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Comparative analysis of the influences of peers and social media influencers on the purchase intention of generation Z

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ABSTRACT

This master thesis aims to compare peers' and social media influencers' (SMIs) impacts on generation Z purchase intention. In a few years, this generation born between 1995-2010 will have the highest purchasing power. Therefore, it is important to understand those digital natives, who influences their purchasing decisions and how.

The literature review of this work focuses on the influence of these two actors. After analyzing existing research, three axes to compare peers and influencers were identified: type of influence (normative and informational influence), type of product (search and experience goods) and personal characteristics (expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness). Several hypotheses based on these axes of comparison were tested using a quantitative study. 221 girls from generation Z participated in the study which was conducted in April 2021. The collected data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics tool. It came out of the interpretation of the results that peers exert a higher informational influence than SMIs. However, there is no significant difference for normative influence. It was also observed that the informational influence is the dominant influence of both actors. Concerning the type of product, peers' informational influence is higher for experience goods. The same was observed for SMIs but in a marginal way. About personal characteristics, informational influence is affected by the person's trustworthiness and expertise. Normative influence is only partially impacted by expertise. It was further noted that SMIs are perceived as having more expertise and peers as being more trustworthy.

Abbreviations:

SMIs	Social Media Influencers
eWOM	Electronic word-of-mouth
PI	Purchase intention
PCA	Principal components analysis
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

Keywords:

Interpersonal influence, peer influence, reference group, purchase intention, SMIs, influencer marketing, eWOM, parasocial relationship, generation Z.

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Table of contents

List of tables

List of figures

List of attachments

Introduction

Who has never bought a good because a friend recommended it or because an influencer promoted it on social media? Most people from my generation will have to admit they already have. The subject of this thesis was inspired by a personal observation. I realized that many of my friends and family members were making purchases because of the influence of a close friend or a social media influencer. In fact, I have to admit I am also under the influence of the latter since I already bought several clothes, shoes and cosmetics because of them. This gave me the envy to study those two actors and understand how they influence people and how this influence can differ based on several factors.

Both peers and SMIs seem to have a deep impact on the purchase intention of my generation, the generation Z. This generation will soon outweigh Millennials as the largest generation on Earth (Gomez, Mawhinney, & Betts, 2019), they are already over 2.4 billion (Facebook IQ, 2019). They are the future of retail and will have huge purchasing power by 2026 (Business Insider, 2021). But who are they? There are several definitions of generation Z, but for this thesis McKinsey's definition will be used. Generation Z members are born between 1995 and 2010 (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In 2021, most of them are adolescents and the older are young adults. Gen Zers are digital natives and spend over 70% of their free time online. Yet, about a third of them tend to adopt means to avoid ads. Thus, an efficient strategy to reach Gen Zers is through influencer marketing (Kolsquare, 2020; Lou & Kim, 2019). However, the members of this generation, alike the older ones, still mainly seem to trust peers, their close friends, when it comes to purchase decisions (MarketingCharts, 2018). Yet, some studies show that the influencers' impact is higher for generation Z than other generations (MarketingCharts, 2018; Stackla, 2018). Indeed, adolescent social media users treat their relationships with influencers more like friendship rather than fanship (O'Neil-Hart and Blumenstein, 2016). Gen Zers therefore both rely on real friends but also on "virtual" friends.

In order to benefit from the members of this important generation, it is crucial for brands and retailers to understand their behavior, how they differ from previous generations and

start establishing a relationship with them (Facebook IQ, 2019). And this includes understanding how two important actors affect their purchase decisions, namely their real friends, peers, and their "virtual" friends, SMIs.
This thesis will help by conducting a comparative analysis of SMIs' and peers' influences on the purchase intention of generation Z. The purpose is to analyze what type of influence those two actors exert on Gen Zers and how this influence varies depending on the context and personal characteristics.

In order to realize this comparison and draw insightful conclusions, this thesis will be divided into two main parts: the literature review and the empirical study. Firstly, by analyzing existing studies on peers' and SMIs' influences, a thorough understanding of the subjects will be gained and clear axes for the comparison of influences will be defined. Then, thanks to the empirical study, several hypotheses will be tested which will help to understand what kind of influence peers and SMIs exert on generation Z and how this influence differs depending on several factors. The method to collect the data will be exposed and the results will be explained and interpreted. Based on those, conclusions and recommendations will be drawn, followed by the limits of those findings and suggestions for further research.

PART I: Literature review

Nowadays, thanks to the development of social media, the number of interactions people can have has increased. Indeed, besides their real friends, adolescents and young adults also interact with influencers, who they sometimes define as their "online friends". It is thus interesting to compare those two types of "friends" and see who has the most impact on purchase intention through attitude and recommendations.

The literature review will start with the real friends, or peers, whose influence is clearly not new and therefore has been studied for a long time and by many scholars. After having thoroughly explored existing literature about peer influence, the influencers will be addressed in the next chapter.

The concept of influencer is not that recent and actually derives from the notion of opinion leader. However, the influencers who are the focus of this thesis, the social media influencers, emerged with social media such as Facebook and Instagram, and are therefore still new in the literature. The papers used are thus really recent and the impact of influencer marketing is still not fully understood due to the recency of this marketing strategy.

Once the two key concepts of this thesis will have been addressed, the next chapter will go on with a comparison between peers' and influencers' impacts on purchase intention. This section will focus on studies that concern both peers and influencers. However, since no papers clearly studying that subject could be found, only some related research will be presented. Furthermore, to fill this gap of literature, some non-scientific surveys will be introduced. Moreover, the point of view of influencers will also be exposed.

Finally, a conclusion of what was learned thanks to the literature review will be done.

1. Peers' influence

The literature review will start with an overview of previous studies about peers' influence. It is divided into two main axes.

Firstly, the focus will be on peers. A definition will be given to make sure readers clearly know what is implied by this term. Since no studies focusing on the impact of peers on Gen Zers were found, studies examining the role of peers during adolescence will be used. Indeed, a consequent part of Gen Zers are currently adolescents, it is therefore more

relevant to review research on teenagers than adults. Once it is done, the concept of peers as a reference group will be introduced. The second focus of this chapter is interpersonal influence. This influence will be defined and its subtypes will be detailed. Then, the impact of peers on purchase intention will be explained, followed by the different factors that can alter this influence such as individual characteristics and product conspicuousness.

1.1. Peers

1.1.1. Definition

The term "peers" relates to a group of people who are acquainted with each other, have common knowledge and experiences. Those members usually compare to one another and serve as a reference to each other (Niu, 2013).

Peers can be seen as a small band of people who regularly interact with each other. Basically, someone's peers are his or her closest friends (Opoku, 2012; Ryan, 2001).

As cited by Niu (2013, p.1231): "…"equalness" defines a peer group, whose members share a similar age, learning ability, social status, and possibly living environment".

Research conducted by Ryan (2001) showed that students listed between four and eight friends in their peer group. Another research found an average of four to five friends (Urberg, Değirmencioğlu, & Pilgrim, 1997).

For the purpose of this study, peers will be referred to as an individual's close friends from the same generation, whom to interact with and to use as a reference.

1.1.2. Role during adolescence

Adolescence is an essential phase during which individuals develop their social identity. During that period, peer groups play an important role in psychological development and teenagers can highly be impacted by peer influence (Gentina & Bonsu, 2013; Huang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). Most research indicates that as children grow up, they rely more and more on their peers and gain autonomy from their family. During adolescence, peer interactions are closer, more intense and influential than during childhood (Ryan, 2001). Those peers with whom teenagers share beliefs and attitudes thus have an increasing influence (Armağan & Çetin, 2013; Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010; Niu, 2013). For teens

at high school age, peers' purchase influence even outweighs parents' one (Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010).

Consumers tend to converse about products and services with their friends. Most adolescents indeed share personal confidences with their peers and receive product information from them. Because the approval of their peers matters, teenagers' preferences are influenced by peers during their purchase. They also like to get advice from their friends in order to buy the best product. Many adolescents further appreciate to shop with their friends (Armağan & Çetin, 2013; Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004).

As it was explained, teenagers are often sensitive to peer pressure and tend to develop behaviors in order to comply with their peers' expectations (Gillani, 2012). Teenagers indeed seek a good position in the peer group, which explains why they may conform to some group norms and accept advice from friends. This behavior reinforces their social identity and sense of belonging (Gentina & Bonsu, 2013; Mangleburg et al., 2004). When someone fears not being accepted in a group, peers can be more influential and perceived as knowing more about products (Johnson & Jennifer, 2015).

Previous literature has thus shown that peers play an important role in the adolescent development and can shape values and behaviors. This influence impacts the teens' preferences and therefore their purchase decisions. A peer group is consequently a kind of reference group, to which individuals compare themselves and by which they are influenced.

1.1.3. Reference groups

A reference group can be defined as "a person or group of people that significantly influences an individual's behavior" (Bearden & Etzel, 1982, p. 184). On a marketing and consumer behavior point of view, that group can impact which products and brands people choose to consume. Consequently, advertisers have used reference groups' power by showing products consumed in socially pleasant situations, using attractive people to endorse products or using obvious group members as spokesperson in advertisement. Reference groups are indeed believed to expose people to behavior and lifestyle, contribute to the formation of opinions and values and generate pressure for conformity (Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

The concept of reference group must be specified and divided into comparative and normative reference groups.

On the one hand, **normative reference groups** include parents, teachers and peers with whom the person interacts. This explains why they are also called socially proximal referents. Those people influence values, norms and attitude (Childers & Rao, 1992). On a consumer behavior side, normative reference groups make individuals aware of some products and infuse their own opinion to the consumer. While doing so, they will impact the consumer's opinion about the product. Normative referents further influence product selection, information processing and decision-making (Gillani, 2012).

On the other hand, socially distant referents or **comparative reference groups** refer to sports heroes or entertainment figures to whom individuals aspire but with whom no interaction occurs (Childers & Rao, 1992).

According to Bearden and Etzel (1982), influence requires the opportunity for social interaction or public scrutiny of behavior. Socially proximal reference groups allow a lot of interaction in contrary with socially distant ones. However, those do provide significant opportunities for scrutiny of public behavior. By consequence, different types of referents are likely to exert different influences based on how observable the consumption is.

The various types of influences and the variation of their impacts will be further investigated in the next chapters.

1.2. Interpersonal influence

1.2.1. Definition

An important determinant of an individual's behavior is the others' influence. According to Clark and Goldsmith (2006), social or interpersonal influence is the group pressure to conform. During adolescence, most of this influence is exerted by peers.

Consumer behavior cannot be thoroughly understood if the effects of interpersonal influence on norms, attitude and behavior are overlooked (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). It affects brand preference, product evaluation and buying decisions. Advertisers thus often try to incorporate interpersonal influence into their ads (Clark & Goldsmith, 2006).

Bearden et al. (1989) recognize two main types of interpersonal influences, which will be detailed in the next section.

1.2.2. Normative and informational influences

The two dominant influences studied by Bearden et al. (1989) are the normative and informational ones. The definitions used are the ones elaborated by Deutsch and Gerard (1955).

On the one side, **normative influence** is the tendency to conform to others' expectations. Further consumer research has separated normative influence into:

- Value expressive influence: occurs when an individual wishes to enhance self-image by association with a reference group. It operates through the process of identification.
- And utilitarian influence: happens when a person complies with others' expectations to achieve a reward or avoid punishment. It works through compliance.

However, Bearden et al. (1989) demonstrated in their study that utilitarian and value-expressive influences are not easily distinguished empirically and could therefore be joined under the normative influence label.

On the other side, **informational influence** is the tendency to accept information from others as evidence about the reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Individuals may search for information from knowledgeable, credible, or highly experienced people or else make inferences based on the observation of others' behaviors. This information will help the person to make a decision, especially under uncertainty (Bearden et al., 1989; Opoku, 2012). According to Park and Lessig (1977), informational influence is internalized if it improves the individual's knowledge of his or her environment or ability to deal with it, like buying a product. The more the source is perceived as credible, the more its information will be internalized.

1.2.3. Peers' influence on purchase intention

Given that peers are an important influence on teens, the latter can be susceptible to both kinds of influences during their shopping. Peers can therefore influence individuals' purchase intention (PI), which is their plan to buy a product or service.

Teens can firstly be influenced because peers may provide information to them. In fact, teenagers may be susceptible to informational influence from friends thought to possess knowledge about products, brands, stores, and other marketing phenomena (Mangleburg et al., 2004). Teens could copy their friend's purchase not for conformity but because they perceive the peer's choice as the best one due to his or her expertise (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Teens may also change their purchase depending on their friend's advice (Mangleburg et al., 2004). Some research conducted by Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) indeed shows that when people observe others evaluating a product positively, they perceive the product more favorably themselves than they would have without this observation.

Furthermore, adolescents could be sensitive to normative influence because desirable behaviors are rewarded, and it helps the teen to construct a positive self-identity. The individual may therefore buy specific products that are approved by his or her peers to impress others or simply to be accepted (Mangleburg et al., 2004).

Studies agree to say that both influences impact shopping behavior. However, Mangleburg et al. (2004) argue that teens are more affected by informational influence from friends rather than normative influence during their shopping. This would mean that teenagers are more influenced by the information they receive rather than the peer pressure to conform. Mascarenhas and Higby (1993) support that informative messages are more impactful than normative ones. Another research conducted by Goodrich and Mangleburg (2010) agrees as well. Indeed, peer expert power, which can be associated to informational influence, has higher ratings than other powers like reward or coercive ones.

By contrast, the study conducted by Opoku (2012) showed that mean scores for normative influence were higher than for informational one. This means that normative influence has a higher impact on purchase decisions. This could be explained by the fact

that we are in an information age where many other sources can be used to get information about products.

1.2.4. Impact of individual characteristics

Individuals differ in their susceptibility to interpersonal influence.
People with low self-esteem tend to comply with others' advice to avoid social disapproval. People with low interpersonal confidence are also more susceptible to interpersonal influence (Bearden et al., 1989). Peers are more influential if the person fears that he or she will not be accepted in the group (Johnson & Jennifer, 2015).
Deutsch and Gerard (1955) asserted that the more hesitant the individual is about the exactness of his or her evaluation of the product, the more likely he or she will be susceptible to interpersonal influence.
Huang et al. (2012) develop how attachment impacts the strength of peer influence. Namely, attachment avoidant adolescents are less likely to shop often with friends and have lower motivation to comply with friends in purchase. That can be explained by their preference for emotional distance and their compulsive self-reliance. Conversely, attachment anxiety increases peer influence on consumer behavior. Those people believe that friends have greater knowledge about products and brands than themselves, and tend to spend more money when shopping with friends. The reason behind those results is that people high on attachment anxiety are characterized by negative self-appraisals, compulsive need for closeness, and fear of rejection.

The degree of interpersonal influence somebody has over a peer can in addition be impacted by the type of friendship. Depending on the number of friendship groups an individual is part of, the influence of the peers will vary. Besides, the extent to which the person identifies with his or her peer network may also change the influence (Mack, Strong, Kowalski, & Crocker, 2007). The social network position also matters. People who are well connected to other members in their peer network are predisposed to receive more advice and of better quality, so they are more open and receptive to peer influence (Gentina & Bonsu, 2013).

Another determinant of the influence of peers is culture. Researchers believe that collectivistic cultures such as those in Asian countries emphasize conformity to group norms and social acceptance. Thus, people from a collectivist culture are expected to be more influenced by their reference group or peers.
However, it was found out by several studies that the mean scores of peer influence are higher in the United States, an individualistic society, than in Thailand or China, which are collectivistic societies. The influence of culture is therefore not clear (Opoku, 2012).

Gender could also impact interpersonal influence. A study conducted by Johnson and Jennifer (2015) revealed that the impact of peers did not vary significantly depending on the gender. Yet, Gentina and Bonsu (2013) argue that women tend to be other-oriented and grant more importance to be part of a peer group, interconnected to friends. They consequently pay more attention to others' opinion and prefer to shop with friends compared to men.

A last characteristic to take into account is the age. The results of the studies conducted by Mangleburg et al. (2004) and Mascarenhas and Higby (1993) show that the age has a significant negative effect on teens' sensitivity to interpersonal influence, early adolescents being more sensitive to peer influence than late ones. Moreover, it was proven that students are more susceptible to peer influence than house-wives. This can partly be explained by the difference in age. In fact, younger people can less easily deal with uncertainty and risk than more mature individuals (Park & Lessig, 1977).
However, the research conducted by Johnson and Jennifer (2015) reports no significant difference in age.
The study conducted by Bachmann, John, and Rao (1993) reveals that the link between age and peer influence is actually quite complex. Peer group purchase influence actually emerges as children progress through their elementary school years (from 6-8 y/o). As children move from early childhood to adolescence, what changes is that teens are aware that peer groups are an important influence for some products, but irrelevant for others. Typically, teenagers will be more influenced for conspicuous products.

1.2.5. Impact of product conspicuousness

It was proven by several studies that the degree of interpersonal influence varies depending on the product conspicuousness (Bachmann et al., 1993; Childers & Rao, 1992; Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010; Makgosa & Mohube, 2007; Opoku, 2012). That term can be defined by the extent to which a product stands out or is noticeable by consumers (Opoku, 2012). The purchase decision linked to a product which is more discussed with peers or which is observable when consumed should be more influenced by reference groups (Childers & Rao, 1992).

Conspicuousness can be depicted by a function of two dimensions. The first describes whether the product is a luxury versus a necessity. Because luxuries are not owned by many people, they tend to be more conspicuous.

The second dimension is concerned by whether the product is used in private or public. Products of public use are more noticeable by other consumers. Those two dimensions lead to four categories of products: public luxuries, public necessities, private luxuries and private necessities (Opoku, 2012).

It was hypothesized that the purchase of luxuries will be more impacted by peer groups than necessities. Further, publicly consumed goods should also be more influenced by peers than privately consumed ones.

It was verified by many studies that publicly consumed luxuries are prone to more peer influence than privately consumed necessities (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992; Makgosa & Mohube, 2007; Opoku, 2012). This influence is both on product and brand decisions.

To sum up, most of the time a luxury-necessity effect does exist, more for product than brand decisions. That is, people are often more impacted by peers when it concerns a luxurious, exclusive product. About the public-private effect, it does also impact peer influence, but in a stronger way for brand decisions. Indeed, products consumed in public tend to be more influenced by peers.

To conclude, the more a product is conspicuous, the more its purchase will be influenced by peers.

2. Influencers' influence

Before deep diving into the topic of influencer marketing, it is worth recalling how the media landscape has evolved lately.

A few decades ago, marketers used traditional push media such as television, radio, newspapers or billboards. Consumers had less choice about what they wanted to watch or read and it was a major challenge for ordinary people to spread their influence outside their local communities. In fact, back then, there were three key obstacles to become famous and reach a large audience:

1. It was expensive to produce and promote content
2. Specialized knowledge and expertise was needed to create content
3. The approval of industry gatekeepers was required to promote content

Therefore, the only influencers used by marketers at that time were celebrities such as movie stars (Backaler & Shankman, 2018; Kervyn, 2020). Thus, the initial form of influencer marketing was celebrity endorsement (Newberry, 2019).

Thanks to technological advances, the emergence of connected devices like smartphones and the development of social media, these barriers fell down. Anyone can now access a large community thanks to social media and the content creation became more accessible and affordable thanks to new devices and freelancers marketplaces.

This paved the way to new influencers, ordinary people who share content about their passion and expertise with their audience via the internet, called social media influencers. Thus, influencer marketing is no longer limited to celebrity endorsements. Mainstream celebrities are still being used but thanks to SMIs, brands have new ways to communicate with their target audience. Because these new SMIs are being more accessible to brands, the use of influencer marketing boomed this decade (Backaler & Shankman, 2018; Chetioui, Benlafqih, & Lebdaoui, 2020; Décaudin & Fueyo, 2016; Newberry, 2019). According to Hubspot blog, 57% of marketers devoted a part of their budget to influencer marketing in 2019, and 92% of professionals consider it is an efficient marketing strategy (Dahmani, 2019).

Consequently, since influencer marketing has become so trendy, it is being studied by many scholars recently. For this literature review, three axes will be explored:

First, some explanations about the concept of influencer marketing and its main consequence, electronic-word-of-mouth, will be given.
Secondly, some words about influencers and their community, who are essential for influencer marketing, will be presented. The unique relationship between them will also be addressed.
Finally, the various factors that can affect the influencers' impact will be examined. Those are mainly the influencer's and follower's personalities but some external factors will also be considered.

2.1. Influencer marketing and its consequences

2.1.1. Definition and advantages of influencer marketing

Influencer marketing essentially consists of identifying influencers in a target audience and encouraging them to use their position to promote a product, service or brand. Practically, influencer marketing nowadays can be seen as win-win partnerships between brands and influencers: SMIs create content and share it with their community, which makes it trendy and increases sales. In return, they receive remuneration, coupons, or free products from the brand (Bolstad & Høili, 2019; Draganova, 2018; Jaakonmäki, Müller, & Brocke, 2017; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019; Pashaei, 2020; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020).
Today, the most commonly used influencers are SMIs, about whom more information is provided in section 2.2.2 and the most used platform is Instagram (Newberry, 2019).
There are three main advantages of influencer marketing which allows it to have such a positive impact on brand attitude and purchase intention.
First, it enables brands to spread the sponsored content across a targeted and engaged audience (Draganova, 2018; Kolarova, 2018). Influencer marketing helps businesses reach a quality of audience that cannot be reached by traditional media (Pashaei, 2020).
In addition, many brands are putting a lot of efforts into influencer marketing because it is more effective than traditional marketing tactics; the Return on Ad Spend would be eleven times higher (Dahmani, 2019). Consumers tend to trust brands less than they used to and are fed up with traditional interruption marketing techniques that prevent them from accessing free content. As a result, more and more people are using ad-blocking

software. Influencer marketing is one solution to counter that phenomenon (Ayush & Hrishi, 2019; Backaler & Shankman, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019). In fact, because the information is shared by the influencer rather than the brand, it looks more credible and authentic, leading to less resistance towards the message (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Décaudin & Fueyo, 2016; Draganova, 2018; Egertz, Almström, & Truong, 2019).

Finally, SMIs can reach many people thanks to their large audience and their influence can further cascade through their followers (De Veirman et al., 2017). As a result, influencer marketing drives more return on investment than any other form of digital marketing (Tapinfluence, 2020).

In order to benefit from influencer marketing and its positive impact on the brand and the sales, it is crucial for marketers to engage with communities and create positive word-of-mouth, and influencers are the key for this (Backaler & Shankman, 2018).

2.1.2. A type of electronic word-of-mouth strategy

Influencer marketing is a type of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) strategy, but it differs from traditional eWOM because marketers have more control and insight over the outcome of the influencer campaign (Chetioui et al., 2020). eWOM can be defined as any declaration made by a customer or potential one, about a good or a company, which is widely shared via the Internet (De Veirman et al., 2017; Pashaei, 2020). SMIs' recommendations can therefore be considered as eWOM.

eWOM plays an important role in forming people's attitude, it helps them to make purchase decision and also reduces the risk associated with the purchase (Pashaei, 2020). Since eWOM is more powerful than companies' advertising messages, it is crucial for organizations to generated positive eWOM about their products or services. One way to fasten and scale the power of eWOM is to connect with people who are at the heart of the conversation, namely influencers, to generate positive buzz. When people talk positively about a brand, they tend to value that brand more and it drives higher purchase intention, which leads to more sales (Chetioui et al., 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017; Draganova, 2018; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Pashaei, 2020).

The mechanism behind influencer marketing is based on the two-step flow communication model introduced by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955. SMIs indeed play an intermediary role in the communication of messages. They interpret and filter information that they receive and then share it with others, creating eWOM, which increases the influence of the message. The message is shared by news media, or brands to influencers (first step) and then by influencers to their audience (second step). This process is more effective than when brands or news media communicate directly with the audience because it generates much more eWOM (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Pashaei, 2020). Consumers prefer to hear the message from the customer's point of view (Pashaei, 2020).

In conclusion, influencer marketing is an effective eWOM strategy which can considerably improve people's attitude towards the brand and consequently increase their purchase intention. However, the main drawback of this strategy is the ability to spot the right opinion leader or influencer. If companies fail in selecting the influencers correctly, they could achieve completely opposite results and ruin their brand reputation (De Veirman et al., 2017). The next section will therefore focus on the heart of influencer marketing, namely the influencer and his or her community.

2.2. Social media influencers and their community

2.2.1. Emergence of social media and new opinion leaders

Before talking about SMIs, the term opinion leader should be introduced. Indeed, influencers are a kind of digital opinion leaders.

In marketing, an opinion leader can be defined as an attractive person, with physical, social and psychological qualities, who has credible knowledge about a category of products. In his or her field of expertise, this person can influence other people's choice of brand or product (Vernette, 2007).

Opinion leaders can further be described as individuals with a wide range of personal relationships who have a clear influential role and are publicly recognized by an important segment of people. They tend to be early adopters in markets and enjoy the

trust of others. They are indeed perceived by people in their environment as having good taste regarding buying decisions (Pashaei, 2020).

The emergence of social media and blogs in the 2000's such as Facebook or Instagram gave birth to a new type of opinion leaders. Some people became famous thanks to social media and the content and messages they shared with their community. It appears that they can influence their followers' attitude, making them a new type of digital opinion leaders, called the "social media influencers" (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández; Kolarova, 2018; J. A. Lee & Eastin, 2020; Pashaei, 2020; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020).
SMIs are a type of opinion leaders because their knowledge on some topics allows them to build a reputation of expert and therefore influence their followers' behavior (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020; J. A. Lee & Eastin, 2020). Thanks to their large following base, they can easily spread information and trends on social media (Kolarova, 2018). SMIs thus combine all opinion leaders' characteristics: they are authentic, knowledgeable, competent and can exert a powerful influence (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).
These digital opinion leaders will be further investigated in the next section dedicated to them.

2.2.2. Definition of social media influencers

Previous sections have already pointed out how influencer marketing has become so trendy and powerful these days. However, no broad explanation has been given about the people who make this marketing strategy that successful, the SMIs.
Social media influencers can be defined as content creators who have built a large audience of followers on social media, which allows them to share information quickly and effectively (De Veirman et al., 2017; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Kolarova, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019). An influencer is a third party who shapes the opinion and purchase behavior of others through social media or blog posts. (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020; Jaakonmäki et al., 2017; Jin et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020). They are indeed perceived as trustworthy trendsetters with desirable taste who deliver valuable information (De Veirman et al., 2017; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Many

people follow them and their recommendations not only because of their status or way of living, but mainly because of the knowledge they possess in specific fields (Draganova, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019).
SMIs often produce blogs, vlogs, pictures or short videos about their daily life, skills, opinions and recommendations based on their experience or expertise (Chetioui et al., 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017). Their success is highly dependent on the content they share online. If it is not well-received, they could lose the support of their community (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020).

Social media influencers should not be confused with celebrities, who are rather a different type of influencers and who are not the focus of this thesis. Traditional celebrities tend to refer to people who became famous thanks to their career, such as being an actress, a footballer etc. Also, their relationship with their fans seems mostly one-sided and non-reciprocal. In contrast, SMIs can be anyone, and they gained their reputation thanks to their social media content and the reciprocal connection they framed with their community (Draganova, 2018; Egertz et al., 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019). Nevertheless, the difference between SMIs and celebrities can sometimes be ambiguous as some macro-influencers actually become celebrities because millions of people follow them. One should keep in mind that the influencers discussed in this thesis are social media influencers, people who became famous due to their use of social media, either they have thousands or millions of followers.
SMIs are a unique type of micro-celebrity who experience both being famous and being "like us", ordinary people (Jin et al., 2019). This special status held by SMIs appears to be more influential than traditional celebrities thanks to SMIs' perceived authenticity and accessibility (Egertz et al., 2019; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Kolarova, 2018). Since they share personal aspects of their life, followers can more easily identify with them and believe them (De Veirman et al., 2017; Jin et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020).
The big advantage SMIs have compared to celebrities, therefore, is the community they have built on social media which is engaged thanks to the special bond that exists between an influencer and a follower. For an influencer marketing strategy to be successful, marketers need to find the right influencer, but in the end, it is all about targeting the right community.

2.2.3. Influencer's community

For an influencer marketing campaign to thrive, a targeted and engaged community is key. To assess the quality of the influencer's community, marketers often refer to the three R factors: Reach, Relevance and Resonance.
Reach defines how many unique people an influencer is able to touch with his or her posts. It can be measured by number of followers, subscribers, traffic on the blog, … Therefore, it is a measure of quantity.

Resonance refers to the interactions, the engagement, the influencer is able to reap. Resonance is crucial because it shows that the audience is engaged and interested in the content. It can be measured by likes, views, video plays, shares, comments, retweets and so on. It is a measure of the quality of the audience.

Relevance involves the match between the audience's interests and the content shared by the influencer. A brand should be careful to choose an influencer and therefore a community which is relevant to its product or service. Thus, relevance measures the match between the influencer's audience and the brand's target audience (Backaler & Shankman, 2018; Newberry, 2019).

To sum up, quantity does not always mean quality or relevance. All three factors should be addressed to maximize the chances of success.
But what makes influencers' communities so qualitative if they are well chosen? It is the relationship harnessed by the influencer that makes his or her audience so receptive and engaged with the content shared. Because SMIs are ordinary people, unlike traditional celebrities, they are perceived as creating less parasocial distance, which results in more closeness with their followers and consequently forms a deeper relationship (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020; Jin et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020). This strong connection between an influencer and a follower is called a parasocial relationship, which is explained in the next section.

2.2.4. Parasocial relationship

Parasocial interaction describes the audience's one-sided relationship with a media persona. Since social media users do not only follow the media persona's posts but can also comment and send messages, this leads to a higher level of parasocial interaction. Because followers' interaction with SMIs is not short-lived but rather a long-lasting relationship, it refers to parasocial relationship. It involves more lasting feelings of connectedness and attachment with the influencer (Lou & Kim, 2019).
Parasocial relationship can thus be defined as a viewer's illusionary interpersonal bond with media personalities (J. A. Lee & Eastin, 2020). It encompasses the key themes of friendship, understanding and identification. Friendship is fostered by the frequency and intimacy of contact. Understanding is the degree to which a fan thinks he or she knows the media personality personally. Finally, identification refers to how the audience associates with the media personae (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020).

In the case of SMIs, followers feel like they are familiar with influencers since they interact a lot with their follower base. The audience also feels like they know them personally like real friends and tends to identify with them since they share a lot about their personal life. This leads to a strong parasocial relationship between followers and SMIs (Kolarova, 2018; J. A. Lee & Eastin, 2020). Adolescents indeed consider their relationship with influencers as friendship rather than fanship (Lou & Kim, 2019). Because generation Z feels the need to belong to social groups, it favors the creation of such horizontal relationships through social media rather than vertical ones (Kolsquare, 2020).
This illusionary face-to-face relationship with SMIs makes consumers more susceptible to their recommendations and behavior (De Veirman et al., 2017). This generates more positive attitudes and intentions towards brands endorsed by influencers (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2020).

However, the strength of this parasocial relationship and the followers' attitude towards the SMI can vary depending on the influencer's and follower's personal characteristics. All the factors altering the influencer's impact on follower's attitude and purchase decisions will be addressed in the next section.

2.3. Factors affecting influencer's impact on follower's purchase intention

2.3.1. Impact of influencer's personal characteristics on followers' purchase intention

Purchase intention is a consumer's willingness or conscious plan to purchase a product or service based on numerous factors (Egertz et al., 2019; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020). One of them is the others' influence and recommendations. Research indeed found that there is a positive association between the attitude towards the influencer, the attitude towards the brands and therefore towards PI (Egertz et al., 2019; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Jin et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2014; Pashaei, 2020). However, this influence is affected by many personal factors of the source. Indeed, the way people perceive influencers will impact their relationship with them and their susceptibility to recommendations.

Eight studies about the impact of influencers' personal characteristics on followers' PI were analyzed (Chetioui et al., 2020; Draganova, 2018; Egertz et al., 2019; S. Lee & Kim, 2020; Lou & Kim, 2019; Pashaei, 2020; Rebelo, 2017; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020). A summary table can be found in pages 22-23.
Several characteristics emerged from these studies, all of which are addressed in the following paragraphs.

All studies questioned the impact of the influencer's **credibility** on the efficiency of his or her product endorsements. The global hypothesis states that if the recipients of the message have high perception of the source's credibility, they will develop a more positive attitude towards the advertisement and thus their PI increases.
The most commonly used source credibility scale in the literature is the one developed by Ohanian (1990), which includes three elements:

- Expertise
- Trustworthiness
- Attractiveness

The first factor, **expertise**, is the degree to which a speaker is a source of accurate information (Pashaei, 2020; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020). Expertise is derived from the source's perceived knowledge, qualifications and competencies in a specific field (Egertz

et al., 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019). Having expertise means that the influencer better understands the advantages and disadvantages of the product and therefore can provide a credible opinion (Egertz et al., 2019).
Upon the eight studies, four agree to say that expertise has a significant impact on PI. Among them, two papers reveal that it is the factor with the greatest influence.

The second element of credibility, **trustworthiness**, can be described as the degree of confidence the follower grants to the influencer. It depends on the believability, honesty and integrity of the information given by the influencer. If a source is trustworthy, his or her community will assume that he or she is telling the truth which leads to more influence on purchasing behavior (Egertz et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020). Familiarity can be a factor improving trustworthiness. Indeed, many people consider friends as trustworthy and consequently trust them more than strangers or sales people (Pashaei, 2020).
Among all the papers studied, four support that trustworthiness has a significant impact on PI. Two of them also think that it is the most influential factor.

The last component, **attractiveness**, is defined by the individual physical appearance and likeability. Influencers who are perceived as elegant, beautiful, classy or sexy seem to have more impact on people (Egertz et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020). Attractiveness can also go further than physical properties and involve personality or lifestyle (Pashaei, 2020).
Regarding its impact on PI, upon the seven studies, six claim that it has a significant influence. And two papers agree to say that it is the factor with the most weight.

Other authors also studied how additional personal factors could affect the influencer's impact on PI. One of them is the quality of the argument or the **persuasiveness** of the endorser (Egertz et al., 2019). Persuasive capabilities are the ability to change someone's attitude and thus the capacity to convince people to use or buy a product (Widyanto & Agusti, 2020).
Persuasiveness was only investigated by one study and it came out that it has a significant impact on PI.

Further, **similarity**, which is the degree of resemblance between two individuals in education, social status and values, can increase the credibility of the sender of information (Egertz et al., 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019). Individuals indeed trust more other people similar to them. Chetioui et al. (2020) refer to the concept of **congruence**. Indeed, if the follower shares personality traits, lifestyle or preferences with the influencer, it could increase his or her PI.
The impact of similarity or congruence on PI was only tested by three studies, and they all found that it is significant.

Tie-strength, which is the level of intensity of the relationship between the sender and the consumer, is also a critical factor affecting the influencer's credibility (Egertz et al., 2019). Tie strength was a variable in one study and showed a low impact on followers' PI.

To conclude, many individuals' factors determine whether the influencer will have a high or low impact on PI. About half of previous studies agree to say that the three components of the source credibility model have an impact on PI, still, there is a lot of disagreement on which factor is the most influential.

Table 1: Studies about the impact of influencers' personal characteristics on purchase intention

The ranking for each study is based on the p-values and standardized Beta coefficients found by the researchers. The rank 1 being the most impacting factor, thus the highest standardized Beta coefficient in the regression.
For Pashaei (2020), the ranking is based on the mean answer for each question about the source credibility characteristic of the influencer. The mean was computed for people who had high PI to know which component was the highest for them. Expertise had the highest mean so is ranked 1.
For Chetioui et al. (2020), the dependent variable of the regression was not PI but attitude towards the influencer. However, the study also shows that attitude towards the influencer significantly and positively influences PI.
For Draganova (2018), the ranking is not known but it still reveals which personal characteristics have a significant impact on PI.

Legend:
1: Most impacting factor on PI
2: Second most impacting factor on PI
3: Third most impacting factor on PI
4: Fourth most impacting factor on PI
5: Fifth most impacting factor on PI
Yes: Factor that has some impact on PI but is not ranked
No: Factor that has no significant impact on PI
Blanc: not studied.

	Trust-worthiness	Expertise	Attractiveness	Similarity	Tie strength	Persuasiveness
Egertz et al. (2019)	1	4	2	3	5	
Rebelo (2017)	1	No	2			
Pashaei (2020)	2	1	3			
Lou and Kim (2019)	No	No	1	2		
Widyanto and Agusti (2020)	No	No	1			2
Draganova (2018)	No	Yes	Yes			
Chetioui et al. (2020)	2	1		3		
S. Lee and Kim (2020)	No	No	No			

Even if an influencer has everything needed to be impactful, he or she is trusted, attractive and seen as an expert, different followers will not react the same way to his or her recommendations. Followers' personal characteristics should also be taken into account to understand how deep they can be influenced.

2.3.2. Impact of follower's personal characteristics on attitude towards SMIs

Depending on their own characteristics, individuals do not all react the same way to a sponsored recommendation. Different factors that could change the followers' attitude towards influencers' advice are discussed in the following paragraphs.

It appears that low self-confidence people are more influenced (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016). Jin et al. (2019) agree and further argue that the level of self-discrepancy can also impact the level of influence. Self-discrepancy is the gap between one's actual and ideal

self. People who suffer from high levels of self-discrepancy would be more tempted to imitate influencers' appearance and buy the product they promote in order to get closer to their ideal appearance.

According to Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2020), culture can impact the degree of influence of SMIs. The authors argue that materialism, one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, leads to a stronger parasocial relationship with traditional celebrities than SMIs in India. In the Indian society, people prefer to take advice from individuals with materialistic possessions, acquired by professional success, rather than from people who have expertise but are not popular enough.

Furthermore, the generation also plays a role in what people trust. According to the study conducted by Herrando, Jimenez-Martinez, and Martin-De Hoyos (2019), members of generation Z develop their trust based on user-generated content rather than on information shared by the company. They should therefore be more sensitive to influencers than previous generations. This is understandable as generation Z is digital native, highly connected and loves to seek for others' opinion online (Delanglade, 2019; Kolsquare, 2020).

Finally, gender could play a role in determining the level to which individuals are influenced. It seems that women are more socially influenceable than men (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016). In the same way, Draganova (2018) highlights that when it comes to purchase decision, women are more influenced than men by their communication with other people.
Pashaei (2020) argues that men and women do not grant the same importance to SMIs' personal characteristics. Women would be more influenced by expertise and trustworthiness, whereas for men, attractiveness is more important. Rebelo (2017) claims that trustworthiness has much more impact on female followers' PI than on male.
To sum up, both the influencer's and the follower's personal characteristics will impact how the follower reacts to the influencer's advice.

2.3.3. Impact of external factors on followers' attitude towards SMIs

There are several factors that can, in addition to the influencer's and follower's personalities, impact the attitude of individuals towards recommendations.

The first one is the sponsorship type and the kind of disclosure. A sponsored post means that the influencer is remunerated by the brand to promote the product or service on his or her social media or blog. Several studies found out that the sponsorship disclosure does not significantly affect the audience or influencer's credibility (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016; Kolarova, 2018; S. Lee & Kim, 2020). Besides, Lu et al. (2014) add that the type of sponsorship reward, which can be direct (money) or indirect (coupons, free samples, …) does not significantly affect attitude towards the recommendation either. This can be explained by the fact that most people know that influencers are remunerated but think they would not put their reputation at risk by lying. Still, Décaudin and Fueyo (2016) claim that transparency is key. When the sponsorship is not transparently mentioned, it could badly affect the SMI's credibility.

Another factor to take into account is the endorser's number of followers. In fact, it seems to impact credibility. Indeed, individuals with a higher number of followers would be perceived as more credible and trustworthy (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016). De Veirman et al. (2017) add that they are more likeable because they are perceived as more popular. Still, marketers should consider that a high number of followers does not always translate into true influence. Moreover, all authors agree to say that it is also important that the influencers follow back some of their followers to be trusted.

The endorsed brand impacts the followers' attitude as well. Actually, a post about a familiar brand will have more influence on brand trust and PI than an unfamiliar one (Kolarova, 2018). Indeed, when people have a high brand awareness of the product recommended, they tend to trust more what the post says (Lu et al., 2014). Besides, a highly credible brand drives more positive attitude towards promotional posts than a less credible one (S. Lee & Kim, 2020). Therefore, in order to affect PI, both the brand and the influencer should be known and credible.

SMIs' impact may vary across product types. Influencers may not be the best marketing choice for all product categories. Lu et al. (2014) compared the impact of SMIs on search and experience goods. A search good is a product for which information about dominant features is easy to obtain and does not require interacting with the product before purchase. A good example would be a cell phone. On the other side, information about experience goods is difficult to find and in order to assess key attributes of the good, the consumer must interact with it. Some examples could be video games or travel tours. The researchers claim that, because of the subjective and unstable nature of experience goods, consumers tend to give less credit to recommendations about them. Contrarily, because search goods features are easily findable and are more stable and objective, consumers more easily believe reviews about them. Therefore, posts about search goods drive more positive attitude towards the product than the ones about experience goods.

Another product classification was used by J. A. Lee and Eastin (2020): utilitarian and hedonic/symbolic product attributes. Products that are used to solve a specific problem are high in utilitarian value. They include inexpensive necessities, the authors take the toothpaste as an example. By contrast, products that are high in hedonic or symbolic values are used to delight sensual and self-expressive needs. Those are often luxurious and sensory products, it could be illustrated by perfume.
The authors argue that a match between the influencer's personality and the product type will lead to an enhanced PI. Since utilitarian products are perceived as sincere products, they found out that they should be endorsed by highly sincere influencers.
Pashaei (2020) supports that the fit between the product and the influencer is important. The influencer's character must be congruent with the brand image

Based on that idea, to promote unique products, with original designs, brands should rather use medium-sized SMIs. Indeed, choosing a really famous influencer with a lot of followers would not fit with the idea of uniqueness and originality if everybody talks about it (De Veirman et al., 2017).

3. Comparison between peers' and influencers' influences

No scientific studies explicitly comparing the impacts of peers and SMIs on PI could be found. Therefore, some studies about related topics will still be discussed. Moreover, to cope with that lack of literature, the results of studies not published by scientific journals will be exposed, but those results should be taken lightly. Since it is interesting to have influencers' view on the question, a message was sent to some of them to get their opinion. Their answers will also be presented in this section.

Bertrandias and Vernette (2012) studied the difference between strong and weak links. A relationship with a strong link features an important frequency of contact, tendency to help each other and confide. In our case, peers would accordingly correspond to a strong link whereas influencers would be a weaker one. The study reveals that people tend more to ask for advice to strong rather than to weak links. One of the reasons is that peers are closer to the person and are therefore seen as better understanding the needs of that person.

Another scientific paper written by Al-Harbi and Al-Harbi (2017) studies the actors who encourage female adolescents to practice physical activity. It came out of the study that SMIs were a stronger driver of motivation than peers. However, this study is not about purchase intention and was conducted in Saudi Arabia, so the results cannot be taken as a baseline. Because no other scientific studies could be found, non-scientific works will now be presented.

According to a study conducted by Stackla (2018), user-generated content, which can be friends', family's or other ordinary consumers' posts, deeply influences purchase decisions. On the opposite, branded content and influencers' publications only affect a minority of surveyed people. Still, they found out that generation Z tends to be more influenced by celebrities and influencers than previous generations. Yet, friends' or peers' posts remain the number one influence on purchase decision.

The report done by Razorfish (2009) goes in the same direction. They indeed found out that the most influential actors, when it comes to buying, are family and friends. People in

fact still talk a lot face-to-face about products and their experience. It does not mean that online friends, bloggers or influencers, have no impact, but the impact of real friends is much higher. However, this study was conducted in 2009 which is quite old and interviewed people aged from 18-55 years-old, so there was no focus on generation Z.
A survey conducted by Bazaarvoice in 2018 affirms that 69% of French consumers interviewed rather trust peers than influencers, because their opinion is more authentic (Rohrlich, 2018).

A report written by MarketingCharts (2018) reveals some interesting statistics about the US. Friends and family are still the ones with the most impact on purchases, as it can be seen in figure 1. However, influencers have more impact on 18-34 years-old than on other generations. Further, the same study was conducted with kids (6-16 years-old), and the results are a lot different. Indeed, friends are still the most influential but they are closely followed by influencers, as illustrated by figure 2 on the following page (MarketingCharts, 2019). This could mean that for generation Z, the impact of peers and influencers could be quite close.

Figure 1: Most influential actors on adults' purchase decisions.
Source: MarketingCharts. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.marketingcharts.com/cross-media-and-traditional/word-of-mouth-106441

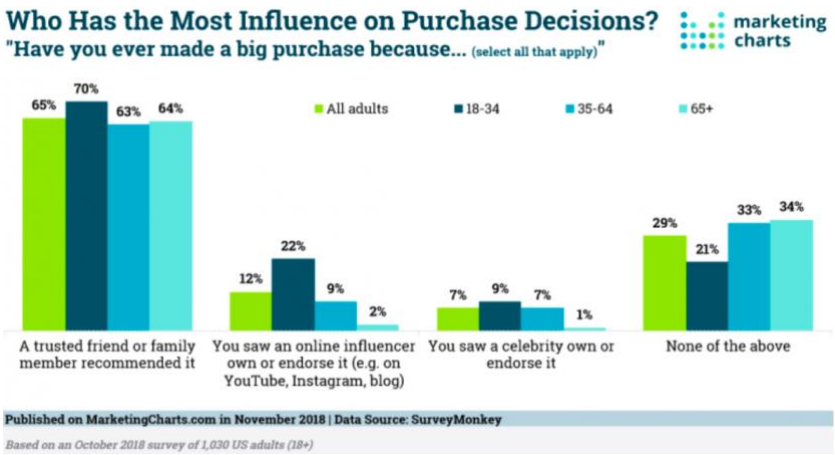
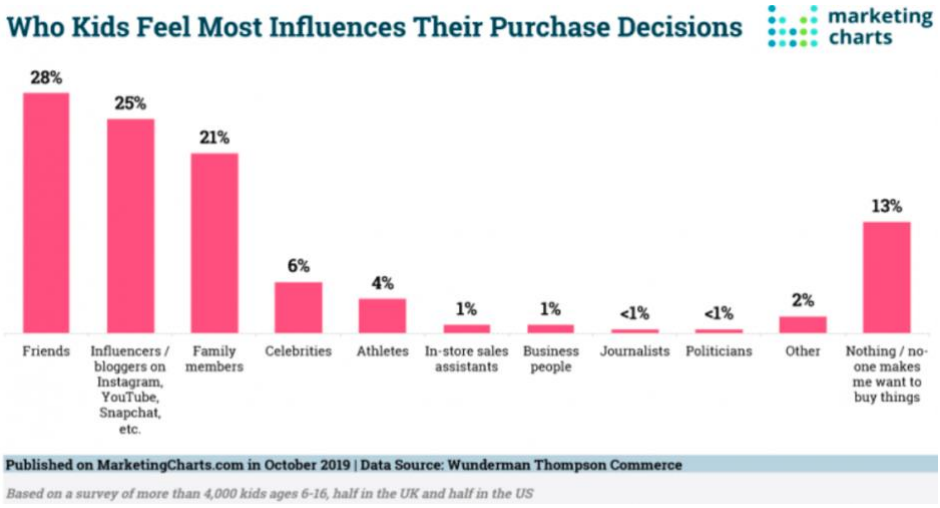


Figure 2: Most influential actors on kids' purchase decisions.

Source: MarketingCharts. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.marketingcharts.com/demographics-and-audiences/teens-and-younger-110706



Furthermore, Bordarier (2019) reports some intriguing facts about YouTubers. As teenagers feel like they know the YouTube influencers they follow, they tend to trust them and follow their opinion. Indeed, 70% of YouTube subscribers listen more to influencers than celebrities. More surprisingly, 40% even say that their favorite YouTube influencers tend to understand them better than their own friends. There is thus a strong link between teenagers and SMIs.

In order to get influencers' point of view, a message was sent to them on Instagram or by email (Appendix 1.1.). Three out of ten answered, their answers can be found in appendix 1.2. They all think that their advice can be as influential or even more than the one of a friend.

According to @Milkywaysblueyes and @Museofgreens, their advice can have more impact than a friend's because they are perceived as experts in some fields due to their personal knowledge and experience and the fact that they could test many products or services in that specific field.

@Museofgreens adds that because people do not know her in reality but only via social media, they will ask for advice more easily because they will not be afraid of being judged. @Barbaraschoumacher thinks that her opinion can have as much impact as a friend's because she thinks her community trusts her. She gives both remunerated but also non-remunerated opinions which increases trust.

Based on those different types of sources, no definitive conclusions can be made. However, there seems to be a trend, most sources indeed think that peers' influence is more important than influencers' when it comes to purchase decisions. But as it was observed, those results seem to vary when a younger generation is interviewed. Moreover, no contextual factors were taken into account to see how the influence could vary. It is thus interesting to conduct a study focused on generation Z.

4. Conclusions of the literature review

Thanks to this literature review, a thorough understanding of peers' and influencers' impacts on purchase intention was achieved. Moreover, the different studies that were already conducted about those influences were reviewed.

Peers, who as a reminder are defined as an individual's close friends from the same generation, who interact with one another and use each other as a reference, clearly play an important role during adolescence. They influence values, attitudes and norms, which is why they are socially proximal referents. The other type of reference group is the socially distant one.

SMIs being content creators who became famous thanks to social media and whose posts are able to influence their community's purchase behavior, they rather fall in the socially distant reference group. Indeed, people aspire to them, but do not interact with them in reality. Still, a really strong bond between influencers and followers exists, even if it is not a real relationship. This link is the parasocial relationship. Therefore, SMIs are more influential than other types of socially distant referents such as traditional celebrities.

Furthermore, two distinct types of influences were addressed in the section about peers; The normative influence, which is the propensity to conform to others' expectations, and the informational influence, which is the tendency to accept information from others as

indication about the reality. Both kinds of influences are exerted by peers, and previous research does not agree on which one is the most important. However, concerning influencers, no previous studies could be found on the subject. It would therefore be interesting to investigate which influence is the most impactful and compare it with the impact of peers.

Afterwards, it was observed in both parts of the literature review that the influence varies depending on personal characteristics and some other external factors.
For both peers and influencers, the impact seems to be greater on people with low self-esteem. Moreover, women seem to be more sensitive to others' influence than men. People with different cultures should also react differently. The age also plays an important role on the influence. Younger generations are indeed more affected by SMIs and concerning peers, early adolescents seem to be more influenced than late ones. For SMIs, a crucial factor is their credibility which is depicted by three dimensions: trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise. Several studies agree to say that those attributes have a significant impact on followers' purchase intention.
A point that raised attention in the external factors is that the impact of peers or influencers further varies depending on the type of product. For peers, the product conspicuousness categorization was used. It came out of several studies that the more a product is conspicuous, so luxurious and consumed in public, the more people would be influenced by peers to buy it.
Whether for SMIs, no similar categories could be found. Still, there was a study about experience and search goods. It was revealed that influencers are more influential on search goods, for which a good deal of information about the product's attributes can be found before buying. However, no similar study could be found about peers.
It could therefore be interesting to compare peers and SMIs based on the type of influence (normative vs informational) and on the type of product as it would bring new knowledge about influencer marketing and the power of peers. Moreover, the impact of personal characteristics could also be examined.

After this literature review, it is not yet possible to say who is the most influential between peers and SMIs and how it varies depending on the situations. However, according to non-

scientific surveys, there seems to be a trend in favor of peers. Still, the results vary when the focus is on the youngest generation. Besides, SMIs themselves think that they can be as impactful as friends mainly because of their expertise. It is therefore worth drawing hypotheses and testing them in order to elucidate those questions.

PART II: Empirical study

This thesis employs a deductive research approach, which consists in using existing theory to create hypotheses, which are then tested by analyzing data collected by an empirical study (de Moerloose & Jacquemin, 2020). Now that the theory has been reviewed in the first part of this thesis, it is time to develop hypotheses and to test them.
This second part will start by explaining the research typology and the data collection method which is used. The target population and sample frame of this study will also be defined. The hypotheses will then be developed and justified. In section 3, the scenarios chosen will be explained and the creation of the questionnaire will also be described. The next section concerns the launch of the questionnaire. The learnings from the pre-test are revealed and the sampling technique is clarified.
After comes the data analysis section. Before doing any analysis, the data has to be prepared. The data manipulation and coding are thus explained, followed by the scales evaluation and the manipulation check. Once it is done, a subsection will describe the sample with some interesting statistics. Afterwards comes the most interesting part, the hypotheses testing. All tests realized and their results will be explained. Finally, conclusions about the data analysis are drawn.

1. Research typology

This thesis aims to compare the effects of peers' and SMIs' influences on generation Z purchase intention. The research will examine the level of interpersonal influence on generation Z purchase intention depending on several stimuli: the type of person, namely SMI or peer and the type of product. The study will also assess the impact of personal characteristics on that influence. Accordingly, a causal research design is used as the purpose is to investigate a cause-and-effect relationship between variables. This type of research design requires a rigorous and structured definition of the hypotheses and needs numerous respondents to be valid (Steils, 2019).
To collect data, a quantitative research method will be used. It is indeed the most adapted method for causal research since it allows to get a large and representative sample.
The data collection method is an online survey. Making the survey online allows to reduce the investigator bias and the social desirability bias because questions will be asked by

the computer via Qualtrics which guarantees anonymity. Moreover, the data collection is fast. However, the response rate is usually quite low (Steils, 2019).

The target population of the survey is females belonging to generation Z, who follow at least one influencer on social media. The survey had to be limited only to females to make sure the scenario presented to them made sense and they could identify to it. It was indeed not possible to find a scenario that made complete sense for both males and females, the reason is better explained in section 3 (Questionnaire).
The sample frame is a subset of the target population which is actually accessible (Steils, 2019). In this case, it is the females belonging to generation Z who follow at least one influencer on social media and who have a Facebook profile. Indeed, the online survey will be shared on this social media. Further explanations about the sampling method will be given in section 4.2. (Sampling technique).

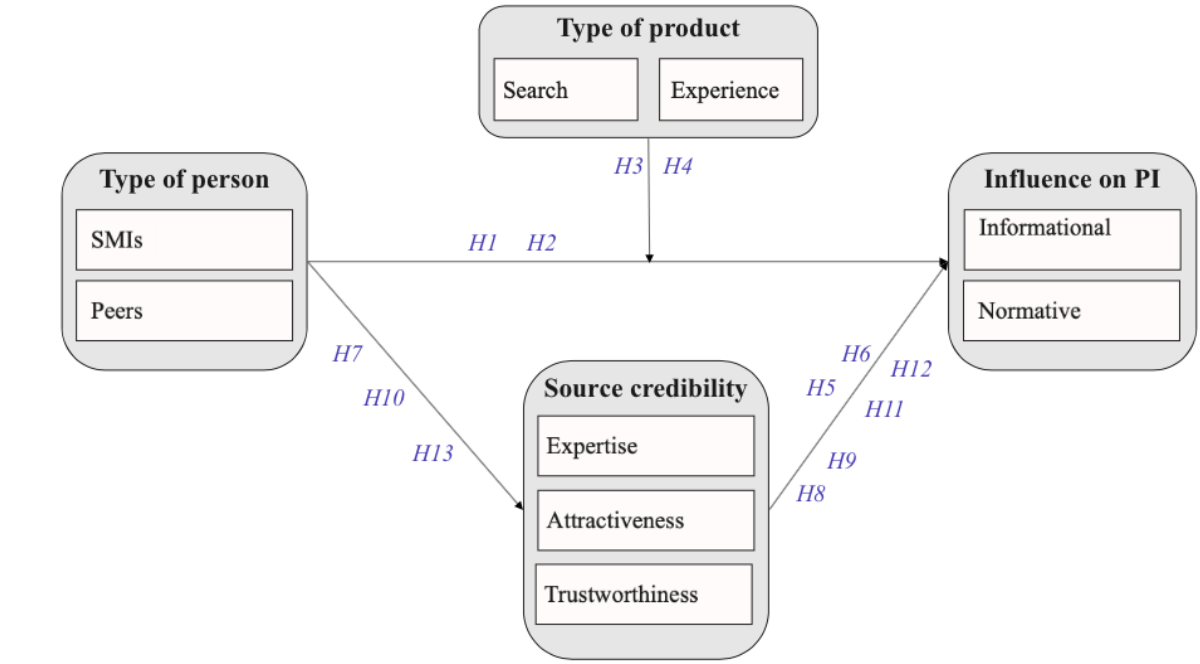
2. Definition of hypotheses

It is now time to build hypotheses to compare influencers' and peers' influences on the purchase intention of generation Z. After the literature review, three main axes of comparison were found.
Firstly, SMIs and peers will be compared based on the type of influence. Indeed, there are two main kinds of influences: normative and informational (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).
Secondly, the comparison will also be made on two types of goods. The categorization used for this empirical study is search and experience goods because this typology is used since a long time in marketing and economy (Rentmeester, 2007).
Finally, a last component that will be taken into account is the impact of personal characteristics. In the literature review, it was found that the source credibility had a high impact on PI. Credibility is usually depicted using a three items scale developed by Ohanian (1990): trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise. Those three personal characteristics will thus be addressed in order to assess their impact on influence and therefore on PI.

Based on those three axes, three main blocks of hypotheses were created. The first one is about informational and normative influences.

Hereunder, a model summarizing the different variables, their relationships and the hypotheses linked to them can be found.

Figure 3: Conceptual model



2.1. Informational and normative influences

As uncovered in the literature review, normative influence is the propensity to conform to others' expectations. It can either occur by identification, when the individual wants to be associated with his or her peers. Or by compliance, when the individual conforms in order to be rewarded or to avoid punishment. On the other side, informational influence is the tendency to accept information from others as indication about the reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

Previous research showed that peers exert both influences on adolescents (Goodrich & Mangleburg, 2010; Mangleburg et al., 2004; Mascarenhas & Higby, 1993; Opoku, 2012). Still, there is no consensus about which type is the most impactful. What concerns SMIs, no such studies could be found. However, it seems like people are mainly influenced by the information they receive from SMIs. They indeed tend to follow them for their expertise in some domains (Draganova, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019). They listen to influencers to make the right choice, since those people have tested many products and

can therefore compare them. Peers usually do not have that expertise, so their informational influence should be lower than SMIs'. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: SMIs generate a higher informational influence than peers.

Concerning normative influence, because SMIs and their followers do not know each other in reality and do not meet, there is less pressure to comply with the influencers' expectations. Indeed, no punishment or reward is possible. Yet, followers might still want to be associated to their favorite influencer, which could push them to act and look like him or her. This would be a type of normative influence by identification. However, normative influence should be higher for peers because adolescents will both want to comply with their peers in order to avoid punishment or be rewarded (Gillani, 2012), but also to be associated with a group of peers to reinforce their sense of belonging (Gentina & Bonsu, 2013; Mangleburg et al., 2004). It is indeed important for the adolescent to be part of a group, for real. Consequently, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: Peers generate a higher normative influence than SMIs.

2.2. Search and experience goods

The second axis selected for this study is the type of good. As a reminder, the typology chosen is search and experience goods since it is well known and easy to understand and differentiate. A search good is a product for which information about main features is easy to gather and does not require interacting with the product before purchase. Nelson (1970) indeed said that a search good is one whose qualities can be determined by the consumer before purchase. Some examples are: clothing, sports equipment, cellphones, household furniture and decoration (Leahy, 2011; Lu et al., 2014; Nelson, 1970).

On the opposite, information about experience goods is hard to find and therefore requires interacting with the good to assess the key attributes. An experience good is accordingly defined as one whose qualities cannot be evaluated prior to purchase or usage (Nelson, 1970). Some examples could be video games, cars, drugs and toiletries, restaurants, hotels or travel tours (Leahy, 2011; Lu et al., 2014; Nelson, 1970; Rentmeester, 2007). Opinion about experience goods is thus more subjective and unstable. Previous research showed that influencers are more trusted for search goods

reviews because their opinion is more objective and information can also easily be found via other sources. Because opinions about experience goods are more subjective and personal, followers give less credits to influencers' advice about those (Lu et al., 2014).

About peers, no previous research using that classification could be found. Still, because peers are more close to the adolescent and know them personally, their advice on experience goods should be more trusted. What concerns search goods, the influencer's advice might have more impact because he or she might have tested more similar goods and will be able to give a more complete and objective opinion. Those thoughts lead us to those hypotheses:

H3a: Peers have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is experience good.

H3b: SMIs have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is search good.

H4a: Peers have a greater impact on normative influence when the product type is experience good.

H4b: SMIs have a greater impact on normative influence when the product type is search good.

2.3. Personal characteristics

The last variables that will be investigated in this study are the personal characteristics. The empirical study will only focus on the three components of source credibility, which are: trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise (Ohanian, 1990). Indeed, those were the most studied personal characteristics in previous research (Table 1, pages 22-23).

We will start with expertise, which is defined as the degree to which the speaker is a source of accurate knowledge (Pashaei, 2020; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020). It is derived from knowledge, qualifications and competencies in a specific field (Egertz et al., 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019). Someone with expertise will be able to give more accurate information about a good because he or she better understands the positive and negative points of the product (Egertz et al., 2019). This should therefore lead to a higher informational influence. However, it is hypothesized that expertise is not directly linked to normative

influence. The latter is actually more about conformity and association. People either conform to others' expectations to avoid punishment or to be rewarded or else to feel as part of a group. According to us, this is rather linked to the status of the person, his or her "popularity" rather than his or her knowledge.
It therefore leads to those hypotheses:

H5: Higher expertise leads to higher informational influence.

H6: Higher expertise does not lead to higher normative influence.

Moreover, influencers should have higher expertise than peers. Indeed, they are often known for their knowledge in a certain field (Draganova, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019) and all the products or services they could try. Peers do not have the opportunity to receive and test as many products, and are often less documented about a specific field. As a result, the following hypothesis is written:

H7: Expertise is higher for SMIs than for peers.

What concerns attractiveness, the second component of credibility, it is defined as the physical appearance and likeability of someone (Egertz et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020). It was shown by previous studies that attractiveness was the characteristic with the most influence on purchase intention (Table 1, pages 22-23). Maybe because attractive people could have higher normative influence as others might want to identify with them and/or be accepted in their group. Still, it is unlikely that it will impact informational influence since attractiveness has nothing to do with the knowledge of the person and the information they can share. The hypotheses tested are thus the following:

H8: Higher attractiveness does not lead to higher informational influence.

H9: Higher attractiveness leads to higher normative influence.

Besides, SMIs are often attractive people. Indeed, it is one of the reasons why people follow them, because they aspire to them. Also, it is their job to post nice pictures, to master Photoshop, they therefore look classy and beautiful most of the time. Yet, peers can also be attractive, but in general, SMIs tend to be more attractive as it usually drives more followers. It is consequently hypothesized:

H10: Attractiveness is higher for SMIs than for peers.

Finally, trustworthiness is the degree of confidence the adolescent grants to the source. It is based on honesty, believability and integrity (Egertz et al., 2019; Pashaei, 2020; Widyanto & Agusti, 2020). Trustworthiness should impact both kinds of influences as it is crucial that the individuals trust the peer or influencer in order to be influenced. People will be more influenced by information given by a trustworthy source, since the information will as well be perceived as true and believable. Moreover, if the peer or SMI is trusted, he or she will also more easily persuade the others to behave in a certain way. Accordingly, two hypotheses are derived:

H11: Higher trustworthiness leads to higher informational influence.

H12: Higher trustworthiness leads to higher normative influence.

It seems obvious that trustworthiness should be higher for peers than influencers. Indeed, peers are close friends who know each other well, they should therefore highly trust each other (Opoku, 2012; Ryan, 2001). What concerns SMIs, the fact that the follower does not know them personally should reduce trust. Moreover, most influencers' posts are sponsored, which could also decrease the trust of followers into their recommendations if there is no transparency about the partnerships (Décaudin & Fueyo, 2016). Yet, SMIs often swear they are telling what they really think about the product, even if they received it for free or were paid. However, some of them just do it for the money and do not hesitate to lie. All influencers should not be put in the same basket, but still, in general people will trust more their peer than an influencer. As a result, this hypothesis is written:

H13: Trustworthiness is higher for peers than for SMIs.

3. Scenarios and Questionnaire

In order to test all those hypotheses, a between-subject experiment was developed. Several scenarios had to be created depending on two stimuli: the product type and influential person (Table 2). There are thus four variations of the questionnaire which will be randomly and equally assigned to respondents. The complete questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

Table 2: Scenarios of the questionnaire

Type of product / type of person	Peer	Social Media Influencer
Search good	Situation 1	Situation 2
Experience good	Situation 3	Situation 4

Regarding the choice of products, some research was made and it turned out that some experience goods that could be used are the following: video games, cars, drugs and toiletries, restaurants, hotels or travel tours (Leahy, 2011; Lu et al., 2014; Nelson, 1970; Rentmeester, 2007).

As a reminder, the target population is generation Z, therefore a car will not be suitable for everyone because some are not even in age to drive.

Moreover, restaurants, hotels and travel tours are too dependent on the localization of the person. Indeed, someone following an influencer from another city or country will not really be interested in those recommendations as they will never be able to consume or use services from a place they will never go to. It would thus bias the survey. The goods left are thus video games and toiletries which can easily be discussed both by peers and influencers. However, video games might not be relevant for some people who never play them, especially girls. Therefore, the scenario will not speak to them. Regarding toiletries, it is highly relevant for girls but less for boys. Many men indeed do not care about cosmetics and makeup for example.

In order to create a scenario which really speaks to the participants, it was decided to focus only on girls from generation Z. There is indeed a risk that by surveying both genders, some people might not be able to identify with the scenario because they never use the product presented. That would falsify the results which is undesirable.

Now that only girls will be surveyed, the experience good chosen is a moisturizing cream, either for the body, hands or face. Indeed, this is a universal cosmetic bought by nearly all women, it should thus not bias the results. Laurent (2020) actually reveals that in France, skincare products represented alone 40% of total cosmetics sales in 2020. For the selection of product, Wei and Lu (2013) were also a source of inspiration. They made a similar study only for girls and chose skin toner as an experience good.

Regarding search goods, it is easier to find one. Indeed, some that could be used are the following: clothing, sports equipment, cellphones, household furniture and decoration, … (Leahy, 2011; Lu et al., 2014; Nelson, 1970).
They are all quite general and could work for women. Clothing is a good choice since there is no doubt that everybody sometimes needs to buy clothes, and it is easily discussed both by peers and influencers. To make it more specific, the scenario will talk about a pullover to make sure all the respondents think about the same type of clothes.

Now that the products for the scenarios have been chosen, the questionnaire can be explained. The beginning of the questionnaire is the same for all scenarios.
It starts with an explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and the conditions required to reply, which are being a girl born between 1995 and 2010 and following at least one influencer on social media. The approximate time needed to reply is specified and answers are guaranteed anonymous.
The first block of questions starts with a definition of influencer to be sure respondents all have the same reference. Then there are basic questions to approach the subject and check that respondents follow at least one SMI. The second requirement about the age and gender of the respondents will be asked at the end of the questionnaire because it is a personal question and beginning by personal questions could make some people exit the questionnaire (Steils, 2019).

The second block of questions is randomly assigned from four blocks, one per scenario.
Each block starts with a presentation of the situation. The respondent is asked to imagine that she has to buy a product. Either a pullover for the search good or a moisturizing cream for the experience good.
After, she is asked to think about a person. Either a peer, who is defined as a friend with whom the respondent interacts a lot and who is from the same generation. Or an influencer, who is a content creator who built a large audience of followers on social media thanks to his or her posts.
Once the respondent has that person in mind, he or she is asked to either provide the pseudo for the influencer or the first letter of the name for the peer, in order to keep it

anonymous as it is quite private. This question is asked to make sure the respondent has really thought about someone.

The question that follows is about the source credibility. The respondent has to assess the person she thought about using the scale developed by Ohanian (1990) (Table 3, page 43). It was translated from English to French and some items were not used in order to make the questionnaire less long and increase the response rate. There are four items per characteristic, which makes it a multi-item scale and therefore more reliable. Each item has to be evaluated on a five points Likert scale. The five points Likert scale was chosen to have precision without adding too much complexity and to keep it mobile friendly. The scale is balanced with a neutral position as third point to avoid bias.

The next question is to assess the impact of the peer or SMI on informational and normative influences. The scales developed by Bearden et al. (1989) and Mascarenhas and Higby (1993) were used as a basis (Table 3, page 43). They had to be adapted to the context of this study but the items are really similar. Equivalently to the previous question, respondents have to evaluate on a five points Likert scale whether they agree or not with the proposition.

The following block of questions is the same for all situations. The first question is used to verify that the person the respondent thought about was in fact perceived as a peer or as an influencer. And the second question aims to verify that the product presented in the situation was well perceived as an experience or search good.

The final block of the questionnaire asks a few demographic questions. Those are not mandatory, except for the age and gender since they are required to answer the questionnaire.

Table 3: Scales used in the questionnaire

Questions numbers	Concept to measure	Scales used
5.1, 8.1, 11.1, 14.1, 5.2, 8.2, 11.2, 14.2, 5.3, 8.3, 11.3, 14.3, 5.4, 8.4, 11.4, 14.4	Expertise	Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers' Perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising, 19*(3), 39-52.
5.5, 8.5, 11.5, 14.5, 5.6, 8.6, 11.6, 14.6, 5.7, 8.7, 11.7, 14.7, 5.8, 8.8, 11.8, 14.8	Trustworthiness	
5.9, 8.9, 11.9, 14.9, 5.10, 8.10, 11.10, 14.10, 5.11, 8.11, 11.11, 14.11, 5.12, 8.12, 11.12, 14.12	Attractiveness	
6.1, 9.1, 12.1, 15.1, 6.2, 9.2, 12.2, 15.2, 6.3, 9.3, 12.3, 15.3, 6.5, 9.4, 12.4, 15.4, 6.6, 9.5, 12.5, 15.5	Normative influence	Bearden, W. O., Netemeyer, R. G., & Teel, J. E. (1989). Measurement Of Consumer Susceptibility To Interpersonal Influence. *Journal of Consumer Research, 15*(4), 473 and Mascarenhas, O. A. J., & Higby, M. A. (1993). Peer, parent, and media influences in teen apparel shopping. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 21*(1), 53–58.
6.7, 9.6, 12.6, 15.6, 6.8, 9.7, 12.7, 15.7, 6.9, 9.8, 12.8, 15.8, 6.10, 9.9, 12.9, 15.9	Informational influence	

4. Launch of the questionnaire

4.1. Pre-test

Before sharing the questionnaire online, a pre-test has to be done. It helps to assess the time needed to answer, verify if the vocabulary is understood, see if respondents do not want to answer some questions and check their interest until the end of the questionnaire (Steils, 2019). Ten girls part of the target group were asked to answer the questionnaire and give feedback afterwards.

It came out of that pre-test that the average time to answer the questionnaire is 5 min 30 sec. This is not too long and good to reduce the fatigue effect. Indeed, if the questionnaire is too long, the respondents lack of attention and it decreases the quality of responses (Steils, 2019).

Some respondents had troubles understanding the question 17 (verification of the type of product). It was consequently reformulated in order to increase its understandability. Another feedback was to make the introduction to the survey more attractive. It was therefore improved. Except from that, no other changes had to be made since the respondents found the questionnaire clear and answered until the end.

4.2. Sampling technique

Once the adaptations are done, the questionnaire is ready to be used. Because no database of generation Z females who follow at least one influencer is available, probability sampling is not achievable. In order to spread the questionnaire, Facebook will be used, thus a convenience sample. The advantage is that it is easy to access and is not costly. However, the disadvantage is that it is biased since only people I know or friends of people I know will have the opportunity to answer to the questionnaire. Most respondents would therefore live in the province of Luxembourg and be aged between 20 and 24 years old. To try to reduce the bias, I will inspire from snowball sampling and will ask people from different ages in generation Z, so between 11 and 26 years-old, and different localizations, to share the questionnaire with their friends. In that way, also people that I do not know will be able to answer, so the respondents will represent the whole age range of generation Z and not just a part of it. Moreover, the questionnaire will also be shared on special groups which are created just to share surveys with thousands of people on Facebook.

The survey was shared on 19th March 2021 via Facebook and ended on 25th March 2021. A total of 229 respondents took part in the survey until the end. Eight could not be taken into account because they did not respect the conditions of the sample frame, which are being a woman born between 1995 and 2010 and following at least one influencer on one social media. In total, 221 valid respondents are recorded.
Hereunder is table 4 with the number of respondents per situation. Those numbers are not equal due to the fact that many questionnaires were started but not finished. Moreover, some of the questionnaires that were answered until the end could not be taken into account because they were not respecting the sample conditions.

Table 4: Number of respondents per scenario

Situation	**Number of valid respondents**
Situation 1: pullover & peer	63
Situation 2: pullover & SMI	53
Situation 3: moisturizing cream & peer	60
Situation 4: moisturizing cream & SMI	45

5. Data analysis

5.1. Data preparation

5.1.1. Coding

The data collected from the 221 respondents now has to be prepared for further analysis. Before conducting the manipulation check and scale analysis, some excel data manipulation had to be done. Indeed, due to the four scenarios, the Qualtrics excel output created one variable per scale per scenario. For example, for each scenario, the expertise scale was measured by 4 items. The same quotation was used but the words friend, influencer, pullover and moisturizing cream varied depending on the scenario. Therefore, there was a total of 16 variables related to expertise, 4 per scenario.
In order to test the hypotheses, those variables had to be grouped into one per quotation and two nominal variables were created, namely type of product and type of person, to know which scenario was attributed.
A table was created to show which question relates to which variable in SPSS, it can be found in appendix 3.1.
The last step before scale evaluation is to assign a number to each possible response in order to be able to use the statistical software SPSS. Most of the coding was done automatically by Qualtrics, only the coding of the two new variables, type of product and type of person had to be done manually. A table summarizing the coding can be found in appendix 3.2. Once this is done, the scales evaluations can be conducted.

5.1.2. Scale evaluation

Several scales used in the survey are multi-item scales. Now, the purpose is to reduce those scales and to try to explain the multiple items using only one component. To do so, factor analyses have to be carried out.
A factor analysis examines the potential interrelationships among a number of variables. It allows to summarize the data by grouping several variables together (Steils, 2019).
The first step is to check that the variables are factorizable. For that, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) must be higher than 0,5. Moreover, the significance level of the Bartlett's sphericity test should be lower than 0,05. The factor analysis method used is the principal

components analysis (PCA). Indeed, the purpose is to determine the minimum number of factors that will account for the largest variance in the data.

If the conditions are fulfilled, the PCA can be done. The cumulative percentages of the variance extracted by the factors have to be higher than 50% and the eigenvalues higher than 1. If not, the items with commonalities lower than 0,5 should be deleted.

Before creating the new variable which will account for the others, the reliability of summarizing those variables together has to be checked. For that, the Cronbach Alpha must be higher than 0,7.

If it is the case, the new variable which is the mean of the several items can be created.

This detailed process will thus be conducted for each multi-item scale used in the survey.

Table 5: Results of scales evaluations

N°	**Scale**	**Items**	**KMO**	**Barlett's test**	**Cumulative variance**	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**New variable(s)**
1	Expertise	Expert1 Expert2 Expert3 Expert4	0,840	Sig. 0,000	76,4%	0,897	Expert
2	Trustworthiness	Trust1 Trust2 Trust3 Trust4	0,824	Sig. 0,000	81,6%	0,921	Trust
3	Attractiveness	Attract1 Attract2 Attract3 Attract4	0,811	Sig. 0,000	69,5%	0,848	Attract
4	Normative Influence	Norm1 Norm2 Norm3	0,749	Sig. 0,000	1 factor: 43,4% 2 factors: 76,5%	0,820	Norm_approval
5		Norm4 Norm5				0,728	Norm_identification
6	Informational Influence	Info1 Info2 Info3 Info4	0,738	Sig. 0,000	62,3%	0,791	Info
7	Product verification	Verif_product1 Verif_product2 Verif_product3	0,511	Sig. 0,000	53,9%	0,191	
8	Product verification (without 3rd item)	Verif_product1 Verif_product2	0,5	Sig. 0,000	78,1%	0,72	Verif_product

We will start with the expertise scale, which is a scale composed of four items. We will conduct a factor analysis in order to determine if the four items can be summarized into one component. All the results of the tests for all the scales can be found in table 5.
The KMO indicator is 0,84 which is higher than 0,5. Moreover, the Barlett's sphericity test level of significance is 0,000. Therefore, the data is factorizable.
The total variance explained by one component is 76,4%, which is much higher than 50%. According to the PCA, we can group the four items and explain them with only one variable. Still, before creating this new variable, we have to check the reliability of the scale. For that, we will conduct a reliability analysis and check the Cronbach's Alpha. In this case, it is 0,897 which is higher than 0,7. The scale is thus highly reliable and the new variable Expert which is the mean of Expert1, Expert2, Expert3 and Expert4 can be computed.

The same batch of tests is conducted for the trustworthiness scale, which is also a multi-item scale with four elements. The KMO and Barlett's Test conditions are fulfilled as it can be seen in table 5, line number 2. The PCA reveals that by keeping one component, 81,6% of the variance can be explained, which is great. Moreover, the scale is highly reliable. Consequently, a new variable Trust which is the mean of the four items can be created.

We will now run the factor analysis and reliability analysis for the last scale of the source credibility, which is attractiveness. On line number 3 of table 5, we can see that the KMO and Barlett's test conditions are met. With only one component, 69,5% of variance is explained. It is a little bit less than for the other scales but it is still higher than 50%. The Cronbach's Alpha exceeds 0,7 so the scale is reliable. By consequence, the new variable Attract, which is the mean of Attract1, Attract2, Attract3 and Attract4, is computed.

Now that the three scales of the source credibility have been reduced, we must go on with the normative and informational influences' scales.
We will start with the normative influence, which is measured by a five-item scale.
The factor analysis reveals that the KMO and Barlett's sphericity test conditions are fulfilled, the data is thus factorizable. However, in order to explain over 50% of variance,

two components are needed. The first component explains 43,4% of variance and when adding a second component, the cumulative variance explained is 76,5%.
When looking at the rotated component matrix (Appendix 3.3.), we can note that the first three items, namely Norm1, Norm2 and Norm3 are better explained by the first component. And the last two items, Norm4 and Norm5, are better explained by the second component. This is not surprising since factor 1 measures the items related to the approval and compliance to others' expectations, which is one side of normative influence. Indeed, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) separated normative influence into value expressive influence and utilitarian influence. Factor 1 therefore explains utilitarian influence, which happens when someone complies with others' expectations to be rewarded or avoid punishment. Whereas factor 2 measures items related to the identification part of normative influence, the fact of being part of a group. This relates to value expressive influence, which occurs when somebody wants to be associated to a group to improve self-image (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).
With those two factors we thus have to conduct two reliability analyses. The first one regarding Norm1, Norm2 and Norm3 has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,820, as it can be seen on line 4 of table 5, the scale is thus reliable. We can create a new variable Norm_approval which is the mean of Norm1, Norm2 and Norm3.
The second reliability analysis concerns Norm4 and Norm5. On line 5 of table 5, we observe that the Cronbach's Alpha is 0,728, we can consequently create the new variable Norm_identification by computing the mean of Norm4 and Norm5.

We will continue with the reduction of the scale informational influence. It comprises four items. The KMO and Barlett's test results reveal that the data is factorizable, as seen in line 6 of table 5. With one component, 62,3% of the variance is explained. The scale is reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,791. We can compute the mean of Info1, Info2, Info3 and Info4 and create the new variable Info.

Finally, we have one more scale to analyze. It is the three-items scale that was used to verify if the respondents perceived a pullover as a search good and a moisturizing cream as an experience good.

Before conducting the factor analysis, we have to compute a new variable because the Verif_product3_neg is not going in the same direction as Verif_product1 and Verif_product2. We thus compute the new variable Verif_product3 which is equal to 6-Verif_product3_neg. We can now conduct the factor analysis.

We can see on line 7 of table 5 that the KMO is 0,511 which is just above 0,5. The variable Verif_product3 has a really low communality of 0,129. Consequently, only 53,9% of variance is explained. When conducting a reliability analysis with the 3 items, the Cronbach's Alpha is 0,191. However, if the variable Verif_product3 was deleted, it would be much higher.

We will thus do a new factor analysis with only the first two variables, the results can be found in line 8 of table 5. Now the KMO has decreased a bit and is 0,5 but 78,1% of variance is explained and the reliability is higher with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,72. We will thus create a new variable Verif_product which is the mean of Verif_product1 and Verif_product2.

We are now done with the scale verifications since the last verification which concerns the type of influential person relies only on a one item scale.

5.1.3. Manipulation check

We now have to verify that respondents were attentive to the scenario they were assigned to and that the products were correctly perceived.

First, we have to check that respondents did think about a peer or an influencer when they were asked to. For that, we will use the person verification scale which ranges from 1 to 5, 1 corresponding to the definition of a peer and 5 to the definition of an influencer. We will conduct a T-Test for two independent samples to compare the means of the group which had to think about an influencer and the one which had to think about a peer. If the manipulation worked, the mean for SMIs should be significantly higher than the one for peers.

We can see on figure 4 that the Levene's test is significant (p=0,015), therefore equality of variances cannot be assumed. We will thus analyze the second line of the table. The mean of peers (1,24) is 3,38 points lower than the one of SMIs (4,61), and this difference is significant (p=0,000). This means that our manipulation worked and that people did think about a peer, someone close with whom they interact a lot, when they were asked

to. And that the others did think about an influencer, someone quite famous who they do not know for real.

Figure 4: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Verif_person

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Verif_person	peer	123	1,24	,702	,063
	SMI	98	4,61	,768	,078

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Verif_person	Equal variances assumed	6,041	,015	-34,054	219	,000	-3,376	,099	-3,572	-3,181
	Equal variances not assumed			-33,709	198,997	,000	-3,376	,100	-3,574	-3,179

The second verification we have to conduct is to check that respondents perceived a pullover rather as a search good and a moisturizing cream rather as an experience good. This is to verify both if respondents were attentive to the good they imagined buying and also to verify that the products taken for the survey were perceived as they were supposed to be. The scale used is the verification product one which has been reduced in the previous section and is now summarized by the variable Verif_product. This scale ranges from 1 to 5, 1 corresponding to the definition of an experience good and 5 of a search good. To conduct the manipulation check, we will realize a T-Test for two independent samples, where the means of the people who had to think about an experience good and a search good will be compared. If the manipulation worked, the mean for the search good should be significantly higher than for the experience good.

We can see on figure 5 that Levene's test is not significant (p=0,113), consequently equality of variances can be assumed and we can look at the first line of the table. It comes out that the mean of search good (3,82) is 0,05 points higher than the mean of experience good (3,77). Yet, this small difference is not significant, the p-value is 0,668. This means that the pullover and the moisturizing cream were not perceived as significantly different types of products. This should be kept in mind when analyzing the results of hypotheses testing.

There are several possible explanations to that result. This might be due to the fact that the scale used was not appropriate. Indeed, during the pre-test some reported that they were not sure they understood the question. Maybe even with the improvements, the

respondents still did not understand. Moreover, we saw that the reliability of the scale was very low when the three items were used. One had to be deleted, but the Cronbach's Alpha was just above 0,7, it was not really high.

The lack of difference can also be due to a bad choice of products. However, the products were chosen based on previous studies which had classified clothing as a search good and toiletries as an experience good.

Figure 5: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Verif_product

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Verif_product	search	116	3,8147	,74755	,06941
	experience	105	3,7667	,90953	,08876

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Verif_product	Equal variances assumed	2,537	,113	,430	219	,668	,04799	,11159	-,17194	,26792
	Equal variances not assumed			,426	201,827	,671	,04799	,11268	-,17419	,27016

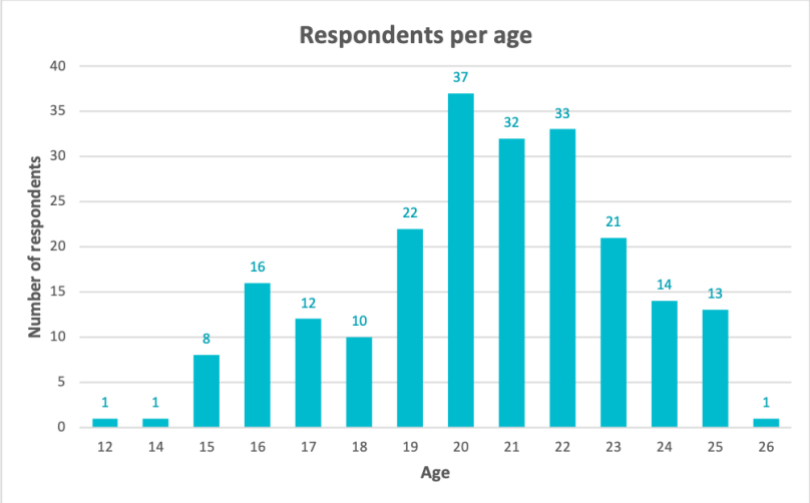
5.2. Sample description

Now that the scales are reduced, we can have a look at our sample. The social media the most used by respondents is Instagram, indeed 96,8% use it. It is followed by Facebook (83,7%), then YouTube and Snapchat (both 76,9%) without surprise. Twitter was the least used social media among the ones displayed in the answers. It is only used by 18,1% of respondents (Appendix 4.1).

Nearly all respondents, 98,2%, use social media every day. This answer is not surprising because the respondents are part of generation Z, which is digital native and highly connected. The others who do not use them every day still use them 4 to 6 times per week (Appendix 4.2).

Concerning the activity of the respondents, most of them, 90,5%, are students or in training. Employees represent 8,6% and less than 1% are independent. Again, those results are not startling since most people from generation Z are still in the age to go to school (Appendix 4.3).

Figure 6: Respondents per age



Regarding the age of respondents, which had to be between 11 and 26 years-old to be part of generation Z, it is quite varied as it can be seen in figure 6. There are more responses from people aged 20-22 years-old, which is not surprising because I shared the survey on my Facebook and most of my contacts and their friends are in that age-range. However, responses from younger and older people were also collected, which is important to have a diversified and representative sample. Still, it was really hard to get answers from very young people, aged 11 to 14 years-old since it is quite early to have accounts on social media.

5.3. Testing of hypothesis

Now that the main characteristics of the sample have been described, we can test the hypotheses developed earlier.

5.3.1. Test of informational and normative influences hypotheses

H1: SMIs generate a higher informational influence than peers.

Independent variable: type of person (nominal)

Dependent variable: informational influence (metric)

To test this hypothesis, a T-Test for two independent samples will be conducted. Indeed, we aim to compare the informational influence generated by peers and the one generated by SMIs. With our test, we want to reject H0 to be able to admit that there is a significant difference between peers' and influencers' informational influences.

H0: There is no difference between the mean informational influence of peers and SMIs.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean informational influence of peers and SMIs. The mean is higher for SMIs than peers.

Once the test is conducted, we should first verify whether the two groups have an equal variance or not. To do so, we have to look at the Levene's test results. This test's null hypothesis is that variances are equal, therefore we would like to fail rejecting H0 to assume equality of variance. However, we can see that in our case the test has a significance level of 0,001 which is lower than 0,05 (Figure 7). This means that we reject H0 and variances are not equal. We thus have to look at the independent samples T-Test results for "equal variances not assumed", which is the second line of the table. The test reveals that there is a significant difference (p=0,000) between peers' and SMIs' informational influences of 0,47 (Figure 7). The test shows us that peers (3,24) exert a higher informational influence than SMIs (2,77), the difference is therefore the contrary of what was hypothesized. This means that our first hypothesis is not validated. SMIs do not generate a higher informational influence than peers.

Figure 7: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Info

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Info	peer	123	3,2398	,78563	,07084
	SMI	98	2,7704	1,00429	,10145

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Info	Equal variances assumed	11,811	,001	3,899	219	,000	,46943	,12039	,23215	,70671
	Equal variances not assumed			3,794	180,526	,000	,46943	,12373	,22528	,71358

H2: Peers generate a higher normative influence than SMIs.

Independent variable: type of person (nominal)

Dependent variable: normative influence (metric)

To test this hypothesis, T-Tests for two independent samples will be conducted. Indeed, we want to compare the normative influence generated by peers and the one generated by SMIs.

H0: There is no difference between the mean normative influence of peers and SMIs.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean normative influence of peers and SMIs. The mean is higher for peers than SMIs.

Since the scale evaluation revealed that normative influence was explained by not one but two components, two T-Tests will have to be conducted. We will start with the variable Norm_approval, which is linked to utilitarian influence and which is a part of normative influence.

This time the Levene's test is not significant (p=0,76), which means we fail to reject that variances are equal (Figure 8). We can therefore interpret the first line of the table, which is for "equal variances assumed". We can see that there is a difference of 0,03 between peers' (1,84) and SMIs' (1,81) influences. However, this small difference is not significant. Indeed, the significance level is 0,79 which is much higher than 0,05 (Figure 8). By consequence, we fail to reject H0 and have to assume that there is no difference between the value of Norm_approval for peers and SMIs.

Figure 8: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Norm_approval

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Norm_approval	peer	123	1,8401	,83671	,07544
	SMI	98	1,8095	,87081	,08796

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Norm_approval	Equal variances assumed	,092	,761	,265	219	,791	,03058	,11536	-,19678	,25795
	Equal variances not assumed			,264	204,298	,792	,03058	,11589	-,19790	,25907

The same test is now realized for the second variable, Norm_identification, which is associated to value expressive influence, a division of normative influence. Again, the Levene's test on figure 9 shows that equality of variance cannot be rejected (p=0,179). We therefore have to analyze the first line of the table which refers to "equal variances assumed" (Figure 9). We observe a difference of 0,05 points between peers' (1,6) and SMIs' (1,65) influences. Yet, this slight difference is not significant since the significance level (p=0,63) is higher than 0,05 which means we fail rejecting H0.

Figure 9: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Norm_identification

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Norm_identification	peer	123	1,5976	,74012	,06673
	SMI	98	1,6480	,80657	,08148

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Norm_identification	Equal variances assumed	1,817	,179	-,483	219	,629	-,05040	,10430	-,25595	,15516
	Equal variances not assumed			-,479	199,438	,633	-,05040	,10532	-,25808	,15728

We can conclude from those tests that there is no significant difference between peers' and SMIs' normative influences since both variables showed no significant difference. Our hypothesis 2 is thus not verified, we cannot say that peers exert a higher normative influence than SMIs.

An interesting insight is that for both peers and SMIs, the informational influence dominates the normative one. But peers have a higher informational influence than SMIs.

5.3.2. Test of search and experience goods hypotheses

H3a: Peers have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is experience good.

H3b: SMIs have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is search good.

Independent variable: type of person & type of product
Dependent variable: Informational influence

To test those hypotheses, we first wanted to conduct a N-way Anova. Unfortunately, the Levene's test was significant so we could not assume equality of variances. The problem is that for a N-way Anova, the Welsh test cannot be called, it only works for a simple Anova. Therefore, in order to test the hypotheses H3a and H3b, we will conduct 2 T-Tests instead of one N-way Anova.

To test H3a, we will select the cases where type_of_person=1, which corresponds to peers. We can write the following null and test hypotheses:

H0: There is no difference between the mean informational influence of peers depending on the type of product.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean informational influence of peers depending on the product. Experience goods generate a higher influence than search goods.

We can then conduct an independent samples T-Test to compare the means of informational influence depending on the type of product. We can see on figure 10 that Levene's test is not significant (p=0,111) so the equality of variances can be assumed. Likewise, we can see that for experience goods, the level of informational influence is 3,4 which is 0,31 points higher than for search goods, 3,09. This difference has a significance level of 0,027 which is thus significant. We can therefore reject H0 and verify our Hypothesis 3a. We confirm that peers have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is experience good.

Figure 10: T-Test for 2 independent samples (search VS experience) on variable Info for peers

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Info	search	63	3,0873	,70876	,08929
	experience	60	3,4000	,83514	,10782

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Info	Equal variances assumed	2,572	,111	-2,243	121	,027	-,31270	,13943	-,58874	-,03665
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,234	115,836	,027	-,31270	,13999	-,58998	-,03542

Before testing H3b, we must select the cases for which the type of person is SMIs. Once it is done, we can conduct an independent samples T-Test to compare the means of informational influence depending on the type of product. We will test the following hypotheses:

H0: There is no difference between the mean informational influence of SMIs depending on the type of product.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean informational influence of SMIs depending on the product. Search goods generate a higher influence than experience goods.

The Levene's test reveals that we can assume equality of variances (p=0,119). We can see on the group statistics table in figure 11 that the level of informational influence is of 2,98 for experience goods and 2,59 for search goods. However, the difference of 0,38 between the means is only marginally significant. Indeed, its significance level is 0,059 which is a bit above 0,05 (Independent samples test table of figure 11). However, this difference goes in the opposite direction compared to what we expected. Indeed, informational influence is marginally higher for experience goods than search goods. We thus cannot accept H3b.

Figure 11: T-Test for 2 independent samples (search VS experience) on variable Info for SMIs

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Info	search	53	2,5943	,89366	,12275
	experience	45	2,9778	1,09470	,16319

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Info	Equal variances assumed	2,478	,119	-1,909	96	,059	-,38344	,20086	-,78214	,01526
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,878	84,885	,064	-,38344	,20420	-,78945	,02258

H4a: Peers have a greater impact on normative influence when the product type is experience good.

H4b: SMIs have a greater impact on normative influence when the product type is search good.

Independent variable: type of person & type of product
Dependent variable: Normative influence

To test those hypotheses, the same method as for H3a and H3b had to be applied. Because normative influence is explained by two components, we have to conduct the T-Tests for both Norm_approval and Norm_identification. We can write those null and test hypotheses:

H0: There is no difference between the mean normative influence of peers depending on the type of product.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean normative influence of peers depending on the product. Experience goods generate a higher influence than search goods.

We will start by testing H4a and we will select the cases where the type of person is peers. We then start with the T-Test comparing the means of Norm_approval depending on the type of product.

Equality of variances can be assumed since Levene's test is not significant (p=0,087). We can therefore look at the first line of the table Independent Samples Test (Figure 12) and see that the small difference in means (0,2) between search (1,94) and experience goods (1,74) is not significant (p=0,192). For the component Norm_approval we thus fail rejecting H0 and we cannot accept H4a.

Figure 12: T-Test for 2 independent samples (search VS experience) on variable Norm_approval for peers

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Norm_approval	search	63	1,9365	,77796	,09801
	experience	60	1,7389	,88955	,11484

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Norm_approval	Equal variances assumed	2,978	,087	1,313	121	,192	,19762	,15049	-,10031	,49555
	Equal variances not assumed			1,309	117,122	,193	,19762	,15098	-,10139	,49662

The same test is now conducted for the second component of normative influence, namely Norm_identification. The equality of variances can be assumed (p=0,269) and by looking at the first line of the independent samples test table (Figure 13), we can see that the difference of 0,02 between the means of search (1,59) and experience goods (1,61) is not significant (p=0,876). Consequently, we fail rejecting H0, there is no significant difference between the mean of Norm_identification depending on the type of product. Since for both components of normative influence the difference is not significant, we fail to accept H4a. Peers' normative influence is not higher for experience goods.

Figure 13: T-Test for 2 independent samples (search VS experience) on variable Norm_identification for peers

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Norm_identification	search	63	1,5873	,70448	,08876
	experience	60	1,6083	,78163	,10091

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Norm_identification	Equal variances assumed	1,234	,269	-,157	121	,876	-,02103	,13405	-,28641	,24435
	Equal variances not assumed			-,157	118,251	,876	-,02103	,13439	-,28715	,24509

We will now conduct the tests for H4b. We start by selecting only the data where the type of person is SMIs. Furthermore, we write the following hypotheses:

H0: There is no difference between the mean normative influence of SMIs depending on the type of product.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean normative influence of SMIs depending on the product. Search goods generate a higher influence than experience goods.

Afterwards we conduct an independent samples T-Test to compare the means of Norm_approval depending on the type of product. Equality of variances cannot be assumed (p=0,003) so we have to look at the second line of the table Independent Samples Test (Figure 14). We can see that the mean for experience goods (2,1) is 0,53 points higher than for search goods (1,57) and this difference is significant (p=0,003). However, this difference is the opposite compared to what we predicted, therefore we cannot accept H4b for the Norm_approval component.

Figure 14: T-Test for 2 independent samples (search VS experience) on variable Norm_approval for SMIs

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Norm_approval	search	53	1,5660	,66533	,09139
	experience	45	2,0963	,99651	,14855

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Norm_approval	Equal variances assumed	9,618	,003	-3,138	96	,002	-,53026	,16898	-,86568	-,19483
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,040	74,571	,003	-,53026	,17441	-,87774	-,18278

We will now conduct the same test for Norm_identification. This time equality of variances is assumed (p=0,702) and we can see that the small mean difference (0,01) between search (1,64) and experience goods (1,66) is not significant (Figure 15). The p-value is indeed 0,932. Consequently, we fail to reject H0 and we cannot say that there is a significant difference of means between search and experience goods for Norm_identification. H4b is thus not accepted either for the component Norm_identification. Therefore, we can conclude that SMIs' normative influence is not higher for search than experience goods.

Figure 15: T-Test for 2 independent samples (search VS experience) on variable Norm_identification for SMIs

Group Statistics

	Type_product	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Norm_identification	search	53	1,6415	,80490	,11056
	experience	45	1,6556	,81758	,12188

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Norm_identification	Equal variances assumed	,147	,702	-,085	96	,932	-,01405	,16434	-,34026	,31217
	Equal variances not assumed			-,085	92,951	,932	-,01405	,16455	-,34082	,31273

5.3.3. Test of personal characteristics impact hypotheses

H5: Higher expertise leads to higher informational influence.

Dependent variable: informational influence (metric)

Independent variable: expertise (metric)

To test that hypothesis, we will conduct a multiple regression analysis. This analysis will reveal whether expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness do have an impact on informational influence. Thus, the multiple regression explained hereunder will also be used to test the following hypotheses 8 and 11.

For hypothesis 5, we can write the following null and test hypotheses:

H0: Expertise does not significantly impact informational influence.

H1: Expertise significantly impacts informational influence. This impact is positive.

We want to reject H0 and confirm H1. For that, the Beta needs to be significant and positive.

A multiple regression analysis using the stepwise technique was carried out. Before analyzing it, several conditions have to be verified.

We can see on figure 16 that the Durbin Watson is 1,973 which is close to 2. This indicates that there is no autocorrelation of errors.

Figure 16: Model summary of multiple regression explaining Info

Model Summary[c]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	,311[a]	,096	,092	,87401	,096	23,384	1	219	,000	
2	,389[b]	,151	,143	,84916	,055	14,002	1	218	,000	1,973

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Expert

c. Dependent Variable: Info

We now have to verify the normal distribution of residuals. To do so, we have to look at the normal Q-Q plot which can be found in appendix 5.1.1. We can observe that the points are near the diagonal, which shows that it is normally distributed. We further have to check the homoscedasticity. To do so, we have a look at the ZRESID against ZPRED plot (Appendix 5.1.2.). The data is quite dispersed so it is homoscedastic.

Finally, we have to check on figure 17 that the VIF is lower than 3 and the Tolerance is higher than 0,3. It is the case so all the conditions are met and we can now interpret the ANOVA table.

Figure 17: Coefficients of multiple regression explaining Info

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1,147	,394		2,909	,004		
	Trust	,429	,089	,311	4,836	,000	1,000	1,000
2	(Constant)	,551	,415		1,328	,186		
	Trust	,412	,086	,298	4,775	,000	,997	1,003
	Expert	,210	,056	,234	3,742	,000	,997	1,003

a. Dependent Variable: Info

It appears after the regression analysis that two models were created, we can check that both are significant in the ANOVA table (Figure 18).

Figure 18: ANOVA table of multiple regression explaining Info

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17,862	1	17,862	23,384	,000[b]
	Residual	167,291	219	,764		
	Total	185,153	220			
2	Regression	27,959	2	13,979	19,387	,000[c]
	Residual	157,195	218	,721		
	Total	185,153	220			

a. Dependent Variable: Info

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust

c. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Expert

Using the Model Summary, we can see that adding Trust is significant as well as adding Expert (Figure 16). The variable Attract was not added to the model since its impact on Info is not significant. Model 2 has a higher adjusted R square (0,143), we will therefore keep that one.

We can now have a look at the coefficients (Figure 17). In order to write the equation, unstandardized coefficients have to be used. However, if we wish to compare the coefficients to see which one has the most impact, we have to look at the standardized coefficients.

The model is the following:

*Info = 0,551 + 0,412*Trust + 0,210*Expert + epsilon*

If we now compare Trust and Expert, we can see that Trust (β=0,298) has a higher impact on Info than Expert (β=0,234).

We can conclude from this multiple regression that H5 is validated. Indeed, the beta corresponding to the variable Expert has a significance level of 0,000 and has a value of 0,210 which means that when Expert increases, Info increases as well which is what we hypothesized.

H8: Higher attractiveness does not lead to higher informational influence.

Dependent variable: informational influence (metric)

Independent variable: attractiveness (metric)

This hypothesis will be tested using the same multiple regression analysis as for H5.

H0: Attractiveness does not significantly impact informational influence.

H1: Attractiveness significantly impacts informational influence.

Here we want to fail rejecting H0 to show that there is no link between attractiveness and informational influence. For that, the Beta should not be significative.

We can see that the variable Attract does not appear in the multiple regression model. This means that its impact on informational influence is not significant. We can therefore partially validate H8.

H11: Higher trustworthiness leads to higher informational influence.

Dependent variable: informational influence (metric)

Independent variable: trustworthiness (metric)

To test that hypothesis, we will use the same multiple regression analysis as for H5 and H8 which was detailed earlier.

H0: Trustworthiness does not significantly impact informational influence.

H1: Trustworthiness significantly impacts informational influence. This impact is positive.

We want to reject H0 and confirm H1. For that, the Beta needs to be significant and positive.

We observe from the coefficients table of the multiple regression analysis that the variable Trust has a significance level of 0,000, which means that it does have an impact on the variable Info (Figure 17). Moreover, the value of the unstandardized coefficient of Trust is 0,412 which is positive. This means that when Trust increases, Info does as well. We can therefore reject H0 and say that our hypothesis 11 is validated. Moreover, we can also note that trustworthiness is the component that has the most impact on informational influence.

H6: Higher expertise does not lead to higher normative influence.

Dependent variable: normative influence (metric)

Independent variable: expertise (metric)

To test that hypothesis, we will conduct two multiple regression analyses. As a reminder, normative influence is explained by two variables. Those regressions will disclose whether expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness have an impact on normative influence. It is important to note that the multiple regressions explained hereunder will also be used to test the following hypotheses 9 and 12.

For hypothesis 6, we can write the following null and test hypotheses:

H0: Expertise does not significantly impact normative influence.

H1: Expertise significantly impacts normative influence.

Here we want to fail rejecting H0 to show that there is no link between expertise and normative influence. For that, the Beta should not be significant.

We will start with the first component of normative influence, which is Norm_approval. This variable refers to utilitarian influence.

We can see from the summary of the regression analysis that the Durbin Watson is 1,845 which is close to 2 (Figure 19). This indicated that there is no autocorrelation of errors.

Figure 19: Model summary of multiple regression explaining Norm_approval

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	,135[a]	,018	,014	,84435	,018	4,051	1	219	,045	1,845

a. Predictors: (Constant), Expert

b. Dependent Variable: Norm_approval

We further have to check the normal distribution of residuals. By checking the Q-Q plot, we can see that most points are near the diagonal so we can assume a normal distribution of residuals (Appendix 5.2.1.). Another condition is homoscedasticity. We can see on the graph of ZRESID against ZPRED that the data is dispersed, so the condition is met (Appendix 5.2.2.).

Finally, we have to check that the VIF and Tolerance conditions are fulfilled, we can see that it is the case in figure 20. We are now allowed to analyze the regression outcomes.

Figure 20: Coefficients of multiple regression explaining Norm_approval

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1,469	,187		7,865	,000		
	Expert	,112	,056	,135	2,013	,045	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: Norm_approval

It comes out of the multiple regression analysis that only one model was created, using the variable Expert. The variables Attract and Trust do not significantly impact Norm_approval.

In the ANOVA table, figure 21, we can see that the model is significant since the significance level is 0,045 which is lower than 0,05.

Figure 21: ANOVA table of multiple regression explaining Norm_approval

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2,888	1	2,888	4,051	,045[b]
	Residual	156,129	219	,713		
	Total	159,018	220			

a. Dependent Variable: Norm_approval

b. Predictors: (Constant), Expert

We can therefore examine the coefficients table (Figure 20). The Beta for the variable Expert is positive and significant.

We consequently write the model:

*Norm_approval = 1,469 + 0,112*Expert + epsilon*

From this first regression, we can conclude that expertise (variable Expert) has a positive significant impact on Norm_approval, against our expectations.

We now have to go on with the second multiple regression which explains the variable Norm_identification, which is related to value expressive influence, the other part of normative influence.

It results from the analysis that no model could be created because it was not significant. The variables Expert, Attract and Trust therefore do not significantly impact Norm_identification.

Our hypothesis 6 is thus partially validated. Indeed, it is true for the variable Norm_identification. However, we saw that expertise had an impact on the variable Norm_approval. Since normative influence is the combination of those two variables, the hypothesis cannot be entirely validated.

H9: Higher attractiveness leads to higher normative influence.

Dependent variable: normative influence (metric)

Independent variable: attractiveness (metric)

To test that hypothesis, we use the same multiple regressions as for H6. These are the null and test hypotheses to consider:

H0: Attractiveness does not significantly impact normative influence.

H1: Attractiveness significantly impacts normative influence. The impact is positive.

We want to reject H0 and confirm H1. For that, the Beta needs to be significant and positive.

In the first regression which explains Norm_approval, attractiveness is not significant and therefore does not appear in the model. For this first variable, we consequently fail to reject H0.

What concerns the second regression which explains Norm_identification, attractiveness does not appear either. This means that it does not have a significant impact on Norm_identification.

We can therefore conclude from both regressions that attractiveness does not significantly impact normative influence. We thus fail to reject H0 and our hypothesis 9 is not verified.

H12: Higher trustworthiness leads to higher normative influence.

Dependent variable: normative influence (metric)

Independent variable: trustworthiness (metric)

This hypothesis will be tested using the same multiple regressions as for H6 and H9. The following null and test hypotheses are written:

H0: Trustworthiness does not significantly impact normative influence.

H1: Trustworthiness significantly impacts normative influence. The impact is positive.

We want to reject H0 and confirm H1. For that, the Beta needs to be significant and positive.

Similarly to attractiveness, trustworthiness does not appear in the regressions. The variable Trust does not have a significant effect on Norm_approval, neither does it on Norm_identification. We therefore fail to reject H0 and conclude that trustworthiness does not significantly impact normative influence. This is against what we hypothesized, H12 is consequently not verified.

H7: Expertise is higher for SMIs than for peers.

Dependent variable: expertise (metric)

Independent variable: type of person (nominal)

To test this hypothesis, a T-Test for two independent samples will be conducted. Indeed, we want to compare the expertise of peers to the one of SMIs. We can write the null and the alternative hypotheses:

H0: There is no difference between the mean expertise of peers and SMIs.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean expertise of peers and SMIs. The mean is higher for SMIs than for peers.

To validate our hypothesis, we need to reject H0.

We can see on the figure 22 that the Levene's test is not significant (p=0,581) so we can assume that the variances of both groups are equal. We will therefore check the first line of the table. The test reveals that peers have a mean expertise of 3 which is 0,43 points lower than SMIs' one, 3,43. This difference is significant since the level is 0,002 which is lower than 0,05. We can consequently reject the null hypothesis and verify our hypothesis number 7.

Figure 22: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Expert

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Expert	peer	123	3,0000	1,02279	,09222
	SMI	98	3,4311	,97242	,09823

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Expert	Equal variances assumed	,306	,581	-3,181	219	,002	-,43112	,13551	-,69820	-,16405
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,200	212,250	,002	-,43112	,13474	-,69671	-,16553

H10: Attractiveness is higher for SMIs than for peers.

Dependent variable: attractiveness (metric)

Independent variable: type of person (nominal)

To test this hypothesis, another T-Test for two independent samples will be conducted. In fact, we want to compare the attractiveness of peers to the one of influencers. Here are our test hypotheses:

H0: There is no difference between the mean attractiveness of peers and SMIs.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean attractiveness of peers and SMIs. The mean is higher for SMIs than for peers.

The output (Figure 23) shows that the Levene's test is not significant (p=0,727) which means equality of variances can be assumed. What concerns the difference of means, peers' attractiveness (4,06) is 0,05 points higher than SMIs' one (4,02). However, this small difference is not significant (p=0,61). We therefore fail to reject H0 and our hypothesis 10 is not verified.

Figure 23: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Attract

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attract	peer	123	4,0610	,63966	,05768
	SMI	98	4,0153	,68660	,06936

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Attract	Equal variances assumed	,123	,727	,510	219	,610	,04567	,08948	-,13069	,22203
	Equal variances not assumed			,506	201,087	,613	,04567	,09020	-,13220	,22354

H 13: Trustworthiness is higher for peers than for SMIs.

Dependent variable: trustworthiness (metric)

Independent variable: type of person (nominal)

Again, the hypothesis will be tested using a T-Test for two independent samples, as we are willing to compare the trustworthiness of peers to the one of influencers. Those are the hypotheses used for the statistical test:

H0: There is no difference between the mean trustworthiness of peers and SMIs.

H1: There is a significant difference between the mean trustworthiness of peers and SMIs. The mean is higher for peers than for SMIs.

Once again we aim at rejecting H0 in order to verify our hypothesis.

This time the Levene's test result visible on figure 24 is significant (p=0,017). Equality of variances is thus not assumed and the second line of the table will be analyzed. We observe that the mean trustworthiness of peers (4,65) exceeds of 0,59 points the one of SMIs (4,07). Moreover, the level of significance of this difference is 0,000 which is lower than 0,05. We can therefore reject H0 and verify our hypothesis 13. Trustworthiness is higher for peers than for SMIs.

Figure 24: T-Test for 2 independent samples (peers VS SMIs) on variable Trust

Group Statistics

	Type_person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Trust	peer	123	4,6524	,49551	,04468
	SMI	98	4,0663	,70579	,07130

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Trust	Equal variances assumed	5,788	,017	7,240	219	,000	,58611	,08095	,42657	,74565
	Equal variances not assumed			6,966	167,595	,000	,58611	,08414	,42001	,75222

5.4. Conclusion of the data analysis

Table 6: Results of hypotheses testing

Hypo-thesis	Result	Explanation
H1	Not approved	Peers exert a significantly higher informational influence than SMIs, which is the reverse of what was hypothesized.
H2	Not approved	For both components of normative influence, there is no significant difference between peers and SMIs.
H3a	Approved	For peers, the level of informational influence is significantly higher when the product type is experience good.
H3b	Not approved	For SMIs, the level of informational influence is marginally higher for experience goods. This is the opposite of what was hypothesized.
H4a	Not approved	For peers, both components of normative influence reveal no significant mean difference depending on the type of product.
H4b	Not approved	For SMIs, Norm_approval is higher for experience than search goods, which is the opposite of what was hypothesized. For the second component, there is no significant difference depending on the product.
H5	Approved	Expertise significantly and positively affects informational influence since Beta is significant.
H6	Partially approved	Normative influence is composed of 2 components, and expertise does influence one of them. Expertise influences Norm_approval but not Norm_identification.
H7	Approved	Expertise is higher for SMIs than peers, the difference is significant.
H8	Partially approved	We can assume that higher attractiveness does not lead to higher informational influence since we failed to reject H0 which states that attractiveness does not significantly impact informational influence.
H9	Not approved	Attractiveness does not significantly impact normative influence. The variable is not significant in the Norm_approval regression nor in the Norm_identification one.
H10	Not approved	Attractiveness is not higher for SMIs than for peers. No significant difference was found.
H11	Approved	Higher trustworthiness leads to higher informational influence. The Beta is significant and positive. Moreover, it is the variable with the highest impact.
H12	Not approved	Trustworthiness does not significantly impact normative influence. The variable is not significant in the Norm_approval regression nor in the Norm_identification one.
H13	Approved	Trustworthiness is higher for peers than for SMIs, the difference is significant.

Even if all our hypotheses could not be verified, we could still learn a lot on peers and SMIs and their influence on generation Z women.

We hypothesized that SMIs would generate a higher informational influence than peers due to their expertise in specific domains. However, it turned out that peers are the ones

who exert the highest informational influence on generation Z women. This means that people are more influenced by the information given by their peers.
What concerns normative influence, we could see that for both components, there was no significant difference between peers and SMIs. We thought that peers, due to their closeness and real relationship with the person, would have a higher impact but it is not the case.
We further learned that for both peers and SMIs, the type of influence which is the most influential is the informational one. It means that generation Z women are more influenced by the information they receive, which helps them to make a decision, rather than being influenced because they want to be rewarded or want to be part of a group. For influencers, no previous studies could be found on the subject, so it is an interesting finding to know that their influence comes mainly from informational influence and that this one is still lower compared to peers.

What concerns the impact of the type of product, we validated that peers have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is experience good. This can be explained by the fact that peers are close to the person and know them personally, so their advice is trusted. Moreover, it is difficult to find information on an experience good without trying it, so asking a friend can help to make a decision.
Concerning SMIs, their level of informational influence was marginally higher for experience goods than search goods. This is the opposite of what we expected. They do not have more influence on search products for which their advice is more objective.
Regarding normative influence, we thought that peers would have a greater impact on experience goods. However, it came out of the survey that there was no significant difference in normative influence depending on the type of product. Let us remind that the level of normative influence is much lower than the informational one, and this low impact does not change depending on the product.
About SMIs, it was hypothesized that their level of normative influence would be higher for search goods. It turned out that it was not verified. Indeed, for the component (Norm_approval) dealing with the utilitarian side of normative influence, the influence was slightly higher on experience than search goods. And for the value expressive side, there was no significant difference depending on the product type.

The last part of our analysis concerns the impact of source credibility on peers' and SMIs' influences. About expertise, we verified that it has a positive impact on informational influence. Regarding normative influence, we thought that expertise would not impact its level. However, it came out that the utilitarian component of normative influence was positively impacted by expertise. This means that people will tend more to try to avoid punishment or seek reward by their attitude if the influential person has more expertise. Still, it was verified that the value expressive part of normative influence is not significantly impacted by expertise. People will not want to identify more to someone because this person has more expertise. Next to that, we could verify that SMIs are more perceived as experts than peers.

For attractiveness, we were right when saying that it would not significantly impact informational influence. Being more attractive does not lead to a higher informational influence level. This seems logical since the beauty of someone does not explain the value of the information they can share with their contacts. However, concerning normative influence, we thought that it would have a positive impact but it does not. Attractiveness does not significantly impact the level of normative influence. We further thought that SMIs would be perceived as more attractive than peers, but it turned out that there was no significant difference.

What concerns trustworthiness, we accepted that higher trustworthiness leads to higher informational influence. In fact, it is the characteristic which impacts the most informational influence. We hypothesized that trustworthiness would also impact normative influence, however, it turned out that it does not significantly impact it. Therefore, the fact that people trust the peer or SMI will only impact how they will be influenced by the information received. We finally could verify that peers have a higher trustworthiness level than SMIs. This is not surprising since a peer is someone we know for real and with whom we interact more than with an influencer, even if a parasocial relationship can exist. The fact that peers are more trusted and that trustworthiness is the component with the most impact on informational influence explains partially why peers have a higher informational influence than SMIs.

General conclusion

This master thesis aims to compare how peers and SMIs impact the purchase intention of generation Z. This generation will soon have a large purchasing power and it is crucial for companies to understand who influences them. We started this comparative study by reviewing existing literature on both actors. This allowed us to find three interesting axes of comparison for the empirical study: type of influence, type of product and personal characteristics. Hypotheses were written based on those axes and an online questionnaire was launched to test them. The data analysis allowed us to learn more about peers' and SMIs' influences and to draw some interesting conclusions. We will now discuss the new theoretical contributions we can bring thanks to our results. We will also explain which previous research we support. Then, thanks to those learnings, we will be able to give some advice concerning managerial practices, especially in marketing, to benefit from the influence of those two actors. We will finish this paper by explaining its limitations and potential further research.

1. Theoretical contributions

This comparative study on peers' and SMIs' influences on the purchase intention of generation Z brings several interesting theoretical insights.

Firstly, we learned about the type of influence exerted by SMIs. This is an important contribution since no similar study could be found. We identified that SMIs exert mainly informational influence on their followers. It means that followers are influenced by the information SMIs give about goods, which they perceive as the reality. On the other side, SMIs' level of normative influence is very low, which means that followers are not following SMIs' advice to be part of a group or be rewarded.

Yet, we noted that the most influential actors when it comes to informational influence are still the peers. For normative influence, no significant difference was detected. This means that Gen Zers will listen more to the advice and information given by their close friends than the ones given by SMIs. This result goes in the same direction than the findings of Bertrandias and Vernette (2012), who claim that people tend to ask more for advice to strong links, like peers, rather than weaker ones, like SMIs. This also joins previous non-scientific studies which already found out that peers remained the actors

with the most impact on people's purchase decisions (MarketingCharts, 2018, 2019; Razorfish, 2009; Stackla, 2018). However, most of those studies did not focus on generation Z, our study therefore brings new information. Moreover, we also contribute to the already existing studies on the type of interpersonal influence exerted by peers. Our results reveal that peers exert a higher level of informational influence than normative influence, similarly to SMIs. This result meets other scientific studies conducted previously by Mascarenhas and Higby (1993), Mangleburg et al. (2004) and Goodrich and Mangleburg (2010).

Our research also brings some theoretical contributions about the impact of the type of product on the influence. We validated that peers have a greater impact on informational influence when the product type is experience good. Indeed, considering that peers interact a lot and know each other well, their subjective advice on experience goods is highly valuable since it is hard to find information before purchase about those goods.
Yet, what concerns SMIs, our findings do not match those of Lu et al. (2014). We indeed found that informational influence was marginally higher for experience goods, not for search goods. The same result was found for utilitarian normative influence. This means that SMIs' opinion on experience goods, even if it is more subjective and personal, is still valuable for followers. This might be explained by the fact that it is hard to find information on experience goods, so people turn to influencers' reviews. However, we must remind that we used a moisturizing cream as experience good and that it was not perceived as such by the respondents. Therefore, those findings should be taken lightly and should be verified by conducting another study using other products.

Finally, our study will also contribute to the existing papers on the impact of source credibility on interpersonal influence and PI. We firstly partially validated that attractiveness does not lead to higher informational influence. However, a surprising finding is that attractiveness does not lead either to higher normative influence on purchase decision. This is unexpected since the majority of studies on the subject found that higher attractiveness leads to higher impact on PI, and two further said that it is the most impactful characteristic (Table 1, pages 22-23). However, this result might be explained by the fact that we surveyed only women. Indeed, Pashaei (2020) argues that

the impact of SMIs' personal characteristics on PI depends on the gender. According to this study, women would be more influenced by expertise and trustworthiness, which joins our results. Whereas for men, attractiveness is more important.

Regarding expertise, it has a positive impact on informational influence and on the utilitarian component of normative influence. Studies conducted by Draganova (2018); Egertz et al. (2019); Pashaei (2020) and Chetioui et al. (2020) go in the same direction and found that expertise have a positive influence on PI. The positive impact on informational influence can be explained by the fact that someone with expertise will be able to give more precise and correct information about a good because he or she better understands the benefits and drawbacks of it (Egertz et al., 2019).

We also found that SMIs were perceived as having more expertise than peers. Since they are often known for their expertise in specific fields, this is not unexpected (Draganova, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019). They also receive a lot of products and participate in events which increases their knowledge in their field of expertise.

Concerning trustworthiness, the last component of source credibility, it was found that it is the component with the highest impact on informational influence. Similarly, Egertz et al. (2019) and Rebelo (2017) found that it is the characteristic with the highest impact on PI. Yet, we should keep in mind that we only surveyed women, which influences the results. Indeed, Rebelo (2017) claims that trustworthiness has much more impact on female followers' PI than on male.

Additionally, our study showed that peers are more trusted than SMIs, this joins the study conducted by Rohrlich (2018).

2. Managerial contributions

Our findings enable us to give some managerial advice, especially in the marketing field. Firstly, since peers remain more influential compared to SMIs, companies should try to leverage more their power, especially through their informational influence. Some marketing ideas could be to create sponsorship programs where the existing clients can invite and convince some peers to buy the product or service. Both the sponsor and the sponsored person would be rewarded with coupons, cashback or gifts. This would encourage the peers to talk about the brand with friends and convince them to try the

good, thanks to their informational influence. This strategy has been successfully used by companies such as Hello Bank, Drop Box, Tesla or Airbnb (Novak, 2020; Sancelot, 2021). Our results suggest that it should be more used, especially for experience goods.

Another idea, which is already broadly used but which is reinforced by those results, is to make contests on social media and ask as a participation condition to tag some friends. In order for those comments to be more impactful, the company could ask something like "In order to participate, leave a comment where you tag two friends and you tell us about your favorite product/service and why you like it". If the friends tagged read the comment, they might want to learn more about the favorite product/service of their friends and start a discussion about it with them. They could therefore be influenced by their friends' advice about the brand or product, which would be a form of informational influence.

Something else that could be done is to make some special events like "Shopping with a friend day". This event could take place during the international friendship day to be more relevant. Companies that have physical retail channels could reward people who come to shop with a friend with some coupons or gifts. Once the peers are in the shop, it is a favorable environment for them to start a discussion about products sold in that shop and the brand itself, which would generate informational influence. Those kinds of events could also trigger normative influence since the friends might want to identify with each other, be part of a group, and buy similar products.

We also saw that for peers, the level of informational influence is higher for experience goods. Accordingly, these kinds of actions should even more be considered for experience goods marketing campaigns such as toiletries, restaurants or entertainment parks.

Regarding SMIs, we saw that their influence comes mostly from informational influence as well. But they have less impact than peers. However, their informational influence on generation Z should still be taken advantage of.

A piece of advice that could be given to brands, following the results, is to try to inform in a clear way the influencers about the product/service and its benefits. Indeed, the followers will mostly be influenced by the information the SMI shares with them, not simply by the fact that the SMI bought/used the product. It is therefore important that the influencer can share relevant and true information about the good. This should also be

considered when creating partnerships with SMIs. It is important that the influencer does not only show the product but explains its features and gives his or her opinion about it. The informational influence SMIs can have on generation Z indeed comes from the information they share with their community.

What concerns the type of product, surprisingly, SMIs' influence is a bit higher for experience goods. This means that even if the opinion of the influencer is more personal and unstable, it still affects the audience. Influencer marketing campaigns should therefore not only be used for search products but also for experience goods such as toiletries and travel or entertainment activities. There are indeed a lot of beauty influencers on social media as well as travel inspirations accounts.

Further, when choosing an influencer for a partnership, the two criteria that should firstly be taken into account are his or her trustworthiness and expertise, if the target audience is females from generation Z. The physical appearance does not significantly impact the influence the SMIs or peers have on generation Z girls. However, the fact that the person is trusted and seen as honest will impact the level of informational influence he or she has. Also, the more the person is seen as an expert in the domain, the more he or she will have both informational influence and utilitarian normative influence. Thus, when searching for an influencer, the marketer should rather look at the inside of the person, his or her relationship with the followers and knowledge in the field, rather than the outside physical appearance.

3. Limitations and further research

We will end up this conclusion with the limitations of this thesis and possible future research.

A first limit of this work is the choice of products that was made to test the impact of experience and search goods. Moreover, only one good per category was used. We are aware that the choice of the products affects the participants' answers and that other choices could have led to other answers and maybe other conclusions. Moreover, the moisturizing cream, which was chosen as an experience good, was not perceived as such by respondents. This is why it would be useful in the future to conduct a similar study using other examples for search and experience goods to see if the results are consistent.

A second limit is the fact that the study was only conducted on females living in Belgium or France. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized for the whole generation Z. We guess that the results would be different for boys and depending on the culture. Further research could be done on boys and if possible on both genders if some appropriate goods are found for the scenario. Also, a similar study could be conducted in another country.

Another limit of this comparative analysis is the fact that only three axes of comparison were used: the type of influence, the type of product and the personal characteristics. Firstly, other product categorizations could have been used such as product conspicuousness. Also, additional personal characteristics could be studied. Secondly, other comparative axes could be studied such as, for the influencer, the number of followers and the type of social media or post used. The effect of the personal characteristics of the Gen Zers such as self-esteem or self-discrepancy could also be investigated.

To sum up, this thesis allowed us to better understand the impact of both peers and SMIs on the purchase intention of generation Z. Still, there are some limitations that should be kept in mind. Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct further research on the topic to deepen the knowledge we have on the influences of peers and SMIs on Gen Zers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Influencers

2.1. Message sent to influencers

« Hello [nom] 🙂 j'espère que tu vas bien et [message personnalisé].
Je fais une mémoire sur le marketing d'influence et ça m'aiderait bcp si tu pouvais répondre à une question 🙂🤞
Voici ma question:
Selon toi, comment est perçu ton avis par un membre de ta communauté par rapport à un avis qu'il/elle pourrait recevoir d'un ami?
est-ce que ton avis a autant d'impact que celui d'un ami, voir plus?
ou au contraire, est-ce que tu penses que ton avis a moins d'impact ?
et Pourquoi?
voilà je te remercie d'avance, ça m'aiderait vraiment 😊
ps: [message personnalisé]
bonne journée »

1.2. Answers of influencers

1.2.1. @museofgreens' answer
« Je pense que cela dépend de quel avis il s'agit. S'il s'agit d'un avis concernant tout ce qui est sport, nutrition etc un membre de ma communauté va plus vite avoir un impact que celui d'un ami je pense.

Les membres de ma communauté me perçoivent comme un expert dans mon domaine, du coup, mon avis est plus vite perçu comme correct et bon. De plus, comme (la plupart) des personnes ne me connaissent que via Instagram/les réseaux, ils vont plus vite se confier à moi et demander un avis. C'est un avis extérieur et différent que les amis, c'est plus facile pour eux, ils ne se sentiront pas jugés par moi. »

1.2.2. @barabaraschoumacher's answer

« Je pense que mon avis a autant d'impact que celui d'un de leurs amis! 😬
Pcq ils savent qu'ils peuvent me faire confiance je pense étant donné que je fais aussi bien des retours rémunérés que non rémunérés sur des produits & que quand c'est non rémunéré, je n'ai aucun intérêt à mentir sur la qualité du produit :€ »

1.2.3. @milkywaysblueyes' answer

Link of the video where she answers:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNxsQbQtdDk&t=100s
« Je dirai que oui, mon avis, celui de l'influenceur, aura plus d'impact que celui d'un ami parce que je pense que la personne va estimer que la bloggeuse a pu tester plus de produits et a pu plus se faire un avis en comparant tout ce qu'elle a pu tester parce qu'elle est un peu plus experte dans un domaine que peut l'être l'ami. Maintenant si mon ami est professionnel, je vais clairement lui faire plus confiance. Donc ça va dépendre aussi de la situation. Mais l'avis de l'influenceur peut avoir plus d'impact que celui d'un ami car il est un peu considéré comme un expert dans certains domaines, pas dans tous car nous ne sommes pas experts dans tous les domaines. »

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Introduction

Bonjour, je m'appelle Mathilde Hampert et je suis étudiante en Master 2 Ingénieur de gestion à la Louvain School of Management. Je réalise ce questionnaire dans le cadre de mon mémoire qui a pour but de comparer l'influence des amis à celle des influenceurs sur l'intention d'achat de la génération Z.
Si tu es une fille née entre 1995 et 2010 et que tu suis au moins un(e) influenceur/euse sur les réseaux sociaux, je t'invite à répondre à ce questionnaire, cela m'aiderait beaucoup!
Il te prendra entre 4 et 7 minutes. Réponds le plus honnêtement possible, tes réponses sont entièrement anonymes.

Basic questions

Dans ce questionnaire, un influenceur est considéré comme : un créateur de contenu qui s'est construit une large audience d'abonnées sur les réseaux sociaux grâce à ses publications.

Q1 Quels réseaux sociaux utilises-tu?

- ☐ Instagram (1)
- ☐ Facebook (2)
- ☐ TikTok (3)
- ☐ Youtube (4)
- ☐ Twitter (5)
- ☐ Pinterest (6)
- ☐ Snapchat (7)
- ☐ Autre (8)
- ☐ Je n'utilise pas de réseaux sociaux (9)

Q2 A quelle fréquence utilises-tu les réseaux sociaux?

- [ ] Au moins une fois par jour
- [ ] 4 à 6 fois par semaine
- [ ] 1 à 3 fois par semaine
- [ ] 1 à 3 fois par mois
- [ ] Moins d'une fois par mois
- [ ] Je n'utilise jamais les réseaux sociaux

Q3 Suis-tu au moins un(e) influenceur/euse sur au moins un réseau social?

- ○ Oui (1)
- ○ Non (2)

Situation 1

Pour la suite de ce questionnaire, imagine que tu as besoin d'acheter un pull.
Maintenant, pense à une de tes amies avec qui tu interagis beaucoup et qui est de ta génération. Quand tu as cette personne en tête, passe à la suite du questionnaire. Rappel : tes réponses sont entièrement anonymes !

Q4 Quelle-est la première lettre du prénom de cette personne ?

Q5 Maintenant, je vais te demander d'évaluer ce pair selon les critères suivants. Pour chaque énoncé évalue sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec. (1)= pas du tout d'accord, (3) =ni d'accord ni pas d'accord, (5)=tout à fait d'accord.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Il/elle est expert dans le domaine des vêtements. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle a suffisamment d'expérience pour faire des affirmations sur les vêtements tendances. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle en sait beaucoup sur les vêtements à la mode. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est qualifié pour parler des vêtements à la mode. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Je le/la considère digne de confiance. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
J'ai l'impression qu'il/elle est honnête. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Je pense qu'il/elle est sincère. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je le/la considère comme fiable. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est attirant(e). (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est classe. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est joli(e). (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est sexy. (12)	○	○	○	○	○

Q6 Pour continuer ce questionnaire, pense toujours à ton pair et au fait que tu veux t'acheter un pull. Pour chaque énoncé évalue sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Je n'achèterai sûrement pas ce vêtement tant que je ne suis pas sûre que mon ami(e) l'approuve. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
C'est important que mon ami(e) aime le vêtement et la marque que j'achète. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Quand j'achèterai le vêtement, j'achèterai une marque que je sais que mon ami(e) va approuver. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Si mon ami(e) peut me voir porter le vêtement, j'achèterai la marque qu'il/elle s'attend à ce que j'achète. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'achète le même vêtement que mon ami(e), j'aurai l'impression d'appartenir à un groupe. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour m'identifier à mon ami(e), j'achèterai le même vêtement et la même marque que lui/elle. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour être certaine d'acheter le bon vêtement, je regarderai ce que mon ami(e) achète. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'ai peu d'expérience par rapport aux vêtements, je demanderai des informations à mon ami(e). (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Je demanderai à mon ami(e) de m'aider à choisir le meilleur vêtement parmi une gamme. (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Je parlerai avec mon ami(e) du prix et de la qualité avant de l'acheter. (10)	○	○	○	○	○

Situation 2

Pour la suite de ce questionnaire, imagine que tu as besoin d'acheter un pull. Maintenant, pense à un(e) influenceur/euse que tu suis beaucoup. Pour rappel, un influenceur est un créateur de contenu qui s'est construit une large audience d'abonnées sur les réseaux sociaux grâce à ses publications. Quand tu as bien cette personne en tête, passe à la suite du questionnaire. Rappel : tes réponses sont entièrement anonymes

Q7 Quel-est le nom ou pseudo de cet(te) influenceur/euse ?

Q8 Maintenant, je vais te demander d'évaluer cet(te) influenceur/euse selon les critères suivants. Pour chaque énoncé évalue sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec. (1)= pas du tout d'accord, (3) =ni d'accord ni pas d'accord, (5)=tout à fait d'accord.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Il/elle est expert dans le domaine des vêtements. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle a suffisamment d'expérience pour faire des affirmations sur les vêtements tendances. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle en sait beaucoup sur les vêtements à la mode. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est qualifié pour parler des vêtements à la mode. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Je le/la considère digne de confiance. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
J'ai l'impression qu'il/elle est honnête. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Je pense qu'il/elle est sincère. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je le/la considère comme fiable. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est attirant(e). (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est classe. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est joli(e). (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est sexy. (12)	○	○	○	○	○

Q9 Pour continuer ce questionnaire, pense toujours à l'influenceur/euse et au fait que tu veux t'acheter un pull. Pour chaque énoncé évalue sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Je n'achèterai sûrement pas ce vêtement tant que je ne suis pas sûre que l'influenceur l'approuve. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
C'est important que l'influenceur aime le vêtement et la marque que j'achète. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Quand j'achèterai le vêtement, j'achèterai une marque que je sais que l'influenceur va approuver. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'achète le même vêtement et la même marque que l'influenceur, j'aurai l'impression d'appartenir à un groupe. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour m'identifier à l'influenceur j'achèterai le même vêtement et la même marque que lui/elle. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour être certaine d'acheter le bon vêtement, je regarderai ce que l'influenceur achète. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'ai peu d'expérience par rapport aux vêtements, je consulterai les informations données par l'influenceur. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je vérifierai l'avis de l'influenceur afin de choisir le meilleur vêtement parmi une gamme. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Je consulterai l'avis de cet influenceur par rapport à la qualité et au prix avant de l'acheter. (9)	○	○	○	○	○

Situation 3

Pour la suite de ce questionnaire, imagine que tu as besoin d'acheter une **crème hydratante** (visage, corps, mains...). Maintenant, pense à une de tes **amies** avec qui tu interagis beaucoup et qui est de ta génération. Quand tu as cette personne en tête, passe à la suite du questionnaire. Rappel : tes réponses sont entièrement anonymes !

Q10 Quelle-est la première lettre du prénom de cette personne ?

Q11 Maintenant, je vais te demander d'évaluer ce proche selon les critères suivants. Pour chaque énoncé évalue sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec. (1)= pas du tout d'accord, (3) =ni d'accord ni pas d'accord, (5)=tout à fait d'accord.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Elle est experte dans le domaine des cosmétiques. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle a suffisamment d'expérience pour faire des affirmations sur les cosmétiques à absolument acheter. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle en sait beaucoup sur les cosmétiques. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle est qualifiée pour parler des cosmétiques. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Je la considère digne de confiance. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
J'ai l'impression qu'elle est honnête. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Je pense qu'elle est sincère. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je la considère comme fiable. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle est attirant(e). (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle est classe. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle est joli(e). (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Elle est sexy. (12)	○	○	○	○	○

Q12 Pour continuer ce questionnaire, pense toujours à ton proche et au fait que tu veux t'acheter une **crème hydratante**. Pour chaque énoncé évalue sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Je n'achèterai sûrement pas une crème hydratante tant que je ne suis pas sûre que mon amie l'approuve. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
C'est important que mon amie aime la crème hydratante que j'achète. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Quand j'achèterai une crème hydratante, j'en achèterai une que je sais que mon amie va approuver. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'achète la même crème hydratante que mon amie, j'aurai l'impression d'appartenir à un groupe. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour m'identifier à mon amie, j'achèterai une crème hydratante qu'elle a déjà. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour être certaine d'acheter la bonne crème hydratante, je regarderai ce que mon amie achète comme crème. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'ai peu d'expérience par rapport aux crèmes hydratantes, je demanderai des informations à mon amie. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je demanderai à mon amie de m'aider à choisir la meilleure crème hydratante parmi une gamme. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Je parlerai avec mon amie du prix et de la qualité avant de l'acheter. (9)	○	○	○	○	○

Situation 4

Pour la suite de ce questionnaire, je vais te demander d'imaginer que tu veux acheter une **crème hydratante** (visage, corps, mains...). Maintenant, pense à un(e) **influenceur/euse** que tu suis beaucoup. Pour rappel, un influenceur est un créateur de contenu qui s'est construit une large audience d'abonnées sur les réseaux sociaux grâce à ses publications. Quand tu as cette personne en tête, passe à la suite du questionnaire. Rappel : tes réponses sont entièrement anonymes !

Q13 Quel-est le nom ou pseudo de cet(te) influenceur/euse ?

Q14 Maintenant, je vais te demander d'évaluer cet(te) influenceur/euse selon les critères suivants. Pour chaque affirmation réponds sur l'échelle de 1 à 5. (1)= pas du tout d'accord, (3)=ni d'accord ni pas d'accord, (5) =tout à fait d'accord.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Il/elle est expert(e) dans le domaine des cosmétiques. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle a suffisamment d'expérience pour faire des affirmations sur les cosmétiques à absolument acheter. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle en sait beaucoup sur les cosmétiques. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est qualifié(e) pour parler des cosmétiques. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Je le/la considère digne de confiance. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
J'ai l'impression qu'il/elle est honnête. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Je pense qu'il/elle est sincère. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je le/la considère comme fiable. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est attirant(e). (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est classe. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est joli(e). (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Il/elle est sexy. (12)	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 Pour continuer ce questionnaire, pense toujours à l'influenceur/euse et au fait que tu veux t'acheter une **crème hydratante**. Pour chaque énoncé, indique sur l'échelle de 1 à 5 si tu es d'accord ou pas avec.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3: ni d'accord ni pas d'accord (3)	4: d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Je n'achèterai sûrement pas une crème hydratante tant que je ne suis pas sûre que l'influenceur l'approuve. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
C'est important que l'influenceur aime la crème hydratante que j'achète. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Quand j'achèterai une crème hydratante, j'en achèterai une que je sais que l'influenceur va approuver. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'achète la même crème hydratante que l'influenceur, j'aurai l'impression d'appartenir à un groupe. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour m'identifier à l'influenceur, j'achèterai une crème hydratante qu'il/elle a déjà. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Pour être certaine d'acheter la bonne crème hydratante, je regarderai ce que cet influenceur achète. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Si j'ai peu d'expérience par rapport aux crèmes hydratantes, je consulterai les informations données par l'influenceur. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Je vérifierai l'avis de l'influenceur afin de choisir la meilleure crème hydratante parmi une gamme. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Je consulterai l'avis de cet influenceur par rapport à la qualité et au prix avant d'acheter la crème hydratante. (9)	○	○	○	○	○

Theoretical Verification

Q16 Evalue la personne à laquelle tu as pensé sur cette échelle. (1) = une personne proche avec qui j'intéragis souvent. (5) = une personne que je ne connais pas en vrai, qui est plutôt célèbre.

	Echelle				
	1: une personne proche avec qui j'intéragis souvent. (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5: une personne que je ne connais pas en vrai, qui est plutôt célèbre. (5)
Evalue la personne à laquelle tu as pensé sur cette échelle. (1)	○	○	○	○	○

Q17 Maintenant, évalue de manière générale le type de produit que tu as dû imaginer acheter (un pull OU une crème hydratante **selon ta mise en situation**). Pour ce faire, indique sur cette échelle si tu es d'accord ou pas avec chaque énoncé.

	Echelle				
	1: pas du tout d'accord (1)	2: pas d'accord (2)	3 : ni d'accord, ni pas d'accord (3)	4 : d'accord (4)	5: tout à fait d'accord (5)
Avant d'acheter le produit (pull OU crème hydratante), j'en connais les caractéristiques et je sais si c'est un bon produit ou pas. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Je connais la valeur du produit avant de l'acheter. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Tant que je n'ai pas acheté le produit, je ne sais pas vraiment savoir s'il va me plaire. (3)	○	○	○	○	○

Demographic information

Pour finir, quelques questions sur toi. Tes réponses sont anonymes.

Q18 Quel âge as-tu ? Réponds juste un nombre, par exemple : 17

_____

Q19 Quel-est ton genre ?

- ○ Homme (1)
- ○ Femme (2)
- ○ Non-binaire/transgenre (3)
- ○ Ne souhaite pas répondre (4)

Q20 Quel-est ton statut actuel?

- ○ Etudiant / en formation (1)
- ○ Employé (2)
- ○ Indépendant (3)
- ○ Chef d'entreprise (4)
- ○ Personne sans activité (5)
- ○ Autre (6)

Merci beaucoup pour ta participation, n'oublie pas de valider ton questionnaire.

Appendix 3: Data preparation

3.1. SPSS Variables definition

Question number	SPSS variable	Question text
Q1	Social_media	Quels réseaux sociaux utilises-tu?
Q2	Frequency_SM	A quelle fréquence utilises-tu les réseaux sociaux?
Q3	/	Suis-tu au moins un(e) influenceur/euse sur au moins un réseau social?
Q4; Q10	/	Quelle-est la première lettre du prénom de cette personne ?
Q7; Q13	/	Quel-est le nom ou pseudo de cet(te) influenceur/euse ?
Q5.1; Q8.1; Q11.1; Q14.1	Expert1	Elle est experte dans le domaine des vêtements/cosmétiques.
Q5.2; Q8.2; Q11.2; Q14.2	Expert2	Elle a suffisamment d'expérience pour faire des affirmations sur les vêtements tendances/ les cosmétiques.
Q5.3; Q8.3; Q11.3; Q14.3	Expert3	Elle en sait beaucoup sur les vêtements à la mode/les bons cosmétiques.
Q5.4; Q8.4; Q11.4; Q14.4	Expert4	Elle est qualifiée pour parler des vêtements à la mode/ cosmétiques.
Q5.5; Q8.5; Q11.5; Q14.5	Trust1	Je la considère digne de confiance.
Q5.6; Q8.6; Q11.6; Q14.6	Trust2	J'ai l'impression qu'elle est honnête.
Q5.7; Q8.7; Q11.7; Q14.7	Trust3	Je pense qu'elle est sincère.
Q5.8; Q8.8; Q11.8; Q14.8	Trust4	Je la considère comme fiable.
Q5.9; Q8.9; Q11.9; Q14.9	Attract1	Elle est attirante.
Q5.10; Q8.10; Q11.10; Q14.10	Attract2	Elle est classe.
Q5.11; Q8.11; Q11.11; Q14.11	Attract3	Elle est jolie.
Q5.12; Q8.12; Q11.12; Q14.12	Attract4	Elle est sexy.
Q6.1; Q9.1; Q12.1; Q15.1	Norm1	Je n'achèterai sûrement pas le vêtement/ la crème tant que je ne suis pas sûre que l'influenceur/mon amie l'approuve.
Q6.2; Q9.2; Q12.2; Q15.2	Norm2	C'est important que l'influenceur/ mon amie aime le vêtemen/ la crème et la marque que j'achète.
Q6.3; Q9.3; Q12.3; Q15.3	Norm3	Quand j'achèterai le vêtement/la crème, j'achèterai une marque que je sais que l'influenceur/ mon amie va approuver.
Q6.5; Q9.4; Q12.4; Q15.4	Norm4	Si j'achète le même vêtement/ crème et la même marque que l'influenceur/mon amie, j'aurai l'impression d'appartenir à un groupe.
Q6.6; Q9.5; Q12.5; Q15.5	Norm5	Pour m'identifier à l'influenceur/ mon amie j'achèterai le même vêtemen/crème et la même marque que lui/elle.
Q6.7; Q9.6; Q12.6; Q15.6	Info1	Pour être certaine d'acheter le bon vêtement/ crème, je regarderai ce que l'influenceur/mon amie achète.
Q6.8; Q9.7; Q12.7; Q15.7	Info2	Si j'ai peu d'expérience par rapport aux vêtements/cosmétiques, je consulterai les informations données par l'influenceur/mon amie.
Q6.9; Q9.8; Q12.8; Q15.8	Info3	Je vérifierai l'avis de l'influenceur/mon amie afin de choisir le meilleur vêtement/crème parmi une gamme.
Q6.10; Q9.9; Q12.9; Q15.9	Info4	Je consulterai l'avis de cet influenceur/mon amie par rapport à la qualité et au prix avant de l'acheter.
Q16	Verif_person	Evalue la personne à laquelle tu as pensé sur cette échelle.
Q17.1	Verif_product1	Avant d'acheter le produit (pull OU crème hydratante), j'en connais les caractéristiques et je sais si c'est un bon produit ou pas.
Q17.2	Verif_product2	Je connais la valeur du produit avant de l'acheter.
Q17.3	Verif_product3_neg	Tant que je n'ai pas acheté le produit, je ne sais pas vraiment savoir s'il va me plaire.
Q18	Age	Quel âge as-tu ? Réponds juste un nombre, par exemple : 17
Q19	Genre	Quel-est ton genre ?
Q20	Statut	Quel-est ton statut actuel?
/	Type_person	/
/	Type_product	/

3.2. Coding

SPSS variable	Coding
Social_media	1=Instagram, 2=Facebook, 3=TikTok, 4=Youtube, 5=Twitter, 6=Pinterest, 7=Snapchat, 8=Autre, 9=Je n'utilise pas de réseaux sociaux
Frequency_SM	1=Au moins une fois par jour, 2=4 à 6 fois par semaine, 3=1 à 3 fois par semaine, 4=1à 3 fois par mois, 5=moins d'une fois par mois, 6=je n'utilise jamais les réseaux sociaux
Expert1, 2, 3, 4	1=Pas du tout d'accord, 2=Pas d'accord, 3=Ni d'accord, ni pas d'accord, 4=D'accord, 5=Tout à fait d'accord
Trust1, 2, 3, 4	
Attract1, 2, 3, 4	
Norm1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
Info1, 2, 3, 4	
Verif_person	
Verif_product1,2, 3_neg	
Statut	1=Etudiant/en formation, 2=Employé, 3=Indépendant, 4=Chef d'entreprise, 5=Personne sans activité, 6=Autre
Type_person	1=Peer, 2=SMI
Type_product	1=Search, 2=Experience

3.3. Normative scale evaluation component matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

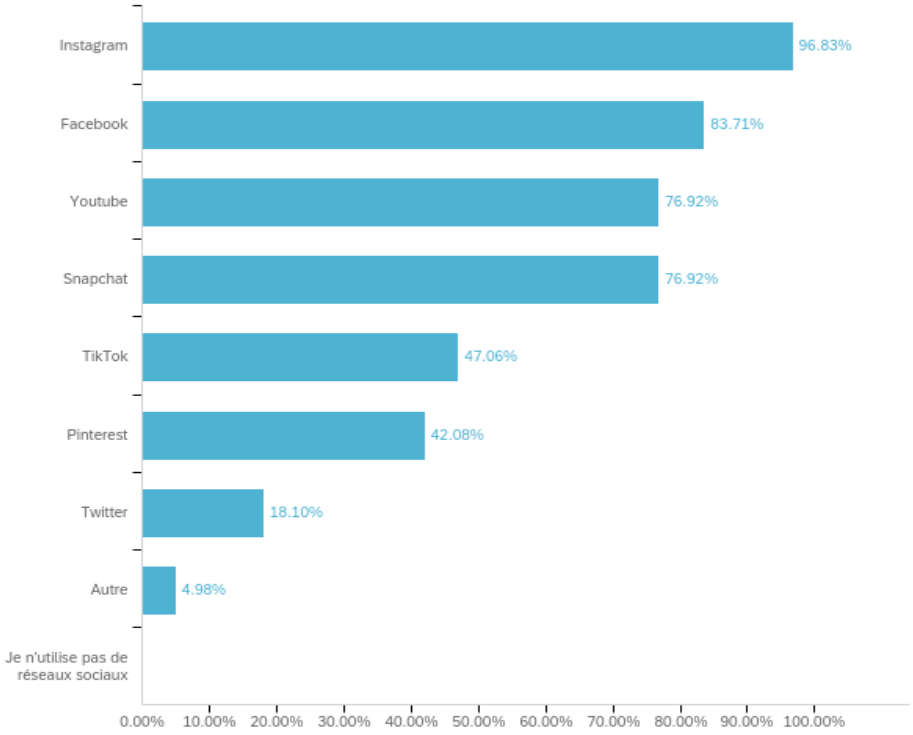
	Component	
	1	2
Norm1	,850	,053
Norm2	,851	,284
Norm3	,800	,282
Norm4	,136	,883
Norm5	,253	,844

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

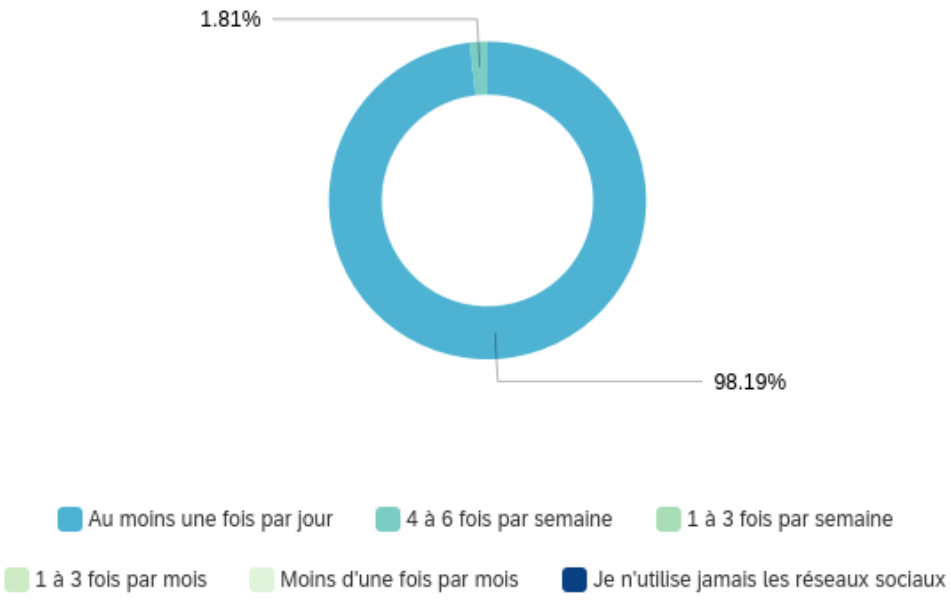
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Appendix 4: Sample description

4.1. Percentage of respondents using each social media



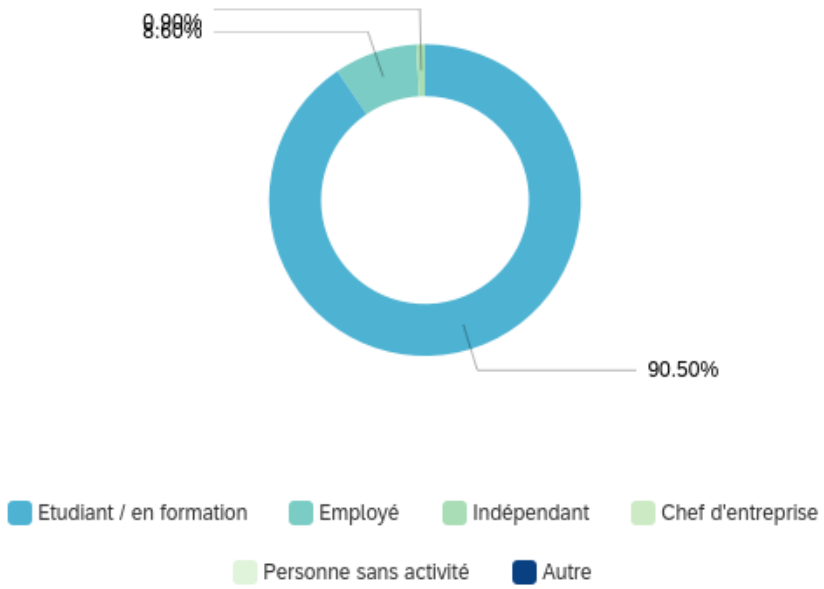
4.2. Frequency of social media usage



98.19% = At least once a day

1.81% = 4 to 6 times a week

4.3. Respondents' status



90.5% = Student/in training

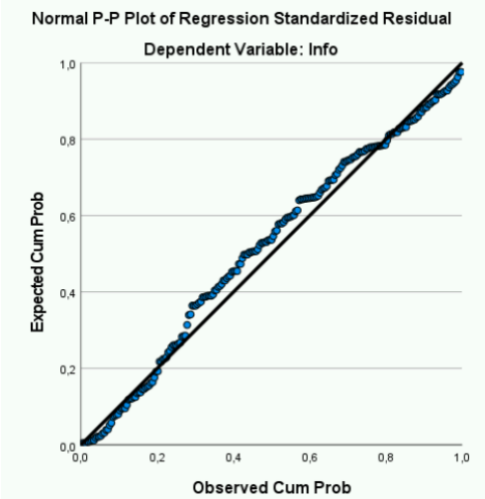
8,6% = Employee

0,9% = Independent

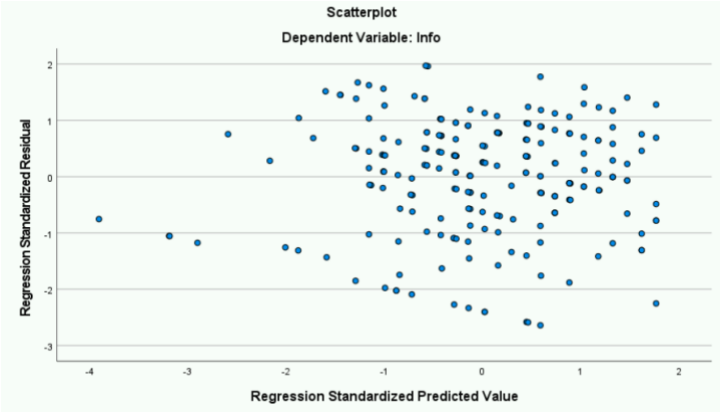
Appendix 5: Hypothesis testing

5.1. Multiple regression outputs for H5, H8, H11

5.1.1. Normal Q-Q plot

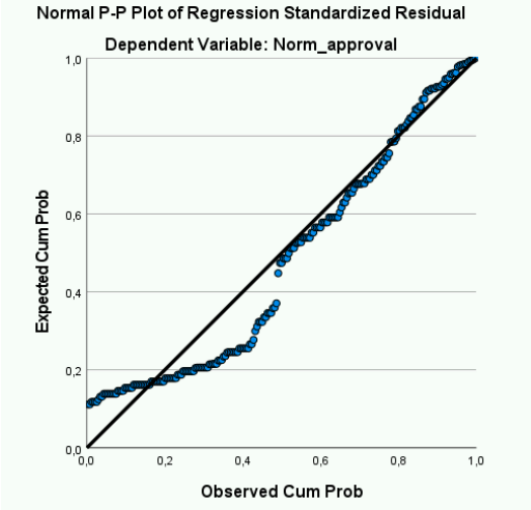


5.1.2. ZRESID against ZPRED plot

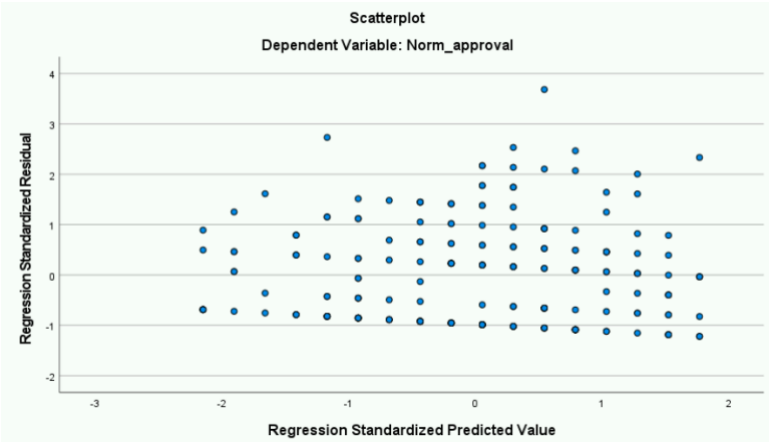


5.2. Multiple regression outputs for H6, H9, H12

5.2.1. Normal Q-Q plot



5.2.2. ZRESID against ZPRED plot



Abstract:

This master thesis aims to compare peers' and social media influencers' (SMIs) impacts on generation Z purchase intention. In a few years, this generation born between 1995-2010 will have the highest purchasing power. Therefore, it is important to understand those digital natives, who influences their purchasing decisions and how.
The literature review of this work focuses on the influence of these two actors. After analyzing existing research, three axes to compare peers and influencers were identified: type of influence (normative and informational influence), type of product (search and experience goods) and personal characteristics (expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness). Several hypotheses based on these axes of comparison were tested using a quantitative study. 221 girls from generation Z participated in the study which was conducted in April 2021. The collected data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics tool. It came out of the interpretation of the results that peers exert a higher informational influence than SMIs. However, there is no significant difference for normative influence. It was also observed that the informational influence is the dominant influence of both actors. Concerning the type of product, peers' informational influence is higher for experience goods. The same was observed for SMIs but in a marginal way. About personal characteristics, informational influence is affected by the person's trustworthiness and expertise. Normative influence is only partially impacted by expertise. It was further noted that SMIs are perceived as having more expertise and peers as being more trustworthy.

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