

## #Influencer marketing

The effects of influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention and brand trust on Instagram

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## *Abstract*

A relatively new approach for organizations to reach their potential consumers is by using influencer marketing. The concept of a brand using celebrities as influencers to endorse their product is an established practice, however, influencer marketing has introduced a new tendency for using micro-celebrities as a new type of influencer. Additionally, an important part of the influencer's social media message is the brand and also the fact that the message is sponsored. The practical relevance of the field of influencer marketing is growing more and more, however, the previous research is inconclusive about which type of influencer in combination with what kind of brand and sponsorship disclosure will be most effective to use in social media. This is why the purpose of this study consists in determining the effects of influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure on the purchase intention and brand trust of an individual. Furthermore, part of the research is to determine if attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise mediate the effect of the independent variables influencer type and sponsorship disclosure on the dependent variables purchase intention and brand trust.

This research uses a 2 (traditional vs. micro-celebrity) x 2 (familiar vs. unfamiliar brand) x 2 (sponsorship disclosure vs. no sponsorship disclosure) factorial design in the form of an online experiment conducted only amongst Bulgarians using Instagram as the social media platform for the research.

The most important results of the study are that micro-celebrities are more effective influencers compared to traditional celebrities as well as that the combination of a micro-celebrity with a familiar brand on the one hand and no sponsorship disclosure, on the other hand, proved to be more influential compared to these combinations with a traditional celebrity. Another important finding is that the mediating variables trustworthiness and expertise improve the effect of the micro-celebrity on purchase intention and brand trust. These results make an important contribution to advancing previous research on micro-celebrities and building the foundation for future research on micro-celebrities in combination with different types of products, as for instance – low and high involvement products. Future research can also measure existing attitudes towards the brand that the micro-celebrity is endorsing before and after the social media message in order to determine what role the brand attitude plays. In addition, using micro-celebrities in the practice can lead to more effective measures for increasing purchase intention of the audience and selecting an influencer based on their personal characteristics will lead to a successful influencer marketing strategy.

**Keywords:** Social media, influencer marketing, brand familiarity, sponsorship disclosure, purchase intention, brand trust

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## 1. Introduction

The internet has been around for some time now and it has become an inseparable part of our everyday life. It has unlocked a door to a whole new online potential reaching more and more people worldwide that continues to grow (Simons, 2011, p. 142; Statista.com, 2017; Kemp, 2017). An important part of the internet are the social media platforms that expand the communication potential of the internet even more. Since it is available for everyone to use, social media has given individuals the opportunity to become part of large social media platforms as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These platforms make it easier to connect and communicate without physically meeting each other. According to Statista.com (2017), the monthly active social media users are 2 Billion in Facebook, 328 Million in Twitter and 800 Million in Instagram. In essence, social media offers a technical alternative to face-to-face communication which allows people to connect to peers and be part of online communities where individuals interact, generate content and share it with other users (Gruzd, 2011; Lai & Turban, 2008). Furthermore, from a customer's perspective, social media enables the high involvement of people with organizations, allowing customers to create content for brands and also give their feedback for an organization's services (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015; Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

The benefits of social media are also visible on an organizational level by giving organizations the opportunity to stay in touch with their customers and to address their feedback. Moreover, social media has become part of the marketing strategies of many companies (Kujur & Singh, 2016, p. 375). Social media marketing is used not only for persuading consumers of the benefits of buying the company's products or services and increasing their brand involvement but the implementing of different social networking sites aims to reach maximum brand exposure and marketing communication through sharing of contents, videos, and images as well as paid social media advertising (Bashar, Ahmad, & Wasiq, 2012). Part of the paid social media advertising is to successfully incorporate people's tendency to turn to others for advice and recommendations by including social media opinion leaders in the organizational marketing strategy (Senecal & Nantel, 2004; Chen, Xu & Whinston, 2011a). This type of marketing is a relatively new field which is known as influencer marketing.

As for what led to the origin of influencer marketing, it can be traced back to when social media platforms, such as Instagram, were initially launched. Back then they did not allow organizations to advertise their products the way that we see them nowadays as sponsored posts. As a result, brands started looking for another way to market products on social media leading to the starting point of influencer marketing. Although advertising on these platforms is now possible, influencer marketing is still being used due to its effectiveness. According to a study of TapInfluence and Nielsen Catalina Solutions (Kirkpatrick, 2016) about the effectiveness of influencer marketing, it shows that influencer marketing has annually produced 11 times more return on investment than traditional forms of advertising. Therefore, causing a heightened interest in influencer marketing from both practical and scientific standpoint. Furthermore, the novelty of this field and the opportunity to take a more detailed look into the factors and effects involved in it are the reason for the interest of the research at hand in influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing is defined as the ability to identify key communities and opinion leaders in social media and to engage them into talking about the organization's brand or product (Brown & Hayes, 2008). These key individuals have the ability to spread the information about a product because of a large number of people with whom they are in contact and thus giving

them the opportunity to share the sponsored content and brand message with their audience (Sammis, Lincoln & Pomponi, 2016). When talking about opinion leaders and communities, the concept of influencer marketing can be linked to the theory of the two-step flow model by Lazarsfeld and Katz (1955) which shows the influence of the mass media on the individuals in those years. In terms of the present social media reality where social media takes the functions of the traditional mass media, the previously known opinion leader has now been replaced by an “influencer” and the individuals that are in social contact with the influencer are called “followers”. Influencers are defined as people who have a wide audience of followers which allows them to maximize the diffusion of information in terms of time and effectiveness (Abidin, 2015; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Bakshy, Hofman, Mason & Watts, 2011).

An already established marketing practice is to use celebrities as endorsers for a brand but when it comes to social media and influencer marketing the traditional celebrities have their competition in the face of the micro-celebrities (Marwick, 2015). The micro-celebrities unlike the traditional celebrities have become popular through social media by creating and sharing content with their audience (Marshall & Redmond, 2016). Consequently, the question arises of which type of influencer it will be more effective to use in a marketing campaign. Furthermore, when an influencer promotes a brand what is the role that brand familiarity plays for the positive response of the influencer’s audience? Do people respond more positively to endorsement with a familiar or an unfamiliar brand? In addition, when a celebrity, traditional or micro-celebrity, promotes a brand, they are paid to do so. In their social media messages, they can choose whether or not to disclose that their message is sponsored. How does the sponsorship disclosure or the lack of it affect the evaluations of their audience? Another aspect that the following study researches is about the effect of the personal characteristics of the influencer and if their attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise improve the positive effect of the influencer. These are all questions that the study at hand aims to answer and they are all combined in the main research question of this research:

***RQ:*** *What are the effects of influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure as well as the mediating effects of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on an individual’s purchase intention and brand trust?*

## 2. Theoretical framework

The purpose of the theoretical framework of this study is to position its research subject in terms of the existing scientific research. In order to do so, this section reviews the previous literature on the topic of influencer marketing. The use of influencer marketing aims to increase the purchase intention and actual purchase of the endorsed product as well as to lead to a repeated purchase of the brand achieved through brand trust. As a result, previous studies research the necessary conditions and factors that provoke purchase intention and brand trust triggered by a social media influencer (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014; Brady, 2017; Akar & Topçu, 2011). However, these studies are somewhat limited because they either only research the effects of traditional celebrities or only the effects of bloggers or micro-celebrities. Nevertheless, the concept of influencer marketing is to use well-known people in social media to promote a brand’s popularity and to increase the purchase of the brand (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Sammis, Lincoln & Pomponi, 2016). This means that in addition to traditional celebrities, micro-celebrities have to be also considered in the role of a social media influencer and how

they affect the purchase intention and brand trust of the audience. Hence, this research will do a comparison between both types of influencers.

When discussing the topic of influencer marketing, it is hard to overlook the fact that the message of the influencer is sponsored by the brand. However, it is not always the case that the sponsorship is disclosed in the message. While examining the previous literature it appears that the effect of sponsorship disclosure has been researched in relationship to traditional celebrities on the one hand (Boerman, Willemsen & Van der Aa, 2017; Dekker & Reijmersdal, 2013) and in relationship to micro-celebrities or bloggers on the other hand (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2015; Brady, 2017). This leaves unanswered the question of whether a traditional celebrity or a micro-celebrity in combination with a sponsorship disclosure will have a more positive effect on their audience.

Furthermore, when promoting a brand, a question arises about the effect of endorsing a familiar and an unfamiliar brand also when it is combined with a sponsorship disclosure and both types of an influencer. It is of interest to examine this effect because previous literature has shown positive effect of familiar brands on purchase intention and brand trust (Porral, Fernández, Boga & Mangín, 2013; Semeijn, Van Riel & Ambrosini, 2004; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000) but the research of brand familiarity regarding influencer marketing is inconclusive.

Additionally, another combination of factors that can possibly affect the purchase intention and brand trust of the audience are the perceived personal characteristics of the influencer, such as their attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise (Ohanian, 1991). However, to the author's knowledge, there is no previous literature that examines and compares the mediating effect of these factors between a traditional celebrity and purchase intention and brand trust on the one hand, and micro-celebrity and purchase intention and brand trust on the other hand. In order to establish what are the effects of influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure have on purchase intention and brand trust, the sections ahead take a more detailed look into the dependent, independent, and mediating variables of this study as well as the interactions between the independent variables.

## 2.1. Dependent variables

### *Purchase intention*

Purchase intention is the first dependent variable in this research because the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention is somewhat unclear due to studies showing contradictory results. For instance, the study of Johansen and Guldvik (2017) failed to establish a positive effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention when tested on blog content. However, other studies researching the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention argue that there is a positive relationship between them (McCormick, 2016; Lisichkova & Othman, 2017). But firstly, in order to answer the abovementioned research question, it is important to define the concept of purchase intention. Purchase intention is defined by Spears and Singh (2004, p. 56) as the conscious decision of an individual to purchase a particular brand. The concept of purchase intention is part of one of the most influential theories for predicting and understanding human behaviour which is namely the theory of reasoned action developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1967, 1980). According to this theory, in order for an individual to carry out a specific behaviour, he or she first needs to form the intention to perform this behaviour. The intention is shaped by two factors - the attitude towards the behaviour and the subjective

norms regarding the performance of this behaviour as well as a third factor in the extended version of the theory - behavioural control. The attitude of an individual is influenced by their behavioural beliefs and perceived favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the outcomes (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 194). Thus, attitudes form a person's mind regarding an object or behaviour, making them like or dislike it. The other factor influencing behavioural intention is the subjective norms that incorporate a person's normative beliefs and their motivation to comply with them (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Meskaran, Ismail, and Shanmugam (2013, p. 308) refer to normative beliefs as the perceived approval or disapproval regarding the behaviour in mind coming from important people like family and friends in the surrounding of the individual.

### *Brand trust*

As Hiscock (2001, p. 1) has described it, the main goal of marketing is to create a connection between the brand and its consumers and the way to do that is by creating trust. Brand trust is the second dependent variable of this study and it is defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) as "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function". Previous research shows that brand trust can be enhanced by the personal characteristics of the brand endorser (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015) and that word-of-mouth communication and building a community around a brand have a positive effect on brand trust (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay & Rochard, 2017; Hudson, Huang, Roth & Madden, 2016). Furthermore, when researching the role of brand trust for consumers studies reveal that it is of high significance for generating commitment, loyalty, and repurchase among other consumer reactions (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). According to the study of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), reaching such consumer responses results in big advantages for the brand including bigger market shares and higher prices. Furthermore, the research of Brown and Hayes (2008, p. 179) shows that when a company earns a consumer's trust, in 54 percent of the cases the consumer will recommend the product to others. Because of the big advantages that brand trust brings, it is important to determine which factors and combination of factors have the most positive effect for influencing brand trust.

### 2.2. Influencer type

The essence of influencer marketing is to use a person that is popular and has a large base of followers on a social media platform. However, a major part of it is to decide whether to choose a traditional celebrity or a micro-celebrity as a product endorser. This introduces the first independent variable of this study and namely – *influencer type*. In order to establish the effectiveness of both types of influencers, this section presents the characteristics and differences between them.

#### *Traditional celebrities*

Celebrities endorsing brands and taking the role of a brand ambassador is an established practice within the marketing world (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan, 1999). Studies have confirmed the effectiveness of celebrities for the high rate of return of investment (Mathur, Mathur & Rangan, 1997). A celebrity can be defined as "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCracken, 1989). By using a well-known and liked celebrity, brands activate associations between the product and the celebrity which leads to an increase of brand awareness as well as easier recall of the endorsed product among potential consumers (Keller, 2008). An important reason according to Martin and Bush (2000) why celebrities constitute as a good

brand endorser is because their fans look up to them and aim to resemble them by adopting their looks and behaviours. It has become easier for celebrities to be in touch with their fans through their social media channels that are accessible to everyone.

### *Micro-celebrities*

The rise of social media gives the opportunity to not only celebrities but also non-famous people to produce an unlimited amount of content and share it with their audience. This has led to a new phenomenon known as micro-celebrities. By using social media, non-famous people are able to present themselves as a “public persona” (Marwick, 2015) that produces content liked by a large number of people, viewed as a fan base. Although the fans of a micro-celebrity can be small in number, far away from the millions of followers of traditional celebrities, they are still influential. According to Clarewells (2014) and Marwick (2015), micro-celebrity is defined as an individual who becomes famous by constructing and presenting to the public a carefully created character who uses videos, pictures, blogs, and audios to increase their social presence and popularity among their audience. In other words, micro-celebrities have gained fame through social media. Different micro-celebrities are active in different fields. Their expertise can vary from food, beauty and fashion to technology and activism.

There is one important question that needs to be answered – What distinguishes micro-celebrities from traditional celebrities apart from the already mentioned differences in the way they become famous? A very important difference that makes micro-celebrities appealing to marketers to use them as influencers is their relationship with their followers. Micro-celebrities have a two-way relationship with their followers and they use social media to interact with them and let them gain insight of their private life. In this way the followers start to feel like the micro-celebrity is part of their friends’ circle (Senft, 2013). Furthermore, the audience is a receiver of content and part of a community at the same time, while with traditional celebrities the bidirectionality is lacking. In spite of being paid to endorse a brand, sharing their authentic experience with products and promoting only brands that they like and having an open and relatively authentic relationship with their followers puts the communication of micro-celebrities somewhere in the middle between brand endorsement and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Newman, 2015). According to Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) that makes them more likeable than traditional celebrities.

Since the positive effect of using a traditional celebrity on influencing consumers’ purchase intention towards the sponsored content has already been proven (McCormick, 2016) it raises the question if micro-celebrity endorsements will be more effective in social media platforms compared to the ones of traditional celebrities. According to a study by Lisichkova and Othman (2017), micro-celebrities are also influential on audience’s purchase intention, however, a few studies can be used to make a comparison between both types of influencers without reaching a clear conclusion. While the research of Gräve (2017) established traditional celebrities as more liked and influential compared to micro-celebrities, the study of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) shows the opposite – namely that micro-celebrities are found to be more influential. Their study makes a review of previous studies supporting the standpoint that micro-celebrities are viewed as more credible than traditional celebrities. Furthermore, according to Wiley (2014) micro-celebrities seem to be becoming more influential due to the fact that they are perceived as more authentic and accessible compared to traditional celebrities which is also supported by the study of Camahort (2016).

The research on the effects of influencer marketing on brand trust is somewhat limited. On the one hand, there are studies, not restricted to social media, which have shown a positive relationship between a traditional celebrity and brand trust (Amos, Holmes & Stutton, 2015; Philipov, 2017; Sandeep & Sidheswar, 2017). On the other hand, however, according to Habibi, Laroche, and Richard (2014), an important part of establishing brand trust is being part of a community supporting the brand. As the abovementioned shows in terms of community engagement, micro-celebrities seem to be more effective because their type of communication is more similar to eWOM communication and communication between community members.

In spite of the unclear conclusion on the comparison between micro-celebrities and traditional celebrities on the one hand and the positioning of micro-celebrities as part of the community of their followers, on the other hand, there are more studies supporting micro-celebrities as more relatable and influential. Based on the literature review, the following prediction is formulated:

***H1: Micro-celebrities will have a more positive influence on purchase intention and brand trust compared to traditional celebrities.***

### 2.3. Brand familiarity

In terms of this research, brand familiarity refers to the product promoted by an influencer and according to Baker, Hutchinson, Moore, and Nedugadi (1986) it is defined as a “construct that is directly related to the amount of time that has been spent processing information about the brand”. Furthermore, brand familiarity is a reflection of the experience and knowledge of the consumer about a brand (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987 as cited by Sundaram & Webster, 1999). Familiarity with a brand results from exposure to the brand in advertisements, in the store or online as well as the recognition of the brand name due to a previous purchase or its use. In previous research, there has been a differentiation between brand familiarity and brand awareness, where awareness is when you have seen and noticed a brand logo, familiarity is when you have knowledge about the brand (Adams, 2012; Cool, 2016). However, in the study at hand, the purpose of the independent variable brand familiarity is to indicate if the participant has encountered or not the brand prior to the survey. Thus, there will be no distinction between both concepts.

Previous research on brand familiarity and brand awareness has indicated that it has a positive and moreover significant influence on purchase intention when applied to in-store research (Porral, Fernández, Boga & Mangín, 2013; Semeijn, Van Riel & Ambrosini, 2004). In general, brand familiarity increases the positive attitude and trust of customers towards the brand. The positive relationship between brand familiarity and brand trust is reinforced by the research of Ha and Perks (2005) testing brand trust in the setting of an online shopping situation. Furthermore, brand familiarity is used by individuals as a heuristic when they are choosing a product (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000).

In spite that there is no clear conclusion if the follower's familiarity with the endorsed brand plays a role in increasing the purchase intention or not, the fact that there is more previous research supporting that familiar brands have a more positive influence on consumers than unfamiliar brands leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

***H2: A familiar brand will have a more positive influence on purchase intention and brand trust in comparison to an unfamiliar brand.***

## 2.4. Sponsorship disclosure

Sponsored recommendation posts are described by Mutum and Wang (2010) as contents generated by a consumer containing a message about the sponsored brand. The sponsorship can be disclosed using diverse hashtags as for instance #ad, #sponsored, #partnership, and #paid (Chacon, 2017). Furthermore, sponsored posts are to be differentiated from product reviews. A sponsored post involves an influencer getting compensated by the brand to promote the product on their social media channel or blog, whereas product reviews are written by consumers on the brand's page or on a seller's website (Lu et al., 2014, p. 259). However, in addition to being sponsored, influencer's recommendation message is also seen as a consumer review and an electronic word-of-mouth. An influencer's audience is more likely to perceive the post even more as an eWOM communication when the influencer has not indicated that the post is sponsored.

Sponsorship disclosures are another aspect of influencer marketing on which the scientific literature is divided and not conclusive whether or not they increase the audience's purchase intention. On the one hand, there is a study by Brady (2017) showing that when the content of social media influencers is indicated as sponsored it provokes sceptical attitude and does not lead to an increase in purchase intention. However, on the other hand, the research of Lu et al. (2014) found out that when the endorsed product is a search good, then indicating the post as sponsored results in a positive attitude towards the recommendation and increased purchase intention. The opposing results of these studies lead to no consensus regarding the sponsorship disclosure on influencers' posts. Additionally, a study by Hwang and Jeong (2015) makes a comparison between conditions with and without sponsorship disclosure, leading to the results that no disclosure is more positively received.

Against the effectiveness of a disclosed sponsorship point also the Persuasion Knowledge Model by Friestad and Wright (1994) as well as the study of Reijmersdal, Fansen, van Noort, Opre, Vanderberg, Reusch, Lieshout and Boerman (2016), testing the activation of persuasion resistance by sponsorship disclosure in blog posts. Their research confirms that disclosing to readers that the content in a blog is sponsored triggers their resistance towards the sponsored content. This further results in more negative attitude towards the brand and lowered purchase intentions. Based on these results, it can be also assumed that indicating that a content is sponsored will lead to lowered brand trust. Based on this literature review, the study at hand will expect the following effect of sponsorship disclosure as an independent variable:

***H3: A message with no sponsorship disclosure will have a more positive influence on purchase intention and brand trust compared to a message with a sponsorship disclosure.***

## 2.5. Interactions

### *Influencer type and sponsorship disclosure*

According to previous research, messages of traditional celebrities without a sponsorship disclosure have a weaker effect on activating the persuasion knowledge of the audience compared to messages with a disclosure (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017). These results show that when the message is indicated as sponsored it is more likely to be perceived as an advertisement compared to when it is not indicated as sponsored. Furthermore, the study of Reijmersdal et al. (2016) testing sponsorship disclosures in blog content confirms that audiences form

more positive evaluations towards the content without sponsorship disclosure compared to the content with disclosure. Additionally, the results of the study of Kim and Lee (2017) show that recommendations from a friend are received more positively than recommendations from a traditional celebrity even if the content of the celebrity's message was organic or without a sponsorship disclosure. The study of Liljander, Gummerus, and Söderlund (2015) found that whether a blogger discloses their message as sponsored or not, does not have a significant difference in influencing the audience's evaluations. The findings of these studies in combination with the perception of micro-celebrities' messages as similar to a recommendation by a friend suggest that:

**H4:** *A message without a sponsorship disclosure will have a more positive effect on purchase intention and brand trust when the influencer is a micro-celebrity compared to a traditional celebrity.*

#### *Influencer type and brand familiarity*

As for brand familiarity, previous research indicates that people are more inclined to choose a familiar brand over an unfamiliar one. This suggests, as according to H2, that when the message of the influencer endorses a familiar brand it will be more effective in increasing the purchase intention and the brand trust compared to an unfamiliar brand. A study of Sundaram and Webster (1999) shows that there is a positive relationship between a word-of-mouth communication and brand familiarity. For the study at hand, this suggests that micro-celebrities, whose recommendations are perceived more as an eWOM compared to the messages of traditional celebrities, will have more influence on brand trust and purchase intention when they promote a familiar brand. Thus leading to the following hypotheses:

**H5:** *Promoting a familiar brand will have a more positive effect on purchase intention and brand trust when the influencer is a micro-celebrity compared to a traditional celebrity.*

#### *Brand familiarity and sponsorship disclosure*

The expectation about the interaction between brand familiarity and sponsorship disclosure is built upon the research findings discussed in section 2.3. More specifically, the following hypothesis is based on the concept that a familiar brand is preferred over an unfamiliar brand as well as that a message without a sponsorship disclosure evokes more positive responses as opposed to a message with a sponsorship disclosure. In addition, the study of Lu et al. (2014) indicates that when a message is disclosed as sponsored the familiarity with the brand increases the positive evaluation compared to when the brand is not familiar. Based on these findings the following hypothesis is formulated:

**H6:** *A message without a sponsorship disclosure, promoting a familiar brand, will have a more positive effect on purchase intention and brand trust compared to a message with a sponsorship disclosure.*

#### *Influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure*

Based on the literature review on all three independent variables, they are expected to interact with each other in the following way:

**H7:** *A message by a micro-celebrity not disclosed as sponsored that promotes a familiar brand will have the most positive effect on purchase intention and brand trust.*

## 2.6. Mediating variables

Nevertheless, being a celebrity or a micro-celebrity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to be an effective social media influencer. In order for the endorsement to be efficient and successful, research shows that the influencer must fulfil some requirements as to the characteristics they possess and the way the audience perceives them (Ohanian, 1991; Lynch and Schuler, 1994; Erdogan, 1999). According to Erdogan (1999), there are two models of personal characteristics - *the source attractiveness model* and *the source credibility model* that affect the perception and effectiveness of the endorsement. The source credibility model refers to the trustworthiness and expertise of the endorser which are transferred onto the message. Trustworthiness translates into believability, honesty and integrity and expertise indicates “the knowledge, experience or skills possessed by an endorser” (Erdogan, 1999, p. 298).

The source attractiveness model, however, refers to the physical appearance and social status of the influencer. This model assumes that the effectiveness of the endorser’s message depends on their similarity, familiarity, and likability by the audience (McGuire, 1985 as cited by Erdogan, 1999, p. 299). Similarity refers to the extent a follower perceives the influencer as similar to them, familiarity is the knowledge a follower has attained about the influencer through exposure and finally, likability is the range to which an influencer appeals through their physical appearance and behavior.

According to these two models, the personal characteristics of the influencer, as well as the perceived characteristics of the shared message have an impact on the follower. Based on that, these models are assumed to be mediating the relationship between the independent variable - influencer type and the dependent variables as well as the relationship between sponsorship disclosure and the dependent variables. According to Ohanian (1990), there are three components from these models that are the most important indicators for the attractiveness and credibility of the source - attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Therefore, these three indicators will be included in this research as *mediating variables* (see *Figure 1*). Based on H1 and H3 in combination with both source attractiveness and source credibility model, the following hypotheses are derived:

**H8:** *The effect of an influencer on purchase intention and brand trust is mediated by their attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise.*

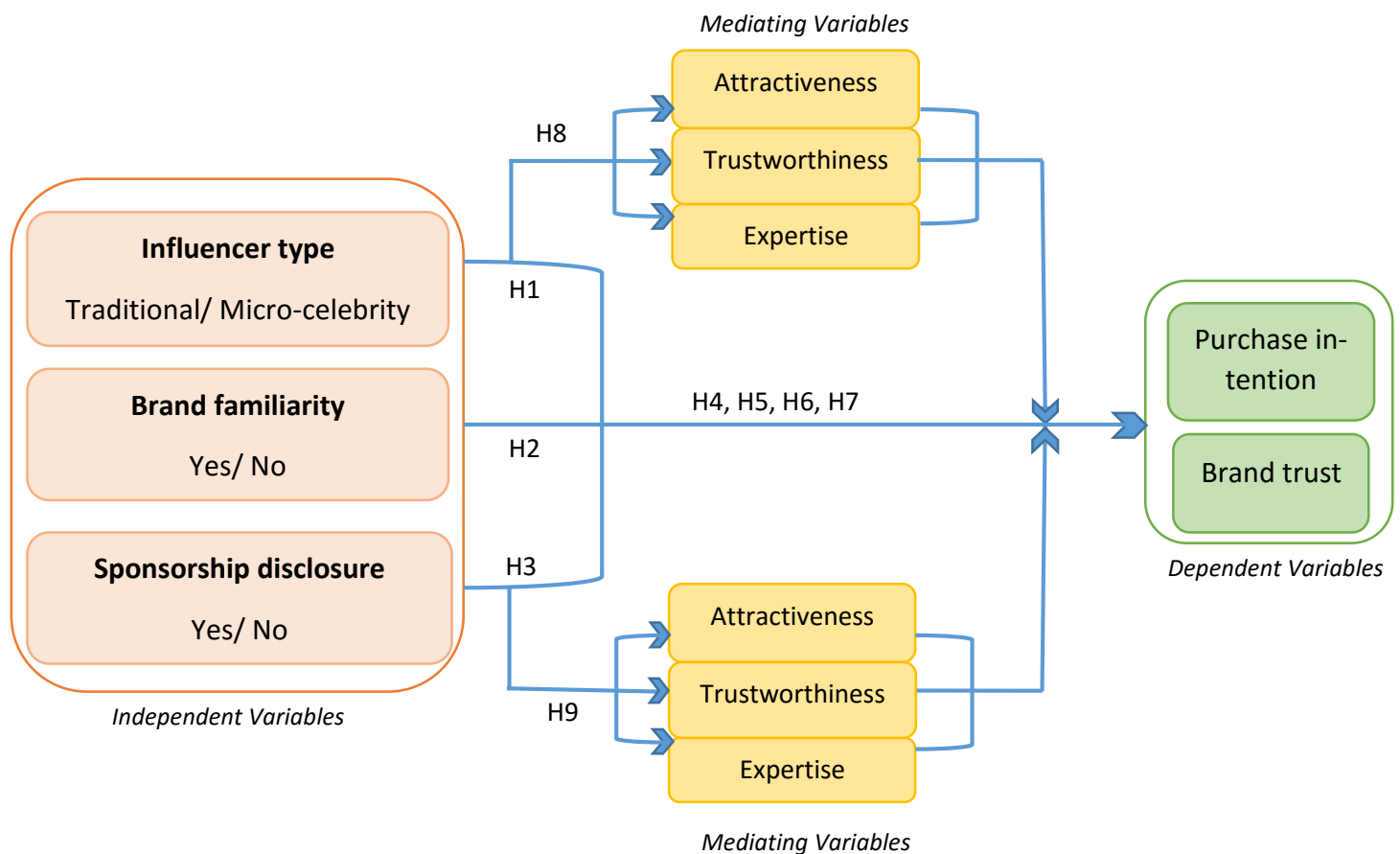
**H9:** *The effect of a sponsorship disclosure (indicated or not) on purchase intention and brand trust is mediated by the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of the influencer.*

## 2.7. The research model

In order to illustrate the research questions, the following figure offers a graphic representation of the research model of the study (*Figure 1*). On the left side the independent variables of the study are indicated - influencer type (traditional/ micro-celebrity), brand familiarity (familiar/ unfamiliar) and sponsorship disclosure (yes/ no). The variables that this study is testing, that are the dependent variables, are purchase intention and brand trust. There are three mediating variables - attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. They mediate the effect of influencer

type on the dependent variables and the effect of sponsorship disclosure on the dependent variables.

Figure 1: Research model



### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research context

For the study at hand, it was decided to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables in the context of Bulgaria. The decision to limit the nationality of the research to Bulgarian has to do with previous studies suggesting cross-country comparisons (Gunawan & Huanng, 2015; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Hwang & Jeong, 2015) to which this study will be contributing. Moreover, the choice of the Bulgarian context is also attributed to the fact that influencer marketing is slowly becoming part of the marketing mix in Bulgaria and to the author's knowledge, there is no previous research testing the effectiveness of influencers' messages on purchase intention and brand trust in Bulgaria.

Furthermore, with regard to the social media context, this research is restricted to Instagram as a social media platform. Although Instagram is the newest social media platform amongst Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, its release date is October 2010 (Instagram.com), according to the research by Hashoff (Hashoff cited by Nanji, 2017), it is one of the most popular and highly preferred by influencers and brands for influencer marketing. In comparison to the other platforms, Instagram is picture-based and it allows users to easily upload photos. Sharing photos in

online communities has become a way to communicate with each other and has grown significantly in recent years. The influence that photos in general and photos of faces, in particular, have as part of the interpersonal communication offline as well as online can be explained through neuroscience. The interpretation of facial expressions and mimics is a highly developed visual skill of people and integrating photos in a communication's channel increases the impact of non-verbal communication (Morton & Johnson, 1991, p. 164; Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014, p. 965). In addition, the results of the research of Bakhshi, Shamma, and Gilbert (2014) shows that Instagram photos with faces are more likely to receive likes and comments than photos without faces, which is consistent with findings from offline studies about the higher involvement with photos of faces. These results offer an explanation for the growing popularity of Instagram and thus the interest of organizations and brands to advertise on this social media platform. This is why Instagram posts will be used for the purposes of the research at hand.

### 3.2. Research design

This research uses a 2x2x2 factorial design constructed as an online experiment. The study explores the effect of influencer type: traditional celebrity vs. micro-celebrity; brand familiarity: yes vs. no; and sponsorship disclosure: yes vs. no on purchase intention and brand trust and it is hence an exploratory study. For the purpose of the research, the deductive approach is being adopted which is based on theory and research questions followed by the testing of the theories by formulating hypotheses in order to determine the relationship between the tested variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.489) as opposed to the inductive approach.

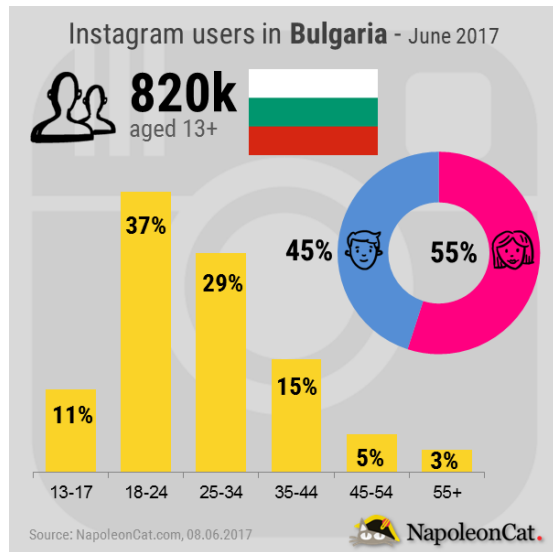
The combinations of the independent variables amount to 8 different conditions that are illustrated in *Table 1*. These conditions consist of the independent variables (influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure) that are manipulated as part of the experiment. Additionally, the research includes the mediating variables (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) that mediate the relationship of influencer type and sponsorship disclosure to the dependent variables (purchase intention and brand trust).

*Table 1: Experimental conditions*

Condition	Influencer type	Brand familiarity	Sponsorship disclosure	Number of participants
1	Traditional celebrity	Yes	Yes	30
2	Traditional celebrity	Yes	No	31
3	Traditional celebrity	No	Yes	31
4	Traditional celebrity	No	No	33
5	Micro-celebrity	Yes	Yes	29
6	Micro-celebrity	Yes	No	28
7	Micro-celebrity	No	Yes	30
8	Micro-celebrity	No	No	31

### 3.3. Participants

Figure 2: Instagram users in Bulgaria, NapoleonCat (2017)



Since the country of the research is set to be Bulgaria, the study will use only Bulgarians as research subjects. Another context requirement is for the participants to be Instagram users. Furthermore, the statistical data of NapoleonCat (2017) shows that the age groups 18-24 (37%) and 25-34 (29%) taken together build 66% of the Instagram users in Bulgaria (Figure 2). This sets the age group for the participants in this research in the ages between 18 and 34. As far as the gender of the participants goes, the worldwide statistic shows that 68% of Instagram users are female (Omnicores Agency, 2017) and according to NapoleonCat (2017) more than 50% of the Bulgarian Instagram users are female (see Figure 2). Thus leading to the decision to include only female participants in the research and also to use

a product relevant only to women. Overall 728 people took part in the study. However, after taking into account all of the pre-requirements set for the participants 243 people were left as a valid sample. The number of participants per condition can be seen in Table 1.

### 3.4. Procedure

The first step of the research was to conduct a preliminary test in order to determine the reliability of the measurement scales and the significance of the constructs. In total 28 participants took part in the preliminary test but only 22 of the responses were without missing data. The preliminary study was used to test which micro-celebrity and which traditional celebrity out of three people for each type was recognized as most familiar and also to determine a most familiar and a least familiar brand again out of three brands for each type. The preliminary test found Mihaela Fileva to be the most popular traditional celebrity ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) and Valerie Yordanova to be the most popular micro-celebrity ( $M = 2.30$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) with a significant difference between both ( $p < .05$ ). As for brands, the most familiar was found to be Maybelline ( $M = 4.96$ ,  $SD = 0.2$ ) in contrary to Divine, which was most unfamiliar ( $M = 1.49$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ). The difference between both brands was significant as well ( $p < .05$ ).

The main questionnaire (see *Appendix 1*) included eight different conditions. The conditions, as described in the research design, are divided into two groups of four conditions per influencer type. As a stimulus material, each condition contained a modified Instagram post of the influencer accustomed to the condition and containing the influencer holding respectively a familiar or an unfamiliar brand of mascara. A mascara was chosen because it is an object that speaks to women, who are the target group of this research. Additionally, the message of the Instagram post was manipulated to contain or not contain #sponsored in respect to the condition. The eight pictures used as the stimulus material for each condition are displayed in *Appendix 2*.

The beginning of the questionnaire informed the participants about the goal of the research, the anonymity of the results, and provided the e-mail address of the researcher for questions and further information. After participants gave their consent to participate, they were asked about their demographics which included gender, age, nationality, educational level as well as their

Instagram usage habits. In the cases when the participants did not fulfil the requirements of the research to be female, over 18, Bulgarian, and to have an Instagram account, they were forwarded to the end of the questionnaire. After acquiring the demographics of the participants and when they met the requirements, they were randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. Each condition started with a question of whether the participant was familiar with the influencer. If not, they were sent to the end of the questionnaire. The remaining participants were shown the respective Instagram post of the condition. The questions were the same for each condition. The first three topics of questions after showing the Instagram post, each topic containing three questions, were used as manipulation check questions. They were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree.

The first manipulation check for familiarity with the influencer consisting of three questions used the scale of Bailey and Cole (2004) with three items amongst which “She is famous.” and “I am familiar with her.” The scale was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .60$ ), however, the reliability is not that high. Additionally, a T-test was performed in order to determine whether the manipulation of the variable worked and the results showed a significant difference between traditional and micro-celebrity ( $M_{\text{traditional celebrity}} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ;  $M_{\text{microcelebrity}} = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). However, the difference in the means is not that big, which led to an additional T-test including only the last item in the scale and namely “I have seen her before on social media.” Although the difference was not that big again, the test resulted in a higher score for the micro-celebrity, thus more people have seen the micro-celebrity in social media compared to the traditional celebrity ( $M_{\text{traditional celebrity}} = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ;  $M_{\text{microcelebrity}} = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ).

Second, the manipulation check for brand familiarity used three questions based on the scale of Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) and it included three items amongst which “This mascara brand is familiar to me.” and “I have heard of this mascara brand.” The reliability for this scale was found to be good ( $\alpha = .95$ ). In order to determine if the manipulation was effective and if the familiar brand was clearly distinguishable from the unfamiliar, a T-test was conducted. The results show a significant difference between both conditions ( $M_{\text{familiar}} = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ;  $M_{\text{unfamiliar}} = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The third and final manipulation check was for recognizing the sponsorship of the Instagram post. The scale that was used was adapted from Reijmersdal, Fransen, van Noort, Oprea, Vandenberg, Reusch, Lieshout, and Boerman (2016) and it included “This post is advertising.” and “This post contains advertising.” The reliability of this scale was also good,  $\alpha = .81$ . The T-test showed a significant difference between the conditions with and without a sponsorship disclosure ( $M_{\text{disclosure}} = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ;  $M_{\text{no disclosure}} = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). However, the difference in the means between both conditions does not allow to say that both conditions are perceived as differently as intended. Another T-test was conducted with only the last item of the scale “This post displays paid content.” because it seems to be a more sufficient measure for the difference in the conditions. The results show a slightly bigger difference in the means between both conditions ( $M_{\text{disclosure}} = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ;  $M_{\text{no disclosure}} = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) with sponsorship disclosure condition more recognized as showing paid content compared to no sponsorship disclosure condition.

Following the manipulation check questions were three questions requesting participants to rate the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of the influencer on a bipolar Likert scale. The last two questions were about the purchase intention and brand trust of the participant measured

on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree). The scales used to measure these variables are described in the next section. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and informed that the photos in the survey were adapted and modified only for the purpose of the research and were not the original content of the influencer.

### 3.5. Measures

#### 3.5.1. Dependent variables

In order to measure the dependent variables, scales from previous studies were applied in the questionnaire. The dependent variable purchase intention was measured on a 4-item scale adapted from Tylor and Baker (1994) and Putrevu and Lord (1994). The items of the scale included “I will purchase [brand name] the next time I need a mascara.” and “It is likely that I will buy [brand name]’s mascara.” The other dependent variable in this research – brand trust was measured on a 3-item scale adapted from Habibi, Laroche, and Richard (2014) and some of the items included “I trust [brand name].” and “[Brand name] is an honest brand.” The full list of items for both scales can be found in the questionnaire in Appendix 1. The items for both dependent variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree for both variables. Both scales were found to be reliable with  $\alpha = .77$  for purchase intention and  $\alpha = .84$  for brand trust.

#### 3.5.2. Mediating variables

The attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as the mediating variables of this study were measured on a scale adapted from Ohanian (1990). It included the three components – attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, with five items as measurements for each. However, the questionnaire is meant for Bulgarian audience and it was translated into Bulgarian. In the process of translation, it appeared that the meaning in Bulgarian of two items out of each group of five coincided. Therefore, one item out of each group was excluded due to repetition. The mediating variables were measured on a bipolar Likert scale, consisting of the following four items also displayed in Appendix 1: Attractiveness: attractive/unattractive, sexy/not sexy, beautiful/ugly and elegant/plain; Trustworthiness: trustworthy/untrustworthy, honest/dishonest, reliable/unreliable, and sincere/insincere; Expertise: expert/not expert, experienced/not experienced, knowledgeable/unknowledgeable, and qualified/unqualified. All three of the scales were found to be reliable (attractiveness  $\alpha = .91$ ; trustworthiness  $\alpha = .92$ ; expertise  $\alpha = .92$ ).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Main and interaction effects

In order to determine the significant effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables in the study at hand, SPSS was used to conduct the analysis of all the possible effects in this research. In particular, for the main and interaction effects, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine which effects were significant. The MANOVA results showed two significant main effects and two significant interaction effects. A more detailed look at these effects is provided in the following subsections.

#### 4.1.1. Main effects

##### *H1: Influencer type*

The Between-Subjects-Effects-Test of MANOVA showed a significant effect of influencer type on purchase intention ( $F(1,235) = 15.04, p < 0.05$ ) and on brand trust ( $F(1,235) = 18.58, p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, in order to establish which type of influencer had a more positive effect on both dependent variables, the means for both groups were compared using a one-way-ANOVA. The influence of the micro-celebrity in comparison to the traditional celebrity on purchase intention ( $M_{\text{microcelebrity}} = 2.87, SD = 1.07; M_{\text{traditional celebrity}} = 2.38, SD = 0.96$ ) was more significant and the micro-celebrity also had more positive effect on brand trust compared to the traditional celebrity ( $M_{\text{microcelebrity}} = 3.03, SD = 1.01; M_{\text{traditional celebrity}} = 2.54, SD = 0.90$ ) (see Table 2). This shows that the micro-celebrity has a bigger influence on purchase intention and brand trust compared to the traditional celebrity which confirms H1.

##### *H2: Brand familiarity*

The second main effect that MANOVA showed is the significant influence of brand familiarity on both purchase intention ( $F(1,235) = 27.63, p < 0.05$ ) and brand trust ( $F(1,235) = 42.89, p < 0.05$ ). Exactly as with the influencer type, the means for both groups – familiar, on the one hand, and unfamiliar brand, on the other hand, had to be compared in order to have a conclusive result on which has a bigger influence on the dependent variables. In order to do that, a one-way-ANOVA was conducted. Comparing the means revealed a bigger effect of the familiar brand on purchase intention ( $M_{\text{familiar}} = 2.95, SD = 1.03; M_{\text{unfamiliar}} = 2.30, SD = 0.96$ ) and on brand trust ( $M_{\text{familiar}} = 3.16, SD = 0.91; M_{\text{unfamiliar}} = 2.42, SD = 0.91$ ) compared to the unfamiliar brand (see Table 2). These results positively confirm the second hypothesis about the bigger influence of a familiar brand on purchase intention and brand trust compared to an unfamiliar brand.

##### *H3: Sponsorship disclosure*

The MANOVA analysis shows that the third main effect of sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention and brand trust is not significant. However, the results for both conditions, with and without sponsorship disclosure are displayed in Table 2.

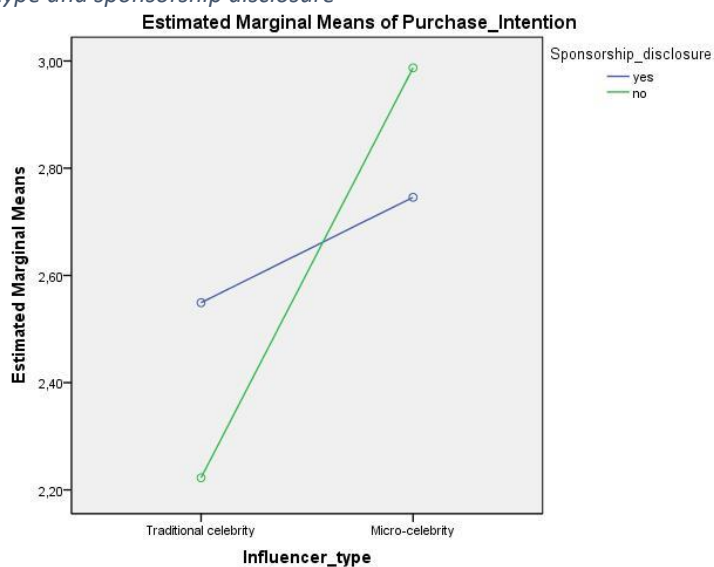
Table 2: MANOVA main effects with groups' means (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree) and standard deviation

Independent variable	Dependent variable	F	p	Mean (SD)	
				Micro-celebrity	Traditional celebrity
Influencer type	Purchase intention	15.04	.00	2.87 (1.07)	2.38 (0.96)
	Brand trust	18.58	.00	3.03 (1.01)	2.54 (0.90)
				Familiar brand	Unfamiliar brand
Brand familiarity	Purchase intention	27.63	.00	2.95 (1.03)	2.30 (0.96)
	Brand trust	42.89	.00	3.16 (0.91)	2.42 (0.91)
				Without sponsorship disclosure	With sponsorship disclosure
Sponsorship disclosure	Purchase intention	0.09	.77	2.59 (1.13)	2.65 (0.95)
	Brand trust	0.43	.51	2.81 (1.01)	2.75 (0.95)

#### 4.1.2. Interaction effects

##### H4: Influencer type in combination with sponsorship disclosure

Figure 3: Profile Plot of the interaction effect between influencer type and sponsorship disclosure

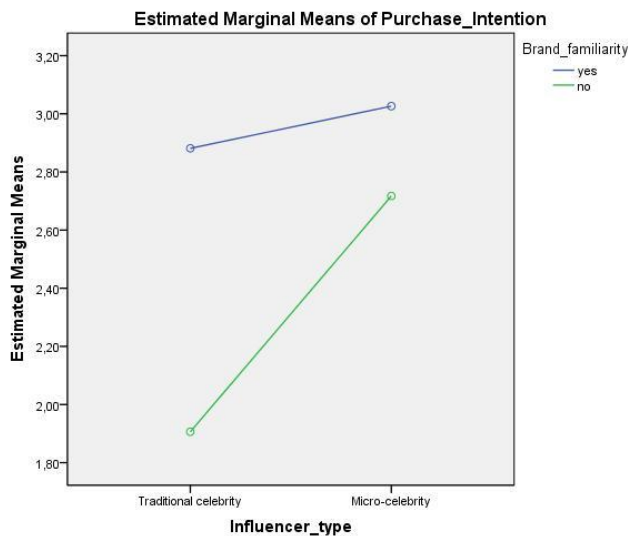


The results of MANOVA show two significant two-way interaction effects. The first significant interaction is the interaction between influencer type and sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention ( $F(1,235) = 5.39$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 3). Figure 3 visualizes this interaction. Furthermore, in order to determine which combination of groups between traditional celebrity and micro-celebrity, with sponsorship disclosure and without sponsorship disclosure had the most positive effect on purchase intention, a two-way ANOVA was performed. The results show the

highest effect on purchase intention occurs when a micro-celebrity is combined with no sponsorship disclosure ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). This result partially confirms H4.

### H5: Influencer type in combination with brand familiarity

Figure 4: Profile Plot of the interaction effect between influencer type and brand familiarity



The second significant two-way interaction is the one of influencer type and brand familiarity on purchase intention ( $F(1,235) = 7.27, p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 3). The visualization of this interaction is displayed in Figure 4. As with the first interaction, a two-way ANOVA was conducted. The results show the most positive influence on purchase intention when the combination of micro-celebrity and familiar brand is present ( $M = 3.03, SD = 1.18$ ). In terms of the hypotheses of the research, this result partially confirms H5.

Table 3: MANOVA with the significant two-way interaction effects

Interaction effect	Dependent variable	F	p
<b>Influencer type * brand familiarity</b>	Purchase intention	7.27	.008
<b>Influencer type * sponsorship disclosure</b>	Purchase intention	5.39	.021

### Hypothesis 6 and Hypothesis 7

The results of the analysis show that the third two-way interaction between brand familiarity and sponsorship disclosure is not significant. In terms of the hypotheses of the research, this means that Hypothesis 6 which predicts a familiar brand and no sponsorship disclosure to be more influential on purchase intention and brand trust compared to a familiar brand and a sponsorship disclosure, is rejected. Furthermore, the three-way interaction of this research, predicting that the most positive effect on the dependent variables will result from the combination of a micro-celebrity, a familiar brand, and no sponsorship disclosure, was found insignificant and this leads to the rejection of Hypothesis 7.

### 4.2. Mediating effects

The mediating effects in the study at hand were also measured using SPSS but an additional feature was installed to the program – Process written by Andrew F. Hayes. This additional program allows doing of all the analysis needed to determine if the mediating effect is significant in one command. In order for a mediating effect to be significant, there are four requirements that should be fulfilled according to the theory for mediation of Baron and Kenny (1986). First, the relationship between the independent variable and the mediating variable should be

significant. Next, the relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable should be significant. The last two requirements consist in the concept that the relationship between the independent variable proceeding through the mediating variable to the dependent variable should be significant and also this relationship should be improved compared to the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable without the mediating variable. The mediation analysis approach of Baron and Kenny (1986) suggests that in order to have a mediation, after the mediating variable has been introduced, the independent variable should not predict the dependent variable any more or its effect should at least be lessened. Furthermore, it can be differentiated between a full and a partial mediation. Full mediation is observed when the value of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent proceeding through the mediating variable is equal to zero. Partial mediation is present when the formerly described effect is not zero but is smaller compared to the effect of the independent on the dependent variable without the presence of a mediating variable.

After conducting the analysis with the four steps combined in the program Process, the results show the following three significant mediating effects.

*Influencer type → Trustworthiness → Purchase intention*

The first significant mediating effect is the one of the independent variable influencer type on purchase intention mediated by trustworthiness. The first step of the analysis shows significant relationship between influencer type and purchase intention ( $F(1,241) = 13.68$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.05$ ,  $b = 0.48$ ,  $t(241) = 3.69$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The second step reveals significant effect of influencer type on trustworthiness ( $F(1,241) = 14.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $b = -0.46$ ,  $t(241) = -3.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Next, the effect of trustworthiness on purchase intention is revealed to be significant ( $F(2,240) = 9.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.07$ ,  $b = -0.15$ ,  $t(240) = -2.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) as well as the effect of influencer type on purchase intention controlling for trustworthiness ( $b = 0.41$ ,  $t(240) = 3.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the effect of influencer type on purchase intention when mediated seems to be improved compared to when it is not mediated by trustworthiness ( $b = 0.41 < b = 0.48$ ) but is not zero which means that the mediation is partial.

*Influencer type → Trustworthiness → Brand trust*

The second significant mediating effect is that of influencer type on brand trust mediated by trustworthiness. First, the analysis shows significant effect of influencer type on brand trust ( $F(1,241) = 16.02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $b = 0.49$ ,  $t(241) = 4.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The second step reveals significance of the effect of influencer type on trustworthiness ( $F(1,241) = 14.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $b = -0.46$ ,  $t(241) = -3.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Next the effect of trustworthiness on brand trust is also significant ( $F(2,240) = 11.44$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.09$ ,  $b = -0.16$ ,  $t(240) = -2.55$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and so is the effect of influencer type on brand trust controlling for trustworthiness ( $b = 0.42$ ,  $t(240) = 3.34$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results show an improvement of the effect of influencer type on brand trust when it is mediated by trustworthiness ( $b=0.42 < b = 0.49$ ) accounting for a partial mediation.

*Influencer type → Expertise → Brand trust*

The final significant effect revealed by the analysis is the effect of influencer type on brand trust mediated by expertise. The first step of the analysis shows significant effect of influencer type on brand trust ( $F(1,241) = 16.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $b = 0.49$ ,  $t(241) = 4.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The next significant effect is of influencer type on expertise ( $F(1,241) = 23.95$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 =$

0.09,  $b = -0.61$ ,  $t(241) = -4.89$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). At the next step of the analysis a significant effect of expertise on brand trust is revealed ( $F(2,240) = 12.92$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.09$ ,  $b = -0.19$ ,  $t(240) = -3.05$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and a significant effect of influencer type on brand trust controlling for expertise ( $b = 0.37$ ,  $t(240) = 2.97$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In conclusion, the effect of influencer type on brand trust is improved by the mediating variable ( $b = 0.37 < b = 0.49$ ) which reveals a partial mediation.

Since the variable influencer type is coded with 1 = traditional celebrity and 2 = micro-celebrity, this means that with a positive beta result for all three mediation results the effect of the micro-celebrity on the dependent variables mediated by trustworthiness and expertise is stronger compared to the effect of the traditional celebrity on the dependent variables mediated by the same variables. Additionally, the results show an insignificance of the effect of influencer type on purchase intention and brand trust mediated by attractiveness as well as the effect of influencer type on purchase intention mediated by expertise. Hence, confirming Hypothesis 8 only partially. Furthermore, the effects of sponsorship disclosure on the dependent variables mediated by attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise were revealed as insignificant which leads to the rejection of Hypothesis 9.

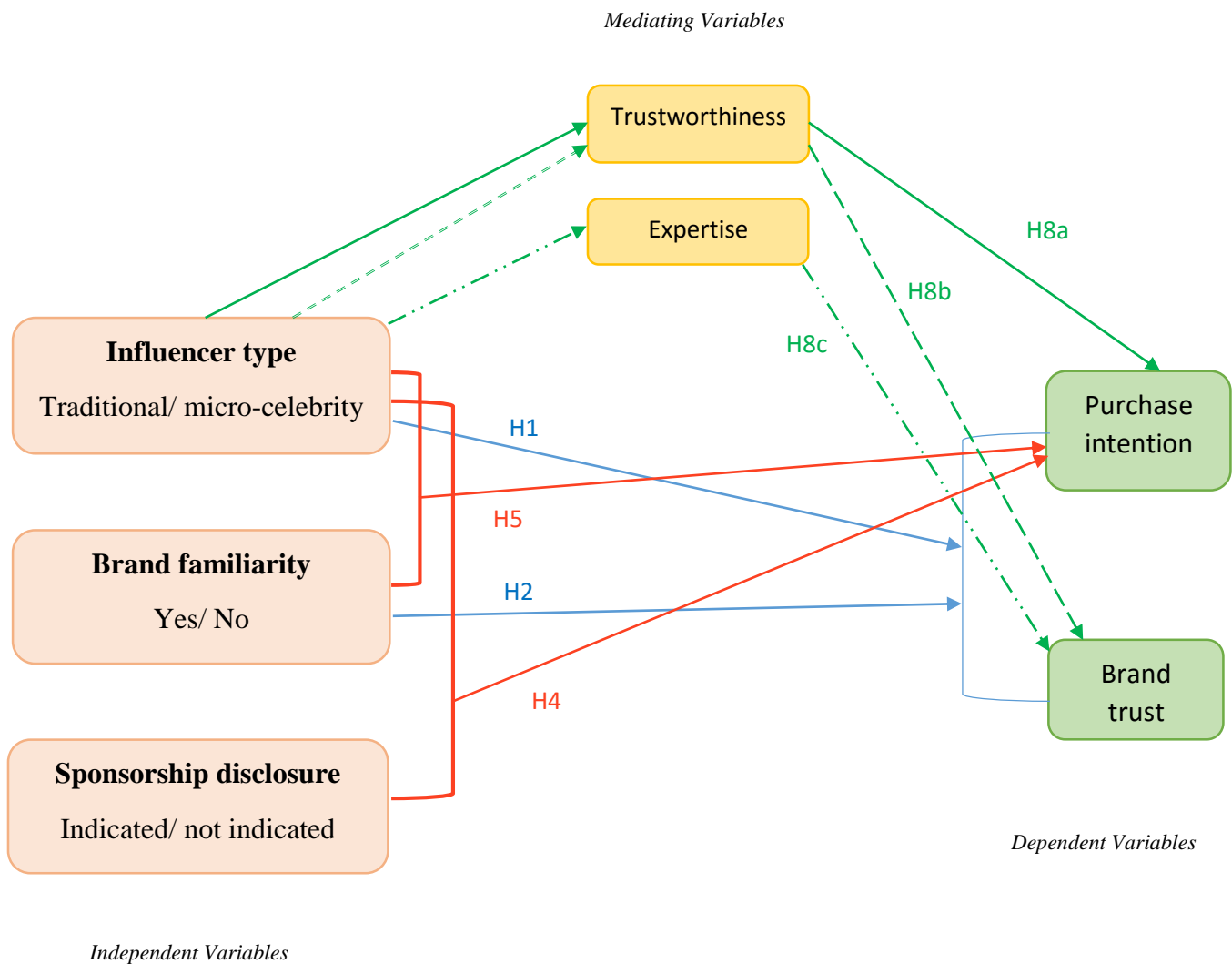
#### 4.3. Hypotheses and research model

The following table summarizes the results of the study and if they lead to the confirmation or the rejection of the predictions made in the theoretical framework. In *Figure 5* the significant effects revealed in the analysis are displayed on the research model.

Table 4: Summary of confirmed and rejected hypothesis

Hypotheses	Confirmed or rejected
<b>H1:</b> Micro-celebrities will have more influence on the purchase intention and brand trust of their followers compared to traditional celebrities.	Confirmed
<b>H2:</b> A familiar brand will have more influence on purchase intention and brand trust in comparison to an unfamiliar brand.	Confirmed
<b>H3:</b> A message with no sponsorship disclosure will have more influence on purchase intention and brand trust compared to a message with a sponsorship disclosure.	Rejected
<b>H4:</b> A message without a sponsorship disclosure will have bigger effect on purchase intention and brand trust when the influencer is a micro-celebrity compared to a traditional celebrity.	Partially confirmed
<b>H5:</b> Promoting a familiar brand will have bigger effect on purchase intention and brand trust when the influencer is a micro-celebrity compared to a traditional celebrity.	Partially confirmed
<b>H6:</b> A message without a sponsorship disclosure, promoting a familiar brand, will have bigger effect on purchase intention and brand trust compared to a message with a sponsorship disclosure.	Rejected
<b>H7:</b> A message by a micro-celebrity not disclosed as sponsored that promotes a familiar brand will have the most positive effect on purchase intention and brand trust.	Rejected
<b>H8:</b> The effect of an influencer on purchase intention and brand trust is mediated by their attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise.	Partially confirmed
<b>H9:</b> The effect of a sponsorship disclosure (indicated or not) on purchase intention and brand trust is mediated by the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of the influencer	Rejected

Figure 5: Research model with significant effects: blue - main effects, red - interaction effects, green - mediating effects



**Main effects** (in blue) - H1:  $p < .001$  and H2:  $p < .001$

**Interaction effects** (in red) - H4:  $p < .05$  and H5:  $p < .05$

**Mediating effects** (in green) – H8a:  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = 0.41$ ; H8b:  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = 0.42$  and H8c:  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta = 0.37$

## 5. Discussion

The objective of this research, as formulated in the research question, consisted in determining the effects of influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure on the purchase intention and brand trust of the individual. The analysis of the results of the study at hand provides a new insight into the field of influencer marketing and the following section is going to take a look at how this new information expands previously done research. Furthermore, this section will offer possible theoretical and practical implications as well as topics for future research and possible limitations encountered during the research.

The first important conclusion that this study reached is that micro-celebrities are more effective as social media influencers compared to traditional celebrities. The results fully confirm Hypothesis 1 and reveal that micro-celebrities have a more positive influence on both the purchase intention and brand trust of the audience in comparison to traditional celebrities. Furthermore, this research supports the results of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) and Wiley (2014) that micro-celebrities are more influential on their audience compared to traditional celebrities. As for the possible interpretation of these results, it is likely that micro-celebrities are perceived as more relatable, as a part of the individual's community as Wiley (2014), Camahort (2016) and Newman (2015) distinguish them from traditional celebrities and also as more open for interpersonal communication. Furthermore, it is revealed that micro-celebrities are especially effective on their own but in combination with a familiar brand on the one hand and no sponsorship disclosure, on the other hand, they positively affect only purchase intention and not brand trust. This partially confirms Hypotheses 4 and 5. This result is important from a practical standpoint because from a marketing perspective a central goal is to provoke an impulse in people to purchase the endorsed product. Thus, micro-celebrities successfully fulfil this objective and using them as social media influencers leads to the desired results.

Analysing the results from the second main effect of the research shows that a familiar brand has a more positive effect on purchase intention and brand trust compared to an unfamiliar brand, thus confirming Hypothesis 2. This conclusion supports the results of previous studies by Ha and Perks (2005) and Adams (2012) about the more positive effect of a familiar brand. Furthermore, the results of previous studies which have determined the positive influence of a familiar brand on purchase intention in in-store settings (Porral, Fernández, Boga & Mangín, 2013; Semeijn, Van Riel & Ambrosini, 2004) are built up by this research by establishing a positive effect of a familiar brand on purchase intention triggered by an influencer's message in a social media setting.

The presence and absence of a sponsorship disclosure in a social media message seems to be insignificant for the audience of an influencer. Although this research predicted a more positive effect of no sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention compared to when there was a sponsorship disclosure, the results did not support this prediction (H3). The assumption that messages without sponsorship disclosure would have a more positive influence on purchase intention and brand trust compared to messages with sponsorship disclosure was not supported. This outcome can possibly be explained by the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The presence of a specific brand in a social media message probably activates the knowledge of people that they are exposed to some kind of advertisement even when it is not disclosed. In addition, the combination of no sponsorship disclosure and a familiar brand is also revealed as not effective for increasing neither purchase intention nor brand trust. This rejects Hypothesis 6. It can be probably explained by the assumption that the positive effect of the

presence of a familiar brand does not outweigh the negative effect of the perceived sponsorship communicated by the presence of a particular brand.

Furthermore, the three-way interaction between all of the independent variables is also revealed as insignificant. Despite that the interaction between micro-celebrity and no sponsorship disclosure on the one hand and between micro-celebrity and a familiar brand, on the other hand, have been proven to have a significant effect on purchase intention, overall combining the micro-celebrity with a familiar brand and no sponsorship disclosure did not have a positive influence on purchase intention and brand trust which led to the rejection of Hypothesis 7.

Another important finding of this research results from the mediation effects. Hypotheses 8 and 9 consisted in the prediction that the effect of influencer type and sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention and brand trust would be mediated through attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Hypothesis 9 is completely rejected but the interesting result is in the partial confirmation of Hypothesis 8. The effect of the micro-celebrity on brand trust is revealed to be improved by the mediation of trustworthiness and expertise. The effect on purchase intention is improved only by the trustworthiness of the micro-celebrities. These effects show that the physical appearance of the micro-celebrities does not have an improving effect when it comes to increasing the purchase intention and brand trust. It is possible that the attractiveness of the person only draws the attention of the individual to the social media message but the trust and expertise that the micro-celebrity broadcast play an important role. These results lead to the consideration that purchase intention and brand trust are influenced on a more conscious level by considering the trustworthiness and expertise of the micro-celebrity and that the primary perceived attractiveness is not an important factor for increasing the purchase intention or brand trust.

#### *Theoretical implications and future research*

The research at hand reached the conclusion that micro-celebrities have more influence on increasing the purchase intention as well as the brand trust of their fans compared to traditional celebrities. This result alone contributes to the previous research done on the topic of celebrity influencers and adds confirmation to the significance that micro-celebrities have gained as effective influencers. In spite of the fact that traditional celebrities have bigger audiences than micro-celebrities, the perceived community feeling and, as a consequence of that, the security feeling that micro-celebrities build as well as their personal relationship with their followers is revealed to be more effective in terms of influencing the audience's purchase intention and brand trust. However, the product used in this research was a low involvement product. Since the research on micro-celebrities as social media influencers is somewhat limited, it would be interesting to do a research comparison between micro-celebrities and traditional celebrities endorsing both low and high involvement products. Furthermore, what will be the effect of micro-celebrities and traditional celebrities' influence when they endorse products that fulfill different types of consumers' goals as for instance – hedonistic, utilitarian, or self-expression?

In addition to being more effective as social media influencers, the micro-celebrities' influence is discovered to be partially mediated by their trustworthiness and expertise. In the sense of low and high involvement product, it would be also interesting to explore what the mediating effect of these personal characteristics - attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on the purchase intention and brand trust of the individual will be.

Another conclusion that this study reached is that familiar brands are more influential compared to unfamiliar brands in the social media setting. Additionally, the combination of a micro-celebrity and a familiar brand turned out to be the most effective for increasing purchase intention. However, in the course of the research, this study used a real brand and not a fictitious one. It is plausible that the tested participants could have had pre-formed attitudes towards the brand that could have stirred their purchase intention in one way or the other. According to previous research when a brand is familiar when presented with a sponsored content the individual is more likely to draw on their previous experience and knowledge of the brand. Thus, when the brand is familiar people are more likely to stick to their previous attitude whereas by unfamiliar brand the sponsored message affects the attitude towards the brand (Machleit, Allen & Madden, 1993; Fazio & Zanna, 1981). As a result, the effects on the individual's attitude towards the brand will not be greatly influenced because it already exists. In order to account for the existing attitude, future research can measure the attitude before exposure to an influencer's social media message and after exposure. This way it can be determined how much of the change in purchase intention can be attributed to the social media influencer.

The comparison of how social media messages with and without sponsorship disclosure are perceived shows that people's purchase intention and brand trust were not significantly influenced by either of the messages. This result leads to the conclusion that whether or not a message is disclosed as sponsored, it provokes defense mechanisms. Thus, a proposition for future research will be to explore possible ways to minimize the feeling of advertisement transmitted through social media influencer's message.

#### *Practical implications and future research*

The results of this research have not only theoretical but also practical implications and there are also possibilities for future research in this direction. One of the more important implications for the practice of influencer marketing is that using a micro-celebrity will be more effective than using a traditional celebrity to increase purchase intention and brand trust of their audience as will be using a familiar brand over an unfamiliar brand as part of the influencer marketing. Hence, from a practical standpoint micro-celebrity influencers should not be overlooked but instead actively involved as part of the influencer marketing strategy.

This research used a beauty product to represent a particular brand and the micro-celebrity that was used to promote the beauty product is known as a beauty blogger. The congruency between the product and the influencer seem to be an important part of choosing the influencer as previous research shows (Thwaites, Lowe, Monkhouse & Barnes, 2012; Till, 1998). Choosing a compatible influencer be it micro or traditional celebrity is an important part of the advertiser's strategy. Furthermore, another key aspect of deciding on who will be used as an influencer is the personal characteristics of the person. As this research shows personal characteristics may have a mediating role which can lead to increased purchase intention and brand trust.

Finally, since this study does not reveal any significant effect of sponsorship disclosure or the lack of it on the purchase intention and brand trust of the influencer's audience, then practitioners may need to invest time into coming up with another way to minimize the perception of influencer's social media message as an advertisement.

### *Limitations*

There are a few possible limitations of the research at hand that need to be considered and taken into account for future research. The research is done only amongst women between 18 and 34 since they are the main users of the used social media. Hence, the used brand is directed towards the target audience. However, there are also men using Instagram as well as other social media channels popular among influencers. So, future research could include both men and women and compare the effects of influencer marketing on both groups.

Another aspect of the research that can be considered as a limitation is that the used micro-celebrity was not as popular as the researcher was led to believe. Although the preliminary test revealed this micro-celebrity as the most familiar to the participants, during the main research there was some difficulty finding participants who were familiar with the micro-celebrity, especially such that were over 18 years old. A possibility for a future research is to include also people under 18 and to make a comparison between the age groups. Furthermore, this study can be expanded in terms of including more than one influencer of each type (traditional celebrity and micro-celebrity) as well as adding more than one brand for both conditions (familiar and unfamiliar brand).

Finally, as a limitation of this research can be considered that the manipulation check questions for the independent variables influencer type and sponsorship disclosure did not show a clear distinction between traditional celebrity and micro-celebrity on the one hand and with and without sponsorship disclosure on the other hand. The scale used to measure the distinction between micro-celebrity and traditional celebrity did not show clear results in distinguishing them one from the other. The same was found to be true for differentiating the conditions with and without sponsorship disclosure. Because of this the manipulation check for both variables was done using only one item of the scales which was the most indicative for the difference in the conditions. Thus, in the future, the used scales can be replaced by scales that are more accurate for this type of measurement.

## 6. Conclusion

The era of the internet offers users unlimited opportunities to connect, share information, and communicate with peers in social media channels. The benefits of social media, however, are not restricted only to the individual level of communication. This is why organizations have not only started to use channels like Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram as part of their marketing strategy but they have also reached out to popular social media personas, also known as influencers, to endorse their products. Hence, giving the beginning to a new path in marketing – the influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is a fairly new field that has not been yet thoroughly explored. In order to understand what the mechanisms behind this field are, more extensive research is needed. This is what the main goal of this study was – to expand the previous research on the topic by researching yet uncovered area of influencer marketing.

Although traditional celebrities and micro-celebrities are used in the practice to reach a brand's potential customers, the research comparing the effect of both types of influencers on the individual is somewhat limited. This led to the research of what the effects of influencer type, brand familiarity, and sponsorship disclosure on the purchase intention and brand trust of the individual were going to be. The results of the study revealed micro-celebrities to be more effective as

influencers compared to traditional celebrities. Additionally, the combination of a micro-celebrity with a familiar brand on the one hand and no sponsorship disclosure, on the other hand, proved to have a positive effect on audience's evaluations. Another positive influence of micro-celebrity was the one mediated by trustworthiness and expertise. Furthermore, no significant distinction between sponsorship disclosure and no sponsorship disclosure was found in contrast to previous literature. These results provide new insight into the field of influencer marketing by addressing an important gap in previous research and advancing it towards a more clear comprehension of the factors involved in influencer marketing. Additionally, this study gives a new starting point for future research and it also contributes to the better practical application of measures related to social media influencers.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1 – Main survey

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Welcome! By completing this questionnaire you will help me write my master thesis, so please take the time to answer some questions. It will take no more than 10 minutes. This research explores the way people perceive Instagram posts. At the beginning of the survey, you will be asked a few demographic questions. After that, you will see an Instagram post and you will be asked to answer some questions based on the post you saw. Participation in the survey is anonymous and voluntary and you are free to withdraw from it at any time. If you have any questions, feel free to send me an e-mail at [m.kolarova@student.utwente.nl](mailto:m.kolarova@student.utwente.nl). Thank you for your time!

Добре дошли! Като попълните този въпросник, ще ми помогнете с проучване за дипломната ми работа, така че ви моля да отделите малко време да отговорите на няколко въпроса. Ще отнеме не повече от 10 минути. Това проучване изследва начина, по който хората възприемат постове в Инстаграм. В началото на анкетата ще бъдете помолени да отговорите на няколко демографски въпроса. След това ще видите пост от Инстаграм и ще ви бъдат зададени въпроси, на които да отговорите на базата на този пост. Участието в анкетата е анонимно и доброволно и можете да се откажете по всяко време. Ако имате някакви въпроси, можете да ми пишете на имейл [m.kolarova@student.utwente.nl](mailto:m.kolarova@student.utwente.nl). Благодаря ви за отделеното време!

☐ I understand the information provided above and I agree to participate./ Разбирам информацията предоставена по-горе и съм съгласен/а да участвам.

Forward/ Напред

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What is your age?/ На колко години сте?

☐ Under 18/ Под 18

☐ 18-24 years old/ 18-24 години

☐ 25-34 years old/ 25-34 години

☐ 35-44 years old/ 35-44 години

Forward/ Напред

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What is your gender?/ Какъв пол сте?

☐ Male/ Мъж

☐ Female/ Жена

Forward/ Напред

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What is your nationality?/ Какъв сте по националност?

☐ Bulgarian/ Българин

☐ Other/ Друг

Forward/ Напред

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What is your level of education?/ Какво е вашето образование?

☐ High school/ Гимназия

☐ Bachelor/ Бакалавър

☐ Master/ Магистър

☐ PhD/ Доктор

Do you have an Instagram account?/ Имате ли профил в Инстаграм?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Forward/ Напред

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How often do you use Instagram?/ Колко често използвате Инстаграм?

☐ Daily/ Всеки ден

☐ 2-3 times a week/ 2-3 пъти на седмица

☐ 4-6 times a week/ 4-6 пъти на седмица

☐ Once a week/ Веднъж седмично

Forward/ Напред

Are you familiar with Mihaela Fileva/ Valerie Yordanova? (Depending on the condition)

Picture of the influencer depending on the condition is shown.

☐ Yes/ Да

☐ No/ Не

Forward/ Напред

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For the following questions please indicate for each statement how much do you agree/disagree by choosing one answer from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

За въпросите, които следват, моля посочете за всяко твърдение дали сте съгласен/а или не сте съгласен/а като изберете един отговор между изобщо не съм съгласен/а и напълно съм съгласен/а.

	Strongly disagree/ Изобщо не съм съгласен/а	Somewhat disagree/ Не съм напълно съгласен/а	Neither agree nor disagree/ Нито съм съгласен/а, нито съм несъгласен/а	Somewhat agree/ Донякъде съм съгласен/а	Strongly agree/ Напълно съм съгласен/а
She is famous./ Тя е известна.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am familiar with her./ Тя ми е позната.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have seen her before on social media./ Виждала съм я преди в социални медии.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree/ Изобщо не съм съгласен/а	Somewhat disagree/ Не съм напълно съгласен/а	Neither agree nor disagree/ Нито съм съгласен/а, нито съм несъгласен/а	Somewhat agree/ Донякъде съм съгласен/а	Strongly agree/ Напълно съм съгласен/а
This mascara brand is familiar to me./ Тази марка спирала за очи ми е известна.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have heard of this mascara brand./ Чувал/а съм за тази марка спирала за очи.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have seen advertisements for this mascara brand./ Виждал/а съм реклами за тази марка спирала за очи.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree/ Изобщо не съм съгласен/а	Somewhat disagree/ Не съм напълно съгласен/а	Neither agree nor disagree/ Нито съм съгласен/а, нито съм несъгласен/а	Somewhat agree/ Донякъде съм съгласен/а	Strongly agree/ Напълно съм съгласен/а
This post is advertising./ Този пост е реклама.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post contains advertising./ Този пост съдържа реклама.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post displays paid content./ Този пост показва платено съдържание.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Forward/ Напред

For the following section of questions, please indicate on the scale what you think of the person you just saw in the photo.

За следващия раздел въпроси, моля отбележете на скалата какво мислите за човека, който току-що видяхте на снимката.

	Very much/ Много	Somewhat/ Донякъде	Neither/ Нито едното, нито другото	Somewhat/ Донякъде	Very much/ Много	
attractive/ привлекателна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	unattractive/ непривлекателна
sexy/ секси	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	not sexy/ не е секси
beautiful/ красива	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	ugly/ грозна
elegant/ стилна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	plain/ обикновена

	Very much/ Много	Somewhat/ Донякъде	Neither/ Нито едното, нито другото	Somewhat/ Донякъде	Very much/ Много	
trustworthy/ надеждна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	untrustworthy/ ненадеждна
honest/ честна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	dishonest/ нечестна
reliable/ благонадеждна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	unreliable/ неблагонадеждна
sincere/ искрена	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	insincere/ неискрена

	Very much/ Много	Somewhat/ Донякъде	Neither/ Нито едното, нито другото	Somewhat/ Донякъде	Very much/ Много	
expert/ експерт	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	not expert/ не е експерт
experienced/ опитна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	inexperienced/ неопитна
knowledgeable/ осведомена	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	unknowledgeable/ неосведомена
qualified/ компетентна	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	unqualified/ некомпетентна



Forward/ Напред

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Based on the same picture, please indicate your level of agreement with the statements.  
Имайки предвид същата снимка, моля отбележете доколко сте съгласен/а с твърденията.

	Strongly disagree/ Изобщо не съм съгласен/а	Somewhat disagree/ Не съм напълно съгласен/а	Neither agree nor disagree/ Нито съм съгласен/а, нито съм несъгласен/а	Somewhat agree/ Донякъде съм съгласен/а	Strongly agree/ Напълно съм съгласен/а
I will purchase Divine the next time I need a mascara./ Ще си купя Divine следващия път, когато имам нужда от спирапа за очи.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is likely that I will buy Divine's mascara./ Вероятно е да си купя спирапа за очи на Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have no intention to buy Divine's mascara./ Нямам намерение да си купя спирапата за очи на Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would consider buying Divine's mascara./ Бих обмислил/а да си купя спирапа за очи на Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree/ Изобщо не съм съгласен/а	Somewhat disagree/ Не съм напълно съгласен/а	Neither agree nor disagree/ Нито съм съгласен/а, нито съм несъгласен/а	Somewhat agree/ Донякъде съм съгласен/а	Strongly agree/ Напълно съм съгласен/а
I trust Divine./ Доверявам се на Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Divine is an honest brand./ Divine е честна марка.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Divine is a safe brand./ Divine е сигурна марка.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Forward/ Напред

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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Thank you for participating. All of the Instagram posts (pictures and text) are designed only for the purpose of the research and they are not the original content of the people you saw.

Благодаря за участието. Всички Instagram постове (снимки и текст), които видяхте са обработени и предназначени единствено за целите на проучването и не са оригинално съдържание от хората, които видяхте.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

Appendix 2 – Stimulus materials

Text – “My new great mascara from #divine/ #maybelline

Traditional celebrity



**mihaelafileva** Новата ми страхотна спирала  
за очи от [#divine](#)



**mihaelafileva** Новата ми страхотна спирала  
за очи от [#divine](#) [#sponsored](#)



**mihaelafileva** Новата ми страхотна спирала  
за очи от [#maybelline](#)



**mihaelafileva** Новата ми страхотна спирала  
за очи от [#maybelline](#) [#sponsored](#)

*Micro-celebrity*



**valerieyordanova** Новата ми страхотна спирала за очи от [#divine](#)



**valerieyordanova** Новата ми страхотна спирала за очи от [#divine](#) [#sponsored](#)



**valerieyordanova** Новата ми страхотна спирала за очи от [#maybelline](#)



**valerieyordanova** Новата ми страхотна спирала за очи от [#maybelline](#) [#sponsored](#)

### Appendix 3 – Ethics Committee Approval

Dear researcher,

This is a notification from the web application form for intended research proposals Ethics Committee Behavioural Science.

Requestnr.	: 17743
Title	: The effects of influencer marketing
Date of application	: 23-11-2017
Researcher	: M. Kolarova
Supervisor	: J.F. Gosselt
Commission	: G. Jansen
Usage of SONA	: No

Your research has been approved by the Ethics Committee.