

The Influence of System-Generated Cues and User-Generated Content on Consumer Responses in Instagram

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Declaration

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ABSTRACT

Advanced technology has introduced social media to the marketing mix, revolutionising brand building opportunities using the Internet and social media, focusing now on consumer-based relationships. Instagram, one of the fastest-growing social media sites, modernised influential advertising by introducing social media influencers to promote branded content. Little research is available on Instagram as marketing phenomenon and a knowledge gap exists in how influential advertising works. Information lacks on what elements of system-generated cues and user-generated content on an individual's Instagram profile influence consumer responses. This study assessed the role of system-generated cues and user-generated content concerning influencer credibility, consumers' parasocial relationships, brand attitude and purchase intention. Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted. In the qualitative phase, two focus group discussions and a pre-test provided the variables to be measured in quantitative research. In the quantitative phase, a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial experiment using non-probability convenience sampling technique realised a sample of 311 female respondents (18–25) across 8 experimental groups. The results showed advertising disclosure negatively influenced the perceived credibility of the influencer and lessened the desire of an Instagram user to form a relationship with the influencer. It is recommended an influencer's advertisement disclosure on Instagram be subtle by using hashtags at the end of the text and preferably placed in the bottom right corner of the verbal content where it has the least chance of being noticed. Homophily (similarity) between die influencer and audience improves influencer credibility, but the presence of authority heuristic (blue tick) decreases the perceived similarity between die influencer and the audience. High number of followers does not affect consumer responses and marketers should not merely select influencers based on the influencer's number of followers. It is recommended future researchers use a real influencer, male and female respondents and another industry to improve generalisations of the results.

Keywords:

User-generated content, System-generated cues, Influencer marketing, Instagram, Source Credibility, Parasocial relationships, Purchase Intention, Brand attitude

Abbreviations

BA: Brand attitude

BAV: BrandAsset Valuator

BE: Brand equity

BRM: Brand resonance model

CBBE: Consumer based brand equity

CMC: Computer-mediated
communication

ELM: Elaboration Likelihood model

eWOM: electronic word-of-mouth

FGC: Firm-generated content

FTC: Federal Trade Commission

IM: Influencer marketing

KMO test: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test

MAIN model: Modality, Agency,
Interactivity and Navigability

PI: Purchase Intention

PKM: Persuasion knowledge model

PSR: Parasocial relationships

SC: Source credibility

SGC: System-generated cues

SIT: Social identity theory

SNS(s): Social networking site(s)

TOPB: Theory of planned behaviour

TORA: Theory of reasoned action

UGC: User-generated content

UGT: Uses and gratification theory

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The man who moves a mountain, begins by carrying away small stones – Confucius

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing experts often say all marketing activities are conducted to develop brand equity; however, brand equity does not change on economic considerations (Ariely, 2008). Even so, high levels of brand equity are associated with higher profits and act as resistance to economic fluctuations. Ultimately, the goal of marketing is to build and develop customer-based brand equity (Keller, 2016). Since the introduction of social media, marketers are able reach smaller niche segments in the market at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising methods. Social media let companies involve consumers in the brand-building process by sharing consumer experiences, knowledge and recommendations. The latest trend is to incorporate an experienced brand user as a promotional tool for the brand. This type of advertising is referred to as influential marketing, which allows brands to focus on targeting consumers, increasing market penetration, using different channels and building consumer trust (Solis, 2017). Thus, influential advertising connects the identity of the brand to an individual for promotional purposes (Johnson & Kaye, 2015).

Instagram is one of the youngest and fastest-growing social media platforms on mobile, mainly focusing on capturing and sharing visual content (Kim, Seely & Jung, 2017). On Instagram, influential marketing has become a popular advertising method (Wallsbeck & Johansson, 2014). Marketers affiliate the brand with the profile of an influencer and the influencer's identity develops the identity of the brand through association (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Two components affecting an influencer's status on Instagram are system-generated cues (SGC) and user-generated content (UGC). For SGC, an influencer's profile shows system-generated information such as the number of posts and followers, likes, comments and the blue tick to confirm authenticity of the account. For UGC, the influencer decides what type of personal information to use to communicate with users.

For example, influencers decide to disclose or not disclose brand associations, whereas their attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily also play a role in UGC. Hence, Instagram profiles and their SGC and UGC are powerful tools for marketers as part of their brand-building strategy.

However, limited research is available on the influence of SGC and UGC on consumer responses. Therefore, for this study, SGC and UGC on Instagram were investigated. Specifically, the relationship between SGC and UGC on an influencer's perceived source credibility (SC), consumers' desire to form parasocial relationships (PSR) with the influencer, the attitude effects of the promoted brand and the outcome of purchase intention (PI). A cohort of millennials (18–25) was chosen as the target population, seeing those consumers have been recognised as the largest consumer group on earth by population and disposable income (Fry, 2018).

This chapter provides a brief background to the study, the problem statement, the research objectives and research methods, concluding with a contribution and orientation of the study. The next section will offer some information on the main aspects of the study, including the link between influencer marketing, brand equity and Instagram as a marketing tool involving identity development with millennial consumers.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The background briefly covers concepts such as brand equity, Instagram, and influential marketing to gain a better understanding of the topic that will be explored in this study.

1.2.1 Influencer marketing and brand equity

All marketing activities are essentially conducted to develop brand equity (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). Brand equity (BE) can be perceived as a conglomerate of all the marketing activities across the lifetime of a brand encapsulated into meaning or perception about the brand within the consumer (Keller, 2009; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). BE has been defined as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and

symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (Aaker, 1991:125). Authors across the literature have studied developing BE in many directions. Some authors have been interested in the financial aspect of BE (Mohan & Sequeira, 2016; Narteh, 2018; Simon & Sullivan, 1993). Other authors have been interested in the effects of BE on consumer responses (Keller, 2001; Seo & Park, 2018; Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė, 2016), which falls in the scope of this study.

In the literature, authors have proposed different models and methods to develop BE among their consumers. One of the most popular models used in the literature is the brand resonance model (BRM) developed by Keller (2001). The model perceives developing brand equity as four different steps and six different components. The BRM model is used in this study and is presented in Chapter 2 (see Chapter 2: Figure 2.1: The Brand Resonance Pyramid).

According to Figure 2.2 (see section 2.4.1, page 35) , all four steps and their components should be developed independently and jointly. As a brand grows and salience develops among their consumers, they move up the model to the pinnacle of a brand-consumer relationship, brand resonance (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Brand resonance refers to the degree that consumers feel coordinated with the brand and is reflected by the level of intensity that consumers engage with the brand, its product offering and advertising content (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). When brands develop BE and endeavour to reach a resonating state with their consumers, the efforts of the brand are mirrored in the consumers' behaviour.

For brands, it is essential to develop BE among their new and already loyal consumers. In the past, brands have used traditional advertising methods to develop BE. For example, print advertising, billboard, television and radio advertising methods were all part of the marketing mix (Morra, Ceruti, Chierici & Di Gregorio, 2018; Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011). Since the inception of the Internet, brands have resorted to modern methods of developing BE referred to as 'new media' or social media. Social media has decreased the cost of advertising for brands and widened the spectrum of the potential target audience. Also, social media has brought about changes to a traditional marketing

method, namely influencer marketing. Influencer marketing can be defined as a marketing strategy that uses the influence of key individuals or opinion leaders to drive consumers' brand awareness and their purchasing intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In traditional influential advertising, brands used celebrities alongside a product in movies and television advertisements to develop BE. The perception and associations of the celebrity would flow from the brand to the celebrity and from the celebrity to the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2017; Roy & Jain, 2017). The flow of associations between celebrity and brand developed brand salience and other parts of the BRM model.

Since the inception of social media, brands have incorporated individuals from different social media platforms to develop BE. The following section will introduce Instagram and describe the usage of social media influencers; how they influence the identities of millennials and how brands use influencers in social media to build brand equity.

1.2.2 Rise of Instagram on social media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as the usage of web-based and mobile technologies to consume, create and share information without geographical, social, political or demographic boundaries. Social media are used to gratify entertainment needs, collecting information and social interaction (Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito & Singh, 2016; Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011). Globally, in 2020, social media users have surpassed 3.5 billion mark, which roughly amounts to about 48% of the population of the world (McCarthy, 2020). In 2020, global social media marketing expenditure rose above \$90 billion (McCarthy, 2020) and could increase during the year.

Throughout the history of social media, many social media platforms have been used to gratify the desire for entertainment and social interaction. Once popular, Myspace (2005) was the largest social network site up to 2009. In 2015, Myspace reported only 50 million active members (Myspace, 2019). Launched in 2007, Mxit was a South African based instant messenger application, which was data-light and allowed the millennial generation to engage with one another innovatively and cost-effectively. Over 10 years, Mxit grew to international stardom but sold their business in 2015 due to a decline of interest (Alfreds & Van Zyl, 2015). Both Myspace and Mxit are examples of social media applications that

were outwitted by the dynamic environment of social media. In 2020, the most populated social media network is Facebook, which boasts more than 2.7 billion active users (Statista, 2020a). Although in 2020 Facebook still enjoys the most active users of all social media platforms, one of the fastest-growing social network sites is Instagram (Beaulac, 2020).

Since its start in 2010, Instagram has grown over the years and in 2020 has more than 1 billion active users (Systrom, 2020). Instagram is among the most popular social network sites that marketers incorporate into the marketing mix to build brand equity (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Influential marketing is a popular advertising method used on Instagram (Wallsbeck & Johansson, 2014), where many individuals have gained a sense of credibility based on performance indicators provided by the platform. For example, having many followers has been perceived as a position of influence over others due to popularity and likeability (Granjon & Benedic, 2017). Individuals with a high number of followers can give brands exposure to segmented niche markets at a fraction of the cost. More than 500 000 active influencers are operating on Instagram (Systrom, 2020), which includes 39% of all Instagram accounts with more than 15 000 followers (Droesch, 2019). In this group of active Instagram influencers, 81% have followings between 15 000 and 100 000 users (Brandwatch, 2017). Because of the popularity of using individuals to promote brands and products, the number of influential advertising posts on Instagram has grown by 48.9% from 2018 to 2019. It is expected influential advertising should continue to grow exponentially throughout 2020 (Asano, 2019; Hutchinson, 2019a). Between 2018 and 2019, the number of users of Instagram grew from 800 000 to 1 000 000 (Statista, 2019) and is predicted to grow by a further 9% in 2020 to 1 090 000 (EMarketer, 2020).

On Instagram, brands have made use of influencer marketing similarly as in traditional methods but through a different type of personality. Brands now use influencers on Instagram alongside a brand to promote their products and build brand equity.

1.2.3 Instagram and identity development among millennials

An influencer is an individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition to promote goods to a consumer by appearing with it in an advertisement (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016a). Influencer marketing grew over 48% (Hutchinson, 2019a) in 2019 and in 2020, there are over 500 000 active influencer accounts on Instagram (Systrom, 2020).

The most popular generation to occupy Instagram is millennials (Statista, 2020b) who occupy 63.1% of Instagram's total active users. Known as Generation Y, the "Net" or "Me" Generation, millennials have been the subject of intense scrutiny from authors. The increasingly influential offspring of the Baby Boomers were born between the 1980s and the early 2000s (Ng & Johnson, 2015). According to Barnard, Cosgrove and Welsh (1998), the exact boundaries defining a generation are much less important than shared historical events and experiences accompanied by social changes. Millennials are thus aged between 18 and 35 meaning that in 2020, they fit near-perfectly into the demographic that companies and marketers are eager to tap. Therefore, for this study, no distinction was made between Generations Y1., Y2 or Z. Marketers want to develop brand loyalty among millennials to decrease consumer turnover rates, which in turn, will lead to greater long-term relationships and higher profits.

Millennials outnumber Generation X and their Boomer parents as well (French, 2018). Both in raw numbers and the workforce, millennials top the demographic ladder and are the most researched generation due to their different and diverse characteristics compared with their predecessors (Helal, Ozuem & Lancaster, 2018; Lee, 2018). These characteristics have been sculptured by the exposure and development of technology and social media during the millennials' life stages (McCarthy, 2014; Ng & Johnson, 2015).

Throughout the millennials' development period, they have been told by preceding generations to get outside their comfort zones, challenge themselves and put everything familiar to the wayside (Sinek, 2014). The constant pressure to perform and conform to societal norms left some millennials without a self-secure identity about themselves, opening the doors to external influences and persuasion (Kavitha & Bhuvaneshwari,

2016). Where preceding generations typically found community through religion, workplace and neighbourhood, millennials have found it online.

Communities and cultures that share values, norms and beliefs satisfy an individual's sense of belonging. Millennials were raised in a technological era where the boundaries between religion, workplace and communities became less clear because of the increased exposure of external cultures and practices through social media (Ng & Johnson, 2015). Consequently, millennials have used Instagram to assist in developing their identity by following influencers.

Influencer marketing on Instagram is effective because of the meaning transfer between the influencer and their audience. By following an influencer, the identity characteristics flow from the influencer to the follower (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). Influencers are individuals who followers perceive as their future selves and act as role models for consumers (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). Therefore, consumers tend to re-enact and follow the behaviour, habits and norms of the influencer (Fleck, Korchia & Le Roy, 2012). Individuals follow an influencer's behaviour as anchors to their own identity, believing that if they replicate the behaviour of an influencer, their identity may coincide with the influencer's (Bergkvist, Hjalmarson & Mägi, 2016).

1.2.4 Credible influencers and parasocial relationships

The literature on influential advertising supports the notion that celebrities with their perceived credibility are an effective way for marketers to promote products to large audiences and build strong brands (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018; Dwivedi, Johnson & McDonald, 2015). The literature also emphasises the need for celebrities and influencers to develop their SC to become more persuasive to their audiences. SC leads to an increased consumer desire to purchase the promoted product (Chakraborty, 2019; Ismagilova, Slade, Rana & Dwivedi, 2019).

When users of Instagram look for influencers who seem appealing, they want to ensure the content of the influencer is credible (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Two components in Instagram can affect an individual's credibility: user-generated content and system-

generated cues (Fox, Bacile, Nakhata & Weible, 2018; Jin, 2018; Wang, Qian & Zhu, 2018). User-generated content (UGC) is content published online that is “created outside of professional routines and practices” and is a manner through which individuals express themselves and communicate with other users (Roma & Aloini, 2019). System-generated cues (SGC) are quantitative indicators that can influence an individual’s identity, popularity and credibility (Lin, Spence & Lachlan, 2016). By combining UGC and SGC, users of Instagram use the cues to judge an individual’s credibility (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2018).

Once credibility has been determined, Instagram users also employ UGC and SGC to determine whether they want to form a parasocial relationship with the influencer (Chung & Cho, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Parasocial relationships (PSR) are defined as one-sided relationships that media users establish with media figures (influencers) (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). PSR occurs when an individual develops the illusion of intimacy with an influencer through exposure to their content on social media (Jin, 2018). Users of Instagram can form PSR with an influencer to assist in developing their online identity (Essamri, Mckechnie & Winklhofer, 2019).

1.2.5 Brand building with influencers

Brands use influencers on Instagram as part of the marketing mix to build the brand and establish brand equity (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Brands choose their influencers based on the credibility of the influencer and congruence with the brand and product offering (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Before selecting an influencer, brands should ensure there are parasocial relationships between the influencer and their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Furthermore, brands use influencers on Instagram as a function of brand building by promoting brand-related content on an influencer’s profile. The effectiveness of an influencer’s promotional activities on Instagram lies in their ability to foster relationships with their audience. This relationship has led to increased persuasion ability of promotional content, positive brand attitude (BA) and increased desire by followers to purchase promoted products associated with the influencer (Gong & Li, 2017; Sakib, Zolfagharian & Yazdanparast, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Since the

audience in Instagram can grow beyond the influencer's ability to form personal relationships with every follower, influencers focus on fostering parasocial relationships (PSR). PSR is defined as a one-way relationship with an influencer from the audience's perspective. These relationships are developed by adding visually orientated content to the influencer's profile (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019; Liu, Liu & Zhang, 2019). PSRs are essential in the effectiveness of promotional content and have been studied from both a traditional and new media perspective (Giles, 2002; Yuan, Kim & Kim, 2016).

Brands incorporate influencers into the marketing mix to develop positive brand attitudes among the influencer's followers (Müller & Christandl, 2019; De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Influencers are also used to influence the purchase decision of their followers positively (Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang & Soutar, 2020).

The literature has proposed that social media users use UGC and SGC to develop their attitude towards the brand and purchase intention (Du, Joo & Wilbur, 2018; Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack & Zahid, 2018; Weismueller *et al.*, 2020).

Nonetheless, there is a shortage of literature to determine the relationship between UGC and SGC on an influencer's profile on Instagram. Specifically, the relationship between UGC and SGC on an influencer's perceived SC, consumers' desire to form PSR with the influencer, the attitude effects of the promoted brand and outcome of purchase intention. Therefore, this study proposes the following problem statement.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement is twofold as it includes both brand building and the social media environment. On the one hand, technology has introduced social media to the marketing environment, bringing a new focus to branding from a traditional marketing approach to a consumer-based relationship approach (Rafiee, 2013). Brands now build consumer relationships and brand equity using the Internet and social media (Alalwan *et al.*, 2017), reaching consumers on a global scale and small niche markets at a fraction of the cost.

On the other hand, advanced technology bred a generation of sophisticated users of the Internet and social media. Millennial consumers (18 to 35) have been recognised as the

largest consumer group on earth by population and disposable income. But millennials differ from previous generations due to their exposure to technology during maturation, which has led them to be sophisticated in the way they collect information and consume products in comparison with previous generations.

Of the many social media sites available to brands for promotional purposes, Instagram was chosen for this study since the largest population on the site is millennials (Brandwatch, 2017; Osman, 2018; Statista, 2018a). As one of the youngest and fastest-growing social media sites on mobile, Instagram has modernised the traditional marketing technique of using celebrities for influential advertising by introducing social media influencers to promote branded content. Marketers use Instagram influencers with brands as a function of brand building and developing favourable brand attitudes (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019; Paul & Bhakar, 2018).

However, limited studies address what UGC and SGC strengthen the desire of followers to form PSR with influencers on Instagram. It is not clear whether the perceived degree of PSR with an influencer influences the audience's willingness to purchase the promoted brand.

Last, marketers incorporate Instagram influencers as part of the marketing mix to develop favourable consumer attitudes towards the brand. The marketing literature on the effect of influential advertising on consumer brand attitudes reports connecting a personality with a brand increases the audience's desire to purchase the promoted brand (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Du *et al.*, 2018). Apart from grasping how favourable brand attitudes are built, Instagram profile cues of an influencer that are most influential in developing favourable consumer brand attitudes must be addressed (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). The question is whether favourable brand attitudes in Instagram translate to increased intention to purchase the promoted product (Paul & Bhakar, 2018).

Research on influential advertising on Instagram has been limited despite the potential value for brands and the evidence of its effectiveness as a brand-building tool. Therefore, this study sought to address a portion of this knowledge gap to contribute to understanding influential advertising on Instagram. From this knowledge, brands may be able to select influencers who will report higher returns on marketing investments.

Considering the background information and the problem statement, the primary goal of the study was to determine the influence of SGC and UGC on consumer responses. Thus, one primary and four secondary objectives were articulated to contribute to achieving this goal.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The background information showed a knowledge gap exists on influential advertising on Instagram. Specifically, knowledge lacks about what elements of UGC and SGC on an individual's Instagram profile are most effective in influencing consumer responses (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, research is needed on UGC and SGC to determine its effect on developing effective advertising on Instagram (Skolova & Kefi, 2019)

The overall purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge and gain a greater understanding of marketing on Instagram with a focus on influential advertising. The following section will discuss the objectives of the study. The objectives of this study are divided into two sections, primary and secondary objectives. The primary objective is provided in Table 1.1

Table 1.1
Primary objectives

Primary objective	To determine the influence of user-generated content and system-generated cues on consumer responses in Instagram
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Four secondary objectives were formulated to contribute to achieving the primary objective. The secondary objectives are presented below in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2
Secondary objectives

Secondary Objectives	
Source credibility	
Secondary objective: 1 _{a-d}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on source credibility b) To assess the influence of SGC on source credibility c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on source credibility
	d) To assess the influence of UGC and SGC on attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily
Parasocial relationships	
Secondary objective: 2 _{a-c}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on parasocial relationships b) To assess the influence of SGC on parasocial relationships c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on parasocial relationships
Brand attitude	
Secondary objective: 3 _{a-d}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on brand attitude b) To assess the influence of SGC on brand attitude c) To assess the influence and interaction effects between UGC and SGC on brand attitude
	d) To assess the influence of using an influencer on brand attitude
Purchase intention	

Secondary objective: 4 _{a-c}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To assess the influence of UGC on purchase intention b) To assess the influence of SGC on purchase intention c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on purchase intention
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The research method is discussed hereafter which will advance the readers understanding of how this study will be conducted.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS

In the following section, secondary and primary research methods will be discussed. The qualitative and quantitative components of the study are explained. This section goes on to explain in greater depth how the study was conducted using a 2 × 2 × 2 experimental design, the sampling technique and data collection.

1.5.1 Secondary research

Secondary research refers to data recorded and gathered by other researchers before and for other purposes than the present study (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013:160). In this study, secondary research was conducted using academic journals in various fields. Journals such as the *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Computers in Human Behaviour* and *Journal of Social Marketing* were used to conduct secondary research. Academic articles, academic books and newspapers were also consulted.

Secondary research provided the background and motivation for the primary research in this study. Marketing communication, social media marketing, influential marketing and consumer behaviour were addressed using secondary research. Secondary research assisted the researcher to gain understanding into SC, UGC, SGC, PSR and consumer-brand connect. Furthermore, secondary research addressed social identity theory and

persuasion knowledge model to gain a better understanding of how individuals create their online identity and how purchase decisions are made. However, secondary research was insufficient in answering the research questions, as secondary data are gathered for a purpose other than that of the current study (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:160). Therefore, primary research was also conducted in this study.

1.5.2 Primary research

Primary research delivers new and original data that have been collected specifically to address the research problems of the study in question (Malhotra, Birks & Wills, 2012). Primary research should be conducted according to a well-planned research process that results in accurate and relevant findings (Malhotra, 2004). A brief overview of the primary research steps is presented in Table 1.3. Table 1.3 shows primary data were collected using a mixed-method approach, also described as a convergent methodology (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), which refers to combining two or more theories of data to study the same phenomenon. Combining two or more data theories ensured the researcher would gain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon researched.

Table 1.3
Research process

	Steps in research process	Relevance to current research
Step 1	Secondary research	Secondary research was conducted to identify a gap in the research and identify possible variables in the study.
Step 2	Qualitative: focus group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User-generated content • System-generated cues • Instagram • Influencers 	Variables were identified by secondary research in Step 1. Gain insight and understanding of UGC and SGC on Instagram. Millennials' behaviour on Instagram, influencers on Instagram and millennials' developing an identity on social media was explored.
Step 3	Qualitative: focus group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source Credibility • Parasocial Relationships • Brand Attitude • Purchase Intention 	Gain a better understanding of the four dependent variables of the study.
Step 4	Quantitative research: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questionnaire development 2. Data collection 3. Data input 4. Descriptive and inferential testing 	First, the questionnaire was created and data collected from the population sample. After that, the data were imported to IBM SPSS and Microsoft Excel for descriptive and inferential testing.

The two research methods used in this study were qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research was conducted in terms of two focus group discussions and a pre-test. As presented in Table 1.3, two focus groups were conducted for different purposes. A summary of the steps involved in quantitative research is also discussed in Table 1.3.

1.5.2.1 Qualitative research

The qualitative research in this study consisted of two focus groups to serve different purposes, leading to different outcomes. A pre-test was also conducted as part of the qualitative research.

1.5.2.1.1 Purpose of the qualitative research

The purpose of qualitative research was threefold. First, focus group 1 was conducted to gain deeper insight into millennials' behaviour on social media, social media itself, Instagram and influential advertising. Second, focus group 1 was conducted to determine the most influential SGC and UGC on Instagram. Third, focus group 2 was conducted to test the various levels of stimuli. The focus group discussions were guided by the objectives of the study to ensure information was gathered on the variables and topics relevant to the primary research. A more in-depth discussion of the focus groups is discussed hereafter.

1.5.2.1.2 Focus group composition and procedure

The two focus groups each consisted of five and six participants between 18 and 25 years. This age group is a cohort of the millennial population, which is explained later in the sampling procedure. The researcher had 5 female participants in focus group 1 and 6 female participants in focus group 2.

Two focus groups were conducted to address the qualitative research objectives. The purpose of focus group 1 was to gain a better understanding of millennials and their social media behaviour. Questions about the amount of time spent on social media a day, their

preferred social media applications and usage behaviours on social were asked. In addition, the research needed greater insights into millennials on Instagram. For example, why do millennials use Instagram, why do they prefer Instagram to other social media applications and what features of Instagram do they like most. A list of questions presented in focus group questions is attached in Appendix A.

Focus group 2 was conducted to gain a better understanding of consumer responses on Instagram. Moreover, how individual develop credibility in Instagram and form relationships with other users. Also, how influencers in Instagram can influence a consumer's brand attitude and purchase intention.

1.5.2.1.3 Focus group analysis

Qualitative analyses were conducted manually according to themes guided by secondary research. The focus group discussions were recorded and the relevant themes transcribed to Microsoft Word. Possible qualitative data from focus group 2 were analysed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS. The information gained was used in the pre-test that provided data for constructing the quantitative research.

1.5.2.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative research was conducted to gather raw data to address the objectives in Table 1.2 and the hypotheses of this study. The following section will explain the pre-test, research design, stimulus development and sampling.

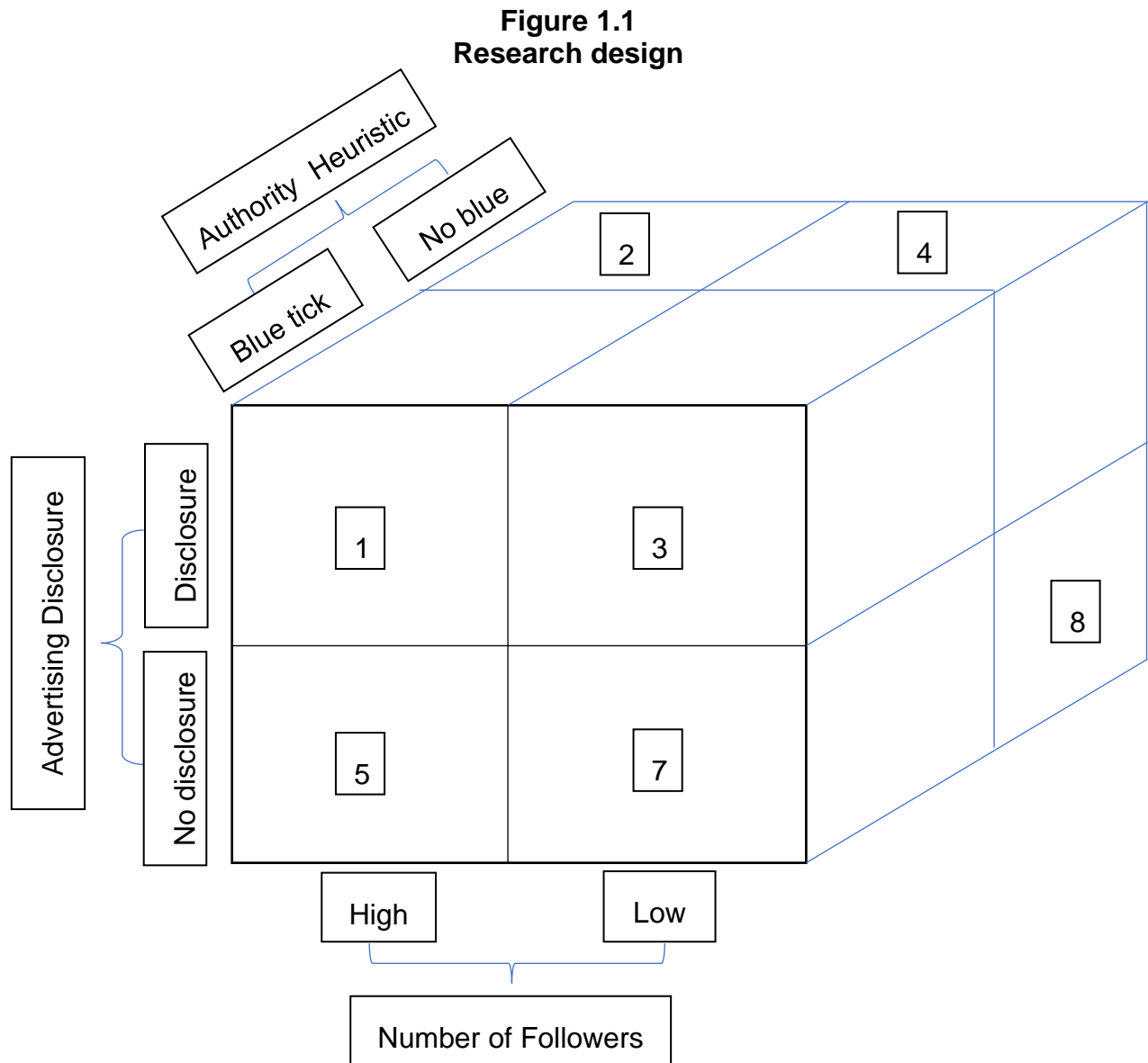
1.5.2.2.1 Pre-test

A pre-test was conducted to gain a better understanding of the system-generated cues of this study. Respondents of the pre-test were questioned about source credibility and the most attributable elements of an Instagram profile to source credibility. The current trends on Instagram were also identified to ensure that this study was conducted on trends relevant to the current period.

1.5.2.2.2 Research design

The research design is a framework to organise the study so that the research can proceed efficiently (Sreejesh, Mohaparta & Anusree, 2014). The research design framework specifies which research methods and procedures are used to collect and analyse the relevant information.

A 2 × 2 × 2 between-subjects factorial experimental design was deemed most suitable to address the objectives of the study. A factorial design allows for testing the main effects and interaction effects of two or more treatments at various levels (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:281). Figure 1.1 is a representation of the experimental design.



This study was conducted across eight experimental groups; each was allocated a unique stimulus. The three independent variables (advertising disclosure, number of followers and authority heuristic) are presented in Figure 1.1 alongside the factors of each independent variable.

1.5.2.2.3 Experimental procedure

In the experiment, participants were exposed to Instagram profiles as stimuli with different levels of SGC and UGC. The combination of various levels that the participants were exposed to was randomised, meaning participants were randomly assigned to the experimental groups. Potential participants received an email containing a link to the online Qualtrics survey. The link provided to the participants granted the participant access to the survey. The survey started with screening questions on Instagram usage and progressed to demographics. Respondents were exposed to different levels of stimuli and answered questions based on the stimuli and constructs measured. Each respondent was exposed to only one set of stimuli in the data collection instrument with different combinations of SGC and UGC. Then the data were exported from Qualtrics to Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS. More about data collection and analyses will be discussed later in this chapter.

1.5.2.2.4 Sampling

The sample design of the quantitative study is discussed in the following section. The target population, sampling frame, sample size, and how the data were collected, are dimensions that will be addressed.

(a) Target population

The target population for this study was Generation Y, also referred to as millennials. Millennials were born between the 1980s and the 2000s (Ng & Johnson, 2015). Millennials were the focus of this study, as they were the first generation to have grown up alongside social media and the rapid expansion of the Internet (Ng & Johnson, 2015).

The motivation for selecting millennials stems beyond their knowledge of social media – millennials are the largest consumer groups by population available to brands and have more disposable income than previous generations (Jang, Kim & Bonn, 2011). Therefore, research about millennials is valuable to marketers, as it assists marketers to understand the consumer group and their behaviour patterns better.

Since the age span of millennials is so wide and because of time and budget constraints, merely a cohort of the generation was used in this study. The respondents of this study were South African millennials between the ages of 18 and 25. The researcher aimed to gather data from female respondents only and there were no demographic constraints on the target population except age. This study only included female respondents as the study focused on female influencers in the female fitness clothing apparel. Individuals of all income groups and race groups were perceived equal in this study.

(b) Sampling frame, selection process and sample size

In this study, a non-probability sampling method was used. A sampling frame with a list of all participants could not be attained. The respondents were selected according to a convenience sampling procedure (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:396). Participation in the study was voluntary and respondents enlisted to participate in the study. Once enlisted, respondents were randomly assigned to different stimulus groups within the experiment.

The sampling size was determined by the number of UGC and SGC in the study. After focus group 1 had been conducted, three independent variables were assessed in this study. The researcher aimed to gather between 30 to 40 respondents per experimental level across 8 experimental groups. Thus, in the final experimental design, the number of respondents included in the study was 311.

1.5.2.2.5 Data collection and questionnaire development

The measurement instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on information gathered from the secondary research, the focus groups and the pre-test. The questionnaire is attached in Appendix B. The questionnaire

started with a word of welcome and general information, questions on gender and other screening questions. After that, participants were exposed to different levels of stimuli and answered items on SC, BA, PI and PSR. The questionnaire concluded with a manipulation check to ensure that manipulations were suitably different and well understood.

The data of the quantitative study were collected by distributing surveys to all respondents on the list. A Qualtrics link was emailed to the respondents through which they gained access to the questionnaire. Qualtrics is computer software used for data collection. Qualtrics ensured that participants could access the questionnaire from a mobile device or computer and the researcher had easy access to all the data. The data analysis process is discussed hereafter.

1.5.2.3 Data analysis

The next section will discuss the data analysis procedures followed to ensure reliable and valid results were obtained. The descriptive and inferential analysis will also briefly be explained.

1.5.2.3.1 Internal validity and manipulation checks

Field experiments are more prone to the negative effects of extraneous variables than laboratory experiments as the testing environment is less controlled, which could lead to potential harming of the internal validity within a study (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013: 269). A measure that is valid measures what it claims to measure (Jackson, 2009:70). In other words, validity refers to whether a measure is truthful or genuine.

Several measures were taken to avoid the possible negative effects of extraneous variables on the field experiment. This study was a cross-sectional study; therefore, data were collected at a single point in time. The history effect was minimised by the cross-sectional study (Field, Miles & Field, 2012). The threat of maturation and mortality effects were thus irrelevant, as each respondent only participated once in the research study (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). The current study employed a post-test only design; therefore,

testing effects were not applicable. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental groups, addressing the threat of potential selection effects.

Instrumental effects were avoided by collecting data similarly for each experimental group. Therefore, the only differences in the questionnaires were the stimuli to which the participants were exposed.

A manipulation check was conducted at the end of the questionnaire. Manipulation checks ensure that manipulating the independent variable has had the desired effect (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:271). For this study, manipulation checks were performed on all three independent variables: the number of followers, authority cue and advertising disclosure.

1.5.2.3.2 External validity

External validity refers to whether the results of the study can be generalised to demographic groups outside those tested in the study (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014:189). The target sample was female millennials aged between 18 and 25, increasing the external validity of the study. However, the use of a non-probability sampling method limited generalising this study. The results of this study were not generalisable to Baby Boomers or Generation X and as the research was conducted in South Africa, the results were not generalisable to any other country.

1.5.2.3.3 Data analysis and interpretation

The quantitative results as generated by the data analysis process are discussed in Chapter 6. The data were statistically analysed with Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS software. Reliability and unidimensionality were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and principal axis factoring. Demographic data were assessed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations.

The independent and interactive influences of the factors on the dependent variables were investigated using univariate analysis of variance. Before univariate ANOVA tests could be conducted, homogeneity of variance had to be verified. Homogeneity of variance

is assumed by an insignificant Levene's test (Field, Miles & Field, 2012:412). Other tests conducted to determine homogeneity of variance were Welch and Brown Forsyth. If all homogeneity of variance tests conducted was insignificant, the researcher could continue with univariate analysis testing of the variables.

1.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of influential advertising on Instagram and the use of information on Instagram in a marketing context.

Influencers carry the potential for brands to tap into as methods of brand building and brand equity development. However, there is limited knowledge on how to leverage the collaborated identity of an influencer and brand to the greatest benefit of a brand. It is proposed that identity congruence between the consumer, brand and influencer will lead to greater effectiveness and persuasion of the influencer marketing but is to be proven in an Instagram context. This study seeks to address the need for more literature in the field of influencer marketing on Instagram.

An influencer's Instagram credibility and identity comprise two dimensions: UGC and SGC (Kim & Johnson, 2016; Lin *et al.*, 2016; Shan, 2016). UGC is any content that individuals post to their profile that portrays their interests or opinions (Roma & Aloini, 2019). UGC defines an individual's personality and can be perceived as a reflection of their identity (Shan, 2016). SGC are quantitative indicators that influence an individual's identity, popularity and credibility (Lin *et al.*, 2016).

The literature has proposed that different SGC on social media platforms carry different weights of credibility (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Hu, 2015; Lin *et al.*, 2016; Van der Heide & Lim, 2016). However, most research regarding SGC has been conducted on Facebook and Twitter (Blease, 2015; Jin, 2018; Kim & Johnson, 2016). No research has been conducted on Instagram to determine which UGC or SGC on Instagram are most influential in affecting SC. Thus, there is insufficient knowledge about the effects of different sources of UGC and SGC on SC, PSR, PI and BA.

This study seeks to address this knowledge gap to ensure that when marketers select an influencer to endorse a brand, an influencer who is most suitable to the target audience of the brand is selected. As a guideline to selecting the most appropriate influencer for a specific brand, the research also plans to establish what dimensions of the influencer's profile are most influential in persuading the target audience. Last, this study will contribute to understanding influencers on Instagram; what makes an influencer influential and how can brands leverage their influencers to increase sales and brand equity.

1.7 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 outlines the study. Background information on the topic, the research problem, objectives and the purpose of the study are described. The research methods, data analysis and contribution of the study are also briefly explained.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 form part of an extensive literature review on key concepts such as SGC, UGC, BA, PI, SC and PSR to shape the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 2 explores the concept of brand building and developing brand equity. The motives for building brand equity and how brands can develop equity using the brand resonance pyramid are examined. Branding in the modern era as seen on social media and other online platforms is investigated, referring to consumers' PI and BA.

In Chapter 3, the broader scope of social media is presented by examining the different elements of marketing. Motives for using social media, different types of social media and advertising on social media are considered. In Chapter 3, the two independent variables, user-generated content and system-generated cues are introduced, including its effects on SC

The fourth chapter introduces millennials and incorporates social media and especially Instagram in developing millennials' personal identity. The chapter explains how millennials use brands and influencers as part of their personal identity growth by developing parasocial relationships.

Chapter 5 describes the mixed-methods research design. This study used qualitative and quantitative research methods and both are reviewed in depth. Qualitative research entails two focus group discussions and a pre-test to gather information useful for the construct of the quantitative research phase. For the quantitative research phase, a 2×2 between-subjects factorial experimental design is described.

The sixth chapter contains the qualitative and quantitative results of the study. The results of the qualitative results are explained, and the themes discussed in each focus group are stated in this chapter. The quantitative results are displayed using inferential and descriptive data analysis.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, hosts a discussion as well as suggestions for future research. The discussion provides a deeper insight into the results presented in Chapter 6. The suggestions offer practical ways in which managers can incorporate the results into practice. Future research will be of value for researchers wishing to conduct further research on the same topic.

1.8 CONCLUSION

Several authors agree that celebrities and influencers on social media with perceived credibility can be used as an effective marketing tool for brand building. The literature also emphasises the need for celebrities and influencers to develop their source credibility through UGC and SGC to become more persuasive to their audiences. The literature has reported that UGC and SGC can influence an Instagram user's perception of source credibility, an increased consumer desire to form PSR with the influencer, increase BA and increase PI of the promoted product (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Loureiro & Sarmiento, 2019; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019; Weismueller *et al.*, 2020). However, a knowledge gap exists of how influential advertising on Instagram works despite the potential value for brands and the evidence of its effectiveness as a brand-building tool. Knowledge lacks about what elements of UGC and SGC on an individual Instagram profile are most influential in affecting consumer responses. Therefore, research is needed on UGC and SGC to determine its effect on developing SC, PSR, BA and PI on Instagram.

The following chapter, Chapter 2, will examine existing literature on brand building through brand equity, forming a positive attitude towards a brand and influencing consumers' purchase intention.

CHAPTER 2

THE ART OF BRAND BUILDING

A brand is not a product or a promise or a feeling. It is the sum of all the experiences you have with a company – Amir Kassaei

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, it was established influential marketing (IM) on social media has been the latest addition to the marketing mix. Marketers can now reach consumers at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising methods by incorporating an experienced brand user as promotional tool for brand building.

Branding is among the most important dimensions for businesses due to its overall impact on a company (Smithson, 2015). Branding has been used throughout the history of human existence to identify and differentiate products. It has become one of the most distinctive skills of a marketer alongside their ability to create, maintain, enhance and protect a brand.

Brands should develop innovative promotional strategies to retain their positioning in the market in comparison with their competitors to ensure relevancy to consumers in a dynamic market. With retaining their position in the market, brands should provide consumers with benefits that are unique to their offering, often referred to as differentiation (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Branding is a broad concept used by companies to define creating, maintaining and growing a brand. Marketers create, maintain and protect a brand by positioning their products and developing brand equity. “A product is what you sell, a brand is the perceived image of the product you sell, and branding is the strategy to create that image” (Mohan & Sequeira, 2016:125).

This chapter will explain the dimension of branding referred to as brand equity (BE). The purpose of Chapter 2 is to describe how brands build BE in a new era of branding. Different models for developing BE proposed in the public domain of the marketing

literature will be incorporated. The chapter will define brand, briefly explain the history of branding and developing BE. For developing BE, some models will be analysed and discerned to determine ways in which a brand can develop BE. The chapter will conclude with branding in a modern era such as branding on social media and other online platforms.

2.2 BRANDING

The art of branding dates back more than 3 000 years when religious organisations branded bodies to distinguish themselves from others according to unique clothing, coins and artefacts (Time, 2018). One of the oldest existing brands in the world is the Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan hot spring hotel founded in 705 AD in Hayakawa, Japan (Onsen-Keiunkan, 2019). Other well-known heritage brands are Stella Artois Brewery (1366), Twinings tea (1706), Shell oil (1833) and Levi Strauss clothing (1837) (Time, 2018). According to the Harvard Business school, 30 000 new brands are launched each year of which 80% fail to surpass three years (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi & Algharabat, 2017). These brands fail for various reasons including companies not being able to support rapid growth, products fall short of promotional claims or the brand product defines a new category first requiring consumer education (Schneider & Hall, 2011).

A brand is defined by the American Marketing Association as, “A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler & Keller, 2012:241). According to the definition of a brand, a brand is separate from its product offering. A product is anything a brand can offer to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that may satisfy a consumer’s needs or wants (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Instead, a brand can be a product or service designed to satisfy the need of a consumer in a functional, rational or tangible way. Brands serve several valuable functions for the company and the consumer. At its most basic level, a brand serves as a product or offering of a company that is sold for a profit. For consumers, brands can simplify choice options according to reduced risk, quality level and engendered trust (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Brands differentiate themselves from competitors by adapting

products to contribute to the uniqueness of the product offering and sustaining their competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

A differentiation method commonly used by marketers is to position a brand according to a unique place in the mind of a consumer, which is referred to as brand positioning (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). Brand positioning is the act of designing the offering and image of a company to occupy a distinct place in the minds of the target market (Keller, 2008). The objective behind brand positioning is to locate the brand in the mind of the consumer in a place that it will maximise the benefit for the company. A good brand position assists marketers in developing marketing strategies that reflect the position of the brand (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2015). For example, brands that have been positioned as high quality and high price should have professional looking advertisements with attention to detail across the integrated marketing mix.

Then again, a brand is more than differentiating and positioning a product on the market. Besides tangible product offerings, brands can accumulate intangible psychological value to consumers, which can be compared with BE (Keegan & Green, 2015). Therefore, the objective of the following section is to analyse the different dimensions of BE. Different models proposed by the literature to develop BE among consumers will also be incorporated.

2.3 BRAND EQUITY

The concept of BE has been thoroughly researched in the marketing literature domain (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, 2001, 2016; Kim, Kim & An, 2003). BE can be perceived as a conglomerate of all the marketing activities across the lifetime of a brand encapsulated into meaning or perception about the brand for the consumer.

The literature presents mainly two dimensions of BE: the financial perspective and the consumer-based approach (Kim *et al.*, 2003; Narteh, 2018; Simon & Sullivan, 1993). The financial approach is measured by market outcomes, for example, relative price, financial market outcomes such as discounted cash flow, royalties and the purchase price of the brand (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). Although the financial approach is useful to determine

the monetary value of BE, it fails to capture the in-depth meanings and associations with the consumer that have been linked to the brand through its advertising.

The second method of measuring BE is from a consumer-based approach. This approach consists of various associations consumers have made about the brand based on their understanding of the values of the brand and how the brand wants to be perceived (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010). The consumer-based approach captures the psychological meaning of the brand and is therefore separate from the financial value. For this study, only the consumer-based approach will be examined. The financial approach is linked to financial statements and deductions and falls outside the scope of this study.

The development of BE leads to a strengthened brand in the consumer's mind. BE emphasises the importance of taking a broad and long-term view of marketing and incorporating a wide range of traditional and non-traditional advertising methods to add value to the brand (Keller, 2016). For a consumer or market segment, brand strength is the relative power of attracting consumers to a given brand versus other brands (Woodside & Walser, 2006). Implicit in this description is the proposition that competing brands are not equally strong. Some brands are more favourable than others are.

Brands need to recognise the importance of BE so a brand can measure-up against competing brands. Also, brands should understand BE to identify areas of the brand that can be transformed to become more profitable and resonate in the minds of consumers. Therefore, to recognise what BE is and how to build it, the following section will define BE and provide an overview of how consumers remember and store memory in their minds.

2.3.1 Defining brand equity

“If you ask ten people to define brand equity, you are likely to get ten (maybe 11) different answers as to what it means” (Winter, 1991:202). Many studies have since been published on BE but Winter's (1991) statement is even more relevant today than it was in 1991. Much attention has been devoted to building BE in the marketing literature, but BE is a complex concept. Therefore, authors have proposed different definitions to

conceptualise their meaning. The variations can be attributed to several studies describing different dimensions of BE as an intangible asset (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010).

Among the first definitions of BE was Srinivasan's (1979:91), who defined BE as “the components of a brand’s overall preference that is not explained by the multi-attribute model”. Estimates of BE resulting from this definition occur at a segment level. This definition fails to highlight the sources of brand value and psychological dimensions of a brand (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010). One of the most cited definitions of BE was proposed by Aaker (1991), which also remains the most prominent across the literature (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Keller, 2016; Mohan & Sequeira, 2016). “A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 1991:125).

Although some authors have proposed a more modern approach to defining BE, their definitions still focus more on capturing and measuring the dimensions of BE as a construct than defining its meaning. For example, Dwivedi, Johnson and McDonald (2015) define BE as the value that consumers associate with a brand, as reflected by the dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. This definition elaborates on the four dimensions to measure BE but fails to conceptualise and elaborate on the deeper meaning of BE. It is necessary to explain how humans store knowledge in memory to gain more knowledge of BE, as strong brands are developed over time. BE consists of different meanings and associations stored in the consumer’s memory during exposures to branded content. Therefore, the following section will discuss how brand meanings and associations are stored in the minds of consumers, resulting in brand recognition and recalls.

2.3.1.1 How memory is stored, associative network model

The mental representation of a brand formed by a person in their mind is referred to as a brand association. Associations can be linked to the first thing the person thinks of when exposed to a brand. Marketing research is concerned with two issues about associations

(Srull & Wyer, 1989). First, how information about a brand is encoded, organised and recalled in the memory of a consumer. Second, how the information that is stored in memory is transformed into social judgements, affective reactions and behavioural decisions (Srull & Wyer, 1989). The most widely accepted conceptualisation of memory and how impressions are stored involve a type of associative model formation (Keller, 1993). Realising how consumers form brand associations will improve marketers' information on how consumers develop their opinions and perspectives of a brand. Consumer perspectives are important as they translate to brand knowledge, which is a component of the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model proposed by Keller (1993). Grasping association storage will enhance the ability of the brand to develop promotional content that will be easier recognised by consumers in purchase decisions.

For associative network models, memory is construed as a figurative network of nodes (objects, events and ideas) connected by links (like a spider's web). The links reflect the strength of an association between two concepts (Hastie, 1988). Memory models incorporate ideas about 'spreading activation' to represent the processes of memory retrieval (Srull & Wyer, 1989). A brand or product that is currently thought of activates a node and 'excitation' spreads between connecting links to associations of the brand stored by the person and the conglomerate of associations from perceiving the brand (Hastie, 1988). Associations that have been encountered more frequently in the past are likely to be stronger and are represented in memory by pathways through which excitation can spread more quickly (Keller, 1993). Brands use advertising to develop associations allowing consumers to reflect on their perceptions of the product versus what is communicated to them through advertising.

Brands use product promotions to build stronger associations with which consumers should be able to recall and recognise a brand faster. Once sufficient 'excitation' has passed from previously activated nodes to a new node so its level of accumulated excitation surpasses some threshold, a new node or association will be stored in the mind of the consumers (Keller, 1993).

Building and developing BE deal with creating brand associations in the minds of consumers. The literature has proposed different models that brands can use to develop

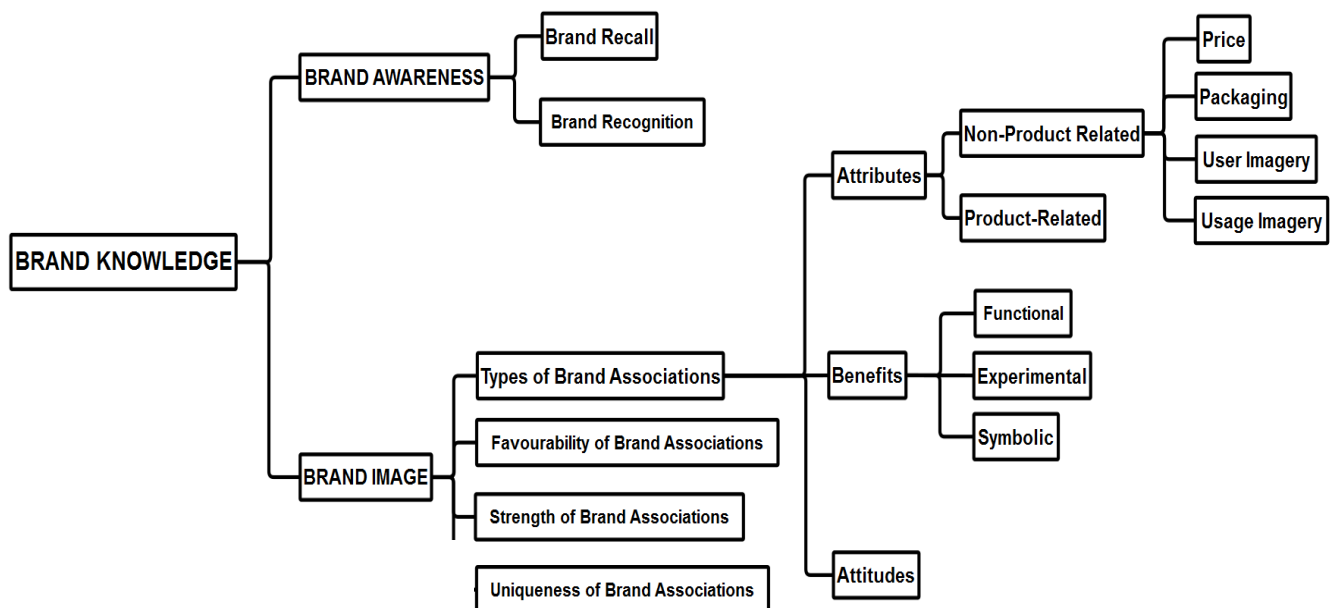
BE and create new memory nodes in the minds of the consumers. A consumer's brand attitude reflects their perception of the brand. This study is concerned with the development process of brand attitudes. Therefore, the following section will introduce and describe developing BE through models

2.4 BRAND EQUITY THROUGH MODELS

The first model that will be explained is the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model developed by Keller (1993). Keller (1993) was among the first authors to acknowledge the multidimensional constitutes of BE. The CBBE model forms the foundation of most BE models that followed. For example, the brand asset valuator (Young & Rubicam Group, 2003), the Millward Brown brand dynamics pyramid (Elms & Pincott, 2009) and the brand resonance pyramid (Keller, 2001). The following section will explain the CBBE model and brand resonance pyramid interchangeably since the brand resonance pyramid is Keller's (2001) modernised version of the CBBE model (Keller, 1993).

The CBBE model in Figure 2.1 was developed by Kevin Lane Keller (1993) to

Figure 2.1: Consumer-based brand equity model



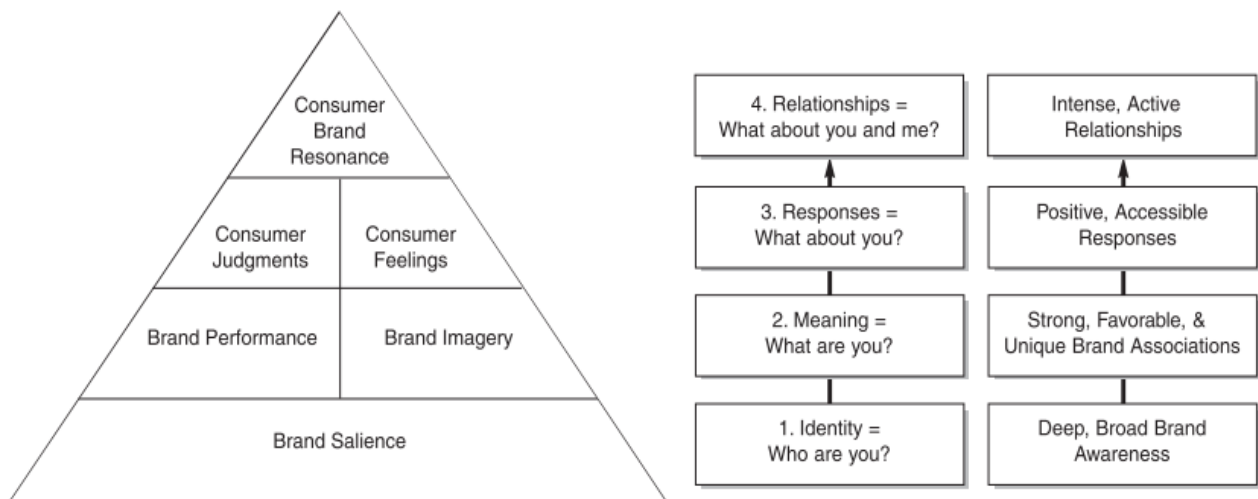
Source: (Keller, 1993)

conceptualise BE. The motivation for Keller's (1993) article was to assist managers in developing BE and researchers who are interested in the strategic aspects of branding. Keller (1993) defines customer-based BE as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses to marketing the brand. CBBE involves consumers' reactions to an element of the marketing mix of a known brand in comparison with their reactions with the same marketing element attributed to a fictitious brand, product or service (Lassar, Mittal & Sharma, 1995). Therefore, BE can be perceived as the cognitive and psychological value of a brand once the monetary dimension has been removed. The CBBE model in Figure 2.1 appropriates that all brand information stems from the concept of brand knowledge. Brand knowledge is conceptualised as a brand node in a consumer's memory to which various associations are linked (Keller, 1993). Brand knowledge consists of two components, brand awareness and brand image. Both brand awareness and brand image are deductions of brand knowledge presented in Figure 2.1. Brand awareness refers to a consumer's ability to recall or recognise a brand when confronted with a purchase decision. Brand image is linked to the non-tangible associations that consumers hold in their minds about the brand (Keller, 2009).

The purpose of the marketing team of a brand is to implement promotional activities that are most efficient and effective in building strong, favourable and unique brand associations. A key point to consider is that the power and value of a brand reside with its consumers because the success of the marketing efforts depend on how consumers respond to the brand (Keller, 2001). The consumer response, in turn, depends on knowledge of the brand that has been created in the minds of the consumers. Brands develop these memory nodes by constantly exposing consumers to advertisement and promotions that are subjective to how the brand wants to be perceived and where the brand is positioned in the market. Keller (2001) modernised the CBBE model to what is known as the brand resonance model. The brand resonance model was developed to help brands construct their BE and strengthen their brand by incorporating various elements and principles into the brand-building process.

Figure 2.2 illustrates brand building as a four-step process from bottom to top: (1) identifying the brand and associating it with a specific product class or need, (2) establishing brand meaning in consumers' minds, (3) eliciting the proper consumer responses in terms of brand-related judgement and feelings, and (4) converting consumers' brand response to an intense, active loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2012:246). Each step in the brand-building process consists of dimensions that brands can use to build BE.

Figure 2.2
Brand resonance model



Source: Keller, 2001

It is important to note that although the brand resonance pyramid has four horizontal steps, it also has two vertical dimensions that divide the development of brand resonance into a rational and irrational side (Keller, 2001, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2012). The rational side of brand building is concerned with performance features – how well the brand performs compared with similar brands or judgement features, that is, a consumer's opinion and evaluation of a brand. The irrational route is concerned with a consumer's psychological attachment to the brand through intangible associations. Those associations are how consumers feel about the brand, what emotions are experienced while using the brand and how consumers feel when displaying and using the brand in public (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Although brands may choose to follow the rational or

irrational route in their BE development process, the literature notes brands selling high-involvement goods best achieve brand resonance incorporating both routes (Duman, Ozbal & Duerod, 2018). The following section will discuss the brand resonance model and the steps incorporated to develop BE through the model.

2.4.1 Brand resonance model

The four steps of brand-building according to the brand resonance model as proposed by Keller (2001) are explained in detail.

2.4.1.1 Step 1: Building the foundation

The first step in building BE is developing deep, broad brand awareness among potential consumers, which is referred to as brand awareness or salience (from now on referred to as salience). The question is about the identity of the brand. Who are you? Getting to know you. In the brand resonance model, salience is made up of two components, brand recall and brand recognition (Cheng, Anderson, Zhu & Choi, 2018; Keller, 2001). Brand recall relates to a consumer's ability to retrieve the brand in memory when given a product category. Brand recognition refers to a consumer's ability to confirm a previous experience and association with the brand (Keller, 1993).

In developing brand salience, marketers use brand elements such as a brand name, logo, symbol or a combination of these associations in the memory of consumers to assist them in recalling and recognising a brand. Brands must educate consumers using the marketing mix to ensure meaningful associations to the brand so that consumers recognise the product or service category in which the brand operates. Brands educate consumers by providing them with information in advertising about the performance of the product. These brand-orientated meanings are stored as nodes and give the brand meaning to consumers. Developing brand meaning is the second step of building a strong brand and is discussed hereafter.

2.4.1.2 Step 2: Brand performance and imagery

The second step of the model is developing brand meaning among consumers. Here, the question is what are you. Brand identity must be changed into brand meaning. Brand meaning can be developed by strategically linking a host of tangible and intangible associations to the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012:246). Through brand promotion, brand meaning is distinguished in functional, performance-related and imagery-related considerations (Keller, 2001). Thus, according to the brand resonance model, brand meaning can be divided into two components, brand performance and brand image with a set of 'brand building elements' in each component.

2.4.1.2.1 Brand performance

A product lies at the heart of a brand. It is the primary tangible experience that consumers have with a brand, what they hear about a brand and what a company can tell consumers about their brand in the communication mix. Therefore, a brand product should satisfy or surpass all consumer expectations. Brands producing products that surpass consumer expectations can expect a higher return on investments, greater financial growth and higher levels of BE (Liu, Wong, Tseng, Chang & Phau, 2017).

Brand performance is defined by how well the product or service meets a consumer's functional need (Keller, 2009). Functional needs refer to the ability of a product to perform certain tasks. The performance attributes and benefits that constitute functionality varies but Keller (2001) has proposed some important attributes that underlie brand performance. Consumers often hold certain beliefs to what levels a product will perform or operate. These performance expectations are communicated to consumers through the marketing mix, previous experiences or word-of-mouth. For example, a battery manufacturer may specify their batteries last 24 hours under certain conditions. If the battery outlasts 24 hours, the consumer's brand performance node could be strengthened leading to preference in recall when purchasing batteries.

As the performance dimensions are concerned with consumption or usage of the product, brands have many different elements through which differentiation can take place. Brands

can differentiate according to serviceability, style, design and durability (Keller, 2016). These elements assist consumers and the public in developing associations about the performance of the brand under various conditions. These performance associations can be reflected in the image of the brand (Keller, 2001).

2.4.1.2.2 Brand image

The brand resonance model stipulates that a critical step in successful brand building is to establish a favourable brand image. In the cited definition by Keller (1993:4), brand image is described as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in memory”. Aaker (1991) states brand image refers to the associations in consumers' minds, beliefs built around the brand, uniqueness that differentiates a brand from others, personal symbolism that buyers associate with a brand and impressions about the brand more than the product. Keller (2001) proposes four categories that define brand image: (a) user profiles, (b) purchase and usage situations, (c) personality and values and (d) history, heritage and experiences. For this study, the views of Aaker (1991) and Keller's (2001) as marketing expert were combined. User profiles, personality and values and history, heritage and experiences were investigated. Purchase and usage situations (Keller, 2001) referring to the type of channel and shop the brand can be purchased from did not correspond with the purpose of this study.

a) User profiles

A well-known English proverb about an individual's identity says, “You are, who your friends are” (Utz, 2010). This proverb implies that persons can be distinguished by their personality and traits and by whom they surround themselves. The idea of judging an individual by their friends also can be applied to brands. Brand imagery associations involve the type of person or organisation who is using the brand (Keller, 2001). Therefore, the image of a brand is partly constructed by the profile of actual users or inspirational, idealised users. Although not for all brands, some brands may focus on the characteristics of more than one type of audience. The brand entails that consumers may

believe the brand is used by many people and therefore, perceives the brand as more 'popular' or a potential 'market leader'. For example, Nike sponsors high-level sports stars; therefore, an individual should associate Nike with high quality and fitness. In short, people develop associations based on other users of the brand.

b) Personality and values

A brand personality is defined as a set of human characteristics associated with the brand and serve a self-expression function (Aaker, 1997). Brands may take on the values and personality traits like those that define people. The personality of a brand can also be influenced by direct or indirect sources of contact that a consumer has with a brand. For example, (1) the consumer of the brand – where the brand personality coincides with those who use the brand, (2) brand endorsers – where the brand personality is formed through the process of linking the identity of a person to the brand and last (3) through elements of the brand such as brand name, advertising style or slogan (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). In addition to personality characteristics, brand personality also includes demographic characteristics such as gender, age and class (high price – low price) (Aaker, 1997). Although sometimes hard to grasp, brands can carry masculine or feminine characteristics. For example, AXE deodorant is perceived as a masculine brand, whereas La Senza is perceived as a feminine brand. Brands also carry age characteristics; Apple is considered a young brand, whereas IBM is considered older (Aaker, 1997). These demographic characteristics are implied directly from the brand user imagery, employees and endorsers (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegger, 2011).

Brand imagery can also be reflected by historic associations. Brand heritage, where the brand comes from and past experiences that have shaped the image of the brand in the mind of the consumer can play a role (Keller, 2001).

c) History, heritage and experiences

Brands may take on associations with their past and certain noteworthy events in the history of the brand (Keller, 2001). These types of brand association may involve personal

experiences and episodes or be related to past behaviours and experiences of friends, family or other users. An important part of BE is hidden in the history, heritage and experiences that consumers have had with a brand over its existence (Woodside, Sood & Miller, 2008). Brexendorf and Keller (2017:8) advise, “Any brand, but especially those that are struggling, can benefit from going back to its roots and identifying what made it special and successful in the first place”.

Brands can use their history, heritage and past experiences in a form of storytelling to develop their brand imagery associations. Although stories are mostly consumer-originated, companies can also create their own stories that are esteemed to be an influential method of advertising (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & Van Riel, 2013). Storytelling is an effective way to educate consumers on certain aspects of the brand. For example, the advertising campaign ‘keep walking’ of Johnnie Walker whisky. Through advertising, the brand shares information on producing the whisky, the long history and the Scottish heritage of the brand. Therefore, storytelling is an effective way for brands to develop strong, favourable and unique associations in the minds of consumers.

Thus, the associations linked to brand image are important to consumers. Consumers buy brands according to their personal perceived ‘brand’ image. In other words, consumers buy brands that are in some form a replication of themselves or at least a desired replication of the self (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Essamri *et al.*, 2019; Malär *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, within the purchase decisions, consumers may consider a brand that replicates their own personality. For example, if an athlete desires to compete at the highest level of a sport, they will consider buying brands that are well known in the sport. The brand may be used by the top performers of the discipline and the personality or image of the brand may likely align with the personality of the consumers. Both former requirements are perceived as brand associations. These desired associations are also partly reflected by how other users and the public response to the brand.

2.4.1.3 Step 3: Consumer judgements and feelings

The third step in building strong brands is ensuring a positive brand response from consumers. Then the question is what about you should we like. Brand response refers to how consumers respond to a brand, its marketing activities and other sources of information (Kotler & Keller, 2012). A response is what consumers think and feel about a brand and can be distinguished according to consumer judgements and feelings. The following section will discuss the two components of brand response: brand judgements and brand feelings and their sub-dimensions.

2.4.1.3.1 Brand judgements

Humans judge in situations involving uncertainty, complexity, trade-offs and other criteria (Mumpower & Stewart, 2002). Purchase behaviour in society requires, among other things, that the consumer be able to make judgements and comparisons across products, brands and services. Such judgements are arrived at by a process in which some or all the various items of information (that is, cues) associated with the product, brand, or service are identified, evaluated, and integrated to form a composite judgement (Szybillo & Jacoby, 1974).

Brand judgement focuses on a consumer's personal opinion and evaluation of a brand (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002). Brand judgement also encompasses how consumers put together the different performance and imagery associations linked to the brand (Keller, 2001). Consumers judge brands according to their past experiences with the brand, discussions with other consumers, personal research conducted and the perceptions they have of other users of the brand. Keller (2001) maintains people judge a brand according to four criteria measures, perceived quality, credibility, brand consideration and superiority.

Perceived quality is reflected by a consumer's judgement towards the brand about their perception of the excellence and superiority of the brand (Zeithaml, 1988). Many of the perceived quality judgements are deducted from extrinsic cues such as price, packaging and brand name (Konuk, 2018). Brand credibility is reflected by the believability and

expertise of the information conveyed by a brand. Brand credibility plays a vital role in the judgement aspect of brand building. When brands communicate to consumers about the performance aspects of their products, the brand promise should be attainable and believable to protect the credibility of the brand. In support of brand credibility, consumers also judge a brand by its perceived superiority. Brand superiority relates to the extent to which consumers view the brand as being unique and better than competing brands (Duman *et al.*, 2018). When a brand is perceived as superior, the brand image reflects the consumer, making the consumer feel more superior when consuming the brand.

Brand judgement emphasises a consumer's personal evaluations and opinions of a given product and involves grouping brand image and brand performance (Panda & Kapoor, 2016). Before a consumer buys a brand, they make predetermined judgements about how they believe the brand will perform under various conditions. These judgements stem from previous promotions, interactions with people and other exposures that may have led to predetermined conception about the brand. Therefore, brand advertising must develop and enhance positive brand associations in the minds of the consumers to ensure that when consumers are confronted with a brand, positive judgements are made. When consumers make positive brand judgements, the result will be growth in BE. The psychological dimensions that constitute brand response are brand feelings.

2.4.1.3.2 Brand feelings

Travis (2000) argues brands are different from products, because, unlike products, a brand arouses feelings. Brand feelings are emotional responses and reactions to the brand and strengthen a consumer's association with a brand (Keller, 2001). Brand feelings constitute six dimensions: (1) warmth: the extent to which brand makes the consumer feel calm, (2) fun: the extent to which consumer feels amuse, (3) excitement: the extent to which consumer feels energised, (4) security: the extent to which consumer feels self-assured and comfortable, (5) social approval: the extent to which consumer feel positive about the reaction of others towards him, (6) self-respect: the extent to which consumer feels fulfilled (Panda & Kapoor, 2016).

The implicit purpose of brand advertising is to enhance brand feelings, which then, *ceteris paribus*, should lead to stronger purchase intent (Cramphorn, 2015). Therefore, enhancing brand feelings should evoke more 'excitement' to a brand association, leading to faster brand recall and brand recognition. The final step in building BE through the brand resonance pyramid is step four, developing brand resonance.

2.4.1.4 Step 4: Consumer brand relations

The final step of the brand resonance pyramid is developing intense, active brand relationships through brand resonance. Finally, the consumer should have been convinced of a feeling of "I love you". Resonance in science is the tendency of a system to vibrate with increasing amplitudes at some frequencies of excitation (Nobukawa & Shibata, 2019). When transferring the definition from science to marketing, a marketing communication plan should develop brand nodes that are constantly vibrating with increased frequencies and excitation in the mind of a consumer. In other words, the promotional activities of a brand should make the consumer excited about the brand and product offering. Brand resonance is defined by Keller (2016) as the extent to which a consumer feels in sync with a brand; the degree to which consumers vibrate in unity with the brand. It is reflected by the level of intensity and activity in the relationship the brand engenders with consumers and is conceptualised in terms of four components: behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement. The goal for brand marketers is to develop a brand resonance with their target market. Therefore, the following section will discuss the four components of brand resonance and how brands could use these components to strengthen their BE.

2.4.1.4.1 Behavioural loyalty

The first dimension of brand resonance is behavioural loyalty in terms of repeat purchases (Keller, 2001). In other words, how often and how much do consumers purchase a brand. Behavioural loyalty is defined as the attachment that a consumer has to a brand (Aaker, 1991). Oliver (1999) claims that loyalty is an accumulation of a consumer's past

experiences with a brand. Therefore, when considering the brand resonance pyramid, identity, meaning and favourable brand responses are all attributable to a past interaction with the brand and contribute to building active loyalty among consumers. For a brand to resonate among consumers, the consumers must have a favourable attitude towards the brand. Favourable attitudes can be achieved by linking 'happy' and emotional associations to the brand. A favourable brand attitude will evoke positive emotions when recalling or recognising the brand (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018).

2.4.1.4.2 Attitudinal attachment

It is required that a consumer's 'feelings' should go beyond having a positive attitude to develop a resonating brand. Instead, as a marketer, you want your consumers to be "in love" or love your brand. Among the first authors to discuss the concept of brand love was Shimp and Madden (1988). Since then, brand love has been a topic of great interest for marketers who pursue brand resonance. Brand love has been divided into three dimensions: passion, intimacy and commitment (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Shimp & Madden, 1988).

The self-inclusion theory of love developed by Aron and Aron (1996) has been adapted to marketing and posits that people need to become part of a brand to feel the emotional attachment. Therefore, when a brand reaches the desired level of integration with the consumer's sense of self, that consumer feels love for the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

Several antecedents of brand love have been proposed such as the status of a hedonic brand, a self-expressive brand, higher levels of perceived brand quality and active participation in a brand community (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Cui, Mrad & Hogg, 2018; Wallace, Buil & De Chernatony, 2014). The brand love relationship is deep and enduring (beyond simple affect), such that the loved brand is considered irreplaceable (Cui *et al.*, 2018).

Brand love is an enduring emotion that consumers have for a brand. In developing brand love, consumers seek active participation with a brand community in which users share

their experiences and emotions felt towards the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Cui *et al.*, 2018). Brand communities play an important role when it comes to brand love to the extent that they help establish a stronger connection with the brand (Coelho, Bairrada & Peres, 2019). The connections experienced with a brand in a community transforms into relationships between consumers in the community.

2.4.1.4.3 Sense of community

Identification with a brand community may reflect an important social phenomenon whereby consumers feel a kinship or affiliation with other people associated with the brand (Keller, 2001). Companies initiate brand communities to achieve favourable brand outcomes (Relling, Schnittka, Ringle, Sattler & Johnen, 2016). A brand community can be defined as space where consumers can harmoniously discuss a brand and connect with endorsers and experienced users of the brand. Endorsers can share their experiences to which community members can relate. Brand communities are composed of people who possess a social identification with others and share their interest in a particular brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). For example, Harley Davidson has motorbike clubs where riders who own a Harley go on group rides throughout the week. Within these group rides, consumers tell stories, share brand experiences and build relationships with other brand users.

When referring to brand communities, researchers have found that identification with a brand is a significant stimulus for brand community participation (Liu & Guo, 2015). One of the motives for consumers to join brand communities is to establish and maintain secure social relationships. These relationships are a core motive in human psychology essential for a subjective sense of well-being (Snyder & Newman, 2019). For brand communities to operate effectively, consumers must be willing to engage actively with the brand and the community. Active engagement is a dimension of brand resonance and is possibly the strongest affirmation of brand loyalty (Keller, 2001).

2.4.1.4.4 Active engagement

Brand loyalty occurs when consumers are willing to invest time, energy, money or other resources into the brand beyond those expended during the purchase or consumption of the brand (Keller, 2001). Consumers may choose to join a club run by a brand, receive updates and exchange correspondence with other brand users. Consumers also may choose to visit brand-related websites, participate in chat rooms and so forth. Active engagement can be perceived as the consumer 'wants' to engage with the brand. The brand has become part of the consumers' identity; therefore, they desire to constantly interact with the brand and gather new information about products.

Keller's (2001) modernised brand resonance pyramid is a four-step brand-building model to assist brands in developing BE. According to the model, brand building is divided into the rational route and the irrational route. The rational route is concerned with tangible elements of brand building, whereas the irrational route is concerned with consumers' perceived imagery and how the public perceives the user alongside the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

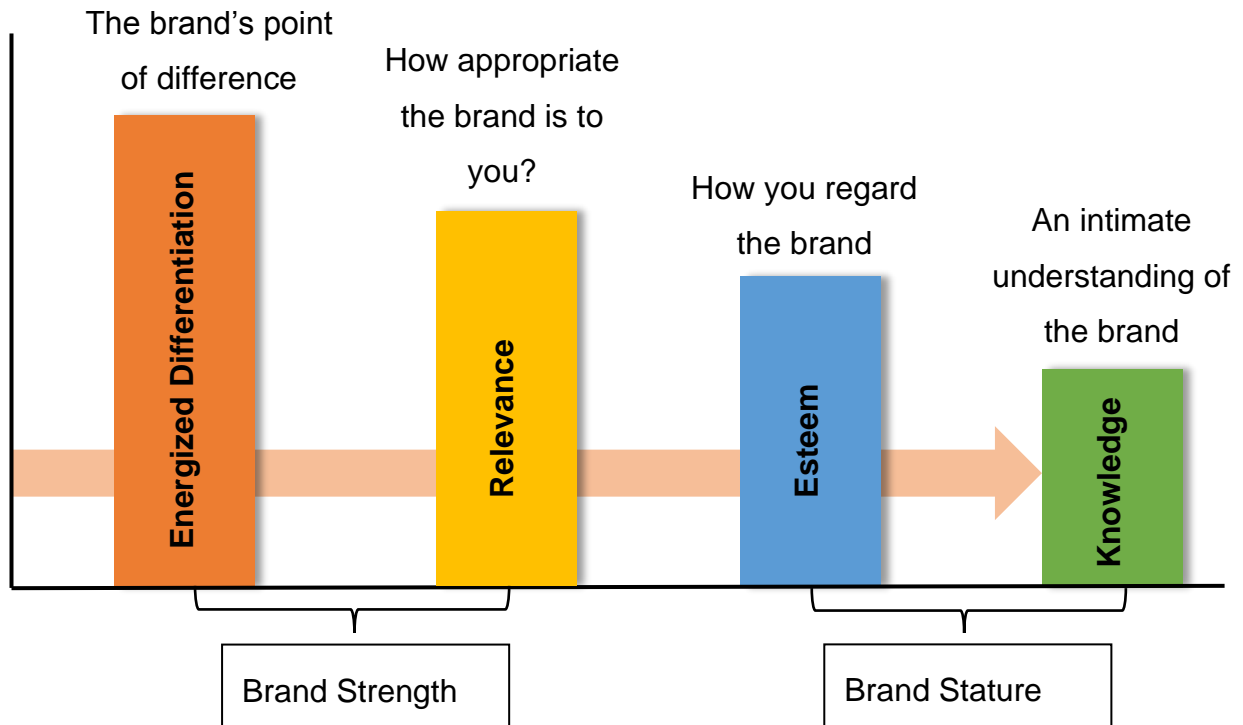
The brand resonance pyramid proposed by Keller (2001) has been instrumental in developing BE for brands. The model proposes four steps ranging from creating broad awareness of the brand among consumers to the final step of brand resonance. The model can be used by marketers to develop BE and influence consumer perceptions of the brand through advertising and promotional activities. Although the brand resonance model is popular, the literature has proposed other models to develop BE and ultimately strong brands. A second model to create and measure BE is the brandasset valuator (BAV).

2.4.2 Brandasset Valuator model

Another model that has been used to measure and develop BE was developed by the Young and Rubicam Group (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The model is referred to as the Brandasset Valuator (BAV) presented in Figure 2.3. The BAV model measures brand qualities and metrics that drive marketplace success according to four components:

differentiation, relevance, esteem and knowledge. Although the BAV is different from the brand resonance model, the two models share similarities. The BAV model comprises two dimensions: brand strength and brand stature. Within each dimension, there are two subdimensions. Within brand strength dimension there are differentiation and relevance, and within brand stature, esteem and knowledge.

Figure 2.3
Brandasset valuator model



Adopted from: (Kotler & Keller, 2012:246)

2.4.2.1 Brand strength

The brand strength component is a leading indicator of future growth and value (Lovett, Peres & Shachar, 2014). The first element of brand strength is energised differentiation. For a brand to be different in the mind of the consumer it needs to be unique and distinct (Dagustani & Satya, 2014). Differentiated brand elements should reflect the essence, beliefs and personality of the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The second component of brand strength is brand relevance. Relevance refers to whether a brand is personally appropriate to a consumer. If the brand is not relevant, the consumer will not be attracted to the brand. Relevance is the source of the staying power of a brand (Dagustani & Satya, 2014) and provides answers to why one needs this brand. Together, the differentiation and relevance of the brand are communicated through promotion and advertising and is used to attract consumers to the brand. For example, a brand can use an influencer to communicate the differences between certain products compared with other brands.

2.4.2.2 Brand stature

The second dimension of the BAV model is brand stature. Brand stature captures the pervasiveness of a brand in a marketplace, which translates to being 'accepted' throughout a group of people, for example, a brand community such as Harley Davidson. Brand stature is composed of two elements: esteem and knowledge (Kotler & Keller, 2012:246). Esteem is the extent to which consumers like a brand and hold it in high regard (Dagustani & Satya, 2014); a consumer's perception of the quality and popularity of the brand (Dagustani & Satya, 2014). Esteem shares properties of the consumer judgement dimension in the brand resonance model, such as a consumer's perception of the quality of the brand and how the public perceives an individual using the brand (Verbeeten & Vijn, 2006). Therefore, it is favourable for brands to have high levels of esteem. The second element of the esteem component is brand knowledge. Brand knowledge is the component that usually consumes the most time to develop, as it is based on consumers' understanding of the brand or have internalised what a brand stands for (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Brand knowledge in the BAV model is developed through constant exposure to brand advertisements, storytelling and communicating the history of the brand and core

value to the public. Another model that has been proposed in the literature to build BE is the BrandDynamics pyramid, also known as the Millward Brown model (Kotler & Keller, 2012:246).

2.4.3 Millward Brown Brand Dynamics Pyramid

The Millward Brown model can be perceived as a mixture of the brand resonance model and the BAV model. The model is composed of five building blocks: presence, relevance, performance, advantage and bonding. The Millward Brown model starts by emphasising the need to develop a broad awareness of the brand and continue to develop BE by focusing on various steps of the model. The final step of the model refers to bonding the brand with consumers. This step is similar to brand resonance as the consumers become one with the brand (Narteh, 2018). Throughout the model, differentiation, the need for the product to perform according to the brand promises and the uniqueness of the brand is emphasised.

In concluding building BE, the variety of definitions and the uniqueness of developing BE for each brand confirms Winter's (1991) assertion that if you asked ten people to define BE, you would probably get 11 answers. The brand resonance model, the BAV model and Millward Brown pyramid all have similar characteristics. The brand resonance model was discussed more in-depth than the Millward Brown pyramid and the BAV model to avoid repetition of the overlapping components of the models. All three models propose that a brand starts by assuring a deep and broad awareness among the potential target market. This step is essential for brands as consumers must know about the brand when confronted with a product need. Brands use the components of these models to ensure developing positive brand associations among the potential target market.

Ultimately, the models are used to create favourable brand associations that are developed through advertising, promotion and brand communication. These associations are used by brands to develop BE among consumers, which in turn, influence the consumer's behaviour (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018). The purpose of building BE is to influence their target consumers' behaviour. From their behaviour, brands can predict a consumer's intention to purchase their products

(Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Also, brands develop their equity to create favourable brand attitudes. These brand attitudes have been noted in the literature to positively influence the consumer's purchase intention (Wang, Cao & Park, 2019). The following section will provide more information on how purchase intentions and brand attitudes form through exposure to advertising.

2.5 BUILDING BRANDS THROUGH CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The marketing communication environment is dynamic and has changed dramatically from what it was 50 years ago (Keller, 2009). Technology and the Internet are fundamentally changing the way brands communicate and the world interacts. At the same time, branding has become a key marketing priority for most companies that want to survive in the ever-increasing competitive environment (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

According to Wang and Ding (2017), a strong brand is composed of high brand awareness and well-established brand associations. Kay (2006) describes a strong brand to be a brand that consists of various components into a 'story'. The evidence of a strong brand is made by the success story of the brand. The story can be used to explain how brands hold strength by creating associated meanings in the minds of consumers (Pinar, Girard, Trapp & Eser, 2016).

Not all brands follow the same brand-building process. The brand resonance pyramid, the Millward Brown model and the BAV model are only some models proposed by the literature to develop BE (Keller, 2001). Building a strong brand is the goal of many organisations. One of the most important outcomes of developing a strong brand is the influence it has on a consumer's attitude, which is reflected by consumer behaviour.

The following section will introduce the component of consumer behaviour. Two theories of consumer behaviour will be described, presenting one of the dependent variables of this study, purchase intention. After that, purchase intention will translate to developing attitudes towards the brand.

2.5.1 Consumer behaviour

Behaviour is determined by the internal processing of information or the action of mental traits whereby consumers follow certain processes before deciding or behaving in a certain way towards consuming a product (Keller & Kotler, 2011).

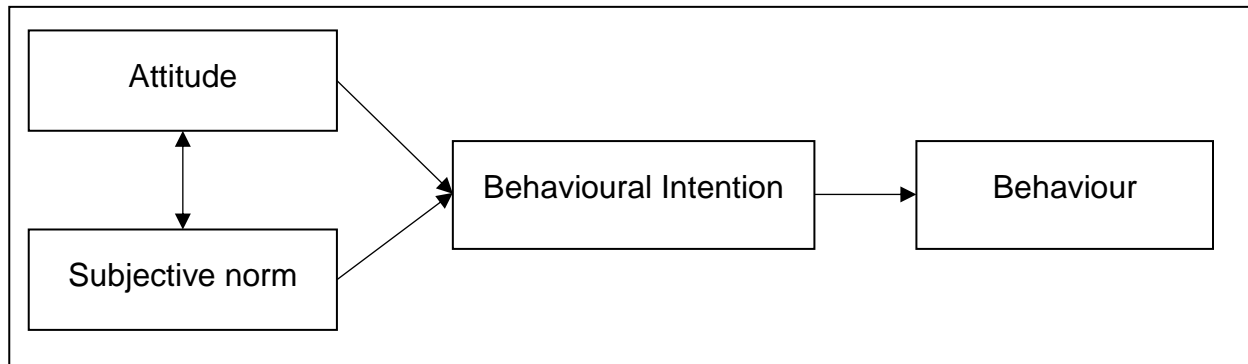
In the literature, various theories explore the way consumers make a decision and the factors that affect a consumer's decision-making. Examples are Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory, rational choice theory (Coleman & Fararo, 1992), theory of reasoned action and its extension – theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2001). The theory of reasoned action is considered an important social psychological theory to predict and explain consumer behaviour. It was one of the first theories suggesting that intention is an antecedent of action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2001).

The following section will discuss the consumer decision-making process and how actions are influenced by our attitudes; how attitudes are predictors of purchase intention. Ajzen and Fishbein (2001) developed the theory of reasoned action and later extended it into the theory of planned behaviour to link attitude, intention and behaviour. Both these theories will subsequently be discussed to comprehend the role and importance of intentions in this study.

2.5.1.1 The theory of reasoned action

The theory of reasoned action (TORA) posits that behavioural intentions, which are antecedents to behaviour, are a function of salient information or beliefs about the likelihood that performing a particular behaviour will lead to a specific outcome (Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992). A model comprising the various elements of TORA is presented in Figure 2.4. Fishbein (1975) divided behavioural intentions into two

Figure 2.4
Model of theory of reasoned action



Source: Bentler & Speckart, 1974

elements, attitude and normative. These elements are determinants of behavioural intentions to act in a specific way, such as to purchase a product or make use of a service (Ajzen, 2011). The first determinant is the consumer's attitude towards performing the intended behaviour. Attitude can be expressed as a personal factor reflecting the degree to which a consumer has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the intended behaviour (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999). Subjective norm is defined as a person's perception that most people who are important to the consumer think the behaviour should or should not be performed (Chang, 1998). Besides, the subjective norm can be perceived as influence from 'outside'. Variables that are external to the model are assumed to influence intentions only to the extent that they affect either attitudes or subjective norms (Fishbein, 1975). A favourable attitude towards the behaviour of purchasing a product will positively influence the individual's behavioural intention. For example, a favourable attitude towards purchasing fitness apparel will depend on whether the individual believes the purchasing behaviour will lead to specific outcomes, such as increased performance, comfort and favourable psychological effects.

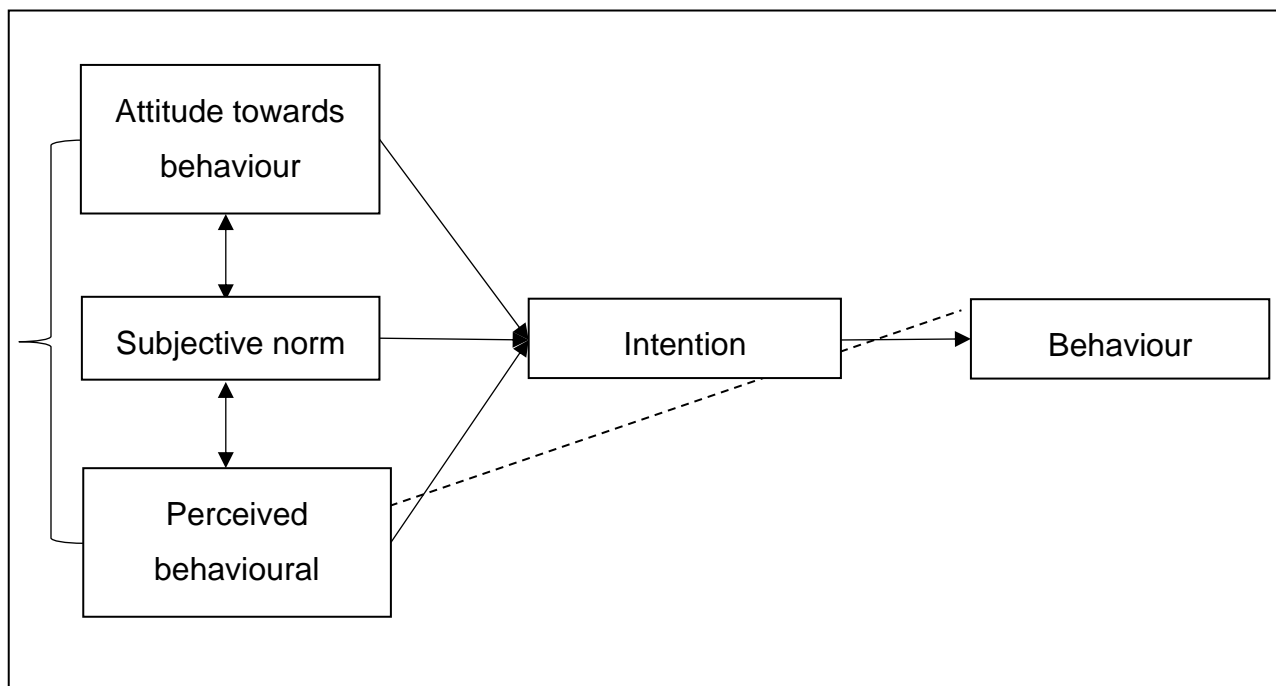
Sheppard, Hartwick, Warshaw, Sheppard and Warshaw (1988) conclude the predictive utility of TORA is strong across conditions. However, the predictive validity of the TORA becomes problematic when the behaviour under study is not under full volitional control (Chang, 1998). Sheppard *et al.* (1988) exposed two problems with TORA. First, predicting behaviour from intention is problematic because various factors in addition to one's

intentions may determine whether a behaviour is performed. Second, there is no provision in the model for considering either the probability of failing to perform one's behaviour or the consequences of such failure in determining one's intentions. Therefore, Ajzen (1985) extended the model by including another construct, perceived behaviour control. The model was extended to deal with the problem of predicting behavioural intentions and is referred to as the theory of planned behaviour (TOPB) (Chang, 1998).

2.5.1.2 The theory of planned behaviour

The TOPB model comprises the same elements as the TORA, namely behaviour, behavioural intent, attitude towards the behaviour and subjective norms as presented in Figure 2.5. In addition, the TOPB responds to limitations within the TORA by

Figure 2.5
Model of theory of reasoned action



Source: Chang, 1998

including perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). The TORA was limited in its dealing with behaviours over which individuals do not have complete volitional control (Terry *et al.*, 1999). The TOPB, however, acknowledges that some human social

behaviour is not under volitional control and can therefore not be predicted by intentions alone (Ajzen, 2011).

As mentioned by Ajzen (1991), behavioural intention will result in a specific behaviour only if it is under volitional control. In other words, whether an individual is able to willingly decide whether to perform a behaviour or not. Although some behaviours are indeed volitional, most depend to a certain degree on non-motivational factors such as the availability of opportunities and resources, including time, money, required skills and willingness of others (Chang, 1998). Opportunities and resources represent an individual's actual control over behaviour if the required opportunities and resources are available and behavioural intent are present, the behaviour of interest will likely be performed successfully (Ajzen, 1991).

Figure 2.5 illustrates the importance of behavioural control. However, the focus is on actual control. Ajzen (1991) asserts that perceived behavioural control and its impact on intentions and actions are of even "greater psychological interest". Perceived behavioural control is defined as an individual's "perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest" (Madden *et al.*, 1992:92). For this study, referring to the purchase of fitness apparel, perceived behavioural control may represent an individual's perception of their ability (for example, availability of time or financial resources) to purchase the product. If the individual perceives their financial means as lacking, they may refrain from purchasing the product despite holding a positive attitude towards the product. Therefore, the model illustrates that perceived behaviour control could have a definite influence on the intent to purchase a product and consequent behaviour.

Although behavioural intentions are generally viewed as the direct determinants of behaviour, the correspondence between measured intention and observed behaviour may sometimes be imperfect (Sheppard *et al.*, 1988). One reason for this discrepancy is often a time-lapse between assessing intentions and when behaviour is observed (Ajzen, 1991). Intentions may change over time and therefore intention, as measured at a specific point in time, can differ with actual intention later when the behaviour of interest is observed (Ajzen, 1991). Possible reasons for inconsistent behaviour has been attributed to an individual's lack to accurately predict their behaviour and potential optimistic or

pessimistic biases in their judgements (Ajzen, 1985). Despite the potential inconsistencies, psychology research confirms intention as the best predictor of planned behaviour (Sommer, 2011). A behaviour that is of importance to this study is purchasing fitness-related apparel. Therefore, the construct of purchase intention will now be explored in greater depth.

2.5.2 Purchase intention

Among many different methods, brands use advertising to create positive associations among consumers that may lead to the intention to purchase the promoted product (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). As mentioned earlier, purchase intent is an indication of purchase behaviour. A consumer's intention to purchase is important to a brand as it is a precursor to purchase behaviour and can reflect the outcome of building a strong brand (Pandey, Sahu & Dash, 2018).

Purchase intention increases the possibility of purchase; therefore, the higher the purchase intention, the greater the purchase probability (Pandey *et al.*, 2018). Purchase intention can be defined as the psychological stage or a determination process of consumers where the consumer forms a genuine willingness to act towards a product or brand (Pandey *et al.*, 2018). Defining purchase intention aligns well with the description above of the construct intention. It can be used as a point of departure for operationalising the purchase intention construct in this study. It may not always be possible to measure the actual purchase of consumers, therefore, the intent of consumers to purchase a product or service can then serve as an indicator of future purchases.

2.5.2.1 Factors influencing purchase intent

Several factors influence a consumer's purchase intent. As discussed in the TOPB, factors can be external and internal. For example, before a purchase decision, consumers look internally into how the product will influence their psychological value (how they see themselves) and external image – the public's perception of the individual using the product.

Brands use credible sources (celebrities and influencers) to influence purchase intention in conjunction with product promotions and advertising to build favourable brand associations that strengthen the brand (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė, 2016). Marketing literature in the public domain has reported that sources perceived as more credible have had positive implications on consumers purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Shan, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). The positive implications can be attributed to credible sources being perceived as more trustworthy and reliable when promoting a brand (Chakraborty, 2019). In other words, the 'voice' of an influencer or celebrity is perceived as more relatable and authentic than the 'voice' of a brand. Therefore, it can be predicted that when an influencer who is perceived as credible promotes or endorses a product, the respondent may have a higher intention to purchase the product.

Apart from an influencer's or a celebrity's perceived credibility exists their parasocial relationships. A parasocial relationship is perceived as a one-way relationship between media figure and media consumer (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Parasocial relationships are mostly formed from the audience's perspective towards the media figure. The academic literature emphasises the importance of parasocial relationships in predicting intentions to purchase a product promoted by a media figure. Literature studies have reported that a higher perceived desire to form parasocial relationships positively influences a consumer's intention to purchase a product (De Bérail, Guillon & Bungener, 2019; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Liu, Liu & Zhang, 2019; Sakib, Zolfagharian & Yazdanparast, 2019).

Marketing literature has reported positive influences of source credibility and parasocial interaction on a consumer's purchase intention (Chung & Cho, 2017). Source credibility and parasocial interaction are only two of the dependent variables of this study and will be discussed in-depth in the following chapters. The third dependent variable of this study is brand attitude. Brand attitude is included in this study because it correlates with brand advertising. The goal of marketers is to develop favourable brand associations that will lead to favourable brand attitudes (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In turn, favourable brand attitudes contribute to strengthening the brand (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010).

2.5.3 Attitude

Consumers' attitude towards a brand predicts their behaviours, including brand consideration, intention to purchase, purchase behaviour and brand choice (Ahn & Back, 2018). Much of the evidence that links prior purchase experience to brand attitude involves thoughts, feelings and judgements about a brand as discussed in the BE section (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich & Iacobucci, 2010). Brand attitude can be defined as "enduring, learned predispositions to behave in a consistent way toward a given class of objects" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2001:256). Thus, brand attitude is related to the degree of likeability and favourable view of a brand and has been used to assess the effectiveness of marketing activities (Ahn & Back, 2018). Researchers have also demonstrated that brand attitude is an important source of BE (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001). Thus, to enhance consumers' brand value, companies should enhance consumers' attitude towards the brand.

Attitude represents a readiness to respond and is not merely a behaviour in itself (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). It is object-specific; in other words, the state of response readiness is directed towards an object and arises from learnt predispositions which are thus not instinctive (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). Therefore, attitudes have consistency, occur in a situation and can originate from previous brand associations concerning marketing activities (Suh & Yi, 2006).

Attitudes are viewed as performing four major functions. First, it adds to understanding and knowledge as it helps people to make sense of occurrences around them. Second, it plays a role in satisfaction since attitude formation results from past rewards and punishment. Third, attitude fulfils an ego defensive role as it contributes to enhanced self-esteem. Finally, attitude helps with establishing a person's self-identity and consequently enables value expression (Evans, Jamal & Foxall, 2006; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2015).

As previously mentioned, a specific attitude towards a brand can predict a consumers' behaviours and intention to purchase (Ahn & Back, 2018). Brands need to understand what consumers think of their brand and what type of attitude consumers hold towards their brand. Therefore, the following section will introduce a dependent variable, brand attitude, to this study.

2.5.4 Brand attitude

Brand attitude can be defined as “enduring, learned predispositions to behave in a consistent way toward a given class of objects” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2001:25). Fishbein’s (1975) theory of reasoned actions (TORA) and Ajzen’s (1985) theory of planned behaviour (TOPB) explain the relationship between attitude and consumer behaviour. The theories suggest human beings are rational individuals with the ability to accept information, process it and make decisions with the most beneficial outcome (Wang *et al.*, 2019). The TORA posits attitude is a psychological tendency to form evaluation in favour or against a particular object or subject and the outcome is a function of the individual’s behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2001). For example, when an individual has a favourable attitude towards a subject, their actions will correspond favourably. Therefore, when consumers have a positive attitude towards a brand, the brand can expect positive favourable outcomes such as increased intentions to purchase the brand and higher market share (Du *et al.*, 2018).

Similar to attitude, brand attitude (BA) can be defined as a consumer’s overall evaluation of a brand (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). BA can also be a global evaluation based on favourable or unfavourable reactions towards brand-related stimuli or beliefs (Ballantine & Au Yeung, 2015). Moreover, BA is a stable predisposition that relates to a brand and can therefore be a determinant of future consumer behaviour (Coelho, Rita & Santos, 2018). The strength of BA is reflected evaluations that involve judgements about a brand, which is not linked to a consumer’s brand-self connect or prominence of brand thoughts. BA is rather a function of confidence by which brand judgements are rendered (Suh & Yi, 2006). A consumer’s BA plays an integral function in their purchase decision. Most authors who have studied BA and consumers’ purchase intentions agree a positive BA will lead to a preference for the brand, increasing the consumer’s purchase intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Park *et al.*, 2010; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2019).

BA is a component of the CBBE model that has been discussed earlier in this chapter. BA plays an integral role in developing BE and has been referred to as an antecedent of BE (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Similar to developing BE, brand beliefs and feelings

are formed through advertising. In turn, these beliefs affect attitudes towards advertisements and consequently attitudes towards the brand being advertised (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Brands can develop BA with increasing consumer brand knowledge by linking positive attributes and associations to the brand through advertisements and other promotional content. Also, rational and irrational brand associations are considered when a consumer determines their attitude towards the brand. These associations stem from consumer experiences with the brand, promotional content and word-of-mouth between consumers (Paul & Bhakar, 2018). Among the different channels that brands use to develop BE and BA are social media and the different social media platforms. A substantial volume of marketing literature has been dedicated to exploring BA on social media that will be explained after this.

2.5.4.1 Developing brand attitude through social media

Of interest in this study is the effects of brand promotions in online communities using an influencer. Online communities are effective in promoting brand-related electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Keller, 2009). By exchanging information, users can compare products, seek advice and build relationships with other users of the brand (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). The interaction through eWOM among members and the source in brand community platforms influences the member's attitude towards the brand, which, in turn, has been reported to increase consumer loyalty (Coelho *et al.*, 2018). When brand-related eWOM is communicated by a trustworthy source, consumers are more convinced of the information due to the source factors (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). As consumers get to know the source, the information from the source about brands and products become more effective on consumers' evaluations concerning their attitude towards the brand (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Among the different source factors that are most contributable towards consumers' BA are their trustworthiness and attractiveness. It has been reported that source attractiveness and trustworthiness can substantially alter consumers' BA and purchase intention (Ballantine & Au Yeung, 2015; Coelho *et al.*, 2018; Paul & Bhakar, 2018).

Brands use social media to develop BA among consumers by developing favourable associations with products. Social media is effective in developing BA, as BA is not time-dependent (Park *et al.*, 2010) and can be formed instantly through thought processing (Suh & Yi, 2006). Therefore, when consumers are exposed to branded content on social media, they may instantly form attitudes towards the advertisement, which translates to an attitude towards the brand (Paul & Bhakar, 2018). Unlike BE that is developed over time and through various exposures to branded content, BA is not time-based and can be formed through a single exposure to branded content (Asiegbu, Powei-Daubry & Iruka, 2012). Moreover, BA in social media is a stronger predictor of future purchase intention than BE. For example, Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) conducted a study to determine the influence of BA and BE on a consumer's purchase intention on Facebook. They concluded that BA could be two times stronger than BE in predicting a consumer's purchase intention (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

In the marketing literature, some studies address the use of celebrities with a brand to determine the effects on consumers' BA (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2019). Results show celebrities with higher perceived credibility by consumers have led to more positive and favourable brand attitudes on Facebook and Twitter (Bergkvist *et al.*, 2016; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Paul & Bhakar, 2018; De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). However, more literature is needed to determine the effects of influencer advertising on BA in social media over celebrity advertising, especially in Instagram (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017).

The need for more literature on BA in social media is twofold. First, there is a need for greater awareness of how consumers form BA in social media marketing, in this study's case, Instagram (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Second, the use of social media influencers over celebrities to form BA must be studied (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Literature predict that consumers can build closer relationships with influencers than celebrities in social media. Influencers are more reachable and engaging than celebrities are (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). However, the literature in this field of research is still limited.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The definition of a brand emphasises the importance of identifying a brand and considering its differences from other competing brands: brand building. The concept of brand building has been around for many years. Branding has become a marketing priority for companies wanting to survive in the ever-increasing competitive environment caused mainly by advanced technology and the Internet. This chapter explained how the art of brand building can be achieved by using models and consumer behaviour.

Models such as the brand resonance pyramid, the BAV model and the Millward Brown dynamics model were analysed for developing the identity and equity of a brand. All three models stress the importance of a brand to sculpture its own identity and awareness through marketing activities. Unique identity and awareness are the first steps that should be established to form a foundation for a brand to develop its BE.

The outcome of building a strong brand, which includes BE, is a positive BA. BA is developed through advertising in which the positive aspects of the brand and possibly negative aspects of its competitors are communicated to consumers. Brands focus on developing associations in consumers to ensure positive BA and to drive consumers to purchase their products. Positive brand associations have previously led to positive BA, which in turn have affected a consumer's purchase intent (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Spears & Singh, 2004).

Thereafter, building brands using consumer behaviour was introduced. Consumer behaviour, intention and attitude were linked using the theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour. The consumer behaviour aspect of this study also introduced two dependent variables of this study, brand attitude and purchase intent. This chapter has identified brand attitude and purchase intention as two consumer responses that will be measured in this study.

The following chapter will investigate the literature on how marketers and influencers use communication on social media to advance credible influential advertising. The important role of an influencer's perceived credibility on social media and specifically Instagram will be explored. The literature on UGC and SGC will be considered.

CHAPTER 3

“INSTA-CRED” – THE ROUTE TO PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY

All the world's a stage, and all men and women merely players – Shakespeare

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication of a company can be divided into two components, traditional media and online media. Online media incorporates social media as an extension, which is the focal point of this study. Thus, social media can be perceived as added to the integrated marketing communication of a brand. Gunelius (2010) defines social media marketing as any form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to build awareness, recognition, recall and action for a brand. Tools of the social web, such as blogging, micro-blogging, social networking and content sharing are used to carry out marketing (Gunelius, 2010). Social media marketing is a new paradigm concerning traditional advertising. Ample space is provided for business organisations to maintain a successful, long-lasting and value-added relationship with their consumers. Social media also allows companies to connect with both existing and potential consumers, engage with them and reinforce a sense of community around the products and services of the company (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017).

Developing on Gunelius' (2010) and Zahoor and Qureshi's (2017) definitions, social media marketing can be used to build brand equity, add value to the consumer–company relationship and attract potential consumers. Potential consumers are people who have not purchased from the brand but their interests are aligned with the product offering of the brand. Therefore, a potential benefit of incorporating social media into the marketing mix is to develop brand equity (BE) and brand attitude (BA), as explained in Chapter 2.

Brand equity and strong brands can be built by adding and consuming brand-related content on social media networks (Colicev, Kumar & O'Connor, 2018; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). On social media, users are exposed to three types of brand-related content, namely firm-generated content (FGC), system-generated cues (SGC) and user-generated content (UGC). FGC is defined as content created by marketers on official

brand pages of social media channels (Colicev *et al.*, 2018), which falls outside the scope of this study. For this study, only SGC and UGC are examined. SGC is described as the system-generated information on an influencer's profile, such as the number of posts and followers, likes, comments and the blue tick to confirm authenticity of the account. For UGC, the influencer decides what type of personal information or brand content to use to communicate with users (Kim & Lee, 2017). Brand-related UGC in social media is independent of the control of the company (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). This study centres on posting and consuming brand-related UGC on social media to ensure source credibility.

This chapter will examine the different elements of influential marketing on social media. Social media in general and Instagram explicitly will be presented. The two independent variables of this study, UGC and SGC will also be expanded.

3.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet originated in the 1960s as an American military project to avoid data and communications from being destroyed during a nuclear military attack (Baltzan, Phillips, Lynch & Blakey, 2009). After that, the Internet went through various development stages into what is known as WEB 2.0, a platform on which users share media among communities across the world. As the WEB 2.0 technologies developed, it has played an active role in creating and distributing UGC content across social media platforms (Hanus, 2018).

WEB 2.0 is a relatively new method in which software developers and end-users use the Internet; that is, as a platform where content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals only. Instead, content and applications are continuously changing and being modified by all users in a collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Mazurek (2014) redefined Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) description of WEB 2.0 as the innovative trends in Internet technology focusing on developing virtual communities and sharing UGC. With the development of WEB 2.0, platforms became more interactive,

communication became quicker, more users started to develop websites for their brands and social media networks grew in popularity.

Social media has become the new consumer communication paradigm for message delivery of company-to-consumer and consumer-to-company (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media can operate on mobile or web-based technology to create interactive platforms through which individuals and communities can create, share and modify content from users across the world. Globally, the number of social media users has reached 4.4 billion in 2020 and the daily average time spent on social media per individual is 116 minutes (Statista, 2020c).

In 2020, brands had access to more than half of the population of the world through social media. Brand-related content could be shared across the world at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising methods. For the near future, social media is here to stay; therefore, brands should continuously adapt their marketing strategies to coexist through communication and empowered consumers. Consumers have become sensitive to push marketing strategies that enforce a sale or purchase. Marketers must adopt alternative strategies to reach new markets. Social media has changed consumers' perception of advertising and consumers expect less of a push structure compared with a pull approach to advertising (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). Organisations that adopted social media on its inception have learned to effectively introduce content to consumers. Social media platforms have been transformed into a powerful networking force for connecting brands with consumers and consumers with new markets (Shawky, Kubacki, Dietrich & Weaven, 2019).

Social media reinforces the process of socialisation by being instant, cheap and easy to use (Alalwan *et al.*, 2017). Traditional media allows for the vertical flow of content from powerful conglomerates to isolated consumers, whereas social media allows information to flow horizontally between consumers. The greatest advantage of social media is that consumers identify content posted online as a more trustworthy source of information compared with traditional marketing. Communication tools allow organisations to integrate social media marketing into their marketing mix to communicate with consumers and to get feedback for future improvement (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017)

3.2.1 Defining social media

Social media can be defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of the Internet (Gan, 2018). In other words, social media can be described as the use of web-based and mobile technology to consume, create and share information. Social media has no geographical, social-political or demographic boundaries and public interaction can partake in a participatory and collaborative way (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media can be perceived as an online 'space' where all users of the space have access to data, information or content willingly posted by other users (Shawky *et al.*, 2019). Social media is not limited by time or space-boundaries; content can be shared across the world and across cultures. Moreover, social media is a place where users can share private or public content that reflects their perceptions, personality and values.

3.2.2 Motives for social media usage

For understanding why people and companies use social media, the uses and gratification theory (UGT) has been proposed. The UGT stipulates that people use certain types of media to satisfy their needs (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). UGT addresses how individuals deliberately select media that will satisfy their needs. Examples are information benefits, economic or remunerative awards, entertainment, social interactions and the need for personal identity (Calder, Malthouse & Schaedel, 2009; Ko, Cho & Roberts, 2005).

The UGT has been studied in the psychology literature and is a well-suited theoretical perspective that can offer insight on new interactive mediums including online media. Online media requires a higher level of interactivity from the user when compared with traditional media methods (Ko *et al.*, 2005). An underlying assumption of UGT is that users are actively involved in media usage and motivated by their needs in their selection of communication media (Van Dijck, 2013). Furthermore, consumers have significant control over the information and media they consume, as most media is consumed optionally unlike with traditional marketing communications (Stafford & Stafford, 2001).

Consumers of social media are responsible for initiating the flow of communication through their decision of what social networking site (SNS) they use, websites they visit and communities they join.

The motives that drive consumption of social media have also been researched (Phua, Jin & Kim, 2017a). This section will discuss the following motives: entertainment, information, community, remuneration, social interaction, pass time and briefly cover online identity development. These motives are repeatedly discussed in the literature and are perceived as the strongest motives for social media usage (Phua, Jin & Kim, 2017a).

Entertainment is the result of fun and play emerging from social media experiences (Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis & Mishne, 2008). A hedonic perspective perceives social media users as people who seek pleasure, want to be entertained or amused, and who want to experience enlightenment through the exposure to content (Godey *et al.*, 2016). It has also been noted that content perceived as more entertaining increases consumer media consumption (Chung & Austria, 2010). Entertaining advertisements lead to a positive attitude towards the advertisement and the brand and increased consumer willingness to distribute (Godey *et al.*, 2016)

Another motive for social media consumption is exposure to brand-related information. Brands share informative content to create brand associations in the consumers' mind as proposed in the performance dimension of brand building in the brand resonance pyramid (Keller, 2001) explained in the previous chapter. Consumers have a desire to seek information directly from brands, which acts as a motivational force to use social media to gather brand-related information (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). The relationship between the ability of an advertisement to provide information to viewers and advertising acceptance proposes that a more informative advertisement adds more value to the advertisement. Therefore, informative advertising leads to positive brand association and attitude towards the brand-related content (Kim & Song, 2018).

In addition to whether brand content offers information and entertainment value, the level of remuneration offered to a consumer motivates consumers to contribute and share content to online communities (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Consumers may engage in brand-related content expecting some form of benefit or reward such as a discount, job-related

benefit or personal want (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Nevertheless, consumers of brand-related content are concerned less with monetary rewards. The social exchange theory posits monetary rewards or incentives are not required for community interactions (Oloo, 2013). Learning something new, getting exclusive content and gaining knowledge about the brand or product has a far greater impact on community members' motivation to contribute and share content in the brand community (Füller, 2006).

Social interaction is fundamentally changing communication between brands and consumers (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010). Daugherty, Eastin and Bright (2008) argue social interaction on social media inspires users to develop new UGC. According to Muntinga *et al.* (2011), social interaction defines users who contribute to brand-related social media platforms to meet like-minded others, interact and discuss brand-related topics, and exchange ideas through sharing brand experiences. Other motivational factors include gaining a sense of belonging, connecting with friends and family, seeking support and substituting for real-life partners (Godey *et al.*, 2016).

A psychological motive derived from a study by Sheldon and Bryant (2016) proposes that users consume social media to pass time. The use of social media to pass time is amplified by individuals less satisfied with life who use social media as an alternative function to interpersonal communication and to pass time (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Users engage in social interaction to develop their online identity (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social interaction involves users gaining insight into the personal lives of others, identifying with their problems and gaining a sense of belonging (McQuail, 1983:25). Social media users express their views and opinions by producing and consuming content. Through this action, individuals have the opportunity to be recognised, express their experiences, learn more of the world, socialise with friends and be entertained (Leung, 2009). Identity development in social media is a prominent feature in social media research and this study, which will be explained in Chapter 4 of this study.

As described above, the social media environment is dynamic for the number of new platforms developed daily that all users have access to. The motives that drive user consumption of social media are unique for each platform (Phua, Jin & Kim, 2017b). The

following section will discuss the state of social media in terms of its number of users and prospective growth because of the dynamic environment of social media.

3.2.3 The state of social media

Since Facebook (2004), the first major social networking service (SNS), several SNS platforms have risen and fallen in popularity seemingly overnight. Only a handful of SNSs have managed to stick around for 20 years or longer (Lee, 2018). According to Table 3.1, social media has experienced a steady growth rate of 9% from 2018 to 2019.

Table 3.1
Growth of social media

Internet users worldwide 2020	4 570 million; increase of 9.1% from 2019
Social media users 2020	3 800 million; increase 9% from 2019
Mobile phone users 2020	4 780 million; increase 2% from 2019
Mobile social media users 2020	3 256 million
Social media penetration worldwide	45%

Source: Deloitte, 2020; Statista, 2020d,b

The average social media penetration rate across the world is 45% with the highest penetration rate in the United Arab Emirates at 99% (Chaffey, 2019). Therefore, the outlook for social media for growth and penetration in 2019 and the near future can be perceived as positive.

The five largest social networks are presented in Table 3.2. The table does not consider the duration of the SNS existence but only the growth of the SNS since 2018.

Table 3.2
Five largest social media platforms 2020

	Name	Users 2020	Users 2019	Users 2018	Ave Growth p/yr for three years.
1	Facebook	2 700	2 493	2 234	7%
2	YouTube	2 000	1 900	1 500	11.1%
3	WhatsApp	2 000	1 500	1 500	11.1%
4	WeChat	1 200	1 060	980	7.5%
5	Instagram	1 010	1 000	813	8.1%

Source: Chaffey, 2019; Statista, 2020c, b,a

Facebook-Messenger is excluded from Table 3.2 as the platform is linked to already present Facebook. As presented in Table 3.2, the largest SNS is Facebook with 2.7 billion active users. Interestingly, when comparing 2019 and 2018 Facebook users, there is a decrease in its active users. The decrease in active users is attributable to many users of Facebook who perceive the site to be more of a news site than being lifestyle orientated (Wong & Morris, 2018). It should be noted that Facebook is the social media hub for many online platforms. Instagram and WhatsApp are two of the largest acquisitions of Facebook. A clear demographic shift in Facebook users in terms of user age has been noticed. Authors such as Koprowski (2018) and Sweney (2018) have proposed two trends; Facebook is becoming a platform for older generations (+55 years). The younger generation (< 35 years) are leaving Facebook for more visually orientated SNSs such as Instagram.

Throughout the growth of the Internet, more generations have adopted social media to communicate and share content. Table 3.3 is a representation of distributing social media sites by gender and majority age groups.

Table 3.3
Social media platform demographics in 2020

Name	Female	Male	Majority age demographic
Facebook	53%	47%	18–54
YouTube	38%	62%	18–75
WhatsApp	54%	46%	18–54
WeChat	64%	36%	18–35
Instagram	52%	48%	18–35 (63%)
Pinterest	70%	30%	18–64

Source: Statista, 2019, 2020a, d,b

Most of the age groups of Facebook are younger generations but older generations are adopting Facebook more than younger generations are. Older generations moving on to social media are helpful to small businesses that do not have the financial capital to invest in a branded website, which has brought about another trend. The movement is now towards online social media marketplaces. It is predicted that in the future, small businesses will no longer have to develop websites. Instead, consumers will buy products directly off Facebook, Instagram or any SNS that adopts an online marketplace orientation (Chen, 2019).

On social media, users seem to be interested in two elements, lack of friction and speed (Hutchinson, 2019b). Social media users want to be exposed to high amounts of content with the least amount of physical interaction with the platform. It is estimated that 85% of teenagers in the US use YouTube, whereas 72% use Instagram and 69% Snapchat (Chaffey, 2019). Therefore, to consume more information in less time, more users of social media are trending towards visually orientated networks (Chen, 2019). Alongside preferring visually orientated media, visually orientated social media marketing has also expanded. The uses of influencer marketing on the social media platform have become an ever-more popular method for brands to promote a product. Influencer marketing has

many different elements that make an individual influential. Hereafter, different elements of influencer marketing will be discussed.

3.3 INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a social media platform that runs on a Web 2.0 platform. On Instagram, content is continuously published by users in a participatory and collaborative fashion. Launched in 2010, the Instagram platform allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos. It has become a medium that allows users “to transform an image into a memory to keep around forever” (Lee, Lee, Moon & Sung, 2015:15). Instagram is one of the youngest and fastest-developing social networks and mobile application. The social network is mainly focused on capturing and sharing visuals, pictures and short videos on which different manipulation tools or ‘filters’ can be applied to change the appearance of a visual. Before posting photos and videos, Instagram gives users the option to add captions, hashtags (the # symbol) to describe the visuals or to attract more attention. Other users are mentioned by including the @ symbol to create a link from the post to another user's account.

The network is asymmetric, which means the user can follow many other people, but they do not have to follow that user back. By default, the user's account is open and visible to anyone, but it can be changed in privacy settings, meaning that their posted materials will be available only to the user's followers. Having a better understanding of Instagram is important, as it provides researchers with a better awareness of social, cultural and environmental issues among people and their activities. After all, "a picture is worth a thousand words" (Kress & Van-Leeuwen, 2006:195). The visual nature and high user engagement rate of Instagram have made it a valuable tool for brands in social media marketing. Certain statistics about Instagram will now be presented, followed by advertising on Instagram and motives for using Instagram.

3.3.1 Instagram by statistics

Various Instagram statistics show the comparison of South African Instagram users and those worldwide to provide context.

Table 3.4
Instagram by statistics in 2020

Number of users:	Worldwide	South Africa
		1 090 000 000
Active daily users	500 000 000	
Average time spent	53 minutes	
Post per day (video/picture)	100 000 000	
Story posts per day	500 000 000	
Age distribution:	Worldwide	South Africa
	(13–17): 7%	(13–17): 7.2%
	(18–24): 32%	(18–24): 30.2%
	(25–34): 32%	(25–34): 33%
	(35–44): 15%	(35–44): 14.3%
	(45–54): 8%	(45–54): 6.9%
	(55–64): 3%	(55–64): 3.4%
	(65+): 2%	(65+): 5%
Gender:	Worldwide	South Africa
	Male: 49.7%	Male: 46.9%
	Female: 50.3%	Female: 53.1%

Source: Gotter, 2018; Pepe, 2019; Statista, 2019a; Statista, 2020; Worthy, 2019

As presented in Table 3.4, the average time spent on the Instagram platform is 53 minutes per day. Gender and age demographics in South African are similar to the demographics of the rest of the world. The age group that is most prominent in South Africa and worldwide are millennial users between 18 and 35 years old. The growth of Instagram since inception has led marketers to investigate the online space to promote brands and connect with users. Instagram has been particularly useful to brands to build relationships with consumers through content posted on their profiles. The following section will introduce Instagram marketing, provide the reader with Instagram advertising statistics and discuss influencer marketing on social media, including Instagram.

3.3.2 Advertising in Instagram

Instagram has been credited as one of the most effective marketing communication tools for brands. In 2020, brands were set to increase their influencer advertising expenditure on Instagram by 39% (Lee, 2018). The prediction meant brands across Instagram would incorporate more influencers than before to promote brands and products. Since Instagram started in 2010, more brands have discovered the potential in Instagram advertising and the ease of reaching new consumers (Pepe, 2019). Table 3.5 emphasises and promotes the branding aspect of Instagram.

Table 3.5
Instagram marketing statistics in 2020

1	7 out of 10 Instagram hashtags are branded
2	More than 8 million business accounts on Instagram
3	80% of Instagram users follow a business account
4	30% of Instagram users have purchased an item seen on Instagram
5	78% of retail brands have shoppable Instagram accounts
6	25% of Instagram advertisements are videos
7	Instagram has the highest engagement rates across all social media

8	2 million monthly advertisements
9	75% of brands have an Instagram account

Among the many reasons for the popularity of Instagram in advertising is its visual

Source: Statista, 2019, 2020a, d,b

orientation. Seventy per cent of Instagram hashtags are brand-related, emphasising the consumers' attraction to branded content and the desire to share branded content with fellow users. Furthermore, 80% of Instagram users follow a brand, indicating that users want to keep up to date with the latest product releases and branded content. In 2019, Instagram updated its online marketplace interface. Consumers could buy products directly off Instagram without visiting a website, which has led to 30% consumers admitting to purchasing a product off the platform. Last, Instagram has the highest advertisement engagement rates of all social media platforms (Hutchinson, 2019). By statistics, Instagram is marketing heaven for brands that want to create brand awareness. Nonetheless, the research into Instagram has been scant.

Unlike Facebook, advertising on Instagram has a more native approach, where advertisements are not explicitly noticeable but rather form part of the viewers' content. Marketing content on Instagram can be spread across the world with ease by using brand-related hashtags. Individuals and brand communities can share, co-create, discuss and build relationships among one another and the brand. Instagram is a catalyst for brands to co-create content with the input of consumers, which may lead to new opportunities for business to develop their brand identity (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay & Richard, 2017). For smaller brands, in 2019, Instagram could act as a replacement for the website of a brand (Wagner, 2019). Consumers no longer needs to move from Instagram on to the brand website, decreasing the number of steps to complete a purchase and increase the possibility of a sale. One of the most advantageous uses of Instagram marketing is the ability of the platform to promote products to a niche selected market through its advertising function. Brands can select a town, gender and age group the promoted content should reach.

For marketers, there are various advertising options available on Instagram. Although Instagram is only a visually orientated platform, many creative ways to promote products are available. The Instagram advertising methods are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6
Advertising types in Instagram

Advertising Type	Explanation	Benefits
Multi-photo carousel	Multi-photo carousel is an advertisement that can contain up to 10 images in the advertisement. A story can be told with a sequence of photos or displaying varying features of the product or brand.	Display performance, aesthetic and product-related features or benefits.
Interactive navigation	Demand a high level of interaction from consumers. Allows consumers to customise products to their preference.	Quick method to get information about a product from consumers. Consumers' preferences
Video advertising	A video that is used to provide information about a product.	Useful in sharing excess information about a production short period. Less cognitive processing for consumers.
Picture advertising	The most basic form of advertising Marketers post a video with a caption that explains the product.	Call to action. Quick processing for consumers.

Picture advertising is among the most popular Instagram advertising methods. This type of advertising is effective in moving the consumer from the advertisement to the brand website (Anagnostopoulos, Parganas, Chadwick & Fenton, 2018) through a link provided in the caption of the advertisement. In picture advertising, the brand and product are prominent in the advertisement and consumers can identify the product and advertisement motives with minimal cognitive processing (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2018). Pictorial advertising is especially popular when the brand connects the product with a person of influence, referred to as influencer marketing. Influencer marketing will be discussed hereafter.

3.3.2.1 Influencer marketing

“Influencer marketing (IM) is one of the most promising and underappreciated disciplines in the digital marketing mix” (Solis, 2017:14). The digital marketing mix is similar to the marketing mix and incorporates all digital marketing activities. IM is defined as a marketing strategy that uses the influence of key individuals or opinion leaders to drive consumers’ brand awareness and their purchasing decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). On social media, there are two types of individuals of marketing influence: celebrities and influencers. A celebrity endorser is defined as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a brand by appearing with it in an advertisement (McCracken, 1989). An influencer is defined as an opinion leader or person of influence with a strong personal brand (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Influencers and celebrities share many characteristics, such as their popularity, personal brand and identity (Hill, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish further between an influencer and a celebrity. Table 3.7 is divided into two sections representative of influencers versus celebrities. One of the main differences of an influencer versus a celebrity is the number of followers the individual has (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Table 3.7
Influencer versus celebrity discrepancy

Influencers	Celebrity
Community	
Influencer marketing creates word-of-mouth advertising using people who are trusted in communities.	Celebrity endorsement attaches the fame of a celebrity to a brand or product.
Influencers are specialists. They have built communities around themselves in a niche space. Influencers build their influence through non-traditional media channels, mainly social media	Celebrities have more of a mass reach across their audience compared with influencers who appeal to niche markets.
Communication	
Influencer is constantly in a running dialogue with the people who follow them. Influencers answer followers' questions and go into further detail on points of interest with community members.	Celebrity endorsements are meant to be seen and heard but not interacted with. Communication with the celebrity runs one way as a single message leveraged on a platform.
User-generated content origin	
Influencer is perceived to be the creator of the entire message.	The message of a celebrity is perceived to be controlled by an agency.
Audience	

Influencers provide more specific audiences (target market-orientated).	Celebrities have a large following appealing to a mass-market.
Followers	
<p>Followers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macro-influencer: 500 000–1 000 000 • Middle-influencer: 100 000–500 000 • Micro-influencer: 1 000–100 000 	<p>Followers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • + 1 000 000

Source: Barker, 2018a; InfluencerMarketingHub, 2019; Nouri, 2018

According to Table 3.7, celebrity status is reached once an individual has accumulated more than one million followers (Barker, 2018b; Chen, 2019; Hill, 2018; Nouri, 2018). Influencers are divided into three categories: macro, middle (power middle) and micro-influencers. One dimension to which marketers remunerate influencers is according to their number of followers, as it a representation of their audience reach. The content generated by influencers is usually organic (self-made) and perceived to be more influential than celebrity-generated content (Van der Heide & Lim, 2016). This study defines an influencer as, first, an individual on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry based on their knowledge or expertise. Second, an individual with an established personal brand who appears in an advertisement alongside a brand to influence online communities. Third, an influencer is an individual who generates lifestyle-based content to add to their social media platform. This description is based on the definitions provided by Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2018) and Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018).

For marketers, IM has proven to be beneficial as an extension of the integrated marketing communications plan. Table 3.8 is a summary of an influential marketing report conducted by the American IM research company Linqia (Lee, 2018) and other marketing research companies based on influential marketing (Barker, 2018b; Hill, 2018). The report was conducted to determine the effectiveness of IM in social media.

Table 3.8
Influencer marketing statistics

Budget	2019: Average annual IM budget increase by 39%
What are the most common ways of measuring return on investment in IM?	Engagement: 90% Clicks: 59% Impressions: 55% Reach: 50% Sales: 46%
The number of influencers involved in an IM programme	1–10 (37%) 10–25 (34%) 25–50 (24%)
Most important social media platform to conduct IM	1. Instagram: 92% 2. Facebook: 77% 3. Blogs: 71% 4. YouTube: 42% 5. Pinterest: 39%
Users are told the content is sponsored	Yes: 87% No: 13%

Source: Beaulac, 2020

Two elements in Table 3.8 to note are the most important IM social media platforms and the increase in the amount spent on planned budget expenditure for 2019. The annual allocation for budget expenditure was forecast to increase by 39% in 2019, meaning the popularity of IM was growing among marketers. Four out of the five most important social media platforms are visually orientated platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. Blogging platforms are the only non-visual dominant social media platform in the top five most important platforms. Earlier this study confirmed that younger generations are

moving away from Facebook to more visually orientated media. This trend is supported by the growth of IM on visually orientated platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, as brands are also moving. Of interest to this study, which is discussed later in this chapter is the disclosure of sponsored content on Instagram. According to Table 3.8, 87% of sponsored content is not disclosed to consumers. According to Federal Trade Commission (FTC, 2013), by law, all sponsored content online should be clearly disclosed to consumers to prevent advertising deception.

Instagram was selected for this study, as it is among the fastest-growing social media applications. Also, the demand for literature on advertising and the use of influencers to promote products for brands continues to increase alongside the growth of the applications (Casaló *et al.*, 2018; Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019). Later, the study will investigate the motives that drive Instagram usage among users.

3.3.3 Motives to use Instagram

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that Instagram is surpassing the growth of most other SNSs. It has also been proposed in the literature that people use social media to gratify various needs (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). In the case of Instagram, users consume Instagram content according to life-stage indicators and psychological motives (Spinda & Puckette, 2018; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Phua *et al.*, 2017a). The following section will provide insight into why Instagram resonates among individuals across the world. Determinants of why people use social media include life-stage indicators and five social and psychological motives.

3.3.3.1 Life-stage indicators

Sheldon and Bryant (2016) propose Instagram consumption is based on several 'life-position indicators' and that each indicator drives a different motive for content consumption. Five variables likely to influence Instagram usage are gender, social activity, narcissism, life satisfaction and interpersonal interaction (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Table 3.9 is a brief discussion of each life-stage indicators.

Table 3.9
Life stage indicators of Instagram usage

Gender	In a study conducted by Sheldon and Bryant (2016), gender was the strongest predictor of the time spent on Instagram. Women were more likely to be active on Instagram as opposed to men (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016).
Social activity	Socially active individuals are likely to use Instagram more than individuals who are less socially active. Also, users who are more socially active are more willing to engage with content on Instagram through liking, commenting and sharing content (Romney & Johnson, 2018).
Narcissism	<p>Narcissism refers to an excessive interest in or admiration of oneself and one's physical appearance. Narcissism was positively related to using Instagram to appear cool and for the surveillance of others.</p> <p>Narcissism also influences the time users spend editing content before posting (Fox <i>et al.</i>, 2018). Singh, Farley and Donahue (2018) discovered that individuals who are more narcissistic post more content to their social media profile than less narcissistic individuals.</p>
Life satisfaction	Users with higher life satisfaction (happier) are less likely to use Instagram to look “cool”. Also, individuals with high levels of life-satisfaction are less likely to use Instagram (Lup, Trub & Rosenthal, 2015).
Interpersonal interaction	Users who enjoy interpersonal interaction are motivated to use Instagram for their perceived coolness, creative purposes and surveillance over other users (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Each life-stage indicator presented in Table 3.9 predicts the likelihood of Instagram adoption or profile creation, the time spent on Instagram and reasons for Instagram usage. Gender seems to be the most influential variable that determine whether an individual would use Instagram. The literature proposes that female users are more likely than men to adopt Instagram and spend more time on the social network (Lee *et al.*, 2015; Phua *et al.*, 2017b). This result is somewhat contradictory to Instagram statistics proposed earlier in the chapter. Earlier, it was concluded the worldwide difference between male and female users of Instagram is 0.6%, which is not a major difference between genders. The literature on Instagram and uses and gratification theory (UGT) propose six social and psychological motives that predict Instagram usage and gratification needs.

3.3.3.2 Social and psychological motives

UGT theory suggests that factors such as one's social and psychological circumstances, motives and expectations influence media use and effects (Spinda & Puckette, 2018). In a study by Sheldon and Bryant (2016), no single factor predicts an individual's selection of media use. Instead, the interaction among different needs, individual differences and social contexts predict media usage. The social and psychological motives driving Instagram usage are presented in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10
Psychological motives for Instagram usage

Social interaction	According to Blight, Ruppel and Schoenbauer (2017), consumers' needs for a sense of community is strengthened through social interaction. Their research determined that users are more likely to increase their interaction with other users on a visually orientated SNS (Instagram) over less visual SNS (Twitter).
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Documentation	Individuals post content on Instagram to depict their lives through photos, remember special events and share their lives with people around them (Khan, 2017; Spinda & Puckette, 2018). This visual nature of documentation is unique to Instagram, according to Sheldon and Bryant (2016).
Self-expression	Users express themselves in Instagram through images that drive the need to connect with popular Instagram figures and participate in online communities (Blight, Ruppel & Schoenbauer, 2017). The self-expression motive also suggests Instagram users use pictures of all sorts to present their personalities and lifestyles (Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2015).
Escapism	Some Instagram users are motivated to pursue relaxation and avoid the troubles they encounter in reality (Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2015). Other escapism motives that drive Instagram usage is passing time (Phua <i>et al.</i> , 2017b).
Surveillance/knowledge	Gathering knowledge about other users drives adopting Instagram. Instagram users want to see what friends and family are up to and keep up-to-date with acquaintances over the world (Phua <i>et al.</i> , 2017b).

According to Lee *et al.*, (2015), the strongest social and psychological predictor of Instagram usage in Table 3.10 is the need for social interaction. Instagram allows users to connect effortlessly with other users on a social level by sharing content or commenting on another user's content. Instagram also makes maintaining a good relationship with others easy and keeping in contact with friends far away. The second strongest social and psychological drive of Instagram usage is documentation. On Instagram, individuals

can record daily events through photos, create their personal space, do personal blogging and record events in their lives (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Documentation allows Instagram users to develop a social identity by posting content to their profile. Documentation and self-expression could be perceived as similar dimensions as individuals are documenting their lives to express their identity to their followers. In short, Instagram can be depicted as an online photo album for the world to see; where users can escape from their daily reality. However, Sheldon and Bryant (2016) have not mentioned the dimension of developing an online identity. The literature proposes developing an online identity as a fundamental dimension to Instagram usage (Carlsson, Wängqvist & Frisén, 2015; Fox *et al.*, 2018; Ozan, 2018).

Identity is referred to as self-concept or self-identity, as it is a "collection of beliefs about oneself that includes elements such as academic performance, gender identity, sexual identity, and racial identity" (Ozan, 2018:28). Embodying an answer to the question of "Who I am" would be what is referred to as one's self-identity. The three elements used to construct one's identity are self-image, self-esteem and the ideal-self. Self-image is the view someone has of themselves, self-esteem is the value one has for themselves, and the ideal self is how someone wishes they were like (Van Dijck, 2013). As this research aims at partly examining the identity users' construct on Instagram, the identity definitions around self-image and ideal-self have specific significance on how users of Instagram reflect on their self-image and ideal-self.

Communication on the Internet has become a big part of our everyday life. Accordingly, people are exposed to a new level of identity that can be easily created, controlled and modified – an online identity. Online identity has been referred to as less stable when compared with gender or ethnicity; nonetheless, it plays an important role in people's lives, especially for young and mid-aged generations (Ozan, 2018). An online identity is attractive to younger generations because on the Internet, the real-world becomes less substantial and the notion of time and space changes significantly (Fox *et al.*, 2018). People communicate with others whom they may never see in the flesh, and it acts as a trigger for creating a new better 'self' without any visible consequences at first glance (Ozan, 2018). Online identity has been considered as permanent as an offline one. "Psychologists argue that this is valuable for the development of a sense of who one is,

who one can be, and how one fits into different contexts" (Carlsson *et al.*, 2015:32). Instagram users create their online identity by adding content to their profiles, which include visually orientated media with adding a caption that elaborates on the moment captured.

Among many motives that drive social media and Instagram is the need for identification development and need to belong (Al-Menayes, 2015; Apodaca, 2017; Davis, 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2017). The literature studies about online identity formation have demonstrated individuals can and do form impressions of others through various computer-mediated communication (CMC) platforms. Trusov *et al.* (2009) suggest the social information processing theory can be used to analyse how impressions of users and their profiles are formed in CMC. The social information processing theory postulates that in real life people use verbal and non-verbal cues to form impressions of people; however, it is not true in the CMC environment (Trusov *et al.*, 2009). In an online environment, people use whatever information is available to them that has been provided by the social media interface to form an impression of an individual. Therefore, to grasp how individuals develop their online identities, it is necessary to understand how UGC assists individuals in forming impressions.

Earlier in the chapter, it was stated that users in social media are exposed to firm-generated (FGC) and user-generated content (UGC). The interest of this study is visually orientated advertising (UGC) through influencer marketing. Influencer advertising has been previously defined and can be summarised as the use of an individual with a perceived degree of credibility alongside a brand for persuasion and promotional purposes (Casaló *et al.*, 2018). In Instagram, two elements or cues influence an individual's perceived level of credibility, namely user-generated content and system-generated cues (Roma & Aloini, 2019). These cues are able to influence an influencer's credibility independently or interactively (Teng & Khong, 2015). The following section will define and discuss user-generated content. Thereafter, the literature will seek to determine how advertising disclosure in influencer UGC affects an influencer's perceived degree of credibility.

3.4 USER-GENERATED CONTENT

User-generated content (UGC) is any content posted by an individual on a social media platform for other users to see (Roma & Aloini, 2019). UGC is a wide and diversified research topic within marketing literature, which includes contributions to many different forms of online communication (Kim & Song, 2018; Roma & Aloini, 2019). The first stream of research has explored the intervening behaviour process of UGC. Contributions in this stream have focused on three major aspects affecting the content generation and transfer: (1) user behaviour (aim, motivation, and incentives for sharing UGC), (2) UGC content features, and (3) the context where user content is created and shared (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012). The second stream of research, more closely related to this study, examines the role of UGC. Specifically online consumer reviews and eWOM in stimulating consumers' purchase decisions and increasing sales and market performance are examined (Halliday, 2016; Jin, 2018; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016)

UGC is unique to each social media site. Each platform differs about how UGC is added, how frequently UGC is added and how other users consume UGC that has been added. Table 3.11 lists the most easily identifiable types of UGC that can be added or edited by an individual in their Instagram account (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017).

Table 3.11
User-generated cues in Instagram

Biography	A section under an individual's username where the user can include designated information about themselves and/or brand.
Image/video	Visual content that is uploaded to a profile for all followers and users of Instagram to see. Includes content uploaded or saved to stories.
Image caption	A section under the uploaded image or video where the user's post includes information about the image or brand.

Location	The individual can choose to include a geographic location where the content was taken.
Profile image	An image that represents an individual's account in all its interactions across a platform. Profile pictures are displayed as an avatar next to the account name on posts, comments and mentions. An avatar is an icon or figure representing a particular person.
Comments	The comment section is below the image caption. The comment section is a space where users of Instagram can interact with one another about the content posted. Unless the profile is private, any user on Instagram can comment on an image or video posted.
Advertisement disclosure	Part of Instagram's interface, advertisement disclosure exists when individuals declare the content added has been sponsored by a brand. Advertisement disclosure on the Instagram interface is located above the content or when included manually, below the image in the caption section.

Source: Casaló *et al.*, 2017; Geurin & Burch, 2017; Instagram, 2019

Of interest to this study is the use of advertisement disclosure on Instagram. Advertisement disclosure was selected due to its marketing orientation, as all brand-related UGC must be disclosed to avoid consumer deception. However, the literature on advertisement disclosure in Instagram and its effects on Instagram users are limited and contradictory. Hereafter, UGC will be defined and an in-depth discussion of sponsorship disclosure will be discussed.

3.4.1 Defining user-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) can be defined as online published content that is “created outside of professional routines and practices” (Roma & Aloini, 2019:36). It is essentially the manner through which users express themselves and communicate with other users in social media (Roma & Aloini, 2019). Christodoulides, Jevons and Bonhomme (2012) specify UGC according to three characteristics (1) content made available through publicly accessible transmission media, (2) reflecting some degree of creative effort, and (3) created outside professional routines and practices.

A term commonly used in the literature alongside UGC is electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM is defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Smith *et al.*, 2012:14). Comparing the definition of UGC and eWOM, UGC is broader in its scope than eWOM as UGC captures all content published online. Although the definition of UGC is broader than eWOM, the two terms overlap considerably when they are brand-related, as it is in this study. Brand-related UGC is any content about a brand created by a user of the brand designed to be shared with others (Kim & Lee, 2017).

Brand-related content online can originate from two sources, an individual or a company. Brand-related content that originates from a brand or marketer on social media is referred to as firm-generated content (FGC) (Colicev *et al.*, 2018). FGC is brand-related content in the form of text, audio, video or pictures that a company generates of its own and then shares it with the world through social media. FGC works synergistically with other traditional marketing media, such as TV, e-mail or billboards, particularly aimed at managing brands and nurturing consumer relationships (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). Now that UGC has been discerned from eWOM and FGC, this study proposes the following definition for brand-related UGC. UGC is any brand-related visual, textual or verbal content published on social media by an individual. Brand-related UGC is a method that individuals use to express themselves, their perceptions and assists in developing their online identity through social media. Last, brand-related UGC is created by individuals outside their occupation routine and practices. This definition was composed by using the

definitions of UGC provided by Geurin and Burch (2017); Hwang and Jeong (2016); Jung and Heo (2019); Kim and Song (2018).

The marketing literature on source credibility and social media influencers confirms that brands use credible, influential individuals in social media to promote brands through brand-related UGC (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016b; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Before 2013, users of social media could post sponsored UGC to their profile without informing consumers. However, non-disclosure raised issues of advertising deception. Therefore, the FTC (2013) enforced guidelines for sponsored social media content that any sponsored content should be disclosed and its connection with the sponsoring organisations. According to Carr and Hayes (2014) and Walden, Bortree and DiStaso (2015), there are four types of sponsorship disclosure in social media. The four types of sponsorship disclosure are presented in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12
Types of sponsorship disclosure in social media

No disclosure	An individual may choose not to disclaim influence at all, not refer to third-party involvement or lack of that in affecting an explicated position.
Impartial disclosure	An individual may explicitly state that his or her stated position has not been influenced by an outside party and that all reviews remain unbiased.
Implied disclosure	Influence may be tacitly recognised, noting that influence may have occurred but without explicating the degree or nature of the influence.
Explicit disclosure	An individual may provide full disclosure of the influence, directly noting the impacts of a third party on his or her espoused positions or attitudes.

Source: Instagram, 2019

This study will incorporate the usage of explicit disclosure and no disclosure to test the effects of sponsorship disclosure on the dependant variables.

3.4.2 User-generated content and persuasion knowledge model

Researchers have discovered that brand-related UGC affects attitude towards a brand and purchase intention towards a product (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012) along with a willingness to recommend a product (Ballantine & Au Yeung, 2015). Characteristics of message content such as message valence (that is, positive, negative) have been found to influence the impact of brand-related UGC on product attitude. Extremely positive reviews and moderately negative reviews strengthen attitudes, whereas negative reviews increase unfavourable product attitudes (Ballantine & Au Yeung, 2015; Hwang & Jeong, 2016).

Marketing literature on sponsored UGC proposes that individuals do not seem to respond the same to explicitly disclosed content versus no disclosed content. For example, Kim and Lee (2017) reported that an advertisement for multivitamin tablets endorsed by consumers who volunteered to endorse the product led to more positive thoughts about the advertisement, a more positive attitude towards the brand, and higher perceived trustworthiness of the endorser. These results were compared to an advertisement about the same product endorsed by people who had been explicitly compensated for their endorsement. The difference in consumer attitudes occurs because consumers' information from unpaid sources are perceived as independent of the marketers, whereas the information from paid sources is perceived as biased (Moore, Mowen & Reardon, 1994).

Most allegations that sponsored UGC differs about the influence on an individual's attitude and perceptions stem from the persuasion knowledge model (Kim & Lee, 2017; Kim & Song, 2018; Müller & Christandl, 2019). When consumers encounter brand-related UGC, they tend to evaluate the usefulness of the content. Then, consumer persuasion knowledge enables them to identify an influencer's motive to post content and guide their evaluation of the advertisement (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The persuasion knowledge model (PKM) posits that consumers have knowledge and beliefs about marketers'

motives, strategies, and tactics, and they use this knowledge to interpret, evaluate, and respond to persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Persuasion knowledge is developed from personal experiences with persuasion attempts. Over time, persuasion knowledge continues to develop into advertising literacy. Advertising literacy is an individual's capacity to recognise advertising, understand its persuasive intent, and have insight into persuasive tactics (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). In addition, advertising literacy is an individual's ability to detect and control emotions that are aroused during an advertisement to evaluate the perceived fairness of the advertisement (Evans, Phua, Lim & Jun, 2017a).

Persuasion knowledge has been associated with unfavourable effects on an advertisement, however, in the newer media environment like social media, persuasion knowledge could work differently (Jung & Heo, 2019). Consumers evaluate familiar and well-developed marketing techniques with confidence due to their accumulated experiences through advertising literacy, whereas they have difficulty judging new marketing practices with insufficient experiences (Kim & Song, 2018).

According to the PKM, when consumers perceive a branded message (that is, sponsored UGC) as a persuasion attempt, their persuasion knowledge is activated (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Once a consumer's persuasion knowledge and advertising literacy are activated, they could become suspicious about the manipulative intent to persuade them by inappropriate, unfair means (Audrezet, De Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018). This inference of manipulative intent induces resistance to the persuasive attempt, which has led to less favourable brand evaluations (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2014).

It is known that sponsored brand-related UGC influences the activation of persuasion knowledge, which varies in terms of the salience and its native nature (Kim & Song, 2018). Research indicates that disclosures can influence affective, cognitive, and behavioural outcomes in varying capacities (Jung & Heo, 2019). Researchers have investigated the impact of disclosures indicating a significant negative effect on brand-related attitudes (Boerman *et al.*, 2014; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016), purchase intention (Evans *et al.*, 2017a; Van Reijmersdal, Fransen, Van Noort, Oprea, Vandeberg, Reusch, Van Lieshout & Boerman, 2016), brand memory and recall, online sharing intention and credibility

perceptions (Evans *et al.*, 2017a). However, positive effects on credibility have also been reported because of explicit disclosure. Carr and Hayes (2014) reported higher levels of source credibility when explicit disclosure was included in a blog. Therefore, the literature on the effects of sponsorship disclosure in social media remains ambiguous. Also, the literature that has been conducted has not focused specifically on Instagram and sponsorship disclosure on Instagram. Therefore, the following section will investigate UGC and sponsored content disclosure on Instagram.

3.4.3 Advertising disclosure in Instagram

For this study, 'explicit disclosure' and 'no disclosure' will be discussed. Explicit disclosure' and no disclosure are levels of independent variables in this study. Those variables were selected based on the need for more literature in this field of advertising. Explicit disclosure informs an individual of the advertisement, whereas no disclosure does not display any sign of the post being an advertisement.

Implied and partial disclosures were not selected as levels of this study. The difference between explicit and partial disclosure is too minute to be noticeable and retrieve significant results to fulfil the objectives of this study. Nonetheless, Carr and Hayes (2014) propose that each form of disclosure may alter the perceived credibility of an influencer in the social media environment. The literature on advertisement disclosure in other social media platforms will be analysed because of the lack of research on sponsorship disclosure on Instagram. The knowledge from the literature review will be transferred to an Instagram context.

In Instagram, peer-to-peer communication occurs naturally where consumers share brand experiences with other users through visually orientated content. A method commonly used by brands to promote their products on Instagram is through influencers. To recap, an influencer is as an opinion leader or person of influence with a strong personal brand (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). With the growing power of online consumer-to-consumer conversations, more influencers are posting sponsored brand-related content for remuneration. Sponsored brand-related content is a form of native advertising and refers to UGC. Native advertising is defined as any paid advertising that takes the specific

form and appearance of editorial content from the publisher itself (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). In other words, native advertising is content that looks similar to UGC. It is not easily identified as advertising unless disclosed by the influencer. According to the FTC (2013), all brand-related content on social media must be disclosed to avoid deception for consumers, but not all influencers do. Therefore, on Instagram, influencers can choose to either explicitly disclose sponsored content or not disclose at all and be at risk of being caught.

The marketing literature has different understandings and definitions of sponsored content. This study adopts the definition of sponsored content by Boerman *et al.* (2014), as the intentional incorporation of a brand, product or persuasive messages into non-commercial, editorial content. Sponsored UGC differs from general product review posts in social media. Sponsored posts are produced based on rewards from the brand; therefore, the content in the advertisement is not necessarily the opinion of the influencer but partly that of the marketer. Advertising disclosure has led to a problem for marketers. Explicit sponsored content has been perceived as bias due to its relationship with a marketer and persuasive attempts (Müller & Christandl, 2019). When users of social media are exposed to disclosed sponsored UGC, persuasion knowledge is activated. Activated persuasion knowledge can have dire effects on the effectiveness of the advertisement and could trigger cognitive and affective resistance to the sponsored content (Van Reijmersdal *et al.*, 2016). Besides, resistance against a persuasion attempt results in less favourable brand attitudes and intention to purchase the brand (Müller & Christandl, 2019). Influencers on Instagram can explicitly disclose sponsored content in different ways.

3.4.3.1 Explicit disclosure in Instagram

It has been noted that advertisement disclosure increases persuasion knowledge (Jung & Heo, 2019). Consequently, an individual's attitudes towards sponsored UGC may become more negative, which in turn, lowers an individual's willingness to engage and share the content (Van Reijmersdal *et al.*, 2016). The literature on advertisement disclosure on Instagram is extremely limited. A singular study conducted by Evans *et al.*

(2017a) on advertisement disclosure reported the presence of an explicit disclosure produced more advertising recognition compared with no disclosure, which is self-evident.

When a sponsorship disclosure is included, any suspicion of ulterior motives turns into certainty and leaves no doubt about why an Influencer depicts a brand in a post. An advertising disclosure may, therefore, prime consumers to think that the influencer is biased, which may negatively impact the influencer's credibility and consequently result in less favourable attitudes towards the brand (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019).

When consumers perceive an Instagram post to be advertising and recall a disclosure in the post, a significant negative impact on attitude towards the brand and intention to share the UGC might follow (Evans *et al.*, 2017a). The negative impact towards a brand has been supported by Chen (2017) who reports that Instagram users do not like 'obvious' and 'intentional' advertising. Instagram users prefer advertising that is more native in nature, which is partly due to consumers who perceive their social media to be their personal space. Therefore, explicit advertising seems to disrupt the flow of content on the platform

In Instagram, there are different methods that influencers can use to disclose a promoted product. Two methods of explicit disclosure are presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1
Explicit disclosure in Instagram



Example 1 in Figure 3.1 uses the Instagram interface to disclose the sponsored content through a “paid partnership” disclosure. In advertisement two, the influencer uses a hashtag to disclose the sponsored content. When comparing Examples 1 and 2, Example 2 follows a less direct and more native approach to the disclosure. Example 1 deliberately discloses the ‘paid partnership’ at the top of before the visual content is viewed. Example 2 includes a subtle hashtag towards the end of the post, which is perceived as more natural (Roma & Aloini, 2019).

Research on advertising disclosure has discovered that including disclosure in the form of a hashtag ‘#sponsored’ in the caption of a sponsored post on Instagram increases a

consumers' recognition of the post as advertising over no disclosure (Evans *et al.*, 2017a). Including a hashtag could negatively affect a consumer's brand attitudes and willingness to share a post.

Studies of online reading behaviour confirm that information near the top left corner of the page is most likely to be seen first. It is followed by information horizontally branching rightward from the top left, and then down the page, in the shape of an F (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). Therefore, it is alleged and needs to be proven that Example 2 will lead to a lower level of advertising recognition compared with Example 1. In turn, the consumer may experience less persuasion interference and respond more positively to the influencer's promotional content in advertisement two than compared with Example 1 (Boerman *et al.*, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019).

3.4.3.2 Non-disclosure in Instagram



Although disclosures are indispensable in a transparent and ethical advertising policy, advertisers and influencers may be reluctant to use them. Most previous research shows that disclosures negatively affect brand attitudes and even influencer evaluations (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). The second form of advertising discussed in this study is non-disclosure. An influencer may choose to post sponsored brand-related content on Instagram and not disclose any external influence, third-party involvement or lack of it in affecting an explicated position. No disclosure is a type of sponsored content (Carr & Hayes, 2014). Similar to explicit advertisement disclosure, the literature on non-disclosure is limited, especially for Instagram.

When a sponsored advertisement has no disclosure, it may be perceived as organic advertising by the consumer (Kim & Song, 2018). In an advertisement that is not disclosed, consumers' perceive the information to be independent of external influence and portray more positive attitudes towards the brand (Kim & Song, 2018). Consumers perceive content that is not disclosed from a source as an opinion or experienced-based, which has not been included for promotional or remuneration purposes (Evans *et al.*, 2017a). Therefore, content that does not include a disclosure could be more effective in

persuading the consumer as fewer persuasive barriers are experienced when analysing the content.

The role of source and sponsorship on Twitter was investigated by Kim and Lee (2017). The conclusion was no disclosure leads to more information-sharing attributions, less monetary-gain attributions, a more positive attitude towards the brand and a greater intention to comply with the recommendation than sponsored UGC (Kim & Lee, 2017). These results are supported by Hwang and Jeong, (2016) that consumers are more likely to perceive UGC from influencers as true reflections of their product experiences compared with disclosed sponsored UGC. Figure 3.2 is an example of a non-disclosed advertisement on Instagram versus a disclosed sponsored advertisement. As stated

Figure 3.2
Disclosure versus no disclosure in Instagram

Example 1: No disclosure	Example 2: Explicit disclosure
 <p>855 likes beccathorderson Relaxing + having me time is my favorite way to celebrate the weekend #introvert. And these bath fizzers + detox & restore foaming bath from @rawsugarliving do just that! 🥰 The bath fizzers cleanse my skin with nutrient rich, hydrating ColdPressed technology and the foaming bath means I get instant bubbly bliss, so me time just got a whole lot better! 😊 Also - for every product you buy, Raw Sugar donates a fresh bar of soap to a family in need! Just look for the white bottles with the bamboo lids at your local @target! #rawlovin #rawthankyou</p> <p>View All 18 Comments 15 April</p>	 <p>3 622 likes alexiadanielleanast "My hair has gone through the biggest transformation this year. I have been focusing on my beauty care routine, making my hair healthier is so important- and it all starts with @Rawsugarliving's natural hair care, my favorite is The Bounce Back Shampoo & Conditioner. It has been a few weeks now, and absolutely love this stuff! It has completely restored and repaired my damaged hair. Infused with Coldpressed ingredients like Mango Butter + Agave + Carrot oil. Swipe left to watch a video of me explaining the nourishing benefits of these organic extracts! Ps- did you know that for every product you buy, Raw Sugar donates a fresh bar of soap to a family in need? That is #Rawlovin! Look for the bamboo tops and white bottles at your local @Target and target.com" #paysponsorship</p> <p>View All 36 Comments</p>

previously, the FTC (2013) requires branded content to be disclosed. On Instagram, not all branded content is disclosed to consumers due to the lack of knowledge about the effects of sponsorship disclosure on advertisement effectiveness. In Figure 3.2, Example 1, the influencer does not disclose the content or product was sponsored. In Example 2, the influencer disclosed the motive of the content as “#paysponsorship”. According to the marketing literature on advertisement disclosure literature, consumers who view Example 1 may experience less active persuasion knowledge compared with Example 2. Therefore, it is proposed that consumers may experience a more favourable brand attitude and intention to share Example 1 over Example 2 (Müller & Christandl, 2019).

3.4.4 Content disclosure and perceived influencer credibility

Despite studies on the effects of advertisement disclosure, a full understanding of this potentially misleading advertising practice requires more research. In particular, ambiguous wording in advertisement disclosures has invited criticism, but few studies have examined the influence of explicit disclosure and no disclosure in Instagram advertisements (Jung & Heo, 2019; Kim & Song, 2018; Müller & Christandl, 2019). As a relatively new phenomenon in the marketplace, advertisement disclosure in the context of social media advertising calls for deeper understanding (Jung & Heo, 2019).

An objective of this study is to determine if and how brand-related UGC in Instagram affects an influencer’s credibility (source credibility). The effects of advertising disclosure and its effects on influencer credibility in Instagram are examined. This study will be among the first to explore the relationship and effects of brand-related UGC on an influencer’s credibility in an Instagram context.

In FGC, the persuasion attempt is clear and direct, but in social media, influencers choose how to disclose (if disclosed at all) external influences that may affect their online musings. Advertisement disclosure may, in turn, influence their perceived credibility of an Influencer (Carr & Hayes, 2014). An influencer’s credibility is essential to their persuasive ability (Casaló *et al.*, 2018). Although influencers in Instagram are required to disclose all sponsored brand-related content, Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 have proven influencers use different methods to disclose any external party influences, if at all.

A study conducted by Carr and Hayes (2014) on sponsorship disclosure and bloggers' credibility demonstrated that a blogger's credibility significantly predicted the influence and persuasion of the content. Sponsorship disclosure can bring into question the credibility of an individual's review. Participants of the study perceived bloggers who imply third-party influence as significantly less credible than bloggers not mentioning third-party influence (Carr & Hayes, 2014).

Individuals perceive promotional content as more influential when the influencer is an active user of the brand themselves (Halliday, 2016). This study explored the effects of 'explicit disclosure' and 'no disclosure' on an influencer's credibility on Instagram. Because of the lack of research on Instagram, research on advertisement disclosure on influencer credibility from other social media sites was explored from which possible predictions of advertisement disclosure in an Instagram context were made.

Carr and Hayes (2014) investigated bloggers and advertisement disclosure. They hypothesised no difference between the credibility of a blogger who explicitly discloses content versus not disclosing. Respondents in the study evaluated the blogger to be less credible when there was no disclosure of sponsorship than when there was an explicit disclosure of sponsorship (that is, compensation was noted) (Carr & Hayes, 2014). Contrary to Carr and Hayes (2014), Ballantine and Au Yeung (2015) concluded there was no main effect between blog source (disclosure versus non-disclosure) and source credibility. Consumers did not perceive an individual to be more credible when disclosing the source of sponsorship versus not disclosing the source. This finding was contrary to other literature studies on sponsorship disclosure (Jung & Heo, 2019; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019).

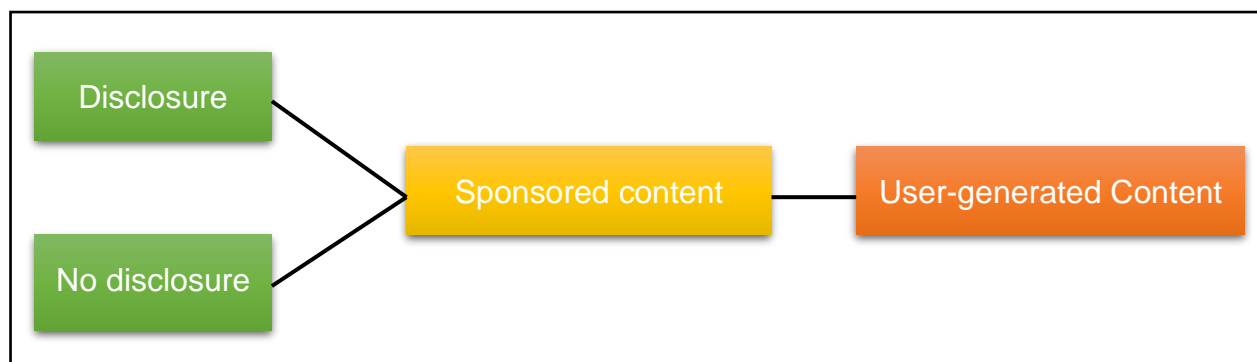
Building on previous research, one would expect that no disclosure would have a more positive effect on source credibility over explicit disclosure. This perception stems from the perceived bias from a disclosed source, suspicious of ulterior motives and the deliberate knowledge of promotional content. Contrary, a blogger was perceived as more credible when explicitly disclosing sponsored content over no disclosure (Carr & Hayes, 2014). Carr and Hayes (2014) attribute this finding to potential cognitive dissonance (inconsistent thoughts) of the consumer. As the blogger's potential bias is indicated

(explicit disclosure), the reader is aware of the bias. Thus, the reader integrates the information into their perception of the blogger, reducing cognitive dissonance in terms of the blogger's motives and increasing the blogger's credibility. An influencer who is paid to promote products may be perceived as being more professional, which may change perceiving the advertisement, making it more acceptable to consumers. (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019).

By nature, explicitly disclosed sponsorship heightens a sense of persuasion, which has led to a negative attitude towards the brand and less motivation to comply with recommending the content (Kim & Lee, 2017). Therefore, it is contrary that no disclosure does not have a more positive influence on source credibility than explicit disclosure does; rather that disclosure increases the perceived credibility of a source. Some authors have attributed the increase in credibility to the disclosure of an "honesty policy" (Abendroth & Heyman, 2013; Kim & Song, 2018). Including "this content is based on one's honest opinion" in an explicitly sponsored post restores a consumer's perception of the credibility of a source and induces positive message attitudes (Hwang & Jeong, 2016:156). The increase in credibility is attributed to the persuasive power of truth advertising (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). This study will contribute and provide clarity to the literature in terms of advertisement disclosure and its effects on source credibility, parasocial interaction and brand attitudes.

On Instagram, influencers can choose to either disclose or not disclose sponsored content. Figure 3.3 is a visual representation of the two types of sponsored content

Figure 3.3
Summary model of content disclosure



disclosures on Instagram. As presented in Figure 3.3, sponsored content can either be explicitly disclosed or have no disclosure. Although there are international regulations that stipulate that Influencers must disclose sponsored content, these regulations are not always followed. The social media literature proposes sponsorship disclosure can have various effects on source credibility due to acknowledging a persuasion attempt (Evans *et al.*, 2017a; Jung & Heo, 2019; Van Reijmersdal *et al.*, 2016).

Social media platforms are partly divided into two dimensions (Shan, 2016). User-generated content (UGC) as a dimension has been explained as consisting of all the content that an individual willingly uploads on to a social media platform. The second dimension, system-generated cues (SGC) are supplied by the platform's interface that affects an individual's online identity and credibility (Wang *et al.*, 2018). SGC is the second independent variable to this study and will be discussed hereafter.

3.5 SYSTEM-GENERATED CUES

The objective of the following section is to introduce system-generated cues (SGC). This section will define SGC and discuss SGC in social media, provide examples of SGC in Instagram and discuss their possible effects on an influencer's source credibility.

3.5.1 Defining system-generated cues and warranting theory

System-generated cues (SGC) have been defined as quantitative indicators of popularity or social influence (Jin & Phua, 2014). SGCs have been referred to as pieces of information that are system or machine rendered (Walther, Van der Heide, Kim, Westerman & Tong, 2008). Machine rendered cues refer to the generation of cues based on previous behaviour by the user that is presented on the social media platform or the user's profile. Previous research on impression formation in computer-mediated communication has suggested that, in addition to message factors, SGC can affect the credibility judgements people make towards an individual (Van der Heide & Lim, 2016; Tong, Van der Heide, Langwell & Walther, 2008; Westerman, Spence & Van der Heide, 2012).

The development of the warranting theory suggests that online platforms afford users the ability to mask or obscure their true identities (DeAndrea & Carpenter, 2018). The warranting theory suggests that when people evaluate information online, they judge the extent to which information is immune to manipulation by the source (Walther, Van der Heide, Hamel & Shulman, 2009). When an individual is perceived to have control over their self-referential information, their warranting value decreases and the information added online by the individual is less effective in affecting people's impressions (Flanagin & Metzger, 2013). The warranting theory has been applied across various online settings to comprehend how people evaluate information on smartphones, personal social networking sites and product rating sites (DeAndrea, Van der Heide, Vendemia & Vang, 2018).

Previously, SGC has been defined as quantitative indicators of popularity that are machine rendered. The warranting theory suggests that people are evaluated as more credible when information is immune to manipulation. Therefore, considering that SGC is machine rendered and immune to manipulation, SGC in social media sites can be effective indicators of an individual's credibility in an online environment. Shan (2016) supports the effectiveness of SGC on credibility judgement. In comparison with UGC, people assign greater credibility to information that is verified and chosen by a machine or computer over that which has been included as UGC (Shan, 2016).

3.5.2 System-generated cues in social media platforms

SGCs are machine rendered pieces of information that can act as a heuristic for credibility judgements (Wang *et al.*, 2018). Among the literature, there is an agreement that consumers in social media use heuristics to make fast and accurate judgements about an individual (Van der Heide & Lim, 2016). A heuristic employs a practical method that sacrifices rationality for practicality (Lin *et al.*, 2016). Each social media platform has unique system-generated cues from which consumers make credibility judgements. Table 3.12 summarises all the prominent system-generated cues in four of the most popular social media platforms. Messenger applications (that is, WhatsApp, WeChat) were excluded from the list of social media platforms. WhatsApp and WeChat were

excluded because a user does not have a public profile to display to other users without consent.

Table 3.13
System-generated cues in social media

Social media platform	System-generated cues
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comments ○ Likes ○ Friends ○ Views • Brand pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Followers ○ Members ○ Views ○ Likes ○ Comments
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers • Following • Tweets • Likes • Comments
YouTube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscribers • Video likes • Video dislikes • Comments • Number of views
Pinterest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following • Unique views • Comments
--	---

Source: Cha & Gummadi, 2010; Instagram, 2019; Smith *et al.*, 2012

Each platform has unique SGC, of which many of the cues are also shared across platforms. For example, comments and likes are perceived the same across Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Each platform has an SGC that portrays users that 'follow' or have 'liked' a page or individual. These users are referred to as followers, friends, members or subscribers.

3.5.2.1 System-generated cues in Instagram

In Instagram, numerous SGCs can influence an individual's credibility. Table 3.14 is a summary of all the SGCs

Table 3.14
System-generated cues in Instagram

Followers	Followers – a quantitative indicator representing the number of people who follow a user. Followers are exposed to all the content that a user post as UGC. Followers are portrayed on a user's profile as a numerical value.
Following	Following – a quantitative indicator representing the number of people an individual follow. By opting to follow a user, an individual will be exposed to the content that an individual post.
Posts	Posts – a quantitative indicator of the number of UGC the individual has added to their Instagram profile. The posts SGC are presented on an individual's profile page.

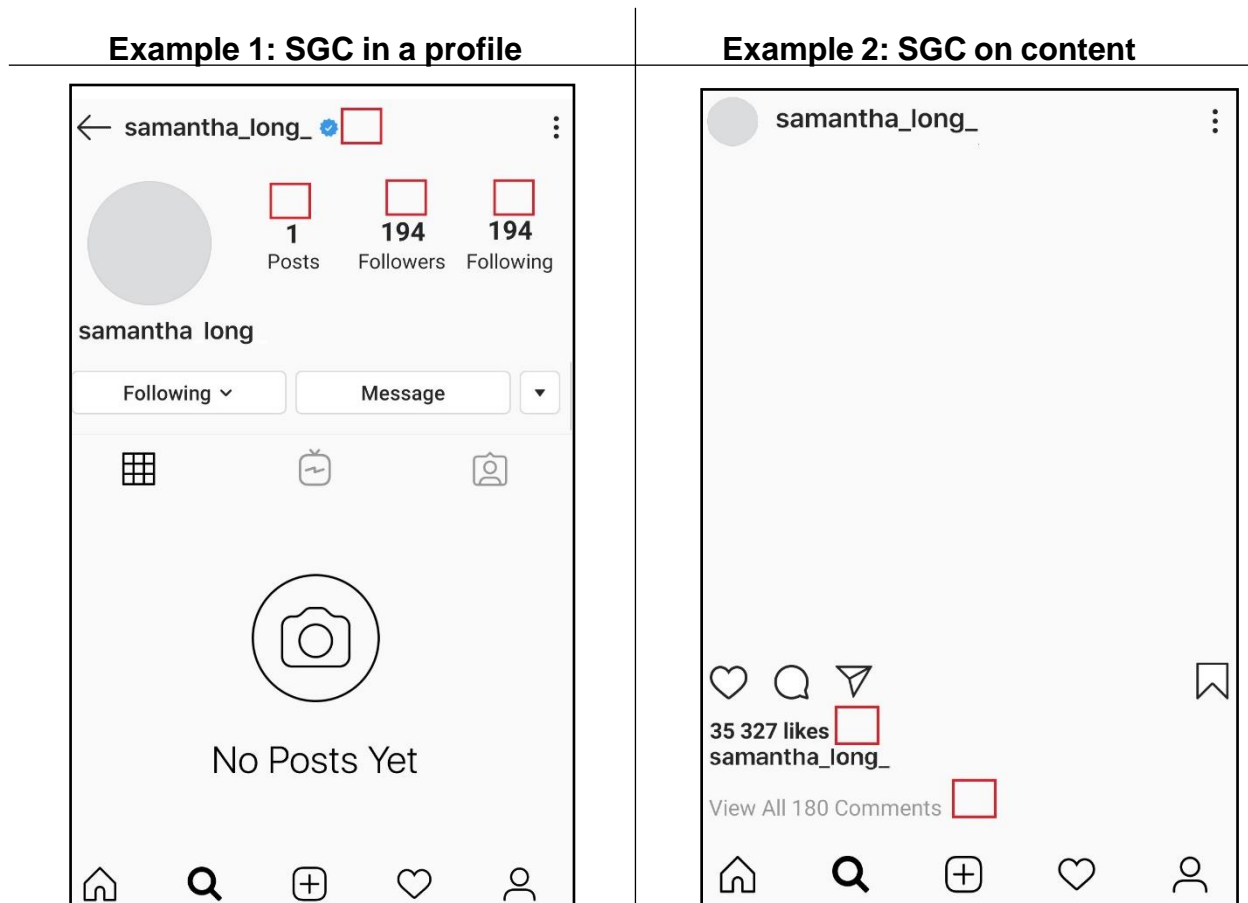
Likes	Likes – a quantitative indicator of UGC. Content that has been added by a user can accumulate ‘likes’ through other Instagram users whom selectively like an image. Likes are displayed below an image.
Comments	The comment cue has two dimensions. Comments can be UGC based and SGC based. UGC orientated comments is a textual expression of an image or conversation about the content that has been added. Comments that are SGC based are a quantitative indicator of the number of people who have commented on the UGC.
Blue tick	The blue tick that appears on top of an Instagram profile is confirmation that an account is the authentic presence of the public figure.

Source: Instagram, 2019

The literature on SGCs on Instagram and the influence on credibility is limited; therefore, the influence of SGC in Instagram is incomplete. In the literature outside Instagram, authors have mostly focused on followers in social media platforms (Jin & Phua, 2014; Loureiro & Sarmento, 2019).

As discussed in Table 3.14, followers are a quantitative indicator portraying the number of people who are exposed to an individual's content on Instagram. Figure 3.4 is an example of all the SGC that are present on Instagram and are represented by the red blocks. Example 1 on the left is a profile example. A profile includes the number of posts, blue tick, followers and following as SGCs. These SGCs are presented on the first

Figure 3.4
System-generated cues in Instagram



exposure to an individual's profile on Instagram. Example 2 portrays the SGC presented on an individual's content posted. The SGCs include the number of likes and the number of comments. Because of the shortage of literature that studies the impact of followers on source credibility in an Instagram context, the following section will introduce the first independent variable, followers. The following section will introduce followers in Instagram and other social media platforms. Possible predictions concerning the effect of followers on source credibility in an Instagram context will be made.

3.5.2.1.1 Followers in social media

The number of followers reflects an individual's network size and serves as an indication of popularity. A higher number of followers results in a larger and wider reach of the message and thus leverages the power of the UGC (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Sundar (2008) refers to followers in social media as a 'bandwagon cue'. In social media, an additional set of cues comes by way of the collective opinion of other users. SGC indicating the number of other users utilising, sharing or following an online personality can trigger a 'bandwagon cue' (Sundar, 2008). A bandwagon cue can be summarised as follows, "If others think that something is good, then I should, too" (Lee & Sundar, 2013:26). In this study, bandwagon cues are the number of followers an influencer has accumulated on their Instagram profile (Sundar, 2008).

In a study by Lee and Sundar (2013) to determine the influence of the number of followers on source credibility, they propose that a high number of followers would lead to higher levels of source credibility compared to a low level of followers. They concluded with insignificant results but higher mean values were reported for profiles with a higher number of followers. Lee and Sundar's (2013) results support Westerman *et al.* (2012) who reported insignificant relationships between the number of followers on all three dimensions of source credibility. Westerman *et al.* (2012) also prove an inverse relationship between the number of followers and source credibility. Therefore, as followers increase past a certain point, the credibility of a source seems to depreciate.

Contrary to Lee and Sundar's (2013) results, Jin and Phua (2014) report the opposite. Jin and Phua's (2014) study on followers and its effects on source credibility in Twitter concluded a higher number of followers positively affect the perceived credibility of a source. This finding is supported by Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack and Zahid (2018). Jin and Phua (2014) maintain that a higher number of followers affects all three dimensions of source credibility (trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness). In contrast, Loureiro and Sarmento (2019) argue the number of followers only influences the attractiveness dimension in male consumers. Jin and Phua (2014) argue a higher number of followers positively affect a consumer's product involvement, intention to purchase the product and intention to retweet the brand-related UGC.

De Veirman *et al.* (2017) measured the impact of the number of followers on a consumer's brand attitude and concluded having more followers increases an influencer's likeability through higher perceptions of popularity. Positive brand attitudes also were reported alongside a larger number of followers. De Veirman *et al.* (2017) warned against a largely positive relationship between followers and following Westerman *et al.* (2012), concluding that when marketers select an influencer, follower and following ratio should be considered.

The marketing literature about the number of followers on source credibility is contradicting. Some authors have concluded that a higher number of followers increases the public's perception of source credibility (Jin & Phua, 2014; Martensen *et al.*, 2018; De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Other authors have concluded the number of followers does not influence source credibility (Lee & Sundar, 2013; Loureiro & Sarmiento, 2019; Westerman *et al.*, 2012). A criticism of the findings of Lee and Sundar (2013) and Westerman *et al.* (2012) is that both studies had low levels of followers. Referring to Section 3.1 of this study on influencer marketing, micro-influencers start gaining credibility at 1 000 followers. The low number of followers could attribute to the insignificant results of both studies. With the contradictory conclusions across the literature, there is a need for more literature about the relationship between source credibility and the number of followers in an Instagram context.

3.5.2.1.2 Authority heuristic

The second independent variable that this study will incorporate is authority heuristic. Users of social media employ heuristics as a "mental generalizations of knowledge based on experiences that provide shortcuts in processing information" (Lee & Sundar, 2013:510). When anybody and everybody can be a source of communication, cues relating to the pedigree of the information that they provide (by way of their professional qualifications, number of followers, or origin of the information) can serve as important determinants of the perceived quality of the information communicated (Lee & Sundar, 2013). The literature regarding authority heuristics has been documented and ranges

between the effects of the heuristic on websites and personal accounts in social media (Edgerly & Vraga, 2019; Sundar, 2008).

Sundar (2008) proposes the MAIN (modality, agency, interactivity and navigability) model for technological affordances in social media. Sundar (2008) claims that with the information credibility perceptions can be formed through heuristics (cues) and that authority heuristic is a major criterion for assigning credibility to a news website. By revealing the source (authority heuristic) of the news lead, the site invites readers to apply the authority heuristic to determine the level of credibility of the embedded news item (Sundar, 2008).

In terms of individuals, authority heuristic is likely to be operational whenever a topic expert or official authority is identified as the source of content (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Past literature has reported different effects of authority heuristics in social media. Vaidya, Votipka, Mazurek and Sherr (2019) assert the blue verified badge on Twitter lets people know that an account of public interest is authentic. The verification badge on Twitter is similar to the badge used on Instagram and Facebook. The badges can be described as a white or black tick marked in a blue circle (Instagram, 2019).

The outcome of the verification badge in the literature has been somewhat inconsistent. According to Vaidya *et al.* (2019), authenticity indicators have little to no effect on users' perceptions of credibility. Users are not more likely to act on or share content that originates from verified accounts than from unverified accounts (Vaidya *et al.*, 2019). These findings contradict previous studies in the literature that portray reputation and consensus as major influences on perceived credibility (Axsom, Yates & Chaiken, 1987; Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Lin & Spence, 2018; Sundar, 2008).

Lin and Spence (2018) report the same as Vaidya *et al.* (2019) and argue that in certain circumstances, minority groups may tend to trust their in-group peers based on their personality and content more than authority heuristic cues. Also, information associated with peer identities may imply its content quality to a message receiver. Individuals processing peer identity cues may overlook their idiosyncrasies and focus instead on the perceived affiliation with the peer, which may reinforce the peer's perceived source credibility (Lin & Spence, 2018). Therefore, in small peer groups or online communities,

members may be less interested in authority heuristics and rather focus on their perceived affiliation with the opinion leader. In smaller groups, the MAIN model, as proposed by Sundar (2008), may have less influence on the perceived credibility of the opinion leader due to the community members' relationship and familiarity with the opinion leader.

Nonetheless, there is a need for more research in this area (Lin & Spence, 2018). Specifically, research is needed on how authority heuristics influence the perception of an individual in social media sites. Based on the authenticity requirements of obtaining an authority cue in certain social media sites, it may be predicted that authority cues in social media can influence a user's perception of credibility. Thus far, research testing the relationship between authority heuristics and perceived credibility in Twitter has been insignificant (Edgerly & Vraga, 2019; Lin & Spence, 2018; Vaidya *et al.*, 2019). However, the relationship between authority heuristics and user responses in Instagram has not been investigated. Therefore, this study addresses this gap in the literature by testing the effects of authority heuristics on Instagram on consumers' responses.

A variety of SGC in Instagram can affect an influencer's perceived credibility. For this study, followers and authority heuristics were selected as two factors that may influence consumer responses in influential advertising.

Each factor has two levels, high and low. It is of interest to this study to determine how the different levels of each factor affect the source credibility of an influencer.

Source credibility has been briefly discussed in Section 3.3 and Section 3.4 of this study, but not yet fully dissected and analysed. Therefore, the following section will further the understanding of source credibility. Source credibility and moderators that may strengthen the relationship between a source and consumers will be investigated. This study will explore the literature on source credibility to determine the dimensions that will be used to capture the construct. Finally, this following section will conclude with source credibility and its effects on brand equity. Brand equity is a dependant variable of this study and was discussed in Chapter 2, but the effects of source credibility on brand equity have not been discussed.

3.6 SOURCE CREDIBILITY

Source credibility (SC) is a thoroughly researched dimension of marketing and was first discussed in the literature by Hovland and Weiss in 1951. Throughout the development and transformation of media and advertising, marketers have used credible sources in advertisements to increase persuasion. SC of an individual can be compared with the credibility of the literature sources. For an academic literature source to be credible, the individual using the source must be able to trust the information of the source (credible journal), the information must be of high quality and the information must be believable. The credibility of a source in the literature is determined by researchers analysing the author's credentials, the journal credentials, and the individual's point-of-view. The same applies to an individual in social media advertising who is perceived as credible (influencer). Individuals use SGC and UGC to develop their credibility in social media. Consumers use SGC and UGC in social media to judge the quality of the influencers' content, their trustworthiness and believability of their opinion (Filieri, 2015; Shan, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2018). Credibility is a paramount concept concerning the influence and persuasiveness of a message, as credibility perceptions affect a receiver's intention to alter his or her attitude towards the information presented (Shan, 2016). Therefore, the following section will discuss SC, its moderators and dimensions. SC is defined, and theoretical models are provided to support the persuasion effect of SC.

3.6.1 Defining and deciding source credibility

Source credibility (SC) in the literature has taken on many different definitions. Shan (2016) defines SC as the extent to which the reviewer is perceived as a credible source of product information and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the product. Some authors have defined SC as a characteristic that influences individuals' perception of the persuasiveness of the message provider. Other researchers describe SC as "a judgment made by a message-receiver concerning the believability of the message-sender" (O'Keefe, 1990:121). According to O'Keefe's (1990) definition, SC can be regarded as a receiver-based construct where the audience bestows their perceived degree of credibility on the message source. SC affects information credibility, therefore,

people are more likely to believe the content of a message if the information is provided by a credible source over a less credible source (Xiao, Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2018).

In the literature, some theories determine how individuals process information and make decisions. A model regularly used alongside SC to determine how individuals make decisions and process information is the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Teng & Khong, 2015). The ELM is a dual-process model of information influence. This model states individual attitude change is based on two distinct routes to persuasion, a central route and a peripheral route (Tseng & Wang, 2016). According to ELM, individuals who are not motivated to process information employ heuristic or peripheral information cues to help them comprehend the perceived information (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). In other words, information cues, such as the number of reviews, number of followers or the appearance of the spokesperson influence a person's judgement of the information. The central route is activated when individuals carefully and thoughtfully consider all information available about the product before purchase (Tseng & Wang, 2016). The central route to persuasion is activated when the purchased product is complex and requires a high level of involvement from the buyer. SC has been associated with the central route but most of the literature proposes SC is considered in the peripheral route to persuasion (Tseng & Wang, 2016; Xiao *et al.*, 2018).

The peripheral route occurs "as a result of some simple cues" rather than critically analysing issue-relevant information (Tseng & Wang, 2016: 2292). The peripheral route has a major effect on information adopting for people with low elaboration motivation (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). Therefore, within low involvement goods, rather than analysing argument quality and accuracy of information (Xiao *et al.*, 2018), consumers consider alternative cues to determine whether the information about the product is credible (Tseng & Wang, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2018). These 'alternative' cues have been discussed above and are referred to as SGC and UGC (Aladhadh, Zhang & Sanderson, 2019; Coliv *et al.*, 2018). For this study, SC will need to be redefined to suit the Instagram context. Consumers can only judge an individual's credibility on Instagram based on their SGC and UGC as they do not personally know the individual. Therefore, this study will define SC according to the definitions provided by Ohanian (1990) and Shan (2016) in conjunction with the ELM. Thus, SC is the extent to which the reviewer is perceived as a

credible and trustworthy source of product information based on their SGC and UGC cues provided by their Instagram profile.

3.6.2 Dimensions of source credibility

SC is a term commonly used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 1990). Some authors have measured SC as a unidimensional construct (Cheung, Sia & Kuan, 2018; Tseng & Wang, 2016). Other authors have proposed between two and four dimensions to measure the SC construct. Two dimensions that are incorporated into most SC scales across the literature are expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise and trustworthiness seem to form the foundation of the SC construct with selective authors adding more dimensions to capture the SC construct (Ohanian, 1990). The second most popular dimension added by authors to the SC scale is the perceived attractiveness of the source (Cheung *et al.*, 2018; Filieri, 2015; Xiao *et al.*, 2018). This study will incorporate Ohanian's (1990) dimensions of SC (expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness), based on its popularity in the literature to capture the SC construct (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Spry *et al.*, 2011). This study will add another dimension that has been proposed in the literature to capture SC, homophily. Homophily is defined as "the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar with respect to certain attributes, such as beliefs, demographics and social status" (Shan, 2016:635). Homophily was included in the SC scale to capture the perceived similarities between the influencer and consumer (Wallace, Buil & De Chernatony, 2017). Hereafter, each dimension will be discussed independently, starting with expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and homophily.

3.6.2.1 Source Expertise

The first dimension of SC discussed in this study is source expertise. Expertise is defined as the degree of perceived understanding, skills and knowledge of an endorser (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Furthermore, expertise has been defined as an endorser's competence or qualification to make certain claims relating to a certain subject or topic

(Lou & Yuan, 2019). An individual's degree of expertise can be perceived as the extent to which the source is seen as being capable of providing correct information to their audience. The information shared by an expert source stems from previous knowledge and experiences and are not merely based on product or brand perception (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, information from expert sources on social media has value to followers.

One of the most influential effects of source expertise is its effect on consumer purchase intention. When consumers receive brand-related information from a source that is perceived to have a high level of expertise, they are more willing to accept the information and purchase the product (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Xiao *et al.*, 2018).

Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) conducted a study to determine which characteristics of source credibility influence a consumer's behaviour. Out of expertise, trustworthiness and homophily, expertise was reported to be the most influential in predicting a consumer's intention to buy. The positive relationship of expertise with the intention to buy is supported throughout the marketing literature (Shan, 2016). Source expertise has been reported to positively influence a consumer's attitude towards the brand (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Part of Lou and Yuan's (2019) study was to determine which dimension of SC is most influential in effecting a consumer's perceived level brand awareness. Their results concluded that source expertise, attractive and trustworthiness positively influence a consumer's brand awareness. Both brand awareness and brand attitude are dimensions that influence a consumer's perceived degree of BE (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Lou and Yuan (2019) and Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) support the notion studies that brands can use credible influencers to build BE.

Literature has proposed and supported the relationship between SGC, UGC and SC. Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) reported that consumers analyse UGC and SGC to determine a source's perceived level of credibility on review sites. On a product review site, consumers would assess three factors to determine the credibility of the information provided by the source (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). The source's number of reviews posted

(SGC), the content of the review (UGC) and the duration the source has been on the platform (SGC) will be evaluated to establish credibility (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). Shan (2016) conducted a study to determine the interaction effects of SGC and UGC on perceived expertise of an online review. The study manipulated reviewer profiles to test the effect of argument quality and reviewer badge on the perceived credibility of a source. Shan (2016) concluded that reviewers with a “top reviewer badge” present higher levels of expertise and trustworthiness than reviewer profile with no badge. Strong arguments (UGC) have a more positive influence on the perceived expertise of a reviewer than weak arguments. Studies by Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) and Shan (2016) support the notion that SGC and UGC influence an individual’s perceived expertise and in turn, their credibility in social media.

3.6.2.2 Trustworthiness

In the online environment, individuals can freely express their opinions and feelings about products, services and brands whilst remaining anonymous. Resultantly, users will try to determine the trustworthiness of a source to use or reject the provided information. Trustworthiness can be defined as the willingness or intention to rely on someone’s opinion about a subject (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). Xiao *et al.* (2018) define trustworthiness as the apparent integrity of the source and the perceivers’ confidence in the source to communicate valid and honest assertions. Hence, it is not enough for the source of information to be perceived as knowledgeable or an expert, but users need to acknowledge the source as reliable and trustworthy. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) propose that trustworthiness is the most important dimension of SC. Trustworthiness being the most important dimension of SC is confirmed by Xiao *et al.* (2018), who concluded that consumers place more emphasis on a source’s trustworthiness over expertise in a purchase decision.

The literature on trustworthiness is copious, but few authors depict how individuals develop their perceived trust in social media. Some authors propose argument quality as a contributor to a higher sense of trustworthiness (Filiari, 2015; Shan, 2016). Shan (2016) attributes an individual’s motive to produce content as an element that influences their

perceived trustworthiness. For example, disclosing paid content on social media informs other users about the motive for content production. Therefore, a user's perceived level of trust towards an individual may vary depending on the disclosure of promotional content. In support of Shan (2016), Lou and Yuan (2019) report that trustworthiness negatively influences brand awareness and purchase intention. This relationship may be explained as follows. Although influencer UGC has value and generally influences followers' trust in their branded posts, followers may hold sceptical beliefs about the influencer's motive to produce the content. Thus, forming sponsored brand-related UGC may discredit influencers.

Xiao *et al.* (2018) believe the interaction among YouTube influencers and their audience in the comment section applies to the influencer's perceived level of trust. This view could be attributed to the idea that relationships are built on the interaction between two individuals and the influencer invests time in developing a relationship with their followers. Although the topic of trustworthiness has been thoroughly researched, the literature on how influencers could develop trust within their audience in the social media remains unclear. This study will seek to contribute to how influencers can build trust among their clients in the social media environment.

3.6.2.3 Attractiveness

Among the first questions that come to the author's mind when discussing attractiveness, is what depicts an individual as attractive. What is deemed attractive is due to the social construct of what the public domain perceive as attractive (Yang, 2018). In the literature, attraction has been divided into two dimensions: physical and social attractiveness (Antheunis & Schouten, 2011). Adding to the complexity of attractiveness, some authors have supplemented attractiveness for likeability of a source (Teng & Khong, 2015; Yang, 2018), whereas Xiao *et al.* (2018) measured likeability and attractiveness as one dimension.

Nonetheless, Ohanian (1990) has proposed that attractiveness is a dimension of SC and is perceived as the classiness, beauty, elegance and sexiness of a source. Moreover, Ohanian (1990) perceives attractiveness as a function of a source's likeability, similarity

and familiarity. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) define attractiveness as one's outward physical appearance. Lou and Yuan (2019) define attractiveness as a source's likeability or physical attraction. Therefore, it can be concluded that an attractive source is someone likeable, shares similarities with the message receiver and portrays a degree of physical attractiveness.

An attractive source increases a message receiver acceptance of the information and can positively influence a consumer's brand attitude and purchase intention (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Wang *et al.* (2018) report that adding images on an individual's social media profile increases the perception of attraction and trustworthiness. In product review websites, a profile photo of the reviewer reported higher levels of attractiveness than no profile photo (Cheung *et al.*, 2018).

3.6.2.4 Homophily

Finally, homophily denotes the similarity between the information source and the message receiver (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Social relationships can influence the credibility of a source, which can be measured through homophily. Homophily can be derived from the shared demographic characteristics (age, gender, education) or perceived attributes (values, preference, beliefs) of a source (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). In online reviews, individuals look for more than a source's trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise. Individuals also look for characteristics, which they share with the source of information. According to the elaboration likelihood model, individual decision-making depends on the characteristics of the information source. Thus, if an individual discovers that a reviewer has shared similarities with them, the message will become more persuasive to the reader (Tseng & Wang, 2016).

According to Pan and Chiou (2011), a relationship between source and the message receiver can influence the credibility of online content, which can be measured by homophily. In social media, a relationship between the source and individual does not always exist. Users employ SGC and UGC provided by the platform to make inferences and heuristics about the shared similarities (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). The SGC and UGC lead to better comprehending the source's personality, values, preferences and

experience, which in turn, leads to an increased desire for social interaction. Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) conducted a study on the effect of characteristics of source credibility on consumer behaviour and concluded a significant relationship between homophily, purchase intent and credibility of the source exists.

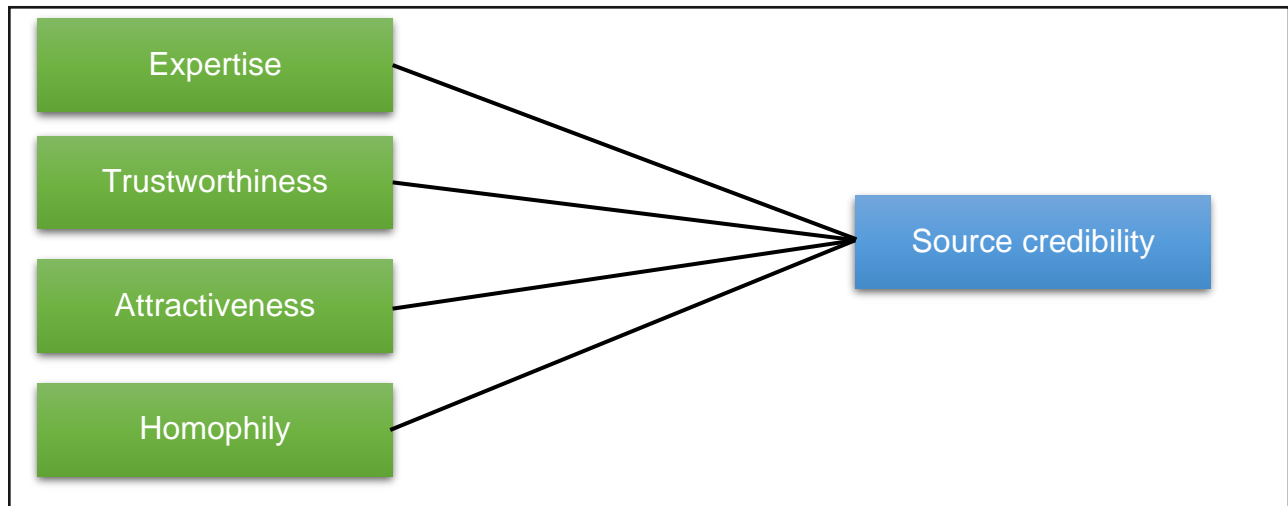
Xiao *et al.* (2018) support the findings of Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) and conclude that a positive relationship between source credibility and receiver is attributed to shared characteristics. Xiao *et al.* (2018) believe similar attitudes between source and receiver have a stronger influence than similarities such as gender and appearance do. Therefore, it may be that individuals perceive homophily as more influential than source attractiveness within the source credibility dimension.

Shan (2016) maintains the most basic principle of interpersonal relationship is homophily or source-receiver similarity. Furthermore, a match between a source's and an individual's personality, beliefs and values are a moderator of source credibility. Shan (2016) argues that in social media advertising, consumers feel they share more homophily with influencers than celebrities. More homophily with influencers can be attributed to an influencer being more of a 'normal' person and their relationships are at an arm's length. Celebrities' lives are too extravagant and far reached for consumers. Relationships between influencer and individual are easier to form than between individual and celebrities. Sokolova and Kefi (2019) report a significant relationship between homophily and parasocial interaction. Homophily influences parasocial interaction based on the similarities and identification between source and receiver. The affection between source and receiver is strengthened by the shared value, which leads to increased levels of persuasion (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

For this study, source credibility is the extent to which the reviewer is perceived as a credible and trustworthy source of product information based on their SGC and UGC cues provided by their Instagram profile. When a source is perceived as credible, their degree of persuasion increases. An increase in persuasion leads to more favourable purchase intentions (Chakraborty, 2019). In social media, a source's credibility is influenced by the SGC provided by the interface and UGC posted by the source (Wang *et al.*, 2018).

This study measures SC based on four dimensions proposed by Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) and Lou and Yuan (2019). The dimensions of SC are expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and homophily. Figure 3.5 is a model of all four dimensions and SC. This

Figure 3.5
Dimensions of source credibility



study predicts that all four dimensions in Figure 3.5 will positively influence SC. The researcher's prediction stems from reviewing the literature on all four dimensions that have concluded that expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and homophily are dimensions of SC and should positively influence the credibility of a source.

An objective of this study is to determine the influence of SGC and UGC on the credibility of an Influencer on Instagram. The literature review on SC has proposed that in social media, SGC and UGC positively influence all four dimensions of SC. But to date, no literature has determined these relationships in an Instagram context. This study will be among the first to determine the relationship between SGC, UGC and SC on Instagram.

Previously discussed in this study was the component of brand equity (BE). BE is defined as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (Aaker, 1991:125). BE has been proposed as a construct of this study. An objective of this study is to determine the influence of SC on BE.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Social media has brought on many advantages for brands, which include strengthening consumer relationships, creating favourable brand association and developing brand and deep brand awareness. Within social media, consumers interact with brands and consumers about brand-related content. Instagram is among the most popular social media platforms used by brands and consumers to engage and interact with branded content. In Instagram, marketers can attract the attention of consumers through influencers. Influencers then provide consumers with information about products and move their attention to the brand website where the consumers can get more information about the product.

This chapter was divided into three sections: social media, Instagram and source credibility. Social media was introduced, defined and statistics about social media users were provided. After that, one of the fastest-growing social media applications, Instagram, was introduced. Instagram user demographics and Instagram advertising were discussed. The section on Instagram concluded influential advertising on Instagram has grown in popularity and effectiveness due to the relationships between influencer and consumer.

The first independent variable that was introduced in this chapter was user-generated content (UGC), which acts as a manner for users of social media to express themselves. UGC was included in this study to determine how the disclosure of an advertisement may influence a consumer's; affect attitude towards the advertised brand, influence the influencer's source credibility and affect the consumer's intention to purchase the advertised brand.

The second independent variable, system-generated cues (SGC) was introduced in this chapter. SGC was defined as quantitative indicators of popularity or social influence (Jin & Phua, 2014). SGC was included in this study as a variable to predict whether users of Instagram perceive the number of followers and the authority heuristic (blue tick) as dimensions influencing consumer responses. Perceived level of credibility, attitude towards the advertised brand and purchase intention of the advertised brand will be investigated.

The following chapter of this study will introduce the final dependent variable, parasocial relationship. Also, the millennial population of this study and the attributes of millennials that differentiate them from other populations will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

CO-CREATING MY IDENTITY

Unless we base our identity upon the truth of who we are, we cannot attain happiness – Brenda Shoshanna

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, it has been established that identity development is a prominent feature in social media research since users engage in social interaction to develop their online identity (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). “Social media has introduced a new world where everybody can tell their story” (Gürel & Tıǧlı, 2015:256). From this view, it can be deduced that many people have discovered social media as a place where they can share their story to an audience the storyteller has never met. Social media has brought about many changes in the lives of people across the world, creating positive implications for brands. Social media users can now share their lives and experiences in real-time for anybody in the world to see. Brands can also share their experiences of consumers using their products in real-time for any social media user to see.

This chapter addresses different aspects of consumers on social media. First, questions must be answered about whom the most popular social media users are and how social media shaped marketing towards these consumers groups. Second, with whom do these consumer groups interact on social media and why do these consumers follow the lives of certain users. Last, how do these consumer groups form relationships with others they have never met on social media. The consumer group that populates most of the social media is the millennial generation (Statista, 2018b). This chapter will focus on developing social media relationships with millennial users. Millennials first need to be defined and differentiated from other population groups.

4.2 MILLENNIALS

The millennial generation is unique compared with their predecessors. Aged in 2019 between 18 and 35, the millennial cohort is the largest consumer group in the world (DeVaney, 2015). Millennials outnumber their baby boomer parents and younger siblings, Generation Z. The millennial age group portrays different values systems to their boomer parents. The difference in value is attributable to the environment in which the millennial child grew up. Millennials were among the first generations to be raised in a world where technology was rapidly expanding. As a result, they were raised in an ever-changing dynamic environment. Moreover, the difference in values has led to a different perception of satisfaction and leisure than preceding generations (Ng & Johnson, 2015). Growing evidence suggests millennial workers espouse different values and attitudes and form different expectations about work (Ng & Johnson, 2015). Evidence also proposes millennials do not embrace the same loyalty characteristics towards brands as their predecessors (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). These different traits have made retaining millennial consumers more complicated for brands and therefore, require research into how the millennial group forms loyalty with brands.

This Chapter will describe various topics in the social media environment. Millennials and their marketing characteristics will be explained, providing background for their attraction to influencers on social media to satisfy their need to belong. Parasocial relationships, which can be summarised as a relationship formed between media user and media figure will be introduced. These relationships carry the potential for brands to tap into the influencer endorsement process. First, it is necessary to differentiate millennials from previous generations in character and marketing.

4.2.1 Millennials in marketing

Among the goals and objectives of the marketing plan of a company is to build long-term loyalty with their clients (Keller, 2016). Companies build long-term loyalty with consumers through advertising and interaction through marketing channels. Among the fundamental considerations for millennials espousing different value to older generations are their

exposure to technology, mainly the Internet and social media (Pandey *et al.*, 2018). The Internet has advanced the generation's ability to retrieve information about products and brands, creating a platform where any individual can communicate with anyone across cultural boundaries and time zones. For brands and marketers, the millennial generation is ideal to include in the marketing mix. Considering millennials' age, they are a consumer group that has recently become independent of their boomer parents and represent nearly two billion people across the world (Helal *et al.*, 2018). Millennials can be perceived as a generation that has yet to develop long-term loyalty towards brands as some have only recently entered the market. Millennials spend more money but have less loyalty to the brands than older generations. Some reasons for their low loyalty may be attributed to their increased exposure to price promotions and open access to product information and ability to effectively compare products (Moreno, Lafuente, Carreón & Moreno, 2017). Millennials are, in turn, a valuable market for brands (Grafström, Jakobsson & Wiede, 2018). Marketers are especially interested in millennials to develop brand loyalty at an early stage of their development. Early brand loyalty will decrease consumer turnover rates at the end and lower consumer retention costs. Other long-term benefits of brand loyalty include repeated business, reduced marketing costs and improved brand image (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

With the Internet and social media, brands have the millennial as their target market. Through social media advertising, brands can reach small niche target groups by developing interpersonal relationships and customised advertising. Among the greatest benefits of consumer loyalty in conjunction with the Internet is the ease of communication with the consumer (Alalwan *et al.*, 2017). Communication with consumers is of great benefit to brands in terms of the feedback that consumers can provide regarding product experiences and innovative proposals, leading to lower research and development costs. Also, communication between brands and consumers develops and strengthens a consumer's perception of brand resonance (Keller, 2016).

Millennials are more receptive to brand communication through social media than older generations due to their grasping of the new media (Newman, 2018). With certain brands, millennials do not just consume products but seek interpersonal relationships with brands, brand leaders and brand communities on social media (Dwivedi, Johnson & McDonald,

2016). Some millennials want to be included in the brand development process as it enhances their sense of belonging. Therefore, social media as a marketing medium is effective in reaching millennials across the world, building long-term loyalty and enhancing interbrand communication.

Millennials support different values and characteristics in how they perceive marketing and themselves. The literature in the public domain has proposed millennial consumers are more receptive to interpersonal communication on social media and have a desire to form long-term relationships with a brand (DeVaney, 2015). Brands and marketers must identify why the millennial generation embrace different values and characteristics than other generations to develop promotional content that is effective in capturing their attention. Some of the characteristics of the millennial cohort will be discussed.

4.2.2 Characteristics of millennials

Research into the characteristics of millennial consumers has reported several unique traits compared with their boomer parents. The conceptualisation of a generation is rooted in Mannheim's (1952) theory or sociology of generations, where members of the same generation share more than the same birth year. As a result, the environment in which the millennial group was raised contributes to their values and beliefs. Some of the environmental factors that shaped the millennial consumer's value and beliefs are parenting, academics, dynamic technology changes and developing social media (Moreno *et al.*, 2017; Ng & Johnson, 2015).

Millennials' consumer behaviour differs from previous generations in the way they satisfy their need. Preceding generations would recognise their need for a product and determine where they will find the product at the best possible price. Millennials prefer to go online to purchase products. According to Melton (2019), 60% of millennial consumers in the United States make their purchases online. The motive for online purchases over in-store purchases stems from the advantages of comparing product information and prices online. The millennial generation is more aware of their purchasing power; therefore, they are more likely to spend their income on acquiring it, usually on consumer goods and personal services (Ordun, 2015). Generation X is more conservative at spending their

income, thereby saving more. Besides, Generation X is less concerned with the meaning transfer and associations that may stem from consuming branded products (Ladhari, Gonthier & Lajante, 2019). Therefore, Generation X is less brand-conscious compared with Generation Y.

Another key characteristic that differentiates millennials from their baby boomer parents is their desire for a work-life balance and flexibility. The literature confirms the millennial generation is not as willing as previous generations to sacrifice personal life to advance their careers (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng, 2015). Millennials prioritise work-life balance as the most important consideration when applying for a job, thereafter their salary. Millennials expect more recognition for their work and earlier pay increases than preceding generations (French, 2018). Also, to employers, the millennial generation reports the higher employee turnover rate compared with other generations and are expected to change occupation up to five times during their careers (Kuron *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, companies need to create value for millennial employees in the work environment. Increased value is attributable to marketing brands to millennial consumers as well, where they want to be included in the development process of products of the brand (Doster, 2013). Millennials want to be included and rewarded for loyal behaviour to satisfy a sense of belonging. An important characteristic that shapes millennial consumers' values and beliefs is their desire to be recognised and belong (Helal *et al.*, 2018).

Millennials' need to belong stems from Maslow's (1943) theory about how humans have basic conditions or needs to fulfil to sustain a healthy life. Among these conditions is the need to belong. Need to belong can be defined as a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). Therefore, it can be concluded millennials, like all generations, have a desire for friendship, intimacy, family and a sense of connection (Maslow, 1943). Mannheim (1952) developed a theory about generations that presumes the values and beliefs of a generation are influenced by the environment in which they are raised. Therefore, it can be concluded that all humans have a natural desire to belong to a group or fit into society alongside people who share similar values and beliefs.

When considering the population group of this study, millennials were raised in a rapidly changing technological and industrial environment and were required to constantly adapt to circumstances. Also, throughout the millennials' development period, they were told by previous generations to get outside their comfort zones, challenge themselves, and put everything familiar to the wayside (Kavitha & Bhuvaneshwari, 2016; Sinek, 2014). Furthermore, they have experienced pressure from older generations to perform and conform to their standards and values (Ng & Johnson, 2015). Previous generations found community and sense of belonging in religion, workplace and neighbourhood. Millennials have had to find new ways to satisfy their desire to belong because of the different environment in which they were raised compared with baby boomers. Millennials were raised in a technological era where the boundaries between religion, workplace and communities were unclear. The unclear boundaries are attributed to the increased exposure of external cultures and practices on the Internet, social media and access to information (DeVaney, 2015). With a desire to belong, the pressure to perform alongside unclear boundaries between religions and excessive amounts of information, several millennials have struggled to establish a personal identity within themselves. Authors have gone as far as to describe some members in the millennial generation as being 'lost' (Madara, Maheshwari & Selvan, 2018; Mellon, 2015). Millennials ultimately desire a society with shared values, norms and practices to satisfy their need to belong. Marketers need to distinguish how millennial consumers have managed to satisfy their sense of belonging because it differs from all previous generations.

For a relationship to satisfy an individual's sense of belonging, the relationship should have pleasant, reciprocal interactions between both parties (Blight *et al.*, 2017). Millennials have personal relationships with family, friends and people in the community like their preceding generations, but also have online relationships unlike those before them.

Relationships on social media can form in many ways; an individual can add a friend or follow another user. Individuals may choose to directly contact another user through their inbox or mention them in a comment. Once a user has been added as a friend or followed, personal information can be shared across profiles. As with real-life relationships, there is the literature evidence that virtual relationships can satisfy an individual's sense of

belonging the same way personal relationships do (Ding & Qiu, 2017; Escalas & Bettman, 2017). On social media, millennials can derive relationships with friends, family and any user who is on the platform across the world. This study is interested in the relationship between a millennial and an influencer; how an influencer satisfies an individual's sense of belonging by becoming a source of meaning. Therefore, the following section will discuss the meaning of influencers to social media.

4.2.2.1 Influencers as a source of meaning

Influencers become a source of meaning to individuals through the process of meaning transfer proposed by the social identity theory (SIT). Tajfel (1974) developed SIT, which stipulates an individual's identity is part of their self-concept derived from knowledge of their membership in a social group together with the emotional significance attached to the social group.

When one identifies socially with an individual or group, the psychological separation between the self and others disappears, resulting in the view of oneself as an interchangeable exemplar of one's social group (Jin & Phua, 2014). According to SIT, people are motivated to achieve positive distinctions about themselves, this is done by socially identifying with individuals or groups that help improve self-concepts. Therefore, SIT posits that individuals categorise themselves into groups by adopting the characteristics and values of an identity group as part of their self-identity.

In the hierarchical structure of social identity, groups are individuals of influence also referred to as influencers. These individuals are perceived as opinion leaders or consumers with experience and knowledge (Zhao, Kou, Peng & Chen, 2018). These influencers or opinion leaders form part of an individual's aspirational self (Ozan, 2018)

Individuals at the top of the hierarchical structure were originally classified as traditional celebrities but with the inception of social media and identity groups on social media, new types of celebrity have come into existence. Now two type of celebrities, traditional and social media celebrities are distinguished. Traditional celebrities are famous for talents, such as acting or sports whereas reality celebrities are famous for exposing their 'real

lives' on traditional and social media. Social media celebrities' star power comes from self-promotion via digital content (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). Social media 'celebrities' whose status has been derived from self-promotion of digital content can be classified into two categories according to their influence and number of followers. The categories are social media celebrities, which constitutes more than 1 000 000 followers and an influencer, which constitutes fewer than 1 000 000 followers (Müller & Maier, 2018; Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Within the influencer status, there are three categories, macro-influencer, middle-influencer and micro-influencer, which are all categorised according to social influence.

In the consumer society, people look at all types of celebrities and influencers for meaning (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). This study is conducted on Instagram. Only influencers and the meaning they provide to users in the identity development process will be examined. Influencers provide meaning to objects through product endorsements; circularly, their own meaning is also created by the products they endorse (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). Influencers use social media to create their identity, which the consumer culture interprets and then consumers use the meanings they fashion for influencers to construct their personal identities (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). Using these processes, celebrities encapsulate meaning on several levels including both broad cultural ideas, such as values and norms, and more idiosyncratic individual meanings, such as what it means to be cool, smart or successful. Thus, users of social media can enhance their identity by linking it to the identity of an influencer by following their UGC, consuming brands and products promoted by the influencer and interacting with the influencer.

Based on an influencer's 'celebrity' status, many followers pursue interaction with influencers through their social media profiles. One-way interaction from an individual to an influencer is referred to as parasocial interaction (PSR) and is pursued to enhance a sense of belonging (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Followers pursue PSR as additions to their social identity through associations that flow from the influencer to the follower via meaning transfer. The following section will define and describe PSR in social media, analysing the available literature to determine the effects of the various cues in Instagram on PSR.

4.3 PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

The term parasocial relationship (PSR) was first introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) describing the interaction between the audience and media figures. Previous studies on influencer endorsement mainly focus on the influence of source factors (Chakraborty, 2019; Shan, 2016; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Some studies also examine the role of audience factors, which denote audience involvement in the product (Chung & Cho, 2017; Giles, 2002; Lee & Watkins, 2016). Nonetheless, the theory of parasocial relationship (PSR) defines the relationship between a spectator and a performer with an illusion of intimacy as a replacement for the 'real' interpersonal relationship. Such a relationship is self-established and the other member could be unaware of the relationship (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). PSR in traditional media has been well documented, which has formed the foundation for the literature of PSR in social media.

When listeners or viewers of a media programme become attached to a certain character, they engage in internal dialogues with those characters in an approximation of face-to-face, interpersonal relationships (Yuan *et al.*, 2016). Individuals appreciate the values and motives of attractive media characters, often viewing them as counsellors, comforters or even as role models (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The following section will seek to define PSR according to the literature and then redefine PSR according to the literature and the predicted outcomes of this study.

4.3.1 Defining parasocial relationship

Parasocial relationship form on the interaction between media user and media figure (Tsai & Men, 2013). PSR can be formed with fictional characters but also with real people like celebrities, influencers or politicians (De Bérail *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, PSR is described as an illusionary experience; consumers interact with personas as if they are present and engaged in a reciprocal relationship. People believe they are engaged in a direct two-way conversation, feeling as though a mediated other is talking to them through their UGC.

PSR can also be perceived as psychological connections users form unilaterally with media personalities through virtual media (Yuan *et al.*, 2016). The concept of PSR is

considered close to the idea of a real-life relationship. Knowledge about the media characters, which includes their style, personality, preferences, and personal life, is accumulated. Consequently, recognising and interpreting the individual's behaviours to become more accurate (Chung & Cho, 2017). A better understanding of the individual's behaviour translates into a more effective meaning transfer. It is noteworthy that PSR between an individual in traditional media and social media differs. In traditional media, PSR would be perceived as unilateral as the individual cannot interact with the media figure. The relationship between an influencer on Instagram, YouTube or Facebook is not unidirectional. Users can add comments and discuss the content, and the content owner has the possibility of responding to the messages and comments related to that content (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Digital personalities seem to have stronger persuasiveness and credibility as followers are more able to relate to them than traditional media personalities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The minute-to-minute updates of influencer information on social media accentuate the followers' illusion that they 'know' the influencer. The instant comment and retweet function make the followers feel they can directly communicate with the influencer (Gong & Li, 2017).

Therefore, for this study, PSR on social media is defined as interpersonal relationships that resemble face-to-face relationships. Relationships are typically one-sided as media characters would seldom know the existence of their followers or have the obligation to maintain a relationship with their followers. PSR are relationships formed to satisfy an individual's need to belong and assist in the identity development through the meaning transfer of personality characteristics from media figure to individual. The following section will discern why individuals follow influencers on social media to form PSR and what elements may enhance the desire to form PSR.

4.3.2 Audience and source factor of parasocial relationships

PSR can be perceived as a series of inputs and outcomes. Inputs are audience factors that strengthen a follower's desire to form PSR with an influencer. For examples, followers with a high need to belong and low self-esteem desire PSR with an influencer (Escalas & Bettman, 2017; Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Other input factors of PSR that have been

proposed are social anxiety and empathy (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Individuals on social media who have a desire to belong to social community groups due to their low self-esteem and social anxiety are more likely to form PSR with media figures (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Followers with low self-esteem are more motivated to follow the lives of influencers on social media to gain a sense of belonging and develop their personal character by transferring identity characteristics from the influencer. It should be noted, PSR is not exclusive to individuals with low self-esteem or need-to-belong and can also form between individuals who are 'set' in their identity (Yuan *et al.*, 2016).

PSR outcomes are associated with several positive source factors (Gong & Li, 2017; Sakib *et al.*, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). A positive attitude towards the endorsed product, higher perceived levels of persuasion and an increased desire by followers to purchase brands and products associated with the influencer is included. PSR can increase affinity toward the objects or products associated with the influencer (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). Consumers, for instance, report higher satisfaction from buying products viewed in advertisements when they have formed PSR with the media figure (Lim & Kim, 2011).

An important aspect of social media for brands is that users can interact with influencers about products. Platforms such as Instagram are great venues for brands to incorporate influencers to foster PSR with consumers (Labrecque, 2014). Thus, influencers have an added value in social media-based branding by which they can increase trustworthiness and perceptions of the brand via fostering PSR (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). Essentially, PSR can increase the endorsement value of influencers, which in turn, will increase the value of using influencers in the marketing mix for brands. The literature notes that an influencer's credibility can affect the desire for individuals to form PSR with an influencer (Sakib *et al.*, 2019). However, the literature on how credibility influences PSR is limited. Therefore, the following section will address the available literature on SC and PSR and predict possible outcomes for this study for SC and PSR.

4.3.3 Dimensions influencing parasocial relationships

It is of interest to this study to determine how different profile cues influence PSR between consumer and individual on Instagram. Social media communication entails a higher level of PSR compared with traditional media. Users can observe how the brand representative (influencer) interacts with other fans and followers. In this way, the user becomes familiar with the projected personality of the influencer through their UGC (Tsai & Men, 2013).

So far, the literature examining the relationship between UGC and SGC and PSR has been limited. Until now, few studies have tested the relationship on Instagram (Boerman, 2020). The marketing literature has proposed a need for a better understanding of the outcomes and factors influencing PSR on social media (Jin, 2018). In the literature, little knowledge exists of how PSR in social media can increase an influencer's persuasion by enhancing a consumer's desire to purchase products promoted by the influencer (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Labrecque, 2014). Contradictions seem to exist on how PSR forms between influencers and individuals. Some authors insist that PSR forms on multiple interactions (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Jin, 2018). Other authors propose PSR can stem from single interactions between media users and media figures (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Labrecque, 2014). This study will adopt Labrecque's (2014) approach to PSR and assume that PSR can form upon a single interaction due to the cross-sectional nature of this study. Most authors in the literature have measured the relationship between SC and PSR by using a unidimensional SC scale (Gong & Li, 2017; Sakib *et al.*, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019).

PSR emerges primarily between like-minded group members with similar characteristics and backgrounds. As the PSR intensifies, consumers follow the activities of the social media group members more often to maintain the relationship (Tsiotsou, 2015). In a study conducted by Sokolova and Kefi (2019) on homophily and its influence on PSR, they concluded homophily significantly influences PSR, indicating the importance of value sharing as a dimension of persuasion. Based on Sokolova and Kefi's (2019) findings, when a consumer and media figure share values, characteristics, behaviours and consumption preferences, the media figure is perceived as more persuasive. Meaning

transfer flows more efficiently from influencer to the user of social media when there is congruence between values and preferences in the relationship (De Bérail *et al.*, 2019).

It has been proposed consumers are more willing to form PSR with influencers who are perceived as more attractive (Sakib *et al.*, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). But the literature is unclear on what dimensions of a user's Instagram profile are most influential in determining the attractiveness of a source. It has been noted influencers who are perceived more attractive establish a higher degree of PSR (Gong & Li, 2017).

Consumers follow influencers for their knowledge in their field of interest, which can also be referred to as their degree of expertise (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Part of the purpose of this study is to determine what elements of an influencer's Instagram profile will influence a source's perceived expertise. The literature in the public domain proposes users on social media are more likely to form PSR with influencers who portray higher levels of expertise (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

Influencers communicate their expertise to their followers through their biography, SGC, interactions with other followers and the UGC posted on their social media profile (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Expertise is defined as the degree of perceived understanding, skills and knowledge of an endorser (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). A study conducted by Xiang, Zheng, Lee and Zhao (2016) to determine the effects of expertise on PSR concluded that source expertise significantly influences PSR. This study predicts that influencers with higher levels of expertise in their field of interest will increase a follower's desire to form PSR. This prediction is supported by a follower's desire to be associated with peers who have higher levels of expertise, which can be attributed to them through the meaning transfer model and SIT theory.

Other possible factors that could influence a consumer's desire to form PSR with an influencer is the brand or brand category the influencer is associated with. If an influencer promotes branded content that a user is interested in, the user may be more willing to form PSR with the influencer (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019).

4.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 introduced the population of this study and explained how they form relationships with influencers in social media through parasocial relationships (PSR). First, the difference in characteristics between millennials and older generations were described in a marketing context.

The marketing goal of a company is to develop brand loyalty among its clients. Loyalty is sculptured by interacting with consumers through various media channels. Among the many channels that brands can use to communicate and interact with their consumers are social media. Social media supports brands in their development of consumer loyalty due to the ease of interaction and communication between brands and individuals. The most popular social media users are millennials. Millennials are people aged between 18 and 35 and were among the first generation to grow up alongside the Internet and social media.

PSR was first discussed as a term in 1956 and describes the relationship between an individual and media figure through different forms of media (Tsiotsou, 2015). In traditional media, PSR forms unilaterally between media figure and individual, whereas, in social media, the relationships are perceived as reciprocal. Social media influencers post content on to their profiles and their followers interpret the content as direct communication (Gong & Li, 2017). This process exposes followers to the live feed posted by the influencer, which forms PSR. PSR has been known to add value to the endorsement made by an influencer by elucidating positive brand attitudes to their audience (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Also, influencers with whom individuals form PSR are perceived as more persuasive and influential, adding to their endorsement value.

This study is interested in determining the effect of UGC and SGC on parasocial relationships. It is predicted UGC and SGC may have a positive influence on forming PSR. This prediction stems from the literature that proposes that influencers build relationships with users on social media by adding UGC and SGC on social media (Boerman, 2020; Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). The following section will introduce the methodology of this study, including the research design, objectives, sampling and data collection.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

The difference between something good and something great is attention to detail – Charles R. Swindoll

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 to 4 provided an overview of brand building including brand equity (BE), brand attitude (BA) and purchase intent (PI). The literature showed individuals on social media gain credibility using user-generated content (UGC) and system-generated cues (SGC) and how consumers of social media desire to form parasocial relationships (PSR) with influencers online. The literature review provided a theoretical basis to inform this research project better and to construct the research methodology.

In this chapter, the methodology employed in the study is described. The research structure, the mixed-methods research approach and the research process are provided, followed by a detailed explanation of the primary research that was conducted to contribute to the extant social media influencer marketing knowledge. Qualitative research was conducted in the form of two focus groups and a pre-test guided by a theory-based discussion guide. The purpose of qualitative research is presented with a description of the research process, the composition of the focus groups, the pre-test and the analyses of the findings.

The qualitative research is followed by quantitative research, elaborating on the factorial design used in this study to collect data for the experiment. The stimuli development process is explained and the independent and dependent variables of the study are presented. The questionnaire development, sampling and data collection processes are also described, followed by an explanation of the quantitative research processes. This chapter concludes by introducing the analysis techniques used to extract meaning from the data. Before providing an overview of the methodology of this study, the chapter commences with a brief review of the problem statement that prompted the research.

5.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Instagram is the one of youngest and fastest social media platforms on mobile available to brands for promotional purposes. The largest population group active on Instagram is the millennial generation who had also been recognised as the largest consumer group on earth by population and disposable income (Fry, 2018). Thus, an Instagram profile and its various cues are potentially powerful tools for brand-building strategies specifically aimed at millennial consumers. Although advanced technology revolutionised brand building opportunities using the Internet and social media, technology also changed millennial consumers into sophisticated users. Marketing strategies now focus on consumer-based relationships. Instagram has modernised the traditional marketing technique of using celebrities for influential advertising by introducing social media influencers to promote branded content. However, the literature review showed little research has been conducted on Instagram as marketing phenomenon and a knowledge gap exists in how influential advertising in Instagram works. Specifically, knowledge lacks about what elements of UGC and SGC on an individual Instagram profile are most influential in influencing millennial consumer responses. Therefore, research was needed to assess the role of UGC and SGC concerning influencer credibility, consumer PSR, BA and PI associated with the influencer.

5.3 OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The primary and secondary research objectives of this study were shaped by a critical evaluation of the literature on important concepts such as UGC and SGC, SC, PSR, BA and PI. Considering the gap in the body of knowledge, the following primary objective and secondary objectives were formulated:

5.3.1 Research objectives

Table 5.1 presents the primary objective and Table 5.2 the four secondary research objectives.

Table 5.1
Primary objective

Primary objective	To determine the influence of user-generated content (UGC) and system-generated cues (SGC) on consumer responses in an Instagram context.
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Four secondary objectives were formulated to contribute to achieving the primary objective. The secondary objectives of this study related to the influence of UGC and SGC on SC, PSR, BA and PI. The secondary objectives and subsections are presented below.

Table 5.2
Secondary objectives

Secondary Objectives	
Source credibility	
Secondary objective: 1 _{a-d}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on source credibility b) To assess the influence of SGC on source credibility c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on source credibility
	d) To assess the influence of UGC and SGC on attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily
Parasocial Relationships	
Secondary objective: 2 _{a-c}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on parasocial relationships b) To assess the influence of SGC on parasocial relationships c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on parasocial relationships
Brand Attitude	

Secondary objective: 3 _{a-d}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on brand attitude
	b) To assess the influence of SGC on brand attitude
	c) To assess the influence and interaction effects between UGC and SGC on brand attitude
	d) To assess the influence of using an influencer on brand attitude
Purchase Intention	
Secondary objective: 4 _{a-c}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on purchase intention
	b) To assess the influence of SGC on purchase intention
	c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on purchase intention

Table 5.2 presented the secondary objectives. The hypothesis are presented hereafter.

5.3.2 Hypotheses

The hypotheses constructed from the primary and secondary objectives are presented in this section. The null hypothesis, derived from the main objective of the study, is shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3
Hypothesis

H ₀	User-generated content (UGC) and system-generated cues (SGC) do not significantly influence source credibility, parasocial relationship, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention.
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Secondary hypotheses were formulated to assess the null hypothesis. Hypotheses relating to the first secondary objective, SC, are presented in Table 5.4 since the

academic literature noted credible sources are more persuasive (Chakraborty, 2019; Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This study aimed to determine the influence of UGC and SGC on the SC of an Instagram influencer independently and interactively.

Table 5.4
Hypotheses – Source credibility

Source Credibility	
H _{01A}	The user-generated content (UGC), advertising disclosure, does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.
H _{01B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.
H _{01C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.
H _{01D}	The interaction between the system-generated cues (SGCs), 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.

Users of social media form relationships with influencers through the interaction on social media platforms. These relationships have been referred to as parasocial relationships since they are one-way from the media user to the influencer (Boerman, 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). This study aimed to determine the effects of UGC and SGC on parasocial relationships on Instagram independently and interactively.

The null hypotheses relating to parasocial relationships are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5:
Hypotheses – Parasocial relationships

Parasocial relationship	
H _{02A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the parasocial relationships with an influencer.
H _{02B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), ‘followers’, does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.
H _{02C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), ‘authority heuristic’, does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.
H _{02D}	The interaction between system-generated cues (SGC), ‘followers’ and ‘authority heuristic’ and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.

Research has shown that UGC and SGC in social media can positively influence a consumer’s attitude towards the brand advertised by an influencer (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Loureiro & Sarmento, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, BA was included in this study to determine the effects of UGC and SGC on consumers’ BA on Instagram independently and interactively.

The hypotheses relating to attitude towards the brand are shown in Table 5.6

Table 5.6
Hypotheses – Attitude towards the brand

Attitude towards the brand	
H _{03A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.

H _{03B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', do not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03D}	The interaction between the system-generated cues (SGC), 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03E}	The use of an influencer in Instagram does not influence brand attitude.

According to Chakraborty (2019), UGC and SGC positively influence PI in an online consumer review context. This study sought to determine the influence of UGC and SGC on consumer PI on Instagram independently and interactively. Table 5.7 presents the hypotheses concerning consumer PI.

Table 5.7
Hypotheses – Purchase intention

Purchase Intention	
H _{04A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence purchase intention.

H _{04D}	The interaction between the system generated cues (SGC) ‘followers’ and ‘authority heuristic’, and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence purchase intention.
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The key to a successful study is to have a well set out process that the study will follow. The following section will discuss the process followed in this study.

5.4 RESEARCH PROCESS

Research is undertaken in most professions. More than a mere set of skills, research is a way of thinking: examining critical and various aspects of day-to-day professions. It is about understanding and formulating guiding principles that govern procedure, developing and testing new theories that contribute to advancing knowledge in a field of interest (Kumar, 2011a).

The main purpose of this study was to comprehend influential marketing on Instagram specifically and enhance the existing literature on the topic. The primary objective was to determine the influence of SGC and UGC on consumer responses relating to the influence of UGC and SGC on SC, PSR, BA and PI. Therefore, this study proposed the following research process as presented in Table 5.8

Table 5.8
Research process

	Purpose	Process
Step 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a gap in the literature. 2. Identify the objectives of the study. 	Consult academic journals, popular website and books. Identify dependent and independent variables that required more knowledge in the marketing literature.

	3. Identify the variables of the study.	
Step 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an understanding of variables and knowledge gap. 2. Write the problem statement. 3. Write a literature review. 	<p>Secondary research was conducted on Instagram, millennials and social media marketing. The research was mostly conducted by consulting academic journals between 2014 and 2020.</p>
Step 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine research approach. 2. Gather primary data on independent variables. 3. Conduct focus groups 1 and 2 	<p>A mixed-method approach was selected. Focus group 1 gathered data on SGC, UGC, Instagram and influencers.</p> <p>Focus group 2 gathered data on the four dependent variables: BA, PI, SC and PSR.</p>
Step 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather data on trends on Instagram. 2. Identify products within trends. 3. Gather primary data on independent variables. 	<p>Complete questionnaires about current trends in Instagram, which included identifying products within the trends. Complete questionnaire on SGC and UGC incorporating the information gathered in focus groups 1 and 2.</p>
Step 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify possible influencer and brand. 2. Develop stimuli examples. 3. Select stimuli from examples. 	<p>After the process of analysing various influencers and brands, an influencer and brand best suited for the study were selected. Forty-two images were collected from the influencer and two Instagram profile examples were created.</p> <p>The 42 images were summarised into 15 images that would constitute the influencer's</p>

		profile. The profile was then developed on Instagram and screenshots were taken.
Step 6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop questionnaire preview. 2. Develop a questionnaire in Qualtrics. 	<p>Develop a questionnaire on Microsoft Word and add dependent variables and items, which were addressed in the secondary research.</p> <p>Convert questionnaire preview from Microsoft Word to Qualtrics.</p>
Step 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect data. 2. Analyse data. 	<p>Export all 8 questionnaire groups to consumer panels on Qualtrics.</p> <p>Conduct descriptive analysis and inferential testing to determine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, which includes the interaction effect.</p>
Step 8	Recommendations and conclusions.	<p>Interpret results logically.</p> <p>Use data to propose future recommendations to brands and marketers based on inferential results.</p>

Table 5.8 consists of 8 steps. In each step, the process is summarised according to its purpose and process that was followed. The following section will discuss the secondary research process that was used to develop the problem statement of this study.

5.5 SECONDARY RESEARCH

In this study, secondary research was conducted throughout Chapters 2 to 4. Steps 1 and 2 of the research process were to gather a greater knowledge of the available literature on the key concepts, identify gaps of knowledge in the literature and determine the objectives of the study. Secondary research needed to be conducted to complete these steps. Several sources were consulted. Academic books that were available both offline and online provided credible representations of acknowledged business, marketing and research-related theories. Published scientific articles provided existing research about social media marketing, and other related topics relevant for this research, such as influential marketing, SC and developing online consumer relationships. Popular online websites discussing the latest news and views on the role of influential marketing were also accessed.

Throughout the secondary research, the authenticity of the data sources and the methods used to generate those source were considered (Mouton, 2001). The literature review of this study proposed three themes. First, with the inception of social media, brands have been exposed to new ways of developing promotional content to build brand equity. One of the new ways that brands have incorporated individuals is through the use of influencers on social to promote brands to demographic markets. Second, the research into the cues or elements that construct an influencer's credibility in social media remains limited. Moreover, the research into SC and Instagram is sparse. Last, although research is available on developing one-way relationships between a media user and a media figure in traditional media, little is known about how the relationship forms in social media between influencers and media users. Therefore, this study conducted primary research to address the need for more information on Instagram, developing SC in Instagram and developing relationships with media figures on Instagram.

5.6 PRIMARY RESEARCH

Primary research delivers original data that have been collected specifically to address the research problem of the study in question (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Primary research

must be conducted according to a well-planned research process that should result in accurate and relevant findings (Decuir-Gunby & Schults, 2017). This research study incorporated a mixed-methods approach to gathering data. A mixed-method method approach has also been described as convergent methodology or triangulation, where the two different methods are used to obtain triangulated results about a single topic (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Convergent research designs occur when the researcher collects both qualitative and quantitative data and merges the two sets of results into an overall interpretation (Creswell, 2009). The mixed-method research approach embraces the pragmatic method and system of philosophy (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Pragmatism draws on many ideas, including employing “what works,” using diverse approaches and valuing both the objective and subjective knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This approach uses induction (discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses) and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for assessing one’s results) (Creswell, 2009; Decuir-Gunby & Schults, 2017). In a pragmatic worldly perception, a researcher would blend worldviews and research methods to solve a problem. For this study, the researcher incorporated the qualitative, quantitative and worldviews to answer and resolve the research questions of this study.

Mixed-method research views qualitative and quantitative methods as complementary rather than conflicting phases in the research process (Decuir-Gunby & Schults, 2017). In this study, focus group discussions and a pre-test were conducted as the qualitative phase of the empirical research. Insights were obtained into but not limited to influential marketing in Instagram, user perception of influencer credibility and relationship development among users of Instagram. A convergent parallel mixed-method design was used. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected in parallel, analysed separately and then merged. Converging the two forms of data collection provide greater insight into the problem than would be obtained if either method were used separately. Therefore, the complementary nature of mixed-method research was embraced.

In Figure 5.1, possible combinations of qualitative and quantitative research phases are presented as part of a mixed-method design matrix (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

**Figure 5.1
Mixed-method design**

		TIME ORDER DECISION	
		Concurrent	Sequential
PARADIGM EMPHASIS DECISION	Equal status	QUAL + QUAN	QUAL → QUAL QUAN → QUAL
	Dominant status	QUAL + quan QUAN + qual	QUAL → quan qual → QUAN QUAN → qual quan → QUAL

Approach adopted for this study

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2011

Figure 5.1 (above) shows the approach relevant to this research; name a sequential time order decision. Quantitative research took place after qualitative research (emphasised by die capital and lower-case letters) but held a more dominant status. In the remainder of the chapter, the quantitative and qualitative research processes applied in this study are discussed.

5.7 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live (Holloway, 2004). Qualitative research addresses marketing objectives through techniques that enable the researcher to provide intricate interpretations of market phenomena without depending on numerical measurement (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013).

5.7.1 Purpose and composition of focus groups and pre-test

Focus groups were deemed an appropriate method for achieving the objectives of qualitative research. Focus groups involve a few people with common experiences or characteristics whom the moderator interviews to elicit ideas, thoughts and perceptions about a specific topic (Holloway, 2004). A discussion guide that is prepared before conducting the focus group interviews is typically used by the moderator to direct the conversations in the group (Gray, 2009). Focus groups were deemed suitable for this research as it allowed for flexible conversations where participants could stimulate thoughts among one another, leading to more in-depth elaborations that could be prompted by the moderator.

The focus groups of this study fulfilled several roles in this research study. Among the first roles was to advance the researcher's concept of Instagram and the interaction of Instagram users with brands on social media. The researcher also gained information about how users of Instagram use the application upon login, Instagram user habits, patterns of consumption and time spent on Instagram. Insight was also obtained on how users perceive influencers in an Instagram context.

Within the qualitative data, rigour and trustworthiness was addressed. Rigour is defined as the quality or state of being very exact, careful, or with strict precision or the quality of being thorough and accurate (Cypress, 2017). Rigour was addressed through the recording of the focus groups. Through the recording, the researcher could extract the data from the participants accurately and concisely by re-listening to the recording.

Trustworthiness refers to quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of findings of qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). Trustworthiness was addressed through the questions asked in the focus groups and the recording of the focus group. Data from the focus group was recorded to which it was transcribed to Microsoft Word. The data from the recording was a truthful representation of the participants answers as the individual participant's voices could be identified and their direct words were transcribed.

Moreover, the focus groups were conducted to gain further insight into how consumers perceive influencer credibility and what components of an Instagram profile are most attributable to influencing credibility perceptions of an influencer. The goal was also to

determine what type of content users find most attractive in forming relationships with influencers on Instagram.

The focus groups were composed according to the objectives of the study and input from secondary research. Both focus groups were conducted in the same way. The focus group participants were similar to the target population of this study, which is explained later in this chapter. The discussion guide in Appendix A directed the conversation. The discussion was recorded for accuracy so insights could be gathered truthfully – the respondents were earlier informed of the recording and they gave their permission. The criteria for the participant selection and the composition of the focus groups were as follows:

1. Gender: This study solely focused on females and females influencers. Therefore, the focus groups was composed solely of females.
2. Race/ethnicity: This study did not consider race as an influential demographic.
3. Age: This study considered age as an important demographic. The study focused on millennials and their Instagram usage. Since the age span of millennials is so wide, a cohort of the generation was used in this study due to time and budget constraints. Therefore, the focus groups consisted of users between 18 and 25 years old.

Hereafter, the purpose of each focus group and a summary of the outcome will be offered.

5.7.1.1 Focus group 1

Focus group 1 was conducted to gather more information on the independent variable SGC and UGC. Apart from the introduction, focus group 1 was conducted across various aspects of Instagram and profile cues on Instagram. Focus group 1 was attended by five participants who met the requirements of the population group to be used in quantitative research.

The first theme discussed in focus group 1 was Instagram. The researcher was interested in gathering information about how subjects use Instagram. For example, the first things the subjects would check upon login into Instagram. Most participants prefer to check their stories before scrolling through their news feed. After that, the subjects were

questioned about their preference for Instagram over other social media sites. The subjects emphasised their preference for visually orientated media and authenticity of profiles on Instagram.

The researcher then introduced the second theme of the focus group, SGC on Instagram (profile cues on Instagram). The purpose was to gain insight into how Instagram users perceive different profile elements on Instagram. Among the cues discussed were blue tick, followers, following and likes. The cues mostly attributable to SC were the blue tick (authority cue) and the number of followers. The third theme was UGC on Instagram, focusing on the marketing dimension of content posted on Instagram. Themes included disclosure and non-disclosure of promoted products.

After discussing the three themes, the researcher asked the subjects some open-ended questions to identify current trends on Instagram. Specifically, about what type of content were influencers pushing at the current time. After that, the subjects were asked to fill out a short questionnaire to gather quantitative data on the various system-generated cues on Instagram. The questionnaire can be found in section 5.7.2 of this study.

5.7.1.2 Focus group 2

Focus group 2 was conducted to gather more information on UGC on Instagram. The shortage of academic literature on Instagram (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017) prompted the need for conducting focus group 2. The purpose was to gain an understanding of the themes of this study (SC, PSR, branding and influencers) in an Instagram context. Focus group 2 was attended by six participants who met the requirements of the population group to be used in quantitative research.

The first theme discussed in focus group 2 was SC. The variable was divided into three dimensions and each dimension was discussed independently. For example, participants were asked to define an expert on Instagram and the type of content that would contribute to a source's expertise. Data from the focus group proposed 'followers' was the profile element that contributed most to a source's credibility.

The second theme discussed was forming relationships in Instagram or parasocial relationships. Instagram users follow influencers for their content. Content can be specific to the interest of Instagram users. For example, according to the participants, fitness influencers would be followed to change the way people think about training and lay forth information the participants were not aware of. The content that influencers would post increased the participant's desire to form a relationship with the influencer.

Similar to focus group 1, focus group 2 was concluded by open-ended questions about current trends in Instagram. Pre-set filters, veganism and health trends were discussed and whether the participants had purchased products directly from Instagram. Finally, focus group 2 participants completed the same questionnaire as focus group 1 to gather quantitative knowledge of SGC and their influence on SC.

5.7.1.3 Pre-test

After focus group discussions 1 and 2, a pre-test was conducted. The pre-test was to gather data about the trends that were proposed in focus groups 1 and 2 and to gather more quantitative data on the SGC proposed in focus group 1. The pre-test group was conducted across 76 participants who met the requirements of the population group to be used in quantitative research. The researcher briefly introduced the study and requested the participants to complete two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was the same as conducted in focus groups 1 and 2. The second questionnaire was conducted to identify fitness trends proposed in focus groups 1 and 2. Specifically, participants identified the type of products that influencers promote in fitness trends. The data from the pre-test were collected and assisted in selecting the brand and product to be used in the main quantitative phase of this study.

Focus groups 1 and 2 advanced the researcher's concept of specific variables in the study. The focus group discussions clarified how the variables would be perceived in an Instagram context by the participants. The pre-test was conducted to gather more data on the trends proposed in focus groups 1 and 2 and solidify the most important SGC. The data gathered in the two focus group discussions and the pre-test had to be analysed. The questionnaire completed in the focus groups and pre-test is now presented.

5.7.2 Questionnaire completed in focus groups

In each focus group, the participants were requested to complete the following questionnaire:

Please answer the following questions by marking the appropriate block with an “X”

Gender:

Male:	Female:
-------	---------

I have been an active Instagram user for (years):

1	2	3	4	5	6	6+
---	---	---	---	---	---	----

In Instagram, I mostly follow:

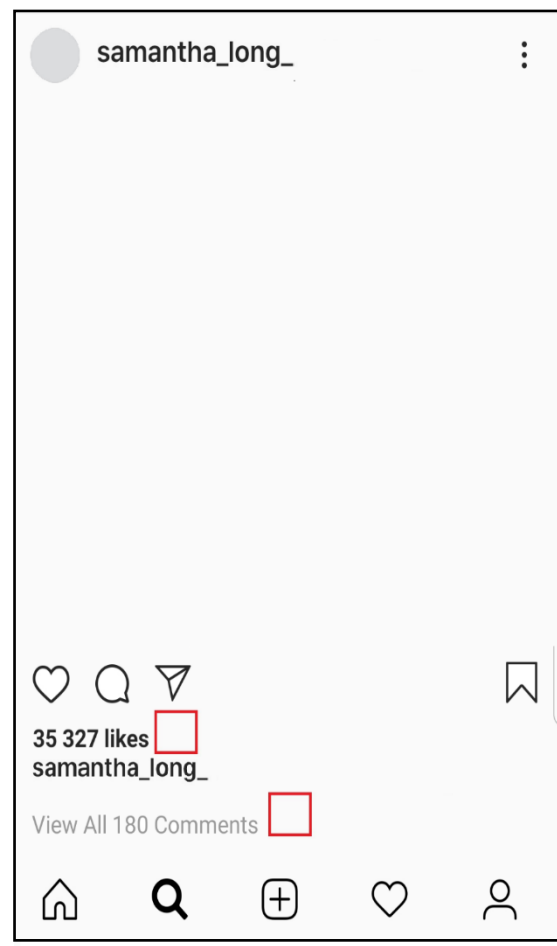
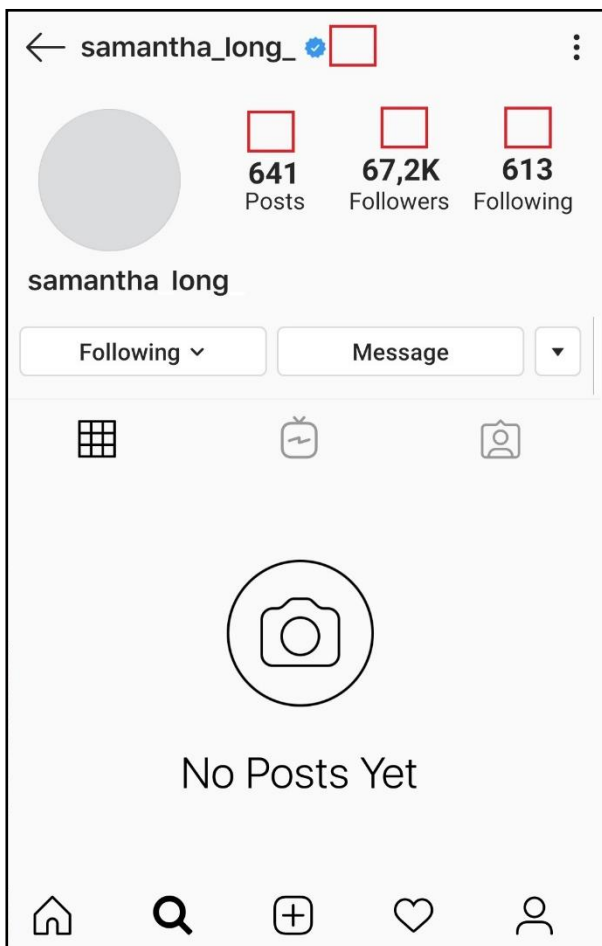
Friends:	Influencers:	Celebrities:
----------	--------------	--------------

Why do you use Instagram?

.....

On Instagram, influencers develop their credibility through system-generated cues as marked by the red squares below in the fictitious profile. Please rate each cue according to your perceived weight/attribution to an individual's credibility in an Instagram context by allocating an attribution value between 1 and 5 in each square. Please note: each number on the scale can be used more than once.

Light attribution	1	2	3	4	5	Heavy attribution
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------



The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather insight into the target sample's Instagram usage and influencer credibility perceptions. Therefore, the questionnaire collected qualitative and quantitative data on the usage frequency of Instagram and motivations for using Instagram. The pre-test questionnaire was completed by 76 respondents and the results concerning the SGC is presented in Table 5.9.

**Table 5.9:
Results – Pre-test**

System-generated cues				
Blue tick (authority cue)	Number of posts	Followers	Likes	Comments
4.075	2.59	4.275	3.875	3.09

The questionnaire collected quantitative data on the perceived credibility of a fictitious Instagram account. The purpose was to determine what SGC in Instagram were most influential in predicting an influencer's SC and the results are reflected in Table 5.9. The participants had to allocate a score to each SGC as marked by the red square provided. During the pre-test, the respondents perceived the authority badge and number of followers to be the dominant SGC that influenced an Instagram users' perception of credibility. The authority badge scored 4.075/5 and the number of followers scored 4.275/5. Therefore, the number of followers was perceived as the most influential factor determining SC.

5.7.3 Focus group analysis

Focus groups 1 and 2 discussions were recorded and transcribed into Microsoft Word for analyses purposes. The results to the questions in the focus groups were divided into themes for each question in relation to participants' answers. Most of the qualitative analyses were conducted manually. Themes in the literature review, the discussion guide and the focus group conversations formed a framework to understand branding in social

media, influencers on Instagram, consumer usage of Instagram and SC on Instagram. The qualitative research and the literature review conducted in this study provided an improved understanding of the variables that would be measured in quantitative research. Finally, the findings on UGC and SGC in the two focus groups and the pre-test assisted in making decisions about which dependent and independent variables to include in the study.

The following section introduces the quantitative component of this study, which formed the second part of the mixed-methods approach used to collect primary data.

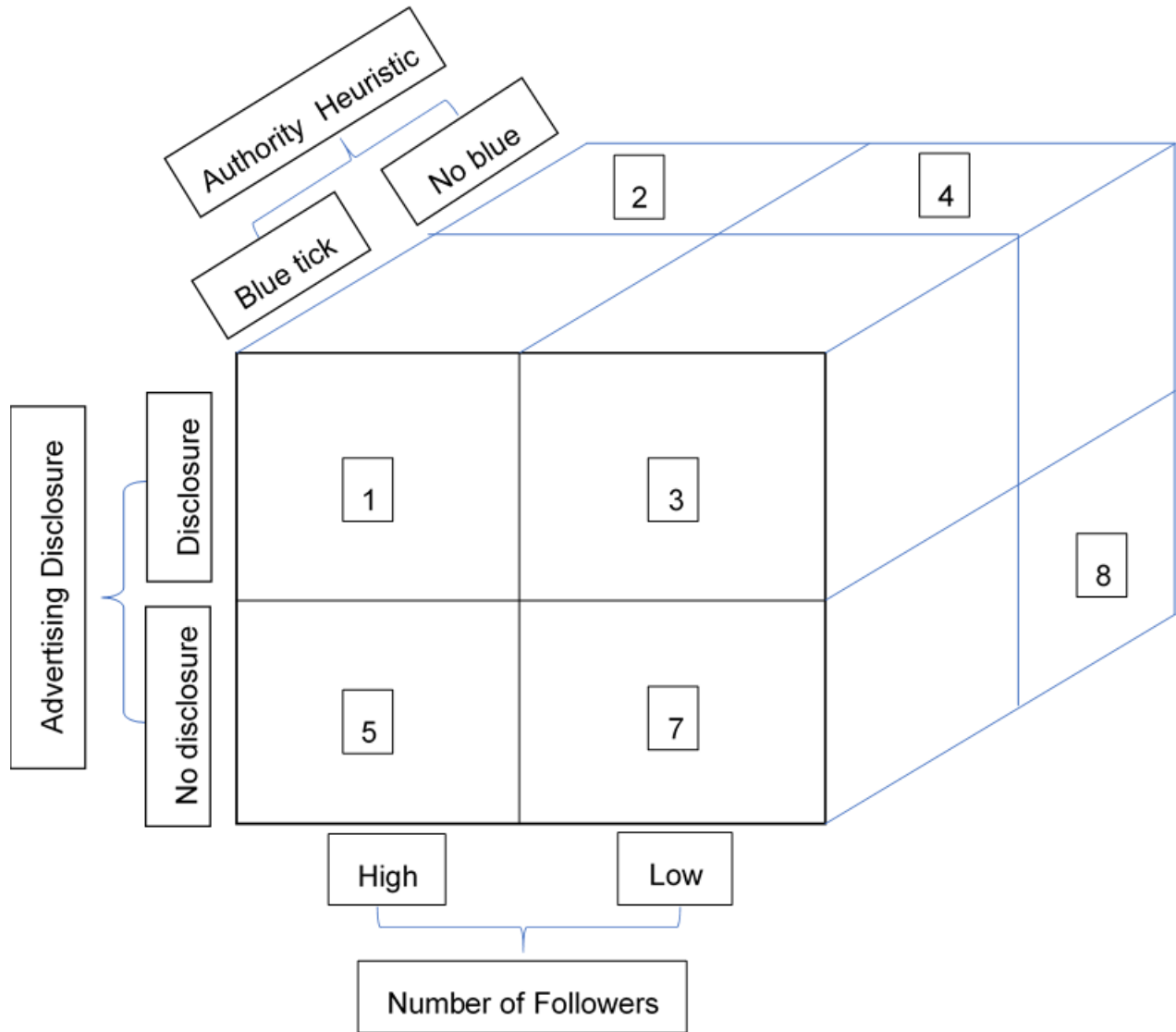
5.8 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research was conducted to address the research objectives developed from secondary and qualitative research (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Quantitative studies incorporate mathematical models and statistics for analysis, transcribing into numerical results (Wrenn & Silver, 2013). The purpose of quantitative research is to assess the individual and interactive effects of the dependent variables on the independent variables. The experimental design is provided hereafter.

5.8.1 Experimental design

A primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of UGC and SGC on consumer responses. Various methods exist to collect quantitative data, depending on whether a descriptive or causal research design will be used. For the quantitative part of this research study, a causal research design was needed to reach the objectives. Therefore, an experiment was conducted (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The format of the experiment that was best suited for this study was a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects factorial design (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). A factorial experiment was selected as the most appropriate research design for this study. A factorial experiment can assist marketers in investigating the concurrent effects of two or more independent variables on single or multiple dependent variables (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The three-dimensional layout of the factorial design used in this study is presented in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2
Experimental design



In Figure 5.2, there are eight experimental levels in this study. Level six is the only non-visible group according to the design. Each level is a combination of three independent variables: advertising disclosure, the number of followers and authority cues. For example, level one is a combination of advertisement disclosure, blue tick and a high number of followers.

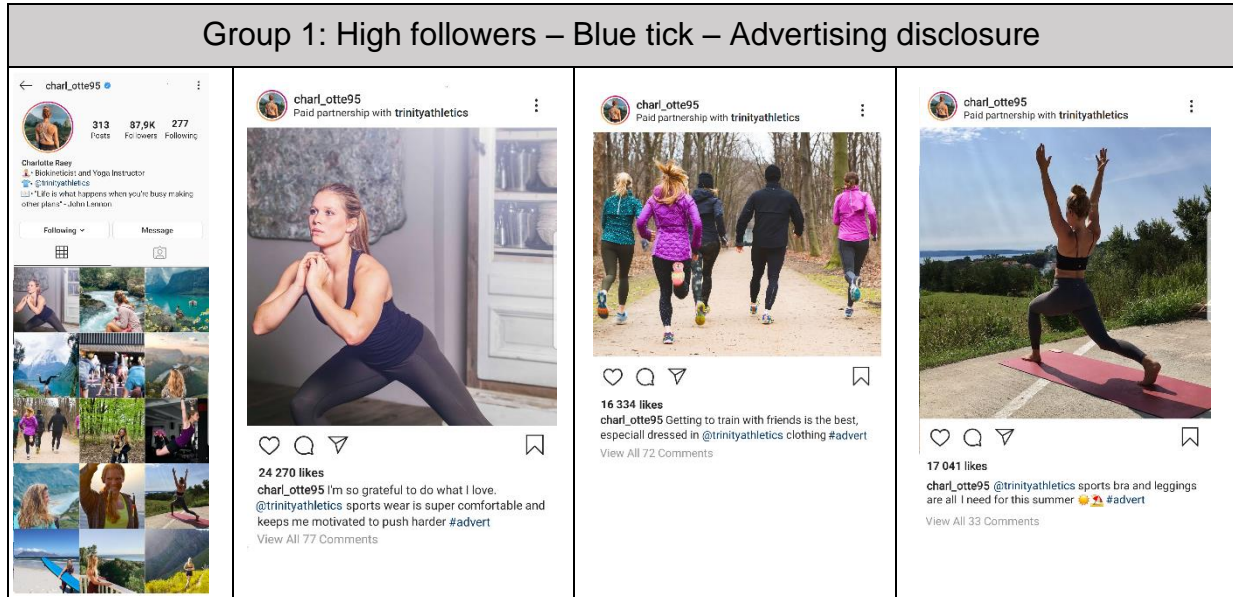
5.8.2 Stimuli development and groups

Influencer advertising can be communicated to consumers in various ways, which may include social media advertising, print advertising or billboard advertising (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). Due to the nature of advertising in Instagram incorporating an identity (individual's profile), a fictitious Instagram profile resembling a real identity was developed as an experimental stimulus for this research. A real identity was used to ensure the stimulus would represent a realistic profile.

Eight levels (groups) of stimuli were developed and each level contained the same influencer identity. The eight levels adhered to the $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects experimental design requiring the same identity but a unique profile configuration of UGC and SGC for each experimental level. The profile was developed on Instagram, which contributed to the external and face validity of the experiment. After the profile was developed on Instagram, a screenshot of the profile was taken, imported to Microsoft paint and edited to the different levels of the experimental design. For example, some group manipulations included a high and low number of followers. The influencer's profile was manipulated accordingly by some groups having 10 100 followers whereas other groups having 87 000 followers. Hereafter, each stimulus group will be presented and briefly discussed.

Figure 5.3 represents the first level of the experimental design

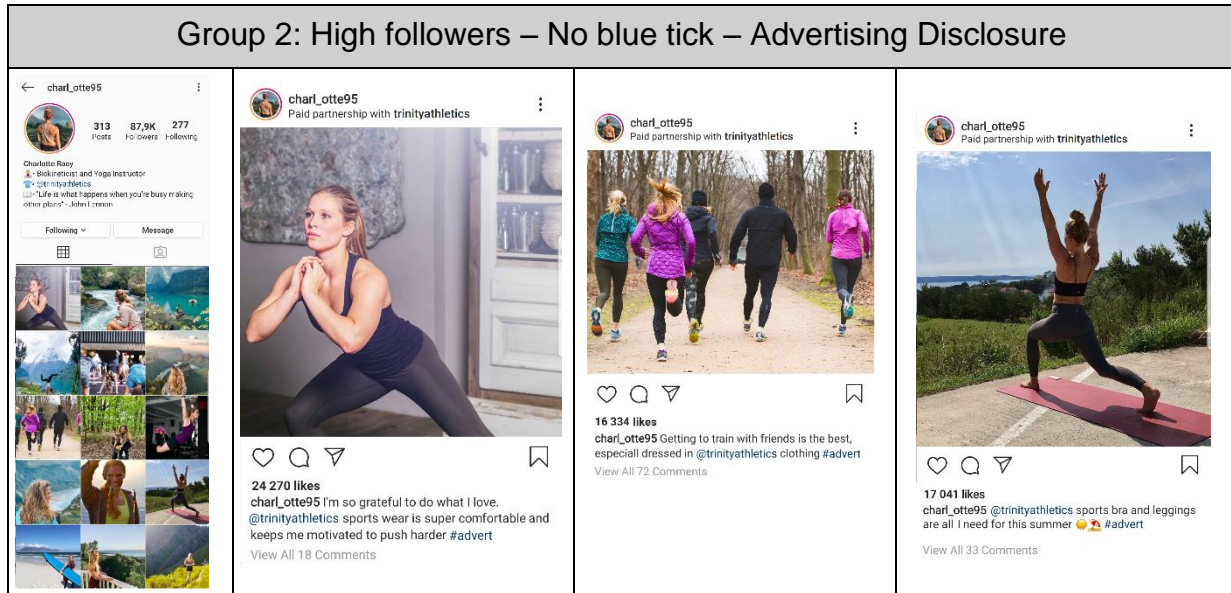
Figure 5.3
Stimulus – Group 1



The first level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGC is manipulated. The profile contains a high number of followers and an authority badge, also known as a blue tick. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are the advertisement disclosure. The advertisement disclosure is presented by the “paid partnership with Trinity Athletics” and the “#advert”. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advert disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are the advertising disclosure.

Figure 5.4 represents the first second level of the experimental design

Figure 5.4
Stimulus – Group 2



The second level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGCs are manipulated. The profile contains a high number of followers and no authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are the advertisement disclosure. The advertisement disclosure is presented by the “paid partnership with Trinity Athletics” and the “#advert”. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure.

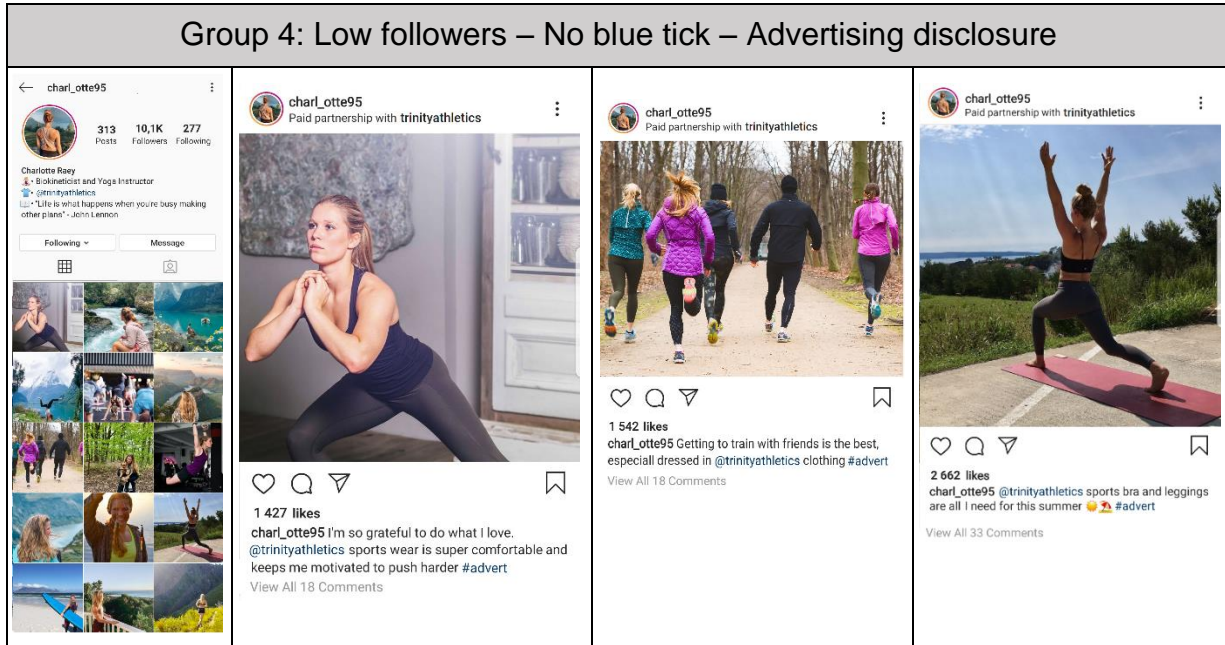
Figure 5.5 represents the Third level of the experimental design.

Figure 5.5
Stimulus – Group 3



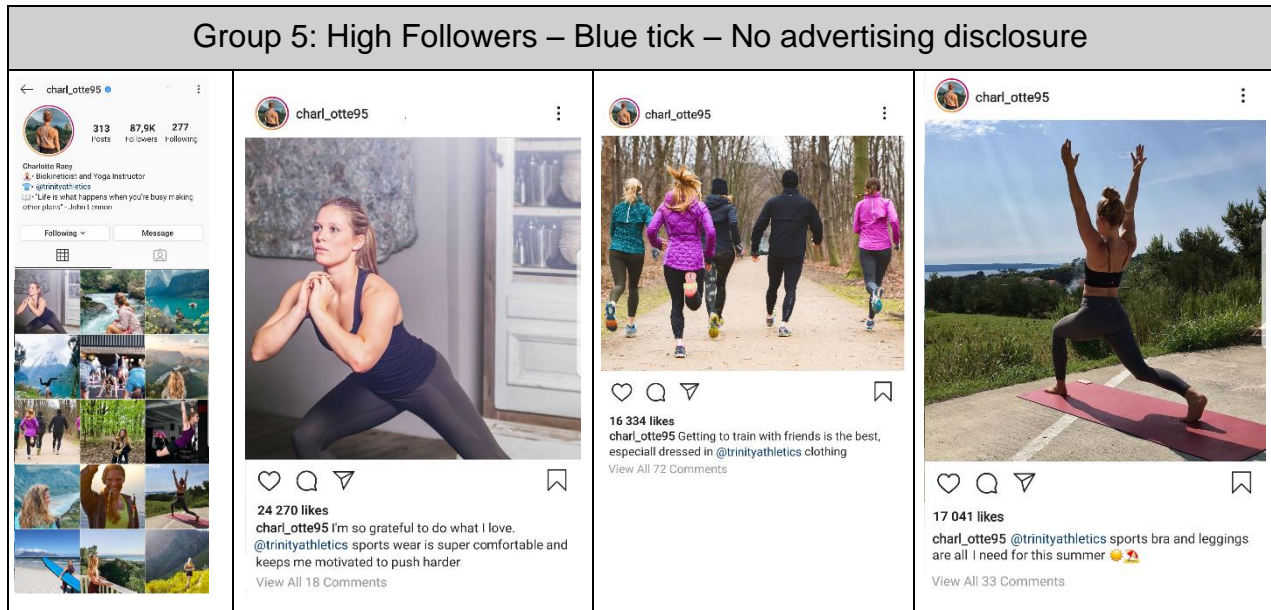
The third level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGC is manipulated. The profile contains a low number of followers and authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are the advertisement disclosure. The advertisement disclosure is presented by the “paid partnership with Trinity Athletics” and the “#advert”. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure. The fourth level is discussed hereafter. Figure 5.6 represents the fourth level of the experimental design.

Figure 5.6
Stimulus – Group 4



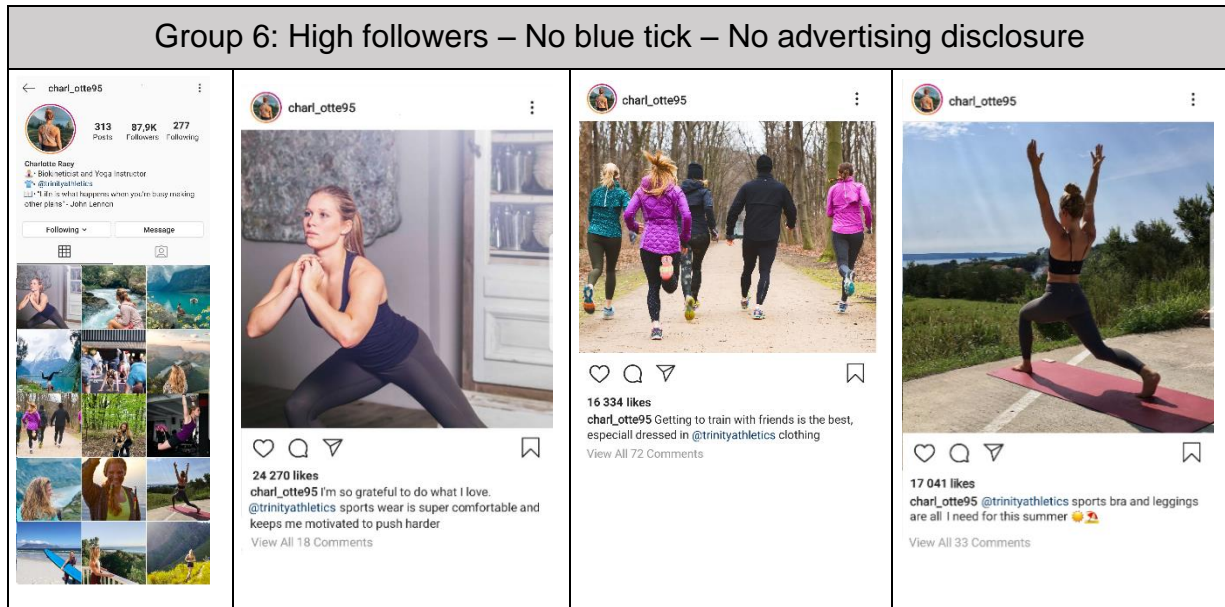
The fourth level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGC is manipulated. The profile contains a low number of followers and no authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are the advertisement disclosure. The advertisement disclosure is presented by the “paid partnership with Trinity Athletics” and the “#advert”. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure. The fifth level is discussed hereafter. Figure 5.7 represents the fifth level of the experimental design.

Figure 5.7
Stimulus – Group 5



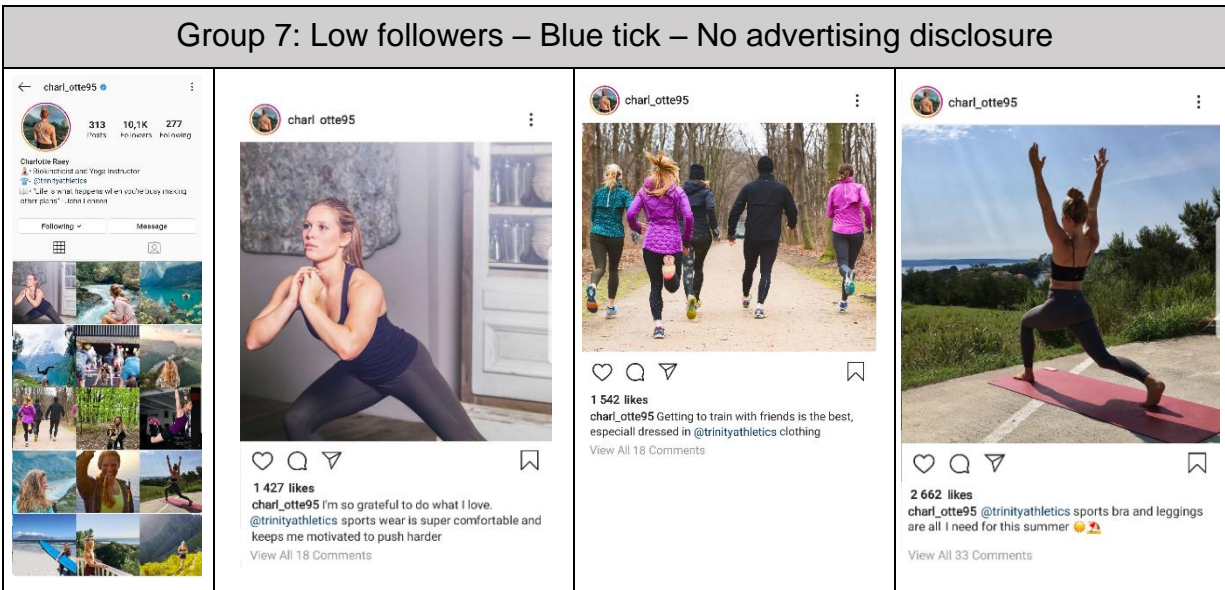
The fifth level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGC is manipulated. The profile contains a high number of followers and authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are no advertisement disclosure. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consist of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure that is not present. The sixth level is discussed hereafter. Figure 5.8 represents the sixth level of the experimental design.

Figure 5.8
Stimulus – Group 6



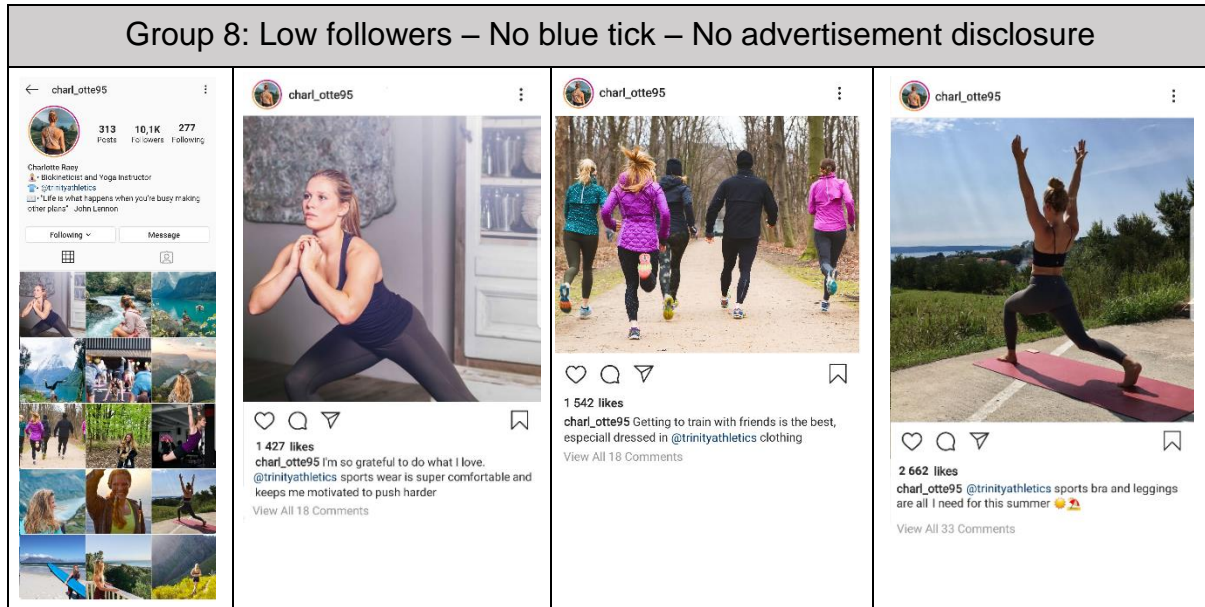
The sixth level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer's lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGCs are manipulated. The profile contains a high number of followers and no authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are no advertisement disclosure. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure that is not present. The seventh level is discussed hereafter. Figure 5.9 represents the seventh level of the experimental design.

Figure 5.9
Stimulus – Group 7



The seventh level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGCs are manipulated. The profile contains a low number of followers and an authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are no advertisement disclosure. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure that is not present. The eighth level is discussed hereafter. Figure 5.10 represents the eighth level of the experimental design.

Figure 5.10
Stimulus – Group 8



The eighth level contains four different profile screenshots. The first screenshot is a profile example. The profile contains a profile picture, biography and 15 pictures that represent the influencer’s lifestyle. In the profile image, the SGCs are manipulated. The profile contains a low number of followers and no authority badge. The second image in level one is an image of the influencer doing Yoga. In the stimulus, the influencer is wearing fitness apparel from Trinity Athletics. The manipulated cues in this image are no advertisement disclosure. A third image is a group of people training, which includes the influencer. The manipulations in the image are the UGC, which consists of the advertisement disclosure similar to image two. The fourth image is of the influencer doing Yoga. The cues manipulated in this image are advertising disclosure that is not present.

The previous section discussed all eight stimuli examples presented to the subjects of this study. Each stimulus example was presented to one of the eight experimental groups according to the manipulations. The following section will discuss the procedure that this study followed to implement the experimental design.

5.8.3 Internal validity

Internal validity is the extent to which any variance in the dependent variable is truly due to the experimental (independent) variable without interferences from extraneous factors that are beyond the control of researchers and cannot be accounted for but could weaken or invalidate the results (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Field experiments are more prone to the negative influence of extraneous variables than laboratory experiments are. Internal validity is enhanced in laboratory experiments because of its ability to maximise control over outside forces (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013)

Internal validity in experiments depends greatly on successful manipulations with meaningfully different effect levels that are confirmed with manipulation checks (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The extraneous variables that can jeopardise the internal validity of a study and the use of manipulation checks will be discussed as it applies to this research.

5.8.4 The role of extraneous variables

A history effect arises when changes other than the experimental treatment occur during an experiment and influences the dependent variable (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012). The data collection for the final empirical research of this study took place over 14 days and no history effect was applicable.

During the data collection period, a noteworthy event occurred. The data collection commenced during the Corona Virus pandemic in South Africa. The people of South Africa were requested to stay home for five weeks. During the staying at home period, data were collected. During this period pandemic, users of Instagram spent more time at home and on social media than before the Conrona Virus period (Statista, 2020c).

Maturation was not relevant, as the experiment was not conducted over a long period (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). Mortality effects did not apply to the research as panellists participated in a once-off questionnaire and only fully completed questionnaires were considered for the research (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). Potential selection effects were addressed by randomly assigning female subjects to the experimental groups that adhered to the sample criteria. Design contamination could not occur, as respondents

were unaware of the experimental nature of the study and the existence of other experimental groups and various versions of the stimuli. The online panel members were sophisticated survey participants and had no reason to jeopardise the research.

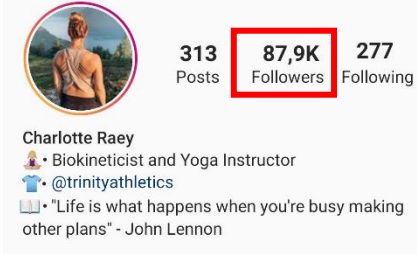
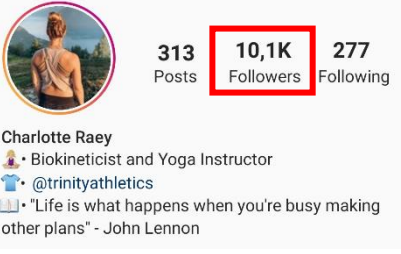

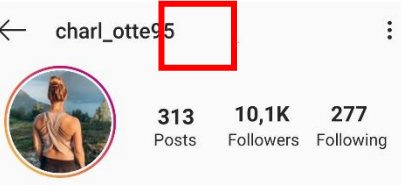
5.8.5 Manipulation checks

Internal validity is largely dependent on successful manipulations – these manipulations can be evaluated by using a manipulation check (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The manipulation development process commenced during quantitative research. Measurement items were included in the data collection instrument to ensure manipulations were perceived as meaningfully different throughout the experiment. Manipulation checks were conducted on all three independent variables, which included the number of followers, authority cue (blue tick) and advertisement disclosure. Manipulation checks for the number of followers were conducted using a Likert-type scale question where subjects were requested to indicate the number of followers the influencer had. For the authority badge, respondents were asked whether they noticed an authority badge on the profile or not. The final independent variable was advertising disclosure. Subjects were asked in the questionnaire whether the influencer disclosed her partnership with Trinity Athletics.

5.8.5.1 Independent variables manipulation

This study included three independent variables: one UGC and two SGC variables. The UGC that was manipulated was the disclosure of advertisements, whereas the two manipulated SGC variables were the number of followers and the blue tick also known as the authority badge. Figure 5.11 provides an overview of how the variables were manipulated.

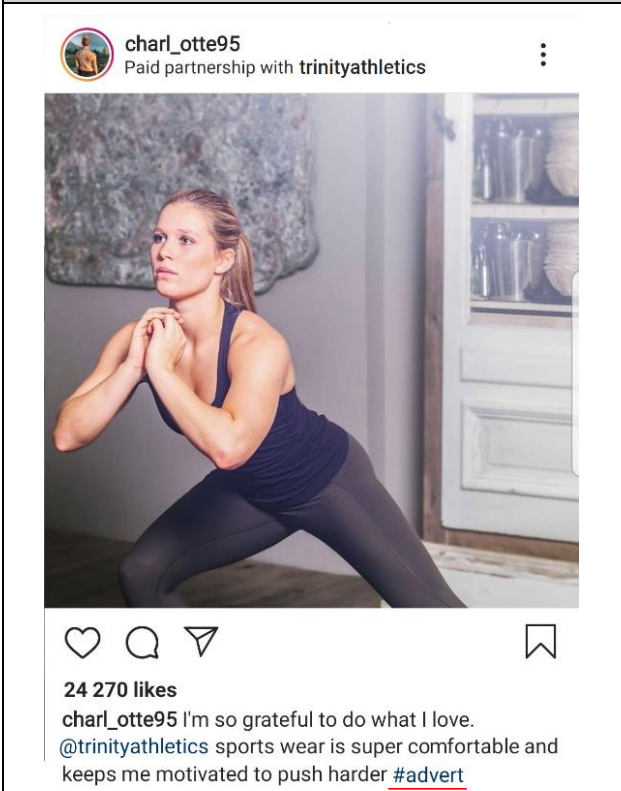
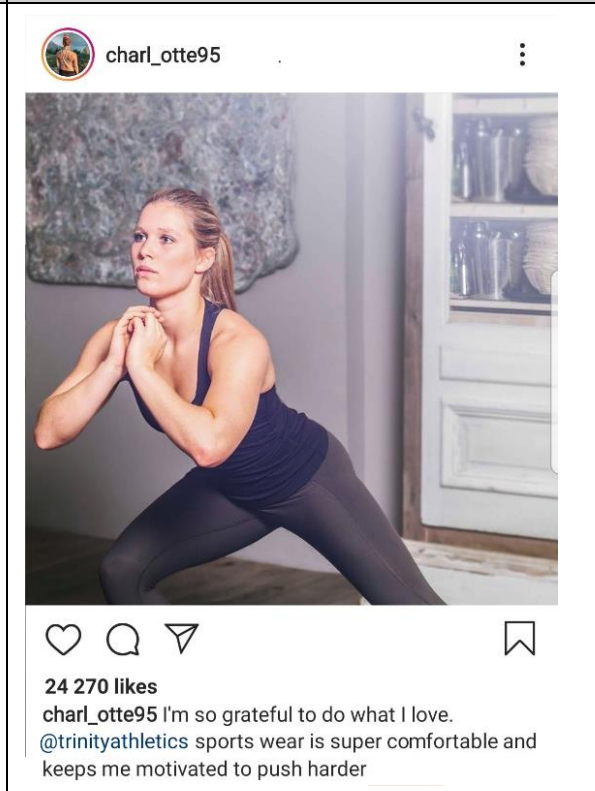
Figure 5.11
System-generated cues – Manipulation levels

System-generated cues		
	High number of followers	Low number of followers
Number of followers	 <p>Charlotte Raey • Biokineticist and Yoga Instructor • @trinityathletics • "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans" - John Lennon</p>	 <p>Charlotte Raey • Biokineticist and Yoga Instructor • @trinityathletics • "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans" - John Lennon</p>
Blue tick or Authority badge	Blue tick	No blue tick
		

As presented by Figure 5.11, the number of followers was manipulated into high and low number of followers. In Chapter 3 of this study, influencers on Instagram were divided into three categories: micro-influencers (1 000 – 100 000 followers), middle-influencers (100 000 – 500 000 followers) and macro-influencers (500 000 – 1 000 000 followers). This study focuses only on the micro-influencers, as these are the influencers who appeal to smaller brands and are the most common type of influencers on Instagram (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). Therefore, for the manipulations of the number of followers, a low number (10 100) and a high number (87 900) of followers were selected. The difference between the number of followers was noticeably significant (77 800). Also, the blue tick was either present in a group level or not present in a group level. As presented in Figure 5.11, the blue tick appears next to the influencer’s name at the top of the profile.

Figure 5.12 below represents the manipulation of the UGC of this study. The manipulations are the disclosure of an advertisement versus the no disclosure of an advertisement.

Figure 5.12
User-generated content – Manipulation level

User-generated content	
Advertising disclosure	No advertising disclosure
 <p>The image shows an Instagram post by user 'charl_otte95'. At the top, it says 'Paid partnership with trinityathletics'. The post features a photo of a woman in a dark blue athletic top and leggings in a squatting pose. Below the photo, there are icons for likes, comments, shares, and a bookmark. The text below the icons reads: '24 270 likes', 'charl_otte95 I'm so grateful to do what I love.', '@trinityathletics sports wear is super comfortable and keeps me motivated to push harder #advert'.</p>	 <p>The image shows an identical Instagram post by user 'charl_otte95' as the one on the left, but without the 'Paid partnership with trinityathletics' disclosure at the top. The text below the photo is: '24 270 likes', 'charl_otte95 I'm so grateful to do what I love.', '@trinityathletics sports wear is super comfortable and keeps me motivated to push harder'.</p>

The disclosure of an advertisement is portrayed by “paid partnership with Trinityathletics” at the top of the post, whereas, “#advert” is present at the bottom of the post to emphasise the endorsement further.

During developing the stimuli, it was ensured the independent variables were drastically different in terms of followers, blue tick and advertising disclosure to contribute to the internal validity of this study. External validity is discussed hereafter.

5.8.6 External validity

External validity is the “accuracy with which experimental results can be generalised beyond the experimental subjects” (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). In the current study, external validity was supported by recruiting non-student participants to the experimental groups. The use of students as participants to an experiment has been noted to affect the external validity of an experiment (Field *et al.*, 2012). Also, to ensure further external validity, all participants to the study had to meet the requirement of being an Instagram user. Furthermore, the study was conducted as an experiment and the stimuli used in the experiment were created similarly to advertisements and content on Instagram.

5.9 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The following section will discuss the instrument used to collect the quantitative data of this study.

5.9.1 Demographic variables

The data collection instrument included seven demographic variables. The demographic variables were measured to provide an accurate understanding of respondents’ profiles and to ensure that respondents adhered to the selection criteria. The first demographic items of the questionnaire were the screening items.

Table 5.10
Questionnaire – Demographics part 1

Item:	Options:									
Do you have an Instagram account?	Yes					No				
Age:	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	25+	

Country of residence:	South Africa		Other	
Gender	Male	Female		Other

Screening items were included in the questionnaire to ensure that the respondents met the criteria of the study. Respondents had to be users of Instagram, female and aged between 18 and 25.

The second part of the demographic section was included to gain a better understanding of the respondents and their Instagram behaviour. The items are presented in Table 5.11

Table 5. 11
Questionnaire – Demographics part 2

Item:	Options						
Familiarity with Instagram	Unfamiliar – Familiar (7-point)						
How many years have you been on Instagram?	1	2	3	4	5	6	6+
On Instagram, I mostly follow	Friends		Influencers		Celebrities		
How many hours do you exercise per week?	< 1	1–2	2–3	3–4	4–5	> 5	
I do most of my clothing shopping...	In-store			Online			

Familiarity of Instagram was included to determine how aware the sample were of Instagram. The number of years was also included in this study. Familiarity and number of years were included to determine how experienced the respondents were with

Instagram. Users who have spent more time on Instagram are deemed to be more experienced users.

The type of person the respondents mostly followed was included to determine which personality the sample followed most. This item was included to determine whether the sample followed influencers. Also, whether the respondents had any experience with influencer and influential advertising.

This study used a fitness brand in conjunction with an influencer. The samples' number of hours dedicated to exercise was included to determine whether the sample had an interest in fitness.

5.9.2 Dependent variables

This study measured the effects of three independent variables on four dependent variables. The four dependent variables were BA, PI, SC and PSR. A variable that was measured but not included in the list of dependent variables was brand awareness/familiarity. Thus, the following section will provide an overview of brand familiarity and the other four variables, the items used in the variables and the reliability of the variables.

5.9.2.1 Brand familiarity

Familiarity was measured after the respondents were introduced to the brand. The objective of measuring brand familiarity was to gain a greater understanding of the respondents' existing brand knowledge.

Brand familiarity was measured with a 7-point semantic differential scale comprising three items. The three items were (1) familiar/unfamiliar, (2) I do not recognise it/I recognise it, and (3) had not heard of/ heard of. The scale originated from the work of Simonin and Ruth (1998) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80; 0.94$). For the current study, the items were slightly adapted from the original scale to ensure clarity and a suitable fit with the question posed.

5.9.2.2 Brand attitude

In this research, the decision was made to include actual rather than fictitious brands in the research design. Actual brands can hold existing associations in the minds of consumers (Bigné-Alcañiz, Currás-Pérez & Sánchez-García, 2009). Existing associations could influence the measured consumer responses, giving an inaccurate portrayal of the impact of the experimental stimuli (Spears & Singh, 2004).

In this study, BA was measured before and after respondents were introduced to the brand. BA was included before and after to determine the effects of the independent variables on BA and the influence of using an influencer on brand attitude. Moreover, BA was included to avoid bias by excluding respondents with negative existing attitudes from the experimental data analysis. These decisions infer the results of the study apply only to those consumers who have pre-existing neutral or positive BA. BA can be defined as a consumer's overall evaluation of a brand (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). BA was measured using a five-item semantic differential scale that has previously been used by Ballantine and Au Yeung (2015) and Spears and Singh (2004). Table 5.12 presents the items adapted and used for this study.

Table 5.12
Scale – Brand attitude

Measure	Brand attitude		
Scale type	7-point semantic differential		
Question posed	If you think about the clothing brand Trinity, how would you describe your opinion of it:		
Response options			
Original Items		Items adapted for this research	
Negative option	Positive option	Negative option	Positive option
Unappealing	Appealing	Unappealing	Appealing
Bad	Good	Bad	Good

Unpleasant	Pleasant	Unpleasant	Pleasant
Unfavourable	Favourable	Unfavourable	Favourable
Dislike	Like	Dislike	Like

BA was measured using a five-item 7-point semantic differential scale adapted from Spears and Singh (2004), which showed excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.98$). The dependant variables, purchase intention is discussed hereafter.

5.9.2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention (PI) is the psychological stage or a determination process of consumers where the consumer forms a genuine willingness to act towards a product or brand (Pandey *et al.*, 2018). The definition was used as a point of departure for operationalising the PI construct. For the current study, PI referred to the likelihood or probability the respondent would take action to purchase the product featured in the influencer's Instagram posts. The definition this implicitly refers to the likelihood or probability that a sale will occur in favour of the advertised brand, Trinity Athletics. Product sales and thus PI are important outcomes of an Instagram advertising campaign. Therefore, PI was measured in this study.

PI was measured using a scale adapted from Spears and Singh (2004). The items are presented below in Table 5.13.

Table 5. 13
Scale – Purchase intention

Measure	Purchase intention
Scale type	7-point semantic differential
Question posed	Please indicate your intention to purchase Trinity's Athletics clothing

Response option
Never / Definitely
Definitely do not intent to buy it / Definitely intend to buy it
Probably not buy it / Probably buy it
Definitely not buy it / Definitely buy it

The PI scales were composed of four items on a 7-point semantic differential scale with a reliability coefficient of 0.97. The SC scale is discussed hereafter.

5.9.2.4 Source credibility

Source credibility (SC) can be defined as the extent to which the reviewer is perceived as a credible source of product information and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the product (Shan, 2016). SC in this study was operationalised as a multidimensional scale consisting of four dimensions. The dimensions were trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and homophily. SC was included in this study to determine whether users of Instagram consider the credibility of a source in the persuasion process. Moreover, how do users of Instagram determine a source's credibility if they have never personally met the source? Three dimensions of the SC construct were measured according to Ohanian's (1990) SC construct. The items of the scale were measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale presented in Table 5.14

Table 5.14
Scale – Source Credibility

Measure	Source credibility	
Scale type	7-point Semantic differential	
Question posed	In relation to the Instagram influencer and her profile, I think the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey is:	
Response option		
Trustworthiness	Expertise	Attractiveness
Dishonest/Honest	Not an Expert/Expert	Not classy/Classy
Unreliable/Reliable	Inexperienced/Experienced	Plain/Elegant
Insincere/Sincere	Unknowledgeable/Knowledgeable	Ugly/Beautiful
Untrustworthy/Trustworthy	Unqualified/Qualified	Not attractive/Attractive
Undependable/Dependable	Unskilled/Skilled	Not sexy/ Sexy

The dimension homophily was included to measure SC. Homophily can be perceived as the shared similarity of the sources in their demographics and interests (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). The SC scale by Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) and Xiao *et al.* (2018) included homophily to determine the perceived credibility of a source. For this research, the scale items were adapted from the study by Xiao *et al.* (2018), which reported a reliability coefficient of 0.91. The items included in the homophile scale were measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale presented in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15
Scale – Source credibility (Homophily)

Measure	Source credibility - Homophily	
Scale type	7-point semantic differential	
Question posed	In relation to the Instagram influencer and her profile, I think the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey is:	
Response options		
Doesn't think like me	Thinks like me	
Doesn't behave like me	Behaves like me	
Different from me	Similar to me	
Unlike me	Like me	

The scale included four items that measured the similarity between the participants of the study and the source, which was the influencer. The following will introduce another scale included in the study, parasocial relationships.

5.9.2.5 Parasocial relationships

Parasocial relationships (PSR) can be perceived as psychological connections that users form unilaterally with media personalities through virtual media (Yuan *et al.*, 2016). The literature has proposed that users of social media follow the lives of media figures as a way to satisfy their need for relationships (De Bérail *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, PSR was included in this study to determine what elements of an Instagram profile intensify a media user's desire to develop a relationship with a media figure. In the literature, authors have adapted items from Rubin, Perse and Powell's (1985) PSR 20-item PSR scale to measure PSR according to various media mediums. Over time, authors

have adapted Rubin, Perse and Powell's (1985) scale to measure PSR across different media mediums. This study adapted the scale used by Boerman (2020) to measure PSR on Instagram, which reported a reliability coefficient of 0.75. The items from Boerman's (2020) scale originated from Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985). The scale reported a reliability coefficient of 0.75 (Boerman, 2020). The items used in the scale are presented in Table 5.16 below.

Table 5.16
Scale – Parasocial relationships

Measure	Parasocial relationships
Scale type	7-point Likert scale
Question posed	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following questions about the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey by indication of an 'X' in the appropriate block.
Response options	
The Instagrammer seems to understand the things I want to know	
I would like to meet the Instagrammer in person	
When I see a post of the Instagrammer, I feel as if I am part of the group	
The Instagrammer feels like an old friend	
I like to compare my ideas with what the Instagrammer says	

Some authors have measured PSR through a selection of items from the original scale (Ding & Qiu, 2017; Ge & Gretzel, 2018; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Ozanne, Liu & Mattila, 2019). These studies have adapted the PSR scale to suit the different marketing mediums, which mostly consisted of vlogs and social media influencers (De Bérail *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2019)

Therefore, the dependent variables measured in this study were SC, PSR, BA and PI. Scale sensitivity is discussed hereafter.

5.9.3 Scale sensitivity

The sensitivity of a measurement instrument considers whether the measurement instrument can measure variability in the responses given by participants, accurately (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). A 7-point scale was used for most of the scale items, whether a Likert or semantic differential scale, thus providing the respondents with a wide range of possible answers.

5.9.4 Response bias

Response bias occurs when participants consciously or unconsciously misrepresent the truth. The possibility of bias in the survey was restricted as much as possible by using plain language (the focus groups confirmed they understood all the questions in the survey). Leading and loaded questions – questions that suggested an answer or a double-barrelled question were avoided (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Questions making assumptions and long and burdensome questions were avoided in the measurement instrument. The order in which the questions were asked was structured to make answering the questions as easy as possible without introducing a bias in the survey. The survey was kept as short as possible to avoid participant fatigue. Other possible errors to avoid in a survey is mentioned next.

5.9.5 Avoiding possible errors

Several errors in surveys should be avoided, such as random sampling error and systematic error. Random sampling error refers to errors that respondents make, whereas systematic errors refer to an administration error (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The respondent errors were eliminated by using forced responses in the online survey to ensure that all questions were answered.

Misinterpretation of questions was avoided by posing the questions in the survey as simple as possible. Respondents were also encouraged to indicate should they not understand a certain question. Some respondents could exercise acquiescence bias (answering everything very positively) or extremity bias (using extremes when answering the questions). Bias responses were eliminated and did not form part of the data analysis, as these answers could undermine the results in the study (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012).

Administrative errors, which are the result of improper administration, were avoided as far as possible by using an online survey tool (Qualtrics), where the data could be downloaded and input errors avoided. The use of SPSS to analyse the data also avoided administrative errors as the program caused the analysis of data to be easier and more convenient. The sample design can thus be addressed next.

5.10 SAMPLE DESIGN

Sampling is important for accurately estimating population parameters from a representative group (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012). The sampling process for the research and the use of online panels for respondent recruitment will be discussed hereafter.

5.10.1 Population

A population comprises a group of identifiable entities that share a set of characteristics and are of interest to the researcher because they pertain to a research problem (Creswell, John & Plano-Clark, 2011; Kumar, 2011a). Zikmund *et al.* (2013) stipulated that a population should be defined accurately to project good results.

The target population of this study was Generation Y consumers. Generation Y consumers were born between 1981 and 2000 (Helal *et al.*, 2018). These consumers are now entering the workplace, settling in their careers or still studying academic students. The wide age range of Generation Y consumers makes it difficult to generalise findings across the entire generation (Ng & Johnson, 2015). Therefore, the generation was split

into a cohort as suggested previously by Valentine and Powers (2013). This cohort consisted of female millennials between 18 and 25 years old.

Millennials were selected for this study as they have more disposable income than previous generations and therefore, have become a profitable target market for businesses (Helal *et al.*, 2018). Also, millennials are among the first-generation groups that grew up alongside the Internet and social media. The lower aged cohort of the millennial group was selected because they make up the largest consumer group on Instagram (Statista, 2018a).

This study was limited by costs and time constraints; therefore, a more cost-efficient data collection was implemented. This study employed a marketing research agency called Qualtrics that owns and manages a large online panel. Respondents for this research would thus form part of the agency panel.

5.10.2 Sampling

Sampling can be conducted according to a probability or a non-probability approach. Probability sampling is a technique in which a sample is drawn in such a manner that the probability of being included in the sample is known for each sampling unit (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012). Non-probability sampling is a process where the likelihood of selecting each sampling unit is unknown and therefore sampling error is also unknown (Babbie, 2010)

For this study, a non-probability convenience sampling method was used. A convenience sampling (that is, obtaining units most conveniently available) was implemented as the decision was made to use an accredited research company, Qualtrics, to gather respondents for this study.

Benefits of using online consumer panels are faster responses, lower costs and the ability to construct targeted samples of people who represent low incidence in a general population sample (Bosnjak, Das & Lynn, 2016). In addition to advantages that overlap with other sampling and research processes, the use of online panels also offers specific methodological and economic benefits. Various samples can be drawn, participants are

readily available due to pre-recruitment, the convenience of completing surveys in respondents' own time and location, and often shorter field times (Bosnjak *et al.*, 2016).

In online panels, respondents are filtered according to the population sample needed. For this study, the applicable filters were Instagram usage and gender. Respondents have had to be Instagram users, aged 18 to 25 and female.

5.10.2.1 Sample size

An increased sample size decreases the width of the confidence interval at a given confidence level, reduces sampling error and increases the sensitivity or power of the relevant statistical test (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). According to Zikmund *et al.* (2013), it can be problematic to obtain desired power levels during analyses of groups that are smaller than 30 members. Cost constraints restricted the number of participants. This study followed an experimental design that consisted of eight groups ($2 \times 2 \times 2$).

5.10.3 Data Collection

The questionnaires used to collect the data were distributed to the participants by using Qualtrics online panels. Once all the questionnaires had been completed, the data were downloaded from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS for further descriptive and inferential analysis.

5.11 DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered by the techniques and processes discussed in this chapter were analysed using both descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. Also, during the data preparation phase of the research, an exploratory factory analysis (EFA) was conducted. The EFA was conducted to ensure uni-dimensionality of the data collection instrument and validity assessments. The descriptive data in this study were analysed using Microsoft Excel, whereas the inferential data were analysed using SPSS.

5.11.1 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis is a technique to analyse the data collected by using distribution, variability and the central tendency (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). In this study, descriptive analysis was used to analyse the demographic data and to present it graphically in Chapter 6. In Chapter 6, different types of graphs and charts are used to present the descriptive data.

5.11.2 Inferential analysis

The data collected were analysed using a univariate analysis. The purpose of the univariate analysis was to assess the hypotheses stated earlier in this chapter (Paragraph 5.3). The inferential analysis included an ANOVA test. Before ANOVA tests were conducted, other tests were conducted to ensure independence of data and homogeneity of variance.

The inferential analysis is discussed in more depth in Chapter 6 (see section: 6.6)

5.12 CONCLUSION

The research design, the blueprint for the collection of data for analysis and adherence to the objectives of the study, was described in this chapter. The research objectives and the hypotheses derived from the objectives of the study were presented, followed by the qualitative and quantitative research phases and processes.

The primary qualitative research consisted of two focus groups and a pre-test. Quantitative research was conducted using a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial experiment. The stimuli development process and the stimuli used in the experiment were explained.

The questions in the research instrument and altering the wording or scales to fit the current study were presented. Last, the sample design was assessed, as well as the selection process. As could be seen in this chapter, several variables and items were considered before the research could be completed. Both qualitative and quantitative

research was conducted, and both contributed to the results that are assessed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

You can have data without information, but you cannot have information without data. –

Daniel Keys Moran

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained the primary data collection methods to contribute to knowledge on the usage of the social media platform Instagram and selected elements of Instagram as marketing tools. The literature review set up a theoretical framework by identifying dependent and independent variables that required more knowledge in the marketing literature. Thus, the primary objective was to determine the influence of user-generated content (UGC) and system-generated cues (SGC) on consumer responses on Instagram. Four important elements, source credibility (SC), parasocial relationships (PSR), brand attitude (BA) and purchase intent (PI) led to formulating four secondary objectives to contribute to achieving the primary objective. The secondary objectives related to the influence of UGC and SGC on SC, PSR, BA and PI. By understanding influential advertising on Instagram, brands might select influencers who will report higher returns on marketing investments. A mixed-method approach was selected and, in this chapter, the results of the qualitative and quantitative data collection are described and assessed.

Qualitative data collection consisted of two focus group discussions and a pre-test. Focus group 1 gathered data on SGC, whereas focus group 2 gathered data on UGC. Findings of the qualitative study enabled constructing a questionnaire that was pre-tested to ensure

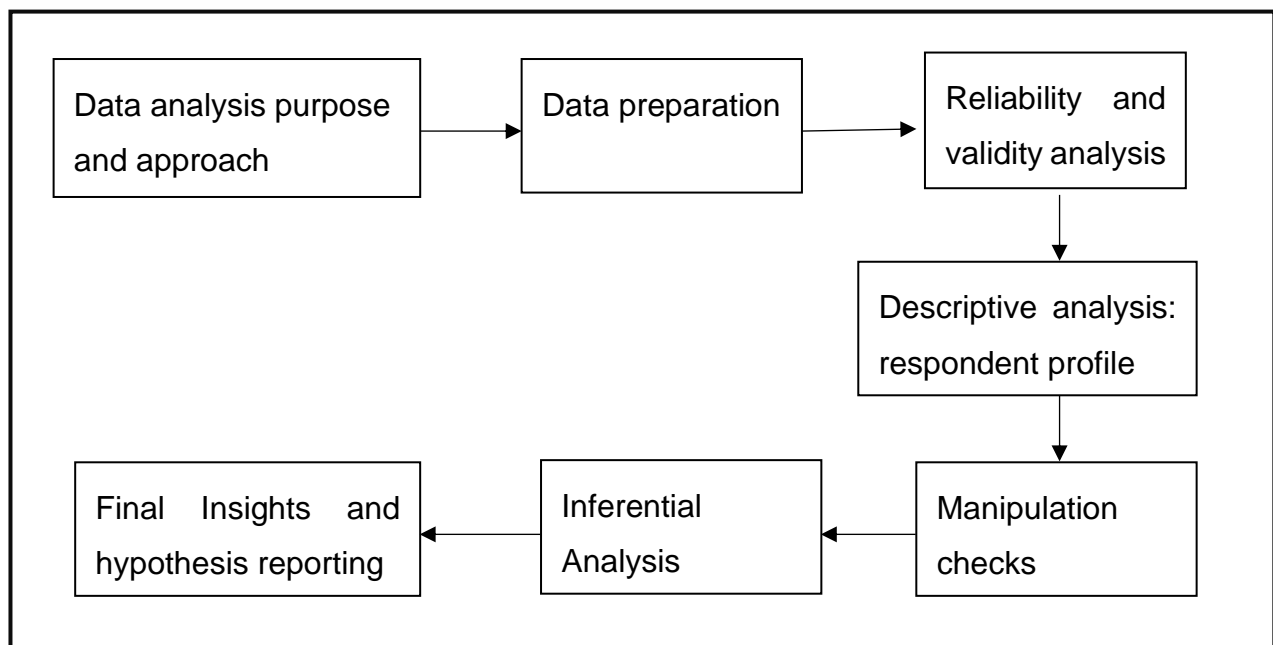
the respondents understood the questions. Before the main research, another pre-test was conducted on 10% of the total sample to confirm respondents understood the questions correctly and to test reliability and unidimensionality of the questionnaire. Only then did full-scale quantitative data collection commence, using a 2 × 2 × 2 between-subjects experimental design.

The raw data collected in the quantitative phase were prepared and evaluated using descriptive and inferential analyses to assess the hypotheses that were developed to address the research problem of this study. The data preparation, descriptive and inferential analyses and the empirical findings of the quantitative phase are described in this chapter. The next section outlines the research purpose, the process and the data preparation in detail.

6.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The purpose of the research was to investigate the influence of SGC and UGC on influencer source credibility, attitude towards a brand, intention to purchase an advertised product, and an Instagram user's desire to form a parasocial relationship with the influencer. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects experimental design was used to address the research objectives (see section: 5.8 Experimental design). Figure 6.1 provides a visual

Figure 6.1
Data analysis process



representation of the process that was followed in this chapter to guide the analyses.

This research chapter commences with data preparation and concludes with a final insight into the data. The data were prepared for final analysis by evaluating the validity and reliability of the data. How the data was prepared for analysis is described next.

6.3 DATA PREPARATION

Data preparation ensures the data are suitable for further analysis and processing. The data were collected by Qualtrics, a marketing research agency that was responsible for the data collection process. The data were collected in two phases. The first phase was a pre-test, which was used to assess the reliability and uni-dimensionality of the questionnaire. The second data collection phase was conducted once the reliability and unidimensionality of the questionnaire were ensured.

Before the data could be analysed, a pre-test (10% of total respondents) was conducted to ensure the measurement instrument would be understood by participants partaking in the experiment.

6.3.1 Pre-test

Qualtrics collected the data for the pre-test. Ten per cent of the total sample was collected to ensure participants understood the questionnaire items correctly and to ensure reliability and unidimensionality of the data. The reliability and unidimensionality of the pre-test data were assessed

6.3.1.1 Reliability

The reliability of the scales was determined by analysing their Cronbach alpha values. A Cronbach alpha above 0.7 was deemed as satisfactory evidence of reliability (Peterson, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The experiment comprised eight groups of respondents and each respondent responded to eleven scales. A majority of the scales had a Cronbach alpha (CA) greater than 0.7. Within the scales that reported a CA lower than 0.7, the data were further scrutinised. The lower than 0.7 CA was attributed to the small sample size and the possibility of response bias (Babbie, 2010). No scales were adapted or changed based on their reliability measurement due to the expected increase in reliability because the realised sample size was much larger (Agbo, 2010).

6.3.1.2 Unidimensionality

The unidimensionality of each construct was independently assessed using factor analysis (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Principal axis factoring (Eigenvalues greater than 0.4) with direct oblimin rotation was selected as the factor extraction method. In the factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests were conducted to determine the unidimensionality of the scales. The KMO and Bartlett's tests were analysed at 10% alpha or 90% confidence level due to the small size of the pilot test.

Some constructs proved to be unidimensional and others did not. For constructs that did not prove to be unidimensional, a bivariate correlations test was conducted to determine what items of the scales loaded significantly and identify those that did not load significantly. No changes were made to the identified items due to the small sample size of respondents in each group. Larger sample size would lead to less variability in the data and could increase the unidimensionality of the scales (Creswell, John & Plano-Clark, 2011).

No changes were made to the data collection instrument after the pre-test based on reliability and unidimensionality, as not enough data existed to infer changes accurately. However, a record was kept of the scales and experimental groups where reliability and unidimensionality were uncertain (as mentioned above) to revisit those scales during the reliability and unidimensional testing of the final data.

6.3.2 Final data preparation

Once the data collection had been completed, it was downloaded from the Qualtrics website into a Microsoft Excel format. The datasheet downloaded from Qualtrics was a completed sheet with the data of all eight groups. After that, the data were exported from the total datasheet to eight different Excel sheets according to the stimulus that was presented to the groups. In each data set, a column was added, named 'group' and the group number of each datasheet. All eight sheets then were conglomerated into one sheet. The data were screened to identify respondents who might not have met the sample requirements. Consequently, one respondent was removed. The validity and

reliability of the questionnaire are discussed hereafter. In total, 311 respondents completed the final questionnaire.

6.3.2.1 Scale validity assessment

The validity of a measurement instrument reflects how accurately the measurement instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). Different types of validity apply to this study, including face validity, construct validity and convergent validity. The three types of validity will now be discussed

6.3.2.1.1 Face validity

Face validity refers to the subjective agreement between professionals that a given scale logically reflects the concepts that are being measured (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Face validity in this study was established by presenting the survey and scales to two marketing professionals who had the necessary expertise to determine whether the scales would measure the reflected construct. Feedback was received, and modifications were subsequently made to ensure the measurement instrument would be better understood by the participants. After face validity was established, content validity was addressed.

6.3.2.1.2 Construct validity

Construct validity refers to the degree to which a questionnaire measures what it is supposed to measure (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012). The uniformity of scales can be measured to determine the construct validity of the data. According to Field *et al.* (2012), factor analysis is used to measure the construct validity of a scale.

In research, two factor analysis approaches are used: confirmatory factor analysis or exploratory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis is chosen when the researcher already knows the number of factors and which variables will most likely load onto each factor. Exploratory factor analysis, which is conducted when the researcher has no specific expectations regarding the nature of the data or the number of factors in the data

(Field *et al.*, 2012), was appropriate for this research. Therefore, for this study, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to ensure the number of factors included was equal to the number of factors measured in this study.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted in SPSS, using a principal axis factoring extraction with direct oblimin rotation (Field *et al.*, 2012). Principal axis factoring allows the factors to correlate (Field *et al.*, 2012). The delta value of the direct oblimin rotation was set on 0, which prevented a high correlation between factors (Field *et al.*, 2012). Two factors were considered to ensure construct validity, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. KMO had to be greater than 0.7 and Bartlett's test of sphericity had to be significant to ensure the scales displayed unidimensionality.

Thereafter, the factor matrix was analysed to ensure only one factor was returned after the factor analysis. All scales for the eight groups had significant Bartlett's test results and KMO results greater than 0.7. The exceptions were SC in Group 1 and expertise in Group 4, which reported a significant Bartlett's test but failed to report a KMO equal to or greater than 0.7. Group 1 reported a KMO of 0.64 and Group 4 reported 0.63. SC and expertise were perceived as unidimensional in all other groups. However, according to Kaiser (1974), a KMO value above 0.6 is acceptable for unidimensionality. Therefore, according to the factor analysis, it was deduced that all scales were unidimensional.

6.3.2.1.3 Convergent validity

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which two concepts that theoretically should be related are related (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). A scale has convergent validity if the concepts that are supposed to be related to one another are related (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Convergent validity can be determined by assessing the reliability of the scales (Babbie, 2010). Reliability of the scales was assessed, and the results are presented hereafter.

6.3.2.2 Scale reliability

According to Zikmund *et al.* (2013), the reliability of a measurement instrument is an indicator of the internal consistency of the instrument. A method used in scientific research to determine the reliability of a measure is to assess the Cronbach alpha of the scales. For a scale to be deemed reliable, it should have a Cronbach alpha equal to or greater than 0.7 (Peterson, 1994). All the scales used in this study originated in previous studies where they were deemed reliable. That did not necessarily mean the scales in this study would automatically be deemed reliable. Therefore, the Cronbach alpha of each scale in each group was assessed again using SPSS. The results are presented in Table 6.1

Table 6.1
Reliability of scales

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8
Brand Familiarity	0.92	0.94	0.95	0.89	0.97	0.94	0.99	0.87
Brand Attitude (pre)	0.90	0.91	0.92	0.94	0.92	0.92	0.96	0.92
Brand Attitude (post)	0.95	0.90	0.92	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.95	0.94
Purchase Intention (A)	0.89	0.87	0.85	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.87	0.85
Source Credibility	0.67	0.73	0.85	0.68	0.79	0.9	0.71	0.78
Attractiveness	0.89	0.67	0.93	0.84	0.94	0.87	0.91	0.87
Trustworthiness	0.89	0.85	0.95	0.88	0.95	0.95	0.93	0.93

Expertise	0.93	0.94	0.97	0.84	0.95	0.92	0.93	0.95
Homophily	0.94	0.92	0.93	0.92	0.93	0.94	0.91	0.96
Parasocial Relationship	0.87	0.89	0.82	0.93	0.94	0.95	0.93	0.92

As can be seen in Table 6.1, all scales had Cronbach alphas > 0.7 (Peterson, 1994)) except for SC in Groups 2 and 4 and attractiveness in Group 2. SC in Groups 1 and 4 had a Cronbach alpha of 0.67 and 0.68, whereas attractiveness in Group 2 had a Cronbach alpha of 0.67. These reliability measures fell below 0.7 as recommended by Peterson (1994). Even so, the reliability measurements that were below 0.7 were all approaching 0.7. The scales were perceived reliable by Murphy and Davidshofer (1988) who proposed a scale reliability measure should not go below 0.6. SC and attractiveness were perceived reliable in all other groups and inclined towards the acceptable 0.7 Cronbach's alpha in their respective groups. Therefore, all the scales used in this study were deemed reliable.

6.3.2.3 Concluding reliability and validity

Reliability is not necessarily an indicator of validity, as is the same for validity in terms of reliability (Ursachi, Horodnic & Zait, 2015). Both reliability and validity were assessed to ensure validity and reliability of the scales used in this study. It can thus be concluded from the previous section that the scales used in the study resembled the properties of reliable and valid scales. After assessing the reliability and validity of the scales, the sample population of the study could be analysed.

6.4 SAMPLE PROFILE AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The sample population who participated in the study was a cohort of the Millennial generation. Consumers who fall into the Millennial segment were born between 1980 and 2000 (Wallop, 2014). In this study, a non-probability convenience sampling method was

used to recruit the respondents. The sample contained 311 respondents. The requirements of the target sample were explained in the previous chapter, which entailed the respondents were all females and active Instagram users. The number of respondents is discussed hereafter.

6.4.1 Number of respondents

In experimental research, it is recommended at least 10 to 15 respondents or test units are included per experimental group (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). Considering that this study comprised eight experimental groups, the minimum number of respondents required for meaningful analysis was therefore 280. In total, 311 respondents completed the questionnaire of this study.

6.4.1.1 Group sizes

The respondents were assigned to eight different groups. The sizes of the different groups are presented in Table 6.2

Table 6.2
Experimental group sizes

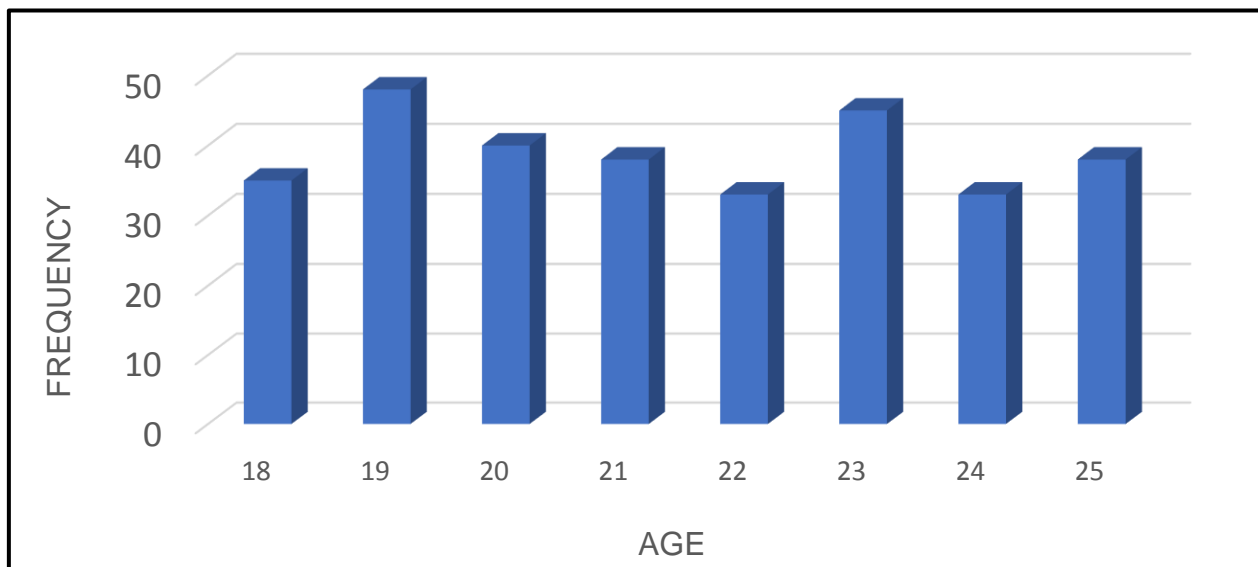
Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8
38	39	39	39	39	39	39	39

All the group sizes were equal except Group 1. One respondent was removed from the group, as the person did not meet the criteria of the study. The age distribution of the sample will be discussed next.

6.4.2 Age distribution

The age distribution in this study consisted of participants aged 18 to 25 in accordance with the Generation Y population explained in Chapter 5. The distribution of the age population is presented in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2
Age distribution

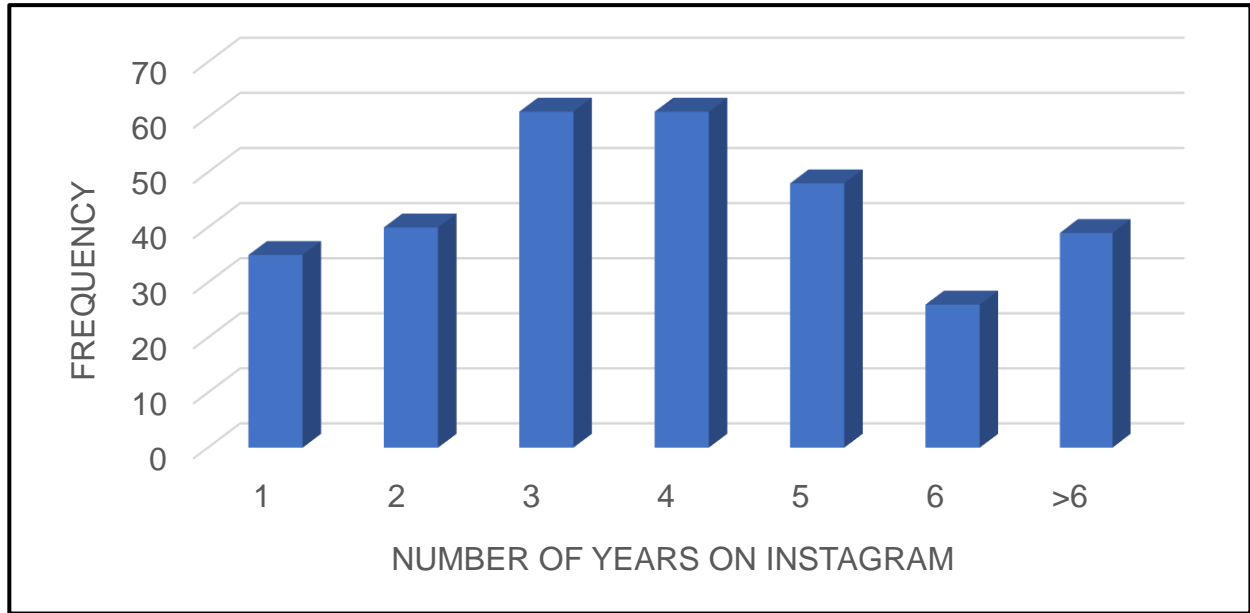


A requirement of this study was for respondents to be between 18 and 25 years old. As presented in Figure 6.2, the age requirements were met. The data also proved normally distributed according to a Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($P < 0.05$). The following section will provide findings related to the time that respondents spent on Instagram.

6.4.3 Experience with Instagram

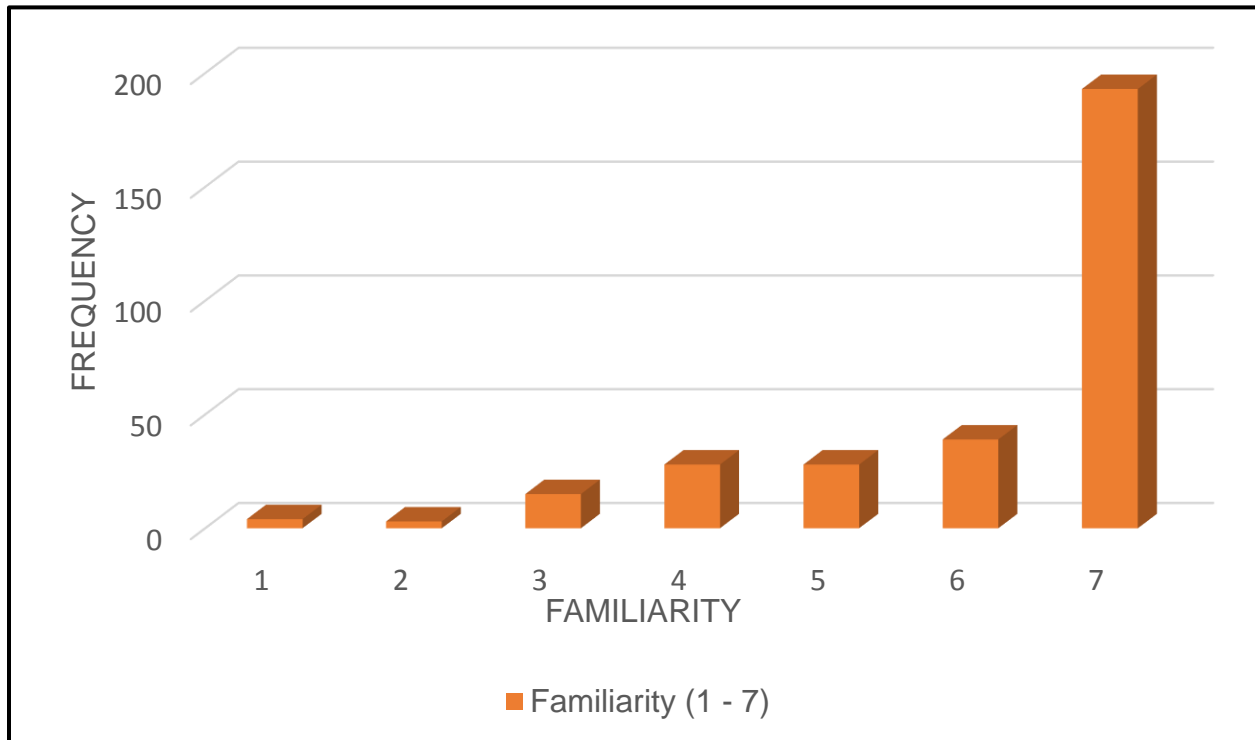
Respondents' experience and understanding of Instagram were determined by measuring their familiarity with Instagram and the number of years the respondents had been using Instagram. The following graphs – Figures 6.3 and 6.4 represent the number of years the respondents have been active Instagram users and their familiarity with Instagram.

Figure 6.3
Years respondents have been on Instagram



According to Figure 6.3, most of the respondents had been Instagram users for more than 2 years.

Figure 6.4
Respondents' familiarity with Instagram

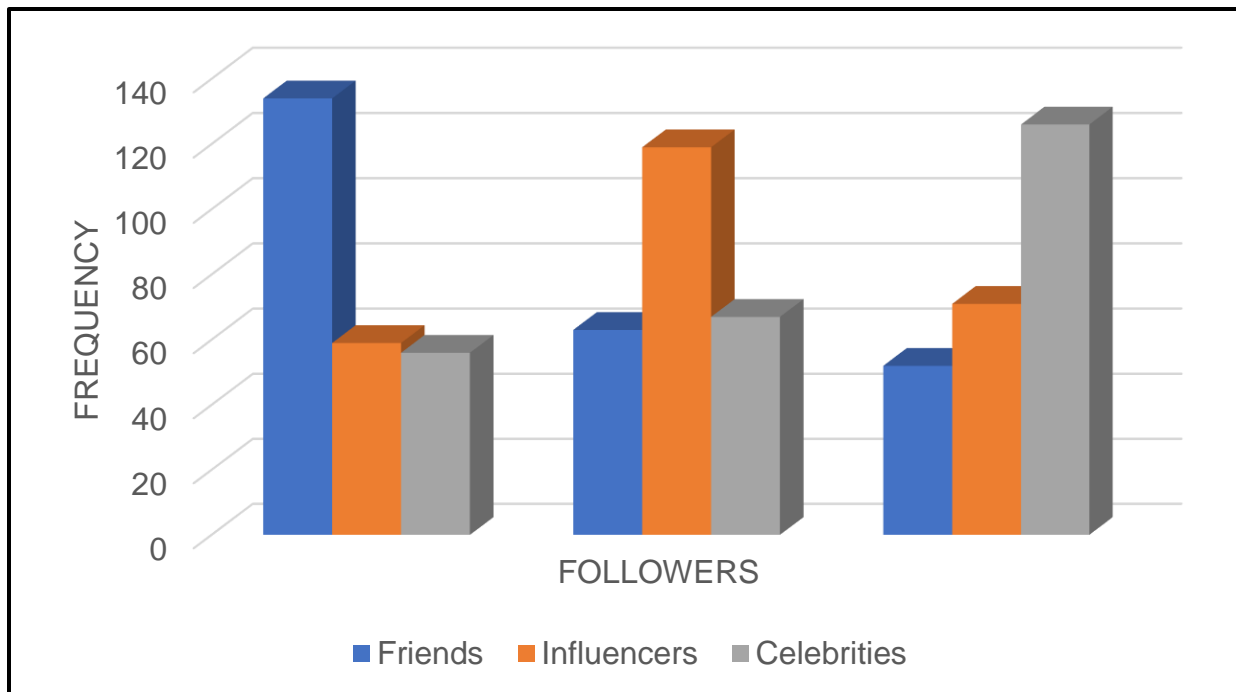


According to Figure 6.4, most of the respondents were familiar with Instagram. Therefore, it can be concluded the sample of this study was all experienced Instagram users. The sample in this study had satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the Instagram app. Having experienced Instagram users as the sample to the study increased the validity of the results.

6.4.4 Categories of mostly followed

Respondents were requested to rank what type of person they mostly follow on Instagram. People on Instagram were categorised into 'friends', 'influencers' and 'celebrities' based on the different user types of Instagram. Sharma (2018) categorised Instagram users into public (friends), influencers and celebrities. Ranking of the most followed personalities is portrayed in Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5
Instagram users mostly followed

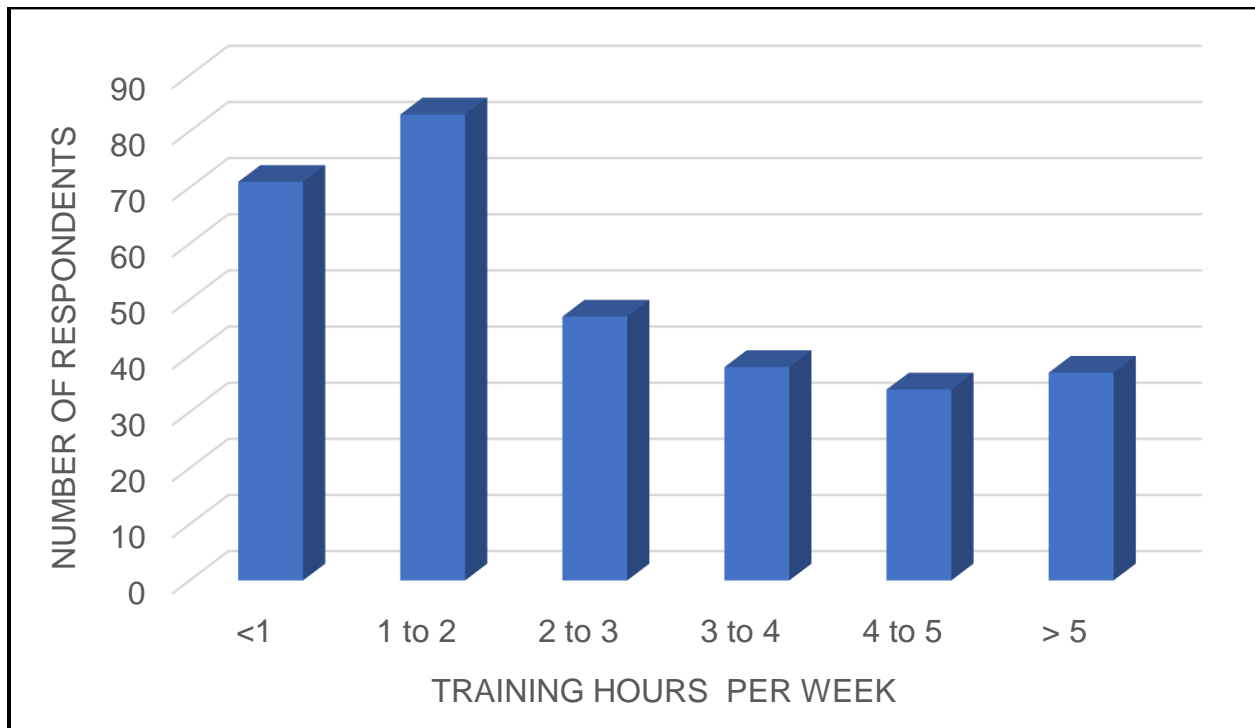


According to Figure 6.5, the respondents in this study mostly followed their friends, then influencers and then celebrities. This finding agrees with that of Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), who presumed that Instagram users are most likely to follow personalities whom they can connect with intimately. From the results in Figure 6.5, it can be concluded the sample of this study were followers of influencers and had experience with the content from influencers. In turn, experience with influencers and their content increased the validity of the results.

6.4.5 Training hours per week

Respondents were requested to include their estimated training hours per week. Figure 6.6 is a presentation of the number of training hours per week.

Figure 6.6
Training hours per week

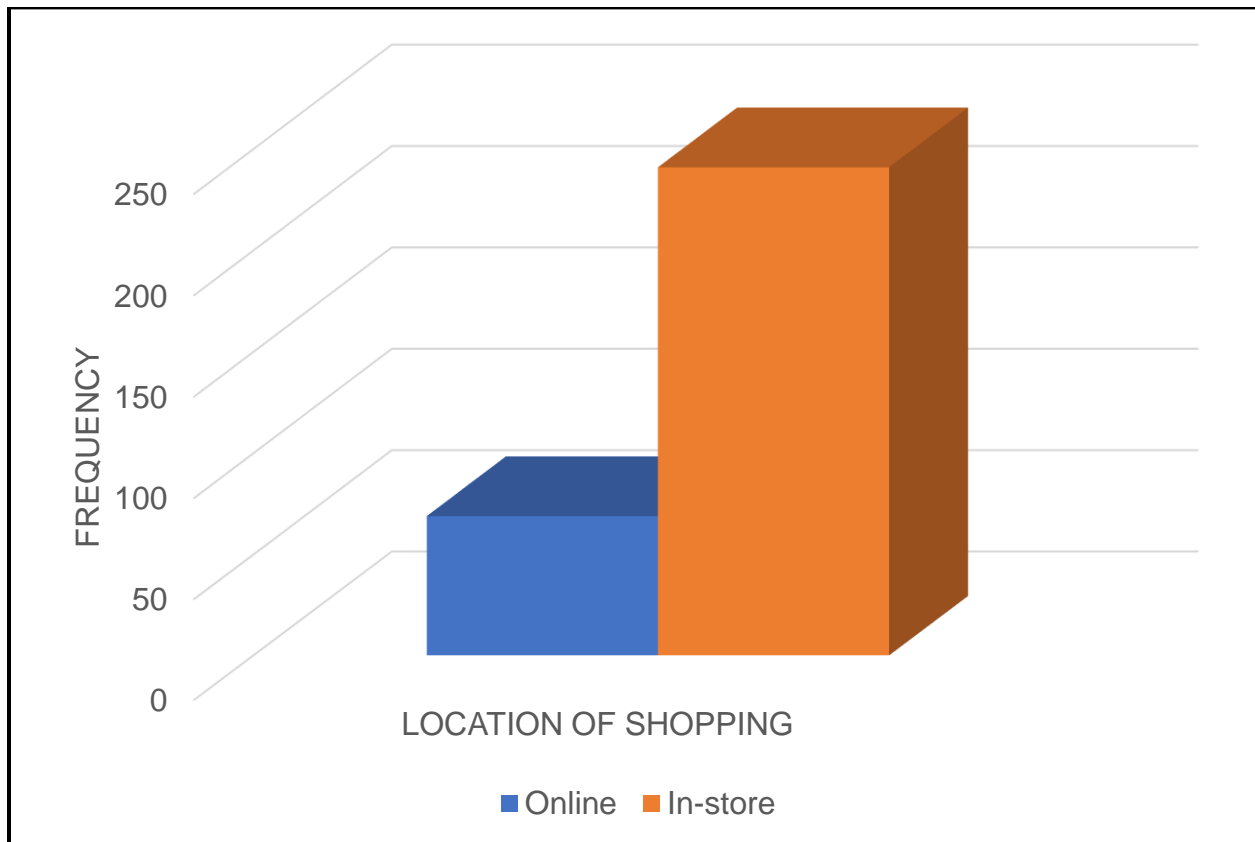


Fifty per cent of the respondents trained between 1 and 2 hours a week and less than 1 hour a week. The product category used in this study was fitness clothing. It could be assumed that respondents who exercise more often during a week, have more interest in the fitness and health lifestyle. Therefore, it was preferred the respondents exercised a minimum of once a week (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Half of the respondents' trained between 1 and 2 hours a week or less than 1 hour a week. It can be concluded the respondents had an interest in fitness.

6.4.6 Online shopping

Respondents were questioned whether all their shopping was conducted online or in-store. The responses are presented in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7
Shopping behaviour



According to Figure 6.7, most of the respondents shopped in-store. Respondents provided reasons for shopping in-store such as “I like fitting on the clothes”, “More shopping options” and “I can get a feel for how the clothing fits my body”. Although the sample showed an interest in shopping online, most of the respondents preferred to shop in-store.

Therefore, age, the number of years, media figures mostly followed, training hours a week and location of shopping were assessed. The descriptive analysis was conducted to gain a better understanding of the sample in this study. The sample suited the requirements of this study, as they were experienced Instagram users who had been exposed to influencers and their content on Instagram before. Also, the sample showed an interest

in fitness. Therefore, the sample of this study was representative of the population who qualified as experienced Instagram users with an interest in fitness.

6.5 MANIPULATION CHECKS

A manipulation check is used in research to determine whether the manipulation employed in the experiment was perceived by the respondents the same way the researcher intended for it to be perceived (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012). Three manipulation checks were conducted according to the three independent variables in this study. Each manipulation check is described afterwards.

6.5.1 Advertisement disclosure

An independent variable of this study was advertisement disclosure. Advertisement disclosure can be summarised as disclosing any relationship that an influencer may have with a brand when posting sponsored content (Roma & Aloini, 2019). Advertisement disclosure had two levels – disclosure or non-disclosure of the sponsored content. Manipulation checks were conducted by asking the respondents whether they recall the influencer disclosing their relationship with the brand. An example of the advertisement disclosure versus no disclosure was discussed in Chapter 5 (see section 5.8.5.1). The respondents' recall of advertisement disclosure is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3
Manipulation check – User-generated content

			Yes	No	% Correct
User-Generated Cue	Disclosure	Group 1	21	17	55%
		Group 2	19	20	49%
		Group 3	24	15	62%
		Group 4	24	15	62%
	No Disclosure	Group 5	3	36	92%
		Group 6	4	35	90%
		Group 7	5	34	87%
		Group 8	7	32	82%

In Table 6.3, the manipulation check for UGC is presented. Groups 1 to 4 were presented with stimuli that contained advertisement disclosure, whereas Groups 5 to 8 contained no advertisement disclosure. The non-disclosure groups accurately remembered whether there was advertisement disclosure or not. This assumption was made on the high percentages of remembering correctly whether the stimuli contained advertisement disclosures. Therefore, it could be concluded the UGC manipulation in these groups was accurately interpreted.

Groups 1 to 4 represented the respondents who were exposed to stimuli that contained advertisement disclosure. Groups 3 and 4 reported the most accurate results about whether the influencer disclosed the advertisement. In Groups 1 and 2, only 55% and 49% of the respondents accurately depicted whether the influencer disclosed the sponsored content. The manipulation checks were conducted after the respondents were

exposed to the stimuli, and were not requested to memorise the influencer's content. This could attribute to the low recalling of advertising disclosure in Groups 1 to 4.

The results of the manipulation check infer that the sample of this study correctly interpreted the UGC (disclosure or no-disclosure) manipulation. Hereafter, the manipulation check for the number of followers is assessed.

6.5.2 Number of followers

A manipulations check was conducted to determine whether the respondents noted and remembered the number of followers of an influencer. The number of followers had two levels (high and low). In the questionnaire, respondents had six options to choose, as presented in Table 6.4.

Option	Number of followers
1	1–20 000
2	20 001–40 000
3	40 001– 60 000
4	60 001–80 000
5	80 001–100 000
6	Do not remember

Table 6.4
Questionnaire options – System-generated cue (followers)

Option	Number of followers
--------	---------------------

1	1–20 000
2	20 001–40 000
3	40 001– 60 000
4	60 001–80 000
5	80 001–100 000
6	Do not remember

Each option increased with 20 000, except for Option 6, which portrayed that the respondents did not remember the number of followers. Table 6.5 presents the data concerning the manipulation check.

Table 6.5
Manipulation check – System-generated cue (followers)

Options	G 1	G 2	G 3	G 4	G 5	G 6	G 7	G 8
1–20 000	4	2	13	12	4	0	17	11
20 001–40 000	1	4	2	2	2	4	2	1
40 001–60 000	2	0	1	0	3	0	0	1
60 001–80 000	3	3	2	0	3	2	1	2
80 000–100 000	15	12	7	7	18	17	6	7
Do not remember	13	18	14	18	9	16	13	17
Total	38	39	39	39	39	39	39	39

The following deductions can be made from

1. A high number of respondents 'do not remember' the number of followers that the influencer had in their questionnaire.
2. Apart from the option 'do not remember', the groups who were exposed to stimuli with high followers (Groups 1, 2, 5, 6), a majority selected the correct option (80 000–100 000).
3. Apart from the option 'do not remember', the groups who were exposed to stimuli with low followers (Groups 3, 4, 7, 8) a majority selected the correct option (1–20 000).

The number of followers was an independent variable of this study; thus, it was required that respondents accurately interpreted the number of followers. The respondents accurately recalled the number of 'followers' according to their respective groups. Respondents were interested in the number of followers that the influencer had and the manipulation was correctly interpreted.

The results of the manipulation check inferred that the sample of this study correctly interpreted the SGC (followers) manipulation. Hereafter, the manipulation check for authority heuristic is assessed.

6.5.3 Authority heuristic

Authority heuristic was included in this study as an independent variable. An authority heuristic is a cue on an Instagram profile that relates to the source of the content. The cue serves as a justification that the individual's profile content is authentically controlled by the individual (Instagram, 2019). The manipulation check was conducted through the questionnaire. Respondents were questioned whether the stimuli that were presented to them in the questionnaire contained a 'blue tick' (as representative of the authority heuristic). The respondents answered by selecting 'yes' or 'no'. The results of the manipulation check are presented in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6
Manipulation check – Authority heuristic

			Yes	No	% Correct
System-Generated cue	Blue Tick	Group 1	28	10	74%
		Group 3	25	14	64%
		Group 5	27	12	69%
		Group 7	22	17	56%
	No Blue Tick	Group 2	20	19	49%
		Group 4	22	17	44%
		Group 6	16	23	59%
		Group 8	18	21	54%

Respondents in Groups 1, 3, 5 and 7 were all exposed to stimuli that contained a 'blue tick'. As presented in Table 6.6, a majority of the respondents correctly recalled the 'blue tick'.

tick'. In the groups that did not contain a 'blue tick' (Groups 2, 4, 6, 8), more than half of the respondents recalled correctly the absence of the 'blue tick'. It should be noted respondents were not presented with the stimuli when questioned about the authority heuristic and therefore had to recall from memory. It seems that the groups that were exposed to the blue tick mostly recalled the SGC. Thus, the manipulation of the authority heuristic was accurately recalled; the respondents noted the blue tick, which contributed to their perception of the influencer's profile.

The results of the manipulation check inferred the sample of this study correctly interpreted the SGC (authority heuristic) manipulation.

Manipulation checks are a way to help ensure that the independent variable has effectively been manipulated or that the participants understood the independent variable in the way that the researcher planned (Babbie, 2010). Therefore, the respondents of this study interpreted the manipulations of the UGC and SGC correctly and the inferential data analysis could be conducted.

6.6 INFERENCEAL DATA ANALYSIS

A univariate analysis was used to assess the difference between the means of the experimental groups. The main and interaction effects were analysed to determine whether the hypotheses would be accepted or not. Before assessing the main and interaction effects, the normality of the data had to be addressed. Normality of the data was assessed by Levene's test and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. An ANOVA test was conducted to assess the results of Levene's test, but first, certain assumptions of an ANOVA should be met.

6.6.1 ANOVA assumptions

According to Field et al. (2012), the assumptions of ANOVA are the same for all parametric tests. Observations made in the research should be independent and the dependent variables should be measured on interval scales. The variances in each

experimental condition should be alike (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012) and the distributions in groups should be normal. Thus, before the data could be analysed, tests had to be performed to ensure those requirements of ANOVA had been met

6.6.1.1 Independence and interval data

The independence of the data assumes the behaviour of one respondent does not influence the behaviour of another participant while taking part in the experiment (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). In this study, an online panel was used that ensured that respondents were unable to interact with one another throughout the process of the experiment. Thus, the independence of the data can be assumed.

The assumption of interval data supposes that the distance between the points on the scales is equal throughout the scale (Field *et al.*, 2012). For this study, a 7-point Likert and semantic differential scales were used for all the scale items. Thus, the distance between the scale intervals can be assumed equal.

6.6.1.2 Normality and homogeneity of variances assessment

The homogeneity of variance (HOV), as one of the assumptions of ANOVA, had to be met. The HOV means the variance should be the same throughout the data field (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Levene's test was conducted to investigate the HOV. The results of Levene's test are presented in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7
Results – Levene's test

	Significance
Brand Attitude (before stimuli)	0.965
Brand Attitude (after stimuli)	0.187
Purchase Intention	0.589

Source Credibility	0.442
Parasocial Relationship	0.343

For Levene's test, a significance level lower than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) means the homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed. If the significance level is higher than 0.05, the variance is not significant, and the homogeneity of variances can be assumed (Field *et al.*, 2012; Sreejesh *et al.*, 2014). As portrayed in Table 6.7, the significance levels of all the variables were higher than 0.05; therefore, HOV could be assumed. The outcome of Levene's test provided insight into which method of analysis of variance would be the most appropriate method to use, given the HOV and the group sizes.

The normality of data is another assumption of ANOVA, which indicates that the data collected are from normally distributed populations (Babbie, 2010). The normality of the data can be assessed by interpreting histograms about the data, but to accurately state whether the data were normally distributed, a Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test was conducted (Field *et al.*, 2012). Results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test are presented in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8
Results – Kolmogorov–Smirnov test

	P-Value							
	G 1	G 2	G 3	G 4	G 5	G 6	G 7	G 8
Brand Attitude (before stimuli)	0.140	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.050	0.001	0.001	0.000
Brand Attitude (after stimuli)	0.000	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Purchase Intention	0.037	0.157	0.200	0.006	0.076	0.059	0.001	0.000
Source Credibility	0.069	0.200	0.091	0.200	0.200	0.021	0.200	0.000
Parasocial Relationship	0.200	0.114	0.200	0.196	0.200	0.200	0.022	0.174

The P values (significant level) indicate whether the data are normally distributed or not. If a P value is higher than 0.05, the data are normally distributed (Field *et al.*, 2012). Thus, the value of data less than 0.05 indicates the data are not normally distributed. As can be seen in Table 6.8, the data were normally distributed in some of the groups and not in other groups. Since some of the data were not normally distributed, it can be concluded that one of the assumptions of ANOVA was indeed violated. By discussing how the results were assessed, the matter of violation of the normality of the data will be clarified as well. However, the sample size should also be taken into account when considering the normality of the data. For larger samples, the normality of data is of less consequence than smaller data sets. In large data sets, the lack of normality can be ignored (Pallant, 2010). The results of this study are interpreted hereafter.

6.7 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The main hypothesis of this study was the influence of SGC and UGC on consumer responses on Instagram. This study incorporated a 2 × 2 × 2 between-subjects experimental design to test the difference between the main and interaction effects. An overview of how the results are reported is discussed next.

6.7.1 Design and reporting of the empirical results and findings

The design of the data analysis is discussed to avoid repetition of the same design for each hypothesis in the rest of the chapter. Before the data of this study could be analysed

using univariate analysis, it was assessed for HOV and normal distribution. Levene's test was conducted and it could be concluded that all eight groups were indeed homogenous. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test provided insight into the distribution of the data. It was determined that according to the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test the data were normally distributed. Consequently, the data could be tested using univariate analysis. The variables of the study are presented in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9
Variables of the study

Independent variables				
User-Generated Content				
Disclosure		No disclosure		
System-Generated Cue (1)				
High number of followers		Low number of followers		
System-Generated Cue (2)				
Badge		No badge		
Dependent Variables				
Brand Attitude				
Purchase Intention				
Source Credibility	Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Homophily
Parasocial Relationship				

The results reported in the following section will discuss each variable presented in Table 6.9. A brief definition and summary of the variable including the relevant statistics (mean values) will be provided. Then, the statistics about the variable will be analysed.

A univariate analysis was used to determine the main and interaction effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The univariate analysis simultaneously assessed the effect that each of the independent variables had on the dependent variables, as well as any interaction effects there might be (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The use of a parametric test, even though the assumption of normality was violated, can be accounted for based on the large sample used to collect the data (Babbie, 2010). Thus, the empirical results and findings calculated on SPSS using the calculations described above will be discussed next. In reporting of the data, the hypotheses in relation to SGC were analysed. Thereafter, the hypotheses concerning UGC and then the interaction effects were assessed. The first main and interaction effect to be discussed is SC.

6.7.2 The influence of system-generated cues and user-generated content on source credibility

SC is defined as the extent to which the influencer is perceived as a credible source of product information and can be trusted to give an objective opinion of the product (Shan 2016). SC was assessed as a multidimensional scale with four constructs; attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily collaborated to form one scale. SC was included in this study to determine whether users of Instagram considered the credibility of a source in the persuasion process. Also, what elements of an Instagram profile were most influential in determining a source's credibility were investigated. The four constructs were measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale and then computed in SPSS to form one variable, SC. The hypotheses relating to SC are presented in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10
Hypotheses – source credibility

Source credibility	
H _{01A}	User-generated content does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer
H _{01B}	The system-generated cue, 'followers', does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer
H _{01C}	The system-generated cue, 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer
H _{01D}	The interaction between user-generated content and system-generated cues, 'followers' and authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer

The hypotheses in Table 6.10 were used to address the objectives of this study and were assessed using univariate analysis. The results, which include the mean values and significance are presented in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11
Results – source credibility

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
	5.53	5.73	0.071
System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
	5.66	5.60	0.574

System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
		5.61	5.65
Interaction Effects			
		Significance	
Followers x Authority Heuristic		0.512	
Followers x Disclosure		0.231	
Authority x Disclosure		0.762	
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure		0.851	

Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

Table 6.11 presents the results of the univariate analysis, which include the mean values, main and interaction effects of SGC and UGC on source credibility. All the main and interaction effects had P-values more than 0.05. Thus, all the hypotheses in Table 6.10 not rejected.

The influence of the advertising disclosure had no significant effect ($P > 0.05$) on source credibility (H_{01A}) (confidence level: 95%).

Under a 90% confidence level, the influence of advertising disclosure on source credibility was significant ($P < 0.1$). Therefore, the mean value was higher for the groups that had no advertising disclosure versus the groups exposed to advertising disclosure. In this case, it can be noted that not disclosing advertising can affectinre the possibility of an influencer being perceived as more credible compared with when advertising is disclosed.

The number of followers on SC (H_{01B}) had no influence on source credibility ($P > 0.05$). The difference between the mean values was small (0.063). The SGC authority heuristic had no significant effect ($P > 0.05$) on SC (H_{01C}).

The four separate constructs of SC were independently analysed. Table 6.12 presents all the results of the univariate analysis tests that were conducted.

Table 6.12
Results – source credibility dimensions

User-Generated Content			
	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
Attractiveness	5.93	6.06	0.171
Trustworthiness	5.85	6.10	0.061
Expertise	6.17	6.20	0.805
Homophily	4.17	4.54	0.053
System-Generated Cues (1)			
	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
Attractiveness	6.02	6.00	0.837
Trustworthiness	5.93	6.02	0.507
Expertise	6.16	6.22	0.617
Homophily	4.54	4.17	0.053

System-Generated Cues (2)			
	Badge	No Badge	Significance
Attractiveness	5.6	6.06	0.390
Trustworthiness	5.94	6.01	0.559
Expertise	6.14	6.23	0.452
Homophily	4.41	4.29	0.522

Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

As seen in Table 6.12, there were no significant differences ($P > 0.05$) of SGC and UGC on the respective dependent variables. At a 90% confidence level, homophily and trustworthiness had a significant influence on the credibility of an influencer.

Homophily denotes the similarity between the information source (influencer) and the message receiver (respondent) (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). At a 90% confidence interval, advertising disclosure significantly influenced the perceived homophily of the respondents. In other words, the respondents were more likely to see themselves as similar to the influencer when their sponsored content was not disclosed versus disclosing the relationship.

There was a significant difference ($P < 0.1$) in the mean values for the number of followers on homophily. The respondents were more likely to feel a sense of similarity between the influencer and themselves when the influencer had more followers. This result can also be supported by interpreting the mean and P value, where the mean difference between high and low followers was 0.373. Also, at a 90% confidence interval, UGC (advertising disclosure) had significant influence ($P < 0.1$) on a source's perceived trustworthiness and homophily.

SGC authority heuristic had no significant influence ($P > 0.05$) on any four dimensions of SC. There was no significant influence between the four factors that constitute SC and

the independent variables, SGC and UGC. Hereafter, the relationship between the PS and the independent variables will be analysed.

6.7.3 The influence of system-generated cues and user-generated content on parasocial relationships

PSR was included to determine whether Instagram users would be more willing to form a PSR with an influencer based on their UGC and SGC. A parasocial relationship forms upon the interaction between a media user and a media figure (Tsai & Men, 2013). PSR can also be perceived as psychological connections that users form unilaterally with media personalities through virtual media (Yuan *et al.*, 2016).

PSR was measured using a 7-point Likert scale derived from a study by Boerman (2020). The scale was initially developed to measure PSR between Instagram users and micro/meso influencers. The hypotheses about PSR are presented below in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13
Hypotheses – parasocial relationships

Parasocial relationship	
H _{02A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the parasocial relationships with an influencer.
H _{02B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), ‘followers’, does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.
H _{02C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), ‘authority heuristic’, does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.
H _{02D}	The interaction between system-generated cues (SGC), ‘followers’ and ‘authority heuristic’ and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.

The hypotheses in Table 6.13 addressed the objectives of this study and were assessed using univariate analysis. The results, which include the mean values and significance are presented in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14
Results – parasocial relationship

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
		4.30	4.75
System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
		4.56	4.48
System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
		4.44	4.61
Interaction Effects			
			Significance
	Followers x Authority Heuristic		0.877
	Followers x Disclosure		0.774
	Authority x Disclosure		0.820

Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure	0.389
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Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

According to Table 6.14, hypothesis H_{02A} that states user-generated content does not significantly influence parasocial relationships failed to be rejected (P value; 0.011). The difference in mean value was 0.447. Therefore, due to the significant relationship ($P > 0.05$), respondents were more inclined to form a PSR with an influencer who did not disclose their relationship with a partnered brand.

In Table 6.14, there was no significant influence ($P > 0.05$) for the number of followers or authority heuristic on PSR (H_{02B} and H_{02C}). The difference between the mean value concerning authority heuristic and PSR was 0.168. The mean for no authority heuristic was higher, signifying that the respondents would be more likely to form PSR with an influencer who did not have a 'blue tick'. In conclusion, there were no significant relationships between the interaction effects of UGC and SGC on PSR. Hereafter, the influence of SGC and UGC on BA will be analysed.

6.7.4 The influence of system-generated cues and user-generated content on brand attitude

Brand attitude was included in this study to address the objectives and determine whether SGC and UGC influenced the brand that an influencer partnered with. Also, BA was included to determine whether the use of an influencer in Instagram increased the respondents' BA. BA can be defined as a consumer's overall evaluation of a brand (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016) or as a global evaluation that is based on favourable and unfavourable reactions towards brand-related stimuli or beliefs (Ballantine & Au Yeung, 2015).

BA was measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale sourced from Spears and Singh (2004). In the data collection instrument, two tests were conducted on BA. The first test

conducted was a univariate analysis to determine the influence of UGC and SGC and their interaction effect on BA.

The second test conducted was a paired sample T-test. In this study, BA was measured as a pre-post measure. Therefore, the means between the groups could also be compared to test the influence of using an influencer on BA.

The hypotheses about the influence of UGC and SGC on brand attitude are presented in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15
Hypotheses – attitude towards the brand

Attitude towards the brand	
H _{03A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', do not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03D}	The interaction between the system-generated cues (SGC), 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03E}	The use of an influencer in Instagram does not influence brand attitude.

The hypotheses in Table 6.15 addressed the objectives of this study and were assessed using univariate analysis. The results. Which include the mean values and significance are presented in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16
Results – attitude towards the brand

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
		5.98	6.19
System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
		6.06	6.11
System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
		5.99	6.18
Interaction Effects			
			Significance
Followers x Authority Heuristic			0.730
Followers x Disclosure			0.055
Authority x Disclosure			0.927
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure			0.912

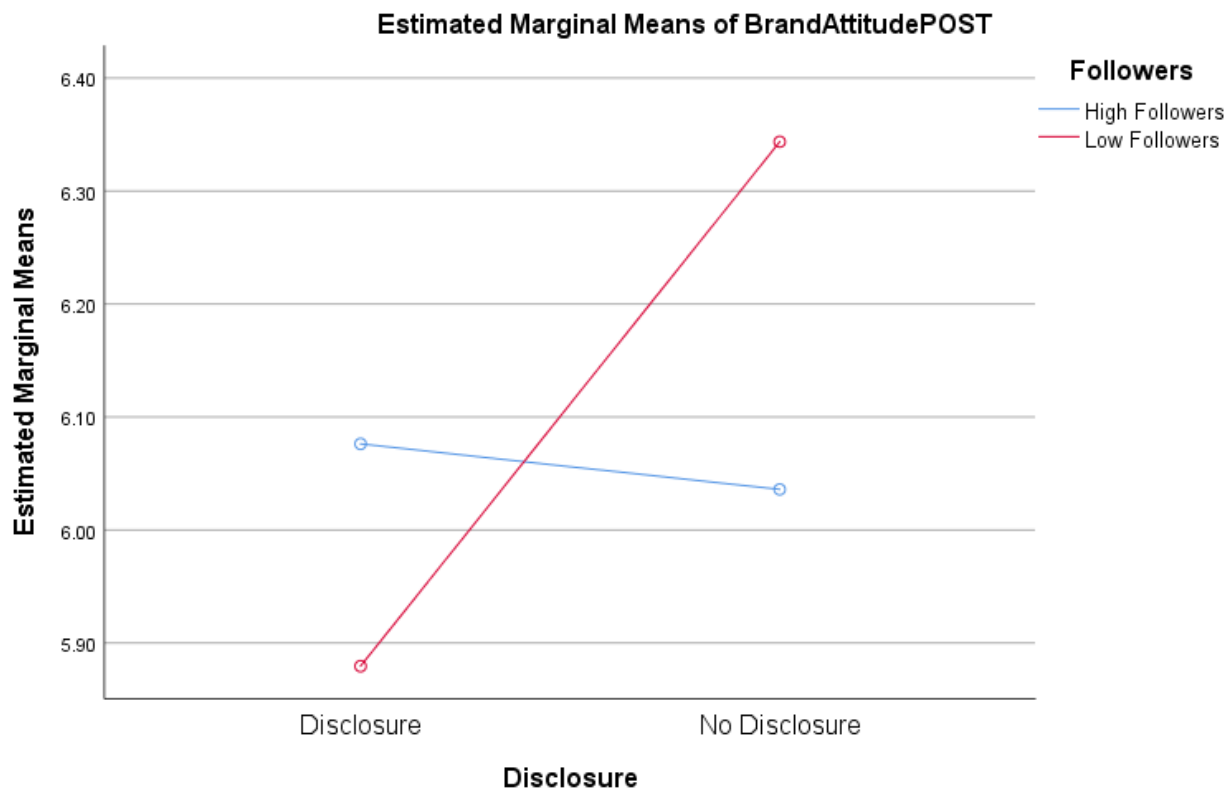
Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

As presented in Table 6.16, at a 95% confidence interval, there were no significant differences ($P > 0.05$) as a result of the main effects. Neither UGC nor SGC had a significant influence on BA. Therefore, H_{03A} , H_{03B} and H_{03C} were not rejected. Also, the difference between the mean values was small. There was no significant relationship

between the interaction effects proposed by H_{03D} . Therefore, H_{03D} was not rejected. However, at a 90% confidence level, there was a significant influence on the interaction effect between followers and disclosure on BA ($P < 0.1$). The profile plot presented in Figure 6.7 can be interpreted to gain a further understanding of the interaction effect.

Figure 6.5 is used to illustrate the nature of the results concerning the interaction effect between the number of followers and advertising disclosure. From Figure 6.5, deductions

Figure 6.5: Profile plot – disclosure versus followers



can be made. Among the deductions is that the lines on the graphs travel in opposite directions. Meaning that, the number of followers was differently affected by advertising disclosure concerning brand attitude. For the low number of followers, the respondents seemed to have been more drastically influenced by advertising disclosure compared with high followers based on the plot of low followers. For a high number of followers, the respondents were less affected by advertising disclosure. Therefore, it can be assumed that respondents who were presented with stimuli containing a low number of followers were more sensitive to advertising disclosure compared with a high number of followers.

Moreover, respondents with a low number of followers placed more emphasis on advertising disclosure in their attitude towards the brand. Nonetheless, there was a significant interaction effect, at a 90% confidence level, between advertising disclosure and the number of followers on BA.

The second test was conducted on BA to address the fourth objective and hypothesis, H_{03E} of BA. BA was analysed using a pre-post-test to determine the effects of using an influencer as a method to influence the BA of the respondents. To determine the influence of using an influencer on brand attitude, a paired sample T-test was proposed by Zikmund *et al.* (2013) to compare the mean values of a pre-post-test. In the questionnaire, the respondents were introduced to the brand, Trinity Athletics, and their brand attitude was measured. Then, the respondents were exposed to their relevant group stimuli and brand attitude was measured again. The results for the pre-post-test are presented in Table 6.17.

Table 6.17
Results – brand attitude pre-post test

Group	BA Before Exposure	BA After Exposure	Difference	Sig:
Group 1	5.53	5.94	0.41	0.001*
Group 2	5.82	6.22	0.40	0.029*
Group 3	5.70	5.81	0.11	0.153
Group 4	5.70	5.95	0.25	0.012*
Group 5	5.65	5.93	0.28	0.013*
Group 6	5.76	6.14	0.38	0.038*
Group 7	5.77	6.27	0.50	0.011*
Group 8	5.95	6.42	0.47	0.012*

Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

The results in Table 6.17 were assessed according to the different groups. According to the results of the paired-sample t-test, there were significant differences in the mean values among the groups, excluding Group 3. The mean value for brand attitude was higher for all groups after the influencer was introduced. The results in Table 6.17 are supported by Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) and De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) who concluded the positive relationship between influencer and BA. Both studies proposed the use of an influencer in social media marketing contributes to developing and increasing BA.

In conclusion, there were no significant differences between the main and interaction effects at a 95% confidence level concerning the hypothesis presented for BA. Furthermore, the usage of an influencer led to a higher mean value for BA. Hereafter, the influence of SGC and UGC on purchase intention will be analysed.

6.7.5 The influence of system-generated cues and user-generated content on purchase intention

PI is the psychological stage or a determination process of consumers where the consumer forms a genuine willingness to act towards a product or brand (Pandey *et al.*, 2018). PI was adapted from Spears and Singh (2004), which comprised four items on a 7-point semantic differential scale. The scale was computed into SPSS to form one variable and was analysed accordingly. The hypotheses formulated in terms of the effects of SGC and UGC on PI are provided in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18
Hypotheses – purchase intention

Purchase Intention	
H _{04A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04D}	The interaction between the system generated cues (SGC) 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence purchase intention.

The hypotheses in Table 6.18 addressed the PI objectives of this study and were assessed using univariate analysis. The results. Which include the mean values and significance are presented in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19
Results – purchase intention

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
		5.33	5.56
System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
	5.49	5.40	0.534
System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
	5.36	5.52	0.296
Interaction Effects			
			Significance
Followers x Authority Heuristic			0.658
Followers x Disclosure			0.186
Authority x Disclosure			0.186
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure			0.485

Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

As presented in Table 6.19, at a 95% confidence interval, there were no significant differences ($P > 0.05$) in the main effects. Thus, all the applicable hypotheses were not rejected. Advertising disclosure had no significant effect on PI (H_{04A})

The difference in the mean value was (0.231). The mean value was higher for no advertising disclosure versus disclosure. In this case, it can be proposed that not disclosing advertising increased the Instagram users' intention to purchase a product.

The number of followers had no significant influence ($P > 0.05$) on PI (H_{04B}). The difference between the mean values was also small (0.091). Therefore, the number of followers did not influence PI.

An authority heuristic had no significant influence ($P > 0.05$) on PI (H_{04C}). The difference between the mean values (0.153) was also small. Therefore, the intention to purchase an advertised product through Instagram was higher when an influencer did not have an authority badge versus having an authority badge.

In conclusion, there were no significant results between the main effects and interaction effects of SGC and UGC on PI. The following section provides a summary of the results of this study.

6.7.6 Summary of findings

Once all the assessments on the hypotheses were conducted, the primary hypothesis could be addressed by investigating the results of the secondary hypotheses. The results of the secondary hypotheses are presented below in Table 6.20 and are based on a 95% confidence level.

Table 6.20
Hypotheses summary

Source Credibility		
H_{01A}	User-generated content does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer	Not Rejected
H_{01B}	The system-generated cue, 'followers', does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer	Not Rejected
H_{01C}	The system-generated cue, 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer	Not Rejected
H_{01D}	The interaction between user-generated content and system-generated cues, 'followers' and authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the source credibility of an influencer	Not Rejected
Parasocial relationship		
H_{02A}	User-generated content does not significantly influence parasocial relationships	Rejected
H_{02B}	The system-generated cue, 'followers', does not significantly influence the parasocial relationships	Not Rejected
H_{02C}	The system-generated cue, 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the parasocial relationships	Not Rejected
H_{02D}	The interaction between user-generated content and system-generated cues, 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the parasocial relationships	Not Rejected
Attitude towards the brand		

H03A	User-generated content does not significantly influence the attitude towards the brand.	Not Rejected
H03B	The system-generated cue, 'followers', does not significantly influence the attitude towards the brand.	Not Rejected
H03C	The system-generated cue, 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the attitude towards the brand.	Not Rejected
H03D	The interaction between user-generated content and the system-generated cues, 'followers' and 'authority heuristic' does not significantly influence the attitude towards the brand	Not Rejected
Purchase Intention		
H04A	User-generated content does not significantly influence purchase intention	Not Rejected
H04B	The system-generated cue, 'followers', does not significantly influence the purchase intention	Not Rejected
H04C	The system-generated cue, 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the purchase intention	Not Rejected
H04D	The interaction between user-generated content and the system-generated cues, 'followers' and 'authority heuristic' does not significantly influence the purchase intention	Not Rejected

The empirical results (section 6.7) and hypotheses were all analysed. The hypotheses were assessed to address the objectives of this study. All objectives were successfully addressed. Significant results were the influence of UGC on parasocial relationships. The empirical results (section 6.7) analysed all hypotheses independently. The hypotheses were assessed to address the objectives of this study. The objectives were successfully addressed. One significant result was reported, the influence of UGC on parasocial

relationships. Advertising disclosure positively influenced the desire of an Instagram user to form a relationship with an influencer. Furthermore, at a 90% confidence level, advertising disclosure exerted a significant influence on SC of an influencer. In other words, an influencer's advertisement disclosure in Instagram can have a negative influence on their perceived credibility. All other alternative hypotheses were not rejected at 95% confidence level with P values > 0.05.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the data analysis process, integrating the qualitative and quantitative phases of research. Findings of the qualitative study enabled constructing a valid and reliable questionnaire that could be used in the second phase of the data collection. The raw data collected in the quantitative phase were prepared and then evaluated using descriptive and inferential analyses to assess the hypotheses that were developed to address the research problem of this study.

The descriptive analysis provided a demographic profile of millennials 18 to 25 years old as the target population. From the descriptive analysis, it also showed most respondents had been Instagram users for more than two years, followed influencers instead of celebrities, were interested in fitness and preferred in-store shopping.

Three manipulation checks were conducted on the three independent variables, advertisement disclosure, number of followers and authority heuristic, respectively. The respondents interpreted the manipulations of the UGC and SGC correctly and the inferential data analysis could be conducted.

Before assessing the main and interaction effects, the normality of the data was assessed by Levene's test and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The data collected were analysed using a univariate analysis to assess the hypotheses. The results failed to reject all the secondary hypotheses except H_{02A} : user-generated content does not significantly influence parasocial relationships. The results thus confirmed UGC and SGC did have a significant influence on consumers' responses on Instagram.

The findings show Instagram is a challenging phenomenon to understand. An Instagram profile has many different UGC and SGC that do not necessarily influence users' perception of or reaction to a profile independently. The perception of a user's Instagram profile could be formed through a combination of cues and psychological elements.

The results in this chapter have various implications, which could be valuable to marketing managers. The findings are further described, assessed and interpreted in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*A little at a time until less becomes more and more becomes less on the other side –
Johnnie Dent Jr.*

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, the influence of system-generated cues (SGC) and user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram consumer responses were investigated. Instagram has become a powerful tool for marketers to use as part of their brand-building strategy. Marketers link the profile of an influencer with a brand whereby the identity of the influencer assists in developing the identity of the brand through associations (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Instagram has therefore become a way for brands to communicate with their consumers.

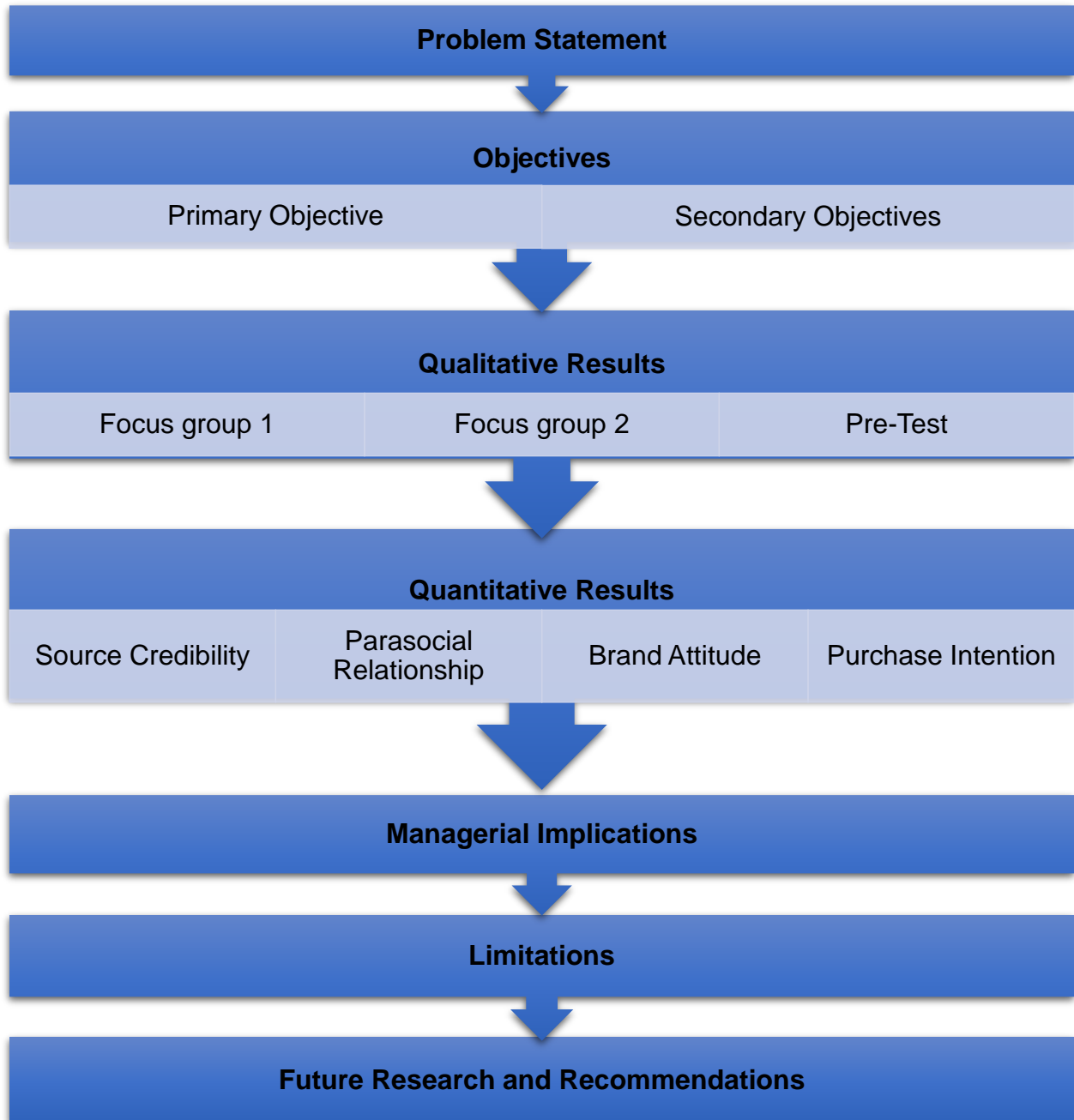
In this research, the influence of various Instagram profile elements on consumer responses was examined. The role of SGC and UGC was assessed in relation to influencer credibility (SC), consumers' parasocial relationship (PSR) with the influencer and consumers' brand attitude (BA) and purchase intention (PI) towards the brand linked to the influencer.

For clarity, the following section starts with an illustration of the layout of this final chapter to enable easy navigation.

7.2 DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTER

The design of the chapter can be seen in Figure 7.1. The problem statement will be revisited as a reminder of the background to the study from which the objectives resulted.

**Figure 7 1:
Chapter 7 Layout**



Following the objectives, an interpretation of the qualitative findings and quantitative results are presented.

In the qualitative findings, the insights gained from the two focus groups and pre-test are reiterated. Thereafter, quantitative research is addressed, including a discussion of the dependent variables. The hypotheses for each dependent variable are referred to, followed by a discussion regarding the mean score of the different factors in the variables.

Last, the practical managerial implications, the limitations of the study. contribution of the study and recommendations for future research are presented.

7.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A shorter version of the problem statement is provided here to avoid repetition. A comprehensive problem statement can be seen in Chapter 1 (see section: 1.3 Problem statement).

Instagram has modernised the traditional marketing technique of using celebrities for influential advertising by introducing social media influencers to promote branded content. However, the literature review showed little research has been conducted on Instagram as a marketing phenomenon. Thus, it can be argued that a knowledge gap exists in how influential advertising on Instagram works. Knowledge lacks about what elements of UGC and SGC on an individual's Instagram profile are most influential in influencing millennial consumer responses. Research was needed to assess the role of SGC and UGC on influencer credibility (SC), consumer PSR, BA and PI associated with the influencer. The following objectives were formulated to help answer the questions that the problem statement posed.

7.4 OBJECTIVES

For this study, the primary objective was to determine the influence of UGC (advertising disclosure) and SGC (followers and authority heuristic) on consumer responses on Instagram.

The four secondary objectives were articulated to achieve the goal of the primary objective.

Table 7.1:
Research objectives

Secondary Objectives	
Source credibility	
Secondary objective: 1 _{a-d}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on source credibility b) To assess the influence of SGC on source credibility c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on source credibility
	d) To assess the influence of UGC and SGC on attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily
Parasocial Relationships	
Secondary objective: 2 _{a-c}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on parasocial relationships b) To assess the influence of SGC on parasocial relationships c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on parasocial relationships
Brand Attitude	
Secondary objective: 3 _{a-d}	a) To assess the influence of UGC on brand attitude b) To assess the influence of SGC on brand attitude c) To assess the influence and interaction effects between UGC and SGC on brand attitude
	d) To assess the influence of using an influencer on brand attitude
Purchase Intention	

Secondary objective: 4 _{a-c}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To assess the influence of UGC on purchase intention b) To assess the influence of SGC on purchase intention c) To assess the influence of the interaction between UGC and SGC on purchase intention
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The role of UGC and SGC was assessed concerning influencer credibility, consumer desire to form PSR with the influencer, consumer BA and PI of the brand linked to the influencer. All four dependent variables and their respective objectives were addressed in this study. These objectives were transformed into hypotheses addressed later in this chapter. Both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted. The following section will discuss the qualitative results.

7.5 DISCUSSION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The qualitative research consisted of two focus groups and a pre-test, the results of which are discussed in this section. The same procedures were followed for both focus groups. Both focus groups were attended by six participants who complied with the requirements of the population group to be used in quantitative research. The discussion guide in Appendix A directed the conversation. The discussions were recorded for accuracy so insights could be gathered truthfully – all participants were earlier informed of the recording and permission was granted. Focus groups 1 and 2 were used to gain an understanding and decide on the dependent variables of the study. Also, to determine which cues on Instagram are most attributable to influencing a source's credibility. Both focus group subjects completed the same questionnaire. The subjects had to identify the UGC and SGC on a profile most influential in influencing a source's credibility. Focus group 1 is discussed first.

7.5.1 Focus group 1

Focus group 1 was conducted pertaining to two independent variables of this study, SGC and UGC. The first theme discussed in focus group 1 was the usage of Instagram as a platform.

In focus group 1, the researcher was interested in gathering information about how subjects use Instagram. For example, determining the first elements of Instagram the subjects would check upon login into Instagram. Most subjects preferred to check their stories. On an Instagram profile, stories are the first available content to see. Stories on Instagram are content of a user's profile that last 24 hours and were proposed by the subjects to be the fastest way to catch-up with their friends.

After watching the stories on their homepage, the subjects would scroll through their newsfeed. The subjects were then questioned about their preference for Instagram over other social media sites. The subjects emphasised their preference for Instagram was based on the visual orientation of the application and the authenticity of the profiles on Instagram. In addition, the ability to develop an online identity that was in correspondence with their real-life identity was postulated as a reason by the subjects as a preference for Instagram.

The researcher then introduced the second theme of the focus group, SGC on Instagram (profile cues on Instagram). The purpose was to gain insight into how Instagram users perceive different profile elements on Instagram. Among the cues discussed were blue tick, followers, following and likes. The cues that the subjects selected to be most attributable to the credibility of an individual were the number of followers and the blue tick (authority cue).

The subjects selected the number of followers due to the time an individual had to invest to gain the following. Only two subjects out of six did not perceive an individual as more authentic based on their followers because of the knowledge that individuals on Instagram "put their best foot forward" on the application. The authenticity of a profile was supported through content that showed the vulnerability of an individual. Three of the six subjects believed that an individual on Instagram could lose their credibility when they have too many followers. The number of followers that an individual could have before decreasing

in credibility was 7 000, 10 000 and 100 000. A common theme proposed about the number of followers was the number of likes the content would receive. Perceived credibility increased when an individual's number of likes on their content was reflected by their number of followers. Another subject said that the authenticity of an individual's profile was questionable if the number of likes varied drastically across the different posts. A consistent number of likes per post suggested that the influencer's audience engaged with the influencer's content.

With relation to SGC's, the number of followers, the following was also discussed. The participants were asked to explain what the number of the following tells them about an individual. The subjects mentioned that a substantially higher following than followers influenced the perception of the perceived quality of the profile. "Who you follow is who you are influenced by." By having too many followings, the subjects believed the Instagram user was being influenced by too many people. Two subjects reported that the influencer's following also contributed to the influencer's authenticity and credibility.

The subjects in the first focus group were questioned about the authority heuristic (blue tick) that some Instagram users have on their profile. Not all participants of the focus group were aware of how an individual would receive the authority heuristic. Some subjects believed the authority heuristic was gained in correspondence with many followers (which to some degree is true). Other subjects contributed the authority heuristic to Instagram users who are famous, authentic and usually sports players. Only one subject perceived the authority heuristic as a tool to protect a user from any fake accounts in their name.

UGC on Instagram focusing on the marketing dimension of content posted on Instagram was also analysed in the first focus group. Topics included disclosure and non-disclosure of promoted products. The first question proposed to the subjects whether they knew that sponsored content had to be disclosed. Most participants did not know that content had to be disclosed.

The second question proposed to the subjects was whether an advertisement disclaimer changed their perception of the individual who posted it. One subject mentioned that advertising disclosure decreases their perception of the influencer's authenticity. The

motives for posting the content would become questionable. Another subject projected that when an individual links their profile to a brand, their content changed to suit the brand and the individual perceived as less authentic. Two subjects supported the decrease in authenticity in relation to advertising disclosure. Interestingly, only one subject mentioned that an influencer's authenticity could be maintained when the disclosed content posted was congruent to the individual's profile-identity.

Focus group 1 was conducted to gain a better understanding of SGC and UGC. Subjects discussed the influence of the different SGC and UGC on an influencer's credibility and authenticity perception. All the SGC and UGC in some way influenced how each subject perceived an individual's profile. Thus, it was concluded that both SGC and UGC influenced how people perceived an individual through their social media profile on Instagram. The following section will discuss focus group 2 of this study.

7.5.2 Focus group 2

Focus group 2 was conducted to gather more information on UGC. The shortage of academic literature on Instagram (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017) prompted the need for conducting focus group 2. The purpose was to gain an understanding of SC, PSR, branding and influencers in an Instagram context.

Focus group 2 commenced with questions relating to influencers and marketing on Instagram. Subjects were requested to define what they believe an influencer is. Definitions provided by the subjects were; "Someone who promotes a product with many followers" and "Someone who wants to change the way people think about a topic". "Someone who educates an audience" and "Someone who communicates their background to their audience". According to the subjects, an influencer can be perceived as an individual who pursues a certain field of interest and communicates their experience to their respective audiences.

The next topic discussed in focus group 2 was PSR. Subjects were questioned about whether they had a favourite influencer. Most subjects reported that they had a few favourite influencers whom they followed on (their) Instagram. Two subjects responded

they have been following the influencers for up to two years. One subject conveyed that as they got to know the influencer better, they became more interested in their content, decreasing the probability of unfollowing the influencer. The subjects were also questioned about whether they find value in their relationships with an influencer. Two subjects responded that the value of an online relationship happened over time. A factor strengthening one subject's relationship with an influencer was the process of the subject going through older content of the influencer on their profile.

Subjects were also questioned about whether they have unfollowed any influencers and why. Half of the subjects (3 out of 6) said they have unfollowed influencers because of posting too much promotional content and showed desperation for more followers. One subject also felt the influencer did not get personal with their content and the content felt far-fetched.

When questioned about whether the subjects followed influencers with similar interests and characteristics to themselves, most subjects said 'yes'. They follow influencers, as influencers are "reflections" of themselves and similar experiences. Four out of six subjects also confessed to having found comfort in an online relationship when the content was relatable.

Another topic discussed in focus group 2 was branding on Instagram. Subjects were questioned about whether they follow brands on Instagram, how they determine the quality of the brand and whether the subjects thought that influencers could affect their perception of a brand. All subjects (6) conveyed that they followed brands on Instagram; clothing brands were among the most popular. The subjects also followed clothing and other brands for promotions and discounts. The quality of a brand was mostly determined by the number of followers and the type of athletes linked to the brand. Athlete and brand congruence has been emphasised by the literature as an important aspect of deducting brand associations (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2018; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). Subjects were also questioned about how many brands they think an influencer should promote. Most subjects felt an influencer should promote only one brand, especially if they have a large following.

Five out of six subjects confessed that an influencer does influence their perception of a brand or product. This finding is similar to Essamri, Mckechnie and Winklhofer (2019), who reported that when a brand is linked to an influencer, the identity of the brand flows to the influencer and the influencer identity to the brand. Therefore, both the brand and influencer identities influence and are influenced by both parties. One subject said an influencer is like a friend, so they can relate to them when they recommend a product.

On influencing the brand, the subjects were questioned about advertising disclosure and whether the subjects believed that an influencer should disclose sponsored content. Most subjects said they believed an influencer should disclose all advertised content. When content was not disclosed, it felt “fake” and deceiving. At the same time, three out of six subjects conveyed advertising disclosure makes the brand look like they need more exposure.

The last topic discussed in focus group 2 was SC. Questions related to what constitutes a credible person and what makes someone more attractive and likeable on Instagram. A credible person was defined as someone who is ‘real’ by showing his or her mistakes, good times, and bad times. A credible person is honest about the product that they are promoting, which includes sharing their experiences with the brand. In relation to what makes an individual attractive and likeable on Instagram, factors such as showing daily lifestyle, quality of content, being relatable, being inspiring and sharing their journey were prominent.

The expertise of an individual was predicted through their number of followers, the amount of content posted and the quality of the content posted. The follower-to-like ration was emphasised as a determinant of expertise. The ratio of followers-to-following and the people whom the individual follows all contribute to the expertise of an influencer.

The trustworthiness of an individual was determined through the transparency and honesty of the individual. When the subject has followed the individual’s content for more than six months, the individual’s perceived expertise increased. An individual had to be the result of the product that they promote. For example, when promoting a fitness product, the individual had to be fit and representative that the product does work. The

components of a profile that were mostly attributable to the trustworthiness of an individual were the content and captions included in their posts.

One of the last questions proposed to the subjects was whether they thought that value between an influencer and individual could develop instantaneously. One subject responded that it could if they spent time on the individual's profile to see whether the person was relatable and had shared interests.

Focus group 2 was conducted to gain insight into the dependent variables of this study and Instagram marketing. The insight furthered the researcher's understanding of SC, PSR, BA and PI. The use of influencers as a marketing component in Instagram was also discussed. The following section will introduce the pre-test conducted.

7.5.3 Pre-test of questionnaire

The pre-test consisted of 76 subjects aged between 18 and 25, completing the same questionnaire as provided in the focus groups. Apart from the questions in the focus groups, the pre-test requested the subjects to complete information based on current trends in Instagram and the type of products that are frequently promoted in the fitness industry. The SGCs that were most attributable to credibility were the number of followers and the authority heuristic (blue tick). Trends in the fitness industry that was most prevalent were the use of influencers to promote fitness clothing.

The pre-test was used to identify the SGC that were used in the final questionnaire of this study. In the pre-test, subjects were questioned about current trends in Instagram to allocate a scope for this study. It was important for this study to research a field that was trending to ensure the findings of this study were relevant and of use to the field of marketing. The following section will analyse the results conducted in the experimental design.

7.6 INTERPRETATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

In this section, the results provided in Chapter 6 are discussed in terms of the dependent variables of the study. The results of the study are provided in a table under each subheading. In the respective tables, the mean values and significant values are presented. The four dependent variables, SC, PSR, BA and PI will be interpreted. After that, a summary of the independent variables, advertising disclosure, the number of followers and authority heuristic will be presented.

7.6.1 Source credibility

Source credibility (SC) can be defined as the extent to which the reviewer is perceived as a credible source of product information and can be trusted to give an objective opinion of the product (Shan, 2016). SC, in this study, SC comprised four dimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Moran & Muzellec, 2017; Shan, 2016). The dimensions of SC were measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale. The hypotheses on the main and interaction effects of SGC and UGC on SC are presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2:
Hypotheses – source credibility

Source credibility	
H _{01A}	The user-generated content (UGC), advertising disclosure, does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.
H _{01B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.
H _{01C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.

H _{01D}	The interaction between the system-generated cues (SGCs), 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the source credibility with an influencer.
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Hypotheses H_{01A}, H_{01B}, H_{01C} and H_{01D} were all not rejected. Thus, neither UGC (advertising disclosure) nor SGC (followers and authority heuristic) exerted a significant influence on SC. The interaction between UGC and SGC (H_{01D}) also did not exert a significant influence on SC. The effects of UGC and SGC are discussed hereafter.

7.6.1.1 H_{01A}: User-generated content and source credibility

UGC was included in this study to determine how disclosure of sponsored content on Instagram can influence developing SC of an influencer. According to hypothesis H_{01A}, disclosure and no disclosure of an advertisement exerted no significant influence ($P > 0.05$) on SC at a 95% confidence level. However, at a 90% confidence level, advertising disclosure had a significant influence ($P < 0.1$) on SC. The significance value and means are presented in Table 7.3

Table 7.3:
Results – user-generated content

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
	5.53	5.73	0.071

UGC is any content posted by an individual on a social media platform for other users to see (Roma & Aloini, 2019). In this study, UGC was expressed as one independent variable with two levels: disclosure and no disclosure of an advertisement. According to the mean values presented in Table 7.3, the mean for SC was higher when the influencer did not disclose the advertisement versus when the advertisement was disclosed. The difference in mean was in alignment with Kim and Lee's (2017) findings who reported an

increase in a source's credibility when an advertisement was not disclosed versus disclosure for multivitamin tablets. The difference in SC occurred in this study because consumer information from unpaid sources (no disclosure) was perceived as independent of the marketers. The information from paid sources (disclosure) was perceived as biased (Moran & Muzellec, 2017). According to the persuasion knowledge model (PKM) explained in Chapter 3, a consumer's persuasion knowledge is activated when the consumer perceives a brand message as sponsored (disclosure) and the consumer becomes suspicious of the advertisement (Jung & Heo, 2019). Suspicion of the advertisement leads to consumers feeling they are being manipulated into a purchase through unfair means (Audrezet, De Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018). The manipulation attempt may have a negative influence on a consumer's PI (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016). Van Reijmersdal *et al.* (2016) support the notion that explicit advertisement disclosure decreases an individual's attitude towards the content and willingness to engage with the content. Last, Veirman and Hudders' (2020) findings show that including a sponsorship disclosure (compared with no disclosure) on Instagram negatively affects BA. The negative effect on BA happens through enhanced advertisement recognition, activating advertisement scepticism, which, in turn, negatively affects the influencer's credibility.

Therefore, the results of this study are in line with the findings in the literature related to the UGC of advertising disclosure and SC. When an influencer discloses sponsored content on Instagram, the credibility of the influencer is lower according to the consumer's perception. The following section will discuss the influence of advertising disclosure on each dimension.

Table 7.4 presents the influence of advertising disclosure on a source's attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and homophily.

Table 7.4:
Results – user-generated content on source credibility

User-Generated Content			
	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
Attractiveness	5.93	6.06	0.171
Trustworthiness	5.85	6.10	0.061
Expertise	6.17	6.20	0.805
Homophily	4.17	4.54	0.053

As evident in Table 7.4, at a 90% confidence level, UGC (advertising disclosure) exerted a significant influence ($P < 0.1$) on a source's trustworthiness and homophily. Trustworthiness can be defined as the willingness or intention to rely on someone's opinion about a subject (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). According to the results in Table 7.4 and the definition of trustworthiness provided by Ismagilova *et al.* (2019), consumers seemed to be significantly more willing to rely on the opinion of a source when they did not disclose advertisement compared with disclosing an advert. This result is supported by the PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994) and the literature from Moran and Muzellec (2017) stating consumers become more sceptical of a source and content produced when advertising is disclosed. The results in Table 7.4 show sceptical behaviour influenced the perceived trustworthiness of the influencer when advertising was disclosed. Lastly, according to Shan (2016), an individual's motive to produce content increased their perceived trustworthiness. In this case, when the influencer openly declared the motive for creating content through advertising disclosure, the respondents perceived the source as less trustworthy. Therefore, this finding is contrary to Shan's (2016) results in that the source's perceived trustworthiness decreased when disclosing why the content was produced. Trustworthiness may decrease, as the influencer may be perceived less authentic once the motive for the content is declared.

Once the motive for producing content is perceived as sponsored, users of Instagram discredit the influencer, as the content is no longer perceived valid and honest (Xiao *et al.*, 2018)

Xiao *et al.* (2018) define trustworthiness as the apparent integrity of the source and the perceivers' confidence in the source to communicate valid and honest assertions. As seen in Table 7.4, UGC had a significant effect on homophily at a 90% confidence level ($P < 0.1$). Homophily can be defined as the similarity between the information source and the message receiver (Xiao *et al.*, 2018). Homophily can be derived from the shared demographic characteristics (age, gender, education) or perceived attributes (values, preference, beliefs) of a source (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2019). In the social media environment, individuals look for characteristics they share with the source of information. In this case, the influencer was a millennial female with athletic interests (bring active) as the respondents. The affection between source and receiver is strengthened by the shared value, which leads to increased levels of persuasion (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). When the influencer disclosed the advertisement, respondents may have lost their sense of shared value. The loss of shared value can be the attributable motive of creating the content as the influencer is only creating the content for promotional purposes.

UGC had no significant effect on source attractiveness and perceived expertise. The attractiveness of an individual is a function of their likeability and physical attraction (Ohanian, 1990). Therefore, it is sensible that UGC would not influence a source's physical attractiveness, as physical attraction is related to the individual and not their advertising disclosure.

For source expertise, there was no significant effect of UGC on source expertise. A source's expertise is defined as the degree of perceived understanding, skills and knowledge of an endorser (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) report that consumers analyse three factors of UGC and SGC to determine a source's perceived level of credibility on a review site. The three factors are the number of reviews posted (SGC), the content of the review (UGC) and the duration the source has been on the platform (SGC). For this study on Instagram, respondents did not perceive the disclosure of advertising as a factor contributing to the expertise of a source, although disclosure of

advertising did form part of the content posted. This result is supported by a study conducted by Shan (2016) who reported that argument quality and authority heuristics are two components most influential in determining a source's expertise. A source's expertise was not influenced by advertising disclosure, as the disclosure of advertising did not make the influencer seem more of an expert in their field of interest. The number of followers was also measured in this study. The effects of the number of followers on source credibility are discussed hereafter.

7.6.1.2 H_{01B}: The system-generated cue, 'followers', and source credibility

SGC was included in this study to determine how the number of followers and authority heuristic on Instagram influenced developing SC of an influencer. According to hypothesis H_{01B} and the results in Table 7.5, the SGC, the number of followers, exerted no significant influence at a 95% confidence level ($P > 0.05$) on SC.

Table 7.5:
Results – system-generated cues (1)

System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
	5.66	5.60	0.574

The number of followers can be perceived as a quantitative indicator representing the number of people who follow a user. In a study by Lee and Sundar (2013) to determine the influence of the number of followers on SC, Lee and Sundar (2013) propose a high number of followers would lead to higher levels of SC. Although Lee and Sundar (2013) reported insignificant results, higher mean values were reported for profiles with a higher number of followers. Lee and Sundar's (2013) results are aligned with the results of this study. This study also reports higher mean values alongside a higher number of followers. The results of this study on the number of followers also aligned with Westerman *et al.* (2012), who reported an insignificant relationship between the number of followers and

SC. Contrary to the results in this study that supported the findings of Lee and Sundar (2013) and Westerman *et al.* (2012), a significant difference between SC and number of followers was reported by Jin and Phua (2014).

A higher number of followers increases a source's perceived level of credibility based on the mean values in Table 7.5, but only marginally. The results in relation to the difference in mean value for the high number of followers on SC was also supported by Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack and Zahid (2018) and De Veirman *et al.* (2017). The conclusion can be made consumers are likely to perceive a source with a high number of followers as more credible compared with a low number of followers. The effect of the number of followers on each component of SC is analysed hereafter.

Table 7.6 presents the results about the number of followers (SGC) on all four dimensions of SC.

Table 7.6:
Results – system-generated cues (1) on source credibility

System-Generated Cues (1)			
	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
Attractiveness	6.02	6.00	0.837
Trustworthiness	5.93	6.02	0.507
Expertise	6.16	6.22	0.617
Homophily	4.54	4.17	0.053

According to Table 7.6, the number of followers exerted no significant effect ($P > 0.05$) on attractiveness, trustworthiness or expertise of an influencer. However, at a 90% confidence level, there was a significant difference between the mean values ($P < 0.1$). The mean value for a high number of followers was 4.54 and for low followers 4.17.

The attractiveness of a source is determined by their physical appearance (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). According to the results in relation attractiveness, the difference in mean values for a higher number of followers was small. However, the increase in mean value is supported by Jin and Phua (2014). A higher number of followers can potentially affect the outward perception of an influencer, making an influencer more attractive for brand building based on the number of followers.

There are differences in the mean value for trustworthiness and expertise as the number of followers increase. The mean value for a low number of followers is higher than the mean value for a high number of followers for trustworthiness and expertise. The difference in mean values of trustworthiness and expertise was contrary to the findings of Martensen *et al.* (2018), De Veirman *et al.* (2017) and Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang and Soutar (2020) who all reported higher mean values for SC alongside an increase in followers. McGlynn, Zhou, Han and Huang (2019) and Weismueller *et al.* (2020) specifically reported an increase in expertise and trustworthiness. In addition, in focus group 2, the subjects conveyed the number of followers was a method of predicting a source's expertise.

Westerman *et al.* (2012) reported similar results to this study where an inverse relationship between the number of followers and SC existed. Having too many followers may cause people to think the page owner is spending too much time amassing followers rather than providing useful content. The direction and magnitude of the mean values of trustworthiness and expertise did not increase as the literature and this study predicted.

Instagram users may be perceived as “follower collectors” when they have too many followers and this may decrease perceived credibility judgements (Westerman *et al.*, 2012).

Despite the differences in the mean value of source expertise and trustworthiness, this study supports the notion that a high number of followers can negatively influence expertise and trustworthiness of a source. This deduction is based on the predicament that an individual with a high number of followers could be perceived as a “follower hoarder”. Also, when an influencer has too many followers, it can have an inverse effect on credibility judgements (Westerman *et al.*, 2012).

The SGC, number of followers, exerted a significant effect on source homophily at a 90% confidence level. The mean value for a high number of followers (4.54) was higher than the mean value for a lower number of followers (4.17). Therefore, when an influencer has a high number of followers, the respondents are more likely to perceive the influencer as similar to them. Interestingly, it could be presumed that an influencer's audience would find more commonality with an influencer with fewer followers, as the influencer would be perceived at an arm's length away. The effect of the number of followers on homophily can be interpreted using social identity theory (Carlsson *et al.*, 2015; Ozan, 2018). Influencers become a source of meaning to individuals through the process of meaning transfer. The number of followers is a predicament of popularity. It can therefore be proposed that users of Instagram may follow influencers with a higher number of followers to be perceived as more popular themselves. The following section will discuss authority heuristic.

7.6.1.3 H_{01c}: The system-generated cue, authority heuristic, and source credibility

The SGC, authority heuristic, was included in this study to determine how heuristics influence the credibility of an influencer. Users of the Internet use the authority heuristic as a “mental generalizations of knowledge based on experiences that provide shortcuts in processing information” (Lee & Sundar, 2013:510). The results of H_{01c} are presented in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7:
Results – system-generated cues (2)

System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
		5.61	5.65

According to the results in Table 7.7, the mean value for SC was 0.04 higher than for an influencer with no authority heuristic. The difference in the mean value was small. The little to no effect of the authority heuristic is consistent with the literature. Lin and Spence (2018) and Vaidya, Votipka, Mazurek and Sherr (2019) concluded that authority heuristic did not influence the perceived credibility of a source. Although Sundar (2008) proposed credibility perceptions can be formed through heuristics (cues), there was no difference in the influencer's credibility on Instagram. This finding could be attributed to minority groups who tend to trust their in-group peers based on their personality and content more than authority heuristic cues (Vaidya *et al.*, 2019). Also, individuals processing peer identity cues may overlook the idiosyncrasies of an individual and focus instead on the perceived affiliation with the peer, which may reinforce the peer's perceived SC (Lin & Spence, 2018). Therefore, on Instagram, users do not seem to perceive a source as more credible based on the 'blue tick'. Instead, it could be argued that users of Instagram rather focus on the individual's personality and their content. Interestingly, when comparing the mean values of the number of followers and authority heuristic on SC, the mean values are similar to a range between 5.60 and 5.66. Thus, it can be concluded that the effect of the SGC, number of followers and authority heuristic, had the same influence on SC.

There was no difference in the mean value for authority heuristic on the perceived credibility of a source. The following section will analyse the effect of an authority heuristic on the dimensions of SC.

The results in terms of the effect of an authority heuristic on the dimensions of SC are presented below in Table 7.8.

Table 7. 8:
Results – system-generated cus (2) on source credibility

System-Generated Cues (2)			
	Badge	No Badge	Significance
Attractiveness	5.6	6.06	0.390
Trustworthiness	5.94	6.01	0.559
Expertise	6.14	6.23	0.452
Homophily	4.41	4.29	0.522

According to Table 7.8, there was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between the authority heuristic and the dimensions of source credibility. The mean values of attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise were higher for respondent groups without the authority heuristic. However, the difference in mean values was small and no conclusions could be made from the difference in mean values.

Interestingly, the difference in the mean value of homophily for an influencer was 0.12 higher when an authority heuristic was included. According to Ismagilova *et al.* (2019), users employ SGC provided by a platform to make judgements about an individual's personality with whom they share similar characteristics. In this case, it can be inferred from the higher mean value and conclusions by Ismagilova *et al.* (2019) that respondents may have used the authority heuristic to find similarity with the influencer. In addition, in focus group 1, subjects proposed that the authority heuristic portrayed the influencer's content as more authentic, which may have also contributed to a difference in homophily. The differences in homophily were too small to draw any conclusions or make predictions from the difference in mean values.

The following section will discuss the interaction effects of UGC and SGC on SC.

7.6.1.4 H_{01D}: The interaction between user-generated content and the system generated cues, on source credibility

Table 7.9 presents the result of the interaction effects of UGC and SGC on SC.

Table 7.9:
Results – source credibility – interaction effect

Interaction Effects	
	Significance
Followers x Authority Heuristic	0.512
Followers x Disclosure	0.231
Authority x Disclosure	0.762
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure	0.851

As seen in Table 7.9, there were no significant differences in the interaction effect of UGC and SGC ($P > 0.05$) on the perceived credibility of a source on Instagram. In the previous section, the hypothesis presented in Table 7.9 was addressed. There was no significant difference between UGC and SGC on SC at a 95% confidence level. However, at a 90% confidence level, there was a significant difference for UGC, advertising disclosure and perceived credibility of a source. Also, UGC, there was a significant difference in mean values for two dimensions of SC, homophily and trustworthiness. Therefore, advertising disclosure can influence the credibility perceptions of an influencer on Instagram. A difference in credibility perception for no disclosure can be attributed to the motive for creating the content. When an influencer does not disclose advertising, the motive for producing content is perceived as more genuine and truthful (Müller & Maier, 2018) and the content may be perceived as more persuasive (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The following section analyses the relationship between UGC, SGC and parasocial relationships.

7.6.2 Parasocial relationships

Parasocial relationships (PSR) form on the interaction between media user and media figure (Tsai & Men, 2013). PSR can be formed with fictional characters but also with “real” people such as celebrities, influencers or politicians (De Bérail *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, PSR is described as an illusionary experience, such that consumers interact with personas as if they are present and engaged in a reciprocal relationship. PSR was measured using a five-item, 7-point Likert scale proposed by Boerman (2020). PSR was included in this study due to a shortage of literature in relation how users of Instagram form PSR with influencers and what elements of a profile foster this relationship. This study proposed the following hypotheses to address the shortage of literature. Hypotheses about PSR are presented in Table 7.10

**Table 7.10:
Hypotheses – parasocial relationship**

Parasocial relationship	
H _{02A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the parasocial relationships with an influencer.
H _{02B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), ‘followers’, does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.
H _{02C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), ‘authority heuristic’, does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.
H _{02D}	The interaction between system-generated cues (SGC), ‘followers’ and ‘authority heuristic’ and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence the parasocial relationship with an influencer.

Hypothesis H_{02A} in Table 7.10 was rejected at a 95% confidence level. Hypotheses H_{02B}, H_{02C} and H_{02D} were not rejected at a 95% confidence level. The following section will analyse the data of each hypothesis individually. The results in Chapter 6 will be

interpreted and discussed according to the main and interaction effects of UGC and SGC on PSR.

7.6.2.1 H_{02A}: User-generated content and parasocial relationships

According to hypothesis H_{02A}, there was a significant difference between the mean values for UGC (advertising disclosure and no disclosure) on PSR on Instagram. The results are presented below in Table 7.11.

**Table 7.11:
Results – parasocial relationships**

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
	4.30	4.75	0.011*

The significant difference between advertising disclosure and PSR makes it necessary to get to the core of the scale by understanding how each item of the scale was answered. Therefore, the following Table 7.12 presents the items used to measure PSR and the mean of each item in accordance with disclosure and no disclosure of an advertisement.

**Table 7.12:
Questionnaire items – parasocial relationships**

User-Generated Content			
PSR Items: 1 to 5	μ: Disclosure	μ: No Disclosure	Sig:
The Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey seems to understand the things I want to know	4.94	5.51	0.01

I would like to meet the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey in person	4.613	5.06	0.035
When I see the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey, I feel as if I am part of her group	4.18	4.69	0.012
The Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey feels like an old friend	3.55	3.92	0.07
I compare my ideas with what the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey says	4.21	4.55	0.12

When analysing the PSR scale according to the items and means, certain keywords and phrases can be identified to assist in interpreting the significant results. The phrases and keywords are presented in Table 7.12 below.

Table 7.13:
Questionnaire items – meaning of items

Item Phrase		Meaning
1	“understand the things I want to know”	Used to determine whether there was a sense of connection and sharing of values between the respondents and influencer.
2	“like to meet”	When someone wants to meet a person, it entails that they are interested in the persona and would like to get to know the persona better.
3	“I am part of her group”	Being part of someone’s group entails that they share commonalities and interests with the persona (Blight <i>et al.</i> , 2017).

4	“feel like an old friend”	When someone feels like an old friend, it can be deduced that the person may feel like they know the persona.
5	“I compare my ideas”	Individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against another person (Gerber, Wheeler & Suls, 2018).

Table 7.13 presents each item and attaches a sense of meaning to each item. From the data in Table 7.13 and the literature, it can be inferred Instagram users form PSR with influencers they feel connected with, share similarities with and want to pursue a relationship with (Blight *et al.*, 2017). The results show when the influencer disclosed an advertisement, respondents of this study became less interested in getting to know more about the influencer. The difference in mean values for the items in Table 7.12 also supported the notion respondents became less interested in interacting and developing a connection with the influencer. Moreover, upon advertising disclosure, the respondent felt less part of the influencer’s social group compared with no-disclosure.

The significant difference in mean values for disclosure versus no disclosure was supported by the literature. The literature has proposed that advertisement disclosure increases persuasion knowledge (Jung & Heo, 2019). Consequently, an individual’s attitudes towards disclosed content may become more negative, which in turn, lowers an individual’s willingness to engage and share the content (Van Reijmersdal *et al.*, 2016). According to Evans, Phua, Lim and Jun (2017a), when an Instagram user is presented with a disclosed sponsored post, the content has a negative impact on the intention to share the content. Last, the negative impact towards advertising disclosure in Instagram has been supported by Chen (2017) who reported Instagram users do not like ‘obvious’ and ‘intentional’ advertising. Instagram users prefer advertising that is more native in nature, which is partly due to consumers perceiving their social media to be their personal space (Kim, Seely & Jung, 2017). Therefore, explicit advertising seems to disrupt the flow of content on the platform.

Thus, advertising disclosure changes the way users of Instagram perceive an influencer. When an influencer discloses their relationship with a brand, users of Instagram become disinterested in the influencer and their content. Also, when a relationship with a brand is disclosed, followers perceive the content to originate from an external influence, which negatively influences the influencer's authenticity (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). Therefore, when influencers do not disclose an advertisement, the content is perceived by the followers as more organic and originating from the influencer. As a result, followers of the influencer are more willing to pursue PSR with the influencer when advertising is not disclosed. SGC on PSR will be interpreted hereafter.

7.6.2.2 H_{02B}: System-generated cues, 'followers' and parasocial relationship

The following Table 7.14 portrays the results of the number of followers on PSR.

**Table 7.14:
Results – system-generated cues (1)**

System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
	4.56	4.48	0.644

According to Table 7.14, there were no significant differences in the number of followers on PSR. There was a small difference of 0.08 between the mean values. Based on the mean values, respondents of this study were more likely to form PSR with an influencer with a high number of followers. But the difference in mean values was too small to make predictions about any future behaviour. PSR is associated with shared similarities with the influencer and a desire to pursue a relationship with the influencer (Blight *et al.*, 2017). According to the results presented in Table 7.14, an increase in the number of followers does not necessarily increase an Instagram user's desire to form a relationship with the influencer.

An increase in followers did not change the mean value of PSR as the influencer did not gain more personality characteristics or similarities with their audience based on their number of followers. The number of followers was external to their personality on Instagram. The following section will interpret the relationship between PSR and an authority heuristic.

7.6.2.3 H_{02C}: System-generated cue, authority heuristic and parasocial relationships

The following Table 7.15 portrays the results for authority heuristic on PSR.

**Table 7.15:
Results – system-generated cues (2)**

System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
	4.44	4.61	0.336

According to Table 7.15, there was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) in mean values for an authority heuristic on PSR. The difference in mean values proposes the desire to form PSR with an influencer increases when no authority heuristic is included. In small peer groups or online communities, members may be less interested in authority heuristics and rather focus on their perceived affiliation and personality of the influencer (Lin & Spence, 2018; Vaidya *et al.*, 2019). It can be inferred from the results that the respondents shared more similarities with an influencer with no authority heuristic. Respondents were less interested in forming PSR with an influencer who contained an authority heuristic. This result can be attributed to an influencer seeming more “professional” when an authority heuristic is included (Lee & Sundar, 2013). The sense of professionalism deviated the respondent’s intention to interact with the influencer.

7.6.2.4 H_{02D}: The interaction between user-generated content and system-generated cues on parasocial relationships

The following Table 7.16 portrays the results of the interaction effect between UGC and SGC, followers, and authority heuristic.

Table 7.16:
Results – parasocial relationship – interaction effect

Interaction Effects	
	Significance
Followers x Authority Heuristic	0.877
Followers x Disclosure	0.774
Authority x Disclosure	0.820
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure	0.389

According to Table 7.16, there were no significant differences between advertising disclosure, number of followers or authority heuristic on PSR. Therefore, hypothesis H_{02D} failed to be rejected at a 95% confidence level. Hypotheses H_{02B}, H_{02C} and H_{02D} were not rejected at a 95% confidence level, whereas hypothesis H_{02A} was rejected. The following section analyses the relationship between UGC and SGC on BA.

7.6.3 Brand attitude

This study included attitude towards the brand to determine how the use of influencers can influence an Instagram user's BA. An attitude towards the brand can be defined as an "enduring, learned predispositions to behave consistently toward a given class of objects" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2001:25). Thus, BA is related to the degree of likeability and favourable view of a brand and has been used to assess the effectiveness of marketing activities (Ahn & Back, 2018). In this study, BA was measured using a six-item, 7-point semantic differential scale. The hypotheses in relation BA are presented in Table 7.17.

Table 7.17:
Hypothesis – brand attitude

Attitude towards the brand	
H _{03A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', do not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03D}	The interaction between the system-generated cues (SGC), 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence attitude towards the brand.
H _{03E}	The use of an influencer in Instagram does not influence brand attitude.

Hypotheses H_{03A}, H_{03B}, H_{03C} and H_{03D} failed to be rejected at a 95% confidence level. Therefore, there was no significant difference between the mean value for UGC and SGC on BA. Some differences in the mean values will be interpreted per hypothesis hereafter.

7.6.3.1 H_{03A}: User-generated content and brand attitude

The mean values for advertising disclosure and BA are presented below in Table 7.18.

Table 7.18:
Results – user-generated content

User-Generated Content

Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
	5.98	6.19	0.106

According to Table 7.18, there was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between the mean values for UGC on BA. The difference in mean value was 0.21 and P value 0.106. The difference in attitude towards the brand in relation to advertising disclosure has been proposed in the literature. Boerman *et al.* (2014) and Wojdyski and Evans (2016) reported significant negative effects of advertising disclosure on BA. When a sponsorship disclosure is included, any suspicion of why the content was posted turns into certainty about why an influencer depicts a brand in a post. De Veirman and Hudders' (2020) findings also showed that including a sponsorship disclosure (compared with no disclosure) in Instagram negatively affects BA through enhanced advertisement recognition, which activates advertisement scepticism.

Advertising disclosure may, therefore, prime consumers to think the influencer is biased, which results in less favourable attitudes towards the brand (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). The direction of the results for advertising disclosure is aligned throughout the literature (Evans *et al.*, 2017a; Van Reijmersdal *et al.*, 2016). The following section interprets the relationship between the number of follower and BA.

7.6.3.2 H_{03B}: System-generated cues, followers, on brand attitude

The mean values for the number of followers on BA are presented in Table 7.19.

Table 7.19:
Result – system-generated cues (1)

System-Generated Cues (1)

Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
	6.06	6.11	0.672

According to the results, there was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between the mean values of SGC on BA. The difference between the mean values was 0.05, which was small. Therefore, it can be proposed the number of followers did not affect BA. The marketing literature about influence and the number of followers on BA is constrained. The marketing literature has determined the effects of SC on BA, but not the number of followers on SC. It has been proposed that higher perceived SC positively influences the attitude towards the promoted brand (Jin & Phua, 2014; Lee & Sundar, 2013). No studies have tested the direct relationship between the number of followers and BA. Nevertheless, there was a significant difference in mean values number for followers on BA.

According to the definition of BA, BAs have consistency, occur in a situation and can originate from previous brand associations in relation to marketing activities (Suh & Yi, 2006). The brand used in this study was a small (Trinity Athletics), relatively unknown brand in South Africa. Based on the low brand familiarity (mean value: 2.82), It can be deduced that most of the respondents in this study are not aware of the brand. Therefore, the respondents did not have preconceived attitudes towards the brand. In addition, the number of followers is concerned with the influencer and not the brand, meaning that BA is not necessarily formed through an influencer's followers. According to focus group 2, brands should focus on the number of followers who follow the brand and not necessarily the influencer's number of followers. The second SGC (authority heuristic) is analysed hereafter.

7.6.3.3 H_{03C}: System-generated cue, authority heuristic, and brand attitude

The mean values for authority heuristic on BA are presented in Table 7.20

**Table 7.20:
Results – system-generated cues (2)**

System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
		5.99	6.18

According to the results, there were no significant differences between the mean values for BA. Therefore, hypothesis H_{03C} failed to be rejected. The difference in mean values for the factors of authority heuristic was 0.19. According to the mean value, the respondents had a more positive attitude towards the brand when the authority heuristic was not present on the influencer's profile. As stated in section 7.6.2.3, respondents shared more similarities with an influencer with no authority heuristic. Respondents were less interested in forming a relationship with an influencer who contained an authority heuristic. In this case, the authority heuristic led to a lower degree of similarity between the influencer and their audience and desire to form a relationship with the influencer. In turn, this has led to a lower mean value on the respondents' attitude towards the brand. Therefore, an influencer was perceived as more professional and 'further away' when containing an authority heuristic.

7.6.3.4 H_{03D}: The interaction between user-generated content and system-generated cues does not influence brand attitude

The significant values for the interaction effect between UGC, advertising disclosure and SGC, followers and authority heuristic are presented in Table 7.21

**Table 7.21:
Results – brand attitude – interaction effect**

Interaction Effects

	Significance
Followers x Authority Heuristic	0.730
Followers x Disclosure	0.055
Authority x Disclosure	0.927
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure	0.912

As noticeable in Table 7.21, there was no interaction effect between UGC and SGC at a 95% confidence level. However, at a 90% confidence level, the interaction effect between advertising disclosure and the number of followers was significant ($P < 0.1$). According to the results in Chapter 6, respondents exposed to advertising disclosure and a high number of followers are less sensitive to advertising disclosure compared with a low number of followers. According to the results, it can be presumed respondents are more receptive of the advertising disclosure when an influencer with a high number of followers discloses advertising. This finding can be attributed to respondents being more acceptive of an influencer's content with a high number of followers, as they are more likely to advertise products on Instagram due to their audience size and reach.

Stated as an objective and hypothesis of this study, this study measured BA in the data collection instrument before and after the exposure to an influencer. Table 7.22 contains the BA differences in mean values before and after the exposure and the significant differences according to a paired sample t-test.

Table 7.22:
Results – brand attitude – pre-post test

Group	BA Before Exposure	BA After Exposure	Difference	Sig:
Group 1	5.53	5.94	0.41	0.001*
Group 2	5.82	6.22	0.4	0.029*
Group 3	5.70	5.81	0.11	0.153
Group 4	5.70	5.95	0.25	0.012*
Group 5	5.65	5.93	0.28	0.013*
Group 6	5.76	6.14	0.38	0.038*
Group 7	5.77	6.27	0.50	0.011*
Group 8	5.95	6.42	0.47	0.012*

Note: *Significant at the $P < 0.05$ level

According to Table 7.22, all groups except Group 3 had P values less than 0.05 (significant). The BA after the exposure to the influencer had higher mean values for all groups. The results in Table 7.22 support the notion that the use of an influencer has a positive effect on an Instagram user's attitude towards the promoted brand (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Nouri, 2018). Interestingly, the BA increased for all groups irrespective of the effects of the independent variables (advertising disclosure, number of followers or authority heuristic). It can be concluded the mere presence of an influencer alongside a brand can positively influence the brand attitude of Instagram users. The effects of the independent variables on PI are analysed hereafter.

7.6.4 Purchase intention

Purchase intention (PI) was included in this study to further the marketing literature's understanding of how consumers perceive influencer advertising on Instagram. More information was needed on the influence of advertising disclosure, the number of followers and authority heuristics on PI on Instagram. PI can be defined as the psychological stage or a determination process of consumers where the consumer forms a genuine willingness to act towards a product or brand (Pandey *et al.*, 2018). The following section will discuss the effects UGC and SGC have on a consumer's PI. The hypotheses for PI are presented in Table 7.23.

**Table 7. 23:
Hypotheses – purchase intention**

Purchase Intention	
H _{04A}	User-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04B}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'followers', does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04C}	The system-generated cue (SGC), 'authority heuristic', does not significantly influence purchase intention.
H _{04D}	The interaction between the system generated cues (SGC) 'followers' and 'authority heuristic', and user-generated content (UGC) does not significantly influence purchase intention.

Hypotheses H_{04A}, H_{04B}, H_{04C} and H_{04D} all failed to be rejected at a 95% confidence level. Therefore, there were no significant differences in the mean values for UGC and SGC, on PI. Some differences in the mean values will be interpreted per hypothesis hereafter.

7.6.4.1 H_{04A}: User-generated content and purchase intention

The first hypothesis analysed is H_{04A}, which determined the influence of UGC on SGC.

The results for H_{04A} are presented below in Table 7.24.

**Table 7. 24:
Results – user-generated content**

User-Generated Content			
Disclosure	Disclosure	No Disclosure	Significance
		5.33	5.56

According to Table 7.24, the difference in mean value was 0.23 and P value 0.114. Although the difference in mean values between advertising disclosure and PI was not significant, no disclosure reported a higher mean value (5.56). The difference between advertising disclosure and PI can be explained by the persuasion knowledge model (PKM). By nature, explicitly disclosed sponsorship heightens a sense of persuasion, which decreases motivation to comply with the recommendations in the advertisement (Kim & Lee, 2017). Therefore, when an advertisement is disclosed, the viewers' persuasion knowledge increases. As presented by the results in Table 7.24, the increased persuasion knowledge from advertising disclosure leads to a lower mean value on PI. Hereafter, the SGC, the number of followers on PI will be analysed.

7.6.4.2 H_{04B}: System-generated cue, followers, on purchase intention

The mean values for the number of followers on PI are presented below in Table 7.25.

Table 7. 25:
Results – system-generated cues (1)

System-Generated Cues (1)			
Followers	High Followers	Low Followers	Significance
		5.49	5.40

According to Table 7.25, the difference in mean values of the SGC, number of followers, on PI was insignificant. The difference in mean value was 0.09 and the P value 0.534. According to the literature, a higher number of followers has a positive influence on PI (Jin & Phua, 2014; Weismueller *et al.*, 2020). For this study, the number of followers led to higher mean values for PI. When social media influencers have many followers, consumers perceive them as more credible, which positively affects PI (Jin & Phua, 2014). Also, the number of followers is a sign of popularity and consumers are more influenced by popular influencers (Weismueller *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, when an influencer has a higher number of followers, they are perceived as more popular. In turn, the increase in popularity has led to a higher mean value for purchase intention.

7.6.4.3 H_{04C}: System-generated cue, authority heuristic, on purchase intention

The mean values of the authority heuristic on PI are presented below in Table 7.26.

Table 7. 26:
Results – system-generated cues (2)

System-Generated Cues (2)			
Authority Heuristic	Badge	No Badge	Significance
		5.36	5.52

According to Table 7.26, the difference in mean value was 0.16 and P value 0.296. Therefore, H_{04C} failed to be rejected, as there was no significant difference in mean values for PI. However, the differences in mean values indicated that ‘no authority heuristic’ led to greater mean value on PI than an authority heuristic. The literature that determines the effect of an Instagram authority heuristic on PI is limited. A singular study has proposed that users are not more likely to act on or share content that originates from verified accounts than from unverified accounts (Vaidya *et al.*, 2019).

Although not supported by the literature, the increase in PI for no authority heuristic can be attributed to the influencer being perceived as more at an “arm’s length”. An influencer without the authority heuristic could be perceived as more down to earth and more connectable. These findings are supported by the results in Chapter 6. The authority heuristic did not make an influencer more credible, easier to connect with or influence the BA positively. The authority heuristic led to a lower mean value on a consumer’s PI.

7.6.4.4 H_{04D}: The interaction between user-generated content and system-generated cues on purchase intention

**Table 7. 27:
Results – purchase intention – interaction effect**

Interaction Effects	
	Significance
Followers x Authority Heuristic	0.658
Followers x Disclosure	0.186
Authority x Disclosure	0.186
Followers x Authority Heuristic x Disclosure	0.485

According to Table 7.27, there were no significant interaction effects between advertising disclosure, the number of followers or authority heuristic on PI. Therefore, hypotheses failed to be rejected at a 95% confidence level. Hypotheses H_{04A}, H_{04B}, H_{04C} and H_{04D} were supported. The following section will conclude the results presented in this section. The three independent variables will be discussed hereafter.

7.6.5 Summary of the independent variables

The following section reviews the findings of this chapter. The effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables are discussed and their potential impact on an influencer's Instagram profile.

7.6.5.1 Advertising disclosure

Advertising disclosure exerted the most of the three independent variables on SC, PSR, BA and PI. However, the 'no advertising disclosure' scenario had the most positive influence on all four dependent variables. Advertising disclosure exerted the most influence because of its inherent nature. The influencer's content was perceived as less authentic and created for promotional purposes when advertising was disclosed.

In summary, the influencer investigated in this study was perceived as less credible when advertising was disclosed. The difference between the mean values for advertising disclosure and SC was significant. Respondents were less interested in forming a relationship with an influencer who created content for promotional purposes. It seemed almost as if the respondents became disinterested in the influencer once advertising was disclosed. The relationship between BA and advertising disclosure reported the highest mean value for the independent variable, UGC. The respondents' attitude towards the brand reported lower mean values when advertising was disclosed. Last, advertising disclosure also led to lower mean values for PI.

It can be inferred from the results that users of Instagram prefer natural, authentic brand content versus disclosed advertised content. Advertising disclosure enhances persuasion knowledge and, in turn, an enhanced persuasion knowledge has a negative effect on how

the influencer is perceived. Also, activating persuasion knowledge negatively affects the way Instagram users perceive the brand and willingness to consider the brand in their consideration set.

7.6.5.2 Number of followers

Of the three independent variables, the number of followers had the least effect on the dependent variables. Focus group 2 and the pre-test proposed the number of followers would be the most influential variable in determining a source's credibility. Contrastingly, the number of followers had little to no effect on an influencer's perceived credibility.

Also, the desire to form a PSR with an influencer with more followers was higher than with fewer followers. This result could be attributed to the notion that users of Instagram want to form relationships with influencers who have more than 10 000 followers, as these influencers are perceived as more popular. According to the social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and meaning transfer model (Roy & Jain, 2017), if an individual follows an influencer who is perceived as popular, the follower perceives themselves as more popular (Ozan, 2018). However, the number of followers had little to no effect on BA or PI. Therefore, apart from a wider audience reach with more followers, this study concludes that a higher number of followers (> 87 000) do not necessarily provide a brand with any benefits in terms of BA or PI of the product.

7.6.5.3 Authority heuristic

There were no significant differences in the mean values in relation to authority heuristic on the four dependent variables. An influencer's profile that contains an authority heuristic led to a lower mean value of influencer credibility, the desire to form a PSR, BA and PI. These findings are contrary to Instagram's idea of authority heuristic. According to the information site of Instagram (2019), the badge means the platform has confirmed the user account is the authentic presence of the celebrity, influencer or international brand that it represents. The badge is supposed to bring credibility to the account. This study reported the opposite results to Instagram's perceived idea of the authority heuristic.

Instead, the authority heuristic led to lower mean values than an authority heuristic on all four dependent variables. The following section will discuss the managerial implications in relation to the results of this study.

7.7 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

After the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, several managerial implications were derived from the results. It is important to note certain recommendations adhere to the parameters of the study. Consequently, recommendations are made for influencers with between 10 000 and 90 000 followers and female millennial Instagram users. Where specified, recommendations pertain to influencers with more followers. These implications are discussed in this section.

7.7.1 Advertising disclosure on Instagram

The independent variable that exerted the most influence on the dependent variables was advertising disclosure (UGC). According to the FTC (2013), sponsored content must be disclosed in social media. According to the result of this study, the explicit disclosure of advertising has many negative effects on how the influencer's content is perceived. Advertising disclosure also has a negative effect on an influencer's perceived credibility and followers' desire to form relationships with the influencer. Therefore, this study proposes the following recommendations for influencers and brands in relation to advertising disclosure:

7.7.1.1 Disclosing of advertising for the influencer

When influencers disclose advertising on Instagram, it is recommended it be kept as subtle as possible. Hashtags at the end of the text content on the post are among the subtle ways of disclosing advertising (Müller & Maier, 2018). Studies of online reading behaviour propose that information near the top left corner of the page is most likely to

be seen first. Then it is followed by information horizontally branching rightward from the top left, and then down the page in the form of an F (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016).

Therefore, it is recommended advertising disclosure be included in the bottom right of the verbal content. From a holistic perspective of an Instagram post, if the advertising disclosure is located at the bottom right, the disclosure has the least chance of being seen by an Instagram user. Also, on Instagram, content can contain up to 30 hashtags. Therefore, it is recommended that advertising disclosure be in the middle of other hashtags in the form of a #ad or #advert. If advertising disclosure is only seen at the end of the content, the viewer may have already formed their opinion and attitude towards the content. In turn, the advertising disclosure may have less impact on a viewer's persuasion knowledge than disclosure located at the top left.

If explicit advertising disclosure is part of the influencer's advertising policy, this study makes the following recommendations. The influencer's audience needs to view the brand or product recommendation coming from the influencer without external brand influence (Veirman & Hudders, 2020). For example, communicating with the audience that the brand recommendation is based on the influencer's truth and that of the influencer's perception. This communication can be done by explicitly disclosing no input from the brand on the product recommendation through the textual component of Instagram content.

Therefore, it is recommended Instagram influencers follow the recommendations above. These recommendations ensure influencer marketing content can be perceived as more authentic and truthful, which may have positive implications for brands in terms of persuasion (Müller & Christandl, 2019). An influencer who is perceived as more persuasive is more valuable to a brand as the influencer's audience are more willing to engage in the influencer's content, consider the brand and form positive attitudes towards the brand.

7.7.1.2 Disclosure of advertising for the brand

For brands, advertising disclosure enhances advertisement recognition, which has a negative effect on BA (Müller & Christandl, 2019; Roma & Aloini, 2019). Therefore, this study recommends the following for brands that use influencers to promote their products.

Brands should ensure the disclosure policies of the influencer are aligned with the disclosure policies of the brand. It would be nonsensical for brands to use influencers who do not disclose advertising if the policies of the brand state that advertising should be disclosed. Alignment of policies can be ensured through communication with the influencer.

Also, if advertising policies between influencer and brand align and advertising disclosure are included in the content, it is recommended that it is done subtly or uniquely. For example, including in the textual component of the post “look what I have been sent today” or “something awesome has arrived today at my doorstep”. Therefore, the relationships with the brand can be disclosed without explicitly disclosing the content has been sponsored or paid for.

7.7.2 Authenticity and similarity

Authenticity can be defined as the degree to which a person’s actions are congruent with his or her beliefs and desires despite external pressures. An influencer’s followers follow the influencer based on their content and personality characteristics. It can be apparent that an influencer’s following may be sensitive to changes in the influencer’s profile and content when promotional content is introduced. Therefore, this study proposes the following recommendation:

It is to the advantage of the influencer that their profile is free of an authority heuristic (blue tick in the top left corner of an Instagram profile). Authority heuristics can decrease the perceived similarity between an influencer and their audience. Not including a verification badge can be done by the influencer not verifying their profile through Instagram.

One of the dimensions that form part of source credibility was homophily. Homophily was among the dimensions positively influenced by UGC and SGC. This study recognised the importance of similarity between the target market and the influencer selected. Similarity between target market and influencer will lead to more acceptance of the advertising and a desire to respond or interact with the branded content. Similarity can be increased through communication on Instagram. Several ways can be used to communicate with an audience on Instagram. The influencer can add textual content about themselves in the biography section of a profile or interact with the audience through the content. Also, the influencer can respond to comments made by followers on the content and communicate directly with followers through the message component of Instagram.

7.7.3 The effects of number of followers

The results of this study propose that the number of followers of an Instagram profile is important for brands and influencers. Therefore, this study recommends the following for brands and influencers.

7.7.3.1 Audience size for the influencer

The number of followers has implications for an influencer. This study proposes that a higher number of followers (+/- 90 000) is not necessarily better for influencers. A high number of followers can make an influencer seem like a “follower collector”. Therefore, influencers should be clear about what they want from their profile and set possible parameters to the profile so brands know how the influencer perceives their audience. An influencer with a high number of followers is effective in developing brand awareness. Engagement with the audience can become challenging because of the high number of direct messages and comments on content due to the high number of followings.

Instead, influencers can set their parameters to a lower number of followers. Influencers can engage more actively with their audience when they have a low number of followers. Engagement with the content can increase the possibility of PSR (Boerman, 2020). In

turn, PSR increases the influencer's perceived persuasion, which can have positive implications for the advertised content.

Influencers should decide on set parameters in relation to their number of followers. The number of followers can be a deciding factor for brands about whether they chose to use the influencer in their influential marketing mix. The implications of the number of followers for brands are discussed next.

7.7.3.2 Selecting influencers according to their audience size

As proposed above, brands can select influencers with an audience size of large, small or anything in between. The influencer's audience size is a determinant factor for brands to achieving their marketing goals. For brands that want to use Instagram influencers to develop brand awareness, an influencer with a larger audience is more applicable.

Brands that want to use Instagram influencers to gain consumer insights, develop consumer relationships and build loyalty among consumers, a smaller audience may be more applicable. An influencer with a smaller audience can actively engage with the follower's comments and direct messages. More attention and information can be given to individual followers. It is recommended for brands that want to target a niche market with a specialised product to select influencers with fewer followers and more engagement with the followers.

In conclusion, more is not necessarily better. Before selecting an influencer, brands should determine their policies and objectives for using an Instagram influencer and select an influencer accordingly. Influencers should determine their parameters with their audience size. The influencer must decide whether they want to be perceived as engaging with their audience or as an effective influencer building brand awareness.

7.7.4 Influencer selection

One of the most important aspects of influential marketing is selecting the right influencers for a brand. Before selecting an influencer, it is recommended that a brand analyses the

influencer's audience. It is recommended the influencer's audience suit the desired target market of the brand.

It is recommended that brands select influencer who are users of the brand and products the brand has to offer.

When followers ask questions about the brand and the influencer's experiences with their products, informative information about the product can be conveyed to the followers. Engagement can take place through the comments section and direct messaging on Instagram.

Marketers should also consider the influencer's attitude towards the brand. It is recommended a brand select influencers who have a positive attitude towards the brand. In turn, an influencer with a positive attitude towards the brand can produce content that will be more authentic and believable. It is suggested the brand provides the influencer with products to use and request feedback from the influencer in relation to the quality of the product to ensure the influencer has a positive BA. Brands are further encouraged to communicate with the influencer about their perceptions of the brand.

It is proposed brands ensure congruence between the brand and influencer. An influencer is used to develop the brand image of a brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019). When a fitness brand promotes a product through influential advertising, it is to the advantage of the brand that the influencer replicates the desired consumer of the brand. The brand can inspect the influencer's content to ensure congruence and that the content is reflective of the desired brand image that the brand wishes to portray.

Influencers are effective in developing brand attitude and brand image (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). It is suggested an influencer's profile reflect the desired image and personality of the brand. In other words, brands can select influencers based on their content to reflect the personality of the brand. For example, if a brand wants to be perceived as rugged (Keller, 2001), it is recommended the influencer's content be adventurous, outdoorsy and daring.

7.7.5 Instagram's complexity

Marketing through influencers is complex. Many aspects of an influencer and components of their profile can be considered by a brand. For example, the number of followers, authority cues, number of following, average engagement on post through likes and engagement with posts through comments. When selecting an influencer for marketing purposes, it is suggested that managers do not select an influencer based on one profile cue or element.

Rather, managers can determine a profile's suitability from a holistic perspective where all SGCs and UGC work together to influence the influencer audience. Most importantly, it can be recommended that brands select influencers based on their interaction with their followers. The interaction can be determined by analysing an influencer's content to determine whether they are responding to the comments made by their audience and whether their hashtags are trending.

7.7.6 Influencers in the holistic marketing mix

A marketing mix has been defined as the set of marketing tools that the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to the results of this study, the use of an influencer as a component of the marketing mix has a positive influence on consumer responses. Influencers can influence a consumer's brand attitude and intention to purchase a product. Influencers should be included as a component of a large marketing campaign. For example, influential marketing can be used alongside television advertisements, Facebook advertisements and YouTube campaigns. Branded products can be provided to an influencer after which the influencer posts content on their profile. The textual element of the content can include links that drive traffic towards the website of the brand.

The purpose of marketing is building strong, favourable and unique brand associations, This study proposes that influential marketing be included as a component of the marketing mix. Influential marketing can assist brands in developing their brand image and brand meaning by using sources who are credible and congruent with the desired

image of the brand. The use of influencers also affects how consumers perceive a brand. In turn, the use of an influencer can assist in developing positive brand judgements.

7.7.7 Forming parasocial relationships in Instagram

Parasocial relationships (PSR) form on the interaction between media user and media figure (Tsai & Men, 2013) and can form between influencers in social media (De Bérail *et al.*, 2019). Influencers cannot form a relationship with all their followers. Instead, an influencer's followers develop PSR with the influencer through engagement with their content. When a follower develops PSR with an influencer, the content of the influencer is perceived as more persuasive. This study proposed that advertising disclosure on an influencer's content withdraw the affections of PSR. Therefore, this study proposes the following for influencers to increase their followers' desire to form PSR.

7.7.7.1 Engaging content

An influencer's visual content on Instagram is the element of a profile with which followers engage. To increase engagement with content between followers and influencers the textual component can be adapted. For example, Influencers can ask questions about their product experiences on the content and request followers to respond in the comments section. Through the comment sections, followers can see each other's experiences and the influencer can engage with their audience through the comments.

Also, to increase engagement on content, it is recommended that influencer have a fixed set of 30 hashtags to include into every post. Hashtags are used to categorise content and make it more discoverable. Hashtags are clickable. Anyone who clicks on an Instagram hashtag or conducts an Instagram hashtag search will see a page showing all the posts tagged with that hashtag.

7.7.7.2 Frequency of posting content

For an audience to develop PSR with an influencer, the influencer should post content regularly to Instagram. It has been recommended that influencers post up to seven times per week (Myers, 2020; Williams, 2020). Therefore, it is recommended that influencers plan their content. According to Williams (2020), how often you post on Instagram does not affect the visibility of content; however, consistency does. Influencers can use apps through which the content can already be constructed (adding editing visual content, description of the post, geographic location and hashtags). In this manner, influencers can plan their content and frequently appear in their audience's newsfeed. Frequent appearance in the followers' newsfeed will keep them up-to-date with the influencer's life and events. In turn, PSR will form between followers and influencers.

In conclusion, the formation of PSR is developed through engagement with influencers' content and ensuring consistent posting of content on Instagram. The limitation of the study is discussed hereafter.

7.8 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study are explained in this section. Although these limitations are not inhibiting to the results of this study, it can contribute to possible future research topics, which are discussed after considering the limitations.

7.8.1 Extraneous variables

A possible limitation of the study was the influence of extraneous variables (Zikmund et al., 2013:232). This study was conducted in a time when the world was battling with the COVID-19 pandemic (2020). South Africa, the place where this study was conducted, was on lockdown (21 March 2020) whereby law, nobody could follow their usual outside exercise routine. Data collection commenced on 12 June 2020; therefore, respondents' attitude towards exercising and influencers who promote fitness brands could have been affected by the COVID restrictions.

7.8.2 Population of the study

In this study, a cohort of Generation Y consumers was investigated, limiting the results of the study to a specific cohort (18–25). The results could thus not apply to other age groups. However, the study set out only to assess consumers in this specific group due to their familiarity and relationship with Instagram, and their Instagram usage patterns. Generation Y tends to be more active on Instagram than many older groups (Helal *et al.*, 2018). The population of the study consisted of female participants to further the understanding of how female users of Instagram perceive influencers who promote fitness clothing. Also, what UGC and SGC on Instagram are most influential in influencing female consumer responses in Instagram.

7.8.3 Instagram profile

The Instagram profile used in this study was not a real profile. A fictitious Instagram profile was developed so that elements of the profile could be manipulated. The number of followers, advertising disclosure and authority heuristic were manipulated according to the $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects experimental design. The necessary manipulation checks prevented the use of a real profile. On an active Instagram profile, UGC and SGC could not have been manipulated according to the experimental design.

The limitations of this study consisted of extraneous variables, the population of the study and use of a fictitious influencer. The following section will discuss the changes future studies can make to expand the understanding of the role of influencers on Instagram.

7.9 FUTURE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the study, topics arose that could be understood better through future research. These topics are discussed in this section.

7.9.1 Population of the study

In the study, as mentioned earlier, a cohort of Generation Y consumers was investigated. Future research could contribute by assessing more than one population cohort, or by assessing another population cohort, such as the older Generation Y consumers, or even Generation Z consumers. All the respondents in this study were in South Africa, which was one of the sampling stipulations for the study. Future research could assess the variables of this study in a different country. The effects of UGC and SGC may differ among audiences of different ages and cultures. Hence, future research suggests that age may provide greater insights into the role of age and culture in influential marketing.

7.9.2 Instagram profile

This study provided the respondents with four screenshots of a fictitious influencer's profile. Therefore, the respondents were limited in choosing the content and interacting with content on an Instagram profile. It is recommended that in future research a study be conducted using a live profile by which respondents can scroll through content. This non-fictional profile will ensure the respondents will be able to see whom the influencer is following, view more content and read more comments. In turn, a non-fictional rather than a fictitious profile may likely influence the degree of PSR and SC perceptions of an influencer.

7.9.2.1 Non-fictional influencer

This study used a fictitious influencer. In the factorial experiment, it is recommended for future research that a non-fictional influencer be used to increase the validity of a study. Alongside a real influencer, the exposure to more of the influencer's content is possible and recommended. Also, follower categories that vary in size can be researched. For example, the influence of 100,000 and 300,000 followers on the four consumer responses investigated in this study could be assessed.

7.9.3 Social media

Instagram is one of the most popular social networks worldwide and currently the most used social networking site for collaborations between brands and social media influencers (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). However, as this study only focused on Instagram, the applicability of the results to other social networking sites is limited. Thus, it would be useful for researchers to examine influential marketing within the context of other social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

7.9.4 Constructs and variables

The variables of this study are important to aid understanding of the effectiveness of advertising disclosure, number of followers and authority heuristics in influencer endorsements. It is recognised that other factors and variables could be relevant. Consequently, future research could examine other cues of Instagram such as the number of likes, following follower ratio and different textual content on the Instagram content. Research on other cues could provide marketers with a greater understanding of Instagram and its cues. Future research could study the influence of UGC and SGCs on different variables in the literature. For example, the influence of SGC and UGC on the dimensions of brand equity (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017).

7.9.5 Product category

This study included the fitness industry as the product category. Therefore, the results of this study are limited to the fitness industry. It is proposed that in future research a different product category be explored. Future potential categories to explore include kitchenware, make-up or lifestyle. These categories were proposed as popular trends in the qualitative pre-test phase of this study and could thus be viewed as relevant for consideration within the South African environment. The following section discussed the contribution of this study.

7.10 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

The primary aim of this study was to contribute to the knowledge on influential advertising on Instagram. No research has previously been conducted to determine which UGC (advertising disclosure) or SGC (followers and authority heuristic) on Instagram are most influential in affecting an influencer's SC, consumers' desire to form PSR with the influencer, consumers' BA and PI linked to the influencer. The purpose was to address this knowledge gap to ensure marketers select an influencer most suitable to the target audience of the brand.

The theoretical chapters of this study identified the need to clarify how UGC and SGC work in Instagram. This study was partly conducted to further our understanding of influential marketing on Instagram and the consumer responses thereof. Also, this study was devoted to enhancing the marketing literature's understanding of using influencers to promote brands alongside credible sources. This study has contributed to the literature's understanding of influential marketing in numerous ways.

First, this study enhanced the literature on advertising disclosure (UGC) on an Instagram influencer's profile and its effect on consumer responses. The results of this study confirm advertising disclosure enhances persuasion knowledge (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019), which has a negative effect on consumers responses. The influencer's source credibility and the consumers' desire to form parasocial relationships with an influencer were identified as the two consumer responses that were mostly affected by advertising disclosure. This result confirms the findings of Chen (2017) and Evans, Phua, Lim and Jun (2017b) who concluded that advertising disclosure negatively influences a source's perceived credibility.

Second, this study enhanced the literature in relation to an influencer's number of followers (SGC) and its effects on consumer responses. The results of this study clarify the confusion between Westerman *et al.* (2012) and Jin and Phua (2014). Westerman *et al.* (2012) reported an inverse relationship between an influencer's number of followers and source credibility. The credibility of a source decreased as the number of followers increased. Jin and Phua (2014) proposed an increase in source credibility when an

individual has a higher number of followers. This study supports the findings of Jin and Phua (2014) that a higher number of followers increases a source's perceived credibility.

Third, this study enhanced the literature in relation to authority heuristic (SGC) on an influencer's profile and its effect on consumer responses. The results of this study provide evidence that a 'blue tick' (SGC) on an Instagram profile is not effective in influencing consumer responses for influencers with followers between 10 000 and 90 000. The results of this study are contrary to the literature on online consumer reviews that suggest authority heuristics (SGC) increase a source's perceived credibility (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). Also, this study contributes to the literature of Instagram that the 'blue tick' has little to no effect on SC, PSR, BA and PI.

Fourth, this study addressed the concerns of Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) and De Veirman *et al.* (2017). Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) proposed the need for more literature on the use of influencers over celebrities for improving BE and their effects on BA. De Veirman *et al.* (2017) proposed the need for greater awareness of how consumers form BA in social media marketing to improve marketing strategies. This study proposes that advertising disclosure (UGC) and authority heuristic (SGC) are both elements of an Instagram influencer's profile that influence BA. In addition, this study contributes to the literature on the use of influencers on Instagram, as it proposes the use of an influencer could have positive implications on BA and PI.

Last, this study contributes to the overall understanding of influential marketing on Instagram. For example, what type of influencer brands should look for and what elements of an Instagram influencer profile are most effective in influencing consumer responses. This study has also proposed several managerial implications for brands to increase the effectiveness of using influencers as a component of brand building.

7.11 CONCLUSION

Traditional marketing methods (print, billboard, television and radio) are still useful in building brand equity, but these efforts are expensive for brands with small target markets. Advanced technology introduced the Internet and at the beginning of the 21st century,

new social media platforms presented marketers with exciting advertising possibilities. Instagram has become one of fastest-growing social media platforms on which marketers incorporate experienced brand users as promotional tools for the brand.

The existing marketing literature provided some information about other social media platforms, which was not conclusive and could not be assumed applicable to Instagram. Little research had been conducted in relation to the effectiveness of influential marketing on Instagram explicitly.

Thus, this study set out to determine the influence of UGC and SGC on consumer responses on Instagram. Specifically, the effect of advertising disclosure (UGC), the number of followers (SGC) and authority heuristic (SGC) on an influencer's profile on how Instagram users perceive an influencer's credibility and determine whether the consumers want to form PSR with the influencer. And, in turn, how those cues affect consumers' attitude towards the brand and their intention to purchase the brand.

The results showed elements of an influencer's profile do influence the way an influencer is perceived and the way the promoted content on the influencer's profile is perceived. Disclosure of advertising (UGC) and its effects on whether the audience wants to form a relationship with the influencer was the most significant result. It was suggested that influencers advertise in the most subtle way to prevent activating persuasion knowledge that negatively affects PSR. Besides presenting the results of this study, recommendations were made to assist future researchers in expanding knowledge in the literature and understanding influential advertising on Instagram.

The ultimate goal of marketing is building strong, favourable and unique consumer-based brand equity. Establishing a positive brand image, brand personality and brand awareness are important elements in considering appropriate social media channels. The results of this study confirmed the power of influential marketing on Instagram. However, Instagram has grown from a platform where influencers often 'facetuned' their bodies to acquire higher number of followers to a new era of transparency. The shift has been from pretend to truthful; for example, Instagram influencers are happy to post content with #nofilter. Now Instagram users expect high credibility from influencers and brands should respect the implications. Instagram users follow influencers who are reflections of

themselves with similar experiences, finding comfort in online relationships when the content is relatable. As a successful brand-building influencer on Instagram recently explained, “Social media can be a gift, a fountain of knowledge, a place where people can go for support, community and guidance. You just have to follow authentic people who are always happy to keep growing and learning.”

Therefore, it is hoped this study provided a deeper insight into the effective use of influencers for influential marketing on Instagram, insight on how Instagram users form relationships with influencers and how elements of an Instagram influencer’s profile affect consumer responses.

Influencer marketing on Instagram is something to pay attention to. The world is used to influencers like the Kardashians, but we all have our own Kardashians in our sub-culture groups. These Kardashians are called influencers and have large impact for a brand when used as part of the brand-building strategy.

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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

FOCUS GROUP 1

Focus group 2 was conducted on 3 September 2019. The following table is a summary of the subjects that were part of the focus group 2.

Participant 1	Participants 2	Participants 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 22 • Gender: female • Employed • Hobbies: outdoors hiking and general fitness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 24 • Gender: female • Freelance programmer • Hobbies: climbing and mountaineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 23 • Gender: female • Student • Hobbies: reading, socialising and active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 25 • Gender: female • Student • Hobbies: reading research and dancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 25 • Gender: female • Traveller • Hobbies: yoga, running, hiking

Instagram

1. What is the first thing you check when you open Instagram?

An individual's newsfeed was the first checked component of Instagram for 3/5 of the respondents. It was a mixture between whether participants would look at stories first or posts. A majority of the participants proclaimed posts and then stories.

Two of the five participants preferred stories over feed-posted content. When questioned about their preference, stories were perceived as more "real" and updated than feed-posted content. Due to Instagram's algorithms, certain followers gain preference in stories. Therefore, users could log into Instagram and instantly see what their friends and followers were busy with in the last 24 hours. Stories are also perceived as more live and

in the “now” than posts which could be outdated by the time its posted and the amount of editing that a post can undergo.

One respondent said that if they had recently posted content to their feed, the first thing they would do upon logging into Instagram is to check the content’s likes and comments.

2. What do you like most about Instagram, above other social media platforms?

Instagram is visually orientated and has less clutter compared to other social networks. Instagram is more concise; therefore, users can easily decipher what friends are doing upon a quick story search. Instagram was also noted as more mobile friendly than other social media sites. Participants consistently emphasised their preference for Instagram’s algorithms that would present their close friends and more preferred follower’s content to them first.

Moreover, most participants emphasised the ability to develop their social identity on Instagram as easier and more effective than other social media sites (Facebook) due to its image only orientation. Also, participants preferred Instagram above other social networks based on the little amounts of clutter that would filter through onto their news feed.

System-generated cues

1. When you go onto someone’s Instagram profile, what is among the first things you observe?

The first things mentioned by some of the participants that neither the literature nor the researcher considered was the mutual friends of an individual. The participants were interested in the mutual friends to understand why another user would follow them and whether it would be someone they would like to follow back.

Moreover, all participants referred to the number of followers as an important SGC that are among the first things they would observe. Thereafter, the first few posts, and the “theme” of the profile would be considered. The theme of the profile refers to the

individual's identity. For example, what type of filters are being used, what type of content is the user posting and how is the user portraying themselves in the content (selfies, fitness shots, social).

The first few posts were also referred to as a reflection of the "profile quality". The profile quality would be judged by the photo quality, captions and comments on posts. One participant described the number of selfies to be an influential factor in their perception of the individual.

The participants also emphasised the importance of comments on posted content. Comments were perceived as a reflection of authenticity and the way the user would interact with their audience.

- If an Influencer wants to follow the user, they do not necessarily check the influencer's followers
- Number of followers are noted among the first thing.
- Check first few posts to see what is written in caption and comments to determine the quality of content that is displayed on the profile. If the individual enjoys the content, they follow them.

Followers:

2. Among the many cues on Instagram, one of them are the number of followers:

a. What does the number of followers tell you about an individual?

The number of followers seemed to portray a unique meaning to each participant with shared similarities. All participants agreed on each other's points that were made. A point worth noting is that one of the participants mentioned that they believed that an attractive individual would have more followers than less attractive individuals.

The number of followers emphasised the popularity of an individual within their community, especially for influencers. Moreover, the number of followers also influenced the participants perceived quality of content. When a user had a high number of followers, the participants assumed that the content quality of the user would be high quality (photo quality, interaction through comments).

- The quality of the content if it's an individual.
- How well the person is known in their community X2.
- Their content appeals to a certain audience.
- The better looking someone is, the more followers they tend to have cause of their image that is appealing.
- It could be a specific moment that made the user famous. For athletes, they may have won a big race and for that time period they gained many followers.
- It differs between the type of user in the profile. For influencers and celebrities, the numbers matter more.
- The number of posts also becomes suspicious when a user has a lot of photos. The number of followers become questionable.

i. Do you perceive a person with many followers to be more authentic than someone with less followers?

- No x2
- One respondent mentioned they had met an influencer their real life did not represent their profile identity. The respondent mentioned that it seemed very fake.
- On Instagram the best foot is put forward.
- Two users mentioned that they were attracted to a user who showed their vulnerability before their audience.

ii. Do you feel someone can have too many followers so that they lose their credibility and become out of reach? (at what amount does this happens?)

- Yes: over 7 000
- 10 000
- 100 000
- If their content seemed worthy, the one user said they were less influenced by the number of followers

- Emphasis was placed again on the number of likes versus the number of comments on a photo as an element that shapes the user's authenticity and credibility

Following:

3. Another cue on Instagram that is prominent on a profile is the number of following:

a. What does the number of following tell you about an individual?

- If a user has a substantial higher number of following than followers, the content of the profile would be perceived as a lower quality.
- Who you follow is who you are influenced by? Therefore, by having many followings, the participant believed that the user was being influenced by too many people
- A participant mentioned that they are interested to see who the influencer is influenced by before they follow them. Therefore, the influencer's following.
- The people that the user follows shows authenticity of the profile
- One participant described the number of following that the individual has in common with the influencer influenced whether they would follow the influencer.

i. Do you feel someone can have too many followings?

- Yes, by all participants

ii. At what number do you think someone's following is too high?

- More than a 1000

Blue Tick:

4. Some profiles have a blue tick next to the name of the individual:

a. Do you know what the blue tick means?

Upon mentioning the blue tick, many of the participants weren't directly sure of what the researcher was referring to. Once the researcher elaborated on what the tick was and where it can be found, 4/5 participants became aware of what cue the researcher was referring to. Not all participants knew what the tick meant and how a profile obtained the tick. Some of the participants thought that the blue tick was obtained when your followers

surpass an amount, this is partly true, but there are other requirements as well. Requirements: authentic (Your account must represent a real person, registered business or entity), unique (Your account must be the unique presence of the person or business it represents), complete (Your account must be [public](#) and have a bio) and notable (Your account must represent a well-known, highly searched for person, brand or entity).

b. When you see a blue tick on an individual's profile, how does this influence your perception of the person?

- Famous, authentic and focused on sports players: "you're famous, you've made it")
- What the user posts is authentic content
- One participant referred to the blue tick as a cue that protects the influencer from fake accounts, elaborating on the thought chain of authenticity.

Likes:

5. Do you view the number of likes a post has accumulated?

- 4/5 participants immediately said yes, the other participant hesitated and said no.
- It was reported that in some countries the number of likes a post accumulates has been turned off, meaning that only the individual can see the number of likes the post has received but followers cannot. (should be checked)

a. Do you sometimes like a post because some of your friends have liked the post?

This question was not originally included in the focus group, but the researcher was interested to see whether the participants would be influenced by a bandwagon cue.

- One the respondents said they have stopped liking posts and prefer to scroll through their content. Other participants mentioned that they sometimes like a post because many of their friends have liked the post. (bandwagon cue: "others think this is good, so should I")

b. If an individual has a high number of followers and low number of likes on their post, does this influence your perception of the person?

- Most participants said yes. (literature?)
- One user mentioned that upon travelling they realised that if their photo was tagged at a popular tourist destination, their likes would drastically increase. This is due to geotagging on Instagram where an individual's content will show upon the search of a location. They also mentioned that many of the people who liked the image were unknown to them. Furthermore, the authenticity of the participants profiles was questionable because the number of likes on their content was inconsistent.
- One participant was adamant that they judge a profile based on the follower-like ration. This could mean that if an individual has many followers and low number of likes on their content, that their following was less authentic and questionable.
- Another participant placed emphasis on the comments on the content. The number of likes per post and the type of comments on a post shape the user's authenticity on a post.
- The number of likes on an image is important. If a follower has a high number of followers and low number of likes, the number of followers become questionable.

User-generated content

On Instagram, users post visually orientated content. This study is interested in the content that is posted by Influencers for marketing purposes.

1. Are you aware that when posting marketing/advertising orientated content, that it should be disclaimed? (#ad, #sponsored, "in partnership with" or Paid by)

- All the participants didn't know that an advert should be disclaimed. When asked the question there was a lot of confusion on the face of the participants. The literature has proposed that 83% of Instagram users aren't aware that a disclaimer is necessary on an advertised post.

a. Does an advert disclaimer change your perception of the individual who posted it?

- One participant agreed. They believed that if an influencer posts content of a brand that a follower does not have congruence with, it may change the follower's perception of the person. The participant continued to mention that if an influencer promotes a brand that they don't like that their perception of the post and the person is negatively affected. (The example was make-up brands that do not conduct animal testing on products "cruelty-free"). Thus far, the researcher has not found any literature that emphasises the influencer-brand-follower congruence as an influential component on social media.
- One participant mentioned that sponsored content decreased their perception of the influencer's authenticity. The motive to posting content becomes questionable.
- One of the participants mentioned that when some Instagram users are approached by a brand to promote their product, their social identity completely changes over time to better suit the brand (the example was make-up. The individual whole profile would become make-up and tutorial orientated after posting make-up related sponsored content
- One participant mentioned that an individual loses their identity upon posting sponsored content and disclaiming it.
- Another participant mentioned that an influencer's authenticity can be maintained when content posted was linked to their profile identity. If there was congruence between influencer's social identity and brand.

c. Do you think an influencer's content should be linked to their identity?

Mostly yes

Open discussion about Instagram usage:

2. What type of products or brand do you think are popular on Instagram at the moment?

- Events
- Gym orientated clothing
- Fitness orientated clothing
- Cars
- travelling

3. Are there any trends that you are aware of on Instagram?

- Health
- Documentation
- Showing lifestyle: micro-blogging
- Social cause products
- Food: making of food and recipes
- Headphones: everyone likes music

FOCUS GROUP 2

Focus group 2 was conducted on 26 September 2019. The following table is a summary of the subjects who were part of the focus group 2.

Participant 1	Participants 2	Participants 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 23 • Gender: female • Employed • Hobbies: outdoors hiking and general fitness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 24 • Gender: female • Student • Hobbies: Outdoors and socializing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 23 • Gender: female • Student • Hobbies: Personal trainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 25 • Gender: female • Student • Hobbies: Personal trainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 25 • Gender: female • Traveler • Hobbies: Yoga, Gym, Fitness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age: 25 • Gender: female

Good evening and thank you all for being here this evening. I really appreciate that you guys are willing to give up your time to be present here tonight, especially this time of year.

Tonight's focus group we will be discussing a very interesting topic, Instagram and influencers on Instagram. Also, how to form credible Instagram profiles that are more effective in promoting products and advertisements.

How this will work is, I have questions that I will ask, and you guys can answer. There is no specific order to answer the questions in and you can all "piggyback" from someone else's answer. Ideally, I would prefer if one person spoke at a time so that I can accurately transcribe this focus group.

Before we start, do you guys give me permission to record this focus group?

YES	NO
------------	-----------

Opening questions:

1. Finish the following sentence, when I log into Instagram, I start by ...
 - Content (1)
 - Stories (5)

2. Are you trying to build up your Instagram account?
 - Yes, by all participants

Influencers and marketing

1. Describe what you think an influencer is?
 - Someone who is trying to promote a product with many followers; “when you see they have it, you want it to”
 - Someone who wants to change the way other people think about something.
 - Someone who puts out knowledge that you were not aware of (also someone who educates their audience in their field of interest)
 - Someone who has communicated their background to their audience

2. Do you follow any influencers in Instagram? Why?
 - Challenges the way the individual thinks about certain topics and gives you a perspective of how other people think about things

3. Have you ever heard of Influencer marketing? How would you describe influencer marketing?
 - All said yes.

- An influencer has a certain reach, and people follow them for a certain reason which makes them perfect for product placement.
- Someone who can sell and promote products online to an audience.
- Free and cheap marketing

Parasocial Interaction

1. Do you have a favourite Influencer? (how long have you followed XXX for?)
 - Many of the participants said they have a few favourite influencers based on the influencers content and interests. For example; fashion, coaching and adventure
 - Only two participants answered, it ranged between 1.5 and 2 years
 - As you get to know the person you become more interested in them therefore the probability of unfollowing them becomes less.
2. Have you ever unfollowed an influencer?
 - Most participants said yes
 - Posting to much content and it became boring
 - Get to desperate for followers and building an audience
 - Too much promotional content.
 - They don't get personal with their followers
3. Do you share similar characteristics (relatable) with some of the influencers you follow?
 - Yes, you follow influencers because they are relatable, and they have had many the same experiences that you have had.
4. Have you ever found comfort in an online relationship (PSR)?
 - If the content is relatable
 - Yes.
 - Most of the participants said yes.

5. Are some Instagram influencers a role model to you?
 - Yes
 - Certain dimensions of their personality are relatable, for example, their free giving nature, goals or their physique.

6. How long before you find value in a relationship between you and an influencer?
 - The first answers were that relationships online happen over time
 - The participants would emphasise that the influencers content is what builds the relationship over time. Especially if they go back into the influencer's content the relationship strength increases.

7. Are all the Influencers you follow attractive?
 - Not all the influencers
 - About 70% of the influencers
 - 50/50

8. Are you more willing to follow an influencer that is attractive?
 - Yes, the general public are will be more willing to follow influencers that are stereotypically attractive.
 - The first thing you see when you analyse an influencers profile is their attractiveness.
 - Instagram is very much about face value and what you see.
 -

9. What makes an influencer attractive on Instagram?

Branding:

1. Do you follow any brands in Instagram? (if yes, why?)
 - Everybody said yes

- Clothing lines were among the most common brands to follow
 - Participants followed the clothing lines to stay up to date with new products and gather more information on the brand and new releases.
 - For specials and bargain purchases
2. When you come across a brand in Instagram, how do you determine the brand's quality?
- Number of followers
 - Type of athletes, who they are linked with (Influencers)
 - Most participants emphasised that a brand's quality would be determined by who they are linked with.
3. Do any of the influencers you follow promote brands/products in Instagram?
- Yes, most of the influencers were linked to some brand
 - When questioned about how many brands the participants agreed that it was mainly one brand for the influencers with a larger following.
4. Do you think an influencer promoting a product can influence your perception of a product/brand? why?
- The influencers influence the perception of the brand quality. This question was especially linked to clothing brands.
 - When someone actually uses the product, it changes their perception of the person who is using the product.
 - Someone else is trying it out and are comfortable in the clothing so it changes the perception of the brand.
 - If you follow the influencer, you can relate to them, so they are like a friend or someone you know who is recommending a product
5. When an influencer promotes a brand/product, do you think they should inform you that the content is paid/sponsored for? Why?

- 5/6 participants said that they should inform their audience when sponsored by a product.
 - When the influencer does not disclose the sponsored content, the participants emphasised that the content feels fake.
6. Does their disclosure change your perception of the brand?
- Yes, the brand is perceived as needing extra marketing
 - It puts up a barrier between the personal relationship with an influencer because they are sharing the content because they have to or want to.

Source Credibility:

1. Define a credible person in Instagram?
- Someone that's real, shows their mistakes, shows the bad times and the good times.
 - Someone who is honest about the product that they are promoting
 - Someone who shares their own knowledge through experiences with the brand
2. What makes someone attractive and more likable in Instagram?
- What they do in their daily lifestyle
 - The quality of the content they share
 - Someone that shares content across all spectrums of their life. Not just showing the highs or lows
 - When you can relate to someone
 - Someone who inspires you
 - Someone who shares how they got to where they are.
 - Relatable and genuine
3. Do you think someone who is attractive is more likable?
- Yes,

- Also, some participants emphasised the fact that the content and the reason for posting was among the main attributors to a person's attractiveness on Instagram.
 - When someone is good looking, it creates a sense of sceptically.
4. Define a person that is an **expert on Instagram**...
- The number of followers predicts a person's expertise
 - Someone who posts the right amount of content
 - Good quality photos and content
5. how do you determine an influencers expertise in Instagram?
- Number of followers
 - Number of likes on content. Mainly the ration between likes and followers
 - Number of likes were mentioned again. But this time the topic was the removal of likes on Instagram.
6. What components of an Influencers profile contributes to their expertise?
- Number of followers
 - The quality of the content
 - Theme throughout the whole page
 - Ratio of followers and following
 - The people who the influencer follows. This was based on influencers with a high number of followers and low number of following. (80 following)
7. When an expert promotes a product in Instagram, would you say that you are more receptive of the message? Why?
- Yes, they can choose more wisely who you can work with
 - The number of followers can determine how many brands want to be linked to you. With a large following, the influencer should have more options to choose from than just selecting any brand.

8. Define a person that is **trustworthy on Instagram**...
 - When you know the person personally
 - Someone you have known for a time-period and have gotten to know their content.

9. How do you determine an influencer's trustworthiness in Instagram?
 - Someone who is transparent. When reviewing a product, they show what they like and what they dislike.
 - Honesty
 - In terms of fitness: someone who is a representative of the results or adds their clients' results online.
 - Feedback from the followers through comments.
 - Success rate of the product.
 - As the relationship grows over time and you have seen many of their content, the person becomes more reliable and trustworthy through time.

10. What components of an influencer's profile contribute to their trustworthiness?
 - Content, what they write about (captions)
 - Success rate of the products.

11. When a trustworthy influencer promotes a product in Instagram, would you say that you are more receptive of the message? Why?
 - Yes, when I trust the person, I don't think they are just trying to push the product onto me, they are more putting out their honest opinion.

12. Do you think that you can find value between you and a follower instantly?
 - It depends how much time you spend on their feed.
 - One way is to start following them and being exposed to their content over time.

- Value can be found in a relationship if you have the time and go through their content and see that the person is relatable, value can be found instantly

Closing questions:

1. Have you ever purchased a product that you saw advertised on Instagram through an influencer?
 - Yes by 3 people.
 - Most influencers that are followed are overseas and the exchange rate makes purchasing products from overseas expensive.
 - Yes, although it was not at that moment. The participant had to go back on the influencers feed to see their review of the product.

2. Do you think a relationship with an/this influencer is reciprocal or one-sided?
 - When they have a very high number of following, the relationship may feel reciprocal to the participant but not to the influencer.
 - One of the participants mentioned that many time influencers would thank their followers for their support. Therefore, there must be some reciprocity, although maybe not equal.
 - Very much up-to the influencer to build the relationship through the comment section.
 - Some relationships from influencers are reciprocal when they communicate with their followers through their content.

3. Are you aware of any current trends in Instagram?
 - Pre-set filters
 - Blue-screen glasses
 - Veganism
 - Food
 - Health – fitness programs

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Group 1:

INSTAGRAM, INFLUENCERS AND MARKETING

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Tobias Beyers of the Department of Business Management at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will contribute towards the completion of a Master's degree. You were selected as a participant in this study because you are a part of the Millennial generation.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate various elements related to Instagram, influencers and marketing.

2. PROCEDURES

In this survey you will be requested to answer various questions and to view an Instagram profile that includes three Instagram posts. Please read all questions carefully and once answered, click on the red arrow at the bottom of the page to continue.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any individual information that is obtained in this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The anonymity of all participants will be protected. Data will not be analysed per individual.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Tobias Beyers (principal investigator) at 17702453@sun.ac.za.

Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other

Instagram account: Do you have an Instagram account?

- Yes
- No

Age: Your current age:

- Younger than 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- Older than 25

Country of Res: My country of residence is:

- South Africa
- Other

How familiar are you with Instagram?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Unfamiliar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Familiar

Years on Instagram: How many years have you been on Instagram?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 6+

Mostly follow On Instagram, who you mostly follow? Please rank accordingly by dragging and dropping.

- _____ Friends
- _____ Influencers
- _____ Celebrities

Exercise hours PW: How many hours a week do you exercise?

- less than 1
- between 1 and 2
- between 2 and 3
- between 3 and 4
- between 4 and 5
- more than 5

Shopping: I do most of my shopping for clothes...

- Online
- In-store

Shopping elaborate Please elaborate on your choice selected above.

Please read the following information on Trinity Athletics: Trinity Athletics is a fitness-orientated clothing brand founded in 2017. They have committed to crafting the very best in multi-functional lifestyle clothing as well as technical sportswear for women. Every product is designed to contribute to enhanced performance and to assist product users to look, feel and perform at their peak. Please observe the images below of Trinity Athletics:



How familiar are you with the brand Trinity Athletics?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unfamiliar	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Familiar
I do not recognise Trinity Athletics	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I recognise Trinity Athletics
I have not heard of Trinity Athletics	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I have heard of Trinity Athletics

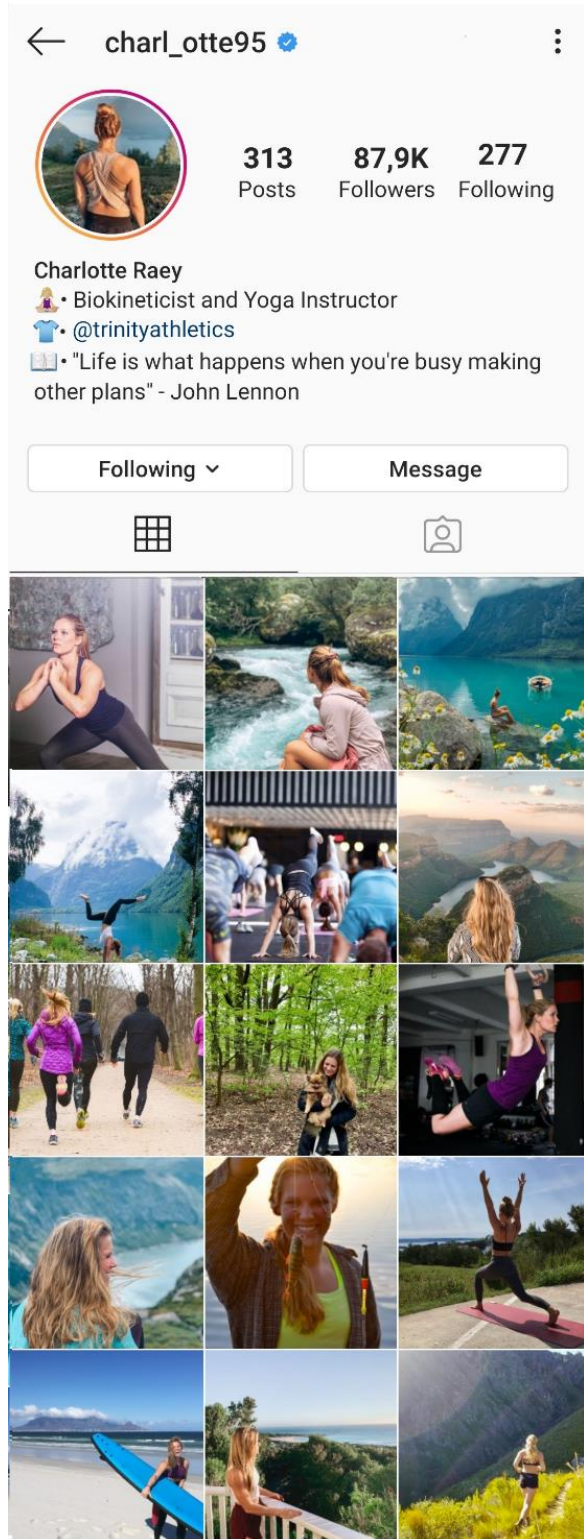


If you think of the brand Trinity Athletics, what is your opinion of it? I think it seems:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unappealing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Appealing
Bad	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Good
Unpleasant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Pleasant
Unfavourable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Favourable
I dislike it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I like it



Please have a look at the screenshots of the profile of the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey, and answer the questions that follow:





charl_otte95

Paid partnership with **trinityathletics**



17 041 likes

charl_otte95 @trinityathletics sports bra and leggings are all I need for this summer 🌞🏖️ #advert

[View All 33 Comments](#)



charl_otte95

Paid partnership with **trinityathletics**



16 334 likes

charl_otte95 Getting to train with friends is the best, especially dressed in @trinityathletics clothing #advert

[View All 72 Comments](#)



charl_otte95

Paid partnership with **trinityathletics**



24 270 likes

charl_otte95 I'm so grateful to do what I love.
[@trinityathletics](#) sports wear is super comfortable and keeps me motivated to push harder [#advert](#)

[View All 77 Comments](#)

If you think of the brand Trinity Athletics, what is your opinion of it? I think it seems:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unappealing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Appealing
Bad	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Good
Unpleasant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Pleasant
Unfavourable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Favourable
I dislike it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I like it

Please indicate your intention to purchase Trinity Athletics clothing.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Definitely
I definitely do not intend to buy it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I definitely intend to buy it
I will probably not buy it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I probably will buy it
I will definitely not buy it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	I definitely will buy it

Just to make sure you remember, below you can scroll through the screenshots of the profile of the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey, again.





17 041 likes

charl_otte95 @trinityathletics sports bra and leggings are all I need for this summer 🌞🔥 #advert

View All 33 Comments



16 334 likes

charl_otte95 Getting to train with friends is the best, especially dressed in @trinityathletics clothing #advert

View All 72 Comments



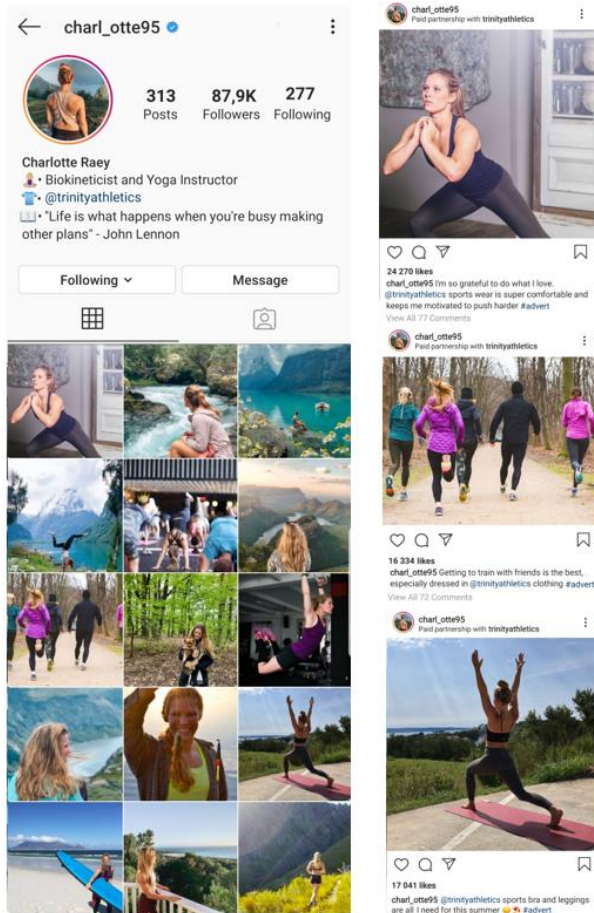
24 270 likes

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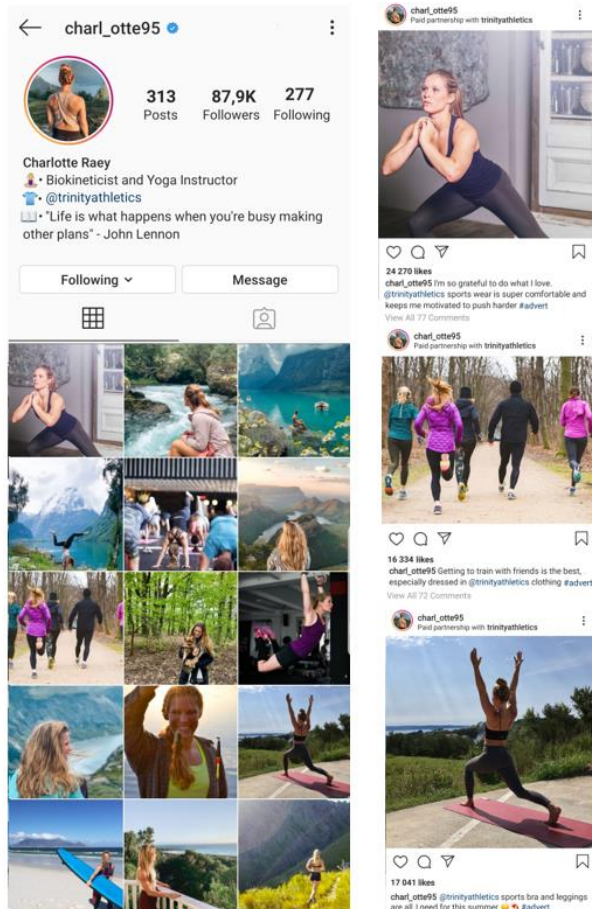
In relation to the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey and her profile, I think she is:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not classy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Classy
Not attractive	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Attractive
Ugly	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Beautiful
Plain	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Elegant
Not sexy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Sexy



In relation to the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey and her profile, I think she is:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Dishonest	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Honest
Unreliable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Reliable
Insincere	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Sincere
Untrustworthy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Trustworthy
Undependable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Dependable



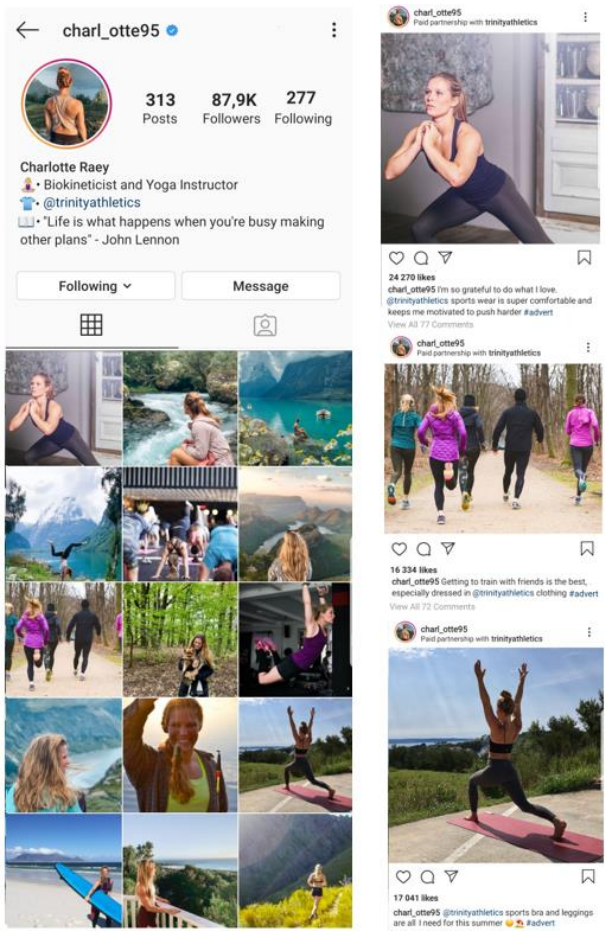
In relation to the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey and her profile, I think she is:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not an expert	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	An expert
Inexperienced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Experienced
Unknowledgable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Knowledgeable
Unqualified	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Qualified
Unskilled	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Skilled

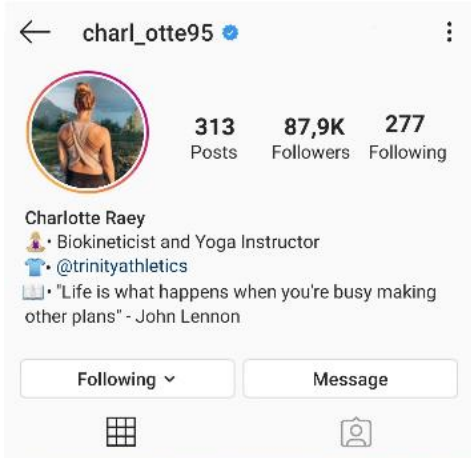


In relation to the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey and her profile, I think she:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Doesn't think like me	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Thinks like me
Doesn't behave like me	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Behaves like me
Is different from me	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Is similar to me
Is unlike me	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Is like me



Just to make sure you remember, below you can view the screenshots of the profile of the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey, again.

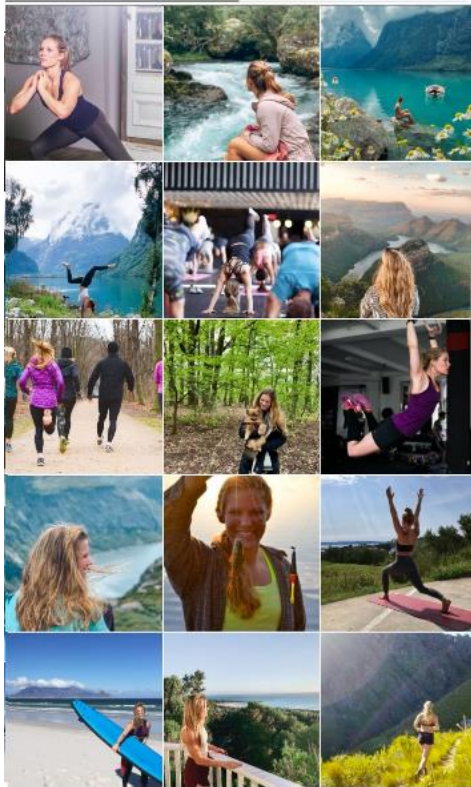


charl_otte95

313 Posts 87,9K Followers 277 Following

Charlotte Raey
• Biokineticist and Yoga Instructor
• @trinityathletics
• "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans" - John Lennon

Following Message



24 270 likes
charl_otte95 I'm so grateful to do what I love.
@trinityathletics sports wear is super comfortable and keeps me motivated to push harder #advert
View All 77 Comments



16 334 likes
charl_otte95 Getting to train with friends is the best, especially dressed in @trinityathletics clothing #advert
View All 72 Comments



17 041 likes
charl_otte95 @trinityathletics sports bra and leggings are all I need for this summer 🌞🌈 #advert
View All 33 Comments

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements in relation to the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey seems to understand the things I want to know	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
I would like to meet the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey in person	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
When I see the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey, I feel as if I am part of her group	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
The Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey feels like an old friend	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
I compare my ideas with what the Instagram influencer, Charlotte Raey says	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

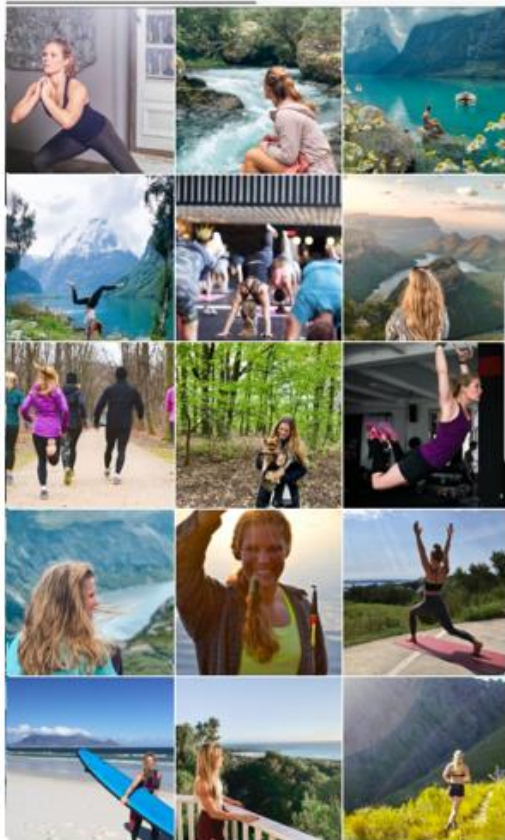
← charl_otte95



313 Posts 87,9K Followers 277 Following

Charlotte Raey
• Biokineticist and Yoga Instructor
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Following Message



charl_otte95
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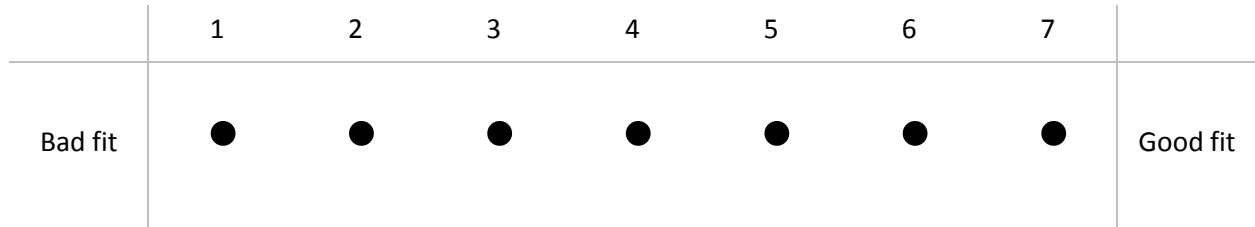


charl_otte95
Paid partnership with trinityathletics

17 041 likes
charl_otte95 @trinityathletics sports bra and leggings are all I need for this summer 🍌🍌 #advert

What Is your opinion of the effectiveness of using influencers in Instagram to promote brands, please elaborate.

To what extent do you think Charlotte Raey is a good fit to promote the brand Trinity Athletics?



Please explain your opinion about why you view Charlotte Raey as a good or bad fit to promote Trinity Athletics.

Would you consider buying Trinity Athletics?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Please elaborate on your choice selected above.

If you think back of the profile you saw, was Charlotte Raey's account verified by Instagram's blue-tick?

- Yes
- No

Did Charlotte disclose whether she was paid for by Trinity Athletics to promote the brand?

- Yes
- No

What brands of clothing do you mostly wear when exercising?

Why do you prefer these brands of clothing?

If the influencer, Charlotte Raey, endorsed your preferred brand, would you be more or less positive towards your brand?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Less positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	More positive

What do you consider when purchasing fitness clothing?



How many followers did Charlotte Raey have on her Instagram profile you viewed during the survey?

- 1 - 20000
- 20001 - 40000
- 40001 - 60000
- 60001 - 80000
- 80001 - 100000
- I do not remember

Please click on any THREE parts of Charlotte Raey's profile below that are most interesting to you.

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram profile for 'charl_otte95'. At the top, there is a back arrow, the username 'charl_otte95' with a verified badge, and a three-dot menu icon. Below this is the profile picture, which is a circular image of a woman from behind, showing her back and arms. To the right of the profile picture are statistics: '313 Posts', '87,9K Followers', and '277 Following'. The bio section includes the name 'Charlotte Raey', a bio icon, and the text '• Biokineticist and Yoga Instructor', a blue checkmark icon, and '@trinityathletics'. Below the bio is a quote icon and the text '• "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans" - John Lennon'. There are two buttons: 'Following' with a dropdown arrow and 'Message' with a person icon. Below the buttons are two icons: a grid icon and a camera icon. The main content area is a grid of 12 small images. The first row shows a woman in a yoga pose, a woman sitting by a river, and a woman in a boat on a lake. The second row shows a woman in a yoga pose, a group of people, and a woman in a yoga pose. The third row shows a group of people running, a woman with a dog, and a woman in a yoga pose. The fourth row shows a woman in a yoga pose, a woman in a yoga pose, and a woman in a yoga pose. The fifth row shows a woman in a yoga pose, a woman in a yoga pose, and a woman in a yoga pose. The sixth row shows a woman in a yoga pose, a woman in a yoga pose, and a woman in a yoga pose.