



“Paid partnership with...”

The effect of advertising disclosures on the followers' behaviour with regard to an influencer on Instagram

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Abstract

Background: Since social media influencers do not always properly disclose their paid partnerships with brands, the practice of influencer marketing has been widely criticized. Several institutions called for improved labelling of sponsored posts by means of advertising disclosures. However, scientific insights into the effects of disclosures in relation to the influencer are scarce.

Objective: The aim of this thesis is to investigate how advertising disclosures affect the followers' behaviour with regard to the influencer who disclosed his or her Instagram post as advertising.

Theory: Building on the idea of the Persuasion Knowledge Model, it is hypothesized that the presence of a disclosure leads to higher levels of advertising recognition, which in turn activates cognitive and/or affective resistance. As a result, it is expected that more negative attitudes towards the influencer are developed, which increase the intention to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards him or her (i.e. 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' or 'unfollowing the influencer').

Method: An online experiment with a between subjects design was conducted, whereby the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (Instagram post with disclosure vs. Instagram post without a disclosure). The population of this research was composed of Instagram users who were following one of the specified influencers and who were using the platform at least once a week. By means of convenience sampling, 294 responses to the experiment were obtained.

Results: It was found that advertising disclosures on Instagram increase the followers' intention to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards the influencer. This effect can be explained by advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer. In addition, also a less strong effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions via advertising recognition and attitude towards the influencer was identified.

Discussion/Conclusion: Based on the results it is concluded that the presence of advertising disclosures negatively impacts the social media influencer. The theoretical and practical contribution of this research as well as possible areas for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, advertising disclosure, Instagram, advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance, attitude towards influencer, persuasion knowledge model

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Introduction

The rise of social media within the last decades has heavily changed the advertising landscape. Whereas marketers were in full control over the content and the distribution of their message within traditional media, social media has empowered consumers and has provided them, among others, with a possibility to express their opinion (Fournier & Avery, 2011). As a result of this development, marketers have increasingly adapted new advertising techniques, such as influencer marketing (Knoll, 2016). Hereby, influential social media users get compensated for the promotion of a brand within their social media posts (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). Since they have a significant potential to impact others on social media, these users are typically called social media influencers (Audrezet, De Kerviler, & Moulard, 2018). They have built big audiences through the creation of appealing content about a particular topic, such as fashion, travelling or sports (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Therefore, brands are often cooperating with them in order to reach a specific target audience (Wong, 2014).

Despite the growing popularity of this advertising technique (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017), several institutions have criticized the practice in the past. This is because the relationship between the influencer and the brand is not always properly disclosed (Cousaris, Van Osch, & Kourganoff, 2018). Through the concealment of this relationship, users might get the impression that the opinions provided within the post reflect the influencer's own beliefs and are not affected by any form of compensation from the brand (Evans et al., 2017). As a response to this criticism, Instagram, one of the biggest platforms for influencer marketing, has introduced an advertising disclosure feature in October 2017. Now, the sub-header 'Paid partnership with...' is presented above the sponsored posts of the biggest influencers (Chacon, 2017).

To date little is known about how the presence of an advertising disclosure might affect the perception of an Instagram influencer. A post from a social media influencer is usually regarded as non-commercial content from an "ordinary" person and is, consequently, perceived as more trustworthy than traditional marketing communications (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). However, the presence of an advertising disclosure might reveal the covert persuasive intention of the influencer and might, therefore, result in a more negative evaluation (Lee, Kim, & Ham, 2016). While the introduction of advertising disclosures could protect users from covert advertising, it might also negatively affect the industry of social media influencers. Therefore, it is important to further investigate the effects of such disclosures.

In line with this, the aim of the current study is to investigate whether or not advertising disclosures on Instagram negatively affect the influencer. Hereby, the following research question will be addressed: *"How do advertising disclosures on Instagram affect the followers' behaviour with regard to the influencer who disclosed his or her post as advertising?"*. Building on the Persuasion Knowledge Model from Friestad and Wright (1994), it is hypothesized that disclosure presence will lead to higher levels of advertising recognition which will activate the followers' defensive coping tactics with regard to persuasion (i.e. cognitive or affective resistance). Due to the use of these coping tactics, it is expected that the followers will develop a more negative attitude towards the influencer, so that they will be more likely to have adverse behavioural intentions (i.e. 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' or 'unfollowing the influencer') towards him or her. Since the literature about the effects of advertising disclosures is generally very scarce, this research study will provide important theoretical and practical insights.

The thesis will proceed with a theoretical framework, which provides important background knowledge with regard to the topic of this research study and which introduces the reader to the different hypotheses. Subsequently, the design of the research as well as the population and the stimulus material will be described within the method section. Afterwards, the result section will provide the outcomes of the hypothesis testing. Within the subsequent discussion section, the

research question will be answered and the limitations of the current study will be presented. The thesis will end with a conclusion, which summarizes the most important findings.

Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework can be divided into two main parts. The first part provides the reader with important background knowledge which is crucial for his or her understanding of this research study. Hereby, the practice of influencer marketing will be defined and will be introduced in relation to other advertising techniques and media theories. Additionally, different types of social media influencers will be distinguished and the basic features of the platform Instagram will be explained. The first part of this theoretical framework will end with a description of the possibilities for disclosing sponsored content and an introduction of the legal situation with regard to advertising disclosures on Instagram.

The second part will introduce the reader to the hypotheses of this research study. It will start with a description of the main research problem, namely the disguise of sponsored Instagram posts as non-commercial content. Besides that, also the Persuasion Knowledge Model from Friestad and Wright (1994) will be discussed, since it partly provides the theoretical basis for this research study. Afterwards, the line of argumentation that led to the establishment of the hypotheses will be presented. The second part of this theoretical framework will end with an illustration of the conceptual research model.

Theoretical background

Classification of influencer marketing within the advertising landscape

Influencer marketing refers to a paid collaboration between a brand and a social media influencer. Hereby, the influencer gets compensated for promoting the brand within sponsored posts (De Veirman et al., 2017). This marketing practice is increasingly used by companies as an effective alternative to more traditional types of advertising (Knoll, 2016). According to a recent survey, it is estimated that the industry doubled its worth within the last two years and the growth is not expected to slow down. About two-thirds (63%) of the companies who currently cooperate with social media influencers are planning to increase their spending in the next 12 months (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2019).

Despite this growing popularity, one can argue that the concept of influencer marketing is not completely new, but is deeply rooted within the media literature. The term influencer, for example, was first used within the *Two-step flow theory* from Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955). The theory states that information from the mass media is distributed to the public within two steps. First, the information is sought out by opinion leaders (so called influencers), who closely observe the mass media and who are particularly interested in a certain topic. Then, these opinion leaders add their own thoughts and interpretations to the message and pass it on to the general public. Consequently, the public opinion is influenced by the information that is distributed by the mass media as well as by the interpretations of the opinion leaders (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Katz, 1957). With regard to influencer marketing, this theory can illustrate the current position of the social media influencer as a middleman between the brand and the consumers.

However, several research publications criticize the simplicity of the two-step flow theory and argue that media information rather tends to flow in multiple directions (Burt, 1999; Gitlin, 1978; Harik, 1971; Weimann, 1982). In line with this, Robinson (1976) introduced the *Multi-step flow theory*. According to this theory, information can flow upwards or even backwards to the media. The general public, for example, is regarded as an active audience, which can provide feedback to the mass media in the form of criticism or suggestions. Similarly, opinion leaders and members of the

public can exchange messages between themselves. Hereby, information is passed on in many different directions and iterations and is not simply disseminated by a top-down approach. Additionally, the theory also includes so-called gatekeepers. These individuals pass on the media information to the opinion leaders and the public, but do not shape the message or exert influence on the others (Robinson, 1976; Weimann, 1982). The multi-step flow theory can be regarded as more suitable for describing the working of influencer marketing than the two-step flow theory, since it takes the possibility for mutual information exchange between the influencer and other actors (e.g. the media or the general public) into account.

Besides its deep roots within the media theory, the practice of influencer marketing is also closely related to other advertising techniques. It is often described as a new type of *Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)* (Byrne, Kearney, & MacEvilly, 2017; Braha & Bar-Yam, 2009; Halvadar & Dash, 2011). Generally, eWOM refers to all kinds of informal communication about particular goods or services, which is directed at consumers by means of Internet-based technologies (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Consequently, some scholars regard eWOM as the equivalent to influencer marketing (Byrne et al., 2017). However, while eWOM describes all kinds of organic and unpaid communication about a brand, influencer marketing usually refers to paid brand communication (Scott, 2015). Therefore, influencer marketing and eWOM need to be regarded as distinct concepts.

The practice of influencer marketing is also described as being similar to *Native advertising* (Evans et al., 2017; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). Although no universally accepted definition of native advertising exists (Shirooni, 2018), it generally refers to advertisements that closely resemble the publisher's original content (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). *Product placements* within movies or TV-shows are a typical example of native advertising. Hereby, commercial products or services are included within film productions in return for monetary compensation from the brand (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Although this technique first emerged within the context of traditional media, it is recently used within social media platforms and personal blogs (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2013; Liu, Chou, & Liao, 2015). Consequently, Audrezet et al. (2018) argue that influencer marketing is a new form of product placement because it focuses on the integration of brand messages into editorial media content.

Since influencer marketing is related to different media theories and advertising techniques, several definitions are proposed within the literature. To illustrate, Sigala and Gretzel (2017) simply define influencer marketing as "the practice of identifying individuals who have influence over a target audience" (p.49). Similarly, Sudha and Sheena (2017) describe it as "a process of identifying and activating individuals who have an influence over a specific target audience or medium, in order to be part of a brand's campaign towards increased reach, sales or engagement" (p.16). More specifically, Sammis, Lincoln and Pomponi (2015) refer to influencer marketing as the "art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand messages with their audiences in the form of sponsored content" (p.7). Although all of these definitions highlight the power of the influencer over the target group, they are regarded as less suitable for the purpose of this research study, since they describe the practice in very broad terms. Within the context of this research, influencer marketing will be defined as follows:

Influencer marketing describes a partnership between an influential social media user and a brand, whereby the user promotes products or services to his or her audience by means of social media posts, in exchange for some kind of compensation from the brand.

This self-developed definition focuses on a specific type of influencer marketing that is very popular on Instagram nowadays. Hereby, it is limited to the influencer's promotion of products for free samples or monetary compensation from the brand. The promotion of products by means of reviews or tutorials is excluded, since these types of influencer marketing are more popular on YouTube.

Based on the previous classification within the advertising landscape, this definition is regarded as most suitable for the purpose of this research study. This is because it emphasizes the paid nature of influencer marketing, so that the practice can be clearly distinguished from eWOM. Furthermore, it also highlights the relatedness of influencer marketing with product placements.

Classification of different types of social media influencers

Social media influencers are defined as “a new type of independent third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media” (Freberg, Graham, McCaughey & Freberg, 2011, p.90). In line with this, influencer marketing is often regarded as a new form of celebrity endorsement, whereby individuals use their reach in order to promote certain products within advertisements (Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). Consequently, several authors refer to influencers as being similar to more traditional celebrities (Golder & Donath, 2004; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016). Although both concepts can resemble each other to some degree, one needs to take a more nuanced view in order to fully grasp the phenomenon of social media influencers (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019).

Therefore, different types of influencers will be categorized within the following section. Hereby, it needs to be noted that there is no standardized distinction between influencers yet and that, depending on the source, the number of followers as well as the term that characterizes a specific category might differ. Consequently, only a rough distinction between influencers can be made. However, for the reader of this research study, it is still important to know about these influencer categories, since each of them assigns different characteristics to the influencers which might impact their commercial value and, thereby, also the follower’s perception of advertising disclosures.

Generally, three different types of influencers are distinguished, namely micro-, macro-, and mega-influencers (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). Micro-influencers constitute the biggest group of content-creators on social media (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). They have the least number of followers, with an audience ranging between 5.000 and 100.000 people approximately (Lin, Bruning & Swarna, 2018; Ruiz-Gomez, 2019; Tapinfluence, 2018). A recent study has shown that micro-influencers produce the best trade-off between reach and engagement (Markerly, 2015). Additionally, they are also perceived as more authentic than influencers with larger networks, since they are more accessible for their followers (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). The main difference between micro-influencers and traditional celebrities who are active on social media is the greater social and geographical distance between the celebrity and his or her audience members. This is because micro-influencers are regarded as more local connections who might interact with their followers in online and offline environments (Lin et al., 2018).

Macro-influencers usually have between 100.000 and 500.000 followers on social media (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). Some of them have even built audiences with up to a million people (Revell, 2017). They have turned their social media activity into a professional, full-time occupation through the creation of a strong online presence across several platforms (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). Since they distribute their content to a wider and more general audience (Brown & Fiorella, 2013), their engagement rates are generally lower than those of micro-influencers (Tapinfluence, 2018). However, due to their increased reach, they are able to gain more comments and likes than influencers with a smaller audience (MediaKix, 2017). In comparison with traditional celebrities, macro- and micro- influencers are considered as being more relevant and trustworthy (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Mega-influencers are regarded as social media celebrities (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). They usually have established an audience of more than a million people (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019; Revell, 2017), so that

they are extremely famous on social media (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019). Their engagement rates are smaller than those of macro-influencers, due to their high amount of followers (Markerly, 2015). Kim Kardashian or Huda Kattan are popular examples of successful mega-influencers nowadays. This research study will mainly focus on this type of influencers, since they are well-known on Instagram and are usually more likely to post sponsored content than influencers with smaller audiences.

Influencer marketing on Instagram

The photo- and video-based social networking app Instagram has more than a billion active users, from which 500 million people use the platform on a daily basis. Although Facebook still has the largest user base across all social networks, Instagram has rapidly grown within the last few years and became especially popular among young adults and adolescents (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2019). The basic principle behind Instagram is a convergent newsfeed, which displays the most recent posts of the people who are followed by a particular user. These posts can be commented or liked by the Instagram community. Every community member can upload photos or videos to his or her personal profile and can follow the profiles of other people. Additionally, the members can also send direct messages to each other or upload photos or videos which disappear after 24 hours ('Instagram stories') (Stegner, 2019).

Due to all of these functions and its large user base, Instagram has become one of the most popular social networks for influencer marketing nowadays (Abidin, 2016; Evans et al., 2017; Segev, Avigdor, & Avigdor, 2019). A recent survey among marketing professionals, brands and agencies found that 79% of the respondents regard Instagram as the most important platform for their influencer marketing campaigns. Other social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or LinkedIn were mentioned significantly less often (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2019). In line with this, more than 25 million companies use Instagram to promote their business and about 60% of the Instagram users state that they first discover new products on the platform (Instagram, 2017).

Possibilities for disclosing sponsored Instagram posts

Despite the popularity of influencer marketing on Instagram, there is no standardized way of disclosing sponsored posts on the platform. Institutions and organizations from different countries give varying recommendations for how to properly disclose advertising. Within this section, the German, the Dutch and the US recommendations will be presented, since this research study will investigate the effects of advertising disclosures by means of Instagram influencers who are popular in these countries.

Within the US, the *Federal Trade Commission* (FTC) has introduced guidelines with regard to the disclosure of social media endorsements, which suggest that sponsored Instagram posts should include the hashtag 'ad' within a prominent position (Federal Trade Commission, 2017). Likewise, in Germany, the guidelines of the *Landesmedienanstalten* state that sponsored posts should be disclosed by means of the hashtags 'ad' ('*Werbung*') or 'advertisement' ('*Anzeige*') (Die Medienanstalten, 2018). Although the *Stichting Reclame Code* has also established guidelines for the disclosure of social media advertising within the Netherlands, they do not specify how influencers should mark their sponsored Instagram posts (Stichting Reclame Code, 2019). As a response to such varying recommendations, Instagram has introduced an advertising disclosure feature in October 2017. Now, the sub-header 'Paid partnership with...' is presented above the sponsored posts of the biggest influencers (Chacon, 2017). Although this feature is not yet available for influencers with smaller audiences (e.g. micro- and macro-influencers), it would constitute a suitable way for standardizing the disclosure of advertising within the platform. Consequently, this research study will

investigate the effects of this specific type of disclosure on the followers' behaviour with regard to an Instagram influencer.

Advertising disclosures on Instagram: Legal situation in Germany, the US and the Netherlands

Legal systems across the world have difficulties addressing the issue of advertising disclosures on Instagram (Dhanesh & Dutler, 2019). Generally, if an Instagram post has a commercial intention and is not disclosed as advertising by the influencer, it is regarded as covert or hidden advertising (Brown & Hayes, 2008). In Germany, there are several laws that regulate the use of such techniques. The *Telemediengesetz* for example, states that commercial communication needs to be clearly recognizable as such. Similarly, the *Gesetz gegen den unlauteren Wettbewerb* points out that it is prohibited to not disclose the commercial purpose of an action if it is not recognizable from the immediate circumstances and if it animates the consumer to make a purchase (Kiel & Solf, 2017). Despite these laws, there still seems to be a lot of confusion among influencers about what kind of Instagram posts they actually need to disclose as advertising. Recently, the *Verband Sozialer Wettbewerb* has taken out a cease and desist order against the German fashion influencer *Pamela Reif*. Within several of her Instagram posts, she has tagged the brands who produced the clothes that she was wearing on the pictures. According to her, the posts cannot be regarded as advertising, since she did not get any monetary compensation from the brands. However, the court held that she is not allowed to tag certain brands within her Instagram posts without disclosure, since she has such a big audience that viewers cannot distinguish between private and commercial intentions anymore (Handel, 2019). Due to such judicial decisions, Instagram influencers are unsure about whether they need to disclose their posts as advertising and simply start to mark all of their content as having commercial purposes (Anton, 2019). This confusion cannot be taken away, since there is no adjudication from the highest German court about advertising disclosures on social media yet (Handel, 2019).

In the US, the *Federal Trade Commission Act* generally prohibits the use of deceptive advertising. Based on this law, stricter guidelines for the disclosure of social media endorsements were enacted by the *FTC* in August 2017. The guidelines state that an Instagram post needs to be disclosed as advertising if the influencer has any relationship or connection with the brand, which would not be expected by the consumers within the communication context and which would impact their judgement about the endorsement (Federal Trade Commission, 2017). Although these guidelines were introduced almost two years ago, the *FTC* has recently received a complaint about 20 influencers (e.g. *Rach Parcell* or *Vanessa Hudgens*) who still do not act according to their standards. In the past, these influencers were repeatedly contacted by the organization and were reminded to properly disclose their sponsored Instagram posts. However, a recent investigation of the advertising watchdog *Truth in Advertising* has shown that they still do not comply with the guidelines of the *FTC* (Truth in Advertising, 2019). This example clearly illustrates that, although the laws and guidelines are more specified than in Germany, Instagram influencers in the US are struggling with appropriately disclosing their paid partnerships.

In the Netherlands, the disclosure of advertising on Instagram is addressed by the *Reclamecode Social Media* (Stichting Reclame Code, 2019). These guidelines state that a partnership needs to be disclosed, if the advertiser offers any kind of advantage to the influencer for the distribution of the social media post, which might impact the credibility of the communication (Stichting Reclame Code, 2019). Similar as within the US, the Dutch influencers still seem to disregard the guideline, although it was already introduced in January 2014. To illustrate, the fashion influencer *Doutzen Kroes* was recently accused of covert advertising. One of her Instagram posts was not disclosed as sponsored, although it included the marketing slogan of the brand *Rivella*, which was a

partner of her. The *Reclame Code Commissie* held that the post need to be regarded as covert advertising, since members of the audience might recognize the slogan as some sort of promotion for the brand. However, no sanctions to the influencer or the brand could be imposed, since the *Reclamecode Social Media* is not yet enacted within the Dutch media law (Pols, 2017).

The previous discussion has shown that, although laws and guidelines with regard to advertising disclosures on Instagram are found in all three countries, influencers are often not properly disclosing their cooperation with brands.

Hypothesis development

Improper disclosure of sponsored posts: The main research problem and its ethical assessment

The following section provides an introduction to the subsequent hypothesis development, because it explains how Instagram users might process a sponsored post that is not disclosed as advertising. Hereby, it presents the main research problem and illustrates why the improper disclosure of Instagram posts as advertising can be regarded as ethically questionable.

Although, in other media contexts, consumers might even be able to identify commercial content without a disclosure, it is especially important to use disclosures on social media. It is difficult to identify sponsored posts that do not contain an advertising disclosure, because they closely resemble non-sponsored ones (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). Therefore, users might not recognize the relationship between the brand and the influencer. They might perceive the provided opinion as being the influencer's own belief, which is not affected by any form of compensation from the brand (Evans et al., 2017). As a result, they might regard the social media post as non-commercial content and, consequently, do not process it critically or do not activate their defensive coping tactics with regard to persuasion (Dhanesh & Dutler, 2019). This is especially worrying, since such non-commercial word-of-mouth recommendations generally have more influence on the consumers' behaviour than marketing communications (Buttle, 1998). Therefore, sponsored Instagram posts which are not disclosed as advertising, can lead to deceptive persuasion and, thereby, heavily challenge the notions of openness and transparency (Taiminen, Luoma-aho, & Tolvanen, 2015).

This research study will investigate whether social media users actually identify a sponsored Instagram post without an advertising disclosure as non-commercial content. Additionally, it will also uncover whether such a post activates their defensive coping tactics and how these tactics might influence their behaviour with regard to an Instagram influencer.

The Persuasion Knowledge Model

The Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) (Friestad & Wright, 1994) provides a theoretical conceptualization of the different knowledge structures and underlying mechanisms which can be activated by consumers when they are confronted with a persuasive attempt. The model states that, in order to evaluate such a situation, consumers mainly use three different mental capacities, namely topic knowledge, agent knowledge and persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Topic knowledge refers to any knowledge about the particular topic of the message. It facilitates the consumers' understanding of the content and helps them to assess the claims that were made within the persuasive attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This knowledge structure was not initially discovered through the development of the PKM, but was already described within earlier research publications about persuasion. To illustrate, Eagly and Chaiken (1984) have stated that almost all of the existing theories about attitude change and persuasion take the message topic into consideration. In line with this, the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the *Heuristic-Systematic Model* (Chaiken, 1987) also assumed that people are motivated to hold a

valid attitude about the topic of the message.

Agent knowledge encompasses any knowledge about the persuasion agent who is identified as the source of the persuasive attempt. Before making a purchase decision, it is logical and reasonable for people to develop attitudes about the individuals and organizations they expect to deal with. Typically, a company or a management group is perceived as being the persuasion agent, because they are responsible for the planning and execution of the persuasion itself. According to the PKM, the consumers' motivation to create or rebuild their agent knowledge is influenced by several factors, such as the familiarity with and the importance of the agent as well as their pre-existing attitudes (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Persuasion knowledge refers to any knowledge that is related to the persuasion as such. It includes folk knowledge about the psychological processes of persuasion, the marketer's tactics and persuasion goals, the effectiveness and appropriateness of these tactics and the consumer's coping tactics and goals. People rely on their persuasion knowledge in order to decide on how to respond or cope with persuasion (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

These three knowledge structures are used together when consumers evaluate a persuasive attempt. However, depending on their accessibility, the importance of each of the structures for the assessment of the situation might vary. This means that consumers might, for instance, rely less on their topic knowledge when they have difficulties with understanding the message of a persuasive attempt, but instead use their persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Several research studies regard persuasion knowledge as being crucial for the investigation of the effects of advertising disclosures (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012; Boerman, Willemsen, & van der Aa, 2017; Evans & Hoy, 2016; van Reijmersdal et al., 2017). Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis development mainly focuses on this specific type of knowledge structure.

The effect of disclosure existence on advertising recognition

The concept of persuasion knowledge is complex to measure because it is influenced by individual, cultural and temporal circumstances (Friestad & Wright, 1994). However, a few researchers argue that there are certain building blocks of persuasion knowledge that are already developed at a young age. Across the different publications, advertising recognition is usually defined as the first building block of persuasion knowledge (John, 1999; Rozendaal, Lapierre, van Reijmersdal, & Buijzen, 2011; Wright, Friestad, & Boush, 2005). Based on this idea, several researchers measure advertising recognition and refer to it as (conceptual) persuasion knowledge. They have found that an advertising disclosure can positively influence advertising recognition (referred to as conceptual persuasion knowledge) across several advertising formats, such as product placements in television shows (Boerman et al., 2012), Facebook ads (Boerman et al., 2017), sponsored blogs (van Reijmersdal et al., 2016) or advergames (Evans & Hoy, 2016). Additionally, other studies that measured the original concept of advertising recognition also found that an advertising disclosure positively influences the recognition of advertising. A study by Boerman, van Reijmersdal and Neijens (2015) for example, showed that advertising disclosures that were presented during product placements in a television show, increase the viewer's level of advertising recognition. Likewise, An, Kerr and Jin (2019) demonstrated that disclosures in sponsored news content lead to higher levels of advertising recognition compared to sponsored news without disclosures. More specifically, in the context of Instagram, it was found that the presence of an advertising disclosure as a hashtag under the post results in higher advertising recognition than compared to a post with no disclosure (Evans et al., 2017). Based on the two streams of research presented within this section, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: *An Instagram post with an advertising disclosure (i.e. 'Paid partnership with...') is more likely to be recognized as advertising than a post that does not contain such a disclosure.*

Cognitive and affective resistance and advertising recognition

The PKM does not state that consumers solely use their persuasion knowledge in order to resist persuasion, but rather to maintain control over the situation and to achieve the most desired outcomes (Friestad & Wright, 1994). However, according to reactance theory, a persuasive attempt may restrict one's attitudinal freedom and may lead to an effort to restore that freedom by rejection of the content or the advocated position (Brehm, 1966). Consequently, it is assumed that, when consumers recognize a persuasive attempt, they tend to resist it (Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008). In line with this, Haas and Grady (1972) found that a forewarning of the persuasive intent of a communicator decreases his or her persuasiveness. Therefore, it is assumed that advertising recognition leads to some sort of resistance with regard to the persuasive attempt.

Within the literature, there is a distinction between cognitive and affective resistance to persuasion. Cognitive resistance generally refers to all kinds of cognitive elaborations that people undertake in order to resist persuasion (Zuwerink Jacks & Devine, 1996). It can be measured by means of cognitive resistance strategies, such as counter-arguing. Hereby, people contest the content of the message when they are confronted with a persuasive attempt (Fransen, Smit, & Verlegh, 2015). In the context of paid blogs, it was found that advertising recognition (referred to as persuasion knowledge) leads to higher levels of cognitive resistance, which was operationalized through the resistance strategy of counter-arguing (van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). Similarly, another study demonstrated that the recognition of sponsored news as advertising activates counter-arguing and, thus, results in higher levels of cognitive resistance (Amazeen & Wojdyski, 2018). However, since the content of Instagram posts is usually very restricted, it is less likely that people apply the strategy of counter-arguing in order to resist a persuasive attempt on the platform. Instead, it is expected that Instagram users are most likely to apply the strategy of source-derogation. Hereby, people contest the source of the message by questioning their expertise, trustworthiness or credibility (Fransen et al., 2015). It is assumed that the respondents who recognize the Instagram post as advertising, doubt the expertise and trustworthiness of the influencer because they realize that the provided opinion might not reflect his or her own beliefs, but might rather be influenced by some kind of compensation from the sponsoring brand.

Affective resistance refers to all kinds of feelings by which people might resist persuasion (Zuwerink Jacks & Devine, 1996). Within the literature, this concept is mainly measured by means of the affective resistance response of negative affect (van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). Hereby, people respond by getting angry, irritated or upset when confronted with a persuasive attempt (Zuwerink Jacks & Cameron, 2003). A study by van Reijmersdal et al. (2016) found that the recognition of paid blogs as advertising leads to higher levels of affective resistance, which was operationalized through the resistance strategy of negative affect. In line with this, it is expected that the respondents who recognize the Instagram post as advertising become angry, irritated or upset because they realize that the influencer might be affected by the sponsoring brand. Based on these findings and the literature presented before, the following two hypotheses are developed:

H2a: *Recognition of an Instagram post as advertising is positively related to cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation).*

H2b: *Recognition of an Instagram post as advertising is positively related to affective resistance (i.e. negative affect).*

Parasocial interaction theory: The moderating role of influencer-follower relationship

Parasocial interaction theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) states that some media users interact with media characters in a way that is similar to real-life social interactions (Labrecque, 2014). Hereby, they project the character into their own social environment and develop an illusory social connection with him or her (Giles, 2002; Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). Although the users are aware of the illusory nature of this connection (Horton & Wohl, 1956), they become attached to the media figure and perceive him or her as an intimate conversational partner (Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen, 2016; Yuan, Kim, & Kim, 2016). Research has shown that affinity, admiration and physical and social attraction are the main factors that foster the development of such parasocial interactions (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schmid & Klimmt, 2011).

Although this theory was originally developed within the context of movie or television characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956), recent studies have shown that it can also be applied to social media influencers. To illustrate, through an analysis of the Facebook page of Kim Kardashian, Lueck (2012) found that parasocial interactions take place between the celebrity and her fans. Similarly, Jin and Muqaddam (2019) demonstrated that parasocial interactions can also be developed between Instagram influencers and their followers. The strength of these interactions might even be increased through the possibility of posting comments or sending direct messages to each other (Rasmussen, 2018). However, due to the high number of followers, social media influencers are not able to engage in true discussions or to respond to all of their followers' requests (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Therefore, the interaction usually remains one-sided and illusory, as originally proposed within the PSI definition of Horton and Wohl (1956) (Labrecque, 2014; Lee and Watkins, 2016).

Through multiple exposures, a parasocial interaction can be transformed into a parasocial relationship (PSR). Hereby, the media users perceive the media figure as a friend and seek advice and guidance from him or her (Labrecque, 2014). These relationships closely resemble interpersonal ones, because (1) they are also established on a voluntary basis, (2) provide some sense of companionship and (3) usually rely on social attraction (Perse & Rubin, 1989). Similar as to how people act in social situations, media users in a parasocial relationship also form opinions and beliefs about the media figure (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). These opinions are transformed into future interactions and can, thereby, further increase the strength of the relationship (Ballantine & Martin, 2005). Within the literature, it is argued that parasocial relationships can reduce the resistance of the media users towards the persuasive messages of the media personality (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). Since several studies state that parasocial interactions and relationships can also be developed between social media influencers and their followers (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011; Ferchaud, Grzeslo, Orme, & LaGroue, 2018; Rasmussen, 2018), the following hypotheses are established:

H3a: *The PSR strength negatively affects the relationship between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance, which means that high levels of PSR decrease the impact of advertising recognition on cognitive resistance.*

H3b: *The PSR strength negatively affects the relationship between advertising recognition and affective resistance, which means that high levels of PSR decrease the impact of advertising recognition on affective resistance.*

The effect of cognitive and affective resistance on the attitude towards the influencer

The PKM argues that the beliefs and the behaviours of consumers may differ when the persuasive intent of a message is apparent compared to when it is obscured. This effect is explained by the change-of-meaning principle, which states that a consumer changes his meaning when he perceives a marketer's action as being a persuasion tactic. To be more concrete, a consumer might, for

instance, consider the effectiveness and the appropriateness of a marketer's action, when he perceives it as being a persuasion tactic and, consequently, changes his meaning with regard to the company that is advertising (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Within the context of Instagram, this means that a post with an advertising disclosure might elicit different follower opinions than a post without a disclosure, because it characterizes the post as a persuasion tactic and reveals the persuasive intent of the sponsoring brand and the influencer. In line with this reasoning, a few research studies have found that the presence of an advertising disclosure generally has a more negative impact on the brand attitude compared to no disclosure (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2014; Boerman et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2017; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). It is assumed that this detrimental effect might be the result of consumer resistance (Milne, Rohm, & Bahl, 2009). It is unlikely that attitudes become more favourable, when consumers respond to persuasive messages with resistance (Tormala & Petty, 2002). Similarly, a recent study found that higher levels of affective resistance lead to more negative brand attitudes. However, such a negative effect on brand attitudes could not be significantly indicated for higher levels of cognitive resistance (van Reijmersdal et al., 2016).

It was not yet examined whether higher levels of cognitive and affective resistance also lead to a more negative attitude towards the influencer who is publishing the sponsored post. In order to fill this gap and to be able to answer the research question presented before, the following hypotheses are established:

H4a: *Cognitive resistance is negatively related to the follower's attitude with regard to the influencer.*

H4b: *Affective resistance is negatively related to the follower's attitude with regard to the influencer.*

The effect of the attitude towards the influencer on adverse behavioural intentions

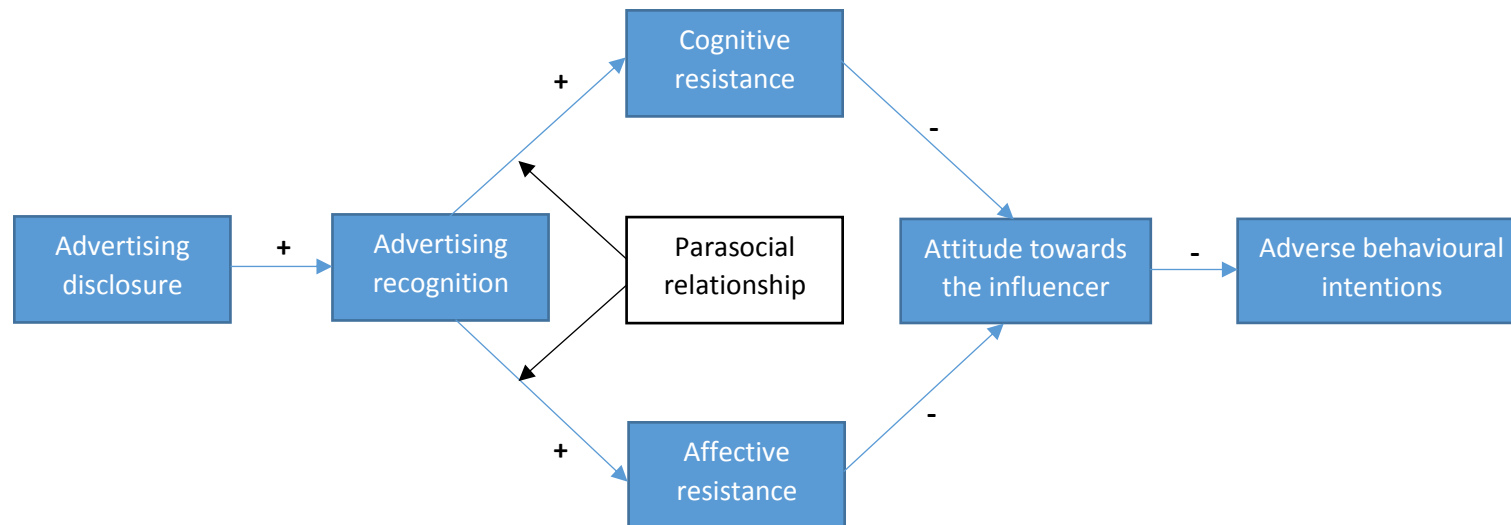
Generally, a rough distinction between different behaviours that users might perform in relation to a particular influencer on Instagram can be made. The first type of behaviour can be labelled as 'favourable behaviour towards the influencer'. Hereby, users might spend a lot of attention to his or her posts, might provide a like to the posts or might write a positive comment. Besides that, users might also engage in 'adverse behaviour towards the influencer'. Hereby, they might just ignore the posts by quickly swiping further, might write a negative comment or might unfollow the influencer on the platform. It needs to be noted that this distinction between different types of behaviours on Instagram may not be exhaustive and is not based on a theoretical foundation, but is rather derived from common knowledge. Nevertheless, it provides an important attempt of characterizing different behaviours on Instagram, so that they become measurable within the context of this research study.

It is expected that followers with a negative attitude with regard to the Instagram influencer are more likely to develop any of the adverse behavioural intentions presented before. In order to make stable predictions about a person's behaviour based on his or her attitude, both concepts need to be comparable in terms of their specificity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). More general attitudes usually do not provide a good basis for the prediction of single behavioural actions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). However, since several research studies have shown that the attitude towards a particular brand can be used to predict the consumers' purchase intention (e.g. Hernandez & Küster, 2012; Lee, Lee, & Yang, 2017), it is expected that the level of specificity between the attitude towards the influencer and the three different adverse behavioural intentions towards him or her is similar enough. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H5: *The follower's attitude with regard to the influencer is negatively related to adverse behavioural intentions towards him or her (i.e. 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' or 'unfollowing the specified influencer').*

Conceptual research model

Based on the different hypotheses presented before, a conceptual research model is developed. Within the model, I theorize that the presence of an advertising disclosure on Instagram (i.e. “Paid partnership with...”) results in higher levels of advertising recognition, which in turn activates cognitive and/or affective resistance (i.e. ‘source derogation’ or ‘negative affect’). Furthermore, I expect that the activation of these types of resistance leads to a more negative attitude towards the influencer, which increases the intention to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards him or her (i.e. ‘swiping further’, ‘writing a negative comment’ or ‘unfollowing the influencer’).



Method

Research design

In order to investigate the effects of advertising disclosures on the followers' behaviour with regard to an influencer on Instagram, an online experiment with a between subjects design was conducted. Hereby, the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (advertising disclosure vs. no disclosure). The ones who were assigned to the first condition were exposed to a fictitious Instagram post with an advertising disclosure, which was created by a specified influencer they were following on the platform. The ones who were assigned to the second condition were exposed to the same Instagram post without a disclosure.

Respondents

The population of this research consisted of Instagram users who were following one of the specified influencers and who were using the platform at least once a week. It was expected that the respondents would react differently to a post from a real influencer than to a post from a fictitious one. Therefore, it was of great importance that they were actually following one of the specified influencers. Hereby, the parasocial relationship between the influencer and the respondent could be measured, so that the results became more reliable. Additionally, it was also important that the respondents were using Instagram on a weekly basis. As stated earlier, multiple exposures can transform a parasocial interaction into a parasocial relationship. Consequently, it was expected that people who were using Instagram at least once a week were more likely to develop some kind of parasocial relationship with the specified influencer than people who were using Instagram infrequently.

For reasons of time and budget, the respondents were recruited by means of a convenience sample. Besides that, the personalised sorting algorithm of the follower lists on Instagram made it impossible to use a simple random sample. This is because the algorithm is based on the individual characteristics of the person who is viewing the list. It takes many different variables into account (e.g. the frequency of interaction with the particular follower), which are not all publicly revealed by the company yet (Cabeen, 2017; Wirdenius, 2018). Therefore, it was not guaranteed that each follower of the specified influencers had an equal chance of being selected within a simple random sample.

In total, 465 responses to the online questionnaire were obtained, from which 294 responses were regarded as valid. This means that the participation requirements were met and the questionnaire was filled in completely. The sample included 197 females (67%) and 97 males (33%). On average, the respondents were 22.92 years old ($SD = 4.68$), with the youngest being 13 years old and the oldest being 58 years old. Out of the whole sample, 152 respondents were exposed to an Instagram post with an advertising disclosure, while 142 respondents had seen an Instagram post without a disclosure. The majority of the respondents followed Instagram influencers whose main location of influence was Germany (52.4%), while influencers who were popular in the Netherlands (17.0%) or the US (30.6%) were followed less often. The exact distribution of the number of respondents per influencer is depicted in Table 1.

In order to approach these respondents, two different strategies were applied by the researcher. The first strategy can be labelled as 'untargeted convenience sampling'. Hereby, the online questionnaire was distributed to a high number of people, who might or might not fulfil the participation requirements. To illustrate, the experiment was publicly shared on the researcher's social media platforms and on the participant management system of the University of Twente. Additionally, also several family members and friends were provided with the link to the research.

The second strategy, on the other hand, can be labelled as 'targeted convenience sampling'.

By means of this strategy, the online questionnaire was distributed to a lower number of people, who were likely to fulfil the participation requirements. The followers of the specified influencers, for example, were directly exposed to the research study on Instagram. This was done by commenting on the posts of the influencers with a link to the online experiment and a short description of it. Furthermore, several micro-influencers were asked to share the research on the platform. These micro-influencers were posting content about similar topics as the specified influencers, so that it was expected that their followers would also be likely to follow one of the specified influencers.

Procedure

The online experiment was created by means of the survey tool 'Qualtrics'. After the respondents had clicked on the link to the study, they were directed to an introductory page. Here, a short description of the general topic of the research (i.e. Instagram influencers) was provided and they were thanked for their participation. Additionally, it was stated that their data was treated anonymously and that they were able to stop with the research at any given point in time. In order to start with the experiment, the respondents needed to indicate that they have read and understood this information.

At the next page, it was checked whether or not they were fulfilling the participation requirements. For this purpose, they were asked to indicate their age. All respondents who were younger than 18 years old needed to explicitly state that they had the consent of their parents to participate in the research study. Besides that, they were also asked to indicate how frequently they were using the platform Instagram. All respondents who were not using Instagram at least once a week, were thanked for their interest and were told that they were not eligible to participate in the research study.

The remaining respondents were exposed to a list of 15 specified influencers and were asked to indicate whom of these influencers they were following on the platform. In case they were following several of these influencers, they were encouraged to choose the one with whom they were most familiar. Afterwards, they were asked to answer a few questions, which were used to determine the strength of the parasocial relationship between them and the chosen influencer.

As a next step, the respondents were assigned to one of the two experimental conditions. The ones in the first condition were exposed to a fictitious Instagram post of the specified influencer that contained an advertising disclosure, whereas the ones in the second condition were exposed to the same post without a disclosure. In both conditions, they were encouraged to take their time in order to carefully look at the Instagram post.

The last part of the online experiment consisted of a questionnaire. Over the course of this questionnaire, the respondents were asked several questions which were used to determine their level of advertising recognition, their cognitive and affective resistance as well as their attitude with regard to the chosen influencer and their adverse behavioural intentions towards him or her.

After the completion of this questionnaire, the respondents were directed to the final page of the online experiment. Here, they were thanked for their participation again and were provided with the contact information of the researcher, in case they had any questions or wanted to delete their provided answers. Additionally, it was also stated that the Instagram post and the brands that were used within the experiment, were fictitious and were only created for the purpose of this study.

Specified influencers

In order to ensure the reliability of the experiment's results, it was important to obtain reactions from a high number of respondents. Consequently, fictitious Instagram posts of 15 different influencers were prepared. Hereby, more people became potentially eligible to participate in the

research study and the acquisition of respondents became less complicated for the researcher. The influencers who were included within the online experiment are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the 15 specified influencers who were included within the online experiment.

Instagram account	Name	Number of followers ¹	Category	Type of product	Brand	Main location of influence	Respondents (n = 294)
pamela_rf	Pamela Reif	4.1 million	Fitness	Fitness clothes	Fit-clothes	Germany	40
sandraprikker	Sandra Prikker	3.3 million	Fitness	Fitness clothes	Fit-clothes	Netherlands	6
jenselter	Jen Selter	12.6 million	Fitness	Fitness clothes	Fit-clothes	United States	7
bibisbeautypalace	Bianca Heinicke	6.4 million	Beauty	Make-up equipment	Natural Beauty Make-Up	Germany	27
nikkietutorials	Nikkie de Jager	11.7 million	Beauty	Make-up equipment	Natural Beauty Make-Up	Netherlands	18
hudabeauty	Huda Kattan	32.9 million	Beauty	Make-up equipment	Natural Beauty Make-Up	United States	8
carodaur	Caroline Daur	1.8 million	Fashion	Jacket	Street-Fashionista	Germany	27
negin_mirsalehi	Negin Mirsalehi	5.2 million	Fashion	Jacket	Street-Fashionista	Netherlands	7
chiaraFerragni	Chiara Ferragni	16.1 million	Fashion	Jacket	Street-Fashionista	United States	8
gronkh	Erik Range	957.000	Gaming	Gaming headset	Headset-Bros	Germany	11
kwebbelkop	Jordi van de Bussche	1 million	Gaming	Gaming headset	Headset-Bros	Netherlands	4
pewdiepie	Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg	16 million	Gaming	Gaming headset	Headset-Bros	United States	11
jeromeboateng	Jerome Boateng	6 million	Famous personality	Jacket	Street-Fashionista	Germany	49
doutzen	Doutzen Kroes	6 million	Famous personality	Fitness clothes	Fit-clothes	Netherlands	15
kimkardashian	Kim Kardashian	128 million	Famous personality	Make-up equipment	Natural Beauty Make-Up	United States	56

¹ As of February 25th, 2019

For the selection of these influencers, three requirements were made by the researcher. First, it was important to select influencers who were specialized in different fields of expertise. This was done because it could be possible that the followers from an influencer who is specialized in sports would react differently to an Instagram post with an advertising disclosure than the followers from an influencer who is specialized in technology. Therefore, influencers from five different categories were included, namely 'fitness', 'beauty', 'fashion', 'gaming' and 'famous personality'. Fitness-influencers were mainly posting content about workouts and healthy diets; beauty-influencers were mainly posting content about new make-up products; fashion-influencers were mainly posting content about new fashion-styles and outfits; and gaming-influencers were mainly posting content about entertainment and games. The term 'famous personality' referred to people who did not become famous on Instagram, but who still have a high impact within the platform and are, consequently, regarded as influencers. These people were posting content about various topics.

Secondly, it was important to choose influencers who have different main locations of influence. This is because it could be possible that the followers from an influencer who is popular in Germany would react differently to an Instagram post with an advertising disclosure than the followers from an influencer who is popular in the United States. Consequently, influencers with three different main locations of influence were selected, namely Germany, Netherlands and the United States. Since the convenience sampling mainly targeted respondents in Germany and the Netherlands, the effects that could be assigned to the main location of influence could be easily controlled. Additionally, influencers who were popular in the United States were also selected, because they are usually known more globally, which facilitated the acquisition of respondents.

Finally, the third requirement for the selection of the influencers was that they had a high amount of followers and that they were generally well-known within their specific field of expertise. This was an important consideration in order to simplify the acquisition of respondents. Besides that, similar influencers were selected within each of the categories, due to this requirement.

Stimulus material

For each of the specified influencers, two stimuli were created. These were largely identical, except for the presence or absence of the advertising disclosure (i.e. Paid partnership with...). It was important that the stimulus material would resemble a real Instagram post as closely as possible, so that the measured effects could be fully attributed to the manipulation and not to any kind of design issues. Therefore, the current Instagram design as it is displayed within their mobile application was used for the creation of the fictitious Instagram posts. Hereby, the actual typefaces and the real usernames and profile pictures of the specified influencers were employed. With regard to the text caption that is displayed underneath the post, similar captions for influencers who belong to the same category were created. Hereby, their individual writing style and the actual use of hashtags and emoticons was taken into consideration. The captions were written in English, since it was not unusual for the specified influencers to address their followers in this language.

The pictures that were used within the posts of the influencers were found on their Instagram accounts or on other sources of the Internet, such as news sites or personal websites. During the selection of these pictures, special attention was paid to the fact that similar products were displayed within the posts of influencers from the same category. Hereby, the impact of personal taste and varying product value impressions on the respondents' perception of the influencer could be minimized. Since, the celebrity influencers were posting content about several different topics, pictures were chosen which display them with the same products that were also used within the posts of the influencers from the other categories. Consequently, four different types of products were displayed within the fictitious Instagram posts, namely 'fitness clothes', 'make-up

equipment', 'jackets' and 'gaming headsets'. The type of product that was displayed within the Instagram posts was used as a control variable during data analysis.

Fictitious brands were used within the advertising disclosures of the Instagram posts. This was done in order to prevent the influence of the respondents' existing brand attitudes on the hypothesized relationships. The names of the brands were only mentioned within the advertising disclosures and not within the text captions, in order to let the posts appear as realistic as possible. The analysis of the current Instagram profiles of the specified influencers had shown that the brand name was usually not included within the text caption of the posts. The implications of this choice, which might have provided a threat to the internal validity of this research study, are discussed within the limitations section of this paper. The fictitious brands as well as the products that were displayed within the Instagram posts are depicted in Table 1.

In total, 30 different stimuli were created. A typical example of one of the fictitious Instagram posts is displayed underneath. The remaining stimuli are depicted in Appendix 1.

Figure 1. Example of the Instagram post with an advertising disclosure.

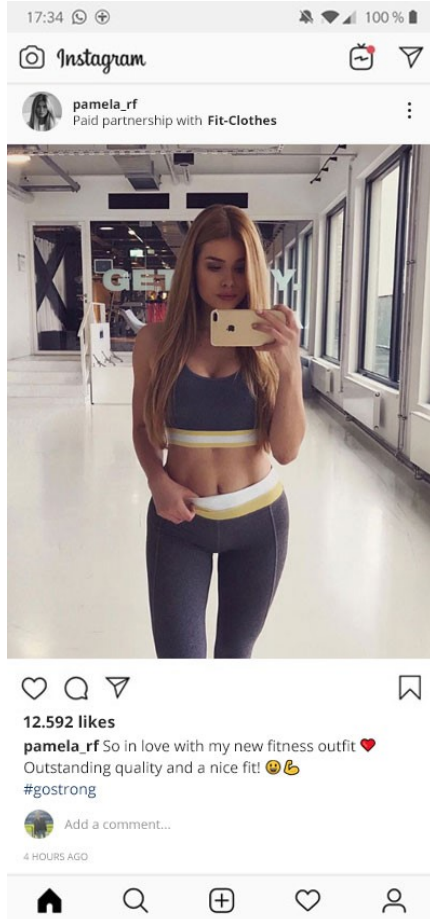


Figure 2. Example of the Instagram post without an advertising disclosure.



Measurement

Advertising recognition

Advertising recognition was measured by a self-developed scale that consisted of five items (e.g. 'I think that the Instagram post I just saw was sponsored'). For the development of this scale, several terms were considered which were frequently used to describe advertising on Instagram. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree' (see Appendix 2).

As opposed to previous research studies that investigated the effects of advertising disclosures (see Boerman et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2017), this construct was measured by means of a multi-item scale. It was expected that a single-item scale might not be sufficient, since the perceptions of advertising might differ, especially in the context of influencer marketing. Additionally, several researchers argue that the use of multiple items for the measurement of a particular construct is always advantageous over the use of a single item (Churchill, 1979; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Cognitive resistance

As discussed before, the construct of cognitive resistance was operationalized by means of the cognitive resistance strategy of source derogation. The respondent's use of this strategy was measured by ten differential items which were extracted from the celebrity endorser's credibility scale from Ohanian (1990). These items consisted of several bipolar adjectives (e.g. honest/dishonest or knowledgeable/unknowledgeable) which were originally developed to measure the expertise and trustworthiness of a celebrity endorser. However, since social media influencers are regarded as being similar to celebrity endorsers (Lim et al., 2017), the use of these items also seemed suitable within the context of this research study. Their wording was slightly adapted, so that they matched the focus of this research and they were measured by means of a 7-point scale (see Appendix 2).

Affective resistance

As mentioned earlier, the construct of affective resistance was operationalized by means of the affective resistance response of negative affect. This resistance response was measured by means of a scale that was developed by van Reijmersdal et al. (2016). The scale consisted of four items (e.g. 'When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel angry'), which were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree'. In order to fit to the context of this research study, the wording of the items was slightly adapted (see Appendix 2).

Parasocial relationship

The strength of the parasocial relationship between the specified influencer and the respondent was determined by means of a scale that was developed by Claessens and Van den Bulck (2015). It consisted of 13 items (e.g. 'I learn from the acts of the chosen influencer'), which were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. This scale was used because it focuses on two important concepts of long-term parasocial relationships (PSR), namely emotional connection and analogy with social relationships. Within the literature, these two concepts were often described as the main elements of PSR (see Boon & Lomore, 2001; Cohen, 2010; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin & Step, 2000; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Additionally, during the development of the instrument, several items from existing scales were combined, which measured the relational aspect of the connection between the media figure and the media user (Claessens & Van den Bulck, 2015). Hereby, the authors made a clear distinction between PSI and PSR. This was important because these

concepts were sometimes used interchangeably within the literature, so that several existing scales contain items that measure both phenomena (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Within the context of this research study, the original 5-point Likert scale was transformed to a 7-point Likert scale (i.e. 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree'), in order to make the scores comparable with the other. Again, the wording of the items was slightly adapted, so that they matched the focus of this study (see Appendix 2).

Attitude towards the influencer

In order to measure the attitude towards the influencer, a scale from Zhou and Whitla (2013) was used. Although this scale was originally developed to measure the consumer's attitude with regard to a particular celebrity endorser, it was still considered as suitable within the context of this research study because social media influencers can be regarded as a new type of third party endorsers nowadays (Freberg et al., 2010). The scale consisted of three differential items with bipolar adjectives ('not likeable/likeable', 'not trustworthy/trustworthy', 'unpleasant/pleasant'), which were measured on a 7-point scale. The wording of the items was slightly adapted, in order to fit to the context of this research study (see Appendix 2).

Adverse behavioural intentions towards the influencer

As mentioned earlier, three different adverse behavioural intentions towards the influencer were measured within the online experiment, namely 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' and 'unfollowing the specified influencer'. By including these three behavioural intentions, a broad range of negative behaviour that could be performed towards the influencer was covered. Since no existing scales within the literature were found, the intentions were measured by self-developed scales that consisted of a single item. Although the classic psychometric argument (e.g. Churchill, 1979; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) suggests that the use of multiple items for the measurement of a particular construct is always advantageous, a few publications have shown that unambiguous constructs, especially behavioural ones, are validly measured by means of a single item (Rossiter & Bergkvist, 2009; Rossiter, 2011).

Swiping further

The negative behavioural intention of swiping further was measured by the following item: 'If I would see this post on my Instagram feed, I would swipe further'. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with this statement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree' (see Appendix 2).

Writing a negative comment

In order to measure the respondents' behavioural intention of writing a negative comment, the following item was used: 'If I would see this post on my Instagram feed, I would write a negative comment'. Again, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with this statement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree' (see Appendix 2).

Unfollowing the specified influencer

The negative behavioural intention of unfollowing the specified influencer was measured by the following item: 'If I would see this post on my Instagram feed, I would unfollow the influencer who has created it'. The extent to which the respondents agreed with this statement was measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 7 = 'strongly agree' (see Appendix 2).

Factor analyses

Factor analyses were conducted in order to check whether the items used within the online questionnaire actually relate to the constructs they were intended to measure (Field, 2005). Since the majority of the scales was derived from the literature, separate analyses for each of the constructs were performed.

More specifically, the relationship between items and construct was tested by means of principal component analyses with direct oblimin rotation (see Appendix 3, Tables 2-6). The results of three different statistics revealed that the data was suitable for conducting factor analyses and that the analyses themselves were executed appropriately. First, it was found that the *Determinant of the correlation matrix* exceeds the necessary value of 0.00001 within all of the analyses, which indicates that the data does not suffer from multicollinearity (i.e. items correlating too highly with each other) (Field, 2005). Secondly, the *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy* resulted in acceptable values between .7 and .9, which means that the patterns of correlations were compact and the analyses were able to identify distinct and reliable factors (Field, 2005; Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Finally, *Bartlett's Test of Sphericity* was significant within all of the analyses, which demonstrates that the correlation coefficients of the items were greater than zero and that, therefore, the execution of a factor analysis was suitable (Field, 2005).

With regard to the scales of advertising recognition, affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) and attitude towards the influencer, factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were extracted and factor loadings smaller than .3 were suppressed. It was found that the items belonging to these scales each load on single factors (see Appendix 3, Tables 2-4). This means that they actually relate to the constructs they were intended to measure. Additionally, they also account for high amounts of the total variance. The factor 'advertising recognition' explained 73.7% of the total variance; the factor 'negative affect' explained 73.9% of the total variance; and the factor 'attitude towards the influencer' explained 80.3% of the total variance.

With regard to the scales of parasocial relationship and cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation), factor loadings smaller than .3 were suppressed and the number of factors that were extracted was restricted to two. This was done because, based on the literature from which the scales were derived, one could assume that each of them would load on two distinct factors. To illustrate, Claessens and Van den Bulck (2015) state that their PSR-scale focuses on two important elements of such relationships, namely emotional connection and analogy to social relationships. By means of a factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation, they have shown that all of their items can be assigned to one of the two factors and that both factors are inter-correlated (Claessens & Van den Bulck, 2015). Likewise, it was also expected that the items of the source derogation scale would load on two distinct factors, because they were derived from two subscales of the celebrity endorser's credibility scale from Ohanian (1990). These subscales measure the expertise and the trustworthiness of a celebrity endorser and, within the context of this research study, it was expected that they together represent the construct of cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation).

The analysis revealed that the items of the PSR-scale load on two different factors, which can be labelled as 'emotional connection' and 'analogy to social relationships' (see Appendix 3, Table 5). Both factors together accounted for 53.5% of the total variance. Similarly, the items belonging to the source derogation scale were also divided into two factors, which can be labelled as trustworthiness and expertise of the influencer (see Appendix 3, Table 6). Together, they explained 65.7% of the total variance. For further analyses, each of the scales was regarded as a single construct. Since both scales were highly reliable (see Table 7), they did not necessarily need to be separated and could also be treated as single constructs.

Reliability analyses

Reliability analyses were conducted in order to check whether the scales that were used within the online questionnaire consistently reflect the construct they are measuring (Field, 2005). Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value of above .7 is referred to as the minimum for a reliable scale (Nunnally, 1978). The results show that all of the scales exceed this minimum value and can, consequently, be regarded as reliable (see Table 7).

Additionally, it was found that, through the deletion of one of the items (i.e. "I think that the Instagram post I just saw was commercial."), the reliability of the scale of advertising recognition could be increased to a Cronbach's alpha value of .93. Likewise, also the reliability of the scale of parasocial relationship could be slightly increased to .87, by excluding one of the items (i.e. "Being able to follow [Name of the influencer] on Instagram makes me feel closer to him/her"). However, both items were retained, since the improvement was rather moderate and both scales already reflect a high degree of reliability.

Table 2. Reliability analyses using Cronbach's alpha for all multi-item constructs.

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Advertising recognition	5	.91
Parasocial relationship	13	.87
Cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation)	10	.88
Affective resistance (i.e. negative affect)	4	.88
Attitude towards the influencer	3	.88

Data analysis

In order to be able to analyse the data, new variables were computed within SPSS, which consist of the average value of the items that belong to a particular scale. Using these new variables, the actual hypotheses were tested by means of an independent samples t-test and different multiple regression analyses. Hereby, also the assumptions that are related to these types of analyses were checked. Even in cases where some of the assumptions were not met, valid and reliable results were obtained, due to the large sample size of this research study (see for example *Central Limit Theorem*; Casson, Franzco, & Farmer, 2014).

In addition to the hypothesis testing, a mediation analysis was conducted. Hereby, I investigated whether and to what extent the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions can be explained by the remaining variables within the conceptual research model (i.e. advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance, attitude towards the influencer). For this purpose, the PROCESS-macro for SPSS was used, which enables observed-variable mediation, moderation and conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2017).

Results

Hypothesis 1: The effect of disclosure existence on advertising recognition

In order to test whether the presence of an advertising disclosure within an Instagram post leads to higher levels of advertising recognition, an independent samples t-test was conducted in SPSS. Hereby, it was found that Instagram posts with an advertising disclosure ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.21$) resulted in significantly higher levels of advertising recognition than posts without a disclosure ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.32$); $t(285.42) = 6.49$, $p = .0001$. Therefore, H1 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2a: The effect of advertising recognition on cognitive resistance

A multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate the relationship between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation). Within the model, advertising recognition was defined as the independent variable and source derogation was defined as the dependent variable. Additionally, dummy variables were included to control for possible effects that were caused by the different types of products that were displayed within the Instagram posts (i.e. 'fitness clothes', 'make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset'). Hereby, the product of fitness clothes was used as a reference category. It was found that the model was statistically significant and that it explained a small amount of the variance in the value of source derogation ($F(4, 289) = 7.40, p < .001, R^2 = .09, R^2_{Adjusted} = .08$). More specifically, the analysis showed that the followers' use of the resistance strategy of source derogation was not significantly predicted by their level of advertising recognition ($\beta = .06, p = .289$). Consequently, H2a is rejected.

Besides the main effect of advertising recognition on source derogation, the impact of the different dummy variables (i.e. 'fitness clothes', 'make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset') on the use of the resistance strategy was also tested. Hereby, it was found that Instagram posts which displayed jackets ($\beta = -.17, p = .020$) or gaming headsets ($\beta = -.21, p = .002$) significantly predicted the followers' use of source derogation.

Hypothesis 2b: The effect of advertising recognition on affective resistance

The relationship between advertising recognition and affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) was tested by means of a multiple regression analysis. Besides the independent (i.e. advertising recognition) and the dependent variable (i.e. negative affect), the different types of products that were displayed within the Instagram posts were included as control variables (i.e. 'fitness clothes', 'make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset'). Again, the product of fitness clothes was used as a reference category. The model was statistically significant and explained a small amount of the variance in the value of negative affect ($F(4, 289) = 4.35, p = .002, R^2 = .06, R^2_{Adjusted} = .04$). The analysis showed that the response of negative affect was significantly predicted by the followers' level of advertising recognition ($\beta = .14, p = .017$). The results suggest a positive relationship, which means that an increase in advertising recognition resulted in higher levels of the response. Therefore, H2b is confirmed.

Hypothesis 3a: Moderating effect of PSR on the relationship between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to test whether the strength of the parasocial relationship between the influencer and the follower has a moderating effect on the association between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation). For this purpose, the independent and the moderating variable were centralized and an interaction term was created. Within the analysis, two different models were used. In the first model, the centralized variables of advertising recognition and parasocial relationship as well as three different control variables (i.e. 'make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset') were included. This model explained a significant amount of the variance in the value of source derogation ($F(5, 288) = 12.45, p < .001, R^2 = .18, R^2_{Adjusted} = .16$). The second model contained the interaction term between advertising recognition and parasocial relationship ($F(6, 287) = 10.56, p < .001, R^2 = .18, R^2_{Adjusted} = .16$). It was found that the addition of the interaction term did not result in a significant increase of the variation explained by the first model ($\Delta R^2 = .00, \Delta F(1, 293) = 1.06, p = .300, \beta = -.06, t(293) = -1.03, p = .300$). This means that the parasocial relationship between the influencer and the follower

($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.88$) did not have a moderating effect on the association between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation). Consequently, H3a is rejected.

Besides the main effect of the moderating variable on the association between the independent and the dependent variable, also other relationships were tested within the first model. Hereby, it was found that the centralized variable of parasocial relationship had a direct effect on the followers' use of source derogation ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .001$). The results indicate that stronger parasocial relationships between the follower and the influencer led to a lower use of the resistance strategy.

Hypothesis 3b: Moderating effect of PSR on the relationship between advertising recognition and affective resistance

The hypothesized moderating effect of the parasocial relationship on the association between advertising recognition and affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) was also tested by means of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Within the first step, the centralized variables of advertising recognition and parasocial relationship as well as the three different control variables (i.e. "make-up equipment", 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset') were included. The analysis showed that this model explained a small, but significant amount of the variance in the value of negative affect ($F(5, 288) = 3.54$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = .06$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .04$). Within the second step, the interaction term between advertising recognition and parasocial relationship was added to the first model. Hereby, it was found that the variation explained by the first model could not significantly be improved through the addition of the interaction term ($\Delta R^2 = .00$, $\Delta F(1, 293) = .45$, $p = .500$, $\beta = .04$, $t(293) = .67$, $p = .500$). In other words, the association between advertising recognition and affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) was not moderated by the strength of the parasocial relationship between the influencer and the follower. Therefore, H3b is rejected.

In addition to the main effect, also other relationships between the variables were tested within the first model. Hereby, it was revealed that the use of the resistance response of negative affect was not significantly predicted by the strength of the parasocial relationship between the follower and the influencer ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .578$).

Hypothesis 4a: The effect of cognitive resistance on the attitude towards the influencer

A multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to test the effect of cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation) on the followers' attitude with regard to the Instagram influencer. Hereby, the independent (i.e. source derogation) and the dependent variable (i.e. attitude towards the influencer) as well as three different control variables (i.e. 'make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset') were included. It was found that the model explained a significant amount of the variance in the value of the attitude towards the influencer ($F(4, 289) = 85.15$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .54$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .54$). More specifically, the analysis revealed that the attitude towards the influencer was significantly predicted by the followers' level of source derogation ($\beta = -.70$, $p < .001$). The results suggest a negative relationship between the two variables, which means that an increase in source derogation resulted in a less favourable attitude towards the influencer. Therefore, H4a is confirmed.

Hypothesis 4b: The effect of affective resistance on the attitude towards the influencer

The hypothesized effect of affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) on the attitude towards the influencer was also tested by means of a multiple regression analysis. Hereby, the independent (i.e. negative affect) and the dependent variable (i.e. attitude towards the influencer) as well as three different control variables ('make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset') were included. The

model was statistically significant and explained a sufficient amount of the variance in the value of the attitude towards the influencer ($F(4, 289) = 22.06, p < .001, R^2 = .23, R^2_{Adjusted} = .22$). The analysis demonstrated that the followers' attitude towards the influencer was significantly predicted by their level of negative affect ($\beta = -.38, p < .001$). The results suggest that higher levels of negative affect led to a less favourable attitude with regard to the Instagram influencer. Consequently, H4b is confirmed.

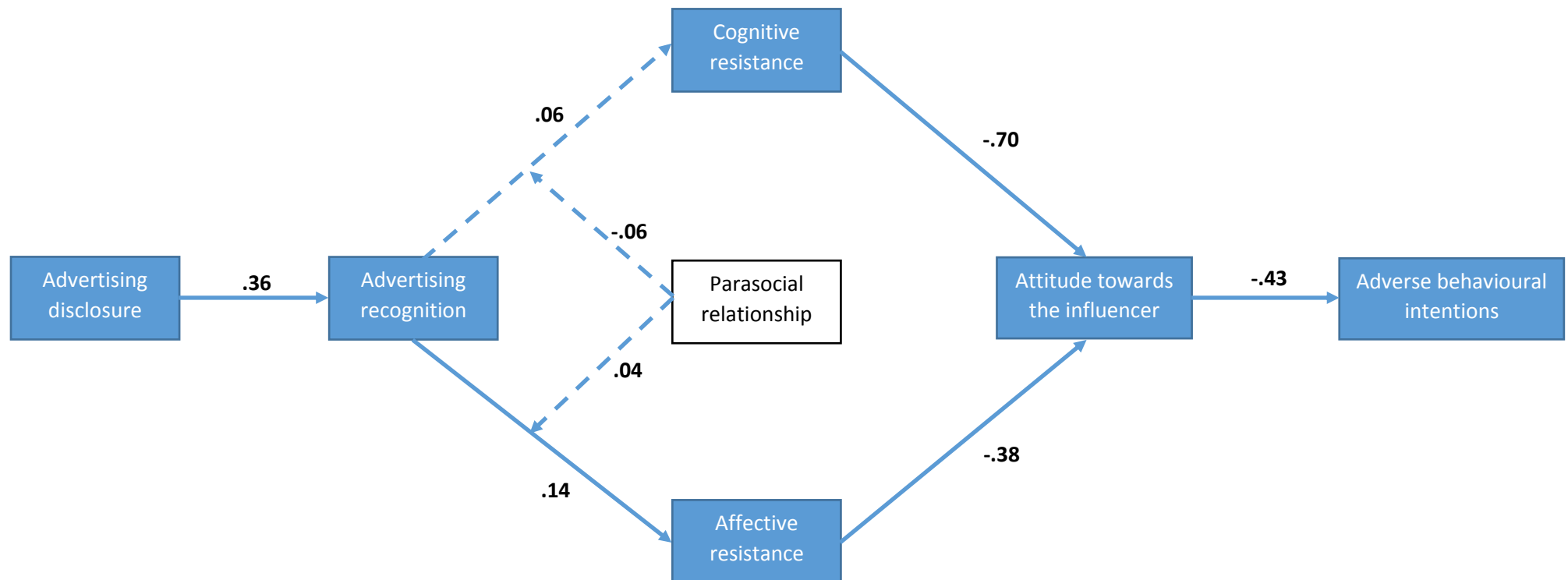
In addition to the main effect of negative affect on the attitude towards the influencer, the impact of the different control variables on the dependent variable was also tested. Hereby, it was revealed that the followers' attitude was significantly related to Instagram posts that promoted jackets ($\beta = .15, p = .027$) or gaming headsets ($\beta = .16, p = .006$).

Hypothesis 5: The effect of attitude towards the influencer on adverse behavioural intentions

In order to test the effect of the attitude towards the influencer on adverse behavioural intentions towards him or her, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Besides the independent (i.e. attitude towards the influencer) and the dependent variable (i.e. adverse behavioural intentions), the model also consisted of three different control variables (i.e. 'make-up equipment', 'jacket' and 'gaming-headset'). It was statistically significant and explained a sufficient amount of the variance in the value of adverse behavioural intentions ($F(4, 289) = 16.00, p < .001, R^2 = .18, R^2_{Adjusted} = .17$). More specifically, the analysis showed that the attitude towards the influencer was significantly related to adverse behavioural intentions towards him or her ($\beta = -.43, p < .001$). The results suggest a negative relationship, which means that a more favourable attitude towards the influencer led to lower levels of adverse behavioural intentions. Consequently, H5 is confirmed.

Research model

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized within the following research model. Hereby, significant effects are illustrated by means of continuous lines, whereas dashed lines are used for insignificant effects. The presented values are the standardized regression coefficients. An additional linear regression analysis was conducted, in order to illustrate the relationship between advertising disclosure and advertising recognition.



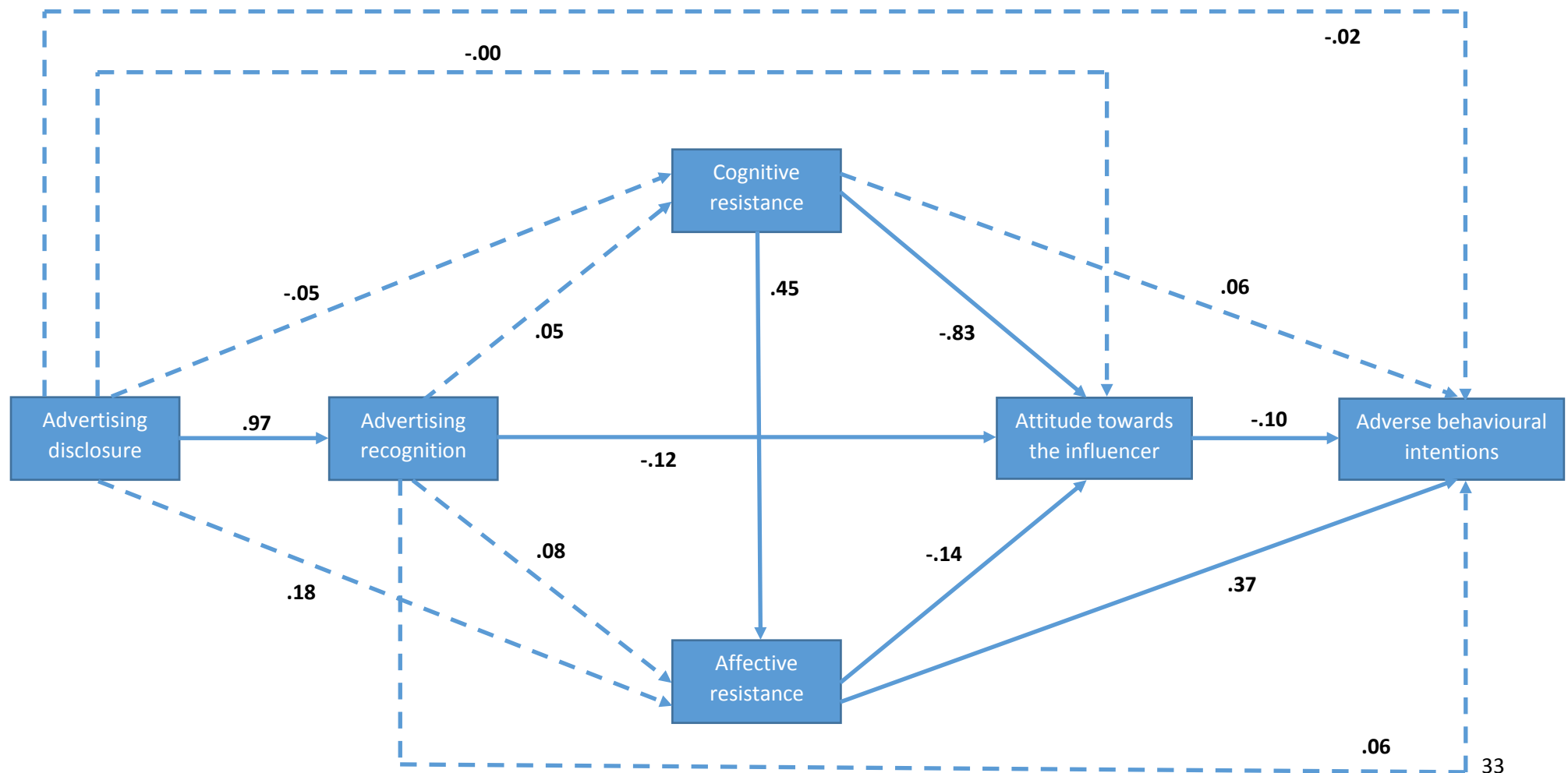
Mediation analysis

Statistically significant effects between individual variables within a research model do not necessarily need to imply mediation (Hayes, 2017). Therefore, based on the hypothesis testing, one cannot simply conclude that the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions is transmitted via advertising recognition, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer. In order to examine whether and to what extent these variables explain the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions, an additional mediation analysis was conducted. Hereby, model 6 (i.e. serial mediation) of the PROCESS-macro for SPSS was applied. Besides the independent (i.e. advertising recognition) and the dependent variable (i.e. adverse behavioural intentions), the model contained four different mediators (i.e. advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer) and three control variables (i.e. make-up equipment, jacket and gaming headset). Using a bootstrap estimation approach of 5000 samples, a significant total indirect effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions was found with 95% confidence intervals, excluding 0 ($b = .17$, $SE = .074$, $CI = .0281, .3263$). This result indicates that the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions is serially mediated via advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer.

Besides the total indirect effect, the analysis also investigated specific indirect effects within the multiple mediation model. Hereby, a significant indirect effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions via advertising recognition and attitude towards the influencer was found with 95% confidence intervals, excluding 0 ($b = .01$, $SE = .007$, $CI = .0010, .0287$). This means that the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions was also mediated via advertising recognition and attitude towards the influencer. The complete model of the mediation analysis is depicted on the following page.

Model of the mediation analysis

All of the relationships between the different variables that were tested as part of the mediation analysis are depicted within the following model. Hereby, continuous lines represent significant effects, whereas dashed lines illustrate insignificant effects. Since the PROCESS-macro for SPSS can only estimate partially standardized regression coefficients for a model with a dichotomous independent variable, the unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed. It needs to be noted that the structure of the model slightly differs from the structure of the research model. This is because a serial mediation analysis was done, so that a relationship between cognitive and affective resistance was implied.



Discussion

The aim of this research study is to uncover whether advertising disclosures on Instagram negatively affect the influencer. Therefore, the following research question was developed: *“How do advertising disclosures on Instagram affect the followers’ behaviour with regard to the influencer who disclosed his or her post as advertising?”*. In order to answer this research question, a conceptual model was created which was mainly based on the integration of the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) and different resistance theories (Zuwerink Jacks & Cameron, 2003). More specifically, it was hypothesized that an Instagram post with an advertising disclosure results in higher levels of advertising recognition which activates cognitive and/or affective resistance. Due to these types of resistance, it was expected that the followers develop a more negative attitude towards the influencer, which results in a higher intention to perform adverse behaviour (i.e. swiping further, writing a negative comment or unfollowing the influencer) towards him or her. Within the following sections, the results of this research study, its limitations as well as its implications for theory, practice and future research will be discussed.

Discussion of the main results

Through the examination of different hypotheses, the following results were obtained. At first, it was found that Instagram users were more likely to recognize a post as advertising when it contained an advertising disclosure compared to when it did not contain such a disclosure (see H1). Hereby, previous results from Evans et al. (2017) were confirmed. Additionally, it needs to be noted that, on average, Instagram posts without a disclosure also resulted in rather high levels of advertising recognition. Both findings have important practical implications for advertisers and the managing directors of Instagram, which will be discussed later on.

Next, it was demonstrated that advertising recognition was positively related to affective resistance, which was operationalized by means of the resistance response of negative affect (see H2b). This means that Instagram users who recognized the post as advertising were more likely to respond by getting angry, irritated or upset. This finding is in line with previous results from van Reijmersdal et al. (2016), which indicate that blog readers experience higher levels of negative affect when they recognize the blog as advertising. Furthermore, the results showed no support for the hypothesis that advertising recognition is positively related to cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation) (see H2a). In other words, Instagram users who recognized the post as advertising were not significantly more likely to question the expertise, trustworthiness or credibility of the influencer than users who did not recognize the post as advertising. Instead, an alternative explanation for the differences in the followers’ use of the resistance strategy was identified. During the analysis, the products that were displayed within the Instagram posts (i.e. ‘fitness clothes’, ‘make-up equipment’, ‘jackets’ and ‘gaming headsets’) were included as control variables. It was found that followers who were exposed to jackets or gaming headsets were less likely to apply the strategy of source derogation than followers who had seen other products. The findings suggest that the differences in the followers’ level of cognitive resistance rather stemmed from the product that was displayed within the Instagram posts than from their level of advertising recognition. This might be caused by varying product value perceptions, which will be further discussed within the limitations section of this paper.

Another possible explanation for the insignificant effect of advertising recognition on cognitive resistance might be that criticizing the Instagram influencer was perceived as impolite or socially undesirable by the respondents (Fraser, 1990; Green, 1996; Grice, 1975). Previous research studies have shown that peoples’ concerns about the social acceptability of their actions influence their decision to apply a particular communication or persuasion strategy (Burleson et al., 1988;

Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1997). In line with this, it might also be possible that such concerns have restrained the respondents from applying the resistance strategy of source derogation. The diverging results with regard to the effects of advertising recognition on cognitive and affective resistance have shown that it was important to differentiate between these two concepts within this research study. The findings might indicate that, in order to resist a persuasive attempt, Instagram users rather rely on their feelings and emotions than on their cognitions. However, this assumption needs to be tested by future research studies, since the followers' use of cognitive resistance was affected by the control variables.

Further, no support could be found for the hypothesis that the parasocial relationship between the follower and the influencer moderated the association between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation) (see H3a). Similarly, the parasocial relationship also had no moderating effect on the association between advertising recognition and affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) (see H3b). A possible explanation for these findings might be that the strength of these relationships within the research sample was rather weak. Different results might be obtained when the hypotheses are tested again with a sample that includes more respondents with stronger parasocial relationships.

Additionally, it was revealed that higher levels of affective resistance (i.e. negative affect) led a more negative attitude towards the influencer (see H4b). In simpler terms, Instagram users who responded to the post by getting angry, irritated or upset developed a less favourable attitude. Apart from the significant effect of affective resistance, the products that were displayed within the Instagram posts also significantly predicted the followers' attitude. To be more concrete, the results showed that followers who were exposed to jackets and gaming headsets developed a more favourable attitude towards the influencer than followers who had seen other products. Again, this might be explained by varying product value perceptions, which will be addressed within the limitations section of this paper.

Likewise, it was also found that the attitude towards the influencer was negatively impacted by the followers' level of cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation) (see H4a). This means that Instagram users who questioned the expertise, trustworthiness or credibility of the influencer, developed a less favourable attitude towards him or her. The effect of cognitive resistance on the attitude towards the influencer was much stronger than the effect of affective resistance. A possible explanation for this might be that cognitive resistance was operationalized by means of the resistance strategy of source derogation. It seems logical that contesting the Instagram influencer needs to be strongly related to the attitude towards this influencer, since in both cases an evaluation of the same person is made. An alternative explanation might be that the majority of the respondents preferred a cognitive thinking style. A previous research study has shown that the individual preference for a particular thinking style (i.e. cognitive or affective) influences the attitude formation towards a familiar object or person. This means that people with a high need for cognition rely on their cognitive evaluations when developing an attitude towards someone familiar, whereas people with a high need for affection rather rely on their affective evaluations (van Giesen, Fischer, van Dijk, & van Trijp, 2015). However, explaining the varying effect sizes of cognitive and affective resistance remains difficult, since this research study was the first that investigated the effects of cognitive and affective resistance on the attitude towards a social media influencer. Certainly, it might also be possible that cognitive resistance simply has a stronger effect on the attitude towards an Instagram influencer than affective resistance. However, in order to clarify this, further research is needed.

Interestingly, previous results have demonstrated that the followers' use of cognitive resistance was not influenced by their level of advertising recognition, but rather by the products that were displayed within the Instagram posts (see H2a). In addition, a strong and significant effect of cognitive resistance on the followers' attitude towards the Instagram influencer was found. Taken

together, these findings might suggest that the products displayed within the Instagram posts affect the attitude towards the influencer because they lead to higher levels of cognitive resistance. However, in order to clarify this, an additional mediation analysis needs to be done in future research studies.

Finally, it was found that the attitude towards the influencer was negatively related to adverse behavioural intentions towards him or her (see H5). Hereby, three different behavioural intentions were included, namely quickly swiping further, writing a negative comment and unfollowing the influencer. The results show that Instagram users with a less favourable attitude towards the influencer had higher intentions to perform any of these behaviours than users with a more favourable attitude. Again, the current research study was the first that investigated the effects of the attitude towards the influencer on adverse behavioural intentions.

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing, one might assume that the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions can be explained by advertising recognition, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer (see Research Model). However, as mentioned earlier, significant effects between individual variables in a research model do not necessarily need to imply mediation (Hayes, 2017). In line with this, the mediation analysis revealed that the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions is transmitted via advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer. More specifically, the results have shown that the presence of an advertising disclosure leads to higher levels of advertising recognition, which in turn activate cognitive resistance. As a result, affective resistance is activated as well, so that a more negative attitude towards the influencer is developed. This negative attitude increases the intention to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards him or her (i.e. 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' or 'unfollowing the influencer'). The mediation effect seems to be counterintuitive at first, since no significant relationship between advertising recognition and cognitive resistance was found within the analysis (see model of the mediation analysis). However, according to Hayes (2017), statistical significance of the individual paths, often labelled as a or b , ($a \neq 0$ or $b \neq 0$) is not necessarily required for mediation, since the total indirect effect is calculated as the product of the individual paths (e.g. $a \times b$).

Apart from the previously described mediation effect, another significant indirect effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions was found. The analysis demonstrated that advertising recognition and attitude towards the influencer also transmit the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions. More specifically, the results have shown that the presence of an advertising disclosure leads to higher levels of advertising recognition, which in turn negatively impact the attitude towards the influencer. As a result, higher intentions to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards him or her are developed. The strength of this second mediation effect, however, was rather weak.

Contrary to the multiple regression analysis which was conducted for hypothesis testing, the mediation analysis did not find a significant effect between advertising recognition and affective resistance. A possible explanation for this might be that cognitive resistance was included as additional control variable within the regression model of the mediation analysis. The results demonstrated a strong and significant effect of cognitive resistance on affective resistance. Therefore, one can conclude that this additional control variable served as an alternative explanation for the value of the dependent variable, which was not considered within the multiple regression analysis. However, the regression model of the mediation analysis only included affective resistance, because model 6 of the PROCESS-macro implied a serial relationship between all of the mediators. Previous research studies did not suggest a relationship between cognitive and affective resistance. Consequently, the presence of this relationship can be regarded as a new finding, which needs to be further investigated by future research studies.

Based on the results of the mediation analysis, two different responses can be given to the

previously introduced research question. First, advertising disclosures on Instagram negatively affect the followers' behaviour with regard to the influencer, because they increase advertising recognition, which in turn activates cognitive resistance. As a result, affective resistance is triggered, which leads to a more negative attitude towards the influencer. Due to this negative attitude, the followers' intention to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards him or her (i.e. 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' or 'unfollowing the influencer') is increased.

Secondly, advertising disclosures on Instagram negatively affect the followers' behaviour with regard to the influencer, because they lead to higher levels of advertising recognition, which result in a more negative attitude towards the influencer. Due to this negative attitude, the followers' intention to demonstrate adverse behaviour towards him or her (i.e. 'swiping further', 'writing a negative comment' or 'unfollowing the influencer') is increased.

Theoretical implications

Previous research studies mainly investigated the effects of advertising disclosures on brand-related outcomes, such as brand attitude and brand memory (see An et al., 2019; Boerman et al., 2012; Boerman et al., 2014; Boerman et al., 2015; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019; Evans et al., 2017; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). The current study, however, explores how advertising disclosures on Instagram affect the followers' behaviour towards the influencer. As mentioned earlier, the results demonstrated that advertising disclosures have a negative effect on the followers' behaviour, which is explained by advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer. In addition, also a less strong and negative effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions via advertising recognition and attitude towards the influencer was found. These results are of high theoretical value for other researchers because they can be generalized across various settings. The online experiment which was used for data acquisition included fictitious Instagram posts of 15 different influencers who were popular in three different countries (i.e. Germany, USA, and Netherlands) and who were specialized in various fields of expertise (i.e. fitness, beauty, fashion, gaming, and famous personality). As a result, not only branch-related or country-specific knowledge was obtained, but the underlying mechanisms of how Instagram users respond to an advertising disclosure were uncovered. Consequently, the findings provide a broad scientific understanding of how disclosures affect social media influencers.

A more specific theoretical implication of this study might be that conceptual persuasion knowledge (i.e. advertising recognition) is not as crucial for investigating the effects of advertising disclosures as suggested by previous research studies (Boerman et al., 2012; Boerman et al., 2017; Evans & Hoy, 2016; van Reijmersdal et al., 2017). By means of the mediation analysis no significant effects of advertising disclosure on cognitive or on affective resistance were found. Certainly, since advertising recognition still mediated the effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions, future research studies should not completely abandon conceptual persuasion knowledge, but should make an attempt to also measure the consumers' agent and topic knowledge. Topic knowledge, for example, would also encompass thoughts about the products that were advertised within the persuasive attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The results of the hypothesis testing demonstrated that the products displayed within the Instagram posts significantly influenced the followers' level of cognitive resistance (see H2a) and their attitude towards the influencer (see H4a). Therefore, in order to further increase the scientific understanding of how advertising disclosures affect social media influencers, future research studies should include all of the different knowledge structures of the PKM.

Practical implications

Certainly, the results also provide important practical implications. At first, it was demonstrated that Instagram's advertising disclosure feature (i.e. "Paid partnership with...") can effectively help users to identify posts with a commercial intention. This is because Instagram posts with an advertising disclosure led to higher levels of advertising recognition than posts without a disclosure (see H1). Therefore, Instagram should make this feature available to all kinds of influencers (i.e. micro-, macro- and mega influencers), so that users can effectively be protected from covert advertising. As a result of this, influencers would also be provided with an easy opportunity to properly disclose their sponsored posts on the platform. This might reduce their number of future court disputes due to the improper disclosure of paid partnerships.

Furthermore, the findings might also indicate that Instagram users are generally sceptical about the non-commercial nature of the posts they encounter on the platform. It was found that on average, posts that did not contain an advertising disclosure also resulted in rather high levels of advertising recognition (see H1). Institutions such as the *FTC*, the *Landesmedienanstalten* and the *Stichting Reclame Code* might consider these finding as a positive outcome, while advertisers and marketers might see it as a threat to the effectiveness of influencer marketing. However, in order to clarify this result, the users' level of scepticism with regard to undisclosed Instagram posts need to be investigated by means of future research studies.

Finally, the current study has shown that Instagram influencers are negatively affected by the disclosure of paid partnerships. It was found that the presence of a disclosure has a detrimental effect on the followers' behaviour towards the influencer, which can be explained by advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer. Therefore, influencers need to decide whether they disclose their partnerships, so that they comply with the law, but harm their own business or whether they do not disclose their partnerships, so that they protect their business, but act in an illegal way. Since both options result in negative outcomes, it might be assumed that several influencers refrain from paid partnerships in the future. This would make the practice of influencer marketing less appealing for brands and might even impact the effectiveness and the popularity of the advertising technique as a whole.

Research limitations

As all studies, the current research certainly had some limitations, which need to be considered when interpreting the results. In terms of design, the only difference between the two stimuli that were created for each of the influencers was the presence or absence of an advertising disclosure (i.e. "Paid partnership with..."). However, for the respondents of this study there might have been two psychological differences between both versions of the post. While the Instagram post with an advertising disclosure included the disclosure as such and mentioned the brand name, the Instagram post without a disclosure obviously did not contain the disclosure, but also did not mention the brand name. Therefore, it might be possible that the observed effects do not only stem from the manipulation of the advertising disclosure as such, but might also be influenced by the presence or absence of the brand name. By including the name of the brand within the text caption of the undisclosed Instagram posts, the internal validity of this research study could have been improved. However, an analysis of the current Instagram profiles of the influencers has shown that they usually do not include the brand name within the text caption of non-commercial posts. Therefore, the name of the brand was only mentioned within the Instagram posts that contained an advertising disclosure, in order to let the posts appear as realistic as possible.

Another limitation of this research study was that the majority of the respondents followed Instagram influencers whose main location of influence was Germany. Considerably less followers from influencers who were popular in the Netherlands or the US filled in the online questionnaire

(see Respondents section). This unequal distribution of respondents can be considered as a possible threat to the external validity of this research study. This is because followers from Instagram personalities who are popular in the US or the Netherlands might be more or less used to advertising disclosures than followers from influencers who are popular in Germany. Therefore, different effects might be observed within a more equally distributed sample.

As mentioned earlier, during the development of the stimulus material, I attempted to include products that result in a similar perception of value. However, the hypothesis testing revealed that followers who had seen jackets and gaming headsets were less likely to make use of cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation) (see H2a) and also developed more positive attitudes towards the influencer (see H4b) than followers who had seen other products. A possible explanation for these findings might be that the respondents estimated jackets and gaming headsets as being more expensive than fitness clothes and make-up equipment. As a result, they might have regarded the products as being of a higher-quality and, consequently, developed lower levels of cognitive resistance and a more positive attitude towards the influencer. In case these assumptions are true, the choice of the products that were displayed within the Instagram posts can be regarded as another shortcoming of this research study.

Future research

While the current study focused on source derogation and negative affect, future studies should examine whether the effects of advertising disclosures on the attitudes and behaviours towards an Instagram influencer can also be explained by other resistance strategies. Since source derogation and negative affect are regarded as less effortful strategies, whereby people do not directly undermine the content of a message (Zuwerink Jacks & Cameron, 2003), the investigation of other strategies, such as attitude bolstering or counter-arguing, could be especially insightful. Hereby, also the general scientific understanding of how people deal with a persuasive attempt on social media could be further improved.

Additionally, only the short-term effects of advertising disclosures on the behaviour with regard to the Instagram influencer were investigated. Hereby, it was found that the followers' behaviour towards the influencer is negatively impacted through the presence of an advertising disclosure. However, it might be possible that followers who regularly see disclosed Instagram posts from a certain influencer, develop more positive behaviours towards this person, because they appreciate his or her honesty and transparency (Dhanesh & Dutler, 2019). Therefore, future research studies need to investigate the long-term effects of advertising disclosures on the evaluation of the social media influencer.

Conclusion

While being popular among advertisers and marketers, the practice of influencer marketing is widely criticized for the non-disclosure of paid partnerships between influential social media users and brands. Several institutions advise influencers to use some kind of advertising disclosure, in order to avoid deceptive advertising and to make people aware of the commercial nature of their social media posts. However, the lack of empirical support has left questions unanswered as to how the presence of advertising disclosures affect the social media influencer. The current study showed that the use of an advertising disclosure on Instagram has a negative effect on the followers' behaviour with regard to the influencer, which can be explained by advertising recognition, cognitive resistance, affective resistance and attitude towards the influencer. In addition, also a less strong and negative effect of advertising disclosure on adverse behavioural intentions via advertising recognition and

attitude towards the influencer was uncovered. Hereby, an important foundation for future research studies is provided, which can hopefully extend the scientific understanding of the impact of advertising disclosures on social media.

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Appendix 1 – Stimulus material

Figure 3. Instagram post from Sandra Prikker with disclosure

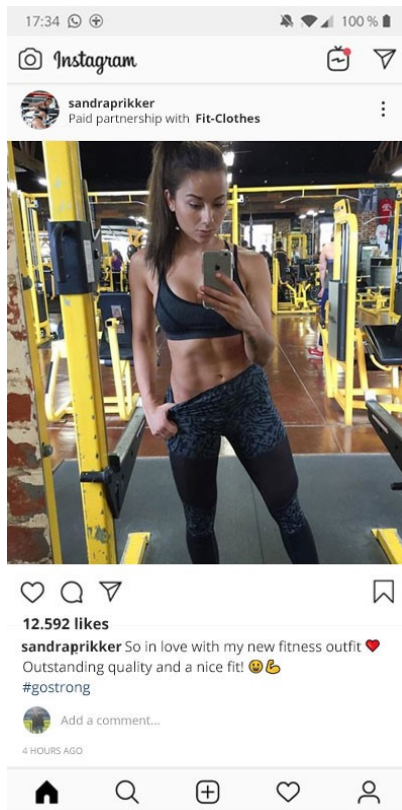


Figure 4. Instagram post from Sandra Prikker without disclosure

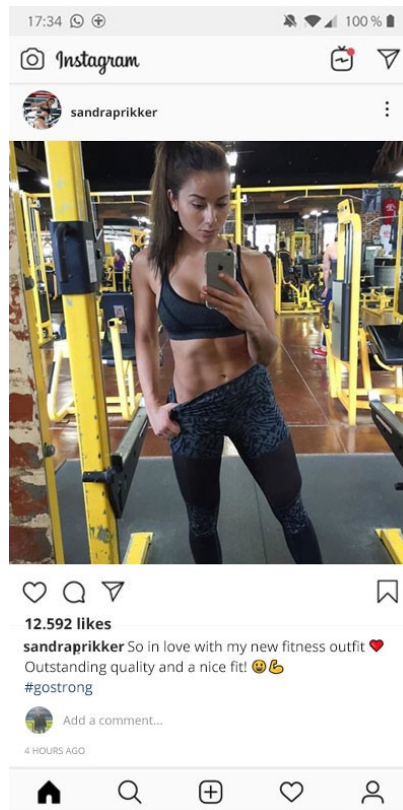


Figure 5. Instagram post from Jen Selter with disclosure



Figure 6. Instagram post from Jen Selter without disclosure



Figure 7. Instagram post from Bianca Heinicke with disclosure



Figure 8. Instagram post from Bianca Heinicke without disc.



Figure 9. Instagram post from Nikkie de Jager with disclosure



Figure 10. Instagram post from Nikkie de Jager without disclosure



Figure 11. Instagram post from Huda Kattan with disclosure

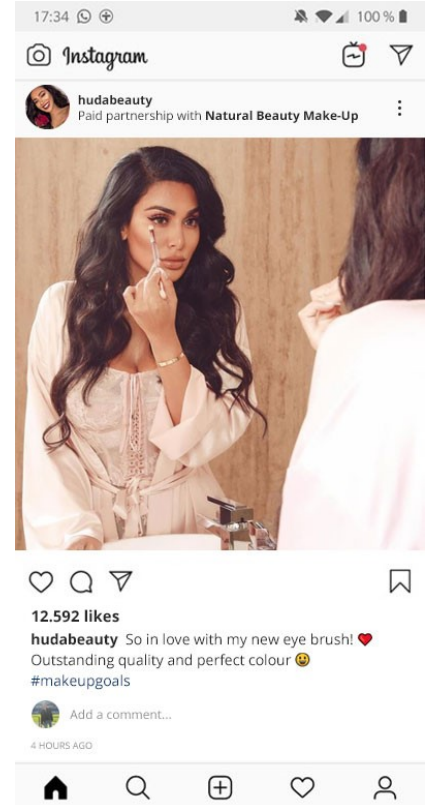


Figure 12. Instagram post from Huda Kattan without disclosure



Figure 13. Instagram post from Caro Daur with disclosure



Figure 14. Instagram post from Caro Daur without disclosure



Figure 15. Instagram post from Negin Mirsalehi with disclosure



Figure 16. Instagram post from Negin Mirsalehi without disclosure



Figure 17. Instagram post from Chiara Ferragni with disclosure



Figure 18. Instagram post from Chiara Ferragni without disclosure



Figure 19. Instagram post from Erik Range with disclosure

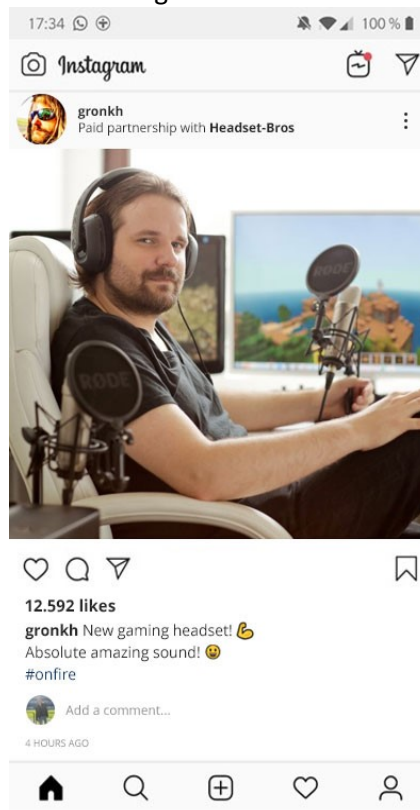


Figure 20. Instagram post from Erik Range without disclosure

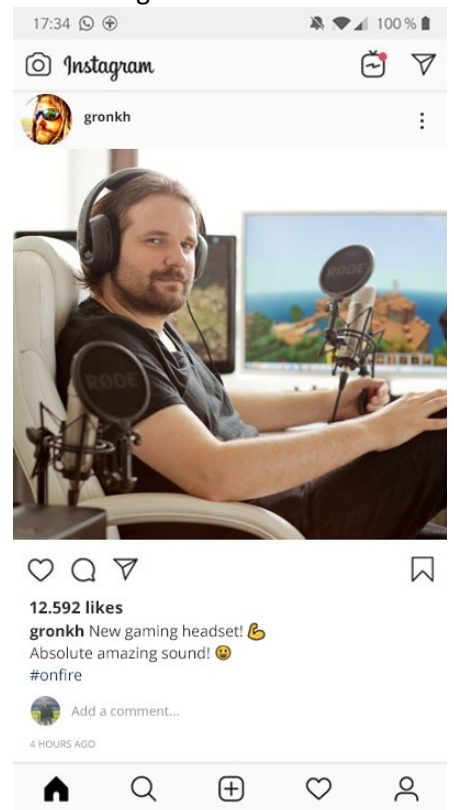


Figure 21. Instagram post from Jordi van de Bussche with disclosure

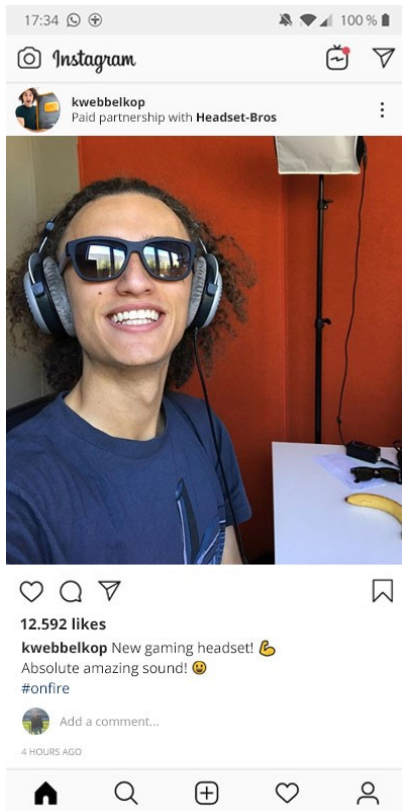


Figure 22. Instagram post from Jordi van de Bussche without disclosure



Figure 23. Instagram post from Felix Kjellberg with disclosure



Figure 24. Instagram post from Felix Kjellberg without disclosure



Figure 25. Instagram post from Jerome Boateng with disclosure



Figure 26. Instagram post from Jerome Boateng without disclosure

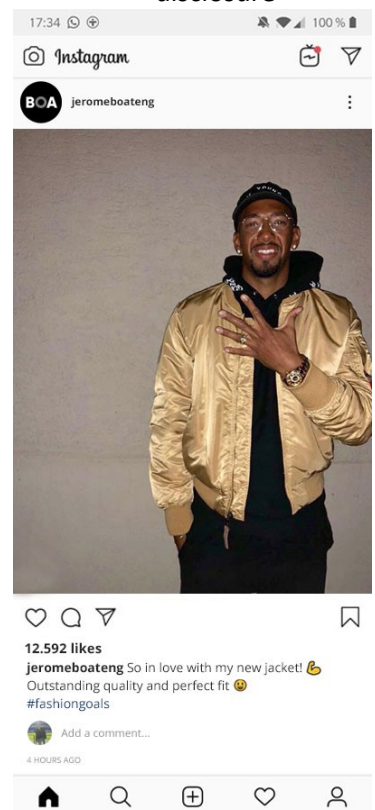


Figure 27. Instagram post from Doutzen Kroes with disclosure



Figure 28. Instagram post from Doutzen Kroes without disclosure



Figure 29. Instagram post from Kim Kardashian with disclosure



Figure 30. Instagram post from Kim Kardashian without disclosure



Parasocial relationship scale (Claessens & Van den Bulck, 2015):

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the influencer you choose from the previous list.

- “When something bad happens to the chosen influencer, I feel bad”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “When something bad about the chosen influencer appears in the media, I feel hurt”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “When my friends laugh at the chosen influencer, I feel hurt”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I learn from the acts of the chosen influencer”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I often have the same point of view as the chosen influencer”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree

- 6 = agree
- 7 = strongly agree
- “I can empathize with the emotions of the chosen influencer”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “The chosen influencer is like a family member to me”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I talk about the chosen influencer like I talk about my friends”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I feel connected to the chosen influencer as I do to my friends”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “Being able to follow the chosen influencer on Instagram makes me feel closer to him/her”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I have tried to get in contact with the chosen influencer”.

- 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I believe it is important to know everything about the chosen influencer”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
 - “Sometimes I actively search for information on the chosen influencer”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree

Advertising recognition scale

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

- “I think that the Instagram post I just saw, was advertising”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “I think that the Instagram post I just saw, was sponsored”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree

- “I think that the Instagram post I just saw, was paid for by a brand”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree

- “I think that the Instagram post I just saw, was commercial”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree

- “I think that the Instagram post I just saw, was the result of a paid partnership”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree

Source derogation scale (Ohanian, 1990):

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

- “I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is...”

Undependable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Dependable
Not an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Expert
Dishonest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Honest
Unknow-								
ledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Knowledgeable
Unreliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Reliable
Inexperienced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Experienced
Insincere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sincere
Unqualified	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Qualified
Untrustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Trustworthy

Negative affect scale (van Reijmersdal et al., 2016):

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

- “When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel annoyed”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel irritated”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel angry”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree
- “When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel enraged”.
 - 1 = strongly disagree
 - 2 = disagree
 - 3 = somewhat disagree
 - 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - 5 = somewhat agree
 - 6 = agree
 - 7 = strongly agree

Attitude towards the influencer scale (Zhou & Whitla, 2013)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

- “I think the influencer who created the Instagram post I just saw, is...”

Not likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Likable
Not trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Trustworthy
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant

Negative behavioural intentions:

Swiping further

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement.

- “If I would see this post on my Instagram feed, I would swipe further”.
 - ☐ 1 = strongly disagree
 - ☐ 2 = disagree
 - ☐ 3 = somewhat disagree
 - ☐ 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ 5 = somewhat agree
 - ☐ 6 = agree
 - ☐ 7 = strongly agree

Writing a negative comment

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement.

- “If I would see this post on my Instagram feed, I would write a negative comment”.
 - ☐ 1 = strongly disagree
 - ☐ 2 = disagree
 - ☐ 3 = somewhat disagree
 - ☐ 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ 5 = somewhat agree
 - ☐ 6 = agree
 - ☐ 7 = strongly agree

Unfollowing the specified influencer

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement.

- “If I would see this post on my Instagram feed, I would unfollow the influencer who has created it”.
 - ☐ 1 = strongly disagree
 - ☐ 2 = disagree
 - ☐ 3 = somewhat disagree
 - ☐ 4 = neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ 5 = somewhat agree
 - ☐ 6 = agree
 - ☐ 7 = strongly agree

Appendix 3 – Outcomes of the factor analyses

Table 3. Principal components factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation including all items that belong to the construct of advertising recognition.

Item	Statement	Factor 1 (‘Advertising recognition’)
AR1	“I think that the Instagram post I just saw was advertising.”	.859
AR2	“I think that the Instagram post I just saw was sponsored.”	.909
AR3	“I think that the Instagram post I just saw was paid for by a brand.”	.926
AR4	“I think that the Instagram post I just saw was commercial.”	.661
AR5	“I think that the Instagram post I just saw was the result of a paid partnership.”	.910

Note: Extraction based on eigenvalue greater than 1.

Table 4. Principal components factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation including all items that belong to the construct of affective resistance (i.e. negative affect).

Item	Statement	Factor 1 (‘Negative affect’)
NA1	“When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel annoyed.”	.860
NA2	“When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel irritated.”	.858
NA3	“When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel angry.”	.888
NA4	“When I was looking at the Instagram post, it made me feel enraged.”	.831

Note: Extraction based on eigenvalue greater than 1.

Table 5. Principal components factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation including all items that belong to the construct of attitude towards the influencer.

Item	Statement	Factor 1 (‘Attitude towards the influencer’)
A1	“I think that the influencer who has created the Instagram post I just saw is... [not likeable/likable].”	.912
A2	“I think that the influencer who has created the Instagram post I just saw is... [not trustworthy/trustworthy].”	.869
A3	“I think that the influencer who has created the Instagram post I just saw is... [unpleasant/pleasant].”	.907

Note: Extraction based on eigenvalue greater than 1.

Table 6. Principal components factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation including all items that belong to the construct of parasocial relationship.

Item	Statement	Factor 1 (‘Emotional connection’)	Factor 2 (‘Analogy to social relationships’)
PR1	“When something bad happens to [Name of the influencer], I feel bad.”	.727	
PR2	“When something bad about [Name of the influencer] appears in the media, I feel hurt.”	.702	
PR3	“When my friends laugh at [Name of the influencer], I feel hurt.”	.581	

PR4	"I learn from the acts of [Name of the influencer]."	.722	
PR5	"I often have the same point of view as [Name of the influencer]."	.864	
PR6	"I can empathize with the emotions of [Name of the influencer]."	.662	
PR7	"[Name of the influencer] is like a family member to me."		.660
PR8	"I talk about [Name of the influencer] like I talk about my friends."		.750
PR9	"I feel as connected to [Name of the influencer] as I do to my friends."		.873
PR10	"Being able to follow [Name of the influencer] on Instagram makes me feel closer to him/her."		.489
PR11	"I have tried to get in contact with [Name of the influencer]."		.683
PR12	"I believe it is important to know everything about [Name of the influencer]."		.758
PR13	"Sometimes I actively search for information about [Name of the influencer]."		.625

Note: Fixed number of factors = 2.

Table 7. Principal components factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation including all items that belong to the construct of cognitive resistance (i.e. source derogation).

Item	Statement	Factor 1 (‘Trust- worthiness’)	Factor 2 (‘Expertise’)
SD1	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is... [undependable/dependable]."	.570	
SD2	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [not an expert/expert]."		.834
SD3	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [dishonest/honest]."	.946	
SD4	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [unknowledgeable/knowledgeable]."		.530
SD5	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [unreliable/reliable]."	.813	
SD6	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [inexperienced/experienced]."		.831
SD7	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [insincere/sincere]."	.851	
SD8	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [unqualified/qualified]."		.804
SD9	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [untrustworthy/trustworthy]."	.891	
SD10	"I think the influencer who has created the post I just saw, is ... [unskilled/skilled]."		.781

Note: Fixed number of factors = 2.