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Louvain School of Management (LSM)

LOUVAIN School of Management

What is the impact of Instagram's Social Influencers on Consumer Attitude and Purchase Behaviour of lifestyle products of young Belgian women?

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ABSTRACT

Marketers and brands continuously search for innovative methods to reach target segments in the most effective way. Social media is one of the fastest evolving communication tools nowadays, exercising a considerable impact on Marketing. Social Influencer Marketing is one of the latest tools combining these elements.

The pursued objective of this thesis is understanding the impact of Social Influencers through Instagram on the buying behaviour of lifestyle products of young Belgian women. Additionally, we do research on elements as attitude, credibility, persuasion attempt and sponsorship disclosure of Influencer Marketing through Instagram.

The methodological approach chosen is a positive approach consisted of two phases. The first is a literature review followed by a qualitative study. During the literature review, we provide you with a theoretical context on Influencer Marketing, as well as on consumer purchase behaviour. Subsequently, we interviewed eight Instagram Influencers, one company applying Influencer Marketing, and eleven young Belgian potential consumers during the qualitative phase. The second phase consists in a quantitative study with the objective to verify a set of research hypotheses. We drew up six hypotheses that we tested with the help of an online survey.

ABBREVIATIONS:

C	Interviewed consumer (e.g. C1 = first interviewed consumer)
E-WOM	Electronical Word-Of-Mouth
I	Interviewed Social Influencer (e.g. I1 = first interviewed Social Influencer)
ROI	Return on Investment
SI	Social Influencer
WOM	Word-Of-Mouth

KEY WORDS:

Social (media) Influencer, Instagram, Product Placement, e-WOM, Marketing, (Social) Influencer Marketing, Buying Behaviour, Consumer Attitude, Advertorial, Lifestyle products

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TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION 1

PART I: Literature review 2

I. Instagram and Microcelebrity Influencer Marketing 2

Chapter 1. Instagram 2

Chapter 2. Using Instagram as a Marketing-tool 3

2.1 Direct Marketing by a company or brand 4

2.2 Social Influencer Marketing 4

2.2.1 An introduction to Influencer Marketing 4

2.2.1.1 The designation “Microcelebrities” 5

2.2.1.2 Influencers influenced by other influencers 6

2.2.2 Collaborations between companies and SIs on Instagram 6

2.2.2.1 Advantages of Influencer Marketing 7

2.2.2.2 Selecting SIs 8

2.2.2.3 Remunerating SIs 8

2.2.2.4 Measuring ROI of Influencer Marketing 10

2.2.3 Legislation 11

2.2.3.1 In America: FTC Guidelines 11

2.2.3.2 In Belgium 12

2.2.4 Ethics and perceived disadvantages 12

2.2.4.1 Cultivation paradigm 12

2.2.4.2 Fraud 13

II. Consumer attitude and purchase behaviour of young women 14

Chapter 3. Marketing Objectives 14

Chapter 4. Consumer purchase behaviour 15

4.1 The 5-Stage Decision Making Model 15

► Problem recognition 16

► Information search 16

► Evaluation of alternatives 17

► Purchase decision 18

► Post-purchase behaviour 18
4.1.1 Consumer purchase behaviour and social media usage of young women .. 19
4.1.2 Impact of hybrid Marketing forms 20
4.1.2.1 E-WOM 20
4.1.2.2 Product Placement 22
Chapter 5. Consumer attitude 23
Chapter 6. Consumer behaviour versus consumer attitude 24
Chapter 7. Persuasion Knowledge 24
III. Conclusion of the literature review 25

PART II: Qualitative research 26
I. Group 1: Potential Consumers 27
Chapter 1. Methodology 27
1.1 Objectives 27
1.2 Method: Individual, online, audio-visual, semi-structured interview 27
1.2.1 Interview guide (*Appendix 1.1*) 28
1.3 Interviewed audience (*Appendix 1.2.1*) 29
Chapter 2. Analysis Method 29
Chapter 3. Summary of results 30
3.1 Lifestyle consumption 30
3.2 Social media consumption 31
3.3 Attitude towards SIs 32
3.4 Potential impact on lifestyle consumption resulting of SI Marketing through Instagram 37
3.5 Conclusion 38
II. Group 2: Social Influencers 40
Chapter 4. Methodology 40
4.1 Objectives 40
4.2 Method: Individual, online, semi-structured interview 40
4.2.1 Interview guide of SIs (*Appendix 2.1*) 41
4.3 Interviewed audience (*Appendix 2.2.1*) 41
Chapter 5. Analysis method 42
Chapter 6. Summary of results 42
6.1 The way to becoming a SI on Instagram 42
6.2 Contact with companies 43

6.3 Influence of other influencers 44
6.4 Conclusion 45
III. Group 3: Brands / Companies 46
IV. Conclusion of the qualitative analysis 47
V. Conclusion of the qualitative phase and construction of hypotheses 48
Hypothesis 1: Influence 48
1.1 Link with this thesis' objective 48
1.2 Justification 48
1.3 Key words 48
1.4 Considered statistical test 48
Group of hypotheses 2: Impacted phases of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model 49
2.1 Link with this thesis' objective 49
2.2 Justification 49
2.3 Key words 49
2.4 Considered statistical test 49
Hypothesis 3: Fashion 50
3.1 Link with this thesis' objective 50
3.2 Justification 50
3.3 Key words 50
3.4 Considered statistical test 50
Group of hypotheses 4: The link between preference on brand information and purchase intention 50
4.1 Link with this thesis' objective 51
4.2 Justification 51
4.3 Considered statistical test 51
Group of hypotheses 5: Persuasion attempt and disclosure 51
5.1 Link with this thesis' objective 51
5.2 Justification 52
5.3 Key words 52
5.4 Considered statistical test 52
Hypothesis 6: Persuasion Attempt (Brand / SI) 52
6.1 Link with this thesis' objective 52
6.2 Justification 53
6.3 Key words 53
6.4 Considered statistical test 53

PART III. Quantitative research 54
I. Methodology 54
Chapter 1. Construction of the survey 54
1.1. Type of questions 55
1.2. Pre-test 56
1.3. Reaching the target audience 56
Chapter 2. Characteristics of the sample 57
II. Analysis methodology 59
Chapter 3. Test of comparison to one standard 59
Chapter 4. The law of categorical judgments 60
Chapter 5. Paired t-test (Comparison of two means-test on dependent samples) 60
III. Analysis and results: verifying the hypotheses 62
Hypothesis 1. Influence 62
Group of hypotheses 2. Impacted phases of the 5-Stage Purchase Decision Making Model 65
Hypothesis 3. Fashion 71
Group of hypotheses 4. The link between preference on brand information and purchase intention 72
Group of hypotheses 5. Persuasion attempt and disclosure 73
Hypothesis 6. Persuasion Attempt (Brand / SI) 77
IV. Conclusion of the quantitative part 79

CONCLUSION 81
I. General conclusion – implications 81
II. Limits and further research areas 83

BIBLIOGRAPHY 85

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Relationship Marketing Largest Platform in 2015, Content Marketing Fastest Growing (ANA & PQ Media, 2016, p. 6) 7
Figure 2 - Top Benefits of Influencer Marketing (Linqia, 2016, p. 2). 7
Figure 3 - Number of influencers per campaign (Linqia, 2016, p. 7). 8
Figure 4 - Example of a possible Cost per Acquisition 9
Figure 5 - Influencer Marketing Pricing models (Linqia, 2016, p. 5). 10
Figure 6 - Success measures of Influencer Marketing (Linqia, 2016, p. 4). 11
Figure 7 - Learning Model (Poncin, 2017) 14
Figure 8 - The 5-Stage Decision Making Model (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2006, in Sinigaglia, 2016) 16
Figure 9 - Age distribution 57
Figure 10 - Professional Status distribution 58
Figure 11 - Impacted phases 65
Figure 12 - CATEGO test H_{2a}: question 6 67
Figure 13 – CATEGO test of H_{2c}: question 16 70

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Inspiration sources of young Belgian women 31
Table 2 - Information sources of young Belgian women 31
Table 3 - Daily Instagram consumption 31
Table 4 - Definition of a SI by young Belgian women 32
Table 5 - Differences in trust between brand and SI 34
Table 6 - Liking a picture - Purchase intention 35
Table 7 - Link between sponsorship disclosure and credibility and purchase intention 36
Table 8 - Impacted Phases of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model 38
Table 9 - Number of Instagram-followers of the SIs 42
Table 10 - Reasons of growing influence of the SIs 42
Table 11 - Media presence of the SI 43
Table 12 - Selection criteria of SIs 43
Table 13 - Restrictions 44
Table 14 - Link Hypotheses - Questions 55
Table 15 - Young Belgian women consulting SIs on Instagram 58
Table 16 - Lifestyle-categories 71
Table 17 - Credibility 75

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

APPENDIX TO THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....90
Explanation of structure.....90
1. **CONSUMERS**.....91
1.1 Interview guide for consumers.....91
1.2 Answers.....97
1.2.1 Interviewees (Consumers = C).....97
1.2.2 Transcription of answers.....99
2. **INFLUENCERS**.....125
2.1 Interview guide for influencers.....125
2.2 Answers.....128
2.2.1 Interviewees (Influencer = I).....128
2.2.2 Transcription of answers.....129
3. **COMPANIES**.....141
3.1 Interview guide for companies.....141
3.2 Answers.....143
3.2.1 Interviewees (Brand = B).....143
3.2.2 Transcription of answers.....144

APPENDIX TO THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH : SURVEY.....146

INTRODUCTION

One of the newest forms in Digital Marketing nowadays is the use of SIs, especially through the social media platform Instagram. It is a combination of e-WOM and product placement. It is a very subtle way of advertising, and that is why it seems to work so well.

A company wanting to advertise its product on social media, does not (only) need to use its own professional profile or page anymore. It simply pays a SI, to recommend the product on their profile by posting a picture. In that way, the company can reach larger networks, in very specific niches. And, more importantly, it does not "taste" like an advert in the mouth of the receiver. Some "followers" do not even notice that this is pure Marketing, they simply think the SI is genuinely recommending a product in the picture he or she sees.

Several studies in this domain have been done yet. In this new research, the main question is:

"What is the impact of Instagram's microcelebrity Social Influencers on consumer attitude and consumer purchase behaviour of lifestyle products of young Belgian women?"

Other questions in this issue are the following: What is a SI? How do companies measure the ROI of Influencer Marketing? How do companies choose a specific Influencer for their product? Are there legal obligations in Belgium? Which audience is the most sensible for Influencer Marketing on Instagram? Do consumers buy more often because of Influencer Marketing or because of direct social media Marketing by the company itself? What percentage of followers see the advertisement through the posted picture? What do criticists say on this topic? What about disclosure guidelines?

This thesis is divided in three parts. The first part presents a summary of all studied literature on SI Marketing on the one hand, and Consumer Purchase Behaviour on the other hand. The second and the third part form the research phase. In the second part, we list up the most remarkable facts that resulted out of interviewing SIs, a company using SI Marketing, and potential consumers. In other words, this is our qualitative study. Based on this information, we drew up several hypotheses, which are statistically tested in the third part of this thesis: the quantitative part. Based on the outcome of these tests, we conclude this research and review the limits of this report.

PART I: Literature review

This theoretical literature review is divided in two parts. The first part, "Instagram and Microcelebrity Influencer Marketing", introduces the domain of the research question of this thesis. It explains the fundamentals of Instagram, Marketing through this platform and Influencer Marketing. The second part, "Consumer attitude and purchase behaviour of young women", clarifies a few consumer reactions to concepts as e-WOM, social media and Product Placement.

I. Instagram and Microcelebrity Influencer Marketing

The first part of this literature review presents Instagram and its most important figures. We will discuss how brands and marketers can use this platform as a Marketing-tool, whether they use their own Instagram-profile or cooperate with SIs. This last method is explained thoroughly in the second chapter.

Chapter 1. Instagram

This first chapter proves how Instagram evolved into one of the most important social media platforms, especially for lifestyle brands. We demonstrate this by framing recent figures about Instagram's ad revenues, global users, and content.

Instagram is a mobile photography application, launched in 2010 by Systrom and Krieger, that was acquired by Facebook for one billion dollars in 2012. In 2013, Instagram was reported to be the "fastest growing media among mobile-savvy users" (Aw Yeong, 2013, in Abidin, 2015, p. 6). In 2016, it brought 1,53 billion dollars in mobile ad revenues, which is 8,4% of Facebook's global mobile ad revenues. Over 80% of the Instagram users live outside the United States, while the mobile ad revenues are much higher in the United States than externally. In 2017, 2,3 billion dollars were brought in by mobile ad revenues in the United States, while only 0,71 billion dollars were brought in outside this region. This difference in trend seems to remain stable in the following years (Nadiminiti, 2017 in Brooke, 2017).

Instagram's revenue share is expected to rise by 18% in 2018, which represents 5 billion dollars (Aslam, 2017).

In 2016, 32% of internet users were using Instagram, which means 700 million total users (April 2017), of which 400 million (May 2017) are daily active users (Aslam, 2017). Compared to 2015, the total user number has doubled. 59% of the 18 to 29-year-old internet users are active on Instagram. Therefore, compared to other social media platforms, Instagram use is especially high among younger adults. Whereas the share of 30- to 49-year-olds is almost half of that number: 33%. And finally, the 65 and older group represents a share of only 8% (Duggan, Greenwood, & Perrin, 2017). Female internet users are more likely to use Instagram than men: 68% of the users are women (Aslam, 2017).

More than 95 million photos and videos are posted every day on Instagram (Nadiminiti, 2017, in Brooke, 2017). Users generally make posts about the highlights of their personal life, while SIs, which are the main topic of this thesis, post about sporting goods, fashion, fitness, beauty, and consumer electronics (Berger, Experticity, & Keller Fay Group, 2016). To summarize these themes: lifestyle products. Jensen (2007) defines lifestyle as "the routine manifestation of subcultures, regulated and influenced by family (social class), friends (status groups, gender, generation) and different types of movements and networks".

Belgium counts 1,2 million Instagram members, of which 720 thousand daily active users. 40% are French-speaking (southern part of Belgium), 60% are Flemish. They spend on average 6,5 hours per person, per month, on the Instagram application. Their average age is 22 years, and 40% is older than 24 years. 58% of the Belgian members are women, while 42% are men. Therefore, the global trend that Instagram is more often used by women, also prevails in Belgium (CIM and MediaEdge MEC, 2016, in Jean, 2017).

Chapter 2. Using Instagram as a Marketing-tool

Some brands have a professional Instagram profile to communicate directly with their followers. In this second chapter, we introduce another way for companies to use Instagram as an effective Marketing tool: "Influencer Marketing".

2.1 Direct Marketing by a company or brand

A study in the United Kingdom revealed that 70,7% of brands were using Instagram in 2017. These companies post on average 4,9 times a picture per week. 50% of Instagram users follow at least one brand. Business Insider reports that more than 90% of Instagram users are under the age of 35. This makes it a very attractive social medium for brands focused on the 18- to 34-year-old target group. Facebook is restricting fan base access to companies increasingly. That is why companies find their way with Instagram, which offers an image-based storytelling capability, more than any other platform (Mancuso & Stuth, 2015).

Miles, author of the book 'Instagram Power', claims that Instagram is the best tool when looking for a mobile Marketing campaign. Still, direct Marketing through Instagram is not for everyone. B2B-businesses benefit less through Instagram than B2C-businesses (Miles, 2013).

2.2 Social Influencer Marketing

This is another way for brands or companies to use Instagram for Marketing interests. In this section, we explain and define notions as a "SI" and a "Microcelebrity". Thereafter, we discuss how companies and brands can collaborate with these SIs through Instagram. At the end of this section, we discuss the legislation that applies on Influencer Marketing, and the ethics linked to this tool.

2.2.1 An introduction to Influencer Marketing

Influencer Marketing is a form of "stealth" Marketing. Pehlivana et al. (2015) define this as "operating on a market in a deceptive, covert, furtive, imperceptible and disguised manner to purposefully influence audiences without the audiences being aware of these activities" (in Charry, 2017, p. 7). In 2016, Instagram was the most proliferate and viable social medium for influencer advertorials (Abidin, 2015). An interesting concept here is an "advertorial", which is a combination of "advertisement" and "editorial". These are personalized promotions of products (or services), posted by an opinion leader, which is "a person who offers informal advice or information about a specific product or product category, such as which of several brands is best or how a particular product may be used" (Keller and Kotler, 2016). These posts appear to be spontaneously experienced by these influencers, but in fact, they are remunerated (Abidin, 2016). Moreover, these advertorials have been found more effective

than classic advertisements, since they take the form of a personal narrative and incorporate Influencers' perspectives of having experienced the product or service themselves (Abidin, 2016). This can be linked to WOM, which is discussed further in *4.1.2.1*.

A SI is "a state of being famous to a niche group of people" (Marwick, 2013, in Abidin, 2016, p. 3). It is about an Instagram user that has established credibility in a specific niche, sector, or industry, because of his or her reach and authenticity. This user has access to a large audience, can persuade others, and creates trends on social media. It is also called "e-fluencer" (Bathelot, 2015). Hence, for these people, taking pictures of their daily life has become a commercial business. They do this on blogs, but nowadays, increasingly on Instagram. Commercial lifestyle bloggers are in general young women, between 18 and 35 years old. Their followers are on average 70% female, between 15 and 35 years old (Abidin, 2015).

2.2.1.1 The designation "Microcelebrities"

A SI can be a celebrity, but on Instagram we also see a lot of so-called "Microcelebrities". Senft (2008) interprets it as "a new style of online performance that involves people "amping up" their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs and social networking sites" (Abidin, 2016, p. 3). While some of these profiles reflect popularity "native" to Instagram, for many others Instagram is a platform for increasing notoriety achieved in another medium (Marwick, 2015). In other words, Microcelebrities are not necessarily known outside the world of Instagram. Microcelebrity is considered as "more authentic" and more interactive than a traditional celebrity because Microcelebrity involves direct and authentic interaction with fans using social media (Senft, 2008, in Marwick, 2010).

People like to follow "luxury profiles", profiles that make posts about (their) expensive possessions and lifestyle. Followers look at "What many young people dream of having and the lifestyle they dream of living" (Marwick, 2015, p. 19). Users often follow and like what they find "aspirational": this is Marketing jargon for something people desire to possess themselves, but usually cannot. What the young users of Instagram find aspirational often resembles "the lifestyles of the rich and famous." (Marwick, 2015, p. 5).

2.2.1.2 Influencers influenced by other influencers

Influencers are inspired by other influencers, as 83% of these influencers say they purchased a product they saw on social media within the last month (Soltysinska, 2017).

2.2.2 Collaborations between companies and SIs on Instagram

Influencer Marketing is top-of-mind for today's marketers. According to eMarketer, nearly half of marketers have upped their investment in Influencer Marketing in 2017. Brands and marketers understand that the voices of authentic, trusted profiles are much more likely to break through the ad blockers (Gilbreath, 2017). As influencers can have a real impact on followers and can be effective in developing the digital presence of a brand, B2C brands should certainly consider SI Marketing (Gelb, 2017). A lot of companies use Influencer Marketing not to sell a product, but rather to get consumers exposed to the brand and its story. That is why we see a lot of lifestyle brands using this tool (Alderton, 2014). Moreover, this type of Marketing is also very effective for a brand wanting to (re)introduce itself or strengthen its position in a particular market (Heffernan in Steimer, 2017). SI Marketing is most effective for brands wanting to reach a "younger" audience, as mentioned above. This is because millennial consumers are turning away from the traditional media. They are moving online and grouping around some selected and trusted influencers who share their interests (Soltysinska, 2017). In a Key Findings Report of April 2016 of the ANA (The Association of National Advertisers), 86% of brands are using Influencer Marketing as part of their content strategy. Only 0,6% finds influencer content not valuable at all, while 53% of brands thinks it is valuable, and 36% finds it very valuable. In *Figure 1*, it is shown that Influencer Marketing has a share of 21,6% of Brand Activation Marketing in 2015 (ANA & PQ Media, 2016). These figures apply on the United States.

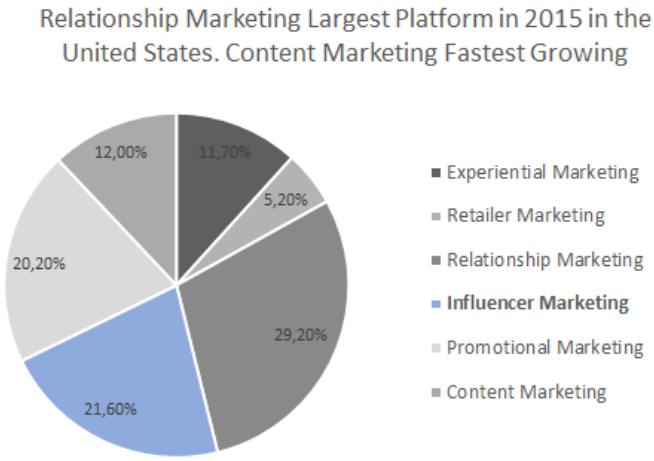

Figure 1 - Relationship Marketing Largest Platform in 2015, Content Marketing Fastest Growing (ANA & PQ Media, 2016, p. 6)

SI Marketing is not just B2C or B2B, it is more like B2B2C. It is a company (business) heading out to a SI (business), who takes on the role of a "micro-sales representative" in this contract to reach possible consumers (Alderton, 2014).

2.2.2.1 Advantages of Influencer Marketing

Linqia's research of 2016 provides answers to surveys completed by 170 American marketers. 89% of marketers believe that creating authentic content about a brand is the most important advantage. The second most essential advantage is driving engagement around a product or a brand. After that comes the fact that Influencer Marketing drives traffic to a brand's website or landing page (Linqia, 2016). *Figure 2* shows some more outcomes.

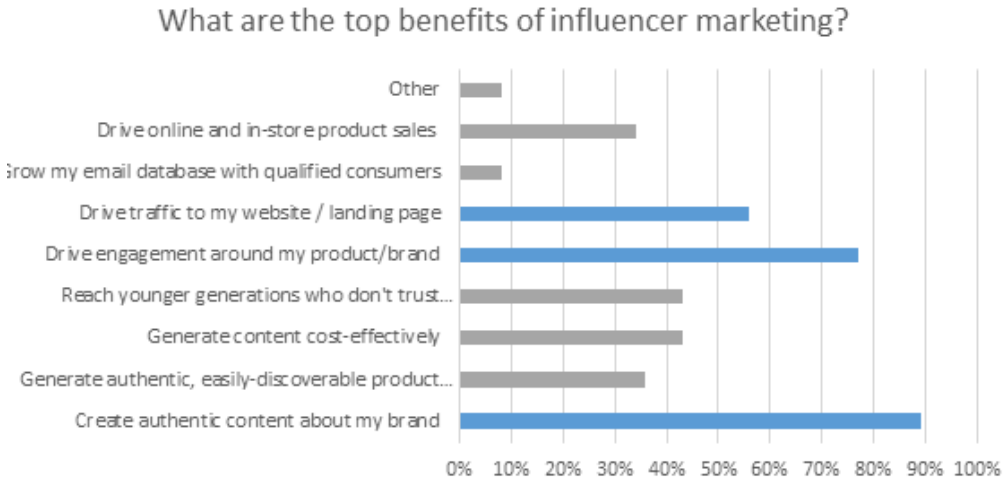

Figure 2 - Top Benefits of Influencer Marketing (Linqia, 2016, p. 2).

2.2.2.2 Selecting SIs

Some profiles have an enormous following audience, while others are very popular in a niche category of followers. For them, the number of followers does not have to be very high because they have a strong influence on their followers. They can reach different social groups within a brand's target audience, with an authentic voice (Heffernan, in Steimer, 2017). Most brands work with ten to twenty-five influencers per campaign. Working with more influencers is less customary, because the process of managing Influencer Marketing can be very time-consuming (Linqia, 2016). *Figure 3* projects precise percentages.

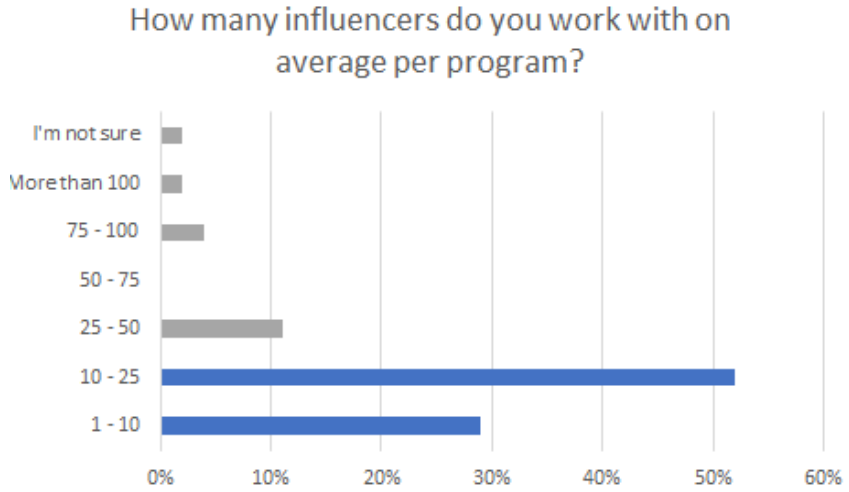

Figure 3 - Number of influencers per campaign (Linqia, 2016, p. 7).

When searching for SIs, companies or public relation agencies should take into account several elements. The more followers, the more reach. Nonetheless, this number is not always reliable. Some profiles pay to get more followers, fake followers, in that case (*see 2.2.4.2*). Thus, more important than the number of followers, is the "engagement rate", or "authority rate". This is a percentage that reveals the amount of "real" followers a profile has (Gilbreath, 2017).

2.2.2.3 Remunerating SIs

What about the contract of collaboration between the brand or agency, and the SI? This part deals with the remuneration of the influencer, and the common conditions or restrictions this contract can imply.

Price lists are usually kept confidential within management agencies. The price fluctuates depending on the popularity, number of followers, the type of product, engagement of the Influencer's account, and the nature of the campaign. SIs know about the existence of "authority scores" or "engagement scores" (*see 2.2.2.2*). The higher the score, the higher they will set their price (Soltysinska, 2017). Instagram influencers (so no "real celebrities") can gain up to 100 thousand dollars for a sponsored post (Aslam, 2017).

Furthermore, SIs can also work on a commission base. As you can see on *Figure 4*, the SI is recommending a watch. Through this influencer, the brand of that watch is offering a promotion to the followers if they use her promotional code, which is often the influencers' name. The influencer sometimes gets paid when a purchaser uses her personal code. It is also a way for the brand to measure how many people buy a watch because of this particular SI – to measure her actual "influence".

Figure 4 - Example of a possible Cost per Acquisition

This remuneration method is called "Cost per Acquisition" (abbreviated "CpA"). Another way of paying the influencer equalling the efficiency of the campaign, is "CpC", or "Cost per Click". Brands pay per consumer that has taken an action (clicking through to the brand's website or page) after being inspired by a SI's content. Or, "CpE", "Cost per Engagement" in which SIs are compensated based on the number of likes, shares and followers they engage (Linqia, 2016). Brands can decide to remunerate the influencer only once, not in function of sales, engagement or clicks. They can simply negotiate a price per photo or video, or they can

provide the SI with free products or experiences, instead of a monetary payment. Linqia (2016) researched which pricing model is found most effective, and which pricing models have been applied by American brands. CpC and CpE have been found most effective, while Pay per Post is used most, showed in *Figure 5*.

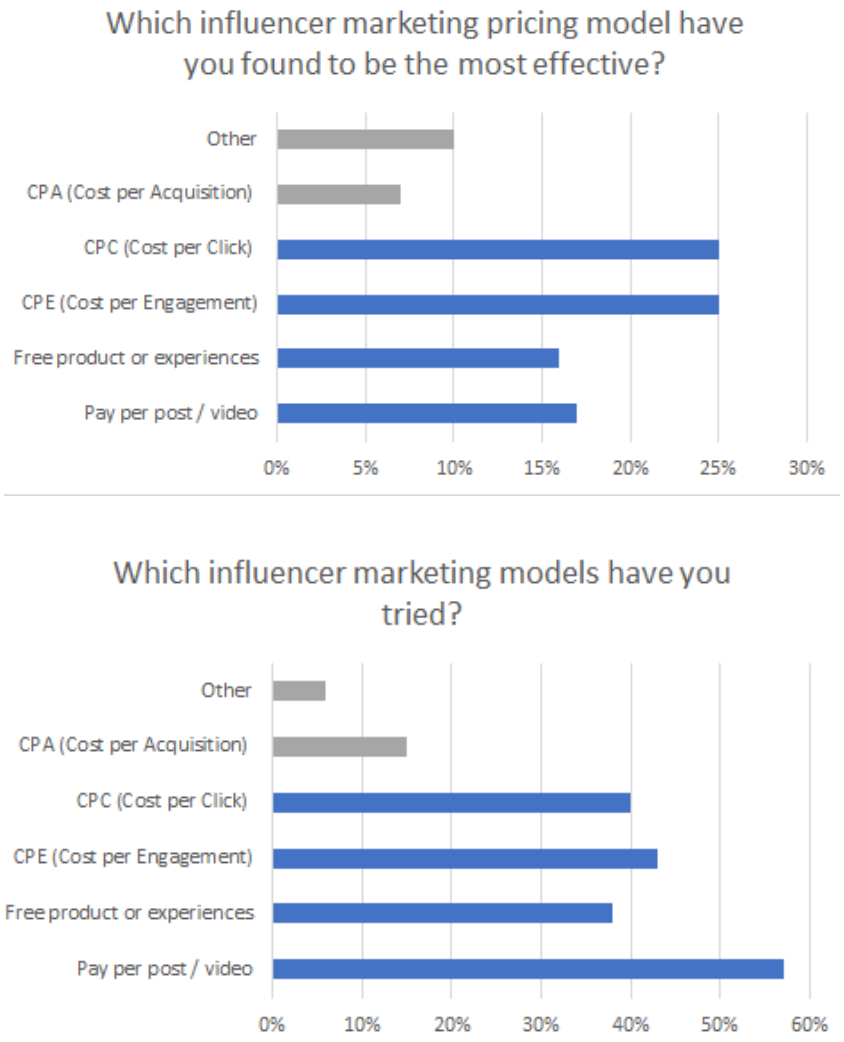

Figure 5 - Influencer Marketing Pricing models (Linqia, 2016, p. 5).

2.2.2.4 Measuring ROI of Influencer Marketing

Influencer Marketing is still maturing, especially in its performance (Gilbreath, 2017). In other words, it is still difficult to measure. Brand awareness and engagement are the most important metrics. Marketers can expect an engagement rate between 4% and 11% when featuring Microcelebrities (versus an average of less than 1% for celebrity campaigns). Engagement is measured in terms of reach, shares, likes, and comments. But it remains difficult to equate engagement with actual sales. 81% of marketers measure the success of

Influencer Marketing in a campaign in terms of engagement, while 62% measure in terms of traffic, and 61% in terms of reach. *Figure 6* presents some more outcomes (Linqia, 2016).

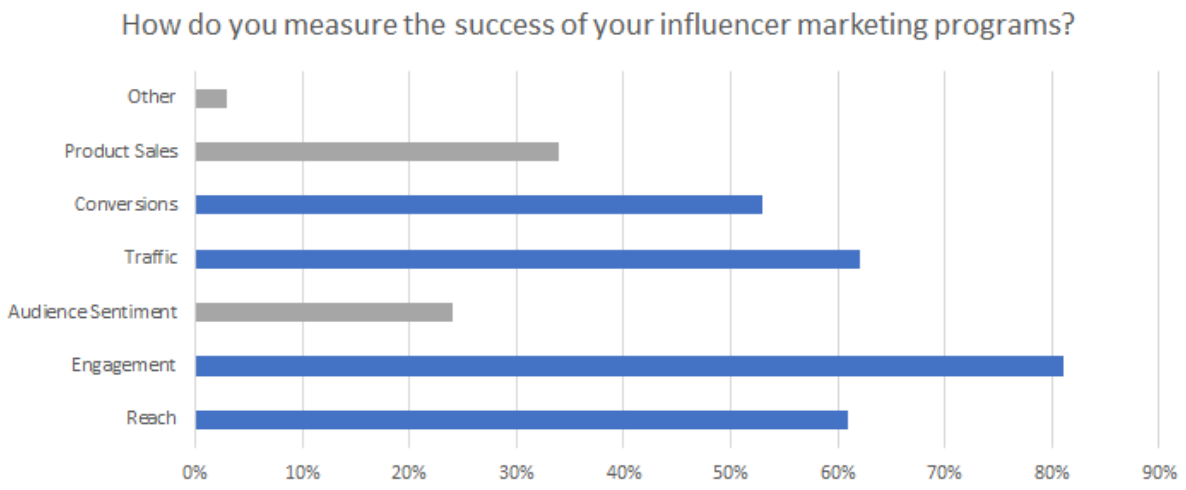

Figure 6 - Success measures of Influencer Marketing (Linqia, 2016, p. 4).

In 2015, eMarketer posted that for every dollar spent in Influencer Marketing, a business makes 6,85 dollars in profit. And when a SI markets content, the ROI is on average eleven times higher than with traditional digital Marketing (Nielsen Catalania Solutions & TapInfluence, 2016).

2.2.3 Legislation

How does the law intervene in these influencer contracts? In America, guidelines have been drawn up by the Federal Trade Commission. In Belgium, there are (until today) no laws with regard to these collaborations.

2.2.3.1 In America: FTC Guidelines

The Federal Trade Commission of America has published guidelines that require SIs to provide disclosures with their posts, to protect consumers on social media from “misleading practices” (Gelb, 2017). These guidelines imply that the influencer should clearly disclose when they have a financial or family relationship with a brand. Additionally, the influencer should avoid ambiguous disclosures like #thanks, #collab, #sp, #spon, or #ambassador. In

other words, they should avoid the use of abbreviations, or ambiguous indications. Research done by Linqia in 2016 in the USA shows that 12% does not comply with these FTC guidelines. 45% have no knowledge about the latest guidelines.

2.2.3.2 In Belgium

In Belgium, there are no legal restrictions for these commercial collaborations today. Some refer to the JEP (Jury for Ethical Practices in advertisement), but it does not tell us something about SIs. Europe has drawn up a few guidelines concerning Product Placement (*which is further explained in 4.1.2.2*), but it does not mention anything specific about Influencer Marketing through social media. The Federal Public Service of Economy of Belgium has proposed guidelines, but these are not yet in force. Every posted picture or video containing sponsored content should soon be labelled as 'advertisement' or 'sponsored' (Federale Overheidsdienst Economie, 2018).

2.2.4 Ethics and perceived disadvantages

This Marketing form takes in a lot of negative comments today. It seems that Influencer Marketing has a dark side too. In *2.2.4.1*, we discuss the cultivation paradigm of SI Marketing, and how people might not see through the "advertisement curtain". Fraud also found its way to Instagram, which is explained in *2.2.4.2*.

2.2.4.1 Cultivation paradigm

Another element that is linked to SI Marketing, the "cultivation paradigm", can be perceived as a disadvantage too. The original definition of this paradigm is: "the cumulative process through which television formats the perception of social reality" (Gebneret al. 2002, in Charry, 2017). It means that by being exposed very often to television, we change our way of thinking and our way of perceiving the outside world. But nowadays, it is not just television. By being frequently exposed to the luxurious life that influencers live on Instagram and other social media, people might begin to think this is a normal way of living. SIs are generally people who are pretty and (pretend to) have beautiful, expensive lifestyle products. The risk of showing these (sponsored) pictures to (young) people, is that they might feel jealous, and it evokes a feeling of inferiority, resulting in the creation of unreal expectations.

2.2.4.2 Fraud

When applying this form of advertisement, marketers should be aware of some people committing fraud on Instagram. This can be: AdTech fraud, fake followers, and bot traffic. In other words: profiles paying for fake clicks, followers, and content. Because the more followers a profile has, the more possible "reach", the higher the profile can set its price to advertise. A possible solution for this is looking at the "authority rate" or "engagement score", as we clarified in *2.2.2.2.* But, marketers and companies should still pay attention here, as hackers might also bypass these elements.

II. Consumer attitude and purchase behaviour of young women

In this second part of the literature review, we step aside from the Instagram-world, and we investigate the attitude and buying behaviour of young women. The possible impact of Influencer Marketing on each occurring attribute, is handled too. Chapter 3 explains a theoretic model on general Marketing objectives. In the fourth chapter, we present the different facets of consumer purchase behaviour, all with the help of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model. Afterwards, we discuss consumer attitude, as we will investigate this concept towards SIs. We handle the link between consumer purchase behaviour and consumer attitude. Finally, we explain Persuasion Knowledge, which can affect the last two presented concepts.

Chapter 3. Marketing Objectives

Every campaign starts with defining the target audience and the objectives to be achieved. (Jean, 2017). Marketers have different objectives when wanting to reach an audience. An interesting presentation of these objectives is the "cognitive – affective – conative"-model. One can set a goal on the cognitive side: a consumer getting to know a brand. Once the information has been treated, the consumer can create an attitude (*which is explained in chapter 5*) towards a brand (affective). The conative dimension aims at making a consumer act, to make him purchase. Influencer Marketing complies with the "learning model", which is presented in *Figure 7*.

Figure 7 - Learning Model (Poncin, 2017)

Chapter 4. Consumer purchase behaviour

Kotler and Keller (2016, p. 179) define consumer behaviour as "the study of how individuals, groups, and organisations elect, buy, use and dispose of goods, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants". This thesis focuses on one aspect of this definition: everything that revolves around the purchase itself. Consumer purchase behaviour first refers to the act of buying a certain product or service. But this is not the only mean of the concept. It includes for instance the search of relevant information to a purchase decision, selections and other actions performed before, during and after a purchase. It is an observable event that takes place in a certain context and at a given point in time. Moreover, it comprises four elements: an action, a target, a context (for instance online) and a time. The first element, the action, is for example: buying, but also searching for information. The second element is the target at which the action is directed (a brand or a product category) (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980, in Ajzen, 2008).

This thesis researches the impact of SI Marketing through Instagram on the buying behaviour of young Belgian women. What other factors influence buying behaviour? According to Keller and Kotler (2016)), buying behaviour is impacted by three factors. To begin with: the cultural factor, which is the primal causal factor of a person's desires and behaviour. In addition to that, social factors such as reference groups, social roles, and family affect buying behaviour. This factor is essential when it comes to Influencer Marketing, as it contains among others: "opinion leaders", which has been presented in *2.2.1* And thirdly, the consumer's personal factors, including age, stage in the life cycle and the consumer's occupation.

4.1 The 5-Stage Decision Making Model

Engel, Blackwell and Miniard developed a comprehensive model that shows the components of decision-making and the interactions among them. According to this model, a consumer typically passes through five stages, which are presented in *Figure 8*. However, consumers may reverse or skip a few stages, they do not always pass through all five of them (Keller & Kotler, 2016).

Figure 8 - The 5-Stage Decision Making Model (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2006, in Sinigaglia, 2016)

- Problem recognition

The first step in a consumer's decision process, is the recognition of a problem or need, triggered by internal or external stimuli. Internal stimuli rise a person's 'normal' needs, as for instance: being hungry. Influencer Marketing can be an example of an external stimulus: a person admiring someone else's new possessions, which inspires that person about making the same purchase. Marketers must identify the sources that trigger a particular stimulus for a need, by gathering information about the targeted customers. Especially when it comes to discretional buys, such as lifestyle products (which are part of this thesis' subject) and luxury goods, marketers must increase the consumer's motivation (Keller and Kotler, 2016).

Influencer Marketing is a good example of the application of a pull strategy. Instead of pushing the consumer to buy the company's products, it is going to make the consumer 'want' and 'search for' the product. Because the SI is showing and recommending the product, some followers with the same interests as the influencer, are going to want the product as well. The pull strategy refers to a process that starts from the audience and goes towards the company: demand requests supply and 'pulls' it out of the company (Corniani, 2008).

- Information search

The model claims the second step is the search of information. When the consumer is executing this second phase, he or she is usually going to traverse two sub-states. Firstly, the consumer becomes more receptive to information about a product. This is called "heightened attention", and it is a milder state of engagement in the search. In the second state, the consumer may enter an "active information search". The person is going to start reading about the product, ask friends, visit stores, and search online, to gather more information on the product (Keller and Kotler, 2016).

Keller and Kotler (2016, p. 196) divide the major information sources into four groups: personal, commercial, public, and experiential sources. A SI is often considered as a personal friend to their followers. But their content is shared on social media, which makes SI Marketing a combination of a personal and a public information source. Consumers are appealing to social media channels for their information search, which is why search through social networking sites is on the rise (Nielsen, 2012, in Moustakas, 2015). How are individuals processing and selecting information on social media before buying something? Social media provides a new channel to acquire product information through peer communication (Kozinets, 1999, in Ioanăs & Stoica, 2014).

By collecting information, the person learns about competing brands and their specifications. The market offers a 'total set' of available brands. After gathering information, this will be reduced to the 'awareness set', the person now knows about some existing brands on the market. After that, some of the brands of the awareness set will meet the initial buying criteria. Together, these brands form the 'consideration set'. After getting to know even more about these brands, only few will enter the 'choice set'. The consumer will in all probability make a final choice out of this last set (Keller and Kotler, 2016).

- ► Evaluation of alternatives

Subsequently, the consumer will evaluate alternatives. Many alternative options are constantly evaluated every minute by consumers (Goh et al., 2012, in Moustakas, 2015). There exist several processes, and most recent models claim that individuals form judgments largely on a rational and conscious basis. Consumers see each product as a bundle of (un)interesting attributes. They will pay most attention to the attributes that convey the sought benefits (Keller and Kotler, 2016).

A consumer's beliefs and attitudes also impact their evaluation of alternatives. A belief is "a descriptive thought that a person holds about something" (Keller & Kotler, 2016, p. 197). Attitude is discussed further in the fifth chapter. An interesting model here is the "expectancy-value model", which presupposes that consumers evaluate products (or services) by combining their brand beliefs, according to importance. This tool helps marketers to predict consumer's choices more reliably. This is a compensatory model, which claims that recognized good things about a product can help to overcome its perceived negative attributes.

User Generated Content (content produced by the user himself, used in Influencer Marketing) and Marketer Generated Content often influence the evaluation of alternatives. Consumers are influenced by other consumers on social media, through visual stimulations and reviews. They seem as "more objective" sources to them. Thus, WOM and e-WOM play an important role here (Moustakas, 2015). This is explained further in *4.1.2.1.*

► Purchase decision

The second-last presented phase of this model is the "purchase decision": executing a purchase intention. We must mention here that purchase intentions and preferences are not completely reliable predictors of purchase behaviour. A consumer can decide to modify or postpone its purchase decision, because of several perceived risks, such as: a functional, physical, financial, social, psychological, and time-linked risks (Keller and Kotler, 2016).

In the explanation of the previous phase, we mentioned a compensatory model. The buying decision is an example of a non-compensatory choice, as positive and negative attribute perceptions do not necessarily net out. Keller and Kotler explain three choice heuristics in this context (2016, p. 199). The consumer can use the conjunctive heuristic, in which the person sets an acceptable minimum level for each attribute and chooses the first brand that meets the minimum standard for all attributes. When the person is executing the lexicographic heuristic, he or she chooses the best brand, only regarding the most important attribute. If the customer is putting the elimination-by-aspects heuristic into work, it means that he or she is eliminating brands that do not meet the minimum acceptable level.

► Post-purchase behaviour

The final step in this process is consumer behaviour after the purchase. The consumer is dissatisfied if the product's perceived performance is not close to his or her expectations. On the contrary, if this is close, the consumer is satisfied. If expectations are exceeded, the consumer is delighted. These three post-purchase reactions make the difference whether the consumer will buy the product again, and talk (un)favourably about it to others (WOM, *see 4.1.2.1),* and thus, possibly influence the purchase decision of others (Keller and Kotler, 2016).

An important notion here is ‘cognitive dissonance’, which Festinger (1957, in Uzma & Reshma, 2012, p. 7) defines as “a psychological phenomenon that occurs when there exists a discrepancy between what a person believes in and the outcome which questions a person’s belief”. In other words, this is the buyer’s remorse, as he or she might question whether he or she has made the right decision when buying a particular brand. Some companies engage their customers with post-purchase communications to impact their feelings about their buy and future buys (Milliman & Decker, 1990). If SIs keep on posting pictures or recommendations of the brand the customer has bought, this might reduce this cognitive dissonance, as it might reassure the consumer about his or her purchase decision.

4.1.1 Consumer purchase behaviour and social media usage of young women

Meredith studied the “new female consumer” (2014). The report reveals that a millennial woman says she shares her "true self" through photos and videos but does not trust others being as authentic or real as she is. Furthermore, 64% does not mind spending more if it fits their needs. 56% of millennial women buy when they have a coupon, and 75% try based on recommendations. Moreover, 70% look for more information if they see an interesting ad, and 55% frequently recommend products to others. 76% feel more comfortable with products that are made by familiar brands. Millennials have the highest engagement in the category followed by Generation X[1]. Additionnally, millennials are more likely than baby boomers to share online and reviewing via social media, they are more sensitive to prices, they use coupons, and they digitally connect before and during shopping. All generations of women rank WOM as the leading way they share tips and tricks. Thus, marketers wanting to respond to the consumer behaviour of millennial women, should try to “join their Social Circle”, by becoming a part of the coupons they are scanning on their smartphones, or posts they are sharing on social sites and applications. They should also try to keep it simple, because they will not take the time to try to understand what the company is trying to communicate. Furthermore, marketers should know that a millennial woman is only willing to take advice from those she admires and trusts, when searching for information. Deals, steals and celebrity endorsements have to remain authentic. The last important thing to know about the millennial woman, is that she is easily stimulated by her senses. The more a marketer or company can appeal to her senses, the more likely they are to draw her to their offerings (Meredith, 2014).

[1] Generation following the baby boomers and preceding the Millennials.

80% of women check product information before buying something and 82% of women say social media is important for them. And finally, men prefer shopping online, women have no preference, they like to shop as well online as in psychical stores (Ioanăs & Stoica, 2014).

We can say that social media has a role in influencing the behaviour of consumers in the virtual environment, especially when the degree of exposure of messages is high and when there is a relation created between the variety of information given and the consumer who is about to make a purchase (Ioanăs & Stoica, 2014). When it comes to buying behaviour resulting from Instagram, Nadiminiti (2017) says that 5% of Instagram users take action after they saw an advertisement post. This action is for example visiting a website, searching, shopping, or even telling a friend about what she saw (Brooke, 2017).

4.1.2 Impact of hybrid Marketing forms

Influencer Marketing on Instagram is a hybrid form of Marketing. More specifically: a combination of the e-WOM and Product Placement. Hybrid Marketing are all payed attempts to influence an audience to obtain a commercial benefit, using non-commercial communication (Balasubramanian, 1994, in Shrum, 2012, p. 18). Sometimes it is unclear whether the SI on Instagram posts the product, because he or she genuinely likes and wants to recommend the product or was remunerated for his or her posts featuring specific products. In short, sometimes it is unclear whether an Instagram content is a "spontaneous post", or an advertisement. We discussed this in the first part of this thesis. If a post is perceived as being "spontaneous", it works like e-WOM, which is presented in the following section, together with the effects this has on consumer purchase behaviour. Hence, the inclusion of branded products in an Instagram post can be considered as Product Placement, which is discussed *in 4.1.2.2.* All these aspects can impact the 5-Stage Decision Making Model.

4.1.2.1 E-WOM

Electronical Word of Mouth is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004, in Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). "Direct selling has proven for decades that people value trusted recommendations and relationships, more than Marketing messages." (Alderton,

2014). Posts from influencers may be the closest thing to WOM recommendations from friends, as these messages have a real impact with their loyal audiences (Soltysinska, 2017).

Recent studies have shown that e-WOM influences consumer behaviour (Chen, Wang and Xie, 2011, Henning-Thurau and Walsh, 2004, Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012, Jiménez and Mendoza, 2013, Wang, 2011, in Lopez & Sicilia, 2013), as well as company sales (Chevalier and Kicka, 2006, Duan, Gu and Whinston, 2008, in Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). Online recommendations increase a product's overall sales, since they can have an impact on consumers' opinions regarding a product, and therefore encourage a purchase (Cheung, et al., 2009, in Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). As we discussed when explaining the different phases of the 5-Stage Decision Model, e-WOM is an important information source when it comes to information research (second phase). Nowadays, consumers, and especially teenagers are becoming more aware about products or services they purchase and consume. Before making a purchase decision they are often looking for customer reviews, rather than relying merely on the product advertisement itself (Sa'ait, Kanyan, & Nazrin, 2016). Namely, 90% of online shoppers consult consumers' opinions online before buying something (Channeladvisor, 2011), and 70% of all consumers say they trust e-WOM (Nielsen, 2012). It seems to be more effective than traditional advertising media, which appears to be losing its effectiveness (Nail, 1995, Parker, 2005, in Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). Consumer confidence in TV, newspapers and magazine ads declined by around 25% between 2009 and 2011 (Nielsen, 2012). 97.9 % of consumers trust e-WOM before purchasing a product (Doh and Hwang, 2009, in Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). The more opinions the consumer has accessed about a product or service, the more influence e-WOM has on decision-making. Consumer opinions are essential to companies in their efforts to understand the responses of customers in resort to their products or services, and to improve their Marketing campaigns or products accordingly. Further, it builds consumers' brand awareness, helps a company to create buzz (Fergusson, 2008, in Hodza, Papadopoulou & Pavlidou, 2012) and influences consumers' brand loyalty (Sung, et al., 2008 in Hongwei, Hui, & Liuning, 2012). Nevertheless, e-WOM becomes less reliable as the people who spread WOM about the product are being paid and provide less genuine experiences, attached to a specific brand (Sa'ait, Kanyan, & Nazrin, 2016). With time, readers may start considering the social media endorser as a personal friend (Ballentine and Martin, 2005 in Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015), which makes the WOM authentic. However, the revelation of sponsorship challenges this illusion of friendship (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015).

4.1.2.2 Product Placement

This is the paid visual inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers in mass media programming (Karrh, 1998, in Galician, 2004, p. 186). Kamleitner and Jyote (2013) define Product Placement as a "purposeful incorporation of brands into editorial content" (in Patton, 2014). Under these circumstances, audiences are likely to be unaware of the commercial influence attempts and/or to process the content of such communication differently than they process a commercial message (Balasubramanian, 1994, in Parreno, 2015, p. 3). Some companies contact SIs, saying exactly how their product should appear in the Influencer's post. These pictures are called "Product Placement selfies" (Abidin, 2016, p. 4).

Williams, Petrosksy, Hernandez, and Page (2011) explain the different purposes of Product Placement. This includes: achieving visibility, interest, attention, increasing brand awareness, consumer memory, consumer recall, instant brand recognition, changing consumers' attitudes, and so on. The effectiveness is different for each kind of these purposes. But the end goal remains encouraging consumers to buy a brand's product, and not its competitor's.

Brand consciousness and the obviousness of the placement are two important factors that can influence consumer behaviour resulting from Product Placement. Nelson and McLeod (2005) investigated the link between Product Placement and brand consciousness (in Patton, 2014). During their study, they explored how certain media platforms impact the perceived brand consciousness of featured products as an outcome of Product Placement.

By featuring products on media platforms, viewers are more likely to become conscious of the brands and products due to exposure time. They also found out that viewers who considered themselves to be "highly brand-conscious" were also those who were "most favourable towards and aware of Product Placements". So, viewers who have been exposed to a brand before viewing it as a placement tend to have a more positive interpretation of the brand after viewing the placement (Patton, 2014). We can link this to the second phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model, as being conscious of the existence of a brand, makes the brand enter the "awareness-set", which we discussed in the information-search phase.

According to d'Astous and Chartier (2000, in Oliver & Nabi, 2009, p. 301): "the obviousness of the placement has a more positive effect on liking when the placement is well integrated into the scene than when it is not". To apply this sentence on SIs on Instagram, we can conclude that posts where the placement is not well-integrated, will be less effective. Posts

that do not fit in the storytelling and interests of the profile, are less effective. In other words, we have reasons to believe that a revelation of sponsorship can lead to a lower para-social interaction[2] (PSI) between the influencer and the follower (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015).

Chapter 5. Consumer attitude

Attitude towards for instance a product or a brand is defined as the mental state of an individual, constituted by experiences and acquired information, allowing to structure his perceptions of the environment and his preferences, and to orientate the way of responding to it (Allport, 1935, in Sinigaglia, 2016). Keller and Kotler define five consumer attitudes about products or brands, which are: "enthusiastic, positive, indifferent, negative, and hostile" (2016, p. 282). Attitude allows guiding choices: individuals will choose the brand towards which they have the most positive attitude. Attitude can be measured with scales. It leans on a set of information, expressed by a positive or negative evaluation, being a predisposition of the action. It is also important to make a distinction between the attitude towards the Instagram post, towards the SI, and towards the sponsoring brand. These three types of attitude can be measured, are different, but impact one another. A study done by Colliander and Erlandsson (2015) reveals that the attitude towards a blog (very similar to SIs on Instagram), decreases once the sponsorship is revealed.

[2] Parasocial interaction is the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with a media performer (Horton and Wohl, 1956, in Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015).

Chapter 6. Consumer behaviour versus consumer attitude

Although it might seem logic, it is dangerous to assume that consumer attitudes are always predictive of consumer behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), as we have mentioned in *4.1*, when explaining the third phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model.

The attitude towards an influencer and the credibility of the influencer will suffer once they reveal they are sponsored. The attitude towards the sponsoring brand and the purchase intention, however, will not suffer because of this revelation (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). This can be explained based on the "correspondence bias", which is the tendency to assume that a person's behaviour is a true reflection of their beliefs or opinions, and thus, their underlying dispositions when in fact, their behaviour could be explained entirely by situational factors (Cronley et al, 1999, p. 627 in Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). In other words, the fact that the attitude towards the sponsoring brand and the purchase intention does not decrease after revelation of sponsorship, is because the influencer is still seen as an "expert" by her followers, and because they believe that influencers praise a brand because somewhere they actually like it, and not because they were paid. But, the correspondence bias in social media is not likely to last forever. It is likely to create a wear-out effect with consumers and erode the potential of a particular social medium as an effective Marketing channel (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015).

Chapter 7. Persuasion Knowledge

To end this literature review, we briefly explain the notion of Persuasion Knowledge, as this can also possibly be an impacting factor, when using Influencer Marketing. To reach consumers, advertisers are progressively incorporating brands, products, and persuasive messages into traditionally non-commercial contexts, as for instance by collaborating with SIs on Instagram (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012). Persuasion knowledge refers to consumers' knowledge and beliefs about various advertising related issues, such as the goals and tactics marketers use to persuade them, the extent to which consumers find these techniques effective and appropriate, but also personal beliefs about how to cope with these persuasion tactics and goals (Friestad and Wright, 1994, Hibbert et al., 2007 in Boerman, Willemsen, & Van der Aa, 2017). The first step of persuasion knowledge is the consumers' recognition of advertising, which is not always the case with sponsored Instagram posts.

III. Conclusion of the literature review

Most sources that researched Influencer Marketing are American or Asian. This makes it interesting to do research on Belgium, a European country, especially because regulations on this tool are not the same. Mentalities of European consumers are also very different of the American and Asian ones.

Out of the first part of this review, we can conclude that the popularity of Instagram raises, which makes it an interesting platform for Marketing ends. Using Influencer Marketing through Instagram is especially interesting for B2C companies wanting to reach a younger public. It is a combination of Product Placement (which makes it hybrid Marketing) and e-WOM. The fact that it is a form of e-WOM, makes it authentic, which is perceived as the most important advantage of this Marketing tool. Despite it being such an effective tool today, measuring its performance remains difficult, and is done more in terms of engagement than in terms of actual sales. Moreover, American Marketers work with ten to twenty-five influencers per campaign and employ mostly the Pay per Post remuneration, although this is not the most effective one.

We gave an explanation on each phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model, which will be used in the following parts. Consumer purchase behaviour of young women (but not especially Belgian women), is characterized by a high engagement, searching information online, and reviewing on social media about purchases. Furthermore, they are very sensitive to prices and digitally connect before purchasing. Penetrating her world being a marketer, means joining her “Social Circle”, and Instagram seems to be a perfect way to do this. Previous studies have shown that revelation of sponsorship decreases consumer attitude towards the influencer, but it does not degrade consumer attitude towards the brand, or their purchasing intentions.

We now have a reliable basis to further investigate the predefined research question of this thesis, starting with a qualitative phase.

PART II: Qualitative research

The literature review provided the theoretical side of this topic. The following part puts these theories of consumer attitude and purchase behaviour resulting from Instagram's SIs into practice.

During the construction of the literature review, we noticed that no studies on the impact of SI Marketing through Instagram on the target audience[3] have been done so far. Researchers have examined consumer behaviour of millennial women, and other studies have been done on SI Marketing, but none of them brings these different aspects together in one analysis. To collect primary data, qualitative research is necessary. Qualitative, as in a type of research that is generally non-numeric, especially based on the quality or nature of the studied phenomena. Contrary to quantitative research, that generally favours the use of rigid methods to collect data and induces relatively objective interpretations of results, the qualitative research is characterized by its great flexibility in the ways to obtain information (D'Astous, 2010, p. 56). It is used when the objective is a thorough understanding of a phenomenon, to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a topic.

We decided to do semi-structured in-depth interviews on three different groups. As we are examining consumer attitude and behaviour, we interview eleven Belgian female potential consumers, all between 18 and 29 years old. But as this second part aims at a deeper understanding of this practice, we decided to contact SIs and brands too. This allows a better representation of this Marketing tool, as it considers all involved parties. This second part is divided into five sections. The first three represent the methodology and results to the three different interviewed groups. Afterwards, you can find the conclusions and hypotheses we have drawn out of the synthesis of our qualitative analysis.

[3] Belgian women between 18 and 29 years old.

I. Group 1: Potential Consumers

This first section explains the methodology of the qualitative research conducted on potential consumers, the analysis method, and a summary of the results.

Chapter 1. Methodology

We begin the presentation of the interviews with the potential consumers by explaining our objectives, how we develop this qualitative research, and how we select the interview audience.

1.1 Objectives

Through the literature review, we found some gaps in the information we were searching for, which led us to draw up the main objectives for the qualitative research. We want to explore the general consumer purchase behaviour on lifestyle products of young Belgian women. We want to know their Instagram use, and their perception on, and attitude towards SIs. Another objective is linked to the Persuasion Knowledge approach that we explained in Part I; more specifically, we want to know if young Belgian women can distinguish a sponsored and a non-sponsored post (especially when there is no disclosure). Eventually, the most important objective of this research, is to discover whether SIs have an influence on the buying behaviour and thus the executed purchase process of young Belgian women. The final objective of this qualitative research is to draw up hypotheses to do research on in the last phase of this thesis: the quantitative phase.

1.2 Method: Individual, online, audio-visual, semi-structured interview

As we want to know more about the consumption habits of the participants, and thus personal information on for instance their budget, we decided to do individual, semi-directed interviews with the potential customers. The advantage of an individual interview is the fact that the interviewee might feel less reticence to share her opinion, which offers the possibility to establish a closer contact, and thus to get deeper into her personal motivations. This type of interview consists in a semi-structured conversation between the interviewee and interviewer, with a variable duration (30 minutes, up to one hour or even more). It provides the interviewee's opinions, feelings, beliefs, and behaviour, that can be interesting for this

research topic. The interviews are taken online, using Skype and Facebook-video, which are two audio-visual tools. We consider recording the audio of the interview as an appropriate choice. This makes it easier to focus on the interview content, of which we generate a full transcription (Jamshed, 2014). The advantage of using these online tools is that the interviewee can stay at home, in comfortable surroundings, completely feeling at ease. A disadvantage of this technique is the requirement of equipment of both parties (the interviewee needs at least a computer for the interview, as she is asked to open a pdf-file while her Skype or Facebook account is connected to us). Connection problems caused some interruptions in the interviews (D'Astous, 2010, p. 76). After interviewing eleven consumers, no more new information was provided. We reached the saturation point (D'Astous, 2010, pp. 66-67). All interviews have been transcribed (*Appendix 1.2.2*). According to Malhotra and Birks (2007, p. 240), transcripts are "a vital and for most studies the primary data source in qualitative data analysis". Therefore, we transcribed the interviews with much care. The average duration per interview is 34 minutes, the transcription counts 25 pages.

1.2.1 Interview guide (*Appendix 1.1*)

To use the interview time optimally, interview guides are used to collect information systematically from the interviewees. (DiCicco-Bloom, 2006, in Jamshed, 2014). The interview guide is drawn up in three parts, as proposed in d'Astous (2010, pp. 67-68). The first part comprises an introduction of the interviewer and interviewee, the interview's purposes, and acknowledgements. The second part is the "body" of the interview. We divide it into different themes, which improve keeping the interview focused on the desired topic (Creswell, 2007, in Jamshed, 2014). The themes are drawn up in function of the predetermined objectives, which are explained in *1.1*. The first theme discusses the purchase behaviour of lifestyle products of the interviewee. We ask targeted questions on their last lifestyle purchase, in function of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model of Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, as this model is the red thread through our research. We explained this model in detail in the literature review. Thereafter, we show a figure of this model to the interviewee and discuss again their last purchase. In this way, the interviewee already has an idea of what this model means, as this returns in the last part of the interview. During the second theme, we got an idea of the participant's social media consumption, especially Instagram. We also want to discover the interviewee's attitude towards SIs. The consumer is exposed to some pictures that could possibly appear on their Instagram feed. Afterwards, we investigate the consumer's perception of SIs. The interviewee is again exposed to a couple of pictures, to provoke

reactions, to indicate an attitude or perception. The last theme is composed of open questions about the interviewee's consumer behaviour because of SIs on Instagram. We again ask targeted questions in function of the five phases of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model. After that, we discuss this model again with the interviewee, to make them confirm which phase they think is most impacted by SIs. The last part aims at concluding the interview, in which we ask if the interviewee has additional comments. We then thank and remind her that the interview remains completely anonymous and confidential.

1.3 Interviewed audience (*Appendix 1.2.1*)

As we concluded in the literature review, Instagram is an interesting platform for marketers and brands wanting to reach a female audience, aged between 18 and 29. The selection criteria for the interviewees is: being a woman, being aged between 18 and 29 and being Belgian. As the interviewer meets those criteria herself, she has a lot of potential interviewees in her own network. We focus on those who are most active on Instagram, and of whom we know they have a certain interest in lifestyle products. We do not ask beforehand the interview about their activity on Instagram, as this risks biasing the interviewee's answers. Moreover, we observe their Instagram activity before selecting the interviewees, without mentioning it. Inactive Instagram users would not have provided interesting information. Thus, this is not a random sample, but this is not problematic, as the qualitative research does not seek a representative image of the population. We are not searching for vast proof, we seek indications and conjectures of possible theories. We also did not tell the interviewees about the subject of this thesis or interview, as we did not want to lead their answers in the direction of Instagram and SIs.

Chapter 2. Analysis Method

The large amount of content provided by the interviewees now must be analysed. This is a procedure of reducing information that consists in classifying, in a limited number of categories, a large amount of words or expressions (Weber, 1985, in Jolibert & Jourdan, 2011, p. 52). To organise and retrieve the most meaningful collected data through the interviews' transcripts, we code the data. This is done by assigning labels to the data, based on a categorisation per open question, per interviewee (Birks & Malhotra, 2007). Labelling, or

"coding", is "the process of bringing together participants' responses into categories that bring together similar ideas, concepts, themes, or steps or stages in process." (Birks & Malhotra, 2007, p. 240). This allows us to easily link similar answers of different interviewees. This is done with the help of a grid. The final objective of this analysis is developing hypotheses, to construct the quantitative research.

Chapter 3. Summary of results

This chapter presents summaries of the transcription of interviews: the lifestyle and Instagram consumption of young Belgian women, their attitude towards SIs, and the potential impact on their purchase behaviour of this tool.

3.1 Lifestyle consumption

First, we can again divide the interviewed audience into three groups, based on their lifestyle consumption, measured in the number of purchases per month, per consumer. As all answers fluctuate around "4", we take this as the average number of purchases per month. Three interviewees purchase more than that, with a maximum of ten per month. Four girls respond "4", and the last four have a lower consumption than four times a month, with a minimum of only once a month.

All eleven interviewees mention "fashion" as being the most purchased category of lifestyle products. The category "cosmetics" was mentioned three times, and "electronics" once. Only one out of eleven consumers perceives herself as being an online shopper, the other ten buy the majority of lifestyle products in brick-and-mortar shops. Their monthly budget varies between €50 and €500, with an average of €184. More than half of the consumers say they value material lifestyle products, four say they are rather neutral on this issue, one says she does not value these products at all.

Ten out of eleven girls respond positively at the question if they are interested in the latest life-style trends. *Table 1* resumes the essential mentioned inspiration sources to keep up-to-date.

Inspiration source	Number of mentions out of 11
Social media	10
A brand's website	6
Magazines	3
Work	1
A brand's newsletter	1
Friends	1

Table 1 - Inspiration sources of young Belgian women

Nine out of the ten people that reply: "social media" as an inspiration source, mention Instagram spontaneously. Other mentioned social media inspiration platforms are Pinterest (3), WeHeartIt (1), Facebook (1), and YouTube (1).

Next to inspiration sources for new trends, they employ other sources when it comes to gathering pre-purchase information. These are presented in *Table 2*.

Information source	Number of mentions out of 11
WOM	10
Sales representative	6
A brand's website	3
Social media	2
Blogs	1
(Direct) advertising	1

Table 2 - Information sources of young Belgian women

3.2 Social media consumption

"What is your top three most used social media?" is the next thing we want to know. As we selected the girls on their active use of Instagram, the outcome is not that surprising. All eleven girls mention Instagram in their top three social media. Nine of them place Instagram at number one, as being their most-used social media. We also asked them how much time they spend on this platform daily. This is presented in minutes in *Table 3*.

User category	Number of consumers out of 11
High (> 120')	5
Moderate (60' – 120')	4
Low (< 60')	2

Table 3 - Daily Instagram consumption

3.3 Attitude towards SIs

To introduce the interviewee to the subject of SIs, we expose them to six different pictures. These are all posts of non-professional profiles, so no brands or companies. But a couple of brands are involved in some of the pictures posted by SIs. We removed their user name and the text beneath the pictures. Our question is: "Do you think a company or brand intervened in some of these pictures?". Ten out of eleven interviewees guess the sponsored pictures wrong, and five of them admit spontaneously that it is difficult to know whether a post is sponsored, only relying on a picture. Another remarkable thing: two out of the six pictures show a close-up of a watch. One of them is a sponsored picture, posted by a SI. The other one is a picture of a friend, showing his new watch on Instagram, not being paid at all. Almost all women say these two watches are both sponsored, although one is not. The reason here is that the watch comes forward in such an obvious way, the profile must have been paid to post it. When the sponsored items are shown in a subtler way, it is less obvious that the post is sponsored. This was the case for some of the other pictures. Ten out of eleven interviewees follow SIs on Instagram. Their definition for a SI contains the elements presented in *Table 4*.

Element	**Mentions out of 11**	**Verbatim**
Sponsored content	4	*"People with a lot of followers, that have been paid by brands, that receive a lot of products, to do advertisements for them."*
High following	3	
Encourage purchase	3	*"It is someone that looks nice, triggering the "I want that too"-feeling, and encourages you to purchase the same product."*
Creation of need	2	
Admiration	2	*"People look up to them and listen to them."*
Special personality	2	*"They have to be of-the-edge (daring to do unusual things), not standard or mainstream, and a bit crazy."*
Gatherings	2	*"These are persons that are invited to events and make publicity for those."*
Empathy	1	*"People can empathize more with a SI than with real, famous models, because they are not photoshopped, and show their imperfections."*
Inspiration	1	*"Someone who inspires others."*
Effort	1	*"They have to be working on it all the time, it requires a lot of time and effort to be present everywhere. They get a lot, but they have to do a lot for it too."*

Table 4 - Definition of a SI by young Belgian women

Why do these ten girls follow SIs? The main reason, mentioned by seven girls, is because these SIs are a source of fashion-inspiration. C3, C9 and C11 mention: "*To get inspiration to buy new clothes.",* and C7: *"You get to know new brands, of which you never heard before, I like that".*

What is their actual attitude towards these SIs?

Four girls are very positive towards SIs. C3 mentions: *"I think it is something good. Certainly today, as everything revolves around social media. (…) Everyone is active on the internet. It is also easier to find something online than in printed books or magazines. I really think it is good that they do what they are doing. I respect people that achieve a great following, and for those who achieve to position to get to sell things on social media*."

Three of them explain why they have a rather neutral attitude: C8 said to us: *"It is not always good. Sometimes, it can be a bit artificial. I sometimes think they only do it for the free products. But on the other hand, I think it is cool they receive all those things."*

Three interviewees take a sceptical position towards them: C4 explains why: *"It is a double life they lead. I would feel used by those brands, just to make money for them.".* C1 said: *"Honestly, I do not like it. I think it is ridiculous, also the fact that they beg you to use their promotional codes. On the longer term, you see more and more people doing that."*

In general, the attitude towards the influencer is the same as the attitude towards a sponsored picture, posted by a SI. C9 had a very particular opinion about sponsored content: *"If they post something that is clearly sponsored, without an explicit disclosure, I will think it is regrettable. I think disclosure is very important, especially towards younger people, because they might be influenced even more easily."* She says she has a positive attitude towards sponsored content, when there is a clear disclosure. Her attitude turns negative when there is no disclosure. The impact of disclosure is discussed later in this chapter.

Almost all girls (ten out of eleven) admit being influenced by those profiles. C3 says: *"I think these profiles influence my taste for clothes and the way I dress. And I think everyone is being influenced by those profiles, even when they say they are not."*

The only girl that claims not being influenced (C2), says the following: *"I am not being influenced by these people. But I am sure a lot of my peers are impacted by what SIs post.".* This is a good example of the so-called "Third-person effect", as cited in Davison (1983). He

explains that sometimes, a communication can lead to action because others think that it might impact an audience, not because of the communication's direct impact.

Some brands also possess an Instagram-account. We ask the interviewees about trust towards the influencer, compared to trust towards a brand itself, and whether there is a difference. *Table 5* presents the outcomes.

Brand / Influencer?	**Mentions out of 11**	**Verbatim**
Brand > Influencer	3	*"I am very aware of the fact that these influencers are being paid, they are part of it. A brand posting something about its product is more honest on liking its own product, than the influencer posting it for the brand."*
Brand = Influencer	4	*"Eventually, it is all about the money."*
Brand < Influencer	4	*"A company will always say that its product is the best. That is why I do not trust companies a 100%. A company will not say it sells a bad product. While SIs are honest, in general."* *"Before, most influencers were only positive about their branded content, but nowadays, it is clear how important honest content has become for their followers. So, I think the tide is turning. People appreciate honesty."*

Table 5 - Differences in trust between brand and SI

We then wanted to test this, by showing the girls twice two different pictures. Each time, a brand posted one of the two pictures and the other was sponsored by the same brand but posted by a SI. In each situation, we ask which of the two pictures the girl likes most to see passing by when scrolling on her Instagram feed. Our second question is which picture would encourage her most to purchase something of the brand the picture displays.

	Situation 1: Hunkemöller		Situation 2: Daniel Wellington	
	See	**PI**	**See**	**PI**
C1	B	B (2)	B	B
C2	I	I (3)	B	B (6)
C3	I (1)	I	B	B
C4	I	I	B (4)	B
C5	I	B	B	I
C6	I	I	I	I
C7	I	I	I (5)	B
C8	B	B	I	I
C9	B	B	I	I
C10	I	B	I	I (7)
C11	I	B	I	I

Table 6 - Liking a picture - Purchase intention

To conclude out of *Table 6*[4]: in most cases, preferring seeing a picture when scrolling, is also the picture that encourages the follower most to purchase something of the brand. For instance: C8 prefers seeing the picture of the brand passing by, and this is also the picture that arouses the highest purchase intentions for her. Some explanations of the answers:

(1) *"I am 100% sure that the brand's picture was photoshopped, as it is a professional model. (…) I can empathize much more with the SI's picture."*

(2) *"I think the brand's picture affects me more because it is clear the model is being paid by the lingerie-brand, and the SI one still pretends it is being a spontaneous post. I attach less credibility to the SI's picture. The brand's picture is an advertisement, it is not being hidden. The SI wants to make it seem too natural, while it is a pure advertisement. So, in that way, I prefer the brand posting it explicitly."*

(3) *"I think the picture on the left (SI) is more spontaneous than the picture on the right (brand). It is also posed, but it is more spontaneous. On the first picture (SI), you see a bit of the environment, while on the second picture, you almost only see the model (brand). (…) It feels more natural. It attracts my attention more than the brand's picture."*

(4) *"The way the girl poses and the things that are written beneath the picture (reduction code and so on), I do not like it. It comes across as publicity on my feed."*

[4] PI = Purchase intention, B = picture of the brand, I = picture of the Social Influencer

(5) *"The SI's picture, because you see a face with a product, it attracts more. It feels less as a publicity."*

(6) *"It just makes me think of a girl that wants to show off with her new watch, like girls do when they are not even paid. I just do not like the "showing-off"-thing of this."*

(7) *"The girl looks trendy, and it makes me look at her watch. The brand's picture of the watch, I am not going to pay attention to that post because I immediately think of a publicity, and I do not want to see that on my feed. The SI's picture will make me read what is written beneath the picture, (...). The SI also provides you with a reduction code. If this code was not there, I would have said: nice watch, maybe I will buy it later. This code will encourage me to buy the watch immediately."*

We discuss disclosure of the collaboration between a brand and a SI with the interviewees, and whether this would impact the credibility of the influencer, and if this would change their purchase intentions. This is linked to the "Persuasion-Knowledge"-theory (Friestad & Wright, 1994, Hibbert et al., 2007 in Boerman, Willemsen, & Van der Aa, 2017), that we presented in the literature review. The results are presented in *Table 7*.

Impact on	**Number of "Yes" out of 11**	**Verbatim**
Credibility	7	*"If there is a disclosure, I think this would imply a counterproductive effect. I think if the post says 'sponsored', or 'ad', a lot of people will judge the post and will say 'I do not want that product at all!', I think a lot of people do not realize a post is sponsored when there is no disclosure."* *"Credibility would not change in case of disclosure, as it is obvious to me when a post is sponsored or not."* *"I know a SI that once promised to her followers to always mention "ad" whenever she posts sponsored content. I think this is beautiful, this makes it all so much more honest."* *"Sponsored content is something that occurs so often, so why would not they imply a disclosure? Why is it such a shame to admit they are being paid?"*
Purchase intentions	1	10 out of 11 answered: *"My purchase intentions would not change if the post said "sponsored"."*

Table 7 - Link between sponsorship disclosure and credibility and purchase intention

So, the majority of girls claim disclosure changes the credibility of the SI. For some, this is in a good way (5), because the SI is being honest, and does not pretend there is no collaboration involved. For others (2), it changes in a negative way, as the "natural" aspect of the post vanishes. Remarkable is that ten out of eleven girls say disclosure would not change their purchase intentions.

3.4 Potential impact on lifestyle consumption resulting of SI Marketing through Instagram

In the last part of the interview, we want to know whether they have bought lifestyle products because of a SI on Instagram in the past. Four out of eleven have. We ask them a few questions that reflect each time one phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model. After that, we show a picture of the five phases of this model, and we ask them to explain us once again each step they took during their purchase process. They answer in the same way as on the separate questions about the phases. One other participant does not remember buying something because of a SI, but she says it was possible. The six other girls have never bought because of a SI. Although we cannot discuss their buying behaviour because of a SI on Instagram, we do discuss the 5-Stage Decision Model with them. We ask them to think very carefully how SIs could impact each phase. Their answers are very similar to the answers of the girls that did experience buying behaviour because of a SI. Our objective is clear: knowing whether Instagram's SIs have an impact on their behaviour and thus this model, and if so, which phase is affected most by this tool.

One thing is clear: all girls agree that the model is in fact impacted by Instagram's Influencer Marketing. The only step that is not mentioned, is post-purchase behaviour.

Impacted Phase	Mentions out of 11	Verbatim
Problem recognition	9 (of which 7 times as most impacted)	*"When followers are exposed to the same product in several influencer posts, they might begin to want the product as well, and think it is "fashionable"."* *"They can make you believe you want the product that they possess so bad. They can "talk you into" wanting the product they recommend. You see it everywhere, all hot influencers have it. So, you need it."* *"Even though the need is not really a "need", it can*

		unconsciously become a need, because they see it appearing continuously on Instagram." *"When a product keeps on returning on your Instagram feed, and you fancy that kind of product-category, a problem recognition can be developed."*
Info search	4 (of which 2 times as most impacted)	*"When I see influencer posts, I sometimes click on the link of the website, for more information, or to see other products of the brand."* *"I think you can see their opinion as information before purchasing a product."* *"I usually click on "swipe up for more" to get more information about the product a SI is showing."*
Evaluation alternatives	5 (of which one as most impacted)	*"Some influencers evaluate in your place: they post comparisons of similar products, of different brands."* *"A lot of SI compare different brands of make-up products, they evaluate in your place."* *"One SI wears it this way, and another wears it that way."*
Purchase decision	6 (of which one as most impacted)	*"When the SI is offering a promotion, the choice is made quickly."* *"The purchase decision can really be impacted in function of the offered reduction SIs sometimes give."*

Table 8 - Impacted Phases of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model

3.5 Conclusion

We explored what steps are taken most by young Belgian women when purchasing lifestyle products. Problem Recognition, Purchase Decision and Post-Purchase Behaviour were the most important ones when it comes to their purchase behaviour. The most important objective is discovering which phase(s) of the consumer's buying behaviour process are impacted by SIs. The four first steps of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model are affected most, according to the interviewees.

Next to that main objective, we now have an idea of the Instagram consumption of the interviewees, which was for the majority more than 2 hours a day. Again, this is not representative for the Belgian population, because of three reasons: firstly, because this qualitative phase contains results of an eleven-headed sample. Secondly, all interviewees are

Flemish, and according a study of CIM (2016) & MediaEdge MEC (in Jean, 2017), 60% of the Belgian Instagram users are Flemish. Only 40% is French-speaking. And thirdly, we selected the girls on having an active user-position on Instagram. So, we can suspect that the average Instagram-consumption of young Belgian women is lower than this, although this should be tested.

When it comes to the attitude of young Belgian women towards SIs, opinions are divided. Out of the interviews, we get the feeling that before, their attitude was more positive, but as this tool is used more often today, some of the girls get a bit tired of seeing all that sponsored content on their feed. This explains some of the sceptic attitudes we encountered. When there is no disclosure or clear persuasive text beneath the picture, the interviewees find it difficult to distinguish a sponsored from a non-sponsored picture. This qualitative phase makes us suspect that disclosure does change the credibility towards the SI, but it has no effect on the purchase intentions of their followers.

II. Group 2: Social Influencers

We also interview eight SIs. Chapter 4 explains the methodology of these interviews, Chapter 5 explains the analysis method, and the sixth chapter summarizes the outcomes.

Chapter 4. Methodology

SIs using Instagram as their communication platform, also come across in this qualitative phase. This chapter deals with the objectives of interviewing SIs, the method that was put into practice, and based on which criteria we select the SIs to interview. Next to that, we explain how we analyse these interviews, and we provide you with the most important outcomes.

4.1 Objectives

We want to know how it all started for them, how the SI achieved the "influencer position", and how she (as we decided to only interview female influencers) achieved the "reach". As we concentrate this research on lifestyle products, we want to know in what niches the Belgian Influencer is specialized. Another objective is getting to know more about the collaboration between the SI and the brands or companies and how prices are negotiated. We also read a couple of times that other influencers easily influence each other. We want to know if they perceive themselves that way.

The qualitative research on this second group will not necessarily induce a further quantitative research. Thus, the overall objective of interviewing this group, is a more profound understanding of this specific communication strategy or strengthen possible hypotheses that are drawn up out of the consumer's qualitative part.

4.2 Method: Individual, online, semi-structured interview

The reasons why we also choose for a semi-directed individual interview with the SIs, are the same as mentioned above (*section 1.2 Individual, online (audio-visual), semi-directional interview*). The only difference here is the fact that we do not have audio-visual contact with the interviewees. SIs often have very buzzy schedules; making time for an interview is not that easy. That is why we choose for the most current and easy format of executing an individual interview: e-mailing. In the e-mail, we mention that the SI can fill in the attached text file whenever she has the time, at her ease. In that way, the SI can give us more detailed

information. A possible disadvantage of this method is that the participant has the time to give answers that seek to give a favourable self-image (D'Astous, 2010, p. 75). Eight interviews of SIs are executed during this qualitative phase, which have been added to the appendix (*Appendix 2.2.2*) (this counts 13 pages).

4.2.1 Interview guide of SIs (*Appendix 2.1*)

The interview guide for SIs is drawn up in the same way as mentioned above (*section 1.2.1 Interview guide of consumers*). It again starts with the first part that introduces the interview, and theme one, that introduces the SI. The body of the interview consists out of four themes: How the interviewee became a SI, how she collaborates with companies and the influence of other influencers. The last part (conclusion), is not as extended as in the audio-visual interviews. We reply to the e-mail with another acknowledgement, but a conclusion of the interview does not follow.

4.3 Interviewed audience (*Appendix 2.2.1*)

The selection criteria for SI interviewees is nearly similar to the selection criteria for the consumers (young women). The reason is PSI: para-social interaction, which we mentioned in Part I. After some time, followers (potential consumers) might perceive the influencer as a personal friend. And these are often about the same age and gender. Plus, the fact that some followers recognize themselves in the SIs, plays a role in these selection criteria. But when is a profile officially a SI per definition? We only contact profiles with at least three clearly sponsored posts in the past few weeks. These profiles have at least about 8 000 followers on Instagram. Some of them advise us to contact profiles with more than 50 000 followers, as they have different and more important collaboration contracts with brands. But as these come closer to "real celebrities", it is very hard to reach those profiles, but we succeeded. We interview one SI with 66 800 followers on Instagram (80 000 combined with other social media), and one with more than 90 000 followers (180 000 combined with other media).

The number of followers on Instagram of the eight interviewed SIs is presented in *Table 9.*

Number of followers	Number of SI out of 8
< 15 000	3
15 000 – 25 000	3
> 25 000	2

Table 9 - Number of Instagram-followers of the SIs

Chapter 5. Analysis method

The same method was applied on the transcription of the SIs interviews as for the consumers' interviews (s*ee Chapter 2).*

Chapter 6. Summary of results

The sections beneath this chapter resume the answers per theme and objective, as mentioned above. Something remarkable during the introduction part of these interviews, is the fact that almost all interviewees are still students (seven out of eight). None of them is a full-time SI, not even those with the highest reach. Most influencers say they do shootings and participate in events, and create content for their Instagram or blogs, when they are not at school.

They say their Influence (measured in number of followers), grew because of the reasons mentioned in *Table 10.*

Reason of growth	Number of mentions out of 8
Frequency of posting	5
Quality of content	3
Fame outside Instagram	2
Other / has no idea	2

Table 10 - Reasons of growing influence of the SIs

6.1 The way to becoming a SI on Instagram

Most of the SIs suppose their great number of followers grew unintentionally (five out of eight). They say posting frequently on Instagram stimulated this grow. Those with the highest number of followers were already famous in some way out of Instagram, because of TV-

shows (two out of eight). All interviewed SIs are influencers on Instagram, half of them mentions being very popular on other social media (See *Table 11*).

Influencer on Media X	Number of mentions out of 8
Instagram	8, (of which 3 exclusively on Instagram: no combination with other media)
YouTube	4
Personal Blog	3

Table 11 - Media presence of the SI

They perceived themselves "officially" as being a SI, once brands began to contact them (five out of eight mentions this). Some of them mention having achieved a certain number of followers next to that. Their audience is in general similar to their own profiles: mostly female and between 18 and 24 years old on average with the same interest domains.

6.2 Contact with companies

Almost all interviewed influencers say they are contacted by both Public Relations Agencies and brands. All influencers are contacted by e-mail for collaborations. Some mention they are contacted during events, or through Instagram's Direct Message-tool. Five out of the eight influencers admit having contacted minimum one company by themselves to collaborate.

They claim they are selected because of their brand fit (the product fits with the usual content of the SI, and the SI fits with the values and style of the brand). It is interesting to see how brand fit is more important than the number of followers the SI has (5 > 2 out of 8). You can see more outcomes in *Table 12*.

Selection criteria	Number of mentions out of 8
Brand fit	5
Quality of engagement	3
Quality of content	2
Number of followers	2
Authenticity	1

Table 12 - Selection criteria of SIs

What we also notice, is that those who have a following smaller than 15 000 to 20 000, are usually paid in free products (one of them calls it: "barter deals"). Pay per Post and Pay per

Acquisition are also used, but more frequently once they have a higher number of followers (> 30 000). However, one of the interviewed influencers (with "only" 14 500 followers at the moment of interviewing), says she asks €100 for one post, and €200 to €250 for 2 posts. She says brands do not always want to pay in Pay per Post. We can conclude out of this that the negotiation power of the SI is important when it comes to remuneration. The interviewed profile with more than 90 000 followers is not allowed to speak out about prices and remuneration methods. We also ask how the personal promotional code works in practice. Almost all influencers say that they are not necessarily paid per acquisition because of that code. The code is generally used to measure their actual "influence". This is interesting for the company; whether it is going to collaborate or not with the influencer in the future.

All influencers indicate that their collaborations involve restrictions or conditions. Almost all of them say that there are content-guidelines and restrictions on time; when (data, hour) they should post the content. More than half of the influencers mention restrictions regarding competition (not tagging a competitor's Instagram-account in the same post, no collaboration within two weeks with a competitor, and so on). Some of them mention that they prefer to be free in this, and do not like this restriction. The exact figures are presented in *Table 13*.

Restriction	Number of mentions out of 8
Content	7
Time of posting	6
Competition	5

Table 13 - Restrictions

All influencers post at least one sponsored post per week. More than half of the interviewees post more than that, up to a third of their posts, and even more.

6.3 Influence of other influencers

All interviewed SIs follow at their turn other SIs. Some say that those other profiles can be inspiring for their own content. Others say that some of their friends are SIs. Another reason is they simply like to follow those profiles. More than half of the interviewees say they had bought something because another Influencer was advertising it.

6.4 Conclusion

During the interviewing phase of the SIs, and comparing the objectives to the results of this, we definitely got a deeper view into this particular world of SI Marketing. We got to know that in general, becoming a SI was not necessarily their intention, as their reach grew organically. Most interviewed SIs reach the same niche: young girls, sharing the same interests as the SI (mostly travelling and fashion). We now know more about the collaborations between SIs and brands (or agencies), as the practical side of this was not totally clear out of the literature review. Micro-influencers are mostly paid in barter deals (free products). But negotiation between the two parties is essential, when choosing the remuneration model. Almost all brands or agencies impose conditions on how the SI should post, with what text, pose and hashtags. More than half of them get restrictions on the time of posting and regarding competition. The influencers are essentially selected because they fit with the brand's style, and vice-versa. The literature review also claimed that influencers are more easily influenced than non-influencers, and this might be true, as more than half of the interviewees assumes having bought something because of another influencer, while this is only four out of eleven non-influencers. They perceive themselves as being a SI, but they will not call themselves "microcelebrities".

III. Group 3: Brands / Companies

The literature review revealed some of the most used strategies by American companies, when working with SIs on Instagram. We want to have the point of view of a company targeting the Belgian market. Our goal was to interview at least three to five companies, but after contacting twenty to thirty of them by mail, only one responds. We come into contact with the Marketing Assistant of a United Kingdom cosmetics brand, that recently entered the Belgian Market. We have an individual, online, semi-structured interview with this person, using e-mail. You can find the interview guide for companies in the appendix (*appendix 3.1*).

Out of the transcription of answers (*appendix 3.2.2)*, we have an idea of what Instagram and Influencer Marketing through this platform mean for a company reaching out to the Belgian market. The interviewed company has its own Instagram account. The interviewee tells us that being active on Instagram is primordial for a cosmetics company, as their target audience is extremely active on Instagram. The objectives of their own Instagram account are: giving information about products, communicate promotions, trigger people to visit their website or point of sale, enlarge reach, engagement and brand awareness. When it comes to collaborations with SIs, the company prefers contacting them directly, rather than appeal to public-relations agencies. They work with two SIs, they had two collaborations with them so far. The objectives of these collaborations are: reaching new people, acquiring new followers and creating brand awareness. *"SIs have a great reach. By posting daily, they create an interactive community. We experienced that we were able to reach their followers when we collaborated with them. This often meant a difference of about 15 000 followers we could reach more easily and quickly."* But the interviewee also recommends being careful with this tool. Using it too much, can be perceived as spam, and the credibility of the company might decrease. *"You do not want the audience to think that you bribed the SI. That is why we choose to work with SIs that are already a fan of our brand."* SIs are selected by the brand based on their interests, Instagram feed, number of followers and their affinity with the sector. They try to find SIs that share the same values and vision of the brand. They work with one influencer per campaign, and they remunerate with free products. They simply send the products to SIs, and if the products satisfy them, they can share it on their social media. If not, the SI is not obliged to do that. As it is a rather small company, they can only work with free products and micro-SIs, as bigger SIs are very expensive to collaborate with. The effectiveness of the collaboration with a SI is measured in terms of reach.

IV. Conclusion of the qualitative analysis

The analysis of the interviews of all parties adds a new dimension to the literature review of this thesis. It makes us suspect that a couple of mentioned allegations of the first part might be true, and it opened gates to working fields we have never thought of during that part.

The interviewed consumers admit in general that their behaviour is being influenced in some way, by Instagram's SIs. When they claim they follow these profiles to be inspired, the sought category of inspiration is in almost all cases fashion. Fashion is also the most mentioned category when we discuss lifestyle with the interviewed consumers. And the four people that have bought something because of a SI on Instagram, all bought clothes. The SIs also mentioned clothes as one of the most common free products. When the consumers are exposed to pictures without a sponsorship disclosure, persuasion knowledge is rather low, as only one out of eleven succeeded in unveiling the sponsored posts. If a post says "sponsored" or "ad", it changes the credibility of the SI. Although, it does not change the interviewee's purchase intentions. Exposing the consumers to the 5-Stage Decision Making Model also provides some interesting information. Recognition of need is the most mentioned phase that is susceptible of being impacted by SI Marketing on Instagram. Evaluating alternatives appears to be impacted too, but in a rather "uncommon" way, as the consumers say the SIs evaluate for them. The offered reduction code impacts the Purchase decision-phase, according to a lot of interviewed consumers. There is no actual preference between a SI's post and a brand's post, but the post that is most preferred to see when scrolling on Instagram, appears to be the same post that encourages the follower to purchase the shown product.

V. Conclusion of the qualitative phase and construction of hypotheses

Based on the conclusions of the qualitative phase of this thesis, we are able to draw up the following hypotheses, that are the foundation of the quantitative analysis.

Hypothesis 1: Influence

H_1: The majority of young Belgian women who follow Social Influencers on Instagram, admit being influenced by these profiles.

1.1 Link with this thesis' objective

To know whether SIs have an impact on the purchase behaviour of young Belgian women, it is interesting to know whether this audience perceives itself as being influenced by SIs.

1.2 Justification

The qualitative research revealed that almost all girls (ten out of eleven potential consumers) admit being influenced by those profiles, even if this is only in a very light or subtle way.

1.3 Key words

We specify *"the majority"* as: a proportion statistically greater than 50%. *"Admit being influenced"* means: Answering "yes" on the question whether SIs are responsible for some changes in their purchase behaviour. "*Young"* means between 18 and 29 years old in this context. *"Follow SIs"* signifies: to be following at least one SI on Instagram. A "*SI*" is specified as "a person that is famous to and has established credibility in a niche group of people, has access to a large audience and can persuade others, because of his or her reach and authenticity"[5].

1.4 Considered statistical test

To test this hypothesis, we are going to execute a test of comparison to one standard (0,50).

[5] This definition is based on several characteristics summed up in 2.2.1: An introduction to Influencer Marketing (in Part I: literature review).

Group of hypotheses 2: Impacted phases of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model

H_{2a}) The most impacted phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model because of Social Influencers on Instagram, is the first phase: Recognition of need.

H_{2b}) The "Evaluation of alternatives"-phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model is facilitated by Social Influencers on Instagram because Social Influencers compare different lifestyle products, instead of the consumer evaluating the alternatives herself.

H_{2c}) A price reduction code offered by a SI on the purchase of a product tends to increase the probability of purchase of this product by the followers.

2.1 Link with this thesis' objective

This hypothesis is directly linked to the main objective of this thesis, as it tests precisely what phases of the purchase behaviour process are impacted most, and in what way.

2.2 Justification

During the qualitative research, nine out of eleven potential consumer-interviewees mentioned the first phase as being impacted by SIs on Instagram. Seven of these eight interviewees even mentioned it as being "the most impacted" phase of all. Three out of the five interviewees that mentioned "evaluation of alternatives" as one of the most impacted phases, explained spontaneously that this is because the SI evaluates alternatives in the consumer's place. Three out of the six girls that mentioned "purchase decision" as one of the most impacted phases, explained spontaneously that this is because of the reduction code the SI provides.

2.3 Key words

By *"5-Stage Decision Making Model"*, we mean: the 5-Stage Decision Purchase Making Model of Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006, in Sinigaglia, 2016). Being *"most impacted"* means: being more impacted than any other phase of the presented model.

2.4 Considered statistical test

We execute the law of categorical judgments on these three hypotheses, and a comparison to one standard-test on H_{2b} and H_{2c}.

Hypothesis 3: Fashion

H_3: For the majority of young Belgian women, lifestyle products considered when following a SI are related to fashion clothing.

3.1 Link with this thesis' objective

If SIs impact the purchase behaviour of young Belgian women, it is important to determine what category of lifestyle products is most impacted by this.

3.2 Justification

During the qualitative phase, we discussed a couple of times "lifestyle-products" with group 1 of the interviewees. When they claim they follow these profiles to be inspired, the sought category of inspiration is in almost all (10/11) cases fashion. Fashion is also the most mentioned category when we discuss lifestyle with the interviewed SIs. And the four people that have bought something because of a SI on Instagram, all bought clothes.

3.3 Key words

"Lifestyle is the routine manifestation of subcultures, regulated and influenced by family (social class), friends (status groups, gender, generation) and different types of movements and networks" (Jensen, 2007). Lifestyle products can cover products like: electronic gadgets, sport- and fitness related products, food, decoration, fashion products such as clothing and accessories, cosmetics, and products related to travelling and photography.

3.4 Considered statistical test

A test of comparison to a standard (0,50) is considered here.

Group of hypotheses 4: The link between preference on brand information and purchase intention

The preferred post is also the post that arouses the highest purchase intention. In particular: H_{4a}) When a young Belgian woman prefers to see a picture of a post of a Social Influencer promoting a brand on her Instagram feed (over the same product of the brand posted by the brand itself), her purchase intention is also more influenced by that same post.

H_{4b}) When a young Belgian woman prefers to see a picture of a post of a brand on her Instagram feed (over a picture showing the same product of the brand posted by a Social Influencer), her purchase intention is also more influenced by that same post.

4.1 Link with this thesis' objective

As encouraging someone to buy something implies a modification in the purchase behaviour of this person, it is interesting to know whether this purchase intention is linked to the picture featuring the brand that is simply "preferred". It is also interesting to investigate which situation influences the most the purchase intention.

4.2 Justification

Here we refer to the matrix in the synthesis of the qualitative research, linked to Hunkemöller and Daniel Wellington. Seventeen out of the twenty-two situations showed that liking for instance most the picture of the SI will also be the post that encourages her most to buy a product of the brand in question, and vice-versa.

4.3 Considered statistical test

We will execute a comparison to one standard (0,50) to verify this hypothesis.

Group of hypotheses 5: Persuasion attempt and disclosure

H_{5a}) The majority of young Belgian women cannot distinguish a sponsored of a non - sponsored post, only relying on the Social Influencer's posted picture.

H_{5b}) The perceived credibility towards the Social Influencer is greater in case of sponsorship disclosure versus sponsorship non-disclosure.

H_{5c}) A minority of young Belgian women confirms that disclosure influences positively their purchase intentions.

5.1 Link with this thesis' objective

It is interesting to know if our audience is aware of the sponsorship in a post when there is no disclosure, and whether this persuasion attempt awareness impacts their purchase behaviour. This is in direct link with the main question of this thesis. Thus, we want to know whether disclosure changes the credibility of SIs perceived by young Belgian women (thus linked to

their attitude), and their purchase intentions (linked to purchase behaviour), as this is all part of the impact SIs can have on young Belgian women.

5.2 Justification

During the interviewing phase of the potential consumers, we noticed how hard it was for the girls to unveil sponsored posts if there is no text beneath the picture. We asked the girls literally whether disclosure changes something to the granted credibility towards the SI, and if this would change their purchase intentions. Out of the qualitative phase, we have reasons to believe that the credibility towards the SI does change, as seven out of eleven girls confirmed this. Five of these seven girls think the credibility changes positively. We also have reasons to believe that the purchase intentions of the girl exposed to the picture do not change after disclosure, as ten out of eleven girls confirmed this.

5.3 Key words

In H_{5a}), "*posted picture"* means the picture without the accompanying text that the SI might have posted. In H_{5b}), "*Credibility*" is measured with the "Credibility (Trustworthiness)"-scale of Ohanian (1990,1991 in Bruner, 2009, p. 372).

5.4 Considered statistical test

To test H_{5a} and H_{5c}, we are going to execute a comparison to one standard-test. In H_{5b}, we test through a factor analysis whether the "Credibility (Trustworthiness)"-scale is unidimensional. We test H_{5b} with a t-test on paired samples.

Hypothesis 6: Persuasion Attempt (Brand / SI)

H_6) A picture that is posted by a SI is less perceived as a persuasion attempt compared to a picture posted by a brand.

6.1 Link with this thesis' objective

As the main objective of this thesis aims at researching the impact of SI Marketing on Instagram, it is interesting to compare this with Marketing done directly by brands, on their own Instagram-profile. Is a picture that is not directly posted by a brand, less perceived as being a persuasion attempt than a post of the brand itself?

6.2 Justification

During the interviewing of the first group (potential consumers), several girls preferred a picture of an influencer to a picture posted by the Instagram-profile of a brand. They said this was because they do not like to see commercial messages appearing on their Instagram feed, although, the shown SI-posts contained sponsored items too.

6.3 Key words

"*Post*" is defined in this context as a picture or video containing sponsored content, posted on Instagram.

6.4 Considered statistical test

We consider a comparison of two means-test on dependent samples for this last hypothesis.

PART III. Quantitative research

The previous part aims at an open-ended, dynamic and flexible research within the target group. This third part provides more statistical and numerical results (Webb, 1995). We explain the methodology of data collection and analysis, we test the hypotheses statistically and end with a clear conclusion based on the results and the verification of the hypotheses.

I. Methodology

The ultimate objective of this thesis is to know what impact SIs on Instagram have on young Belgian women's buying behaviour. The preparatory qualitative research provided interesting coherent observations, which made it possible to draw up hypotheses. We now test these hypotheses through a quantitative phase, using a survey, which only considers our target audience: Belgian women between 18 and 29 years old. This sample gives us an idea of the information we could collect studying each individual of the population meeting those criteria (Howitt & Cramer, 2014, p. 4). During the qualitative phase, we select the interviewees based on our foreknowledge on them. The quantitative phase is an at random sample. Taking a random sample from a population means selecting subjects in such a way that each subject in the population has an equal chance of being chosen. In other words, there is no preference for selecting a specific individual from the population (Howitt & Cramer, 2014, p. 102).

The following two chapters explain how we construct the questionnaire and introduces the characteristics of this sample.

Chapter 1. Construction of the survey

In this chapter, we present how we compose the questions of the survey, as well as how we make sure that each hypothesis is covered with these questions. We pre-test the survey tool on a sub-sample and explain how we reach the target segment of this research.

1.1.Type of questions

The content of the questions is chosen in order to respond to the following questions: “Is the question necessary?”, “Does the respondent understand the question?”, “Is the question sufficient to elicit the required data?”, “Does the respondent has the necessary data to answer the question?” and “Is the respondent willing/able to answer the question?” (Webb, 1995, pp. 93-95).

We merely use closed-ended questions as type of response format. These are questions that are followed by a structured response. In general, these are multiple-choice questions in which the respondent is confronted with a menu of answers from which she or he can select the one that most closely approximates his or her view. We also present some dichotomous questions, which imply a more restrictive response category, where the respondent only has the choice between two answers (Webb, 1995).

During the construction of the questionnaire, it is very important to clearly define the sought objective, as well as the type of information to be collected. Various authors emphasize this matter. We cite Ghiglione (1987): "When constructing a questionnaire, it is necessary to know exactly what one is looking for, to make sure that the questions have a meaning, that all aspects of the question have been well addressed.” (in De Ketele & Roegiers, 1999, p. 32). Therefore, we draw up *Table 14* enlisting all links between each hypothesis and each question of our survey.

Hypothesis		**Question**
Hypothesis 1		Question 4, 6 & 16
Group of hypotheses 2	H_{2a}	Question 6 & 16
	H_{2b}	
	H_{2c}	
Hypothesis 3		Question 7 & 16
Group of hypotheses 4	H_{4a}	Question 8 & 9
	H_{4b}	
Group of hypotheses 5	H_{5a}	Question 13
	H_{5b}	Question 14 & 15
	H_{5c}	Question 6 & 16
Hypothesis 6		Question 10 & 11

Table 14 - Link Hypotheses - Questions

1.2.Pre-test

Creating a perfect questionnaire in only one attempt is almost impossible. Therefore, we pre-test our questionnaire, to uncover faults, before launching it. We choose a small sub-sample of seven people of the intended respondent group (Webb, 1995). We ask them to chronometry the time to complete the survey, to give us an idea of the required time to the respondents afterwards.

The pre-testers gave us interesting feedback, and after some minor changes, our survey follows a logic course, and every question is clear.

1.3.Reaching the target audience

We created a web survey, in which the questionnaire is posted on a website, where it can be completed online. The answers are uploaded and organized on a secure Internet link (Beukenhorst & Kerssemakers, 2012). We use the website "SondageOnline", which allows us to create a multilingual survey including pictures, for free for students.

As we want to reach Belgian women, we draw up the survey in the two most common Belgian languages: French and Dutch. The survey has been shared on Facebook and Instagram, using Instagram Stories. As nearly three quarters of these networks are Flemish, we also shared the survey on a Walloon Facebook-group "So Girly", counting 29 601 members on the day of sharing.

To determine the required sample size, we use the following equation:

$$S = \frac{\frac{z^2 * p(1 - p)}{e^2}}{1 + (\frac{z^2 * p(1 - p)}{e^2 N})}$$

With S = sample size, z = z-score, N = population size, e = margin of error, and p = percentage value (SurveyMonkey, 2018). To estimate the population size of our target segment, we proceeded as follows: Belgium's total population equals 11 358 357, of which 5 754 083 are female (Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken, 2018). Approximately 824 893[6] are between 18 and 29 years old (Statbel, 2018). Our literature study revealed that

[6] All figures are representative for the first quarter of 2018.

59% of the 18 to 29-year old girls are active on Instagram, which makes N = 824 893 * 59% = 486 687. With a z-score of 1,96 (which equals a confidence level of 95%); a margin error of 5% and a percentage value of 50% (this produces a sample size estimate that is neither too little nor too much (Kooiker, 1997, p. 92)), our sample size estimate equals 384.

Chapter 2. Characteristics of the sample

Our final sample size equals 424, which exceeds the minimal estimated sample size. The introduction of the questionnaire implies the required criteria to participate: being a Belgian woman between 18 and 29, active on Instagram. Inhabitants of two of Belgium's three regions participated: 41,04% of the respondents is Flemish; 59,96% is Walloon. There are no remarkable differences in outcome between the two regions. All ages between 18 and 29 are present in our sample, as demonstrated in *Figure 9.*

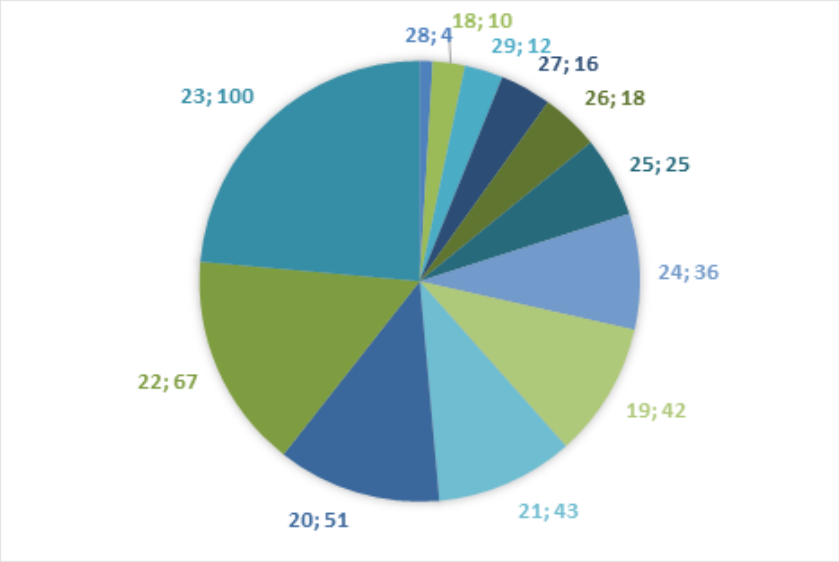

Figure 9 - Age distribution

The vast majority of respondents are students. *Figure 10* presents the professional status distribution of our quantitative research.

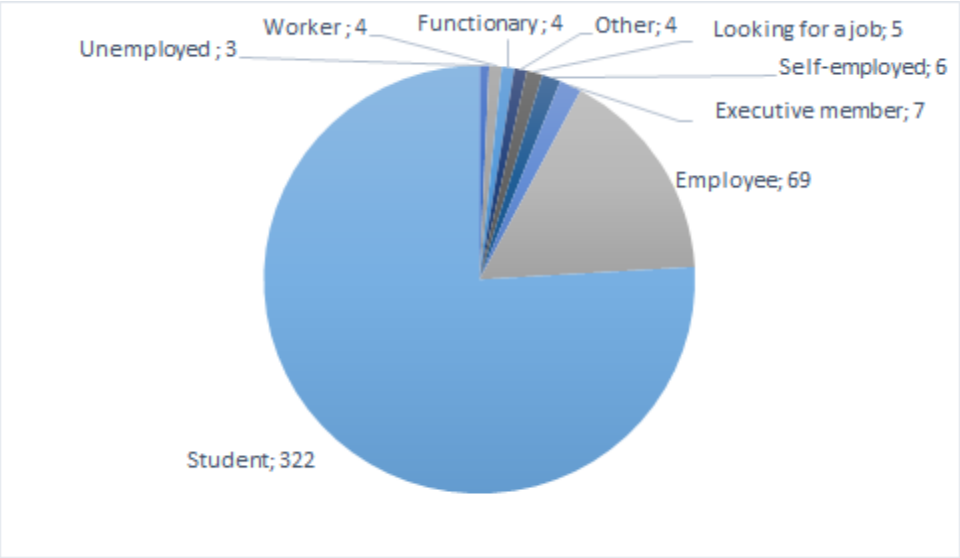

Figure 10 - Professional Status distribution

As we want to know how long the participant has been active on Instagram, we ask in which year she created her profile. 76,18% signed up on Instagram between 2012 and 2015. 8,02% did this before this period; 15,80% during the last three years.

Moreover, once the respondent went through the questions regarding lifestyle products, we ask whether she consults SIs on Instagram. The outcome confirms that young female Belgian Instagram users are almost all confronted with SIs when using this social media platform, as more than 96% confirms this.

Never	3,54%
Rarely	12,26%
Sometimes	33,49%
Often	33,96%
Always, every time I connect to my Instagram account	16,75%

Table 15 - Young Belgian women consulting SIs on Instagram

II. Analysis methodology

In this second section, the different statistic tests that are executed on the collected data are explained. We will perform a test of comparison to one standard, the law of categorical judgements and a t-test on paired samples. “A test is a statistical procedure to obtain a statement on the truth or falsity of a proposition, based on empirical evidence.” (Snijders, 2001, p. 494).

Chapter 3. Test of comparison to one standard

We consider a population counting N individuals. Certain individuals meet a specific characteristic. Based on a sample of n individuals, we observe a frequency, f, of individuals that meet that certain characteristic. We do not know the proportion p of individuals that meet that characteristic within the population. Next to that, f may differ because of sample fluctuations. Considering the obtained value for f, we can test if the proportion p can be considered or not, as equal to p_0, a predetermined value. In other words, the frequency is the number of times that something is placed in a certain category, and the proportion equals the frequency divided by the sample size (Derbaix, 1995).

The hypothesis can be defined as:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p = p_0 \\ H_1: p > p_0 \end{cases} \quad \text{or} \quad \begin{cases} H_0: p = p_0 \\ H_1: p < p_0 \end{cases} \quad \text{or} \quad \begin{cases} H_0: p = p_0 \\ H_1: p \neq p_0 \end{cases}$$

In which H_0 is generally the hypothesis that our results do not show any significant differences between population groups over the specific measured factors. H_1 is the alternate hypothesis that differences shown in our results reflect real differences between population groups (Gilbert & Churchill, 1996, p. 672).

Frequency f follows, in function of the sample form, a binomial law with parameter $p = p_0$, if H_0 is true.

If our sample size is sufficiently large, this law can be approximated by a normal law with mean $p = p_0$ and standard deviation:

$$\sigma_0 = \sqrt{\left[\frac{p_0(1 - p_0)}{n}\right]}$$

The standard normal distribution variable equals:

$$T = \frac{f - p_0}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{p_0(1 - p_0)}{n}\right]}}$$

Given a risk level α, we can determine the critical region of the different possibilities. If we consider H_0: $p = p_0$ and H_1: $p > p_0$, the critical region is of the form $f > b$ with b determined as if: $\alpha = \text{Prob}(H_1 \text{ accepted} | H_0 \text{ true}) = \text{Prob}(f > b | p = p_0)$. In the normal distribution table, we search the value for t_α in a way that $\text{Prob}[T > t_\alpha] = \alpha$. We deduce: $b = p_0 + t_\alpha \sqrt{\left[\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}\right]}$. If the observed frequency f exceeds b, we reject H_0.

Chapter 4. The law of categorical judgments

"Thurstone's categorical judgment analysis aims at deriving interval scales from non-metric data. Each stimulus has a rank on this scale and the distance between two stimuli can be interpreted. Each respondent can provide a number of responses equivalent to the number of stimuli and can classify different stimuli into a single category." (Derbaix, 1995, p. 36). One way to approach this process is to ask the subjects to compare a set of stimuli in pairs to establish order relationships between each of them (Demeuse, 1999).

The MAD (Mean Absolute Average) measures the quality of the adjustment. We consider the MAD as accurate if it is inferior to 10% (Derbaix, 1995). We execute this test using the CATEGO-tool.

Chapter 5. Paired t-test (Comparison of two means-test on dependent samples)

Another form of hypothesis testing that we present in this thesis, is the paired t-test. The paired t-test is used when examining two sets of data. As each value of the first sample is paired with a value in the second, we can conclude that the data in a paired t-test are dependent. The difference of the means of both data sets is the used parameter to make the inference. H_0 states that the difference of the means is equal to zero ($\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0$). In other words: the means of the two data sets being equal. H_1 can be the mean of the first sample

being greater than the mean of the second ($\mu_1 - \mu_2 > 0$), or the opposite (Wilkerson, 2008). We use the following formulas to become the t-test statistic (Derbaix, 1995):

Mean of differences in the population	D
Difference	$d = x_1 - x_2$
Mean difference	$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} d_i}{n}$
Sample standard deviation	$S'_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(d_i - \bar{d})^2}{n - 1}}$
T-test statistic	$t_\nu = \frac{\bar{d} - D}{S'_d/\sqrt{n}}$
Degrees of liberty	$\nu = n - 1$

The decision rule is: we reject H_0 if our t-test statistic (t_{obs}) belongs to the critical zone.

III. Analysis and results: verifying the hypotheses

This third section of the quantitative phase provides the most important outcomes of the online survey, tested using the methods that we explained in section II. Next to the verification of each hypothesis, other interesting additional results are explained throughout this section.

Hypothesis 1. Influence

H_1: The majority of young Belgian women who follow Social Influencers on Instagram, admit being influenced by these profiles.

This hypothesis is tested through question 4, which gives us an idea of the principal media used when wanting to keep up-to-date of the latest lifestyle trends. One of the possibilities is:

"I keep up-to-date of the latest lifestyle trends by following Social Influencers on Instagram."

I absolutely do not agree		**I do not agree**		**Neutral**		**I agree**		**I absolutely agree**	
50	11,79%	56	13,21%	29	6,84%	180	42,45%	109	25,71%

Thus, 68,16% of the participants mention SIs on Instagram being one of their sources to follow lifestyle trends.

This hypothesis is also linked to question 6, which sums up the possible reasons why the participants follow SIs. The most important reasons are:

Reason	**Frequency that agrees (f)**	**Critical frequency (b)**
"*Because I simply like the content posted by the SI*"	80,42%	53,99%
"*To obtain inspiration on new brands and new products*"	63,92%	
"*Because the SI's posted content is interesting*"	59,67%	
"*To find new ideas on products to buy*"	57,31%	

We can calculate the statistical sought frequency for this majority with a "comparison to a frequency"-test. This frequency equals 50% in this case. To calculate the critical frequency b, we consider the following formula, by using the normal law (sample n = 424) with frequency as the unbiased estimator of p:

$$b = p_0 + t_\alpha \sqrt{\left[\frac{p_0(1 - p_0)}{n}\right]} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad b = 0{,}5 + 1{,}645^{7} * \sqrt{\left[\frac{0{,}5* (1 - 0{,}5)}{424}\right]} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad b = 53{,}99\%$$

Through question 16, the respondent has to indicate her level of agreement with a list of statements. One of these statements is linked to H_1:

"The content posted by a Social Influencer on Instagram influences my buying behaviour of lifestyle products."

I absolutely do not agree		**I do not agree**		**Neutral**		**I agree**		**I absolutely agree**	
69	16,27%	89	20,99%	96	22,64%	152	35,85%	18	4,25%

Only 40,1% agrees with this statement. If we filter out the respondents that are never confronted with SIs (3,54%), this percentages raises to 41,56%. We already notice that this value is inferior to 0,5 or 50%, the sought majority.

H_1 is rejected. At $\alpha = 0{,}05$, we cannot conclude that the majority of young Belgian women following SIs on Instagram, states that their purchase behaviour is impacted by these SIs. Thus, **H_1 is not verified.**

We reformulate the previous sentence. This is another statement of question 16.

"Social Influencers have no impact on my buying behaviour of lifestyle products."

I absolutely do not agree		**I do not agree**		**Neutral**		**I agree**		**I absolutely agree**	
20	4,72%	116	27,36%	111	26,18%	116	27,36%	61	14,39%

[7] With an error risk of 5%, the value of t_α of the standard normal distribution variable is 1,645.

We see that 32,08% of the respondents thinks their buying behaviour is impacted if we phrase the statement this way. This is also inferior to the statistical majority of 53,99% we seek: H_1 is rejected. At $\alpha = 0,05$, we cannot conclude that the majority of young Belgian women following SIs on Instagram, states that their purchase behaviour is impacted by these SIs.

Note that only 41,75% agrees that SIs have no impact on their buying behaviour.

These two formulations provide a coherent outcome: H_1 is rejected in both cases. Thus**,** we have another proof that **H_1 is not verified.**

Another interesting observation here, is the Third-Person Effect (Davison, 1983). In question 16, one of the statements is:

"The buying behaviour of my peers is more impacted by Social Influencers than mine."

I absolutely do not agree		**I do not agree**		**Neutral**		**I agree**		**I absolutely agree**	
21	4,95%	47	11,08%	158	37,26%	149	35,14%	49	11,56%

Thus, 46,70% agrees with this statement.

This outcome might demonstrate how young Belgian women are reluctant to say that Social Influencers on Instagram influence their purchase behaviour. Even though this hypothesis is not verified, we think the fact that a higher percentage of women agree that their peers are impacted more, reveals something about themselves too. So, we think that the "true" percentage of purchase behaviour of women being impacted is probably higher than 40,1% and 32,08%, although they do not perceive themselves that way.

Group of hypotheses 2. Impacted phases of the 5-Stage Purchase Decision Making Model

H_{2a}) The most impacted phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model because of Social Influencers on Instagram, is the first phase: Recognition of need.

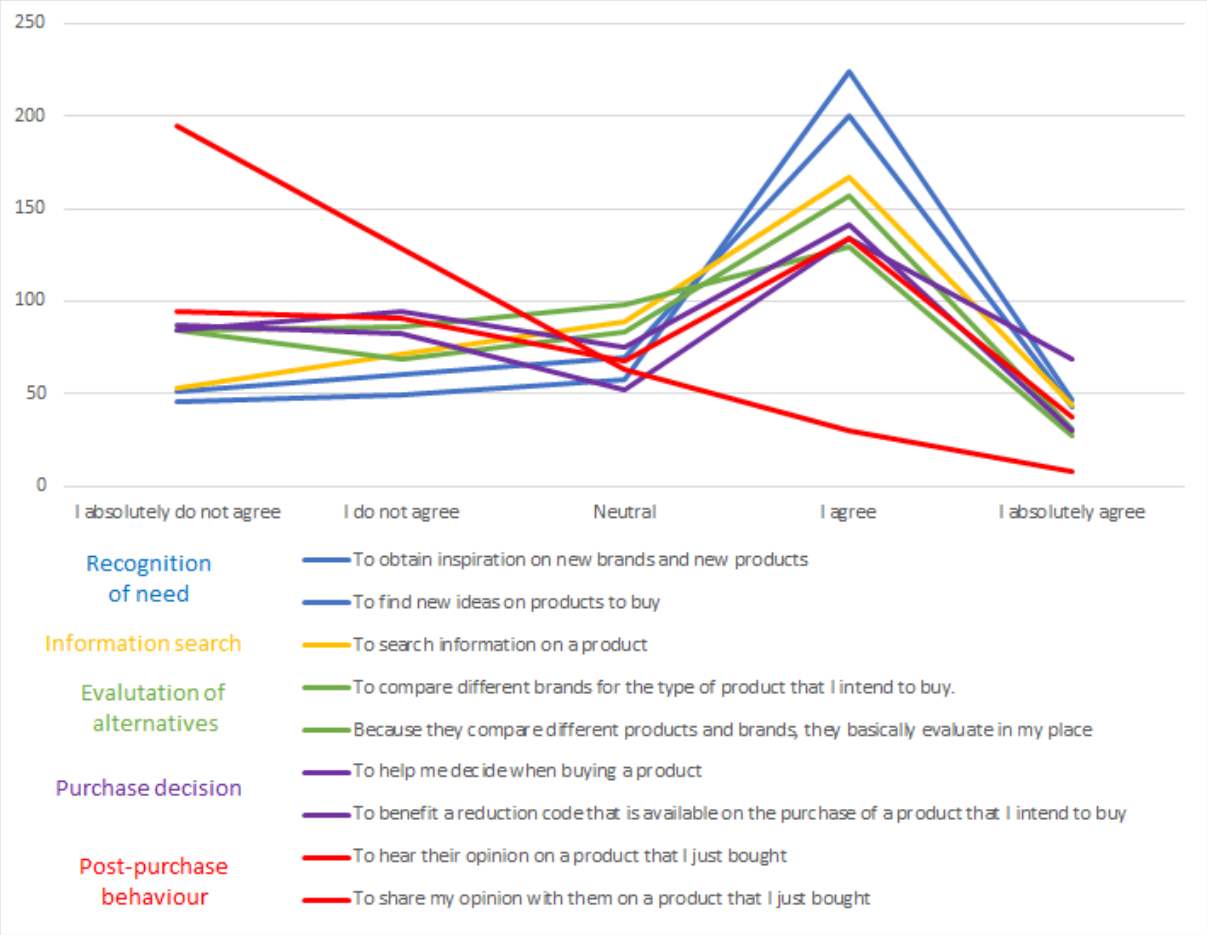

Figure 11 - Impacted phases

The graph on *Figure 11* presents the outcomes per level of agreement, per phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model. We see that both blue curves (recognition of need) are most important on the "I agree"-level, when responding to question 6; why they follow SIs.

We test this hypothesis using CATEGO, a tool that puts into practice the law of categorical judgements. Our test is considered valid as our MAD equals 0,02183 (<10%). The following table sums up all possible reasons to follow a SI on Instagram.

①	*"I knew the person before she became a SI"*
②	*"To obtain inspiration on new brands and new products"*
③	*"I want to follow the latest trends"*
④	*"I simply like to see the SI's pictures"*
⑤	*"I admire the SI"*
⑥	*"I think she posts interesting content"*
⑦	*"To find new ideas on products to buy"*
⑧	*"To search information on a product"*
⑨	*"To compare different brands for the type of product that I intend to buy"*
⑩	*"To help me decide when buying a product"*
⑪	*"To hear their opinion on a product that I just bought"*
⑫	*"To benefit a reduction code that is available on the purchase of a product that I intend to buy"*
⑬	*"Because they compare different products and brands, they basically evaluate in my place"*
⑭	*"To share my opinion with them on a product that I just bought"*

Figure 12 shows the outcome of the CATEGO-test. We observe as most important reason to follow a SI: ④ "*I simply like to see the SI's pictures".* The second most important reason is ⑥ *"I think she posts interesting content".* These two are not linked to the 5-Stage Decision Making Model. But the following two most important are: ② *"To obtain inspiration on new brands and new products"* and ⑦ *"To find new ideas on products to buy".* These are the two only reasons of question 6 that are linked to the first phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model: "Recognition of Need". The CATEGO-test provides the same outcome as the graph on *Figure 11*. **Hypothesis 2a is verified**. We can thus conclude that the most impacted phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model because of SIs on Instagram, is the first phase: Recognition of need.

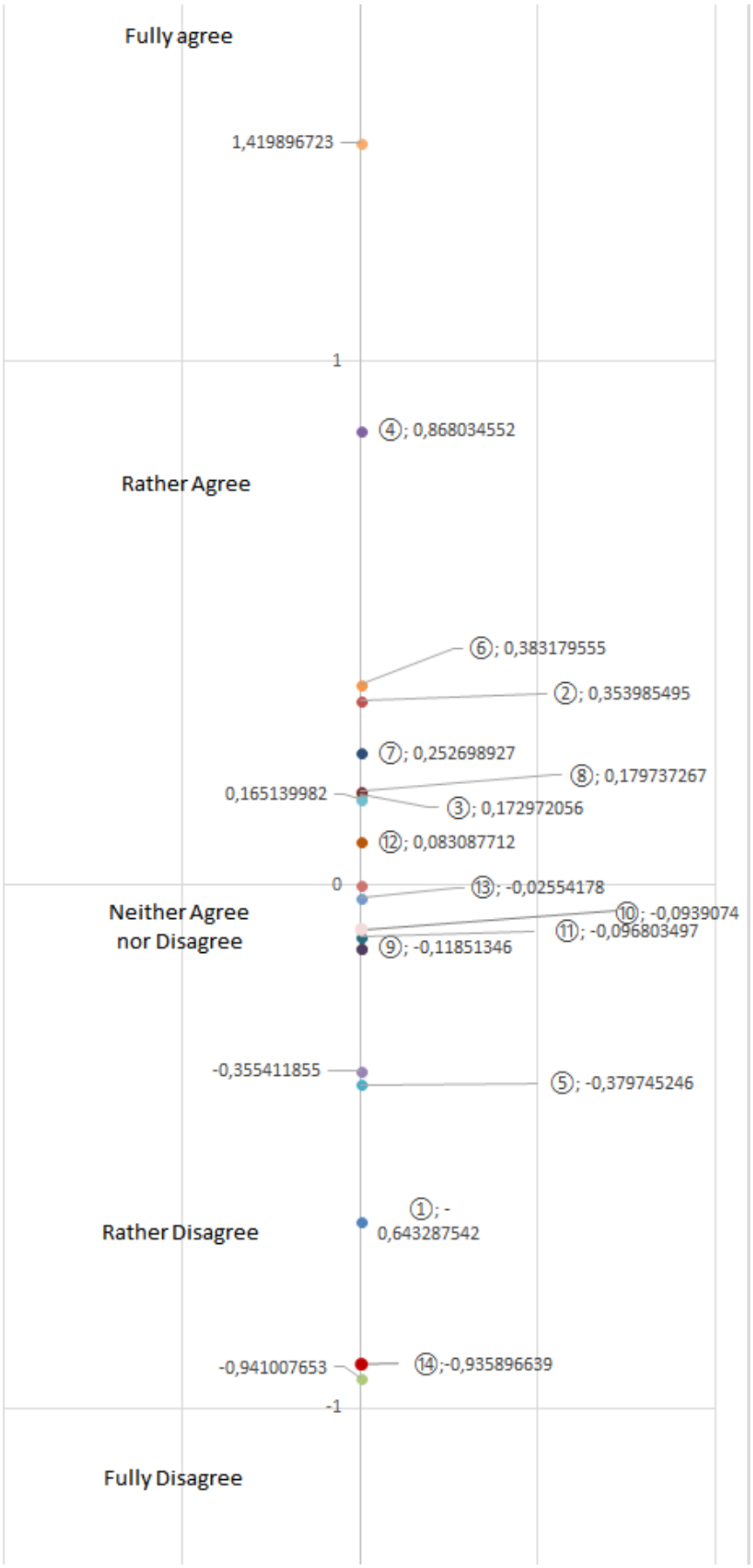

Figure 12 - CATEGO test H_{2a}: question 6

H_{2b}) The "Evaluation of alternatives"-phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model is facilitated by Social Influencers on Instagram because Social Influencers compare different lifestyle products, instead of the consumer evaluating the alternatives herself.

Question 6 makes the respondents think about the reasons why they follow SIs. Two of the possibilities related to H_{2b} are:

		Frequency that agrees (f)	**Critical frequency (b)**
⑨	*"To compare different brands for the type of product that I intend to buy"*	36,79%	53,99%
⑬	*"Because they compare different products and brands, they basically evaluate in my place"*	44,34%	

36,79% agrees with the first statement regarding the "Evaluation of alternatives"-phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model, 44,34% agrees with the second.

To test this hypothesis, we refer to H_{2a}, where we executed a CATEGO test. On *Figure 12*, we observe the possibilities ⑨ and ⑬ both in the "Neither agree nor disagree"-zone. Thus, this reason is not very important to the respondents. When executing a comparison to a statistical majority, we observe that the frequencies (f) of both reasons do not reach the statistical majority rate of 53,99% (b). Both tests reject H_{2b}, thus we cannot conclude that the "Evaluation of alternatives"-phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model is facilitated by SIs on Instagram.

H_{2c}) A price reduction code offered by a SI on the purchase of a product tends to increase the probability of purchase of this product by the followers.

Another possible reason for following SIs mentioned in question 6 is:

	Frequency that agrees (f)	**Critical frequency (b)**
"To benefit a reduction code that is available on the purchase of a product that I intend to buy."	47,87%	53,99%

When executing a comparison to a frequency-test, we reject H_{2c}, as b > f.

Question 16 proposes statements of which three are related to this hypothesis:

⑥[8]	*"I would more easily buy a product recommended by a SI that offers a reduction code available on the purchase of a product."*
⑪	*"The fact that a SI offers a reduction code on a lifestyle product purchase does not encourage me to buy a product that I do not need."*
⑬	*"Promotional codes offered by SIs are always interesting. I often buy products using these codes, even when I do not need these products at that moment."*

We again execute a CATEGO-test, based on the statements of question 16. The results are presented in *Figure 13*. Statement ⑥ is situated in the "Neither agree nor disagree"-zone. The respondents are rather neutral on the fact that they would more easily buy because of a reduction code offered by the SI. ⑪ is located in the "Rather agree"-zone, thus the respondents state that the reduction code does not encourage them to purchase a product they do not need, and ⑬ in the "Rather disagree"-zone.

[8] This numbering is different from in the two previous hypothesis-tests (H_{2a} & H_{2b}), that are about question 6. This numbering is about the statements of question 16.

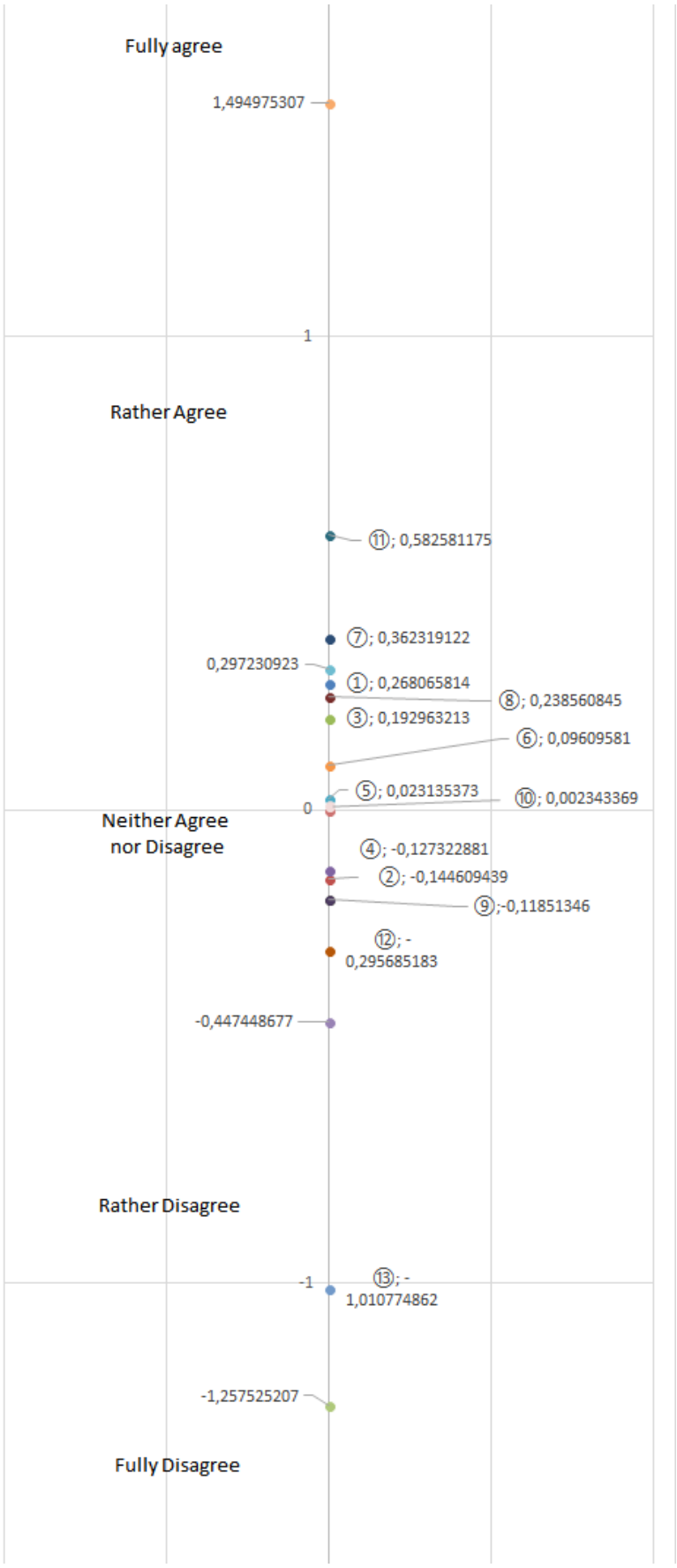

Figure 13 – CATEGO test of H_{2c}: question 16

	Frequency (f)		Critical frequency (b)
	Agrees	**Agrees + neutral**	
⑥	47,87%		53,99%
⑪		38,21%	
⑬	6,37%		

When executing a comparison to a frequency test, the statements regarding H_{2c} are rejected each time, as the frequency never exceeds the critical frequency b. In other words, the frequencies regarding price reduction are each time inferior to the sought statistical majority.

With the help of the CATEGO- and the comparison to a frequency-test, we cannot conclude that a price reduction code offered by a SI on the purchase of a product tends to increase the probability of purchase of this product by the followers. **H_{2c} is not verified.**

Hypothesis 3. Fashion

H_3: For the majority of young Belgian women, lifestyle products considered when following a SI are related to fashion clothing.

We focus on question 7 to analyse this hypothesis: "*Check the answer(s) with which you agree most concerning the following statement: "When following a Social Influencer, I mainly do it for lifestyle products in the category:". Table 16* presents the outcomes of this question.

Electronical gadgets	41	9,67%
Sport and fitness related products	144	33,96%
Food	179	42,22%
Decoration	152	35,85%
Fashion (clothing and accessories)	**343**	**80,90%**
Photography	124	29,25%
Travelling	219	51,65%
Cosmetics (make-up and care)	*257*	*60,61%*

Table 16 - Lifestyle-categories

We execute a "comparison to one standard"-test on this hypothesis.

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p = 0{,}5 \\ H_1: p > 0{,}5 \end{cases}$$

We already calculated the statistical majority level for the first hypothesis. For our sample size, 424, and a risk of error rate of 5%, this is 53,99% (b).

The test frequency rate is 80,90% (f): this percentage represents the proportion of respondents that indicate "Fashion (clothing and accessories)" as (one of the) interest field(s) when following a SI on Instagram. The observed frequency f exceeds b; thus, we reject H_0.

At $\alpha = 0{,}05$, we conclude that, on average, for the majority of young Belgian women following SIs on Instagram, lifestyle products considered when following a SI are related to fashion clothing. **H_3 is verified.**

We also observe one other category exceeding b: Cosmetics (make-up and care): 60,61% > 53,99%. Still, the Fashion-category presents by far the highest rate.

Group of hypotheses 4. The link between preference on brand information and purchase intention

H_{4a}) When a young Belgian woman prefers to see a picture of a post of a Social Influencer promoting a brand on her Instagram feed (over the same product of the brand posted by the brand itself), her purchase intention is also more influenced by that same post.

H_{4b}) When a young Belgian woman prefers to see a picture of a post of a brand on her Instagram feed (over a picture showing the same product of the brand posted by a Social Influencer), her purchase intention is also more influenced by that same post.

To test this hypothesis, the participant is exposed to two pictures. The first picture presents a SI, in which she advertises a specific watch of a specific brand. The second picture shows a picture of that same watch but posted on Instagram by the brand itself. We ask the respondent which picture she likes most, if she would be scrolling through her Instagram feed. Afterwards, we show the two pictures again, and we ask which picture makes her want to buy the watch most. We also provide the respondent with the possibility to answer that they equally make her want to buy the watch. 257 (60,61%) respondents answer twice the same

picture (twice Picture 1, or twice Picture 2). The rest, 167 (39,39%) respondents answer either a different picture (Picture 1 and Picture 2, or the opposite), or answer "equally" on the last question.

To test this hypothesis, we execute a comparison to one standard (0,5).

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p = 0{,}5 \\ H_1: p > 0{,}5 \end{cases}$$

We again already calculated the statistical majority level for the first hypothesis. For our sample size, 424, and a risk of error rate of 5%, this is 53,99% (b). 60,61% chooses twice the same picture. 60,61% > 53,99% thus we reject H_0. **H_4 is verified.** We can conclude that when a young Belgian woman prefers to see a picture of a post of a SI promoting a brand on her Instagram feed (over the same product of the brand posted by the brand itself), her purchase intention is also more influenced by that same post, and vice-versa.

Group of hypotheses 5. Persuasion attempt and disclosure

H_{5a}) The majority of young Belgian women cannot distinguish a sponsored of a non - sponsored post, only relying on the Social Influencer's posted picture.

In question 13, the respondent is confronted with six different pictures. Three of them are sponsored, the other three pictures are spontaneous posts, without any form of collaboration with a brand. All text has been erased, there are no written indications that the picture might be sponsored. The respondent needs to indicate whether she thinks the picture contains certainly not, probably not, probably or certainly sponsored content. After analysing, we notice 58,92% of the respondents answer this question correctly; 41,08% guessed wrong.

We execute a "comparison to a standard"-test on this hypothesis.

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p = 0{,}5 \\ H_1: p > 0{,}5 \end{cases}$$

We already calculated the statistical majority level for the first hypothesis. For our sample size, 424, and a risk of error rate of 5%, this is 53,99% (b).

The test frequency rate is 41,08% (f): this percentage represents the proportion of respondents that indicate the right answer (Probably/certainly sponsored if it actually represented a

sponsored picture, and probably/certainly not sponsored if the picture was actually not a sponsored one). As b > f, we reject H_{5a}.

At α = 0,05, we cannot conclude that the majority of young Belgian women cannot distinguish a sponsored of a non - sponsored post, only relying on the SI's posted picture. **Thus, Hypothesis 5a is not verified.**

Note that 72,13% chooses a "probably"-possibility (probably sponsored / probably not sponsored). This reflects the difficulty of unveiling the collaboration.

H_{5b}) The perceived credibility towards the Social Influencer is greater in case of sponsorship disclosure versus sponsorship non-disclosure.

We measure credibility with the "Credibility (Trustworthiness)"-scale of Ohanian (1990 - 1991, in Bruner, 2009, p. 372). The scale is composed of various semantic differentials measuring components of source credibility relating to sincerity and honesty (Bruner, 2009).

We perform a factor analysis on the outcomes of both cases (disclosure versus no disclosure), to prove that this scale is one-dimensional. A factor analysis is a tool to investigate whether several elements of interest are linearly related to a smaller number of unobservable factors (Tryfos, 1997).

		Disclosure	**No disclosure**
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index		0,932	0,961
Bartlett sphericity test	χ^2	3820,72	5543,63
	significance	0,000	0,000
Total explained variance by one factor		59,91%	70,22%
Cronbach's alpha		0,935	0,964

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index (KMO-index) and the Bartlett sphericity test analyse whether a factor analysis can be undertaken. The KMO-index measures the sampling adequacy quality. In both cases, the analysis is very good, as this index should be comprised between 0 and 1 and > 0,5 to make sense. The Bartlett test tells us that the correlations between the items

are sufficient to do a factor analysis. Again, this value is significant in both cases, so we can continue the factor analysis.

In both cases, the total explained variance tells us that there is only one latent dimension that can be extracted from this multiple item scale of credibility. In the case of disclosure, the total explained variance is 59,91%. We can conclude out of this value that with only one dimension we summarize 59,91% of the content in our data, which is sufficiently good. When there is no disclosure, this percentage is 70,22%, which again means that the scale is one-dimensional.

We can conclude that our scale is reliable if Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0,70. Thus, in both cases, we have a very reliable one-dimensional scale.

Table 17 provides the averages on a Likert-scale from 1 to 7 of the questionnaire.

	Sponsorship Disclosure	***difference***	**No sponsorship disclosure**	
Insincere	4,87	*1,76*	3,11	**Sincere**
Dishonest	5,00	*1,90*	3,10	**Honest**
Not dependable	4,27	*1,04*	3,23	**Dependable**
Not trustworthy	4,20	*0,98*	3,21	**Trustworthy**
Not credible	4,13	*0,76*	3,37	**Credible**
Not believable	4,02	*0,32*	3,35	**Believable**
Biased	3,51	*0,67*	3,20	**Not biased**
Disreputable	4,50	*0,70*	3,79	**Reputable**
Unreliable	4,18	*0,79*	3,39	**Reliable**
Untruthful	4,16	*0,98*	3,18	**Truthful**
Unconvincing	4,13	*0,54*	3,58	**Convincing**
Not at all expert	3,84	*0,29*	3,54	**Expert**
Not true	4,16	*0,79*	3,37	**True**
SUM	54,96	*11,53*	43,43	**SUM**
MEAN	4,23	*0,89*	3,34	**MEAN**

Table 17 - Credibility

We test the difference between two means of two samples when samples are depended (paired).

$$\begin{cases} H_0: \mu_d - \mu_{nd} = 0 \\ H_1: \mu_d - \mu_{nd} > 0 \end{cases}$$

With "d": average of measurements of all individuals if sponsorship disclosure, and "nd": average of measurements of all individuals if no sponsorship disclosure.

The average difference ($\bar{d}$) between the two samples is 4,23 – 3,34 = 0,89.

$$S'_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (d_i - \bar{d})^2}{n - 1}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad S'_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{424} (d_i - \bar{d})^2}{424 - 1}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad S'_d = 1{,}89132$$

$$t_{obs} = \frac{\bar{d} - 0}{S'_d / \sqrt{n}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \frac{0{,}89}{1{,}89132 / \sqrt{424}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad 9{,}68965$$

with $\alpha = 0{,}05$, we obtain a t_{critic} of 1,96559, following the Student-law with 423 (n - 1) degrees of freedom.

As t_{obs} belongs to the critical zone ($t_{obs} > t_{critic}$), we reject H_0.

This test is significative at 0,000. At $\alpha = 0{,}05$, we conclude that the credibility towards a SI disclosing sponsorship is higher than towards a SI not disclosing sponsorship. **Thus, H_{5b} is verified.**

H_{5c}) A minority of young Belgian women confirms that disclosure influences positively their purchase intentions.

We focus on the following statement within question 16 to analyse this hypothesis:

"I would rather buy a lifestyle product recommended by a SI that reveals her collaboration with a brand."

I absolutely do not agree		**I do not agree**		**Neutral**		**I agree**		**I absolutely agree**	
37	8,73%	52	12,26%	122	28,77%	163	38,44%	50	11,79%

To test this hypothesis, we execute a minority-test (or comparison to a standard (0,5)). Women that respond "I agree" or "I absolutely agree" on this question (50,23%) think that disclosure is important when they consider buying a product recommended by that SI.

$$\begin{cases} H_0: p = 0{,}5 \\ H_1: p < 0{,}5 \end{cases}$$

The statistical minority level for this fifth hypothesis, considering our sample size of 424 and a risk of error rate of 5% equals:

$$b = p_0 - t_\alpha \sqrt{\left[\frac{p_0(1 - p_0)}{n}\right]} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad b = 0{,}5 - 1{,}645 * \sqrt{\left[\frac{0{,}5* (1 - 0{,}5)}{424}\right]} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad b = 0{,}4601$$

$$f = 0{,}5023 \quad \leftrightarrow \quad b = 0{,}4601 \quad \rightarrow \quad f > b$$

H_{5c} is not verified. Thus, we cannot say that the minority of young Belgian women confirms that disclosure influences positively their purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 6. Persuasion Attempt (Brand / SI)

H_6) A picture that is posted by a SI is less perceived as a persuasion attempt compared to a picture posted by a brand.

To analyse this hypothesis, we focus on questions 10 and 11. In question 10, the participant is exposed to a picture posted by a SI, in which she advertises a specific watch of a specific brand. In question 11, we see a picture of that same watch, but posted on Instagram by the brand itself. For each picture, we ask the respondent whether she thinks the picture is a persuasion attempt to buy that watch.

	I absolutely do not agree		**I do not agree**		**Neutral**		**I agree**		**I absolutely agree**	
Picture of SI	22	5,19%	111	26,18%	70	16,51%	153	36,08%	68	16,04%
Picture of brand	3	0,71%	7	1,65%	16	3,77%	125	29,48%	273	64,39%

We remark that only 52,12% is aware of the persuasion attempt in the picture of the SI, and that 31,37% does not agree with this picture containing a persuasion attempt. 93,87% of the respondents agrees with the picture of the brand being a persuasion attempt, and only 2,36% does not agree.

We execute a comparison of two means-test on two dependent samples.

$$\begin{cases} H_0: \mu_{SI} - \mu_{brand} = 0 \\ H_1: \mu_{SI} - \mu_{brand} < 0 \end{cases}$$

With "brand": percentage of respondents that agrees with the picture of the brand being a persuasion attempt, and "SI": percentage of respondents that agrees with the picture of the SI being a persuasion attempt.

The statistics of the Likert-scales of both situations are:

	Mean	**Standard deviation**
Picture SI	3,32	1,173
Picture brand	4,55	0,713

The average difference ($\bar{d}$) between the two samples is 3,32 - 4,55 = -1,23

$$S'_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (d_i - \bar{d})^2}{n - 1}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad S'_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{424} (d_i - \bar{d})^2}{424 - 1}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad S'_d = 1{,}318$$

$$t_{obs} = \frac{\bar{d} - 0}{S'_d / \sqrt{n}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \frac{-1{,}23}{1{,}318 / \sqrt{424}} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad -19{,}313$$

with $\alpha = 0{,}05$, we obtain a t_{critic} of -1,96559, following the Student-law with 423 (n - 1) degrees of freedom.

As t_{obs} belongs to the critical zone ($t_{obs} < t_{critic}$), we reject H_0.

This test is significative at 0,000. **H_6 is verified**: A picture that is posted by a SI is less perceived as a persuasion attempt compared to a picture posted by a brand.

IV. Conclusion of the quantitative part

Now that the analysis of the quantitative phase has ended, we observe some interesting, and sometimes surprising outcomes.

Six of our eleven hypotheses have been confirmed by the quantitative research, namely H_{2a}, H_3, H_{4a}, H_{4b}, H_{5b} and H_6.

The topic of the first hypothesis is measuring the actual influence of SIs on Instagram on young Belgian women's buying behaviour of lifestyle products. The sub-hypotheses of H_2 concentrate on the most impacted phase of the 5-stage Decision Making Model by Influencer Marketing. Subsequently, H_3 examines which lifestyle-category is considered most by young Belgian women when following SIs on Instagram. The fourth hypothesis examines the link between preference on brand information and purchase intention. Through the group H_5 sub-hypotheses, we consider persuasion attempt and disclosure, and the effect on credibility towards the SI. The last hypothesis compares the awareness of a persuasion attempt in a picture of a SI with a picture posted by the brand itself.

Our research was not able to prove that the majority of young Belgian women perceive their buying behaviour as influenced by SIs on Instagram, as only 40,1% admits being aware of this influence. But we realize that "being influenced" is a rather unconscious process, thus somehow it makes sense that this percentage is rather low. This topic has been examined through the first hypothesis. It is also not easy to "admit" that your behaviour is influenced. The fact that 46,70% believes the buying behaviour of their peers is more impacted than theirs, strengthens this presumption.

Although we had reasons to believe that the majority of young Belgian women cannot distinguish a sponsored picture of a non-sponsored picture, we were not able to prove this through the fifth hypothesis. 58,92% of the respondents were able to reveal the sponsorship in the pictures. Nevertheless, we notice revealing remains difficult, as 72,13% chose a "probable"-decision: this percentage indicated not being certain of their answer.

Through Hypothesis 3, we proved that advertising fashion clothes and accessories is especially efficient when it comes to collaborating with SIs: more than 80% of the respondents indicated this. This is followed by cosmetics and travelling as other lifestyle-categories that have been found important when following a SI on Instagram.

Although we did not prove that the majority of young Belgian women think their buying behaviour is influenced by SIs, we discovered one phase of the 5-Stage Decision Making model being significantly impacted. This paradox might address the unconsciousness of the influence. The only phase that is clearly impacted, is the first: "Recognition of need". This second hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that 68,16% of the participants mention SIs on Instagram being one of their sources to follow lifestyle trends, which is part of the first hypothesis. We have no proof that any other phase of this model is significantly impacted.

We examined the credibility a young Belgian woman accords towards SIs, through hypothesis 5b. We have proven that the credibility towards a SI is higher when she discloses her collaboration with a brand. It seems that they prefer honesty, as 58,92% of the respondents is aware of the sponsorship when there is no sponsorship disclosure.

We proved through Hypothesis 6 that a picture posted on Instagram by a brand is perceived more as a persuasion attempt than a picture of a product of that same brand posted by a SI.

To end this conclusion, we present the outcome of H_4, as this hypothesis has also been statistically verified. We have proven that when a young Belgian woman prefers to see a picture of a post of a SI promoting a brand on her Instagram feed (over the same product of the brand posted by the brand itself), her purchase intention is also more influenced by that same post, and vice-versa. 60,61% chose the same picture that arouses the highest purchase intention, as the picture she preferred to see.

CONCLUSION

I. General conclusion – implications

The goal of this research was to determine how the consumer purchase behaviour of young Belgian women is affected by SIs on Instagram, considering lifestyle-products. We did this with the help of the 5-Stage Decision Making Model, as we examined which phase of this model is affected most, and in which situation. Additionally, we studied in what measure a young Belgian woman perceives her consumer purchase behaviour being influenced by SIs on Instagram, and whether she thinks her peers' behaviour is more impacted than hers. Next to that, knowing which lifestyle-category is considered most when following SIs on Instagram, might be an interesting piece of information for a lot of lifestyle-companies.

Moreover, we studied their attitude towards these SIs. One of our objectives was researching whether a young Belgian woman's credibility towards a SI changes if this last one discloses her collaboration with a brand. Another goal was studying the rate of young Belgian women that can recognize a sponsored picture, when there is no sponsorship disclosure.

The literature review provided theoretical fundaments and interesting theories regarding this topic. During the qualitative phase, we were able to compare these theoretical findings with practical opinions of potential consumers. We did not limit our qualitative phase to the target segment of this thesis. In fact, we interviewed experts in this domain, as we discussed our main questions with SIs and companies using Influencer Marketing. Combining their information lead to the construction of eleven sub-hypotheses, grouped into six main hypotheses. These have been tested through a quantitative phase, using a survey that has been shared on social media, where we reached both Flemish and Walloon young women.

Belgium counts more than 1,2 million Instagram members, of which 60% daily active users. Their average age is 22 years and 58% of the Belgian members are women (CIM and MediaEdge MEC, 2016, in Jean, 2017). We discovered during our research that 96,46% consults SIs on Instagram, of which 50,71% "often" to "each time when they connect to their Instagram account". This means that SIs on Instagram can reach a huge number of young Belgian women, which creates numerous possibilities for companies operating in specific sectors wanting to do Marketing on social media.

We observe that obtaining inspiration on new brands and finding ideas on products to buy, are the most important reasons related to the 5-Stage Decision Making model when it comes to following SIs on Instagram. We think, and we can also find reasons to believe this in our literature review; this might be especially interesting for new brands, wanting to introduce themselves to their target audience: young Belgian women, interested in lifestyle-products. Using Influencer Marketing thus is interesting when companies want to reach those that try to ban advertisements of their Instagram: the product eventually finds its way to them through the SI. And even though she does not feel "influenced" and does not perceive the advertisement actually as being an advertisement, the young Belgian woman is exposed to the product; sees the products; receives new ideas and inspiration. If a company has a small reach on Instagram, they should consider using Influencer Marketing: they reach a greater and more targeted audience, and the advertisement "tastes" less as an advertisement, in the mouth of the spectators. We proved this with our sixth hypothesis.

We proved through the third hypothesis that Influencer Marketing through Instagram to reach young Belgian women, is especially interesting for fashion-related companies. Although, it might also be interesting for cosmetics-companies.

When a company collaborates with a SI on Instagram, we advise making sure the SI reveals the collaboration. Young Belgian women are aware of the collaboration in most cases, so why would the SI not disclose the sponsorship? We prove this through H_{5a}. H_{5b} confirms that the audience accords more credibility to the SI when she discloses the sponsorship, which might lead to more effective campaigns. Additionally, this might become obligatory, as the Federal Public Service of Economy already drew up guidelines concerning this topic.

II. Limits and further research areas

Although this study reached most of its aims, we encountered a couple of unavoidable shortcomings.

One of the most important limits of this work is due to language differences. During the qualitative research, we only considered Flemish influencers, a Flemish company, and Flemish potential consumers. We did this because it was more convenient to reach Flemish respondents. During the quantitative phase, our respondents were 60% Walloon and 40% Flemish. Thus, the Walloon share in the quantitative research is larger. Knowing there are numerous non-marginal cultural and mentality differences between Wallonia and Flanders, it might be questioned whether the hypotheses drawn up based on the "Flemish" qualitative phase, are representative for the whole Belgian target population. Next to this issue, language complicated other parts of this thesis. For instance, when translating the quantitative survey from French to Flemish, we encountered some problems. Sometimes, even when the translation is correct, a word can have a slightly different meaning, and can be interpreted differently in Dutch than in French and vice-versa. This, again, might bias some outcomes.

The selection of the interviewees during the qualitative research was not random. We explained that this is not a problem, but we did select the girls in function of their active Instagram use, and knowing they follow SIs on Instagram. This must be done in a qualitative phase since we want people to speak thoroughly about the subject. The fact that our quantitative research is more at random, makes that we cannot select the girls on their active Instagram use. Some outcomes of the quantitative research are not in line with the hypotheses drawn up out of the qualitative research: this might be one of the reasons why. Adding a question to explore how active they are on Instagram in the quantitative survey, would have provided more detailed information.

During the interviewing of the potential consumers, we discussed several times the 5-Stage Decision Making Model. Even though we know the five steps of this model are executed unconsciously by the interviewees, we did try to discuss the behaviour of which they are aware. But in most cases, they cannot be aware of this behaviour, so discussing this is in fact not completely possible. Next to that, during the analysis of the survey results, we observed a significant difference with the qualitative phase when it comes to the influence a Belgian woman perceives on her purchase behaviour. The majority of women claim not to be influenced by SIs on Instagram. But we have reasons to believe that these women are more

influenced than they perceive to be. We believe other quantitative methods could be interesting to test this matter again, in the future. Experimental methods, controlling the social desirability-issue that we might encounter through our questionnaire.

Another limit is linked to the professional status distribution of the quantitative research. Almost 76% of the respondents are students. This is not surprising, as almost all women between 18 and 29 in our network are students. A sample representing a larger share of employees would have been interesting, as people who earn a fixed wage might have a different purchase behaviour. We can derive that conclusion out of the qualitative interviews.

We also investigate interesting tracks for future research. During the qualitative phase, we interviewed eight SIs. Their number of followers on Instagram fluctuates between 8 000 and almost 100 000 followers. We did not make a distinction between so-called "Mirco-influencers"[9] and "Macro-influencers". Examining differences in their influence on consumer behaviour could be interesting.

Additionally, as the Federal Public Service of Economy of Belgium recently proposed guidelines regarding this topic, it might be interesting to follow this up. Once these guidelines become official laws, this might affect Influencer Marketing, on all social media platforms.

[9] Not to be confused with "Microcelebrities".

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