Choosing the right social media influencer

A quasi-experiment to explore the impact of influencers’ different characteristics.

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Abstract

**Background:** The use of influencers in social media has become a popular strategy in online marketing. The theoretical field is originally derived from communication and word-of-mouth where certain individuals possess the ability to influence others. With the help of global reach in social media, companies nowadays have the possibility to utilize influencers to communicate brand related content and promotion online.

**Purpose:**
Challenges occur to companies in the selection of the right influencer to achieve desired goals and outcome. The purpose of this study is to identify the effect of social media influencers’ different characteristics and how they are perceived by the receivers.

**Theory and methodology:** The literature review is based on theory of branding, communication and characteristics of influencers online. The study applies experimental research design with qualitative approach in order to investigate respondents perception of messages shared by influencers on Instagram.

**Originality/value:** The current study provides a conceptual model that describes the communication process from companies to customers through social media influencers. The focus of the research is the effect of social media influencers’ characteristics on the message perception of the receivers. The study encompasses numerous insights about differences in SMI’s characteristics perception of female and male genders.

**Results:**
Integrity and frequent activity are described as the most appreciated characteristics of influencers. Their ability to send successful posts online is dependent on the receivers’ perception of a person. The findings of this study contribute to theory and are useful for companies which consider usage of social media influencers in their communication and branding strategies.

**Keywords:** Influencer marketing, social media marketing, WOM, communication, SMI.
Preface

The last months of the one-year marketing programme at masters level have consisted of independent work where we have been able to take advantage of previously gathered knowledge and experience from studies. The final thesis has brought out the creativity in order to research about the topic of our own choice. Influencer marketing is a phenomenon that has accelerated due to the global use of social media where shared content nowadays does not only contain personal photos - but also sponsored messages. Our choice of field is based on our curiosity about a modern marketing approach that in several aspects needs further research.

It has been an exciting journey to discover this field, and contributed to both research and knowledge to companies. We would like to thank all involved people that have helped us to accomplish this study. Professor Anders Pehrsson and associate professor Urban Ljungquist have supported us in the research process and eased the challenges that appeared during the way. Furthermore, we want to mention our gratitude towards our classmates that helped us at the seminars related to the thesis. Last but not least, this study would not has been succeeded without the participants of the empirical investigation.

Alexander Brorsson and Valery Plotnikova

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The way companies communicate with their customers has changed significantly over the last years due to the arise of social media. This phenomenon opened up new online channels where customers can interact with each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and other issues. The social media is a digital word-of-mouth including blogs, chat rooms, products and service rating, but also sponsored content (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). A new communicational tactic that is utilized by many companies in their e-marketing strategies is Social media influencers, so called SMI’s. Social media influencers are known as people who promote products or services through their blogs, tweets and posts in such social media as Instagram or Facebook (Freberg et al., 2011).

Social media and blogging were not originally meant to be a marketing platform, but companies nowadays use the opinion leaders and online influencers in higher extent (Halvorsen et al., 2013). According to companies there are three most dominant reasons to use influencers in a marketing strategy; the creation of authentic content, drive engagement around a product or service, and increase traffic to website (statista.com, 2016). In order to achieve a certain promotional aim, companies usually attract different types of influencers: celebrities, experts in some particular sphere or active social media users with a high popularity and number of followers (Freberg et al., 2011). It is a challenge for marketers to identify a suitable influencer that will have the most effective outcome (Roelens, Baecke & Benoit, 2016). Despite the well used influencer strategy, there is a lack of knowledge among companies. A recent study reveals that 58% of marketing managers identify the online opinions as very important, meanwhile 55 % of them admitted they have low or none knowledge about how to identify the influencers (Vollenbroek et. al, 2014).

Billions of conversations take places every day and many of them are happening online. Written messages give people more time to construct and refine what to say, and self-enhancement motives lead people to use this opportunity to mention more interesting
things. Modern companies are in permanent search for effective communication tools and ways of building long-term relationships with their target customers (Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Companies in US spend about 13 billion dollars on social media marketing and it is forecasted to increase to 19 billion until 2019 (statista.com). While less than 50 % of people nowadays trust traditional commercial information, there is a greater trust in opinions online via e-WOM (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, Beukeboom, 2015; Huang, 2015; Burns, 2016), despite the fact that some content is obviously sponsored (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014). The customer generated reviews within the hotel industry is a clear example of how internet and social media have changed people's behaviour. The trust in reviews, forums and social media is significantly higher than content created by the hotels themselves (Constantinides, 2014).

1.2 Problem discussion
The digitalization has affected many industries but especially marketing and communication. The use of digital tools let companies measure and find target groups in a different way than traditional methods (Royle & Laing, 2014). Social media is by some researchers labeled to communication (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke, 2015; Vernuccio, 2014) while other call it a combination with marketing (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015; Vinerean et. al, 2013). Brands in almost every market are affected by social media and its viral forces that could arise. Nowadays companies cannot rely on traditional branding strategies since the control has moved from the marketers to the consumers. Transparency and authenticity are important concepts in the online world where customers are suggested to be involved in almost every step (Kohli, Suri & Kapoor, 2015).

Currently there are more ways than ever to reach a target audience. It is a challenge to make the right decisions, especially for small and medium-sized firms that often have limited resources and need to focus on a few channels (Key & Czaplewska, 2017). If an influencer strategy is chosen it can be put into actions by deciding what the primary target is. There are regular people that speak well about a firm, while the true influencer is typically seen as a celebrity or a blogger with a large number of followers. Less famous persons could be perceived to be more trustworthy than the influencer, however the influencer will extend the reach significantly (Burns, 2016). Although, to make the strategic decisions even more
complex, it is not always an influencer with a great reach that is most effective to achieve desired targets in social media marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2016). It is known that a product promoted by an influencer with a moderate number of followers will be perceived as more unique and valuable (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2016).

The differentiation of influential people proposed by Gladwell (2001) was broadly used for recent studies about SMI’s (Vollenbroek et al., 2014; Rosenthal, 2014; Zietek, 2016). There are certain types of people that might have a notable impact on people’s opinions which makes personal or behavioral characteristic of an influencer important to take into consideration in order to choose the right one. A wide range of indicators that might be related to influencing characteristics is social activity, charisma, expertise, power, authority, shared interests, uniqueness, innovativeness, amount of followers/friends etcetera (Vollenbroek et al., 2014). Certain individuals can have more influence than others due to their social position, personal features and overall image, including age, gender and even marital status (Zhang et al., 2017). Moreover, Schwartz et al. (2013) highlight the way a person behaves, interacts and expresses himself in social media highly depends on such factors as age, gender and personality.

The success of WOM is dependent on conditional factors and personal backgrounds around both the sender and receiver, which therefore is critical to identify factors that facilitate successful WOM delivery. Strength, richness, personal expressions, previous experiences, and expertise of the sender have a positive impact on the receiver, however this research is based on the offline world (Sweeney, Soutar & Mazzarol, 2014). The authors therefore recommend further studies that will be based on online environment, i.e social media. Furthermore, Gensler et al. (2013) highlight that social media now plays a huge role in branding and communication strategies, since it has become a new channel to interact with the customers. So far, due to the relative novelty of social media influencers phenomenon, hardly any research examined in-depth the effect of SMI’s characteristics on the receiver, his message perception and related these issues to the communication process between companies and customers.
There is a need of constantly updated research in the dynamic and fast changing online environment. The traditional marketing is forced to devote more attention to the digital platforms, meanwhile, many marketers still identify lack of knowledge in order to meet the new circumstances. Marketing online with the help of social media influencers is nowadays an increasingly used method adopted by companies in their communication and branding strategies, however, challenges occur in the selection of the right influencer to achieve desired goals and outcome. This study will contribute to the knowledge of social media influencers and how their different characteristics affect the receivers.

1.3 Research questions
Which characteristics, and gender, of social media influencers will have the most notable impact on the receivers’ message perception?

1.4 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to identify how receivers of messages perceive social media influencers’ different gender and characteristics.

1.5 Delimitations
This study will only focus on the receivers message perception, and will therefore not intend to find out the future course of action based on the message.
2.0 Literature review and conceptual model

While discussions are taking place about whether social media belongs to marketing or communication theory (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke, 2015; Vernuccio, 2014; Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015; Vinerean et. al, 2013) we believe that social media influencers primary belong to communication since people not often perceive the influencer’s messages as marketing (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke, 2015; Yubo & Jinhong, 2008). The social media is a popular approach to reach target groups, communicate with customers and spread brand related information (Jothi, Neelamalar, & Prasad, 2011).

2.1 Branding

There are three major strategies that companies need to establish; business strategy, brand strategy and marketing strategy. While business strategy is mainly about vision, business model and concrete objectives, branding strategy aiming at less graspable factors such as customer experiences, inspiration, trustworthiness and likability. These strategies together are transferred into a marketing plan (Van Gelder, 2005). The traditional way of reaching target groups through marketing is the use of media such as TV, newspaper and radio, however social networks online have changed the game in the field of branding nowadays. It is obvious that the one-way messages are replaced with open dialogues between companies, brands and customers. Instead of delivering messages the focus is rather on exchanging information with each other which has led the improved brand experiences to the consumers (Shen & Bissell, 2013). To contribute to this positive experience and reach increased trust towards a brand, it is of great importance to improve the source credibility of messages (Wu & Wang (2011).

When searching for products or services, customers most often face different alternatives but brands can simplify choices due to a particular reason like perceived quality or trust. The product itself and the accompanying marketing activity will affect the customer experience, but the brand will determine the effectiveness of marketing effort such as advertising and channel placement. The brand positioning will set the direction of marketing activities in order to differentiate to its competitors. It concerns the tangible product attributes but also the
brand’s image and reputation (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Traditional branding theory that was utilized by marketers for many years is the funnel metaphor which means that consumers started with a large number of potential brands in mind and methodically opted out alternatives. The traditional funnel is outdated in favor of the new Consumer Decision Journey that rather keep the customer in an open-ended relationship with the brand who express experiences and opinions online regarding their recent purchase (Edelman, 2010).

2.2. Communication

The knowledge and definition of communication have notably changed in terms of purpose, nature, channels and scope. In general, communication can be explained as a social process and countless ways that enable people to share the information and keep in touch with one another (Schulz & Cobley, 2013). Technological advancement and creation of globalized perspective on communication have made this process complex and resulted in emergence of new communicational channels (Cantoni, 2015). Nowadays modern technologies have become an indispensable part of everyday interpersonal communication, new communication opportunities are considered to be an intensive supplement or even substitute for the traditional face-to-face interaction. One of such brand new channels is social media, which can be defined as a digital platform that enables users to connect, communicate and share the information through social networking and instant messages. (Petric, Petrovcic & Vehovar, 2011). Users are motivated to follow social media platforms in order to keep in touch with their friends, develop relationships with new acquaintances, search for peer and search for peer identification and a group sense of belongings in an online community (O'Leary, Wilson, & Metiu, 2014).

Dozens of social media websites and applications are created daily in order to facilitate the communication process among individuals and groups of people. Virtual communication provides more freedom for the social media users to express and share their opinions, expand and sustain social networks (Cheng, Fu & Vreede, 2017). For the companies, communication with their customers has also shifted from one-way channel to a dialogue (Smith, 2009). Social media has created more interactive communication between organisations and
consumers, thus digital environment became increasingly more important (Hansen & Machin 2013).

2.3. Lasswell’s model of communication

Harold Lasswell is known for developing his classic communication formula “Who Says What in Which Channel to Whom With What Effect?”, that helps to understand the process of communication. Later, this formula resulted in creation of Lasswell’s communication model, which is known as one of the first models in this field (Fig.1). The linear model consists of five major elements: sender (a person who formulates the message), message (idea that must be transmitted), medium (channel by which the message is transferred), receiver (a person who receives the message) and feedback (the outcome of receiving the message) (Lasswell, 1948). The major advantage of the Lasswell’s model is its simplicity and usability in different contexts. However, this model was criticized for lacking barriers in the communication process and effect of environment on the message delivery. Overall, Lasswell’s model is believed to be too general, albeit useful (Cobley and Schulz, 2013; McQuail and Windahl, 2015).
2.4. Shannon and Weaver's model of communication

Fig.2 Schematic diagram of a general communications system (Shannon & Weaver, 1979)

Another classical communication model, made by Shannon and Weaver, was created many years ago, however it still keeps the relevance and forms a bedrock for numerous recent studies related to the digital communication (Menfors & Fernstedt, 2015; Narving & Nilsson, 2016). The model describes communication process with six different factors (Fig.2): information source, transmitter, channel (medium), receiver, destination and the sixth one is an obstacle of communication called noise. First, the information source is a person or organisation that generates the original message, and then a transmitter encodes the message into signals which are then sent through some kind of channel or medium. The small unmarked rhombus in the middle of the model symbolizes the physical channel such as, for instance, phone. A receiver reproduces the message which then arrives at its destination. The receiver decodes the message with his individual perception of environment, therefore, the message might not be interpreted in the same way as it was initially intended by the sender (Shannon & Weaver, 1972). The noise element of the model represents any interference (physical or psychological) that may occur during the message travel along the channel and distort its content (Shannon & Weaver, 1949; Danesi, 2013; Cobley and Schulz; 2013).
2.5 Influencer characteristics

2.5.1 General

Influencers have the ability to strengthen a brand by sharing content through their own social media channels. The outcome is affected by the network's characteristics but it is challenging for companies to identify and approach the optimal influencer to stimulate the distribution of consumer-generated stories (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz, 2013). It is a complex process to identify an appropriate influencer due to all different aspects that will impact the outcome. Among such aspect can be a number of posts, followers, social structure and the company's goal of using an influencers (Neves, Vieira, Mourão & Rocha, 2015). Furthermore, Schwartz et al. (2013) highlight that the same messages sent by different users on social media are perceived by people noticeably distinct way due to various attributes that every person has. Among such attributes can be outlined: age, gender, psychological and external characteristics.

2.5.2 Integrity

Secrets are something that is not meant to be known by others, regardless if it is concerning facts, feelings or observations. People keep secrets for themselves since the information could be sensitive, but sharing a secret to others could relief a burden and stress even if it most often make you more vulnerable. A group of people that is identified to benefit of revealing secrets are social media influencers and bloggers due to the fact that secret sharing strengthens relationships. They have most likely strategic reasons to publically reveal personal and sensitive information online rather than a feeling of stress relief. Past research suggest that the influencers online share their secrets in exchange for extended and strengthen audience, increased loyalty and a stronger personal brand (Kim, Pai, Bickart & Brunel, 2014).

Seidman and Gwendolyn (2014) described a modern tendency of disclosing and expressing a “true self” online. The authors state that such opened behavior on social media helps to form close relationships with others through the Internet. Moreover, Seidman and Gwendolyn (2014) claim that highly frank and opened online users are considered to be more effective in their communication even than face-to-face partners.
2.5.2 Activity

Influencer’s activity level has an impact on the receiver’s willingness to interact with tweets and posts. Studies have found that influencers with a continuously high level of activity in social media are more likely to be retweeted (extended reach) since the content is perceived to be fresher and up-to-date. It is a common method by marketers to target influencers with a high number of followers to gain high level of reach but the level of activity and interaction is also crucial to consider (Stephen, Dover, Muchnik & Goldenberg, 2017). Additionally to the activity level and amount followers, another aspect of activity is the number of followees the user has, where a high number indicates a deeper level of influence (Lahuerta-Otero & Cordero-Gutiérrez, 2016).

The frequency of making post on social media plays a huge role in building up trust and strengthen credibility. There is a notable correlation between the frequency of making posts and self-disclosure that should be balanced in order to become more trustworthy in online environment (Dennen, 2014; Ledbetter and Redd, 2016). Moreover, a lot of celebrities nowadays are attracted by the companies in order to sell or promote products online. It is of high importance for famous people to get followers’ trust, the right celebrity posting behavior may contribute to enhancing credibility, however, people differ in their perception of posting frequency and self-disclosure (Ledbetter and Redd, 2016).

2.5.3 Social status and credibility

Historically some people have always been more credible than others. Leaders in different context such as political, economical or other areas of expertise are perceived to be more trustworthy since they have higher knowledge than average. It will give people a feeling of security and confirmation when they know what others around them are doing. These persons can for instance be columnists, artists, scientists, early adopters or famous people and are often opinion leaders that characteristically enjoy received respect within their field of expertise. In a context of social media the influencers possess a greater ability than average to affect the social network due to their wide reach (Zietek, 2016).
Ledbetter and Redd (2016) explained that credibility on social media depends on many person’s features, especially social status, since social status is easy to assess after examining a social media profile of any user. Social status encompasses many aspects, such as popularity, wealthiness, marital status, occupation, hobbies etc. However, the authors claim that for celebrities credibility is especially difficult to achieve, since many people cannot relate their lives to the lifestyle of famous people.

2.6 Conceptual model

Despite the established and well-used communication theories mentioned above, a new contextualized model was created in order to meet the purpose of the this research in a better way. The conceptual model is marginally changed and primary based on Lasswell's (1948) core components, however Effect is removed due to the delimitations of this thesis. The major reason why a modified Lasswell (1948) model is not sufficient enough depends on Shannon & Weaver’s (1979) emphasis on transmitters which represents the main focus of this study, moreover, Shannon & Weaver’s model enables to add factors that might influence the message delivery. According to Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz (2013) the characteristics of the influencer play a key role in the message perception and outcome. In combination with characteristics, Zhang et al. (2017) stresses the importance of how gender affect the perception.

The conceptual model is visually simplified compared to Lasswell’s (1948) stair based approach. The models from both Lasswell (1948) and Shannon & Weaver (1979) start with a sender of the message, in this case it is a company who wants to express a statement or a brand related message to its target group. Then, the message is formulated and sent further, this element is an indispensable part of both communication models. Firms use influencers as transmitters, which is a part of Shannon & Weaver (1979) who originally also have noise as a
component but it has been changed for characteristics in the conceptual model. The underlying purpose remains the same; visualize factors affecting the message delivery. Social media is the used channel, based on Lasswell (1948). Both mentioned authors have a receiver of the message that in the conceptual model is called follower, a term that which is referred to the receiver in social media context.

3.0 Methodology

*The following chapter describes the way this study is conducted in order to meet the purpose and research question.*

3.1 Research Approach

There are two basic types of research approaches; deductive and inductive (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The difference is how theory is handled; either the research is the utilization of existing theory, or the generation of a new one. Deductive approach is chosen since it will better handle the theory in an appropriate way for this study. Deductive approach is based on usage of existing theory for formulation of new hypotheses that might be tested in the research. Bryman and Bell (2015) state that deductive approach is the most common view of correlation between theory and research. The authors of current study utilized existent theories, therefore, deductive approach was chosen.

3.2 Research Strategy

Qualitative and quantitative research are two principal alternatives of research strategy (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The qualitative research is related to face-to-face interaction with the respondents of a study in order to gain a more in-depth view on a particular subject or topic. The emphasis is on the generation of theories, thus this strategy tends to follow inductive research approach (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). However, qualitative strategy may also follow a deductive research approach in order to get broader knowledge of existent theories, add new aspects to examined topics and operationalize questions for a study (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Malhotra and Birks, 2007).
The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of social media influencers that have most notable impact on receiver’s perception of company’s message, it is of high importance to get deep understanding and detailed opinions of respondents. The phenomenon of social media influencers and their characteristics effect on receivers has not duly examined it yet, due to the recent emergence and wide spreading of this issue. In-depth methods of qualitative research are believed to provide full information and insights related to the topic.

3.3 Research Design

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), experimental research design is one of the most effective methods in achieving trustworthy and relevant findings since it allows to test chosen theories in specific environment. Creswell (2013) states that experimental design helps to determine if different circumstances or variables may influence the research result. This type of research design allows the researchers to have control over the study process and chose factors that are important for meeting the research purpose.

According to Creswell (2013) experimental research design is usually more associated with quantitative research strategy, since it is easier to measure and analyze an experiment results by quantitative methods. However, experimental design can also be used in qualitative studies. Qualitative experiment uses focus groups or in-depth interviews within selective stimulus conditions in order to get better understanding of respondents opinions, motives and broaden the knowledge of examined topic (Robinson and Mendelson, 2012). The authors seek for contributing to the theoretical and practical knowledge of social media influencers, perception of their characteristics and message delivery; experimental research design was chosen, since the qualitative experiment gives an opportunity to get more reliable, relevant and full data related to the topic (Creswell, 2013).

3.4 Data Sources

There are two core ways of collecting data for studies: through secondary and/or primary sources. Secondary data is the information which has already been collected by other researchers or organisations for their own specific purposes. Usually secondary data is commonly used and easily available. Primary data is on the contrary obtained through
first-hand empirical investigation in response to a specific aim or original question. In many cases primary data collection is the only one possible solution for the researcher, who cannot find suitable secondary sources. Despite the fact that primary analysis is more time-consuming and knowledge-intensive compared to secondary analysis, it enables researches to get more relevant, recent and unique data for their study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Due to the lack of appropriate secondary data about how characteristics of social media influencers may affect followers’ message perception, the authors used primary sources obtained through quasi experiment and interviews.

3.5 Data collection method

There are certain differences in conducting quantitative and qualitative interviews. Qualitative interviewing is focused more on the interviewee’s thoughts, ideas and point of view. Thus, new or extra questions can be asked during the qualitative interview, questions can vary in the order and even in wording, which makes such interviews to be more flexible. With the help of qualitative interviews, the researchers are more likely to gain detailed answers and insights that can emerge in the course of conversation with the interviewees.

The semi-structured interviews provide the researches with a bunch of possibilities. First of all, such interviews allow two-way communication that can provide reliable and comparable data. Secondly, semi-structured interviews give an opportunity for respondents to express their opinions with a high extent of freedom, which helps to broaden the understanding of the topic and observe new angles of the issue. The key benefit of semi-structured interviews is its flexibility and attention to the experience of participants while also addressing theory of researchers’ interest (Galletta, 2013).

Consequently, 20 semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted in this research, an approximate time of every individual interview lasted for about 40-50 minutes, each discussion was recorded and transcripted later.
3.6 Sampling

Purposive sampling is one of the most commonly used types of samples for qualitative studies. Purposive sampling helps to meet the specific purpose of the study since it requires the inclusion of certain elements and features. There are numerous purposive sampling types such as criterion, theoretical, snowball, opportunistic etc. (Bryman & Bell, 2015). One of the most widely spread approaches is criterion sampling that enables the researchers to select proper respondents in accordance with specific criteria. Sampling criteria are the certain characteristics that research participants should meet in order to fulfill objectives and purpose of the study. Among such criteria could be distinguished age, gender, marital or ethnic statuses, level of education etc (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2015) highlight the importance of choosing the right number of respondents to reach the optimum sample size. Qualitative samples are often moderate in size, since the processes of data collecting and analysis are very time-consuming for the studies of this research strategy. Furthermore, the sample size might not be too big in order to allow the researchers to concentrate on the important aspects of the study and data gathered.

For this study, quasi-experiments and face-to-face interviews with 20 participants were conducted. Two main criteria were chosen; age and gender, since Zhang et al., (2017) stresses its potential effect on influence. Thus, 10 female and 10 male respondents took part in the research. All the respondents’ age varied from 20 to 30 years old, since people of this age group are the most active users in social media (Balakrishnan, 2014; Smith 2011).

3.7 Laboratory quasi experiment

Bryman and Bell (2015) describe two basic types of exploratory designs: laboratory and field experiments. Laboratory experiments take place in highly controlled environment, it may not be necessarily some kind of research laboratory, but well-planned and organised circumstances. When doing the laboratory experiment, a researcher is enabled to decide where this experiment will happen, at what time, in what conditions and with which participants. Field experiments, on the contrary, are conducted in real-life settings (e.g. shops,
workplaces, hotels, hospitals etc) and the circumstances of such experiment are not controlled by the researcher.

Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2015) state that there is a possibility of conducting quasi-experiments, which have certain characteristics of experimental designs, however, there is a lack of random assignment to treatment or control. Usage of different criteria enables the researcher to control the treatment condition of quasi-experiment, instead of applying random assignment. Morgan (2000) highlight that the advantage of quasi-experiments is a pre-post testings, which helps to exclude respondents’ misinterpretation and confounds, this pre-post data can be compared or added to the actual experimental data. Quasi-experiments utilize such independent variables as continuous (age) and categorical (gender). Overall, laboratory quasi experiment with qualitative nature was picked as a method of this study since the aim is to gather deeper insight of people’s reasoning about the influencers’ messages. Additionally, Sweeney, Soutar & Mazzarol’s (2014) study about WOM were based on quantitative research.

The participants of this study went through reading a booklet of six Instagram posts made by social media influencers. The choice of Instagram as a social network to examine was based on the fact that it is one of the fastest growing global online social platforms where users have an opportunity to share their pictures and videos, write posts, send messages. People spend more time on Instagram than other analogous social media networks, moreover, there were estimated more than 400 million monthly active Instagrammers in 2016 (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The choice of this number of post is based on the purpose of having two influencers of each gender for every chosen primary characteristic. For instance, post number one was made by male influencer with high social status, post number two was related to the female influencer with high social status. Overall, three primary characteristics were outlined for this study: social status, activity and integrity, thus the total number of post is six. An extended number of influencers would force the sample to increase up to twelve posts if a gender and characteristics equality should apply. That extension were considered to overwhelm the participants of the study and thereby decrease focus on the influencers. A number of six was selected to keep the participants’ attention meanwhile having a sufficient sample of influencers with adequate differentiation regarding the characteristics.
Directly after the respondents looked through the booklet of influencers, they participated in individual face-to-face interviews. Such procedure enabled the possibility to examine how the characteristics affected the message perception. Each participant got acquainted with these posts in a quiet room with no distraction elements or rush. Conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews right after the quasi-experiments provided a chance to examine the participants’ perception of social media influencers, how they interpret the message delivered by these influencers, to find out which SMI’s characteristics play the most important role for them.

3.8 Choice of influencers

The six different Instagram posts uploaded by the influencers included a sport nutrition product in the picture. The desired industry is selected based on its global popularity, and according to Wnent (2016) it is one of the most popular Instagram topics in competition with fashion, travelling and food. Product placements and promoted posts are common ways of doing marketing in the fitness industry. Currently (May 2017) there are 193 million hashtags of fitness and 56 million of health on Instagram. The six influencers have a notable distinction between the three characteristics identified in theory chapter and were selected based on a high level of a primary characteristic, followed by lower level in the other two characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Primary characteristic</th>
<th>Short description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influencer 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>High social status</td>
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<td>Influencer 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High social status</td>
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<td>Influencer</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
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3.9 Questions

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why. (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke, 2015; Yubo & Jinhong, 2008)

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you were looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors. (Zhang et al., 2017, Schwartz et al. 2013)
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<th>Question</th>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?</td>
<td>(Lahuerta-Otero &amp; Cordero-Gutiérrez, 2016)</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?</td>
<td>(Kim, Pai, Bickart &amp; Brunel, 2014; Seidman and Gwendolyn, 2014, Ledbetter and Redd, 2016)</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?</td>
<td>(Ledbetter and Redd, 2016)</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>What is your attitude to very active Instagrammer’s that make posts daily on social media?</td>
<td>(Stephen, Dover, Muchnik &amp; Goldenberg, 2017; Dennen, 2014, Ledbetter and Redd, 2016)</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?</td>
<td>(Zietek, 2016, Ledbetter and Redd, 2016)</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?</td>
<td>(Zietek, 2016, Ledbetter and Redd, 2016)</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)</td>
<td>(De Veirman, Cauberghe &amp; Hudders, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any blogger that fitted the</td>
<td>(Neves, Vieira, Mourão &amp; Rocha, 2015)</td>
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product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

3.10 Quality criteria

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) qualitative studies require specific quality criteria which are different from those used by quantitative researchers. The authors outlined two major quality criteria that can be utilized for qualitative study: authenticity and trustworthiness, which in its turn consists of four aspects.

3.10.1 Trustworthiness

Reaching the criterion of trustworthiness plays a crucial role in conducting qualitative studies, since it helps to the researcher to obtain confidence in the findings, participants and context in which the study was carried out (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). According to Bryman & Bell (2015), qualitative studies aim for getting an in-depth view or new insights of some aspects of social reality where there is no absolute truth, however, there are numerous angles and opinions related to the topic. Thus, this is researcher’s responsibility to ensure the right process of collecting data in order to gather these different points of view and formulate trustworthy conclusions. Overall, four different aspects need to be highlighted: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability.

3.10.2 Credibility

The creation of the findings credibility encompasses several steps. First of all, the research might be conducted in accordance with the guidelines of well-established research practices. Moreover, the researcher might ensure the right interpretation of the findings in order to make sure that respondents’ points of view were correctly understood (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The authors of the current study adhered to the guidelines for proper research practice set out by Bryman and Bell (2015), Galletta (2013), Malhotra and Birks (2007), Ritchie and Lewis, (2003) that were discussed throughout the methodology chapter and utilized for the data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the authors had conducted a pre-test of interview questions in order to avoid any misinterpretation among participants. Pre-test
was conducted with two representatives of each gender and since every question turned to be unambiguous and comprehensible, afterwards the results of pre-test were added to the actual research data.

3.10.3 Transferability

This second aspect of trustworthiness is transferability which essentially refers to the ability for the empirical findings of a qualitative study to be utilized by future researchers. Since qualitative studies tend to be conducted in unique context, it is of high importance to make findings useful. In order to meet this criteria, a researcher is encouraged to produce what Bryman and Bell (2015) refer to as “thick description”. This entails that during the interviews, the moderator should attempt to get as much information as possible from the respondents. This will result in a higher likelihood that some aspects of the research can be transferable to future studies. In order to achieve this criterion, the open-ended questions were utilized during the interviews, with following-up extra questions in cases when it was necessary in order to get deeper understanding of the respondents’ opinions and gather more detailed information related to the topic.

3.10.4 Dependability

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), the researchers need to apply “auditing” approach in order to obtain the dependability of the study. Such an “auditing” approach requires detailed records of every research step, for instance, problem formulation, selection of research participants, interview transcripts and data analysis. Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2015) highlight that qualitative studies usually generate extremely large datasets, thus it might be very time-consuming for the researchers to do the auditing of the whole process. First of all, proper auditing of the process requires stepwise work of a number of researchers who can divide the research tasks and carry out separate analysis and compare the data to the findings. In order to fulfill dependability aspect of trustworthiness, the authors of this study aimed for extensive examination of the problem, motivated the research sample in detail. Furthermore, each interview was recorded and transcripted for making an in-depth analysis of gathered data. Additionally, the research team of current study consisted of two persons, each member of the team was assigned with different tasks during the research process, and hence each
member acted as an ‘auditor’ for the other member by constantly assessing and validating the interim results.

3.10.5 Confirmability

Bryman and Bell (2015) state that in order to meet confirmability aspect of trustworthiness a researcher may remain as unbiased and objective as possible during the research process of qualitative study. The researcher should act in good faith by attempting to not allow personal views, values or theoretical inclinations to interfere in the process, especially during the analysis. The authors of the current study took this quality criteria into consideration during the entire research process by staying as objective as possible and only utilizing the previously discussed theoretical frameworks for the analysis of the empirical data derived from the respondents.

3.10.6 Authenticity

According to Bryman and Bell (2015) the criterion of authenticity is referred to the assurance of fair representing various viewpoints related to the examined topic. Empirical data of qualitative research might encompass opinions of different members of social setting. In order to meet this criterion, the authors of this study extended the research sample to 20 participants and divided them into two different groups in accordance with their gender. This enabled the researchers to get diverse responses and to add new angles to the findings.
4. Results

The results are presented in a structure based on different gender. This chapter starts with a table of answers in order to simplify the presentation, followed by a deeper explanation of the three different characteristics.

4.1 Men

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Opinions</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.</td>
<td>Four of the respondents claimed that “it depends”, and think that some of the posts are advertising and some natural. Four of them perceived the posts to be authentic and the other two had a skeptical opinion.</td>
<td>“It depends. Number 5 looks natural while Zlatan is pure advertising. 1, 2 and 6 are advertising.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How important for you was the Instagrammer’s personality when you were looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.</td>
<td>None of the respondents cared about age and gender, however the Instagrammer’s personality is of higher importance.</td>
<td>“It’s interesting to see their goals. I didn’t pay attention to age and gender.”</td>
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<td>3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?</td>
<td>Four respondents did not consider the amount of followers to be important. The other six believed it is important.</td>
<td>“The more the better. You need financial resources to promote a product through a famous Instagrammer.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“I care more about content than numbers. Non-celebrities might have very good content and that is what matters to me.”</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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</table>
| 4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile? | All respondents think that openness and transparency are important factors. "The more privacy they share, the more real. I like people’s honesty in posts.”  
“I like openness. I believe less famous persons need to be opened to attract followers. I also like when they’re happy and comfortable with themselves.” |
| 5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? | Four respondents find the profile description important. Two of them do not read the description while the other four read it, however not that carefully. "I always read this information, it’s very important.”  
“First I check the post and the feed, then profile description and number of followers.” |
| 6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammer’s that make posts daily on social media? | Diversified answers are found within this question. Daily posts are by most respondents acceptable but it can quickly become too annoying. Two respondents think that daily posts are too much. "Once a day is ok but not more. Then it becomes uninteresting and annoying.”  
“Frequent content is important, especially if they’re not famous.” |
<p>| 7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)? | Four respondents believe that high social status matters to them, while the other six had either no opinion or prefer less famous people. &quot;Not at all. Actually the opposite since I prefer people that I can relate to. If I was fat I would probably follow more fat people.” |</p>
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<tr>
<td>8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?</td>
<td>Three respondents have higher trust towards celebrities and perceive them to be more interesting. The rest of the respondents did either dislike celebrities or had no specific opinion.</td>
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<td>“I’m not convinced just because they are celebrities. I mean, they get paid for it.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I dislike them, I perceive their posts as the way of making money and it is usually very obvious. They could recommend something on personal level, but I am not sure that I can trust it.”</td>
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<td>“I don’t really care. But I guess I trust celebrities’ promotion more.”</td>
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<td>9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.</td>
<td>The most popular post was number 5 due to openness and transparency. The other posts were chosen primarily based on personal relatedness, but also openness.</td>
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<td>“Number 3. I saw his profile description and he also lifts weights that’s what I also do and I can relate to it.”</td>
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<td>“Number 5. She obviously doesn’t have an intention of doing promotion. She’s just natural and honest.”</td>
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<td>“Number 4 and 5. I see them as real and honest. They don’t promote the”</td>
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| 10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)* | The most memorable product was undoubtedly number 1, promoted by a celebrity. Noteworthy though, is that some respondents have been exposed to this promotion from the past.  
"The reason why I probably remember Vitamin well much better than anything else is because I’ve already known about Zlatan having worked with Vitamin well, so I’ve heard about it before. And Also Zlatan is the only one person that I knew among these Instagrammer’s. I haven’t remembered any new product, so I can’t describe any other product." |
| 11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion. | All respondents referred to an influencer that they believed looked natural in relation to the product promotion. The choices of different posts might be different, however their major reason is still consistent.  
"Number 5. She’s opened and honest about her weight loss and project. And most important, she doesn’t use any hashtags about the product or text to promote it.” |
4.1.1 General

No one of the male respondents thought that age and gender affects their perception, and someone directly after that question mentioned the influencer’s personality and inspiring charisma to be more important. A respondent believed that everyone of the influencers looking for some kind of attention or confirmation but are positioned in different stages.

4.1.2 Integrity

Of the found results, several of the concepts had diversified answers and opinions, however the male respondents totally agreed about the importance of integrity. Openness and frankness consistently shows a great impact on the influencers credibility and message perception. Influencer number five was mentioned by over half of the respondents as the most trustworthy person due to her perceived honesty where no promotional intentions were identified. She described a deeply personal and self-critical story about her weight and need of lifestyle change, that had high impact on the respondents since they can relate to this person in higher extent than a celebrity for instance. Posts that are shared with this honesty are perceived as more natural and authentic, which will wipe out the suspiciousness towards a potential sponsored post.

Whether these product posts are perceived to be advertising or authentic, is the most common answer “it depends”. About half of the respondents clearly state that the posts are seen as advertising and refer to fabricated setup of the picture while the other half mention solely influencer number five as a reason to believe that posts could be authentic. She does not put the product in center which obviously have a greater impact on the receiver compared to a post with promotional intentions. Furthermore, she does not include neither the name of the product in text or hashtags which stresses the natural characteristic. It is seen as personal recommendations rather than promotion. That is one of the reasons why some respondents prefer following non-celebrities. When the male respondents were asked about a specific post
they liked, a predominant reason were the openness and authentic approach influencer number five used.

4.1.3 Activity

Diversified answers and opinions are found in the concern of activity level of the Instagrammers. Respondents explicitly stated that too many posts are annoying and makes influencers uninteresting. That leads to decreased success rate of messages since the receivers lose attention of the post. One respondent preferred less updates in order to make every single message more interesting to read. The group thought that one post daily is maximum to avoid annoyance, but even at that activity level posts need to be mixed and not only include same type of pictures and messages. The rest of the respondents had either no opinion, or preferred frequent posting of messages and stressed that rich content is important to make an influencer interesting - especially if he/she is no celebrity. Another expressed opinion regarding activity level connected to the question of advertising or authentic perception, is that sponsored posts shall be used with caution. If an influencer constantly share sponsored messages to promote a product, it might have opposite effect on receivers.

4.1.4 Social status

The question regarding social status and celebrity is highly diversified where almost every respondent had a distinct opinion. Some persons were convinced that celebrities increase the credibility of messages if a product is promoted by a celebrity, based on a belief of higher trustworthiness and interest. Additionally it requires financial resources to use celebrities. One respondent assumed that celebrities often reject sponsorship requests which makes their selected promotion campaigns more reliable. Half of the group had an opposite opinion where suspiciousness were central in their view of celebrities. Fabricated pictures and paid content are believed to interfere with the messages and decrease trustworthiness. A well related question of social status is the number of followers that six of the respondents emphasized as crucial to make an influencer interesting, however rest of the group highlighted the importance of content rather than a high number of followers. Messages sent by less famous persons are by these persons perceived to be more relatable since they do not have that much in common with celebrities. However, an influencer of that characteristics are
by one respondent believed to potentially damage a brand if it stand in contradiction with the company’s core values.

When the respondents were asked about their favourable post of the six influencers, only two persons answered a celebrity. All other preferred influencers with less followers and social status and based it on its natural approach, and a belief that regular people posting products because they actually use them freely instead of an agreed sponsorship. On the other hand, the most memorable and wanted product were placed in picture 1 that included a celebrity. However, a few respondents admitted that they were familiar to the certain promotion campaign from the past and in some cases also tried the product.

4.2 Women

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them</td>
<td>Nine out of ten respondents perceive these posts generally as advertising,</td>
<td>“Depends who it is. Regular people that post pictures of health products only want to be seen as</td>
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<td>as advertising or authentic? Explain why.</td>
<td>however four of them mentioned that “it depends”. They mostly referred</td>
<td>healthy. I don’t like that kind of Instagrammers. The celebrities only do it for money which then</td>
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<td>to who do the promotion (a celebrity or a non-celebrity).</td>
<td>I see as paid promotion.”</td>
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<td>2. How important for you was the Instagrammer’s personality when you</td>
<td>Six respondents think that personality, gender, and age is important.</td>
<td>“It is very important, it makes looking through the post more interesting. I payed attention to the</td>
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<td>were looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age</td>
<td>The other ones do not believe it is important to them.</td>
<td>age and gender and I guess I prefer following girls of my age.”</td>
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<td>and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.</td>
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<td>3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of</td>
<td>Seven of the ten respondents noticed the number of followers</td>
<td>“Depends on what I am looking for. But I prefer”</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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<td>followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?</td>
<td>and think it is important in order to attract interest. The other three either preferred influencers with less followers, or had no specific opinion.</td>
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<td>popular users. I paid attention to it.”</td>
<td>“I prefer less followers since they seems to be more “real” but I guess many of them looking for sponsorships.”</td>
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<td>4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?</td>
<td>All respondents agreed that it is important. Openness and frankness make an influencer more interesting to follow.</td>
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<td>“It is more interesting if people are opened. Number 5 is very opened.”</td>
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<td>5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?</td>
<td>Four respondents think description is important. Two think it is pretty important, and the other four do not pay attention to the description.</td>
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<td>“Not that important to me. I don’t know why. I prefer start looking at the feed of pictures.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I read most of them, so it is quite important.”</td>
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<td>6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammer’s that make posts daily on social media?</td>
<td>Six respondents think daily posts are important, while three dislike this frequency, and the last one had no opinion.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I don’t like it. I usually pay attention to the number of posts.”</td>
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<td>“Yes active instgrammers are much more interesting but it can maximum be two uploads in one day otherwise it’s annoying. If more than one post in a day it need to contains something else than the first picture.”</td>
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7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

Three respondents think it is important, three think it is not important, and the other four said that it depends.

“It matters to me. I would say that the celebrities affects me but on the other hand I can better relate to number 5. I mean, what do I have in common with Zlatan?”

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

Six respondents dislike promotion made by celebrities. Three other says it depends, and the last one think celebrities increase credibility.

“I guess I have more negative attitude to the celebrities’ post, it is too often an obvious sponsored promotion.”

“Celebrities make money of it, I don’t trust such posts made by them.”

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

Post number 1, 4 and 5 are most popular.

“Number 4 and 5. They seem to be most authentic and opened and less interest of promoting the product.”

“Zlatan. Zlatan is Zlatan.”

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)

The respondents generally remembered a variety of products but Vitamin Well (Post 1) was mentioned by seven respondents.

“I remember the post from Zlatan but maybe I remember it because I’ve seen that promotion before.”

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best

Seven respondents said that authenticity and transparency are the most important factors. Influencers shall have a natural

“Number 5 is real. Her intention doesn’t seems to promote the product. She does it of free will which I
way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

connection to the product they promote.

perceive to be authentic. I like her.”

“I guess all of these six influencers have a purpose of sharing their post but I trust number five most of them. She’s authentic.”

4.2.1 General

The most memorable products among participants were picture number one, two and three. The personality of influencers turned to be quite important to the majority of female respondents, also half of them mentioned that they prefer social media users of the same age and gender, since it is easier to relate to them.

4.2.2 Integrity

The majority of respondents stated that frankness and openness are very important for them and told that those profiles always are more interesting to follow. A popular post is number five who is seen as a very sincere one and on the contrary said that profile number one seemed to be too private. An understanding and respect of celebrities’ privacy is mentioned by a respondent, meanwhile she thought it is boring. A mutual point of view by some respondents is that famous people tend to be less opened and natural in their profiles, than usual people that are believed to be very honest. The most popular post are the ones with natural approach were the influencer promote the product in an authentic way, or does not put it in center at all. The influencers’ openness and personality is considered be recognizable in an early stage when facing the post. Transparency is mentioned to be important if a follower shall trust their messages, and thereby also sponsored post at regular frequency. If the influencer consistently share transparent posts about a healthy living there is an increased chance of trust their messages and promoted products. What people are looking for is connections and links to the influencer in order to establish a relationship even if the have never met in person.
Moreover, the majority of female respondents have suspiciously mindset about such messages and posts with products, and is believed to be pure advertising, especially if some celebrity made a post about a product. That was a widespread belief that celebrities’ posts are usually sponsored, however usual people may recommend something just because they really want to share a good product with the followers. Despite that positive attitude in general towards these people, some respondents are still suspicious because they believe unknown Instagrammers to upload product promotions in hope to attract potential sponsors. Favourable posts are the ones that smoothly hide the product and do not make the promotion too obvious. Moreover, the majority of female participants stated that they always read profile information of the bloggers and unknown users, since it helps to find out very quickly what this profile is about without scrolling down the whole feed and decide if this profile might be useful or not.

4.2.3 Activity

Only three respondents out of ten claimed that they do not like very active users, since it is too annoying, where one of them stated that social media nowadays is filled with too much unnecessary information. The total number of posts is of interest when checking an Instagram profile. The rest of female participants said that they prefer active users, however it is important that the content should be varied and interesting in order to retain the attraction over time. The desirable range of different content is particularly important if more than one post is uploaded daily, otherwise there is a potential risk that the influencer is perceived to be annoying repetitive. Frequent posting are especially appreciated when the content is a certain mission and its progress, such as weight loss. Inactive influencers are seen to be boring and lose attraction from followers.

4.2.4 Social Status

The question about the importance of social status of the influencer resulted in diversified answers and reasoning among the participants. A half of the respondents replied that social status does not matter to them when reading social media posts and referred to the importance of valuable content and information instead. However, two respondents mentioned that social status affects the influencer’s credibility to them, and other participants said that celebrities
are more interesting and likely to influence them than unknown people. Noteworthy about the celebrities’ level of trustworthiness, these posts were the most memorable in the experiment, despite the respondents doubtfulness. A high number of followers also indicates that this influencer is of interest of many people and thereby increase the likelihood of being affected by others. However, someone is more focused in the amount of likes of the post instead of number of followers when looking at these messages.

A half of respondents highlighted that they have mostly negative attitude to the posts made by celebrities, because they get money to promote different products and they cannot trust them, but it is also mentioned that relevant partnerships have a more positive perception. For instance, a professional athlete that promotes a sport nutrition is considered to be of natural character. Later on, most of participants agreed that there might be some connection between an influencer and a product that he/she recommends. It is important to make a post look natural and to convince followers that an influencer really uses this product. Influencer number five has a low social status but high trustworthiness since she is not actively try to promote the product. Respondents noticed that she does not even include the product as a hashtag in hope for greater attention. On the other hand, celebrities might be helpful if a person actively is seeking for a certain product. In that case a famous person fronting the product can increase the trustworthiness. Regarding the current sport nutrition products that is in focus of the study, professional athletes have higher trustworthiness due to their strict diet, even if an “fitness Instagrammer” have the same amount of followers.

5. Analysis and discussion

This chapter contains an analysis of the current results in relation to previous research within this topic. The discussion intend to lift the results into a generalizable level.

5.1 Analysis of results

As Zhang et al. (2017) and Schwartz et al. (2013) state, age and gender could possibly have an impact on how influencers are perceived. The current study shows that these conditions matter to the female followers, who are more likely to be attracted by influencers of similar age and gender. Schwartz et al. (2013) highlight that the same messages sent by different
users on social media are perceived by people noticeably distinct way due to various attributes that every person has. The current findings does not contrast Schwartz et al. (2013), however the different attributes are explored and investigated. Influencers have the ability to strengthen a brand by sharing content through their own social media channels (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz, 2013) which is truly confirmed in the current result, but it could also accidentally hurt the brand image if a non-suitable influencer promote the product.

Influencers are identified to benefit from revealing secrets and sharing personal information due to the fact that it strengthens relationships. Past research suggests that the influencers online share their secrets in exchange for extended and strengthen audience, increased loyalty and a stronger personal brand (Kim, Pai, Bickart & Brunel, 2014). The respondents of the current study described how opened minded people online are appreciated by followers and lead to strengthen relationship. By exposing sensitive information, influencers increase attention and trustworthiness among the receivers of the message. According to Zietek (2016), trustworthiness and credibility can also be improved by celebrity, which is partly shown in these findings as well, however a considerable suspiciousness is directed towards these people with reference to possible sponsorships and paid content. Furthermore, respondents find it difficult to relate to celebrities’ lifestyle which does not improve the relation to the famous influencer, completely in line with research by Ledbetter and Redd (2016).

Opinions from respondents suggest that influencers with a high level of activity are favourable to follow, but inactive Instagrammers seem to be boring. Dennen (2014) and Ledbetter and Redd (2016) claim that frequent posting is crucial in order to gain attraction, however they do not deal with the perceived limit of a maximum post. This study clearly signaled that too frequent posting by the influencer could be harmful to the follower’s interest. Additionally, in contrasts to their research, none of the respondents in the current study spoke about increased trustworthiness related to frequent posting.

The previous research made by Kilgour, Sasser & Larke (2015) and Yubo & Jinhong (2008) that place the concept of influencers into communication rather than marketing is partly in
contrast to the results in this study. The matter of social status, celebrity and natural approach in messages need to be considered when determining how to categorize this product promotion. Lu, Chang & Chang (2014) claim that even sponsored posts in social media are perceived to be more trustworthy than traditional marketing. The current study does not question Lu, Chang & Chang (2014), however it only concerns influencers in general, while this study separate influencers into different characteristics. The sponsored post are by some respondents perceived to be unpopular and fake, while others have a more favourable attitude. Since the findings of the current study put major attention to influencers’ openness and authenticity, it can be related to Kohli, Suri & Kapoor (2015) who highlighted the importance of transparency in the online world. Based on the respondents opinions, support could be found to Zietek’s (2016) and Ledbetter and Redd’s (2016) theory about celebrities ability to gain trust, but simultaneously findings support Burns (2016) statement that less famous persons could be perceived more trustworthy than the famous influencer. Divided answers are received in this study but a majority considered the non-celebrity to be preferred.

5.2 Discussion

Based on previous research, which describes the challenge for marketers to identify a suitable influencer that will have the most effective outcome (Roelens, Baecke & Benoit, 2016), the current results consisting of diversified opinions of this topic could explain the complex situation, even if the use of digital tools let companies measure and find target groups in a different way than traditional methods (Royle & Laing, 2014). Word-of-mouth is a well-known marketing phenomenon and has convincing effects on people’s trust (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, Beukeboom, 2015; Huang, 2015; Burns, 2016), however that research is based on the offline environment (Sweeney, Soutar & Mazzarol, 2014). The point of internet is the possibility to interact and listen to people you do not know or have met in the physical world. According to the new findings, all transmitters of online messages are not granted success in delivery process. The characteristics and personality are of high importance in the social media which eventually is not fully comparable to traditional WOM. Due to a considerable positive attitude towards less famous influencers, an inevitable question is the use of celebrities in social media marketing, and consequently its related costs. The results are suggested to not be seen as a general truth to marketing success since less famous persons lack the potential of reach, however likely high effectiveness.
The rise of social media changed the world of marketing but also people’s behaviour and mindset (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The user generated content was perceived to be trustworthy in comparison to traditional promotion (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, Beukeboom, 2015; Huang, 2015; Burns, 2016), however the new findings signals a suspiciousness and distancing towards sponsored content, that contrasts Lu, Chang & Chang (2014). The increased use of sponsored posts have eventually reached a critical saturation since the current results reveals a generally sceptical attitude towards celebrities and sponsored messages. Noteworthy though is the use of qualitative approach of this study and its thereby small sample. A further quantitative research will contribute to an extensive understanding of this topic and facilitate a more reliable analysis.

6. Conclusion

The new discovered findings about how different characteristics of social media influencers are perceived by receivers, have the ability to address the purpose and research question of the current study. The results stresses the importance of openness and honesty among influencers. While influencers that protect their privacy are seen as uninteresting, a convincingly wide majority agrees on transparency to be the most important characteristics of an influencer. Natural posts and messages with less focus on promotion are appreciated by followers and believe that the influencer use the product freely without any sponsorship agreements. The respondents were even able to identify the product despite the absence of hashtags and promotional text messages related to the post. Another characteristic that was mentioned equally to an influencer’s openness is the activity level. Posts and messages that are sent frequently (daily) are perceived to be more interesting compared to inactive influencers. The frequency is especially interesting in case of certain projects that the influencer is involved in, i.e. weight loss mission. People will be able to follow their progress in a better way and are susceptible to receive the influencer’s messages.

6.1 Theoretical contribution

The current research contributes to several fields such as communication and branding theories, general knowledge of social media influencers phenomenon. As it has already been
discussed modern companies are in permanent search for effective communication tools and ways of building long-term relationships with their target customers. Social media has become an indispensible part of branding and communication companies’ strategies.

The current study examined social media influencers as a part of communication process between brands and consumers. The created conceptual model based on Lasswell (1948) and Shannon & Weaver (1979) communication models was proposed to contribute to the understanding of message delivery with the help of social media influencers. Moreover, the effect of SMI’s characteristics on the receivers’ message perception was thoroughly explored and analyzed in this study. Numerous authors (Gladwell, 2001; Zhang, Moe & Schweidel, 2017; Schwartz et al, 2013) highlighted that certain personal characteristics have an impact on the level of influence that an individual may have on others. There have been made studies about influential people and their characteristics in social media context (Vollenbroek et al., 2014; Rosenthal, 2014; Zietek, 2016), however, none of them related SMI’s characteristics to the communication process and message perception among receivers.

Moreover, qualitative research strategy of this study contributed to gaining more insights and details about receivers’ perception of social media influencers and their characteristics among different genders. The findings of this research are believed to be useful for creation an effective communication strategy for brands in social media and more appropriate targeting.

6.2 Managerial implications

The results of this study might be useful for the companies that consider usage of social media influencers in their promotional and branding campaigns. In order to send the right message and achieve more effective outcome of attracting social media influencers, companies shall take into consideration their personal attributes and characteristics. Since the chosen product for this research was sport nutrition, the results will be especially useful for the brands and companies that deal with this type of goods.

First of all, it was found that representatives of different genders perceive social media influencers in distinct ways. Consequently, it is of high importance to choose different
influencers for various target groups. Female social media users prefer influencers of the same age and gender, so that they could relate themselves to a blogger easily. Furthermore, it was found that the overwhelming majority of social media users participated in this study pays a lot of attention to level of openness that an influencer express in his/her social media profile. Sharing private information and high activity on social media are likely to increase the trustworthiness to influencers’ recommendations and posts. Thus, companies should give their preferences to the influencers that have high level of integrity and activity.

Moreover, it was found that the examined age group has a positive attitude towards goal-oriented persons, who show their journey of achieving this goal with help of social media. It is of great importance to make promotional post look natural. It might not be obvious that an influencer makes some recommendations because of sponsored partnership with a company. Plus, this study revealed that there might be some connection between an influencer and a product that is promoted.

Overall, it is suggested choosing an influencer who is related to the industry of promoted product (e.g. a sportsman for sport products). Also, an influencer should not have many other promotional posts in the profile because it may deteriorate the trustworthiness. Concerning the content of posts made by social media influencers, companies should ask a blogger to make as much natural picture with a product as it is possible. An excluded promotional hashtag and text related to the post might seem to look like personal recommendations about this product, and not advertising that can be found in some other media. Since the social media followers are interested in following the progress of a an influencer’s certain mission (i.e. weight loss), companies should consider making numerous posts with the same influencer that can tell some story about the regularly usage of the promoted product, in order to increase the interest among followers.

Regarding the attraction of celebrities to promotional and branding campaigns, companies may face several advantages and disadvantages that were found in this study. Besides notable spendings on cooperation with famous people, companies should also know that effect of celebrities’ posts might be controversial. Some people believe that every product related post made by famous person is sponsored and not trustworthy at all. Moreover, some respondents
claimed that if a celebrity is a brand face of one product, it is more trustworthy than a celebrity who promotes dozens of different products. Nevertheless, some people express an opinion that if a company can afford promotional campaigns with celebrities, than it is a stable and credible brand. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that posts made by celebrities turn to be more memorable, than post made by other social media influencers.

Finally, in order to send a desirable message and get favorable outcome of using social media influencers, companies should contemplate the various characteristics that are important for their aims. The characteristics of SMI are perceived differently among different genders, thus it is of high importance to take this fact into consideration when choosing an influencer.

6.3 Limitations and further research

The current study focused on three primary characteristics of social media influencers; social status, activity and integrity. Future studies may include additional characteristics in order to obtain more in-depth findings and identify effect of other characteristics on the receivers. This study examined each characteristic independently, however, one social media influencer may have numerous characteristics at the same time, what can also become a bedrock for the further research. Moreover, the sample of this study encompassed two criteria, the authors suggest adding some other criteria or examining age criterion in more detail. The age group of this study sample varied from 20-30 years old, however, other age groups and their perception of social media influencers may also be explored. Furthermore, all respondents participated in this study were Swedes, thus, the authors believe that the replication of this research in other countries and addition of international angle to this topic will result in more generalizable results. Finally, the authors recommend for future studies to carry out a quantitative research related to the topic with a larger sample to gain further generalizability of the results.
7.0 Reference list


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8.0 Appendix

1. Male, 23 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.
   
   *It really depends on the post and circumstances but when it comes to sport activities and healthy lifestyle. I think much less of it as an advertising.*

2. How important for you was the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.
   
   *I didn’t look at their age, but I paid attention to the gender and also checked if it was just a normal person or an athlete, sportsman etc. Age wasn’t that important for me.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and the popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?
   
   *I didn’t pay much attention to the followers actually in none of the profiles.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?
   
   *I think it is really important, because it helps to understand this person better and gives a proper outlook of his life. Also, pictures shouldn’t seem to be fabricated, it is important for me to see natural photos that can show what kind of person the blogger really is.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?
   
   *It also helps to see what kind of person is it, I read most of them.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?
   
   *I always chose very active users to follow.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you?
It plays a big role for me. I am not spending that much time on social media, but if I would have more spare time, I would like to read more celebrities’ blogs, it might be interesting.

8. What is your attitude to the posts made by celebrities?
I guess I perceive their posts quite the same way as usual people’s posts.

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
Number 3. I feel like the more I know about the person, the better. He has a lot of pictures of his daily life and he even says in his profile description “you will find here pictures of me, my family, our travelling and workouts” – it gives a good idea of what kind of person you came across and you know what to expect. That’s what I like.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)
The vitamin well bottle... I am afraid nothing else. The reason why I probably remember Vitamin well much better than anything else is because I’ve already known about Zlatan having worked with Vitamin well, so I’ve heard about it before. And Also Zlatan is the only one person that I knew among these bloggers. I haven’t remembered any new product, so I can’t describe any other product.

11. How should be the Instagrammer connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any blogger that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
When you look at the picture you should feel that the Instagrammer really uses this product in his daily life, not just promotes it. Person should recommend something on his personal level. I also realized that I didn’t really read their posts, I was much more focused on the pictures. Number 6 has only 41 followers and seems that he recommends the product on his personal level, because he really likes it. Number 3 looks the most natural for me, don’t know really why, but I like this one.
2. Female, 20 y.o.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.</td>
<td><em>I see them as advertising. I can easily see if the post is a sponsored promotion, so I guess the majority of post that I saw now is advertising.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.</td>
<td><em>It’s pretty important. Personality comes through the pictures. I payed attention to both age and gender. And I guess I made some associations immediately, for instance, “oh, this is typical swedish father, oh this girl is might be the same age as me”. But I don’t think that age or gender can affect me somehow.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?</td>
<td><em>I guess it should not really matter, but probably pretty unconsciously I think “Oh, they have a lot of followers, maybe I should follow them also, people like something in this profiles”. I didn’t actually pay attention to it, but of course even without looking at it I knew that there is a huge difference in popularity between Zlatan and some usual girl.</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?</td>
<td><em>The more personal a profile gets, the more I like it. It is pretty important for me. For example, Number 2 mentioned that she loves God, Number 3 posts photos of his family or number 5 shows her journey to slim shape and shows her body what is very personal...yes, I noticed such things.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?</td>
<td><em>I think when I look at the profile “What can it give to me?” Let’s say Number 3 father of the family, or Zlatan, they probably cannot give me any information that I am interested</em></td>
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</table>
in. But on the contrary these girls Number 4 and 5, they may have something interesting for me, because I can relate myself to them.

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammer’s that make posts daily on social media?
I don’t mind if a person is very active in his profile, sometimes it can be very interesting to follow people who have very active lifestyle.

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you?
It doesn’t really matter for me, once again it depends more on what this Instagrammer can give me in terms of information.

8. What is your attitude to the posts made by celebrities?
It depends. I guess celebrity should be connected to a product. Like here, Zlatan is a sportsman and he promotes a sport drink - that’s fine.

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
Number 4. She mentioned not only the product in the post but also described her whole day, it’s better. I don’t like posts that screams “Buy this!”; it should be hidden somehow.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)
Two protein bars, Vitamin Well from Zlatan, some energy drink, protein powder and ony girl had yoghurt drink I guess.

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any blogger that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
It doesn’t convince me at all if I see that an Instagrammer’s is doing it only for money and he wouldn’t really use it in his life, if he hadn’t been payed for that.
Number 5 I would never know if she got sponsored for that or not, I like that she didn’t write anything about this product, just holds it and Number 3 he also didn’t write some text like “buy this!”; just photo and hashtags.
1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

It is obviously sponsored. You can see it how they hold the product and how they write about it. I believe that the famous influencers are sponsored while the less famous persons are looking for sponsorships. The celeb is interesting but the “nobodies” are not interesting since they only looking for attention and sponsor deals. The reason why I prefer the celebrities is because they select partnerships among all offers they got. Zlatan for instance, he might have got hundreds of proposals but only select a few.

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

I haven’t thought about it actually. Gender doesn’t mean that much for me either.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

The more followers, the more credible it gets. It’s not the first thing I look for but it’s important how trustworthy this person is.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

If they shall promote a health product I believe it’s very important that this person actually is healthy. If they’re transparent in their social media and stresses a healthy living it will affect me positively.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

That is not that important to me but I read it though. The first I look at is the feed of picture and get an overview about what kind of posts this person upload.
6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?
*Like it! More activity!*

6. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?
*I believe it’s important since their status will enhance the credibility.*

7. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?
*Same answers as previous question.*

8. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
*Zlatan. Zlatan is Zlatan.*

9. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*

10. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
*I like Chrille. He seems to be a nice guy who doesn’t have an underlying thought about promoting the product. He’s opened and authentic.*

11. Do you want to buy any of product you saw? Which one and why? If no, describe your experience of buying some product after seeing it on social media blog post.
*Vitamin Well. I don’t think I would buy Chrille’s product even if I like his post.*

### 4. Female, 24 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.
I don’t think I notice the product. I focus on the person itself, especially if it’s a celebrity. In general I perceive these posts as promotion because they either have a sponsorship, or they are looking for one.

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.  
*Gender doesn’t matter to me, and people trying to lose weight only looking for credit and encouragement.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?  
*It’s not that important. I rather looking at the amount of likes instead. Generally I’m more interested in less famous persons. Zlatan is not that interesting to me.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?  
*I like people’s openness in social media. It feels more authentic when they open up themselves, but on the other hand I have an understanding of celebrities that protecting their privacy, but it’s boring.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?  
*I always start looking at the feed of pictures, and then the description.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?  
*Inactive people are boring. It’s much more interesting if they are active and uploading pictures daily. Especially if they post pictures about a specific mission such as weight loss.*

6. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?
If it’s a product that I’m actively seeking I believe that high social status will have an impact on me but in general I prefer following people that I better can relate to. I have more in common with them compared to the celebrities and people with high social status.

7. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?
   *I trust my friends rather than celebrities. In that case I don’t care about their celebrity, status and number of followers.*

8. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
   *I like number five since her project attracts me and I’m curious about her progress.*

9. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*
   *I remember the post from Zlatan but maybe I remember it because I’ve seen that promotion before. Furthermore, I can’t just ignore the fact that Zlatan is Zlatan.*

10. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
   *I guess all of these six influencers have a purpose of sharing their post but I trust number five most of them. She’s authentic.*

11. Do you want to buy any of product you saw? Which one and why? If no, describe your experience of buying some product after seeing it on social media post.
   *No, I haven’t bought any product after seeing it on social media. Not that I’m aware about.*

5. Male, 28 y.o

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.
I see all of this as somehow of promotion, but in different stages. None of them are real. Celebrities are paid while the regular people want to be paid and sponsored. I’m not convinced of them and I don’t think it contributes to a stronger brand for the company.

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

The gender doesn’t matter. I think health product has nothing to do with gender, rather the person itself. I guess all of these six influencers want some attention and maybe confirmation but they do it in a different way.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

I care more about content than numbers. Non-celebrities might have very good content and that is what matters to me.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

I like opened persons. Especially celebrities that you can follow in a sort of backstage mode. I follow some actors that post pictures about the production of movies. However, I can understand that some people care about privacy. Zlatan for instance might not be willing to share pictures of his children.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

First I check the post and the feed, then profile description and number of followers.

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

Good content and consistent frequency is appreciated by me, but some people go way beyond the limit when they upload several pictures a day. So annoying! I only follow inactive people that I know. Celebrities like Zlatan doesn’t need to post that much since I see him on tv almost daily.
7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

_I might pay attention to number 1 and 2 since they are famous but I wouldn’t say my opinion in this case is special. I don’t care that much about the status._

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

_The company and product increase the credibility by the use of celebrities but I don’t believe it affect my purchase intention._

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

_Number 5. She speaks about herself in first case instead of putting the product in center. She feels confident and real._

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)

_I remember Celsius, Vega, Swebar._

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

_Number 5. She’s opened and honest about her weight loss and project. And most important, she doesn’t use any hashtags about the product or text to promote it._


1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

_I see it as advertising but it depends on who’s doing the promotion. Number 5 seems to be honest and has no intention of doing promotion. I see her as real and think she’s the most interesting person of this six influencers._
2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

*Zlatan is famous and I like him. He probably rejects many offers but only accepting a few. That increases the credibility to me. The non-famous influencers have probably never got any question of doing promotion. Or at least very very few. I would like to say that gender doesn’t matter to me but I guess it does.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

*I don’t pay that much intention to the number of followers. I care more about the content or people I know.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

*The more privacy they share, the more real. I like people’s honesty in posts.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

*Very important. I want to know more about the person which makes the presentation crucial. Number four seems to be a nice guy.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*Once a day is ok but not more. Then it becomes uninteresting and annoying.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

*I recognize Vitamin Well best of these products and Zlatan is probably the major reason for that.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*I’m not convinced just because they are celebrities. I mean they get paid for it.*
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<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.</td>
<td>Number 3. He looks like a really nice guy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did</td>
<td>Vitamin Well, Nocco, Swebar, and the basket girl with something named V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through</td>
<td></td>
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<td>the posts one more time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she</td>
<td>They weight loss girl. She doesn’t put the product in center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best</td>
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<tr>
<td>way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your</td>
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<tr>
<td>opinion.</td>
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7. Male, 24 y.o.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them</td>
<td>It depends. Number 5 looks natural, while Zlatan is doing promotion. 1, 2 and 6 is pure</td>
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<tr>
<td>as advertising or authentic? Explain why.</td>
<td>advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was</td>
<td>I might affect me a little bit but I can’t really explain how. I guess I have more in common</td>
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<td>looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and</td>
<td>with the male Instagrammers.</td>
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<td>gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and</td>
<td>It affects me quite a lot. Even if I know Zlatan is doing promotion it still increase the</td>
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<tr>
<td>his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it</td>
<td>credibility. I don’t care that much of unknown people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>his/her profile?</td>
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Personally I prefer products that are promoted but people I better can relate to. Number 5 who wants to drop weight is interesting since her challenge could be mine as well. Despite that, I guess Zlatan will boost Vitamin Well’s sales even if it only a pure promotion picture.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? 
I start watching the feed, followed by the description.

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media? 
Frequent content is important. Especially if they are unknown.

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)? 
I have more trust in less famous persons. The social status affects me.

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities? 
The more promotion they post, the worse it gets. If they post promotion moderately often it could be accepted.

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why. 
I love Zlatan. Simple as that.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time) 
Vitamin Well, Celcius, Gainomax.

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion. 
Number 4 and 5. They are real to me and it looks like they really like the products and use them by free willing. That increase the trust towards these posts and influencers. When it
comes to product recommendation on Instagram I prefer influencers with less followers. The celebrities are thereby not of interest to me.

8. Female, 26 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagramm posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.
   Most often as promotion but if it’s smoothly hidden I see it in a more natural way. It can’t be too obvious.

2. How important for you was the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.
   Gender doesn’t matter but it must feel real. I like the picture of Zlatan but the person doesn’t need to be famous.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?
   I prefer less followers since they seems to be more “real” but I guess many of them looking for sponsorships.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?
   If people are willing to opened themselves publically it’s fine for me. Personally I like people that are honest and don’t just publish a successful facade.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?
   Not that important to me. I don’t know why. I prefer start looking at the feed of pictures.
6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*I like daily post but it needs to be something different. Some people only upload similar photos and I get bored of that. Messages needs to be different if it shall attract me over time.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

*More interesting if they’re famous.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*I like posts from athletes and perceive them to be trustworthy when they do promotions of products. I know they are careful about their diet. The typical “Instagammers” is not that credible in my eyes.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

*Number 4 and 5. They seem to be most authentic and opened and less interest of promoting the product.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*

*Vitamin Well, Vega, Gainomax, Swebar.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*Number 4 and 5. Probably number 5 because she doesn’t care about her awkward picture. She even says that she’s not proud of it and I admire her encouragement. I like her.*
9. Male, 22 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

   Not really, most of them seemed to be just personal recommendations. Maybe only Zlatan’s post looked like an advertising, because I know that he has contracts with some companies.

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

   It is good to know what is their personal aim is and how they achieve it. I didn’t pay attention to these factors, I don’t think it is that important.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

   The more followers they have the more interesting their profiles are, I guess. And also the more followers they have, I am the more likely to follow back. And I payed attention to the number of followers here.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

   In general it is important for me that the blogger is very opened, than I can easily relate myself to his posts. But I guess now when was looking through these profiles I didn’t pay attention to this factor.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

   If there is a good description it is easy to know what is the content of the profile. Yes, I have red every description here.
6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*I have nothing against it. But sometimes it’s not that interesting.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

*That doesn’t matter to me.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*I don’t really care. But I guess I trust celebrities’ promotion more.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

*Number 4. She is so opened and active, it is interesting to see her progress.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*

*Vitamin Well, some protein shake...I don’t remember anything else.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*I don’t think that they should be connected anyhow. I like Zlatan’s post, he is the perfect man to advertise a sport product and I like the picture very much.*

---

10. Male, 23 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

*It depends of how frequent it is. If it’s too often it’s just getting ridiculous but with moderate frequency it’s better. Since I’m very fit I can better relate to Zlatan instead of unfit persons promoting a certain sport drink.*
2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

Yes a little bit, you need to like the character who’s promoting the product. Gender though doesn't matter to me.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

The more the better. It increases the credibility. It also requires financial resources to use these popular influencers.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

The openness often fades away in relation to celebrity. That’s why I prefer less famous persons.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

I start looking at the feed to get an overview, and then I eventually have a look at description and number of followers.

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

I lose interest in an Instagrammer that posts daily. If they post pictures with less frequency I find it more interesting and pay more attention to the posts.

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

Not really, I’m more interested in people of similar lifestyle. If I would be fat, I would most likely be attracted to people of same challenges.

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

High credibility.
9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
Number 5. I guess many people are able to identify themselves with her. Furthermore, it feels like she doesn’t do promotion intentionally.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)
Vitamin Well because of Zlatan, Gainomax, Celsius, Vega, Swebars.

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
Absolutely number 5. I refer to previous answer.

11. Male, 27, y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.
It’s promotion. I like the celebrities but not the other ones. I especially like Zlatan.

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.
Gender doesn’t matter to me but personality is crucial.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?
It is very important to me but I start looking at the feed first and then the number of followers.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?
Openness is interesting. I appreciate when people are opened and share private content. I like that people who’s comfortable with themselves. I guess they also need to have that approach to succeed on Instagram while celebrities doesn’t need to work that hard to increase number of followers.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?
   *I never look at that.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?
   *Moderate is best. Some posts a week is perfect if you ask me. Daily is too much if it shall keep my attention.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?
   *I prefer the successful persons. Unknown people are not interesting to me since I’m not that active myself in social media.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?
   *It depends what celebrity it is. Zlatan is an excellent example of what I believe people like.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
   *Number 5. She’s opened and honest which attracts me.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*
    *Gainomax, Vitamin Well, Vega and the protein box.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
The celebrities promotes good products but one again, I prefer number 5 because she’s so authentic.

12. Female, 27 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

Depends who it is. Regular people that post pictures of health products only want to be seen as healthy. I don’t like that kind of Instagrammers. The celebrities only do it for money which then I see as paid promotion.

2. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

Number 4 is really annoying. “Heey look at me I’m healthy.” It’s so fake and she wants to raise attention.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

Yes, it affects me. I’m more interested in a high number of followers but it’s not what I first look at. I look at the feed and then profile description and followers.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

Very good! If they’re comfortable by sharing private information and honest post I like that. It’s interesting to follow that person’s.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

I read it but I don’t care that much about it. I primary look at the feed.
6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

Yes active Instagrammers are much more interesting but it can maximum be two uploads in one day otherwise it’s annoying. If more than one post in a day it need to contains something else than the first picture.

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

I matters to me. I would say that the celebrities affects me but on the other hand I can better relate to number 5. I mean, what do I have in common with Zlatan?

8. What is your attitude to the posts made by celebrities?

I don’t think I’m affected by them, especially if they upload promotions post once or twice but if it’s frequently I might be more affected.

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

I really like Zlatan and Vitamin Well.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)

Vitamin Well, Nocco, Gainomax, Vega, Dalblads.

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

Number 5 is real. Her intention doesn’t seems to promote the product. She does it of free will which I perceive to be authentic. I like her.

13. Male, 22 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.
Not really, these once look very natural.

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you were looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

Of course I noticed the difference between usual people and famous athletes. I am more attached to usual people who train and try to achieve some goals, than Zlatan who is showing off on his profile. I search for some Instagrammers that I can relate to.

I didn’t pay attention to their age and gender.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

The content is more important to me than number of followers. I didn’t look at the number of followers. I looked only at posts.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

It is very important for me. Number 5 and Number 4 and 3 are quite opened, because they show their body.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

I always read this information, it’s very important.

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

I don’t have a special attitude to such Instagrammers. Here I didn’t pay attention to the number of posts that they have.

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

I guess people tend to follow more really rich people, because it is interesting to see their lifestyle. As for me, I think I tend to follow famous people.
8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*I want to see their lifestyle, not sponsored posts. I won’t follow a celebrity if I see that there are a lot of promotional posts. But if there are few, it’s fine.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

*Number 5. It’s interesting to see her journey to losing weight and she is very opened in her posts, she shows the whole process, I like it.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*

*I am pretty sure I saw smoothie?...But I don’t remember any product*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*I just think that they should be honest about what they promote, they must really use this product or to say openly that they got payed for this. I feel like that every post that I saw here was sponsored. But I like Number 2, because her comment seems to be natural and honest, she probably really likes this bar.*

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1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

*No, I don’t feel triggered or affected by this posts. I don’t see it as advertising.*

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.
I don’t see much personality here, to be honest, they just show off. I didn’t pay attention to age and gender at all, except the last one (Number 6) he seemed to be quite old to get back into shape.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?
   *I guess the more followers a blogger has, I can be the more influenced by him. I noticed only Zlatan’s number of followers and payed attention only to the number of posts of Number 3.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?
   *I guess it might be important but actually I didn’t pay attention to this factor when I was looking at these posts, not at all.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?
   *I read each description here. It is important.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?
   *Sometimes it is very annoying, the content should be interesting. I noticed only Number 3’s activity.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?
   *I don’t care at all. If I like this person, I will follow.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?
   *I dislike them, I perceive their posts as the way of making money and it is usually very obvious. They could recommend something on personal level, but I am not sure that I can trust it.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
Maybe Number 2, cute description.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*

*Vitamin, energy bar, sweet bars, protein powder. I don’t remember any product name, except Vitamin.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*I really believe they should be connected, but celebrities I guess can promote almost everything, they just shouldn’t overdo and overuse this. Number 4, 5, 6 are the most natural.*

15. Male, 21 y.o.

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

*Not really, except Zlatan.*

2. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

*It’s interesting to see their goals. I didn’t pay attention to age and gender.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

*It’s always quite interesting to see the number of followers of every user. I paid attention to it in every profile, but I don’t think that I perceive their posts differently based on the popularity.*
4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?
*It’s very important, I notice such things. I guess Number 5 is very opened.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?
*I didn’t read every single description, pictures can tell me what this profile is about, that is more important for me.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?
*It’s annoying. I didn’t look at the number of posts here.*

7. What role does the blogger’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?
*Not really. I am more focused on the content and number of followers.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?
*I don’t think that celebrity can affect me very much, but maybe only some celebrity that I like very much*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.
*Number 3 I saw his profile description and he also lifts weights that’s what I also do and I can relate to it.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*
*Sport drink...I don’t remember any brand name.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.
If they promote a product, it shouldn’t look fake, it should be simple and natural. Number 1 and 4. 4 seems very natural and like she just casually showed this product. Zlatan doesn’t have a lot of promotional posts, thus it seems very trustworthy for me.

16. Female, 23

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

   It depends on what you know about the person, for example, Zlatan has made a lot of ads, so I can connect him to some brands and promotion. It also depends on the number of followers that a blogger has. If a person has a lot of followers that I can maybe think that it is some kind of advertising.

2. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

   Not really important I guess, it is more about what they show and what kind of photos they post. Yes, I payed attention to the age and gender. I think I prefer people around my age, but gender is not that important.

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

   I guess it is important, I don’t think I will follow some account that has only two followers. Here I payed attention to the number of followers in every profile.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

   I think it is nice, here people with less followers seemed to be more opened than popular ones.
5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

*I read each, except Zlatan because I already know who he is. If I don’t know the person, I will always read his profile information.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*I don’t pay attention to how many posts person posts, it is important to have a good variation of content, if it is always and different, I don’t mind. Here I didn’t notice number of followers.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

*I think I go most for the lifestyle of the person, I like to have a variation of famous people and not really.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*I guess I have mostly negative attitude, but it depends if a celebrity seems to be very honest or these posts are made just for making money. Usually it is easy to get if it is sponsored promotion of not by what is written in the post.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

*Number 1 I like the post, but I don’t like Zlatan’s feed, too much of showing off.*
*Number 4, I like her profile, very bright and various.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)

*I don’t remember any brand name, there was some sport bar.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*I don’t think it plays any role for me, I won’t buy any product just because of the person who made this post.*
1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

*Zlatan has a lot followers and he is very famous, thus in his case I think it is advertising, but I am not sure about the other profiles. But in general there are a lot of promotions on social media nowadays.*

2. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

*To be honest, I have more respect for Zlatan, because he is famous and I know what he is doing in his life. So I will probably want to buy Vitamin Well instead of Swebar, because I don’t know this guy (Number 3). Yes, I did, I guess I have more connection with girls of my age.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

*It is very important. Here I payed attention to the number of followers in every profile.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

*I think it is a bit important, here I notice Number 5, a girl that tries to lose weight. She is obviously more opened than Zlatan.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

*I usually read such description, here I red some of them.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*I think it is too much, social media is overfilled with unnecessary information.*
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<tr>
<td>7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?</td>
<td>No, it’s not important for me.</td>
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<td>8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?</td>
<td>I trust them more, I usually want to buy some product that I see in celebrities’ profiles.</td>
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<td>9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.</td>
<td>Number 5, I like her profile, a lot of personal pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them?</td>
<td>(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time) Vitamin Well, Vega bar, Swebar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.</td>
<td>There may be some connection, it is very important. I would trust more a sportsman if he promotes a sport product. Number 4, her post looks very natural.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**18. Female, 23**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.</td>
<td>It depends. If it is Zlatan, I know that he is famous and then I think that he probably gets money for such posts. But the posts in the end of the list do not seem to be advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.</td>
<td>It is very important, it makes looking through the post more interesting. I payed attention to the age and gender and I guess I prefer following girls of my age.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

It is good if a blogger is popular, it makes him more interesting and I trust popular profiles. I usually pay attention to the number of followers.

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

It is more interesting if people are opened. Number 5 is very opened.

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

I read most of them, so it is quite important.

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammer’s that make posts daily on social media?

I guess it is too much, I don’t want to see the same person all the time. I didn’t notice the number of followers here.

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

If a person is famous, than I am more likely to follow him.

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

Celebrities make money of it, I don’t trust such posts made by them.

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

Number 5, I like the colours very much. Number 2 also because of the content.

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)

Vitamin Well, Vegan bar, Swebar, can’t remember something else.
11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any blogger that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*I think it matters, there might be some connection. Number 3 I like that this blogger seems to be so happy.*

19. Female, 24

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

*It depends. Sometimes people just want to recommend some product to their followers. Here Zlatan seemed to do advertising of Vitamin Well.*

2. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

*It is quite important, if a person is humble or not. I didn’t pay attention to the age and gender.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to red the post? What effect does it have on you?

*I wish it wasn’t important for me, because I prefer to focus on the content, however if I see that a blogger reaches a lot of people, it is more inspiring for me. I didn’t pay attention to the number of followers in these profiles.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

*As long as they don’t like and don’t try to cover something that is obvious, I don’t really care. Number 5 and 6 tell their weight loss journey, it is quite opened.*
5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

*I don’t like to look through the whole profile in order to find out what it is about, such descriptions are very helpful. I read each profile information here.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*I don’t pay much attention to the number of posts, it is fine for me if a person is very active on social media.*

7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

*I don’t pay attention to such factors.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*I guess I have more negative attitude to the celebrities’ post, it is too often an obvious sponsored promotion.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

*Number 5 seems to be very brave to post such private information about here and Number 2 looks as a very active and successful woman.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? (by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)

*Sport drink, Swebar, Vegan bar, protein shake.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*I guess a blogger should really use a product, if he promotes it. Number 3 and Number 6 do not push a product to the followers and do not insist on buying, thus they seem to be the most natural for me.*
20. Female, 22 y.o

1. How do you perceive such Instagram posts in general? Do you see them as advertising or authentic? Explain why.

*I usually scroll pass such posts because they usually try to sell something to me. They don’t recommend it for real they just want to get money. People that are not popular seem to be more real in their recommendations.*

2. How important for you was Instagrammer’s personality when you was looking through these posts? Did you pay attention to his/her age and gender? If yes, describe your attitude to these factors.

*It is very important. For example, there is nothing personal in Zlatan just holding a bottle and there are a lot of personal things in posts where people really train and try to achieve some goals with the help of this products. I guess gender is more important for me.*

3. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s number of followers and his popularity when you read his/her posts? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post? What effect does it have on you?

*Depends on what I am looking for. But I prefer popular users. I payed attention to it.*

4. How important for you is the Instagrammer’s openness and frankness in his/her profile?

*Number 5 shows a lot of personal things, I like such brave people.*

5. What role does the Instagrammer’s profile information (description) play for you? Did you pay attention to it when you started to read the post?

*I never read these.*

6. What is your attitude to very active Instagrammers that make posts daily on social media?

*I don’t like it. I usually pay attention to the number of posts.*
7. What role does the Instagrammer’s social status play for you (wealthy or not, occupation etc)?

*I noticed only that Number 1 and 2 are famous.*

8. What is your attitude to the post made by celebrities?

*It doesn’t feel real, for example, look at Zlatan’ picture, it’s too professional.*

9. Which one of the posts that you saw did you like more? Explain why.

*Number 4, because the content of her profile appeals to me.*

10. Describe each product that you saw in the posts, what emotions did you have after reading about them? *(by memory, without looking through the posts one more time)*

*Vitamin water, bar...that’s it.*

11. How should the Instagrammer be connected to a product that he/she promotes? Was there any Instagrammer that fitted the product the best way and seemed the most natural in his/her promotion? Explain your opinion.

*It is always better to have a person that is connected somehow, than just a random one, it captures my attention more. Number 4 fits in the best way.*