



Micro Influencers: The digital marketing future for increasing engagement

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Abstract

Background: Companies are increasingly venturing to influencers to promote their products and brands on social media. Influencers are often described as social media users with a lot of followers. But there are different types of influencers, and their disparities are not only defined by their number of followers. The most important aspect in an influencers commercial viability is engagement. Engagement can be defined as “being involved with someone”. A high level of engagement indicates that the influencer is actively involved with their audience, and their audience with them.

Objective: Currently, there is no clear understanding of how companies can enhance engagement by using influencers and creating sponsored posts. Previous studies have explored the general principles of influencer marketing, but there is a scarcity of research that focuses on and differentiates the various facets of influencer marketing. As a result, the aim of this study is to gain knowledge on the effects of different types of influencers and sponsored posts on consumer influencer engagement.

Method: An online experiment through Qualtrics was conducted via a two ‘type of influencer (mega or micro)’ by two ‘type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement)’ between-subjects factorial design (after a pre-test). The experiment was completed by 199 adult participants utilizing convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Data was obtained from participants between the ages of 18 and 75 who live in the Netherlands, speak Dutch, and use social media.

Results: To measure consumer influencer engagement, a 10-item consumer brand engagement scale was used. According to the findings, a micro influencer has a greater effect on the consumer influencer engagement than a mega influencer. But there were no significant findings indicating that the type of sponsored post had an effect on consumer influencer engagement, nor did the interaction effect. Possibly due to malfunctioning manipulations. A parasocial relationship scale, a credibility scale and an authenticity scale were used to measure the variables parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity. But there were no (mediating) effects discovered for these variables.

Conclusion: The importance of micro influencers is the key takeaway from this research. Micro influencers can be used by brands to create relationships with a specific group of consumers to create engagement. There have been no additional findings, but this does not rule out the possibility of engagement being related to the type of content. Additional research is needed to better understand engagement and involvement. Research on a larger scale with real influencers can be insightful because of authentic relationships. And it can also be very interesting see what the effects of consumer influencer engagement are on the sales of products or services of promoted brands.

Keywords: *Influencer marketing, micro influencer, consumer influencer engagement, credibility, authenticity, parasocial interaction, Instagram, sponsored posts, social media, advertising.*

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1. Introduction

Businesses are expected to spend approximately €13 billion on influencer marketing in 2022, according to Business Insider Intelligence (2020). Every social media platform draws influencers to varying degrees, but currently Instagram remains the gold standard for influencer marketing. Almost four out of every five companies utilize this platform for influencer campaigns (Business Insider Intelligence, 2020). Companies anticipate that by introducing their target markets to persons of interest, consumers will be more willing to try out a brand's product or service. Through sponsored content, people represent brands on personal social media accounts (Glucksman, 2017).

An influencer, according to Pixlee (2021), is a social media user who has established credibility in a specific field, has access to a large audience and can persuade others because of their credibility and reach. Most people envision a group of the most well-known social media users with millions of followers when they think of influencers (Glucksman, 2017). The overall number of followers of an influencer appears to be more essential than anything else at first sight for companies that search for influencers that can promote their brand. And while the numbers are attractive, the most essential aspect in an influencer's commercial viability is engagement (Wissman, 2018).

The concept of engagement can be defined as “the fact of being involved with something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022c), or within influencer marketing “being involved with someone”. Consumer involvement is a state of mind that encourages customers to identify with product offerings, as well as their consumption patterns and behaviour. It evokes a sense of personal importance or relevance in a person to the product offering, leading to a desire to gather and assess information for current and future decision-making and usage. Consumers who are more involved are more likely to seek out, pay attention to, and consider product information before making a purchase (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006). There are various metrics on social media to measure engagement, an influencer's engagement rate for instance reveals how loyal their followers are, as well as whether their following isn't bolstered by bots and fraud accounts. It also shows the trust of followers. The higher the level of engagement, such as views, likes, comments, and shares, the greater the followers' trust and the least bots and fraud accounts (Newberry, 2021).

In this study, the engagement of followers with influencers is examined using the variable consumer brand engagement. However, this variable is used to assess the engagement with the influencer instead of with the brand and is therefore referred to in this study as consumer influencer engagement. In comparison to traditional definitions such as involvement, the consumer influencer engagement concept has been proposed to describe the nature of consumers' particular interactive influencer relationships more thoroughly (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Based on the three dimensions of Hollebeek et al. (2014), consumer influencer engagement can occur simultaneously on the dimensions: cognitive processing, affection, and activation.

The extent to which this consumer influencer engagement occurs can depend on the type of influencer. Influencers are often classified into different categories based on their number of followers. This is how the most commonly used categories; mega influencer (more than a million followers), macro influencer (100,000 to 1 million followers) and micro influencer (1,000 to 100,000 followers) were created (Ismail, 2018). However, as previously indicated, the number of followers is not the most important aspect of an influencer. As a result, the disparities between mega, macro, and micro are defined in this study not only in terms of the number of followers but also in terms of expertise, type of followers, underlying motives, depth, and width of the profile.

An influencer's type of sponsored content can also have an effect on the consumer influencer engagement of followers. The present study distinguishes between two types of sponsored posts from influencers: high-involvement sponsored posts and low-involvement sponsored posts, based on the work of Lee and Theokary (2021) and the elaboration likelihood model of Petty and Cacioppo (1986). High-involvement sponsored post are derived from the central route (strong arguments, personalized, profound) and low-involvement sponsored posts are derived from the peripheral route (cues, broad, superficial) of the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Nevertheless, in addition to these two key elements, there are other factors that can impact the level of consumer influencer engagement. Credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction all play a notable role in this. A high credibility of an influencer can be interpreted as being genuine with their followers (resulting in truthful relationships) and a high authenticity of an influencer can be interpreted as being genuine to oneself (resulting in truthful endorsements) (Audrezet et al., 2020).

The perceived parasocial interaction can be interpreted as the degree to which a follower experiences a relationship with an influencer (Horton & Wohl, 1956), which enhances branding and results in more emotional loyalty to the influencer and interaction with the advertised goods (Ki et al., 2020).

The combination of the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post is expected to be important to increase the consumer influencer engagement. Recent studies have demonstrated that the congruence of influencers' content and their areas of interest seem to have a significant impact on follower activity. Kim and Kim (2021) revealed that content that corresponds to an influencer's main interests leads to a more favorable evaluation of endorsed companies. When the brands they are promoting are matched with their own images, influencers draw more exposure to the sponsored post they created (McCormick, 2016). Companies should look for true matches between their brand, their content, and the endorsing influencer (Pöyry et al., 2019). The importance of the 'match-up hypothesis' (match between an influencer and the sponsored post/brand) is widely recognized (Choi & Rifon, 2012). But although the importance of the match is well understood, the differences between types of influencers and types of sponsored posts are rarely utilized in academic literature.

The following topic is examined by the research question:

“To what extent does the combination of a type of influencer (mega or micro) and a type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) affect consumer influencer engagement, and what is the role of credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction?”

In order to answer this research question, a (quantitative) experiment is conducted. In this study the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post are manipulated to see which match gives the optimal result and to evaluate what the effect is of the factors credibility, authenticity and parasocial interaction. This features a 2 '(type of influencer: mega or micro)' x 2 '(type of sponsored post: high-involvement or low-involvement)' between subjects' factorial design. The following part of this paper provides a more in-depth overview and examination of important literature that constitute the basis for the hypotheses. After this, the methodology section will outline how the study was carried out, and subsequently, the study's findings will be presented and discussed.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a more comprehensive overview and examination of important literature that constitute the basis for the hypotheses. First, the study's dependent variable, consumer influencer engagement, is discussed. Second, under the heading social media influencer, the first independent variable type of influencer is discussed. Third, under the heading involvement with sponsored content, the second independent variable type of sponsored post is discussed. Then under the heading influencer and sponsored content compatibility, the predicted interaction effect of the independent variables is addressed. Subsequently, under the headings of credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction, the mediating variables are addressed. Eventually, the research model of this study is explained and visualized.

2.1 Consumer Influencer Engagement

The degree of commitment between an online audience and the content of an influencer is often measured by engagement. As previously described, the concept of engagement can be defined as “the fact of being involved with something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022c), or within influencer marketing “being involved with someone”. In its substitute, involvement can be defined as “the act or process of taking part in something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022d). In the introduction, the concept of consumer involvement was briefly described, consumers who are more involved are more likely to seek out, pay attention to, and consider product information before making a purchase (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006). And in influencer marketing, a high level of engagement indicates that the influencer is actively involved with their audience, and their audience with them. It suggests that the influencer's followers trust the influencer and are interested in their posts and the brands they represent (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). In practice, the number of interactions and responses on a regular post is frequently used to indicate engagement. This includes likes, comments, reposts, and shares, among other things. If followers do not interact with the influencers, engagement diminishes (Jutrzenka, 2021).

Despite the growing use of social media to engage consumers, research on consumer brand engagement, particularly through the use of influencers, is still insufficient. Because of its potential

effect on consumer behaviour, consumer brand engagement via social media has aroused the interest of both practitioners and academics in recent years (Delbaere et al., 2020). Consumer brand engagement can be defined as “a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions” (Brodie et al., 2011, Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). However, in this study the variable is used to assess the engagement with the influencer instead of with the brand and is therefore referred to as *consumer influencer engagement*. Influencers are their own personal brand, and with their personal brand they demonstrate their unique abilities, expertise, and personality in a real and relevant method (Bates, 2020).

Hollebeek et al. (2014) identified three dimensions that correspond to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of engagement. *Cognitive processing* (the cognitive consumer influencer engagement dimension) is defined as “a consumer's level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). *Affection* (the emotional consumer influencer engagement dimension) is defined as “a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). Hollebeek et al. chose the term “affection” over the more neutral term “affect” because of the positively valued characteristic underpinning consumer influencer engagement. *Activation* (the behavioral consumer influencer engagement dimension) is defined as “a consumer's level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). These three dimensions are used in this study to measure the dependent variable consumer influencer engagement. Consumer influencer engagement can occur on multiple dimensions simultaneously.

2.2 Social Media Influencers

Influencers have a notable number of followers on social media, and companies pay them to promote products to targeted followers in exchange for free products, vacations, and/or a monetary reward per promotional post (Landsverk, 2014). Influencer marketing is essentially a form of virtual word-of-mouth. People are significantly more likely to respond positively to a message from a trusted friend or personality than they are to a sponsored post from a company (Whitler, 2014).

Influencers are frequently divided into groups based on the number of followers they have. The three main types of influencers: mega influencers (over a million followers), macro influencers (100,000 to 1 million followers), and micro influencers (1,000 to 100,000 followers) were developed in this way (Ismail, 2018). However, in reality, the disparities between these three categories are established by more than just the number of followers, their distinctions are more complex (Christodoulaki, 2018). In this study, the disparities between mega, macro, and micro influencers are defined not only in terms of followers, but also in terms of expertise, type of followers, underlying motives, profile depth, and width.

Mega influencers are mostly celebrities with over a million followers, they almost always have a blue verified badge on social media platforms (Ismail, 2018). A verified badge indicates that Instagram has verified that the account is the real person, celebrity, or brand it represents. The verified badge is a technique used by Instagram to assist users locate the genuine accounts of celebrities and brands (Instagram, 2022). Mega influencers appeal to a wide spectrum of people with a variety of interests. Advertisers may reach many people through mega influencers, but it comes at a steep price. Individual interactions with followers are often more distant, with fewer encounters and more general and less intimate interactions. Mega influencers lack true converting influencer power since their followers are so diversified in terms of demographics (age, gender, race, location, profession) and psychographics (personality, values, attitudes, interests, lifestyles). Their main goal is to gain awareness for the brand (Ismail, 2018). Mega Influencers have on average a 2% to 5% engagement rate per post (Christodoulaki, 2018).

Macro influencers have a social media following of 100,000 to a million people. Macro influencers gained prominence mostly through the internet. If marketers want to target a certain group of customers, a macro influencer can be more effective. (Ismail, 2018). Macro Influencers have on average a 5% to 25% engagement rate per post (Christodoulaki, 2018).

Micro influencers are social media users with 1,000 to 100,000 followers, they often don't have a blue verified badge on their account. Micro influencers are industry experts that specialize in a certain subject. They are more powerful than traditional influencers in terms of their relationships, they interact more with their followers and use a more personal approach. The story they tell with a

post is often perfectly attuned to the perception and core values of the target group that follows them. Their goal is engagement with the target group and having a sincere connection. A micro influencer's following is relatively homogenous (Ismail, 2018). Micro Influencers have on average a 25% to 50% engagement rate per post (Christodoulaki, 2018).

The research of Delbaere et al. (2020) is one of the first to offer scientific evidence that influencers function as a route to consumer brand engagement through the three dimensions: cognitive processing, affection, and activation (as defined by Hollebeek et al., 2014). Influencers have an impact on every stage of the hierarchy of effects model, from awareness to purchase (Delbaere et al., 2020). The first aspect, cognitive processing, is shown when the influencer's content triggers customers' brand thoughts. When the influencer references a particular brand, the audiences think about (and post about) that brand. Consumers have highly favorable responses to the sponsored post of influencers and the brands they list, demonstrating the second aspect of brand interaction, affection. The large number of followers who post reviews about the content supports the third aspect of brand engagement, activation. Followers claim that the recommendations of influencers heavily influence their own brand choices, showing conviction and purchase (Delbaere et al., 2020). Ki et al. (2020) focused on influencers' attachment formation process, as well as the elements that impact and are influenced by it, to provide insight into the interaction between them and their followers. Inspiration, enjoyability, similarity, physical attractiveness, and authenticity (associated with influencer) are key elements that make followers feel connected to influencers. These elements influenced followers' perceptions of social influencers as human brands resulting in a strong loyalty.

In this study, it was decided to compare two extremes, so the types of influencers: *mega influencer* and *micro influencer* are included in the experiment. Due to the differences in engagement rates on posted posts (Christodoulaki, 2018), the relationship with followers (Ismail, 2018) and the similarities (Ki et al., 2020) between a micro influencer and their followers, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H1: The use of micro influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than the use of mega influencers.

2.3 Involvement with Sponsored Content

The sponsored posts of influencers vary a lot, the content of mega influencers is often more superficial than that of micro influencers. The reason for this can be that mega influencers focus more on their large reach and therefore want to appeal to many different types of people. Lee and Theokary's research (2021) links this to the elaboration likelihood model. The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (ELM) (Cacioppo & Petty, 1986) has shown to be a useful processing model that represents people's motives and capacities to process issue-relevant material.

Two unique pathways can be used by influencers to attract likes and persuade their audience to become followers: the central route and the peripheral route. Followers evaluate the influencer in a critical thought process on issue-relevant knowledge via the central route. The quality of an influencer's content is crucial to evaluate this. Followers who go through the peripheral route participate in a less cognitively challenging procedure and develop evaluations based on the message's remaining aspects (Lee & Theokary, 2021). Endorsements of famous people are traditionally seen as a peripheral cue in the ELM, but the research of Lee and Koo (2016) reveals that when an influencer provides an issue-relevant argument, and the expert image fits well with the endorsed product an influencer persuades consumers through the central route. Based on this theory, this research distinguishes between two types of sponsored posts: high-involvement sponsored posts and low-involvement sponsored posts.

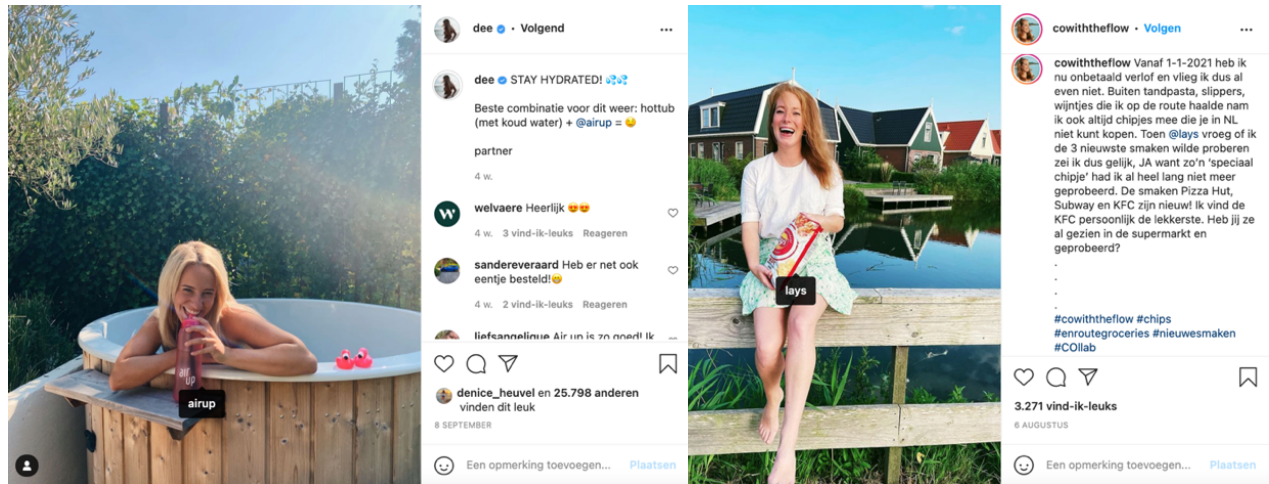
A high-involvement sponsored post is derived from the central route of the elaboration likelihood model. This type of sponsored post consists of (strong) arguments, is personalized to the influencer and the content of the post fits with what the followers are motivated and interested in.

A low-involvement sponsored post is derived from the peripheral route of the elaboration likelihood model. This sponsored post is based on peripheral cues that attract attention such as humor or irrelevant perks and the content is much more superficial and is aimed at a diverse audience.

Real examples of these types of content are shown in Figure 1 on the next page. An example of a low-involvement sponsored post is a post from influencer @dee, she is promoting a product she has no apparent connection to, the content is short and superficial. An example of a high-involvement sponsored post is a post from influencer @cowiththeflow, she promotes a product while explaining

her connection with the brand/product, she has a much longer and more profound post and by asking a question she tries to interact more with her followers.

Figure 1: Examples sponsored posts on Instagram



To gain insight into the connection between influencers and their followers, Ki et al. (2020) focused on the attachment formation process of influencers, as well as the factors that influence and are impacted by it. The primary aspects that make followers feel linked to influencers are informativeness, visual aesthetics (content is aesthetically pleasing, attractive and visually appealing), and expertise (associated with content).

A high-involvement sponsored post will make followers feel more connected than a low-involvement sponsored post due to increased degrees of informativeness, visual aesthetics, and expertise. Previous literature shows that the sponsored post of influencers has an effect on the consumer influencer engagement. And the type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) may contribute to enhance this consumer influencer engagement.

Therefore, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H2: *A high-involvement sponsored post from influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than a low-involvement sponsored post from influencers.*

2.4 Influencer and sponsored content compatibility

Choosing the right influencer is important for the success of an advertisement. Influencers draw more exposure and engagement for the advertising they star in if the brands they promote are linked with their own image. As a result, the degree of alignment between an influencer and the brand being promoted (commonly referred to as 'match') is likely to impact the success of the sponsored post (McCormick, 2016). However, alignment between the influencer and the brand should not be the only alignment that exists; alignment should also exist between the influencer's personality and the way they promote brands and create sponsored posts. Brands must decide which type of influencer and which type of sponsored post they want to use for their campaign. To maximize the outcomes of these influencer campaigns, the right choices must be made and there must be a right match between the content and the influencer.

Micro influencers have a deeper bond with their followers and their followers admire their personality. They are also an expert in a specific field and are not just followed because they are well known. Micro influencers imbue a sponsored post with their personality, and their followers will post about that content and try the sponsored brand themselves (Ismail, 2018). Because the followers have a high desire to investigate their arguments and believe in the expertise of the influencer (because of their involvement with the micro influencer) they often follow the central route of the ELM (Lee & Theokary, 2021). And therefore, a high-involvement sponsored post will work best. The use of a low-involvement sponsored post will not have a higher effectiveness since it affects the image of the influencer's expertise, and it makes the influencer unreliable.

The followers of a mega influencer are not as invested in the influencer as they are in a micro influencer. Micro influencers are typically followed by those who are genuinely interested in the personality of the influencer and what they do, but mega influencers are frequently followed just because they are well-known. Because the followers have a low desire to investigate their arguments and are more likely to be drawn to peripheral cues, they often follow the peripheral route of the ELM (Lee & Theokary, 2021). And therefore, a low-involvement sponsored post will work best. The use of a high-involvement sponsored post will not have a higher effectiveness since there is no deep connection with the followers and the influencer is not seen as an expert.

Based on the combinations, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H3: *High-involvement sponsored posts result in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a micro influencer, rather than posted by a mega influencer.*

H4: *Low-involvement sponsored posts result in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a mega influencer, rather than posted by a micro influencer.*

2.5 Credibility

One of the most essential aspects of influencer marketing is to use an influencer who is seen as credible by the audience. The term *credibility* refers to “the fact that someone can be believed or trusted” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022b). Important factors within credibility are attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of the influencer (La Ferle & Choi, 2005). According to Delbaere et al. (2021), successful influencers have a well-established trust relationship with their followers, and customers rely on their content for helpful information and recommendations. Their credibility may be seen as being true to their followers (Audrezet et al., 2020). Muda et al. (2014) emphasized the relevance of social influencer credibility, stating that the credibility of influencers has a positive impact on brand attitude. And other research indicates that credibility has a substantial impact on the efficacy of communication (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Pornpitakpan, 2004).

According to Singh and Banerjee, an honorable, exquisite personality, and a respectable image are factors of endorser credibility (2018). Human connections have an important role in credibility. Listening to a genuine person generates a greater sense of trustworthiness than listening to corporate communication products (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Although there is limited research on the difference between mega, macro, and micro influencers’ credibility, evidence suggests that micro influencers are perceived as more trustworthy. Consumers report considerably greater product knowledge when exposed to micro-influencers, and micro-influencers tend to be more successful in improving consumer outcomes (Kay et al., 2020). In comparison to mega influencers, micro influencers may be viewed as more credible (Coursaris et al., 2018).

2.6 Authenticity

Authenticity is critical for a successful relationship between a company and an influencer. In influencer marketing, authenticity involves representing one's genuine personality and beliefs while being true to oneself (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022a). Important factors within authenticity are sincerity, truthful endorsements, visibility, expertise, and uniqueness (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Influencers can gain personal benefits by cooperating with businesses because of their influence. But influencers' underlying goals and non-commercial orientation, on the other hand, are valued by followers (Audrezet et al., 2020).

As the usage of social media grows, it's never been more critical for influencers to operate with transparency, compassion, and integrity, and for companies to fully embrace this approach. Authenticity, and hence an influencer's perceived honesty and integrity, is an important aspect in the success of any affiliated promotion (Meyfarth, 2020). Positive customer sentiments are justified by the influencer and the content's apparent authenticity, and the perceived authenticity of an influencer has a high impact on the amount of buying intentions of their followers (Pöyry et al., 2019). Micro-influencer endorsements (as opposed to mega-influencer endorsements) result in stronger perceptions of authenticity for the endorsed company, which reflects on perceptions of influencer authenticity (Park et al., 2021). Mega influencers are more prone to consumer skepticism regarding the authenticity of their recommendations (Coursaris et al., 2018).

2.7 Parasocial Interaction

Sometimes, audiences create interpersonal connections with media personalities as if they know them personally. The term *parasocial interaction* defines this type of psychological relationship that an audience has with personalities in the mass media, particularly on television and online. Despite having no or limited encounters with these personalities, viewers tend to view them as friends. Parasocial interaction is defined as an illusionary experience in which media audiences interact with personalities (for example, talk show hosts, fictional characters, and social media influencers) as if they are in a reciprocal relationship with them. The perceived parasocial interaction

can be defined as the degree to which a spectator (follower) experiences a relationship with a performer (influencer) (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

According to Jin et al. (2019), creating emotional connections between companies and online customers requires inducing parasocial interaction and experiences of social presence with the online source. Audiences form emotional ties with social influencers, which makes them more relatable. According to Ki et al. (2020), social media platforms were originally created to encourage personal bonding rather than product or brand recommendations. As a result, social media followers' emotional attachment to social influencers sets a strong precedent that impacts their behavioral proclivity to accept the influencers' recommendations. Influencers' followers perceive them as human brands that meet their standards for being ideal, related, and competent, resulting in high levels of loyalty. This positive emotion is transferred to endorsements, which consequently motivates followers to consider purchasing the products/brands recommended by influencers.

In advertising and marketing, parasocial interaction is crucial because it improves branding results by creating emotional allegiance to ad characters, which boosts engagement with the sponsored post (Ki et al., 2020). Micro influencers can best fulfill unique roles by building deep emotional interpersonal interactions and they play a larger role in two-way communication within their networks, suggesting higher trust (Britt et al., 2020).

Based on the previous literature, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H5: *The use of micro influencers leads to more ^{a)} parasocial interaction, ^{b)} credibility, and ^{c)} authenticity, as compared to the use of mega influencers.*

H6: *The use of a high-involvement sponsored post leads to more ^{a)} parasocial interaction, ^{b)} credibility, and ^{c)} authenticity, as compared to the use of a low-involvement sponsored post.*

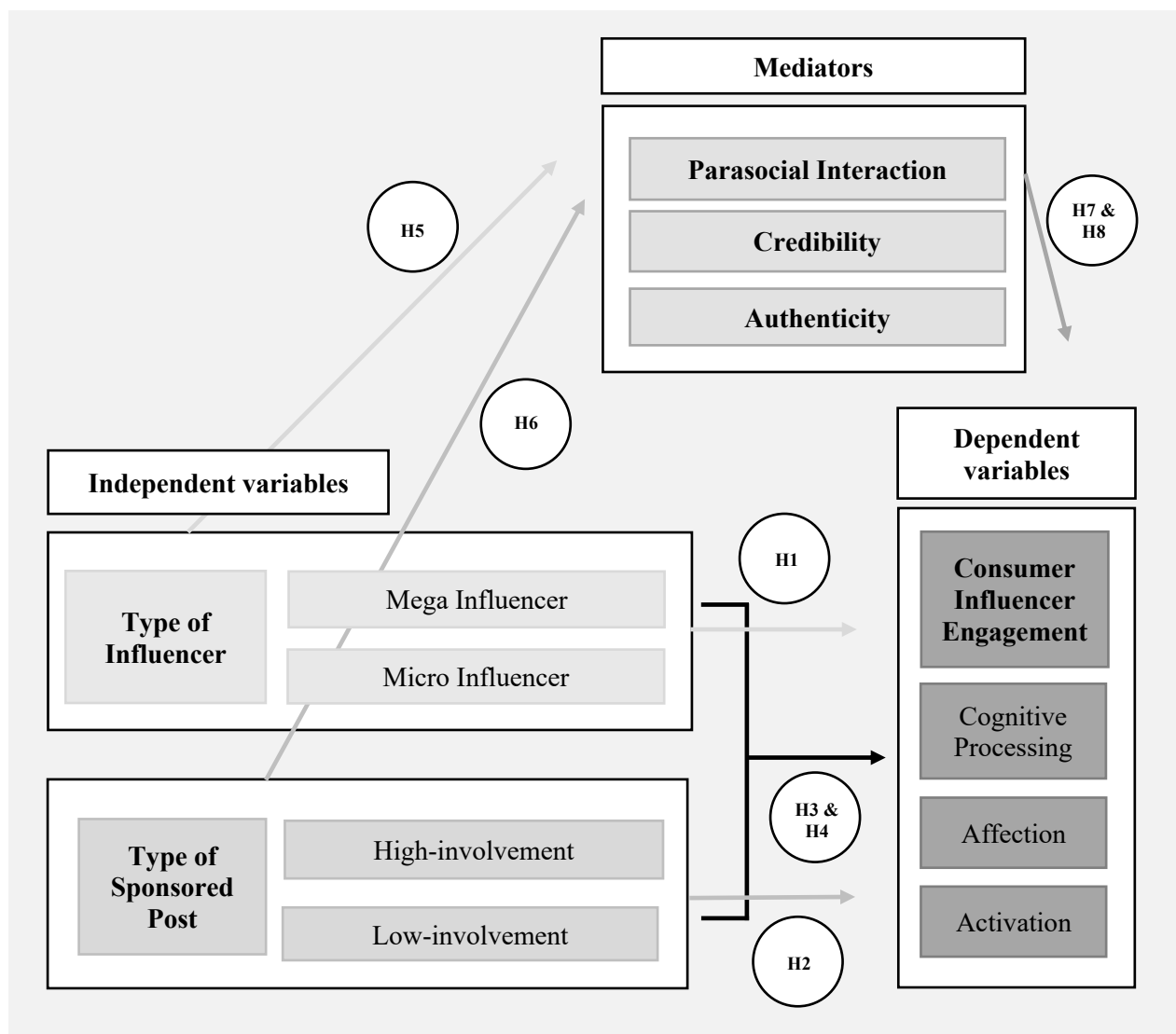
H7: *^{a)} Parasocial interaction, ^{b)} credibility, and ^{c)} authenticity mediate the effect of the type of influencer (mega or micro) on consumer influencer engagement.*

H8: *^{a)} Parasocial interaction, ^{b)} credibility and ^{c)} authenticity mediate the effect of the type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) on consumer influencer engagement.*

2.8 Research Model

A research framework has been developed based on the findings of prior studies and the literature. Figure 2 illustrates the research model and the relationship among the research variables. This research aims to investigate if the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post influence consumer influencer engagement. This study will measure the consumer influencer engagement with the following dependent variables: cognitive processing, affection, and activation. These dependent variables are related to the independent variables (type of influencer and type of sponsored post). It is also expected that the variables parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity have an influence when evaluating a certain type of influencer or type of sponsored post. These are the mediating variables in this study.

Figure 2: Research Model



3. Research Method

The aim of this study was to investigate if the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post influenced consumer influencer engagement. Specifically, this study examined to what extent a micro influencer and a high-involvement sponsored post, as opposed to a mega influencer and a low-involvement sponsored post influence the dimensions of consumer influencer engagement: cognitive processing, affection, and activation. In this section of the paper a more detailed description is given of the research design, stimulus materials, pretest, participants, procedure, and measures of this study.

3.1 Research Design

The focus of this research was to explore how the type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) promoted by a different type of influencer (mega or micro) affects consumer influencer engagement and what the mediating role of parasocial interaction, credibility and authenticity was within the combined effect of the two. A quantitative experimental study was conducted to answer this question. This research examined a 2 ‘type of influencer (mega or micro)’ x 2 ‘type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement)’ between subject’s factorial design. This research design is shown in Table 1. In the study each respondent was randomly exposed to one of the four experimental conditions. The participants in the first condition were exposed to a low-involvement sponsored Instagram post, posted by a mega influencer. The participants in the second condition were shown a high-involvement sponsored Instagram post, posted by the same mega influencer. The participants in the third condition were shown the same low-involvement sponsored Instagram post, posted by a micro influencer. Finally, those allocated to the fourth condition saw the same high-involvement sponsored Instagram post, posted by the same micro influencer.

Table 1: Conditions 2 x 2 design and number of respondents

	Mega influencer	<i>n</i>	Micro influencer	<i>n</i>	Total
Low-involvement sponsored post	Condition 1	48	Condition 3	47	95
High-involvement sponsored post	Condition 2	50	Condition 4	54	104
Total		98		101	199

3.2 Stimulus Design

A micro and mega influencer profile and a high-involvement sponsored post and a low-involvement sponsored post were required stimuli for the final experiment. During the design process, it was decided to vary the type of influencer both textually and visually (accompanying text, profile of the influencer and posted pictures) and the type of sponsored post only textually (caption with the post). To keep the modifications to a minimum and avoid any unwanted discrepancies. Because the majority of research on social influencers is focused on Instagram influencers, it was decided to use the design of the social media platform Instagram for this experiment.

To perform controlled manipulations, the same individual was used for both the micro and mega influencer profiles. The presented influencer in the pictures is real, but a different username was displayed, and the real individual does not normally post in English or Dutch, therefore it was assumed that participants would not identify the individual. The manipulation of the micro and mega influencers entails several separate manipulations occurring at the same time. A *mega influencer* has a blue verified badge, many posts, more than a million followers, an accompanying text focused on fame and various topics, an Instagram bio that shows diverse interests and highlights and posts that also shows diverse interests. A *micro influencer* does not have a blue verified badge, has fewer posts, 1,000 to 100,000 followers, an accompanying text focused on expertise and a specific topic, an Instagram bio that shows expertise and highlights and posts that also show expertise.

A high-involvement sponsored post and a low-involvement sponsored post were also required stimuli for the final experiment. The sponsored posts were created specifically for this study utilizing photoshop. The content of the Instagram caption is based on literature from the theoretical framework and Instagram served as a source of inspiration for producing accurate photos and text for stimuli posts. Stronger is a real brand that was featured in the sponsored posts. The manipulation of the high-involvement sponsored post and a low-involvement sponsored post is incorporated into the Instagram caption. The *high-involvement sponsored post* consists of strong arguments, is personalized to the influencer and this caption fits with what the followers are motivated and interested in. The *low-involvement sponsored post* has weaker arguments and is based on peripheral cues that attract attention (such as colors), the caption is much more superficial and is aimed at a diverse audience.

3.3 Pre-test

A pretest was conducted to ensure the manipulations of the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post in the main study. The pretest and main study were performed in Dutch; therefore, the materials were also in Dutch. The goal of this pre-test was to examine which profiles respondents' thought were micro and mega influencers, as well as which types of sponsored posts they thought were most high-involvement and low-involvement. In the pre-test participants had to respond to statements that indicated which individual should be used, which Instagram profiles should be used for the micro and mega influencer and which posts should be used for the high-involvement and low-involvement sponsored Instagram posts. The individuals, profiles, and posts from which the pretest candidates could respond to were deduced through extensive research. For the influencers, it was investigated how to adequately represent a wide interest versus expertise, and for the posts, it was thoroughly examined what strong (on topic) and weak (non-relevant) arguments were.

An online questionnaire designed in Qualtrics was used to perform the pre-test. Participants ($n=27$) of the pre-test rated the four individuals, the three mega and three micro influencer profiles and the two high-involvement and two low-involvement sponsored posts displayed in Appendix I. Participants were enlisted by requesting acquaintances to complete the survey. The participants were between 18 and 28 years old ($M_{age} = 22.59$, $SD = 2.17$), there were 5 males (18.5%) and 22 females (81.5%) among them. The participants were given definitions of the types of influencers and the types of sponsored posts and then had to rate the stimuli based on several statements. The statements to measure this were based on the definitions formed in the theoretical framework. The materials were also tested on their realism, credibility, and attractiveness. The definitions and statements can be found in the questionnaire of the pre-test in Appendix II. The results per element of the study are shown in Table 2, based on these outcomes the final stimuli for the main study were selected.

Table 2: Pre-test results

Individual ^{a)}	Profile mega influencer ^{a)}	Profile micro influencer ^{a)}	High-involvement sponsored post ^{a)}	Low-involvement sponsored post ^{a)}
$Mo = 4.00$ $SD = 0.69$	$Mo = 1.00$ $SD = 0.33$	$Mo = 2.00$ $SD = 0.30$	$Mo = 2.00$ $SD = 0.36$	$Mo = 1.00$ $SD = 0.17$

^{a)} Mode + Standard Deviation of the mean of the combined statements

The data of the pre-test were analysed. Because the participants in the pretest chose an individual, profile or post for the various statements, it was more relevant to look at how often the individual/profile/post was chosen instead of looking at the mean scores. Therefore, for the results it was chosen to look at the mode, shown in Table 2 (the standard deviation indicates the distribution).

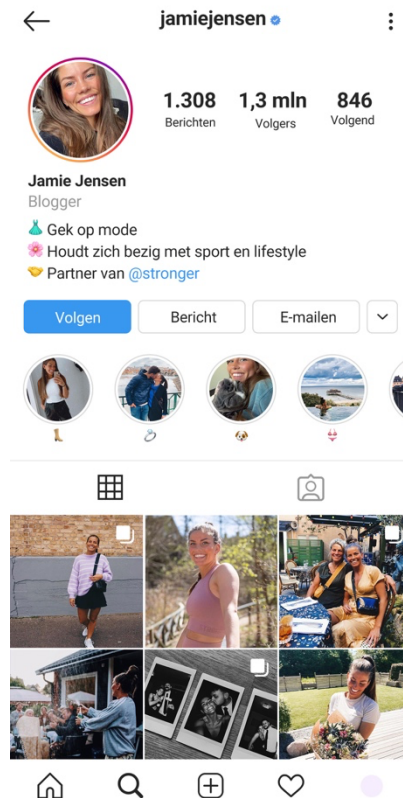
The results of the pre-test showed that the fourth individual got chosen more frequently. Participants felt most inspired by this individual, she gave them the most pleasant feeling, radiated the most authenticity and seemed the most realistic, credible, and attractive. For the mega influencer profile, also one profile stood out from the other profiles, profile 1 got chosen more frequently. This profile was also considered to be the most realistic, credible, and attractive. In addition, a majority of 81.5% of the participants indicated that they thought that profile 1 best suited a mega influencer. Participants indicated that this profile appealed to them the most and was the broadest of the three. For the micro influencer profile, one profile performed a little better than the others, profile 2 got chosen more frequently. Profile 2 was also considered to be the most realistic, credible, and attractive. In addition, a majority of 44.4% of the participants indicated that they thought that profile 2 best suited a micro influencer. Participants indicated that this profile appears to them to be the most sympathetic, friendliest and most motivating of the three. For the high-involvement sponsored post, one post stood out from the other post, post 2 got chosen more frequently. Post 2 was also considered to be the most realistic, credible, and attractive. A minor remark was that this post did not rank very high in having a personal touch, thus this was added in the main study. For the low-involvement sponsored post the participants were more divided, post 1 was chosen slightly more often. Post 1 was also considered to be the most realistic, credible, and attractive.

3.4 Condition Stimuli

Based on the findings from the pretest, four conditions were made and used in the main study. These stimuli are shown in Figures 3 to 6. The four conditions for the main study make four different combinations of posts and profiles, (1) a low-involvement sponsored post from a mega influencer, (2) a high-involvement sponsored post from a mega influencer, (3) a low-involvement sponsored post from a micro influencer, and lastly, (4) a high-involvement sponsored post from a micro influencer.

Figure 3: Condition 1 (mega influencer and low-involvement sponsored post)**Accompanying text:**

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste fashion influencers van dit moment. Door alle verschillende stijlen die ze laat zien is ze een inspiratie voor bijna iedereen. Daarnaast neemt ze je mee in haar leven en worden haar vrienden, familie, huisdieren en vriend overal bij betrokken.

**Figure 4:** Condition 2 (mega influencer and high-involvement sponsored post)**Accompanying text:**

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste fashion influencers van dit moment. Door alle verschillende stijlen die ze laat zien is ze een inspiratie voor bijna iedereen. Daarnaast neemt ze je mee in haar leven en worden haar vrienden, familie, huisdieren en vriend overal bij betrokken.

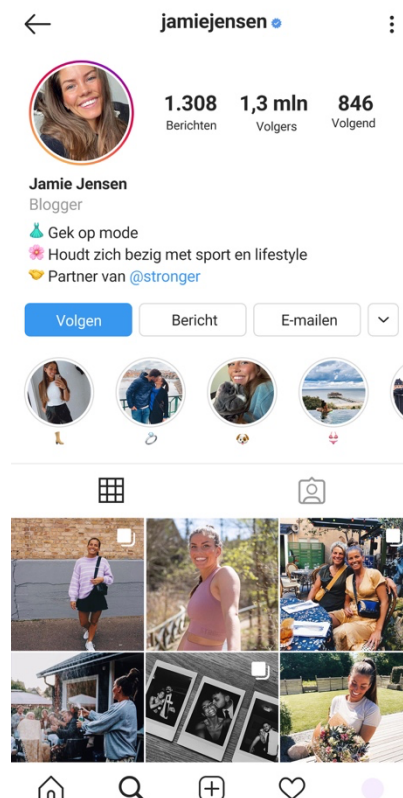
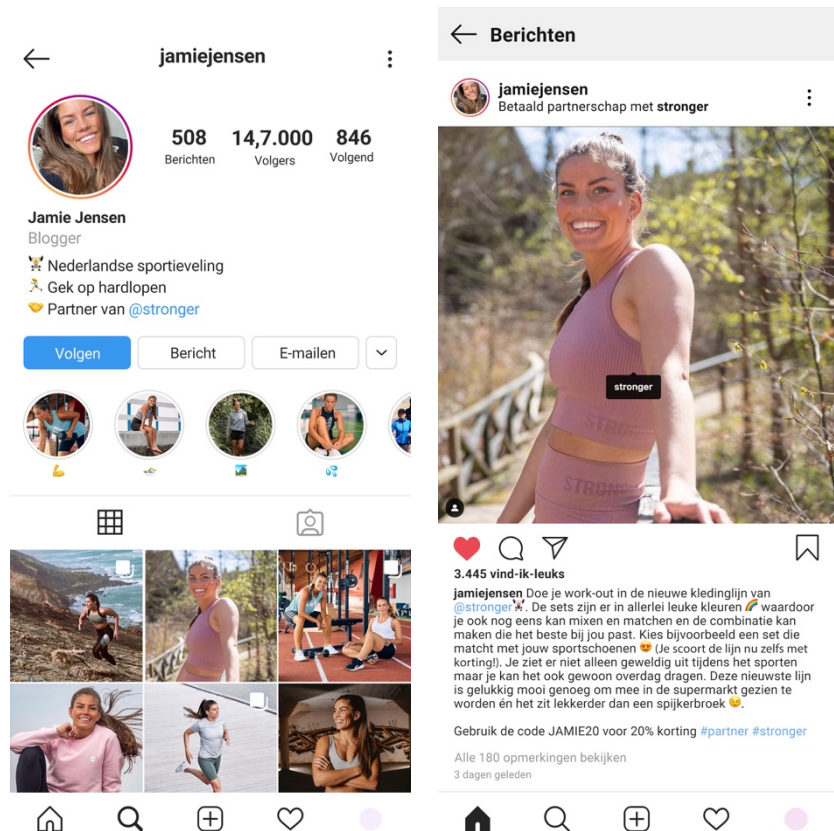
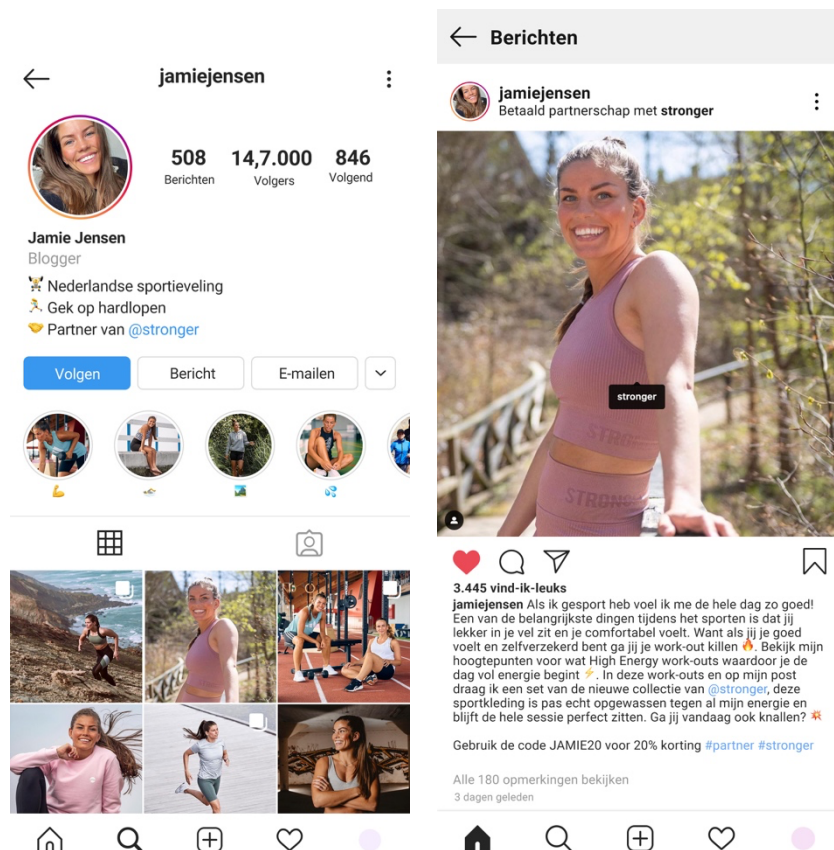


Figure 5: Condition 3 (micro influencer and low-involvement sponsored post)**Accompanying text:**

Deze influencer is een super fanatieke sportieveling, en met haar enthousiasme motiveert ze haar volgers om ook te sporten. Als je op haar profiel kijkt krijg je spontaan zin om naar buiten te gaan en actief bezig te zijn. Ze deelt allerlei handige tips hoe het sporten nog leuker wordt.

**Figure 6:** Condition 4 (micro influencer and high-involvement sponsored post)**Accompanying text:**

Deze influencer is een super fanatieke sportieveling, en met haar enthousiasme motiveert ze haar volgers om ook te sporten. Als je op haar profiel kijkt krijg je spontaan zin om naar buiten te gaan en actief bezig te zijn. Ze deelt allerlei handige tips hoe het sporten nog leuker wordt.



3.5 Participants

This study's target population consists of Dutch social media users over the age of 18. A sample of 298 participants were recruited for the primary study via convenience and snowball sampling, as well as via the BMS faculty's Test Subject Pool system SONA. Participants were gathered using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. From the 298 responses, 99 responses had to be removed from the dataset because of the filter questions ($n = 3$) and the unfinished questionnaires ($n = 96$). As a result, in this study, the final dataset contains 199 valid responses. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in this experiment. There were no rewards or risks associated with taking part in this study, and all participants participated voluntarily. The participants were between 18 and 75 years old ($M_{age} = 31.29$, $SD = 13.18$). Table 3 summarizes the gender and age distributions per condition.

The use of social media by the participants was evaluated. The responses of participants ($n = 199$) to the question "How often do you use social media?" were analyzed utilizing frequency analysis. The majority of participants (80.9%) indicated that they use social media often (several times per day), and 18.6% indicated that they use it on a regular basis (every day). Of the participants, 83.9% use the Instagram platform and 62.3% follow influencers on social media. There were no significant differences between the conditions on demographic variables and social media usage.

Table 3: Distribution of sample characteristics

Condition	Age ^a	Male ^b	Female ^b	Total
Condition 1 (Mega influencer X Low-involvement sponsored post)	$M = 32.40$ $SD = 13.33$	12 (21.4%)	36 (25.2%)	48 (24.1%)
Condition 2 (Mega influencer X High-involvement sponsored post)	$M = 31.58$ $SD = 14.02$	18 (32.1%)	32 (22.4%)	50 (25.1%)
Condition 3 (Micro influencer X Low-involvement sponsored post)	$M = 30.15$ $SD = 11.72$	14 (25.0%)	33 (23.1%)	47 (23.6%)
Condition 4 (Micro influencer X High-involvement sponsored post)	$M = 31.04$ $SD = 13.70$	12 (21.4%)	42 (29.4%)	54 (27.1%)
Total	$M = 31.29$ $SD = 13.18$	56 (100.0%)	143 (100.0%)	199 (100.0%)

^a Mean + Standard Deviation of self-reported age

^b Division Male/Female in numbers and percentages

3.6 Procedure

The experiment was carried out in an online context, therefore a Qualtrics questionnaire was created. Because the survey was done in the Netherlands, it was decided to formulate the questions in Dutch in order to increase the number of participants. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix III.

At the start of the questionnaire participants had to grant consent and answer the filter question before proceeding with the online questionnaire. The filter question was included in the questionnaire to check whether the participants used social media. The first part of questionnaire included socio-demographic questions including gender and age, as well as a few questions about social media usage and following influencers.

After the sociodemographic questions a page was shown with a short explanation of the experiment. This page stated that the participant would see an Instagram profile and an Instagram post on the next page and that they had to view and read these carefully because they had to answer the coming statements based on that profile and post. It also instructed them to imagine that they were a follower who has an interest in sports. This is because the expertise component in this research is shown in sportsmanship and the sponsored post is for a sportswear brand.

Then on the next page, the participants were randomly subjected to one of the four conditions that showed a type of influencer (micro or mega) and a type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement). As soon as they finished looking at the profile and post, the participants were invited to fill in the statements on the dimensions of consumer influencer engagement: cognitive processing, affection, and activation. The participants subsequently answered the statements on the mediating variables credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction. Following that, the participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

3.7 Measurements

The dependent variable: consumer influencer engagement. This research measures the dependent variable consumer influencer engagement. This variable is based on the constructs cognitive processing, affection, and activation (Hollebeek et al., 2014). The scale to measure this variable is based on the 10-item consumer brand engagement scale from Hollebeek et al. (2014).

In this research the consumer brand engagement scale is amended to measure the engagement with the influencer instead of with the brand and therefore the variable is referred to as consumer influencer engagement. The items that were used for this variable are shown in Table 4. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The reliability of the dependent variables (Cronbach's alpha) is also shown in Table 4. The reliability analysis revealed that the internal consistency of all items in the scale is high ($\alpha = .90$).

Table 4: Overview of items and reliabilities of scales used for dependent variables

Scale	Items	α
Consumer influencer engagement (10)		.90
Cognitive processing (3)	(1) Seeing this influencer gets me to think about her	.85
	(2) I think about this influencer a lot when I see her post	
	(3) Seeing this influencer stimulates my interest to learn more about her	
Affection (4)	(1) I feel very positive when I see this influencer	.86
	(2) Seeing this influencer makes me happy	
	(3) I feel good when I see this influencer	
	(4) I would be proud to follow this influencer	
Activation (3)	(1) I would spend a lot of time looking at this influencer, compared to other influencers	.84
	(2) Whenever I need tips from an influencer about sport, I would use this influencer often	
	(3) This influencer would be one of the influencers I would follow when I use Instagram.	

Cognitive processing: The dependent variable cognitive processing was used to measure how much participants are cognitively processing the materials. Cognitive processing is defined as “a consumer's level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). This variable is measured using three items. The items have a high internal consistency, according to the reliability analysis ($\alpha = .85$).

Affection: The dependent variable affection was used to measure the perceived affection of participants on the materials. Affection is defined as “a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). This variable is measured using four items. The reliability of the items of affection was high ($\alpha = .86$).

Activation: The dependent variable activation was used to measure the perceived activation of participants on the materials. Activation is defined as “a consumer's level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). This variable is measured using three items. The reliability of the items of activation was high ($\alpha = .84$).

The mediating variables: parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity. The constructs of the mediating variables parasocial interaction, credibility and authenticity were also measured in this research. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The items that were used for these variables and the reliabilities of the mediating variables (Cronbach's alpha) are shown in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Table 5: Overview of items and reliabilities of scales used for the variable parasocial interaction

Scale	Items	α
Parasocial interaction (9)		.90
	(1) The influencer makes me feel comfortable as if I am with a friend	
	(2) I see this influencer as a natural and down-to-earth person.	
	(3) This influencer seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know.	
	(4) I would look forward to seeing this influencer on social media.	
	(5) If this influencer appeared on another account, I would watch that account	
	(6) I would miss seeing this influencer when she is not active.	
	(7) I would like to meet this influencer in person	
	(8) I feel sorry for this influencer when she makes a mistake.	
	(9) I would often read, comment on, or share posts of this influencer	

Parasocial interaction: The mediating variable parasocial interaction was used to measure the perceived parasocial interaction of the participants on the materials. This variable is measured using nine items. This scale is based on the parasocial relationship scale from Gong and Li (2018). The items have a high internal consistency, according to the reliability analysis ($\alpha = .90$).

Table 6: Overview of items and reliabilities of scales used for the variable credibility

Scale	Items	α
Credibility (9)		.86
Attractiveness (3)	(1) I find this influencer attractive	
	(2) I think this influencer is classy	
	(3) I think this influencer is sexy	
Trustworthiness (3)	(4) I find this influencer trustworthy	
	(5) I find this influencer sincere	
	(6) I find this influencer reliable	
Expertise (3)	(7) I think this influencer is an expert	
	(8) I think this influencer is experienced	
	(9) I think this influencer is skilled	

Credibility: The mediating variable credibility was used to measure the perceived credibility of the participants on the materials. This variable is measured using nine items. This scale is based on the measurement model for credibility scale from La Ferle and Choi (2005). The items in the credibility scale have a high internal consistency, according to the reliability analysis ($\alpha = .86$).

Table 7: Overview of items and reliabilities of scales used for the variable authenticity

Scale	Items	α
Authenticity (18)		.90
Sincerity (4)	(1) I think this influencer is kind and good hearted (2) I think this influencer is sincere (3) I think this influencer is very genuine (4) I think this influencer is down-to-earth	
Truthful	(5) Although this influencer posts ads, she gives meaningful insights into the product	
Endorsements (4)	(6) This influencer gives very honest reviews on brands (7) The product and brand that this influencer endorses fits her personality well (8) This influencer is promoting a product she would actually use	
Visibility (4)	(9) This influencer does not only post about the good things in her life but also about the hardships (10) This influencer talks about real-life issues going on in her life (11) This influencer talks about her flaws and is not ashamed to show them to followers (12) This influencer reveals a lot of her personal life to her followers	
Expertise (3)	(13) This influencer is skilled in her field (14) This influencer is very knowledgeable in her field (15) This influencer demonstrates a natural ability in her field	
Uniqueness (3)	(16) I think this influencer is unique (17) I think this influencer has distinctive characteristics (18) I think this influencer's content is original and not a copy of someone else's	

Authenticity: The mediating variable authenticity was used to measure the perceived authenticity of the participants on the materials. This variable is measured using eighteen items. This scale is based on the authenticity of social media influencers scale from Lee and Eastin (2021). The items in the authenticity scale have a high internal consistency, according to the reliability analysis ($\alpha = .90$).

For this study, all scales and statements are translated into Dutch because the questionnaire is conducted in Dutch. See Appendix IV for the Dutch translations of the scales.

4. Results

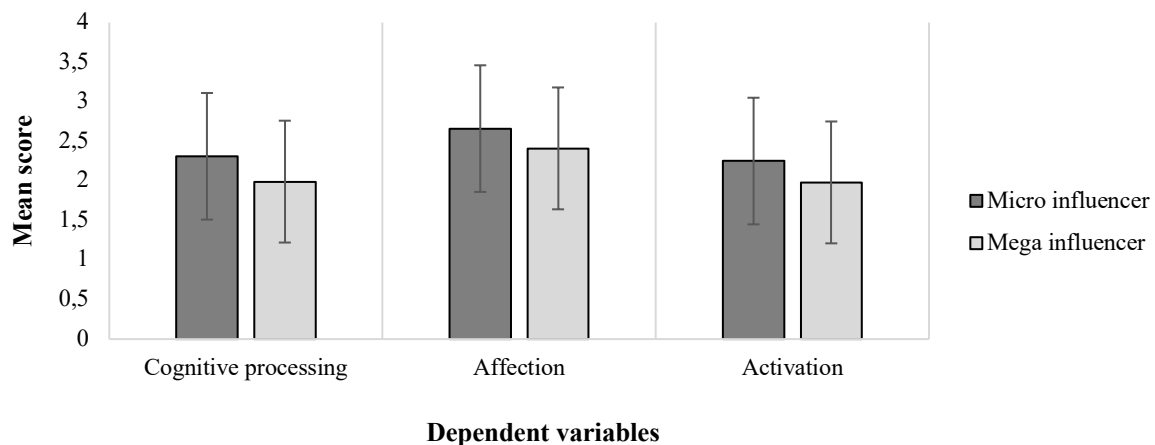
The findings of the research are presented in this section. A MANOVA was performed on all dependent variables to determine if the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post manipulations had an effect. In addition, the mediation effects of parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity were investigated. And finally, an overview of supported hypotheses is provided.

4.1 Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Dependent Variables

To analyse possible main and interaction effects on the independent variables, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with type of influencer and type of sponsored post as independent variables and cognitive processing, affection, and activation as dependent variables. The general effects between the independent and dependent variables were investigated using the Wilk's Lambda test.

Main effects of type of influencer on dependent variables: According to H1 it was expected that the use of micro influencers would result in higher consumer influencer engagement, than the use of mega influencers. Wilk's Lambda test revealed that there was a significant main effect of type of influencer ($\Lambda = .956$; $F(3,193) = 2.96$, $p = .033$) on the dependent variables. The test of between-subjects effects revealed the significant main effects of type of influencer on cognitive processing ($F(3,193) = 7.63$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .038$), affection ($F(3,193) = 6.35$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .032$), and activation ($F(3,193) = 5.13$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .026$). The main effects are visualized in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Main effect of type of influencer on cognitive processing, affection, and activation



As can be seen in the descriptive statistics of the dependent variables in Table 8, when participants were exposed to the micro influencer, the mean scores of the dependent variables cognitive processing, affection and activation were always higher than in the conditions where participants were exposed to the mega influencer. And therefore, hypothesis one is supported.

Main effects of type of sponsored post on dependent variables: According to H2 it was expected that the posting of a high-involvement sponsored post by influencers would result in higher consumer influencer engagement, than posting a low-involvement sponsored post. Wilk's Lambda's test revealed that there was no significant main effect found for type of sponsored post ($\Lambda = .989$; $F(3,193) = 0.71$, $p = .545$) on the dependent variables. Inevitably, as can be seen in the descriptive statistics of the dependent variables in Table 8, there is no regular pattern in the mean scores of the high-involvement sponsored posts and the low-involvement sponsored posts. And therefore, hypothesis two is not supported.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of the dependent variables

Type of sponsored post	Type of influencer	Mega influencer		Micro influencer	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Low-involvement sponsored post					
	Cognitive Processing ^{a)}	1.98	0.79	2.38	0.84
	Affection ^{a)}	2.52	0.73	2.65	0.72
	Activation ^{a)}	1.94	0.82	2.28	0.88
High-involvement sponsored post					
	Cognitive Processing ^{a)}	2.00	0.79	2.25	0.86
	Affection ^{a)}	2.28	0.69	2.66	0.73
	Activation ^{a)}	2.01	0.85	2.22	0.86

^{a)} 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree / 5=strongly agree)

Interaction effects of type of influencer and type of sponsored post on dependent variables: According to H3 it was expected that a high-involvement sponsored posts would result in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a micro influencer, rather than posted by a mega

influencer. And according to H4 it was expected that a low-involvement sponsored post would result in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a mega influencer, rather than posted by a micro influencer. Wilk's Lambda test revealed that there was no significant interaction effect found for type of influencer and type of sponsored post ($\lambda = .976$; $F(3,193) = 1.60$, $p = .190$) on the dependent variables. And therefore, hypotheses three and four are not supported.

4.2 Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Mediating Variables

To analyse the possible effects of the independent variables on the mediating variables, another multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post as independent variables and parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity as mediating variables. The general effects between the independent and combined mediating variables were investigated using the Wilk's Lambda test.

Main effects of type of influencer on mediating variables: According to H5 it was expected that the use of micro influencers would lead to more (a) parasocial interaction, (b) credibility, and (c) authenticity, as compared to the use of mega influencers. According to Wilk's Lambda test there is no significant effect of type of influencer ($\lambda = .968$; $F(3,192) = 2.07$, $p = .103$) on the mediating variables. As can be seen in the descriptive statistics of the mediating variables in Table 9, when participants were exposed to the micro influencer the mean scores were often a little higher than in the conditions where participants were exposed to the mega influencer. But these effects are not significant and therefore, hypothesis five is not supported.

Main effects of type of sponsored post on mediating variables: According to H6 it was expected that the use of a high-involvement sponsored post will lead to more (a) parasocial interaction, (b) credibility, and (c) authenticity, as compared to the use of a low-involvement sponsored post'. According to Wilk's Lambda test there is no significant effect of type of sponsored post ($\lambda = .978$; $F(3,192) = 1.44$, $p = .234$) on the mediating variables. As can be seen in the descriptive statistics of the mediating variables in Table 9, the results were in the opposite direction than hypothesized. When participants were exposed to the low-involvement sponsored post the mean scores were a little higher than in the conditions where participants were exposed to the high-

involvement sponsored post. These effects are not in line with the proposed hypothesis and therefore, hypothesis six is not supported.

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of the mediating variables

Type of sponsored post	Type of influencer	Mega influencer		Micro influencer	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Low-involvement sponsored post					
	Parasocial interaction ^{a)}	2.38	0.68	2.36	0.71
	Credibility ^{a)}	2.91	0.57	3.03	0.58
	Authenticity ^{a)}	2.90	0.44	2.95	0.50
High-involvement sponsored post					
	Parasocial Interaction ^{a)}	2.17	0.68	2.24	0.68
	Credibility ^{a)}	2.78	0.58	2.91	0.62
	Authenticity ^{a)}	2.82	0.48	2.75	0.50

^{a)} 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree / 5=strongly agree)

Interaction effects of type of influencer and type of sponsored post on mediating variables:

Wilk's Lambda test revealed that there was also no significant interaction effect found for type of influencer and type of sponsored post ($\Lambda = .981$; $F(3,192) = 1.26$, $p = .290$) on the dependent variables.

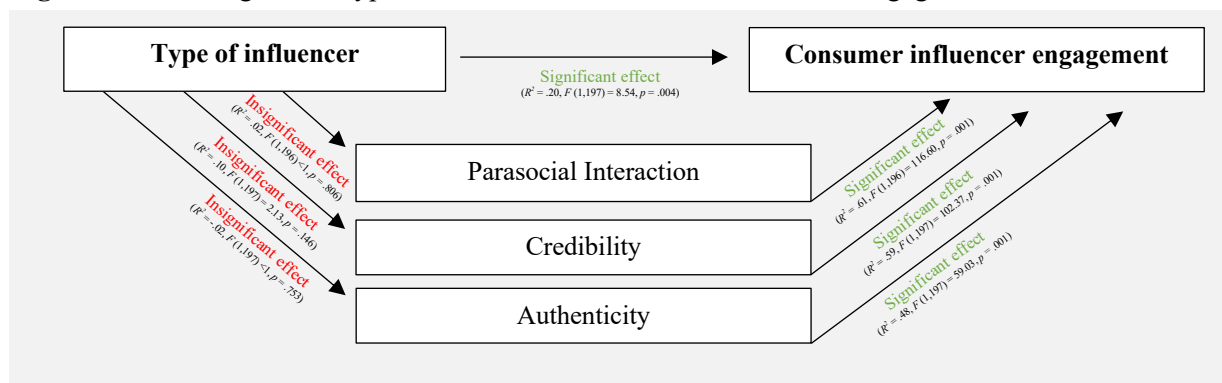
4.3 Mediation Analysis: Regression of the Mediating Variables

The mediator analysis investigates whether the relationship between the independent variables type of influencer and type of sponsored post and the combined dependent variable consumer influencer engagement is transferred by the mediators parasocial interaction, credibility, or authenticity. The mediation analysis from Baron and Kenny (1986) was used.

Mediating effects of parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity on type of influencer and consumer influencer engagement: According to H7 it was expected that ^(a) parasocial interaction, ^(b) credibility and ^(c) authenticity mediate the effect of type of influencer (mega or micro)

on consumer influencer engagement. The mediator analysis showed that the regression coefficient for type of influencer on consumer influencer engagement is significant ($R^2 = .20$, $F(1,197) = 8.54$, $p = .004$). Therefore, the existence of a mediator is possible. But there must also be a significant correlation between type of influencer and parasocial interaction, credibility, or authenticity if a mediator effect exists. The regression coefficient for type of influencer on parasocial interaction ($R^2 = .02$, $F(1,196) < 1$, $p = .806$), credibility ($R^2 = .10$, $F(1,197) = 2.13$, $p = .146$), and authenticity ($R^2 = .02$, $F(1,197) < 1$, $p = .753$) is not significant. So even though there are also significant correlations between parasocial interaction ($R^2 = .61$, $F(1,196) = 116.60$, $p = .001$), credibility ($R^2 = .59$, $F(1,197) = 102.37$, $p = .001$), and authenticity ($R^2 = .48$, $F(1,197) = 59.03$, $p = .001$) and consumer influencer engagement, hypothesis seven is not supported and there is no mediation (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Mediating effects type of influencer and consumer influencer engagement



Mediating effects of parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity on type of sponsored post and consumer influencer engagement: According to H8 it was expected that ^(a) parasocial interaction, ^(b) credibility and ^(c) authenticity mediate the effect of the type of sponsored post on consumer influencer engagement. The mediator analysis showed that the regression coefficient for type of sponsored post on consumer influencer engagement is not significant ($R^2 = .04$, $F(1,197) = 0.28$, $p = .598$). Therefore, the existence of a mediator is not possible and hypothesis eight is not supported. These mediator analyses confirmed that the variables parasocial interaction, credibility and authenticity do not mediate the relationship between the independent variables type of influencer and type of sponsored post and the combined dependent variable consumer influencer engagement. But there are significant correlations between the effect of parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity on consumer influencer engagement.

4.4 Overview of the Tested Hypotheses

For this research, eight hypotheses were formulated in the theoretical framework. The hypotheses can be supported or not supported based on the results of the MANOVA and mediation analysis. Table 10 summarizes the study's supported hypotheses.

Table 10: Overview of supported hypotheses

	Content	Results
H1:	The use of micro influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than the use of mega influencers.	Supported
H2:	A high-involvement sponsored post from influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than a low-involvement sponsored post from influencers.	Not supported
H3:	A high-involvement sponsored post results in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a micro influencer, rather than posted by a mega influencer.	Not supported
H4:	A low-involvement sponsored post results in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a mega influencer, rather than posted by a micro influencer.	Not supported
H5a:	The use of micro influencers leads to more parasocial interaction, as compared to the use of mega influencers.	Not supported
H5b:	The use of micro influencers leads to more credibility, as compared to the use of mega influencers.	Not supported
H5c:	The use of micro influencers leads to more authenticity, as compared to the use of mega influencers.	Not supported
H6a:	The use of a high-involvement sponsored post leads to more parasocial interaction, as compared to the use of a low-involvement sponsored post.	Not supported
H6b:	The use of a high-involvement sponsored post leads to more credibility, as compared to the use of a low-involvement sponsored post.	Not supported
H6c:	The use of a high-involvement sponsored post leads to more authenticity, as compared to the use of a low-involvement sponsored post.	Not supported
H7a:	Parasocial interaction mediates the effect of the type of influencer (mega or micro) on consumer influencer engagement.	Not supported
H7b:	Credibility mediates the effect of the type of influencer (mega or micro) on consumer influencer engagement.	Not supported
H7c:	Authenticity mediates the effect of the type of influencer (mega or micro) on consumer influencer engagement.	Not supported
H8a:	Parasocial interaction mediates the effect of the type of sponsored post on consumer influencer engagement.	Not supported
H8b:	Credibility mediates the effect of the type of sponsored post on consumer influencer engagement.	Not supported
H8c:	Authenticity mediates the effect of the type of sponsored post on consumer influencer engagement.	Not supported

5. Discussion

The main objective of this study was to determine the extent to which the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post influence consumer influencer engagement. An experiment was carried out to examine this. The type of influencer and the type of sponsored post were manipulated to determine whether there was an effect on the constructs of consumer influencer engagement: cognitive processing, affection, and activation. Furthermore, it was examined if the mediating variables parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity had an effect when evaluating a certain type of influencer or type of sponsored post. This section of the paper includes a general discussion of the findings, a discussion of the study's limitations, and suggestions for future research, as well as practical and theoretical implications and a conclusion.

5.1 General Discussion of the Results

The study's main goal is to answer the following central research question: *“To what extent does the combination of a type of influencer (mega or micro) and a type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) affect consumer influencer engagement, and what is the role of credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction?”* First, it was investigated whether the use of micro influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than the use of mega influencers. Second, it was investigated whether the posting of a high-involvement sponsored post by influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than posting a low-involvement sponsored post. Furthermore, the combinations between the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post were analyzed. And finally, the effects of parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity were explored.

The most important finding of this study is that the use of micro influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than the use of mega influencers. More specifically, the results showed that the use of micro influencers resulted in higher levels of cognitive processing, affection, and activation which is in line with the hypothesis. Moreover, it was expected that the posting of a high-involvement sponsored post by influencers results in higher consumer influencer engagement, than posting a low-involvement sponsored post. Because no significant differences were discovered between the conditions, the outcomes of this study contradict the stated hypothesis.

Then the combinations between the types of influencers and the types of sponsored posts were analyzed. It was expected that a high-involvement sponsored post would result in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a micro influencer, rather than posted by a mega influencer. And that a low-involvement sponsored post would result in higher consumer influencer engagement when posted by a mega influencer, rather than posted by a micro influencer. But the results revealed no significant effects and therefore these hypotheses were not accepted. The effects of parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity were also examined. The findings revealed that these variables have an effect on consumer influencer engagement. But the variables type of influencer and type of sponsored content have no effect on parasocial interaction, credibility, and authenticity. As a result, none of the hypotheses relating these variables were supported.

In conclusion, only the first hypothesis can be supported. When it comes to the study's main question, there's no evidence that a type of influencer (mega or micro) and a type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) have a substantial impact on consumer influencer engagement. And there is also no evidence that credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction perform a mediating role on the variables type of influencer and type of sponsored post.

One of the few significant and most important findings of this study is that micro influencers lead to higher consumer influencer engagement. This is in line with the previous literature used to formulate the hypothesis. For example, Ismail's (2018) research, which claims that micro influencers have greater power than traditional influencers in terms of relationships. And Marques et al. (2021) research found as well that posts from micro influencers (versus macro influencers) result in more clicks, comments, and likes, increasing consumer-brand engagement.

But why were there so few significant findings in this study? The type of sponsored post was based on the literature of Lee and Theokary (2021) and Cacioppo and Petty (1986) (that refer to the traditional elaboration likelihood model of persuasion). Influencers can use two main routes to attract likes and persuade their audience to become followers: the central route and the peripheral route. Followers assess the influencer in a critical thought process on issue-relevant information via the central route (or, in this case, via a high-involvement sponsored post). The quality of an influencer's content is critical in determining this. Followers who go through the peripheral route (or, in this case,

via a low-involvement sponsored post) participate in a less cognitively challenging procedure and create impressions based on the remaining components of the message (Lee & Theokary, 2021). According to Ki et al. (2020), the key causal characteristics in material that make followers feel connected to influencers are informativeness, visual aesthetics, and expertise. As a result, it was predicted that a high-involvement sponsored post would make followers feel more connected than a low-involvement sponsored post due to higher levels of informativeness and expertise. However, this was not the case. And even though the posts were well operationalized and pre-tested, the insignificant outcomes could possibly be explained by the fact that both types of sponsored posts are different but are both a route to consumer influencer engagement (just like the central and peripheral route). It was expected that both routes would lead to results such as followers or exposure, but that a high-involvement post would do much more with engagement. Because that type of content is much more in line with the process of forming involvement and engagement

The absence of an effect of type of sponsored post on consumer influencer engagement might be one of the reasons why the combinations with different types of influencers also did not provide the desired effects. A second reason might be that the match between an influencer and a product is based on multiple other variables rather than the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post. According to McCormick (2016), influencers get more exposure and engagement with their advertisements if the brands they promote are associated with their personal image. As a result, the degree of alignment (or match) between an influencer and the company being promoted is likely to have an impact on the sponsored post's success. But, of course, their personal image is more than just the type of influencer they are and the type of sponsored post they publish.

The type of approach utilized might be the reason for the insignificant effects of type of influencer and type of sponsored post on credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction. Despite the fact that this was considered in advance and thoroughly pretested, and the participants were given explicit instructions in advance, the results could be different than they would be in real life. The conditions were created since it was an experiment, and the respondents had no prior history with the influencers that were presented. The term credibility, for example, refers to the capacity to trust or believe someone (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022b). And influencers have a well-established trust

relationship with their followers, according to Delbaere et al. (2021), to rely on their content for helpful information and recommendations. In this experiment, however, that was not the case. Authenticity refers to expressing one's actual personality and beliefs while being true to oneself (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022a). Due to the respondents' limited exposure to the influencers, it could have been difficult for them to form an opinion. In the case of the variable parasocial interaction, the inadequately created relationship with the influencer presented might be the origin of the insignificant outcomes. The respondents' parasocial interactions, or interpersonal relationships with influencers as if they knew them personally (Horton & Wohl, 1956), are unlikely to have been formed during the brief time they were exposed to the influencer. The respondents were also supposed to be able to sympathize with the situation, however several responses indicated that this was difficult for them, and that certain statements were addressed based on prejudices against influencers or Instagram.

The content created by influencers, according to Wellman et al. (2020), raises ethical concerns in this emerging profession. The majority of this research assumes that influencers easily operate outside of an ethical framework and that certain influencers violate the boundaries of the law. Influencers should, according to their findings (while generating sponsored content) employ the concept of credibility as an ethical guideline. Two basic ideas underpin this authenticity ethic: being honest to themselves and the brand, as well as being true to their audience. Possible prejudices against influencers might derive from this idea, and with no prior relationship with the shown influencer participants in this study might have questioned the sponsored content.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

To begin, the limitations of the study design must be mentioned. The participants had no prior relationship with the presented influencer because the study was conducted in an experiment setting. Consequently, fictive influencers were chosen to prevent bias based on pre-existing attitudes about a real influencer. It can be very interesting to do research on existing influencers and their followers and then look at the effects of different types of sponsored posts from different types of influencers. When doing research in this manner, many prior attitudes must be considered, but it can also have a positive

effect because the relationships and engagement between the influencer and the followers are authentic. An experiment was chosen in this study to adequately restrict the modifications, but given the results, a study on real influencers might be very interesting.

A pre-test was carried out to develop appropriate stimulus material for this study. The materials were assessed on whether one was the most micro/mega influencer or high/low-involvement post during this pre-test. And it was not examined if the outcome was significant enough for people to notice. Because a lot of attention had been paid to developing distinctive posts and on how they should look like, this was expected to be sufficient. A manipulation check should have been incorporated to ensure that participants not only glanced at the profile and post but actually read the descriptions and carefully viewed and read the profile and the post supplied. Due to the extensive pretesting and development of the manipulations, it was expected that the posts were clear enough.

Furthermore, all condition groups were given identical photographs in the post. Given the alleged picture superiority effect, which asserts that people prefer to pay attention to pictures over words, it's reasonable to conclude that participants in this study were primarily interested in the post photographs and not the captions or profile descriptions (Stenberg, 2006). As a result, especially the type of sponsored post (which was only textually manipulated) became unimportant to the participant, and all condition groups exhibit comparable responses. Normally, this effect would not be that strong, but because the participants do not know the influencer, have no previous relationships with them and no intrinsic motivation to read the posts and engage with this influencer, this may be the case.

Moreover, because of the study's focus, respondents were only exposed to the stimulus materials once. Because sponsored social media content is frequently part of a larger social media campaign, consumers' opinions and behaviour are seldom shaped by a single encounter with an Instagram post or an influencer. As a result, an experiment in which participants are exposed to stimulus materials several times over a longer period of time would be more realistic. According to Zajonc (2001), the beneficial effects of frequent exposure to a stimulus item occur only after repeated exposure. The exposure, relationships, and connections between influencers and followers are considerably more genuine in future research with actual influencers and followers, and the results might be more meaningful. Prior relationships might be the key to research with significant results.

5.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the gap in literature on types of influencers. Companies are increasingly turning to micro influencers, and it is critical to conduct scientific research into why this is and what the advantages are. The gradual movement toward the use of micro influencers is slowly starting to be observed in the scientific field, with more and more being presented about the benefits of micro-influencers, such as in the Kay et al. (2020) study. Therefore, the question arises, why do these micro influencers work better when it comes to achieving consumer influencer engagement? What has been discovered so far is that involvement is a strong point of micro influencers. It is all about the connections that these influencers have with their followers (and their followers with them). The sincere relationships they build create the feeling of involvement.

Despite the fact that there were few significant findings in this study, it surely adds to what has already been done. This research can be highly interesting for follow-up studies since it operationalizes influencers thoroughly. There is limited research categorizing influencers into different categories, but even less research where the differences are not just based on the number of followers. These distinctions can certainly be included in new studies on influencers and perhaps the definition of influencers should be changed and sharpened based on these other distinctions. This study is a contribution to the nascent field of influencer marketing research and is theoretically relevant since it broadens the scope of previous social marketing research.

The practical importance of engagement in influencer marketing is emphasized in this study. On the internet and social media, advertising and other commercial messages are simple to eliminate. When compared to advertising, reaching out to a specific target demographic using an (micro) influencer becomes much more beneficial (Singh, 2019). What has been investigated in this research can be immediately applied in practice. Despite the insignificant results, the study does not rule out that engagement is related to the type of content, but future research should proof that.

5.4 Conclusion

One thing the advertising industry can be confident of is that influencer marketing is here to stay. In today's environment, it's exceedingly improbable that someone is unaffected by social media

influence. With the rise of this new instrument for promoting brands and products, greater understanding about this phenomenon will emerge. This master thesis is titled: "Micro influencers: the digital marketing future for increasing engagement", and if there is one takeaway from this research, it is the importance of micro influencers. Brands can use micro influencers to create relationships with a specific group of consumers, and they can do it using a medium that consumers already appreciate and trust. The current study showed that the use of micro influencers leads to higher levels of consumer influencer engagement such as cognitive processing, affection, and activation.

This study delves deeper into the use of one specific medium, Instagram. But one thing is certain: there will be new platforms with entirely new methods to advertise products and brands. TikTok is now on the rise, and while 'the elder generations' may still be sceptical of the app, it is likely to overtake Instagram as one of the most popular social media platforms. In the future years, new platforms are likely to emerge, with advertisers and researchers' responsibility being to discover new techniques of (influencer) marketing to enhance marketing results.

The purpose of this research was to explore to what extent the combination of a type of influencer (mega or micro) and a type of sponsored post (high-involvement or low-involvement) affects consumer influencer engagement. It also attempted to investigate more of the mediating roles of credibility, authenticity, and parasocial interaction. The study examines the concepts of types of influencers and types of sponsored posts in social media marketing from a conceptual standpoint. Because there were few significant effects, the only conclusion of this study is that micro influencers are more effective than mega influencers when it comes to achieving consumer influencer engagement. However, it cannot be stated that high-involvement sponsored posts are more effective in achieving that engagement than low-involvement sponsored posts. Similarly, no conclusions can be drawn about the combination of the type of influencer and the type of sponsored post.

Inevitably, additional research is needed to better understand consumer influencer engagement and the factors that drive such engagement. Research on a larger scale with real influencers can give more insights in the variables that do have an effect on consumer influencer engagement. And it can also be very interesting to take it a step further and see what the effects of consumer influencer engagement are on the sales of products or services of promoted brands.

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Appendix I Pre-test Materials

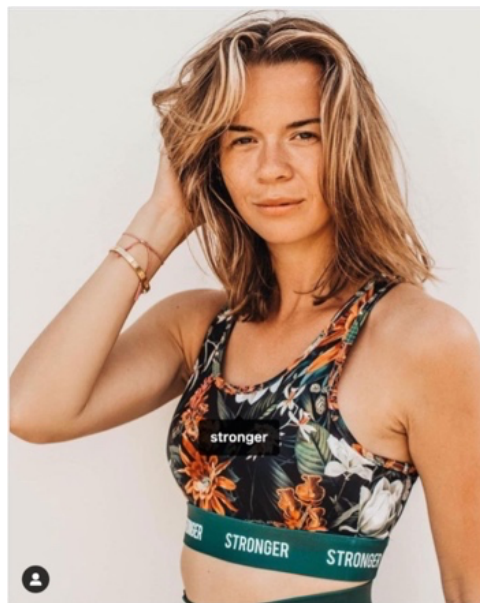
Figure 9 portrays the different individuals, figures 10 and 11 portray the different profiles and figures 12 and 13 portray the different posts that were tested in the pre-test. The same person was used for the mega and micro profiles in the main study to reduce the number of different factors.

Individual:

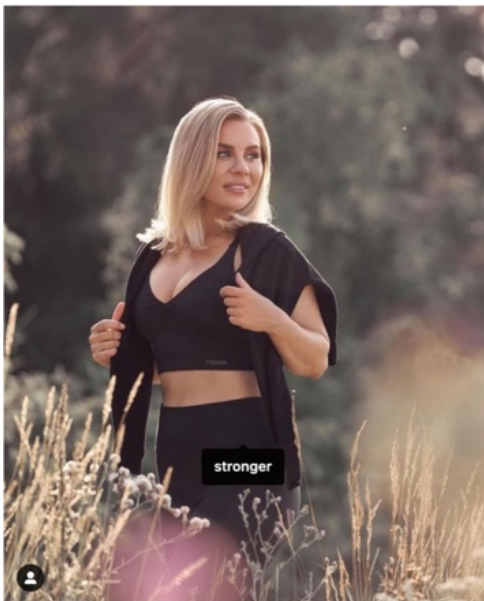
Figure 9: Different individuals to manipulate mega and micro profile.



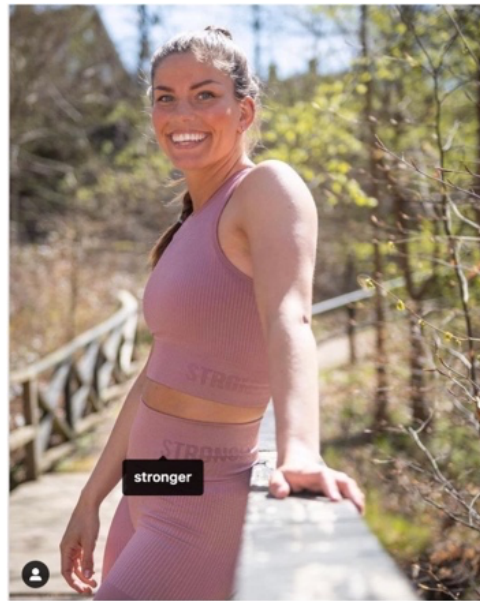
Influencer 1: @joannaswica



Influencer 2: @margauxdietz



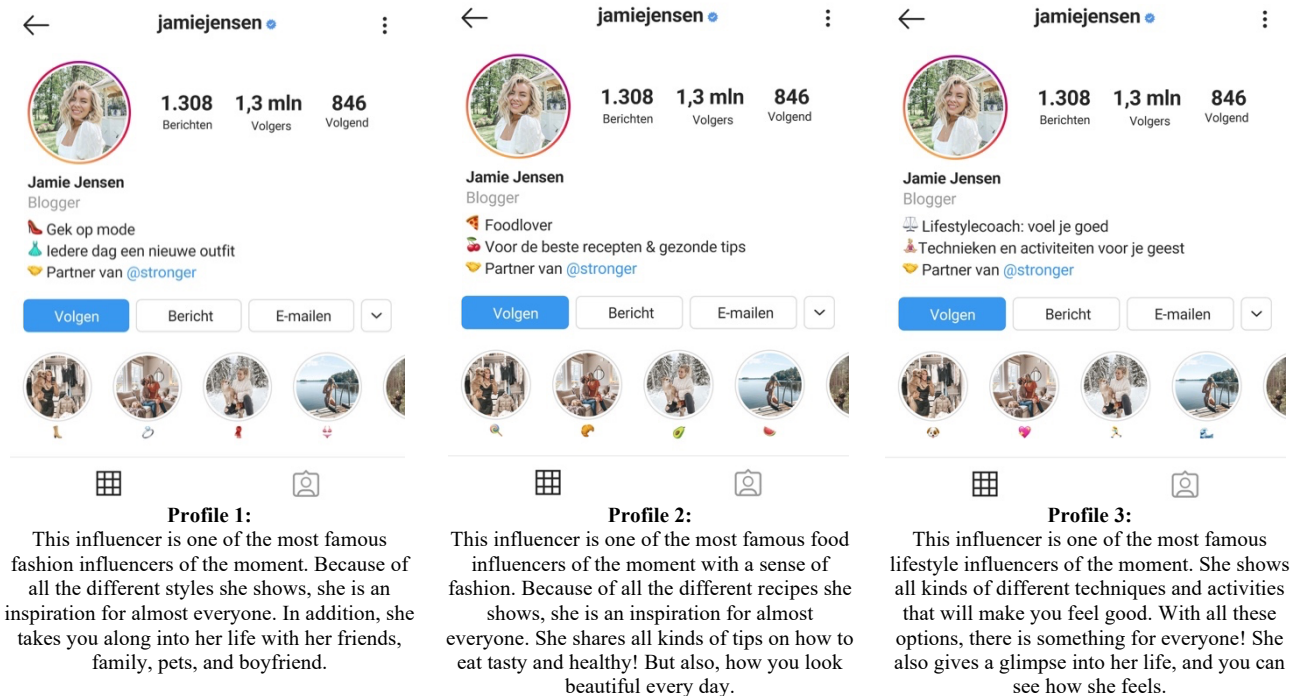
Influencer 3: @therese



Influencer 4: @thereseperssonn

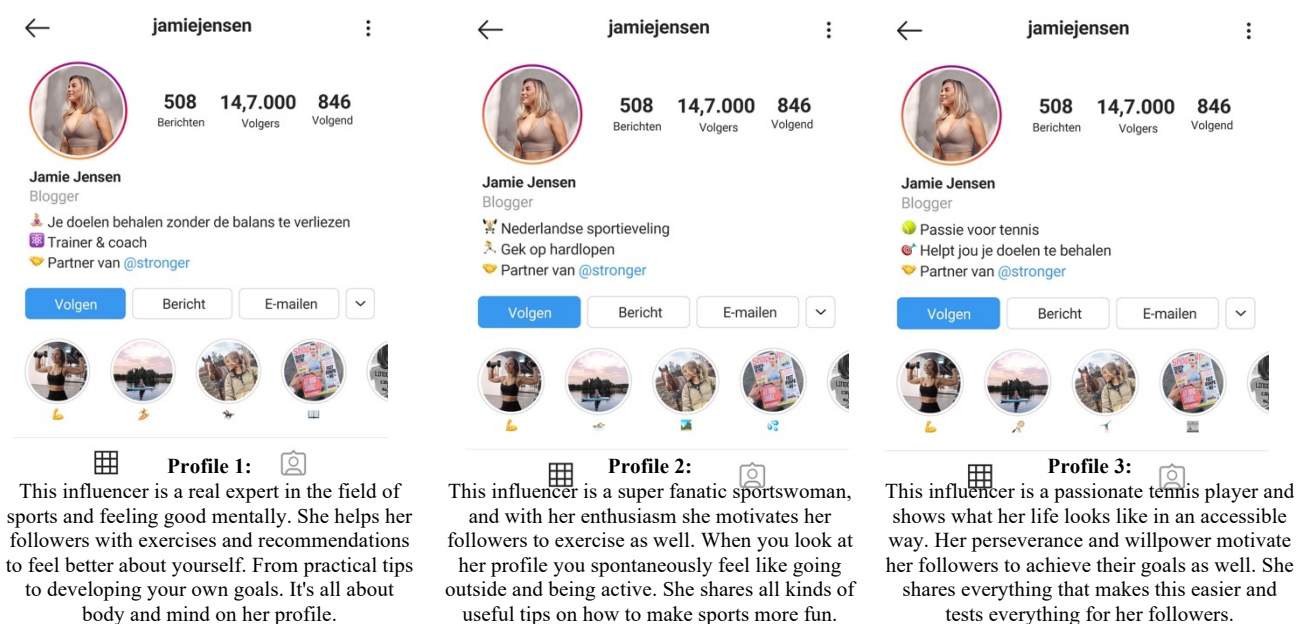
Mega influencer profile:

Figure 10: Profiles mega influencer (everything but the pictures)



Micro influencer profile:

Figure 11: Profiles micro influencer (everything but the pictures)



High-involvement sponsored posts

Figure 12: High-involvement sponsored posts



Post 1



Post 2

Low-involvement sponsored posts

Figure 13: Low-involvement sponsored posts



Post 1



Post 2

Appendix II Questionnaire Pre-test

(Pre-test will be taken in Dutch because the participants will all be Dutch)

https://utwentebse.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_cRU9Jk0tVm4RXPU?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current

Beste respondent,

Graag nodig ik je uit om deel te nemen aan deze pre-test. Deze pre-test wordt afgenomen in het kader van mijn Master thesis voor de opleiding Communication Science aan de Universiteit Twente. De enquête zal ongeveer 10 minuten duren en de deelname is geheel vrijwillig.

Voor mijn onderzoek heb ik verschillende materialen ontworpen, en om deze materialen te valideren wordt deze pre-test afgenomen. Op de volgende pagina's help je mij om de juiste keuzes te maken in mijn materialen. Besteed je volle aandacht aan de foto's en ondertekeningen, er worden hier namelijk vragen over gesteld. Het onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd onder supervisie van Universiteit Twente. Hierdoor heb je de garantie dat alle ingevoerde gegevens volledig anoniem zijn en niet aan derden worden verstrekt.

Je kunt als deelnemer je medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat jouw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgave van redenen. In het geval van vragen of opmerkingen voor, tijdens of na deze studie, voel je vrij om contact met mij op te nemen via het volgende e-mailadres: b.heuvel@student.utwente.nl

Alvast bedankt voor je medewerking

Met vriendelijke groet,

Britt Heuvel

Master student Communication Science

Geef a.u.b. aan dat je bovenstaande informatie hebt gelezen en akkoord gaat met deelname aan dit online experiment.

☐ Ik stem hier mee in, begin aan de vragenlijst

☐ Ik stem niet toe, ik wil niet deelnemen

Wat is je geslacht?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Vrouw
- ☐ Anders of wil ik niet zeggen

Wat is je leeftijd?

Maak je gebruik van sociale media?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

Page Break

Hoe vaak maak je gebruik van sociale media?

- ☐ Vaak (meerdere malen per dag)
- ☐ Regelmatig (iedere dag)
- ☐ Af en toe (een aantal keer per week)
- ☐ Zelden (een keer in de zoveel weken)
- ☐ Bijna nooit (een paar keer in het jaar)

Volg je influencers op sociale media? (Een influencer is een ‘bekend’ persoon die een bovengemiddelde invloed heeft op het gedrag van anderen)

☐ Ja

☐ Nee

Van welke sociale media platformen maak je gebruik? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

☐ WhatsApp

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ YouTube

☐ Snapchat

☐ Twitter

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Pinterest

☐ TikTok

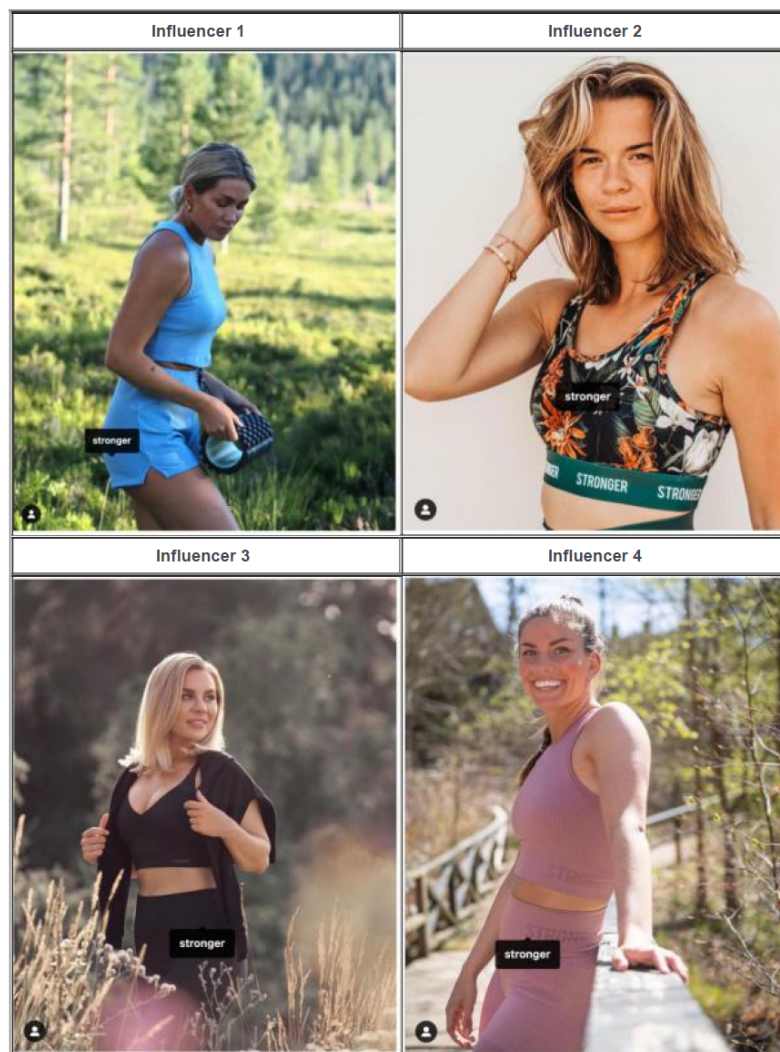
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In het onderzoek wordt een influencer gebruikt, deze wordt op het ene moment neergezet als micro influencer en op het andere moment als mega influencer. Een **micro influencer** is een gebruiker op social media met 1.000 tot 100.000 volgers. Een micro influencer is een expert in een bepaalde branche en echt gespecialiseerd in een bepaald onderwerp. **Mega influencers** zijn meestal beroemdheden met gemiddeld meer dan een miljoen volgers. Mega influencers spreken een breed spectrum van mensen aan met uiteenlopende interesses.

Het is belangrijk voor het onderzoek om de juiste persoon te kiezen die door de participanten wordt gezien als realistisch etc.

Daar heb ik jouw hulp bij nodig.

Kies daarom welke influencer het beste past bij onderstaande statements:



Beantwoord de volgende statements over de getoonde influencers:

	Influencer 1	Influencer 2	Influencer 3	Influencer 4
Ik vind de persoon op deze foto er het meest uit zien als een influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat de persoon op deze foto het meest geschikt om zowel een mega als een micro influencer te zijn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me het meest geïnspireerd door deze influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer geeft mij het plezierigste gevoel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer de meeste authenticiteit uitstraalt.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer het meest realistisch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer het meest geloofwaardig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer het aantrekkelijkst.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Heb je een voorkeur voor een van deze influencers? Zo ja, welke en waarom?

Herken je één van de (of meerdere) personen die je op de foto zag staan?

- ☐ Nee
- ☐ Ja, influencer 1
- ☐ Ja, influencer 2
- ☐ Ja, influencer 3
- ☐ Ja, influencer 4

Page Break

De mensen die we volgen op Instagram volgen we meestal met een bepaalde reden, omdat we ze persoonlijk kennen of omdat het iemand is die we interessant vinden. Of we bijvoorbeeld een influencer interessant vinden is sterk afhankelijk van onze eigen interesses. Zoals we net al bespraken maken we onderscheid tussen mega influencers en micro influencers. Het verschil tussen deze types is niet alleen het aantal volgers.

Mega influencers hebben doordat zij veel volgers hebben een breed spectrum aan mensen met uiteenlopende interesses die hen volgen. Dit is ook te zien in het profiel van een mega influencer, ze hebben bredere interesses en focussen zich niet op één onderwerp. Vaak staan deze influencers wat verder van hun volgers af en kun je hun levensstijl niet vergelijken met die van jou. Ook zul je niet heel gemakkelijk contact krijgen met deze influencers.

Voor het onderzoek zijn we op zoek naar een profiel dat duidelijk uitstraalt dat het om een mega influencer gaat. **Je krijgt nu drie Instagram profielen te zien. De foto's zijn hetzelfde, daar hoeft je niet op te letten. Het gaat echt om alle informatie die je naast de foto's krijgt.**

Kies welk profiel het beste past bij onderstaande statements:

Profiel 1

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste fashion influencers van dit moment. Door alle verschillende stijlen die ze laat zien is ze een inspiratie voor bijna iedereen. Daarnaast neemt ze je mee in haar leven en worden haar vrienden, familie, huisdieren en vriend overal bij betrokken.



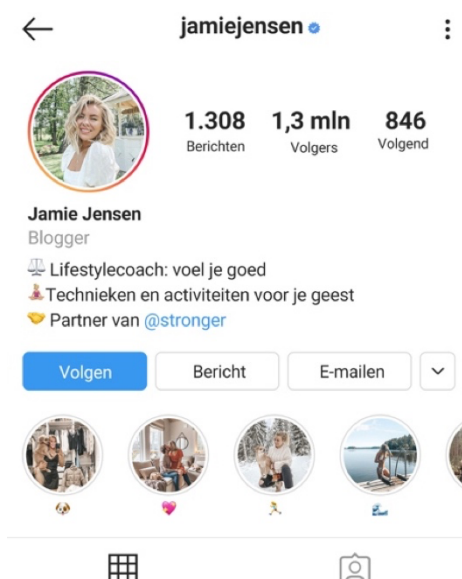
Profiel 2

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste food influencers van dit moment met een gevoel voor mode. Door alle verschillende recepten die ze laat zien is ze een inspiratie voor bijna iedereen. Ze deelt allerlei tips over hoe je lekker én gezond kan eten! Maar ook hoe je er prachtig uit ziet.



Profiel 3

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste lifestyle influencers van dit moment. Zij laat allerlei verschillende technieken en activiteiten zien waardoor jij je goed gaat voelen. Door al die opties zit er voor iedereen wel iets tussen! Ook geeft ze een kijkje in haar leven en zie je hoe zij zich voelt.



Beantwoord de volgende statements over de Instagram profielen die je zojuist hebt gezien:

	Profiel 1	Profiel 2	Profiel 3
Ik herken mezelf het minst in deze influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik denk dat deze influencer gevolgd wordt door heel veel verschillende mensen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik denk dat ik van deze influencer het minst snel een reactie krijg.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer de meest variërende onderwerpen laat zien.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer het verste van mij af staat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer het minst een expert lijkt op het gebied van sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het meest realistisch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het meest geloofwaardig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het aantrekkelijkst.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het beste passen bij een mega influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Heb je een voorkeur voor een van deze profielen? Zo ja, welke en waarom?

Zoals je net hebt gelezen zijn we op zoek naar een profiel dat het beste past bij een mega influencer, heb je nog tips of ideeën hoe we dit nog sterker kunnen aanzetten?

Zoals we net al bespraken maken we onderscheid tussen mega influencers en micro influencers. Het verschil tussen deze types is niet alleen het aantal volgers. Daarom doorlopen we nu dezelfde vragen maar nu voor een micro influencer.

Micro influencers hebben minder volgers maar hebben wel een veel specifiekere groep met volgers die veelal dezelfde interesses delen. Dit is ook te zien in het profiel van een micro influencer, zij zijn echt een expert op één bepaald gebied en hun hele profiel is hier aan gelinkt. Vaak staan deze influencers veel dichterbij hun volgers en herken je jezelf in hun levensstijl. Ook krijg je met deze influencers veel makkelijker contact in de vorm van een reactie o.i.d.

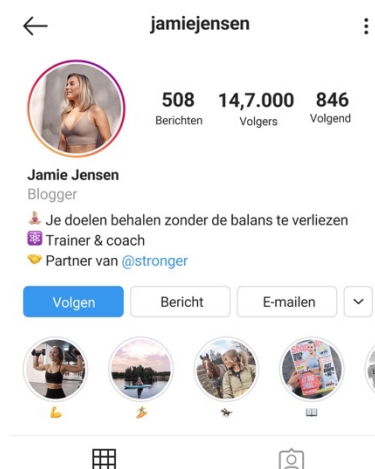
Voor het onderzoek zijn we ook op zoek naar een profiel dat duidelijk uitstraalt dat het om een micro influencer gaat. **Je krijgt nu drie Instagram profielen te zien. De foto's zijn hetzelfde, daar hoeft je niet op te letten. Het gaat echt om alle informatie die je naast de foto's krijgt.**

*** Let op! De getoonde influencers zijn een expert op het gebied van sport, dus houd bij het beantwoorden van de statements het scenario in je hoofd dat je een gebruiker bent die houdt van sportiviteit.**

Kies welk profiel het beste past bij onderstaande statements:

Profiel 1

Deze influencer is een echte expert op het gebied van sporten en daarmee jezelf mentaal goed voelen. Zij helpt haar volgers met oefeningen en aanbevelingen om beter in je vel te zitten. Van praktische tips tot het ontwikkelen van eigen doelstellingen. Alles draait om lichaam en geest op haar profiel.



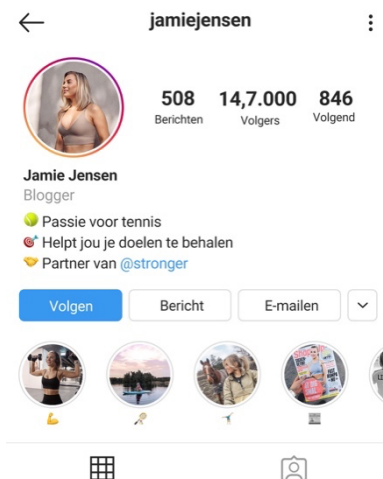
Profiel 2

Deze influencer is een super fanatieke sportieveling, en met haar enthousiasme motiveert ze haar volgers om ook te sporten. Als je op haar profiel kijkt krijg je spontaan zin om naar buiten te gaan en actief bezig te zijn. Ze deelt allerlei handige tips hoe het sporten nog leuker wordt.



Profiel 3

Deze influencer is een passievolle tennisspeelster en laat op een toegankelijke manier zien hoe haar leven er uit ziet. Haar doorzettingsvermogen en wilskracht motiveren haar volgers om ook hun doelen te behalen. Ze deelt alles wat dit makkelijker maakt en test alles uit voor haar volgers.



Beantwoord de volgende statements over de Instagram profielen die je zojuist hebt gezien:

	Profiel 1	Profiel 2	Profiel 3
Ik herken mezelf het meest in deze influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik denk niet dat deze influencer gevolgd wordt door heel veel verschillende mensen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik denk dat ik van deze influencer het snelste een reactie krijg.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer de minst variërende onderwerpen laat zien.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer het dichtste bij mij staat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer het meest een expert lijkt op het gebied van sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het meest realistisch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het meest geloofwaardig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het aantrekkelijkst.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dit profiel het beste passen bij een micro influencer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Heb je een voorkeur voor een van deze profielen? Zo ja, welke en waarom?

Zoals je net hebt gelezen zijn we op zoek naar een profiel dat het beste past bij een **micro influencer**, heb je nog tips of ideeën hoe we dit nog sterker kunnen aanzetten?

De content van de mensen die we volgen op Instagram is vaak ook erg verschillend. Binnen het onderzoek maken we onderscheid tussen high-involvement gesponsorde content en low-involvement gesponsorde content.

High-involvement gesponsorde content bestaat uit sterke argumenten. Ook is deze content gepersonaliseerd door de influencer. De content sluit aan bij datgene waar de volgers gemotiveerd en geïnteresseerd in zijn. Ook zit er een duidelijke interactie met de volgers in, zoals bijvoorbeeld een vraag waar ze op kunnen reageren.

Voor het onderzoek zijn we op zoek naar content die duidelijk uitstraalt dat het om high-involvement gesponsorde content gaat. Je krijgt nu twee Instagram posts te zien zonder foto. Het gaat om de caption bij de post, deze gaan over een sportkledingmerk. Dus blijf het scenario in je hoofd houden dat je van sportiviteit houdt en informatie wil verkrijgen via Instagram.

Kies welke post het beste past bij onderstaande statements:

Post 1



Post 2



Beantwoord de volgende statements over de Instagram post die je zojuist hebt gezien:

	Post 1	Post 2
Ik vind dat deze gesponsorde post de meeste diepgang heeft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind de tekst van deze gesponsorde post het leukst	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze post het beste past bij wat ik als sportieve volger wil zien	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze gesponsorde post het minst draait om de kortingscode	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze post het sterkste argument bevat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze gesponsorde post de meest persoonlijke tint heeft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest informatief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me het meest geïnspireerd door deze gesponsorde post	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat het argument van deze post het beste bij het thema sport past	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest realistisch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest aantrekkelijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest geloofwaardig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest authentiek	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Heb je een voorkeur voor een van deze posts? Zo ja, welke en waarom?

Zoals je net hebt gelezen zijn we op zoek naar een post die het meest **high-involvement gesponsorde content** weergeeft, heb je nog tips of ideeën hoe we dit nog sterker kunnen aanzetten?

Zoals we net al bespraken maken we onderscheid tussen high-involvement gesponsorde content en low-involvement gesponsorde content. Daarom doorlopen we nu dezelfde vragen maar nu voor low-involvement gesponsorde content.

Low-involvement gesponsorde content bestaat uit signalen die de aandacht trekken zoals humor of korting. Deze content is erg algemeen en oppervlakkig en kan daarom vaak nietszeggend zijn. De inhoud is niet erg informatief en heeft geen duidelijke match met de influencer. Ook leidt deze inhoud niet tot interactie.

Voor het onderzoek zijn we op zoek naar content die duidelijk uitstraalt dat het om low-involvement gesponsorde content gaat. Je krijgt nu twee Instagram posts te zien zonder foto. Het gaat om de caption bij de post, deze gaan over een sportkledingmerk. Dus blijf het scenario in je hoofd houden dat je van sportiviteit houdt en informatie wil verkrijgen via Instagram.

Kies welke post het beste past bij onderstaande statements:

Post 1



Post 2



Beantwoord de volgende statements over de Instagram post die je zojuist hebt gezien:

	Post 1	Post 2
Ik vind dat deze gesponsorde post de minste diepgang heeft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind de tekst van deze gesponsorde post het leukst	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze post het minst goed past bij wat ik als sportieve volger wil zien	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze gesponsorde post het meest draait om de kortingscode	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze post de minst sterke argumenten bevat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze gesponsorde post de minste persoonlijke tint heeft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het minst informatief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me het minst geïnspireerd door deze gesponsorde post	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat het argument van deze post het minst bij het thema sport past	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest realistisch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest aantrekkelijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest geloofwaardig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze gesponsorde post het meest authentiek	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Heb je een voorkeur voor een van deze posts? Zo ja, welke en waarom?

Zoals je net hebt gelezen zijn we op zoek naar een post die het meest **low-involvement gesponsorde content** weergeeft, heb je nog tips of ideeën hoe we dit nog sterker kunnen aanzetten?

Bedankt voor je deelname aan deze pretest. Het gebruikte scenario in dit onderzoek is fictief en op geen enkele manier gerelateerd aan het merk Stronger of de gebruikte Influencers. Mocht je naar aanleiding van de deelname nog vragen hebben, twijfel dan niet om contact op te nemen met de onderzoeker (b.heuvel@student.utwente.nl).

Je antwoorden staan geregistreerd en je kunt de pagina nu sluiten.

Appendix III Questionnaire Main Study

(Questionnaire main study will be taken in Dutch because the participants will all be Dutch)

https://utwentebs.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_eXr4P9tRuMgHzVk?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current

Beste respondent,

Graag nodig ik je uit om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek. Dit onderzoek wordt afgenomen in het kader van mijn Master Thesis voor de opleiding Communication Science aan de Universiteit Twente. Ik waardeer het enorm als je even de tijd wilt nemen om deze vragen voor mij te beantwoorden, jouw bijdrage aan dit onderzoek is erg waardevol voor mij. De enquête zal minder dan 10 minuten duren en de deelname is geheel vrijwillig.

Het onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd onder supervisie van Universiteit Twente. Je hebt de garantie dat alle ingevoerde gegevens volledig anoniem zijn en niet aan derden worden verstrekt. Je kunt als deelnemer je medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat jouw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen. In het geval van vragen of opmerkingen voor, tijdens of na deze studie, voel je vrij om contact met mij op te nemen via het volgende e-mailadres: b.heuvel@student.utwente.nl

Alvast bedankt voor je medewerking

Met vriendelijke groet,

Britt Heuvel

Geef a.u.b. aan dat je bovenstaande informatie hebt gelezen en akkoord gaat met deelname aan dit online experiment.

- ☐ Ik stem hier mee in, begin aan de vragenlijst
- ☐ Ik stem niet toe, ik wil niet deelnemen

Page Break

Een vereiste om deel te kunnen nemen aan dit onderzoek is enige voorkennis van sociale media.

Onder sociale media vallen bijvoorbeeld Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube,

TikTok, etc. **Maak je gebruik van een (of meerdere) van deze sociale media?**

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

Page Break

Wat is je geslacht?

- ☐ Man (1)
- ☐ Vrouw (2)
- ☐ Anders of wil ik niet zeggen (3)

Wat is je leeftijd?

Hoe vaak maak je gebruik van sociale media?

- ☐ Vaak (meerdere malen per dag)
- ☐ Regelmatig (iedere dag)
- ☐ Af en toe (een aantal keer per week)
- ☐ Zelden (een keer in de zoveel weken)
- ☐ Bijna nooit (een paar keer in het jaar)

Volg je influencers op sociale media? (Mensen die een professionele carrière hebben gemaakt van actief zijn op sociale media)

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

Van welke sociale media platformen maak je gebruik? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ TikTok

Page Break

Op de volgende pagina zie je een Instagram profiel en een Instagram post. **Bekijk en lees deze beide goed door** en beantwoord de statements op basis van wat je gezien en gelezen hebt. **Stel je voor dat je een volger bent die interesse heeft in sport.**

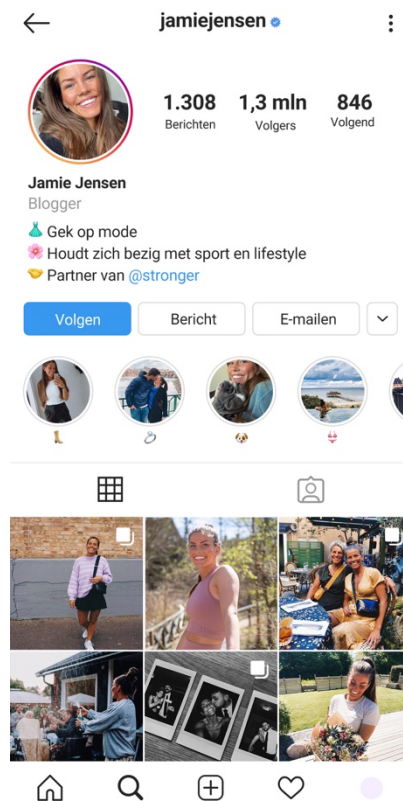
Let op! Je kan tijdens het beantwoorden van de statements niet terug om het profiel en de post nog een keer te bekijken, dus neem deze goed in je op zometeen.

Page Break

*Respondents see one of these four conditions *

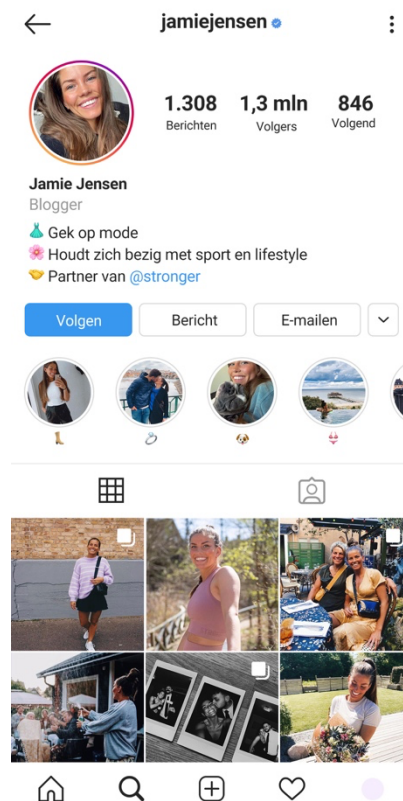
Condition 1

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste fashion influencers van dit moment. Door alle verschillende stijlen die ze laat zien is ze een inspiratie voor bijna iedereen. Daarnaast neemt ze je mee in haar leven en worden haar vrienden, familie, huisdieren en vriend overal bij betrokken.



Condition 2:

Deze influencer is een van de bekendste fashion influencers van dit moment. Door alle verschillende stijlen die ze laat zien is ze een inspiratie voor bijna iedereen. Daarnaast neemt ze je mee in haar leven en worden haar vrienden, familie, huisdieren en vriend overal bij betrokken.



Condition 3

Deze influencer is een super fanatieke sportieveling, en met haar enthousiasme motiveert ze haar volgers om ook te sporten. Als je op haar profiel kijkt krijg je spontaan zin om naar buiten te gaan en actief bezig te zijn. Ze deelt allerlei handige tips hoe het sporten nog leuker wordt.

**Condition 4:**

Deze influencer is een super fanatieke sportieveling, en met haar enthousiasme motiveert ze haar volgers om ook te sporten. Als je op haar profiel kijkt krijg je spontaan zin om naar buiten te gaan en actief bezig te zijn. Ze deelt allerlei handige tips hoe het sporten nog leuker wordt.



Beantwoord de statements en houdt daarbij de post en het profiel die je zojuist hebt gezien in je gedachten.

	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Neutraal/ eens noch oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Het zien van deze influencer zet me aan het denken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik denk veel na over deze influencer, na het zien van haar post	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het zien van deze influencer stimuleert me om meer over haar te weten te komen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Neutraal/ eens noch oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik voel me heel positief als ik deze influencer zie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het zien van deze influencer maakt me blij	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me goed als ik deze influencer zie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou met trots deze influencer volgen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Neutraal/ eens noch oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik zou veel tijd besteden aan het kijken naar deze influencer, vergeleken met andere influencers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wanneer ik tips van een influencer over sport nodig heb, zou ik deze influencer vaak opzoeken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer is een van de influencers die ik zou volgen als ik Instagram gebruik	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Beantwoord de statements en houdt daarbij de post en het profiel die je zojuist hebt gezien in je gedachten.

	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Neutraal/ eens noch oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik vind deze influencer aantrekkelijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer stijlvol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer sexy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer geloofwaardig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer eerlijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer betrouwbaar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer een deskundige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer ervaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer bekwaam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Beantwoord de statements en houdt daarbij de post en het profiel die je zojuist hebt gezien in je gedachten.

	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Neutraal/ eens noch oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik vind deze influencer aardig en goedhartig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer erg oprecht	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer heel echt over komen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer nuchter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hoewel deze influencer advertenties plaatst geeft ze zinvolle informatie over het product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer geeft zeer eerlijke beoordelingen over merken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het product en merk die deze influencer promoot past goed bij haar persoonlijkheid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer promoot een product welke zij daadwerkelijk zou gebruiken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer post niet alleen de mooie dingen uit haar leven maar ook de minder mooie dingen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer praat over echte problemen die in haar leven spelen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer praat over haar onzekerheden en schaamt zich niet om deze te tonen aan volgers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer onthult veel van haar persoonlijke leven aan haar volgers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer is bekwaam in haar vakgebied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer is zeer goed geïnformeerd in haar vakgebied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer toont een natuurlijk vermogen in haar vakgebied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind deze influencer uniek	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind dat deze influencer onderscheidende kenmerken heeft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind de content van deze influencer origineel en geen kopie van die van iemand anders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Beantwoord de statements en houdt daarbij de post en het profiel die je zojuist hebt gezien in je gedachten.

	Helemaal niet mee eens	Niet mee eens	Neutraal/ eens nog oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Deze influencer zorgt ervoor dat ik me op mijn gemak voel alsof ik bij een vriend ben	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zie deze influencer als een natuurlijk en nuchter persoon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deze influencer lijkt het soort dingen te begrijpen die ik wil weten	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou er naar uit kijken om deze influencer op social media te zien	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Als deze influencer op een ander account zou verschijnen, zou ik dat account bekijken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou deze influencer missen om te zien als ze niet actief is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou deze influencer graag persoonlijk willen ontmoeten	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb medelijden met deze influencer als ze een fout maakt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou vaak berichten van deze influencer lezen, comments plaatsen of berichten delen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Heb je na aanleiding van het onderzoek nog opmerkingen? (onduidelijkheden, technische problemen etc.)

Page Break

Bedankt voor je deelname aan dit onderzoek. Het gebruikte scenario in dit onderzoek is fictief en op geen enkele manier gerelateerd aan het merk Stronger of de gebruikte influencer. Mocht je naar aanleiding van de deelname nog vragen hebben, twijfel dan niet om contact op te nemen met de onderzoeker (b.heuvel@student.utwente.nl).

Je antwoorden staan geregistreerd en je kunt de pagina nu sluiten.

Appendix IV Translations of the Measurement Scales

Table 11: Overview of items and scales used for dependent variables Dutch translations

Scale	Items
Cognitive processing (3)	(1) Seeing this influencer gets me to think about her *(1) Het zien van deze influencer zet me aan het denken (2) I think about this influencer a lot when I see her post *(2) Ik denk veel na over deze influencer, na het zien van haar post (3) Seeing this influencer stimulates my interest to learn more about her *(3) Het zien van deze influencer stimuleert me om meer over haar te weten te komen
Affection (4)	(1) I feel very positive when I see this influencer *(1) Ik voel me heel positief als ik deze influencer zie (2) Seeing this influencer makes me happy *(2) Het zien van deze influencer maakt me blij (3) I feel good when I see this influencer *(3) Ik voel me goed als ik deze influencer zie (4) I would be proud to follow this influencer *(4) Ik zou met trots deze influencer volgen
Activation (3)	(1) I would spend a lot of time looking at this influencer, compared to other influencers *(1) Ik zou veel tijd besteden aan het kijken naar deze influencer, vergeleken met andere influencers (2) Whenever I need tips from an influencer about sport, I would use this influencer often *(2) Wanneer ik tips van een influencer over sport nodig heb, zou ik deze influencer vaak opzoeken (3) This influencer would be one of the influencers I would follow when I use Instagram. *(3) Deze influencer is een van de influencers die ik zou volgen als ik Instagram gebruik

Table 12: Overview of items and scales used for the variable parasocial interaction Dutch translations

Scale	Items
Parasocial Interaction (9)	(1) The influencer makes me feel comfortable as if I am with a friend *(1) Deze influencer zorgt ervoor dat ik me op mijn gemak voel alsof ik bij een vriend ben (2) I see this influencer as a natural and down-to-earth person. *(2) Ik zie deze influencer als een natuurlijk en nuchter persoon (3) This influencer seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know. *(3) Deze influencer lijkt het soort dingen te begrijpen die ik wil weten (4) I would look forward to seeing this influencer on social media. *(4) Ik zou er naar uit kijken om deze influencer op social media te zien (5) If this influencer appeared on another account, I would watch that account *(5) Als deze influencer op een ander account zou verschijnen, zou ik dat account bekijken (6) I would miss seeing this influencer when she is not active. *(6) Ik zou deze influencer missen om te zien als ze niet actief is (7) I would like to meet this influencer in person *(7) Ik zou deze influencer graag persoonlijk willen ontmoeten (8) I feel sorry for this influencer when she makes a mistake. *(8) Ik heb medelijden met deze influencer als ze een fout maakt (9) I would often read, comment on, or share posts of this influencer *(9) Ik zou vaak berichten van deze influencer lezen, comments plaatsen of berichten delen

Table 13: Overview of items and scales used for the variable credibility Dutch translations

Scale	Items
Credibility (9)	
Attractiveness (3)	(1) I find this influencer attractive
*Aantrekkelijkheid (3)	* (1) Ik vind deze influencer aantrekkelijk
	(2) I think this influencer is classy
	* (2) Ik vind deze influencer stijlvol
	(3) I think this influencer is sexy
	* (3) Ik vind deze influencer sexy
Trustworthiness (3)	(4) I find this influencer trustworthy
*Betrouwbaarheid (3)	* (4) Ik vind deze influencer geloofwaardig
	(5) I find this influencer sincere
	* (5) Ik vind deze influencer eerlijk
	(6) I find this influencer reliable
	* (6) Ik vind deze influencer betrouwbaar
Expertise (3)	(7) I think this influencer is an expert
*Expertise (3)	* (7) Ik vind deze influencer een deskundige
	(8) I think this influencer is experienced
	* (8) Ik vind deze influencer ervaren
	(9) I think this influencer is skilled
	* (9) Ik vind deze influencer bekwaam

Table 14: Overview of items and scales used for the variable Authenticity Dutch translations

Scale	Items
Authenticity (18)	
Sincerity (4)	(1) I think this influencer is kind and good hearted
*Oprechtheid (4)	* (1) Ik vind deze influencer aardig en goedhartig
	(2) I think this influencer is sincere
	* (2) Ik vind deze influencer erg oprecht
	(3) I think this influencer is very genuine
	* (3) Ik vind deze influencer heel echt over komen
	(4) I think this influencer is down-to-earth
	* (4) Ik vind deze influencer nuchter
Truthful	(5) Although this influencer posts ads, she gives meaningful insights into the product
Endorsements (4)	* (5) Hoewel deze influencer advertenties plaatst geeft ze zinvolle inzichten in het product
*Eerlijke	(6) This influencer gives very honest reviews on brands
aanbevelingen (4)	* (6) Deze influencer geeft zeer eerlijke beoordelingen over merken
	(7) The product and brand that this influencer endorses fits her personality well
	* (7) Het product en merk die deze influencer onderschrijft past goed bij haar persoonlijkheid
	(8) This influencer is promoting a product she would actually use
	* (8) Deze influencer promoot een product die ze daadwerkelijk zou gebruiken

Visibility (4)	(9) This influencer does not only post about the good things in her life but also about the hardships
* Zichtbaarheid (4)	<p>*(9) Deze influencer post niet alleen de mooie dingen uit haar leven maar ook de minder mooie dingen</p> <p>(10) This influencer talks about real-life issues going on in her life</p> <p>*(10) Deze influencer praat over echte problemen die in haar leven spelen</p> <p>(11) This influencer talks about her flaws and is not ashamed to show them to followers</p> <p>*(11) Deze influencer praat over haar onzekerheden en schaamt zich niet om deze te tonen aan volgers</p> <p>(12) This influencer reveals a lot of her personal life to her followers</p> <p>*(12) Deze influencer onthult veel van haar persoonlijke leven aan haar volgers</p>
Expertise (3)	(13) This influencer is skilled in her field
* Expertise (3)	<p>*(13) Deze influencer is bekwaam in haar vakgebied</p> <p>(14) This influencer is very knowledgeable in her field</p> <p>*(14) Deze influencer is zeer goed geïnformeerd in haar vakgebied</p> <p>(15) This influencer demonstrates a natural ability in her field</p> <p>*(15) Deze influencer toont een natuurlijk vermogen in haar vakgebied</p>
Uniqueness (3)	(16) I think this influencer is unique
* Unicité (3)	<p>*(16) Ik vind deze influencer uniek</p> <p>(17) I think this influencer has distinctive characteristics</p> <p>*(17) Ik vind dat deze influencer onderscheidende kenmerken heeft</p> <p>(18) I think this influencer's content is original and not a copy of someone else's</p> <p>*(18) Ik vind de content van deze influencer origineel en geen kopie van die van iemand anders</p>

Appendix V Factor Analysis

Table 15: Factor analysis - (rotated component matrix) dependent variables

Statements	Factor		
	1	2	3
Consumer Brand Engagement: Affection – (2) Seeing this influencer makes me happy	.86		
Consumer Brand Engagement: Affection – (3) I feel good when I see this influencer	.85		
Consumer Brand Engagement: Affection – (1) I feel very positive when I see this influencer	.81		
Consumer Brand Engagement: Affection – (4) I would be proud to follow this influencer	.58		
Consumer Brand Engagement: Cognitive Processing – (2) I think about this influencer a lot when I see her post		.83	
Consumer Brand Engagement: Cognitive Processing – (3) Seeing this influencer stimulates my interest to learn more about her		.79	
Consumer Brand Engagement: Cognitive Processing – (1) Seeing this influencer gets me to think about her		.76	
Consumer Brand Engagement: Activation – (2) Whenever I need tips from an influencer about sport, I would use this influencer often			.83
Consumer Brand Engagement: Activation – (3) This influencer would be one of the influencers I would follow when I use Instagram.			.81
Consumer Brand Engagement: Activation – (1) I would spend a lot of time looking at this influencer, compared to other influencers			.67
Explained variance:	54.58%	13.04%	7.75%
Eigenvalue:	5.46	1.30	0.78
Cronbach alpha:	.86	.85	.84