THE EFFECT OF SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE ON CONSUMERS PERCEPTION OF SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND THE LIKELIHOOD TO RECOMMEND ORGANIC HAIR CARE PRODUCTS.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Business Science for the Marketing Department
School of Management Studies
Faculty of Commerce
University of Cape Town

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DATE: 14 March 2021

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing has made its way to the forefront of online marketing due to the rapid expansion and usage of social media platforms. Despite the increased adoption of influencer marketing, the effect of sponsorship disclosure on source credibility remains under-researched in academia. This study aimed to address this research gap in two parts. Firstly, by evaluating the characteristics and significance of social media influencers. Secondly, by investigating the effect of sponsorship disclosure on consumers perception of source credibility and the likelihood to recommend organic hair care products. The selected social media platform for this study was Instagram, due to its growing popularity and increased usage by influencers. The hair care retail business as a proven multi-billion dollar industry, set itself as a valuable industry for the purposes of this study. The research methodology involved the collection of primary data from existing literature on influencer marketing strategies and social media influencers. Ohanian's Source Credibility model was found to be of relevance to the research objectives, therefore, it was used a theoretical framework for the study. Secondary data was collected by exploring the relationships between sponsorship disclosure, source credibility and electronic word-of-mouth marketing. Quantitative data was collected through a structured questionnaire which was issued online to University of Cape Town students. To ensure that the research contributed to existing academic literature, the target population chosen for the study was the Generation Z. The data collected was analysed using inferential statistical methods in order to test the hypotheses. A structural equation model was used to analyse the relationship between variables and the results indicated that all hypotheses were found to be supported, depicting that sponsorship disclosure has an impact on perceived source credibility. Additionally, the results indicated that respondents were more likely to participate in word-of-mouth recommendations for products endorsed by influencers that they regarded to be credible. The overall research findings provide valuable insights on consumer perception towards the credibility of social media influencers. This information can be used in marketing practice to aid marketers to develop appropriate strategies for sponsored influencer marketing campaigns. Furthermore, this study contributes to academia by adding empirical data to the existing body of literature on influencer marketing.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing; Social Media Influencers; Source Credibility; Instagram*

ACKNOWLDEGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone that was involved in this research including all the respondents who participated in this study.

A special thanks to my supervisor, Lebogang Mototo and my co-supervisor, Dr Pragasen Pillay. Thank you for your leadership, mentoring and encouragement throughout this research. Your guidance and assistance was valuable beyond measure. Without your insights and expertise, this thesis would not have been possible.

Additionally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their endless support and encouragement throughout my studies. With special mention to my dear mother, for motivating me to continue further with my academic journey.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This chapter provides an introduction to the following research topic: the effect of sponsorship disclosure by influencers on consumers perception of source credibility and their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others. Background information on the key concepts of influencer marketing, social media influencers and sponsorship disclosure is presented. The purpose of the research is discussed as well as the contribution of the study. Additionally, the research objectives and hypotheses statements are presented. This chapter also provides an overview of the research approach for the study along with the structure of the dissertation.

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The number of internet users globally has reached four billion with the average person spending approximately two and a half hours each day on social media platforms (Statista, 2018). Consumers are spending more time online and the internet has become a hub for online interactions, which in turn has fuelled the growth of digital marketing (Hautz et al., 2014; Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2017). The digital environment is constantly evolving with technological advances. Over the years, advanced features have been added to existing social networking sites, along with new social media platforms being introduced (MarketingTech, 2018). The phrase "social media platforms" refers to a collective term for online communication channels that facilitate interaction, information sharing, collaboration and networking between users (Booth & Matic, 2011). These channels include platforms such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat amongst others (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017). As many consumers are spending more time online, this presents a challenge for brands to find suitable

marketing strategies that will enable them to reach their target audience online; where they are most active. Additionally, the evolving digital space has resulted in changes in consumer behaviour and the underlying reasons for an individual to go online; be it for social networking, sharing ideas, self-promotion or seeking information has an effect on how they interact online (Leavitt & Kesler, 2011). In order to meet consumer needs, digital and social media marketing strategies have to keep up with the ever-changing digital space (MarketingTech, 2018).

According to Colner (2018) the digital economy is expected to account for an estimated 26% of the global GDP, presenting brands with an opportunity to leverage the full potential of this field. Among the various marketing strategies in the digital space, past research such as that carried out by Hughes (2019) highly recommends brands to use paid advertising, video content as well as making use of influencers and endorsers. Influencers help brands to reach a specific set of consumer's who are active on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat (Ghidotti, 2017). Additionally, influencer marketing provides opportunities for brands who would like to build relationships with their target market and is now considered an important strategy for brands to increase their presence within online communities (Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014; Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). Brands have since recognised the potential of this market and statistics reveal that by year 2022, marketers will spend up to $15 billion dollars on influencer marketing (Business Insider, 2021). For these reasons, this research will focus on the area of influencer marketing.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has gained prominence in an industry dominated by social media (Smart Insights, 2017). Although it is not a new marketing concept, influencer marketing has made its way to the forefront due to the rapid expansion and usage of social media platforms; through which influencers communicate (Booth & Matic, 2011). The term "influencer marketing" refers to the use of influential individuals to drive a brands message in order to reach a specific target audience (Leavitt & Kesler, 2011). This process involves paid partnerships between brands and influencers, whereby influencers receive compensation for posting and promoting the brand's products or services on social media (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018). Over the past decade,

the emerging influencer marketing community has demonstrated a significant potential in connecting brands with consumers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Subsequently, this has resulted in the integration of influencer marketing as part of the social media marketing mix, making it important for marketers to understand so they can be able to make use of it effectively (MarketingTech, 2018).

Influencers, also known as opinion leaders, can be defined as individuals who have the power to inspire the formation of attitudes, public knowledge and opinions of others (Booth & Matic, 2011). According to Phan & Yedic (2018), influencers also have the ability to affect purchase decisions because of their perceived knowledge and subject matter expertise. There are different categories of influencers and those applied by the Growth from Knowledge (GFK) market research organisation are social, category and brand influencers (Trustin, 2005). Social influencers are individuals who have large networks of connections with other consumers. Category influencers are those individuals who are well informed about a specific product category and brand influencers are strong advocates for specific brands (Trustin, 2005). This research aims to study social influencers, specifically those who operate on social media platforms. These individuals are referred to as "social media influencers" and will be referred to as "SMIs" in this paper. Social media influencers (SMIs) can be described as digital influencers who have managed to accumulate a significant number of followers on social media channels by sharing content such as images, videos and posts (Abidin, 2016).

Unlike traditional celebrity endorsers who have gained fame through specific activities such as entertainment or sport, SMIs distinguish themselves in that they are ordinary individuals who have gained loyal followings online (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). As ordinary people sharing their everyday lives online, SMIs are perceived to be more trustworthy, relatable and authentic when compared to traditional celebrity endorsers (Li & Yin, 2018; Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack & Zahid, 2018). The value of SMIs lies in that they are able to impact the perception of others, by providing a different impression or view on a brand which in turn has an effect on consumer behaviour; in particular behaviour such as purchasing a product or recommending products and services (Booth & Matic, 2011). Additionally, the significance of SMIs has been shown in previous studies made which investigated endorser-brand partnerships. One particular study made by Phan

& Yedic (2018) concluded that endorsements made by SMIs can be given the weight of a trusted friend or seen as a peer recommendation which leads to a higher likelihood of the consumer purchasing the product or service being advertised.

The appeal of Social Media Influencers

A Nielsen (2015) survey carried out showed that 49% of consumers rely on recommendations made by influencers when making purchase decisions, and about 40% had bought an item after viewing an influencer recommendation on social media. Furthermore, the study revealed that approximately 20% had shared a product they learned about from an influencer with their friends and family ((Nielsen, 2015). SMIs have been found appealing according to a Marketing Tech report which revealed that 46% of people will believe the information that they are told by online influencers (MarketingTech, 2018). Apart from providing recommendations to their followers, SMIs have been proven valuable in providing insights to marketers that can be used by brands to better understand their target audience and to create better advertising strategies (Kleintjes, 2017). For these reasons, SMIs are an effective way for brands to communicate their messages to their target audiences through sponsored partnerships.

Sponsorship disclosure by SMIs

Sponsored partnerships are business activities that involve any support or payment which is provided to the endorser by a brand; in return for the promotion or endorsement of a product, service or activity (Trustin, 2005). Sponsored content can be defined as any form of paid collaboration between a brand and an influencer (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). This involves creation of relevant content by the influencer for their audience in order to promote or recommend a particular product or service (De Veirman et al., 2017). In return, the influencer receives compensation from the brand they are endorsing (De Veirman et al., 2017). Investigating the concept of sponsorship is valuable as it forms part of the strategies used in integrated marketing communications and sponsorship is an element of the broader marketing communication mix (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018; Stubb, Nyström & Colliander, 2019).

Additionally, it is important to research the implications of sponsorship disclosure on marketing strategies due to the recent advertising laws that have been put in place for marketers. Advertising standards and codes have been put in place to ensure that the different types of marketing communication are carried out in a legal, ethical and honest manner (FTC, 2017). All brand marketers and their representatives are required to adhere to the advertising standards and code of practice (Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2017). In 2017, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforced a consumer protection law which makes it a requirement for influencers and brands to disclose any business partnerships or relationships (FTC, 2017). Advertisers and influencers are required to reveal paid partnerships with disclaimers that reveal the sponsorship (FTC, 2017). Additionally, Instagram's advertising policies also required that content creators and brands comply to the full disclosure of all sponsored content. Other international regulations, such as the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) also require marketers to inform consumers about any information pertaining to the commercial nature of sponsored posts (WOMMA, 2013). Furthermore, laws have been enforced stating that any form of advertising on social media platforms should be authentic and should not include messaging which is false or misleading (Khamis et al., 2017).

As SMIs were not previously required to reveal when a recommendation or promotion is sponsored, the new law brings about change in the practice of influencer marketing and the implications of disclosing paid partnerships are yet to be explored (Khamis et al., 2017). A possible advantage that this change could create for companies is that this new law legitimises the use of influencer marketing and makes it formally recognised as part of the strategies that can be used in the social media marketing mix (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017). This may encourage more companies to use influencer marketing as part of their online marketing strategy (Boerman et al., 2017). Past research has also shown that companies that adopt truthful and transparent marketing strategies whereby paid partnerships are disclosed, have experienced positive reactions from consumers (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018). However, one may argue that being truthful and transparent may have a negative implication on consumer perception of SMIs as they may be seen to be less authentic (Ewers, 2017; Audrezet, de Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018). This research aims to investigate the implications of sponsorship disclosure as well as its mediating effect on other marketing communications such as word-of-mouth marketing.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth Marketing

WOMMA (2007) defines word-of-mouth (WOM) as the process involving the transfer of information from one consumer to another consumer. WOM marketing techniques are commonly used in marketing communications and have recently become more useful because of the global increase in online social connectivity amongst consumers (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). According to Böse (2019), WOM marketing can be used to identify key communities that can be targeted by marketers, opinion leaders as well as SMIs. Most importantly WOM can be used to identify SMIs with a substantial number of followers, who are likely to create and drive WOM communication by creating conversations between customers and a brand (Böse, 2019). To date, there are two types of WOM mediums which have been identified: face-to-face WOM (F2F) and electronic WOM (eWOM). The two types of WOM are different in that face-to-face WOM occurs in direct contact between individuals whereas electronic WOM happens indirectly through online channels (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). In this research eWOM will be investigated as the research will be focused on an online social media platform.

Social media platforms allow eWOM information to be easily distributed to a large number of people through the use of social media posts containing images, videos and written content (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Consumers who encounter eWOM information on social media platforms comprehensively assess the information they have received before using it for their purchase intentions, sharing the content or recommending certain products or services to others based on this information (Erkan & Evans, 2016). The likelihood of individuals recommending a specific product or service to others can be used to measure performance of marketing strategies (Khamis et al., 2017). The Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (2013) report revealed that studies have shown that 33% of sales result from word-of-mouth recommendations (WOMMA, 2013). Additionally, Hautz et al. (2014) states that peer recommendations are of significance as consumers are more inclined to purchase a product or service when it has been recommended by an individual that they know. Provided that eWOM recommendations have a significant effect on sales, investigating the likelihood of consumers to recommend a product or service would be beneficial to marketing practice. With that said, the second objective of this study is to examine consumers likelihood to recommend a product that has been endorsed by an influencer.

1.2. DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following definitions of key concepts apply throughout this research paper:

- Social Media - a collective term for online communication channels that facilitate communication, information sharing, collaboration and networking between users. These channels include platforms such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat amongst others (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017).

- Influencer Marketing - defined as the use of individuals to drive a brands message in order to reach a specific target audience (Leavitt & Kesler, 2011). Paid partnerships are formed between brands and influencers whereby influencers receive compensation for posting and promoting the brand's products or services on social media (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018)

- Social Medial Influencer - an individual who has established credibility in a particular field and has the power to inspire the formation of attitudes, public knowledge and opinions of others. They usually have a large community of followers who actively interact and engage with their content on social media platforms (Leavitt & Kesler, 2011; De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017)

- Source credibility - refers to an individual's personal traits which can increase the level of acceptance and persuasion during the advertising process (Ohanian, 1990)

1.3. PROBLEM DISCUSSION

A recent survey by Statista (2018) revealed that the top reasons for using social media platforms among adults is for obtaining helpful information, general networking and for entertainment purposes. Despite the popularity of social media, research has shown that users rarely engage with content on social media for commercial purposes and many individuals are not interested in

viewing sponsored content, with some stating that they are confused by this type of advertising (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017; Park, Im & Kim, 2018). Moreover, commentary sections of sponsored posts often reveal scepticism towards the advertised product or service (Hughes, Swaminathan & Brooks, 2019). This creates a challenge for SMIs to create content which can engage and satisfy their followers (Hughes et al., 2019). On the other hand, brands are faced with the challenge of ensuring that the collaborations they make with influencers are beneficial for their brand in order to obtain the desired outcome (Hughes et al., 2019). To date, most research on the topic of influencer marketing focuses on the collaboration between influencers and brands while only a few studies have investigated the effects of sponsorship disclosure on consumer perception of source credibility of influencers (Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017; Ewers, 2017). Additionally, previous studies in influencer marketing have focussed largely on millennials and the Gen Z age group is under-researched (Harshe, 2018). Therefore, this led the research to address the following problem statement:

Limited knowledge on the Gen Z population is available on the effect of sponsorship disclosure on consumer perception of source credibility.

1.4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The term "source credibility" refers to the extent to which an individual perceives a source of information to be believable, true and unbiased (Lu & Chang, 2014). In the context of influencer marketing, it refers to an individual's personal traits which can increase the level of acceptance and persuasion during the advertising process (Ohanian, 1990). Source credibility is an attribute that has been used in previous studies to analyse the effectiveness of partnerships between an endorser and a brand (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017:19). Past studies which have been carried out indicate that information presented by a credible source can affect consumer beliefs, opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards a brand (Lim et. al 2017:19). The key selling point for influencer marketing is the credibility of the endorser; influencer marketing has been proven to be successful mainly because the consumer believes that the endorser is providing their honest views and opinions for a particular product or service (Boerman et al., 2017). Therefore, by disclosing

paid partnerships, the perceived credibility of SMIs may be affected and this presents a need to examine this assumption (Abdallah, 2015; Phan & Yedic, 2018)

Ohanian (1990) was the first to develop a scale to measure an individual's source credibility, focusing specifically on celebrity endorsers. Although extensive research has been carried out on source credibility, past studies such as those carried out by Lu et al., (2014) and Boerman et al., (2017) have focused largely on celebrity endorsers and academic literature on SMIs is limited. As discussed earlier, SMIs have been proven to have an influence on eWOM (Liu et al., 2015) however, there is limited amount of research that explores the implications of source credibility on the likelihood of consumers to recommend products to others via eWOM.

With that said, the purpose of this research is to fill this gap in academic literature by answering the following research questions:

1. When SMIs disclose sponsored partnerships, does it have an effect on consumer perception of their source credibility?
2. Does consumer perception of SMIs credibility influence their likelihood to recommend products to others via eWOM?

1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

1.5.1. Primary Research Objective

The primary research objective is as follows:

- To investigate the effect of sponsorship disclosure on consumers perception of source credibility and the likelihood to recommend organic hair care products

1.5.2. Theoretical Objectives

The theoretical objectives of this research are as follows:

- To evaluate literature on the characteristics of SMIs
- To assess the mechanism by which SMIs influence consumers
- To evaluate the implications of sponsorship disclosure by SMIs

1.5.3. Empirical objectives

The empirical objectives of this research are as follows:

- To investigate consumer perception of the credibility of SMIs who disclose paid partnerships
- To investigate whether consumer perception of SMIs credibility influences their likelihood to recommend products, particularly organic hair care products, via eWOM

1.5.4. Research Hypotheses

This study will make use of Ohanian's Source Credibility Model as a frame of reference. The three main components of the model which are expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness will be explored. Researchers argue that the credibility and efficacy of an influencer depends on their perceived level of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990; Li & Yin, 2018). For these reasons, the following hypotheses were formulated for this research:

H1: The trustworthiness of an influencer has a positive effect on consumer perception of their source credibility.
H2: The attractiveness of an influencer has a positive effect on consumer perception of their source credibility.
H3: The expertise of an influencer has a positive effect on consumer perception of their source credibility.

The second objective of this study is to investigate whether consumer perception of the credibility of an influencer has an effect on their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H4: Consumer perception of the influencer's credibility impacts their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM.

1.6. RESEARCH APPROACH

A scientific research approach was carried out to address both the empirical and theoretical research objectives. Firstly, primary data was collected from existing literature on influencer marketing strategies and social media influencers. Secondly, a gap in literature was identified and a problem statement was formulated along with the research objectives and hypotheses. Thirdly, a conceptual framework was developed to measure the research constructs. Fourth, the scope of the study was defined and secondary data was collected by means of an online questionnaire issued out to University of Cape Town students. The convenience sampling technique was used for this study and the questionnaire was sent out to students in the age range of 18 to 24, which falls under the Gen Z age group. Data was collected from a sample size of 118 participants. The collected data was analysed by using descriptive statistics through the use of frequency tables, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics through Structural Equation Modelling was used to test out the hypotheses and to interpret the data. Fifth, empirical validation of the conceptual research model was carried out. Sixth, the research findings were presented and discussed. Lastly, research insights were provided, conclusions were drawn and suggestions for future studies were discussed.

1.7. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Information provided by social media influencers to their online communities has an impact on consumer behavior (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Various studies have discovered the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior however very few studies address the characteristics of influencers, in particular their credibility (Hughes, Swaminathan & Brooks, 2019). This study will contribute to the existing body of literature on influencer marketing by

providing insights on consumer perception towards the credibility of brand sponsored social media influencers. Additionally, this study provides insights on the impact of perceived source credibility on the overall functioning of the influencer promotional system, by investigating how an influencer's perceived credibility affects the likelihood of on individual to recommend a product that the influencer has endorsed.

1.8. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This section provides an outline of the structure of the dissertation as well as a brief description of each chapter:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the research

This chapter provides an introduction to the research topic. Background information is provided on the key concepts of influencer marketing, social media influencers and sponsorship disclosure. The purpose of the research is presented as well as the contribution of the study. Additionally, the research objectives and hypotheses are presented. This chapter also provides an overview of the research approach and the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Research Context

This chapter provides a discussion of the research context by outlining information regarding the subject area, the platform selected, the industry of choice and the selected demographic for the study. This includes providing background information on Instagram as the selected social media platform, the Generation Z which has been selected as the target population and the organic hair care industry. The chapter provides a review on Instagram as a channel for influencer marketing and Instagram user demographics in the South African context. Additionally, the chapter outlines the demand for organic hair care products and the characteristics of the Genaration Z demographic.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter provides a theoretical discussion and evaluation of existing literature which has been conducted on the topics of influencer marketing. Past research on the following marketing concepts is presented: Influencer marketing, social media influencers, sponsorship disclosure and referral marketing through eWOM. Additionally, this chapter reviews the topics of social media strategy and the consumer buying decision process which critical in understanding consumer behaviour and purchase decisions.

Chapter 4: Research model and hypotheses development

This chapter provides a discussion of the research model development. Ohanian's source credibility model is used as a theoretical framework. The model measures source credibility with three components; trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness and it was used to develop a new research model for the purposes of this study. The following research constructs are defined: Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Source Credibility and electronic Word of Mouth. Additionally, the proposed theoretical model and hypotheses statements which have been developed are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Research methodology and design

This chapter outlines the research methodology and research design used. First the research philosophy, research approach and data collection methods used are explained. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds to explain the sampling techniques used which includes the sample frame, target population and sampling method. The research instrument is discussed, including the questionnaire design and the method of questionnaire distribution. The rationale behind the choices of conducting an online questionnaire is discussed along with the considerations made for online surveying. Lastly, the chapter outlines the data validation techniques carried out to ensure data reliability and accuracy.

Chapter 6: Research Findings, Data Analysis & Discussion of Results

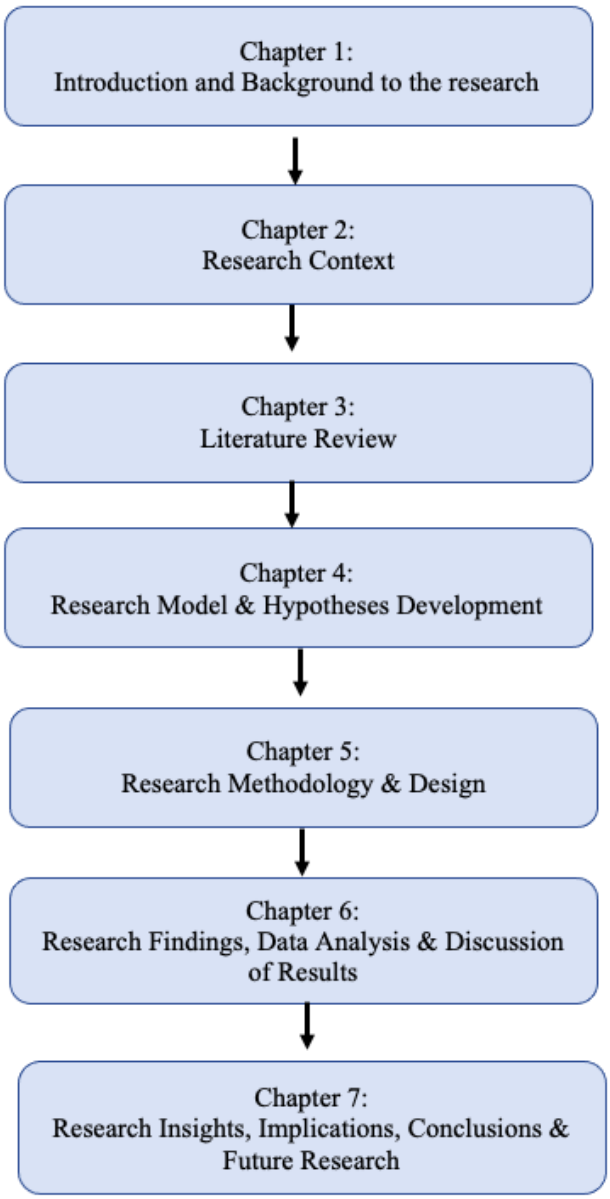
This chapter presents the research findings, data analysis and discussion of the results. Firstly, the sample characteristics are described. Thereafter, the results from the questionnaire are presented in the form of tables and graphs. Statistical tests which were used for measuring data reliability and validity are discussed and the results are presented. Following the reliability measurements, the inter-construct correlation matrix is discussed. Lastly, inferential statistics are presented and hypotheses test results are analysed along with a discussion of the conceptual model fit assessment.

Chapter 7: Research Insights, Implications, Conclusions & Future Research

This chapter concludes the research by providing the key research insights, implications and conclusions. First the research insights obtained from the findings are provided. Second, managerial implications and practical recommendations are provided. Third, possible limitations of the study are discussed as well as suggesting recommendations for future research on influencer marketing.

The following diagram presents an outline of the organisation of this research paper:

Figure 1: Thesis Outline



1.9. CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of the research. The first section provides a background to the research topic and establishes the importance of the study. A discussion of marketing in a digital environment is carried out as well as outlining the concept of influencer marketing. Thereafter the significance of social media influencers is explored and the legal requirements of social media influencers to disclose paid partnerships is discussed. Through the review of previous research sources, the implications of sponsorship disclosure by influencers are examined. The concepts of

sponsorship disclosure, source credibility, word-of-mouth marketing and the likelihood to recommend a product or service are also discussed.

The second section of this chapter presents definitions of key concepts and the problem statement, which outlines the area of concern. The third section of this chapter presents the purpose of the study and the research questions that seek to be answered by the study. The fourth section presents the theoretical and empirical research objectives of the study as well as the research hypotheses. The fifth section of the chapter provides an overview of the research approach. The sixth section of the chapter presents the contribution of the study. Lastly, the seventh section presents the structure of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT

This chapter provides a discussion of the research context by outlining information regarding the subject area, the platform selected, the industry of choice and the selected demographic for the study. This includes providing background information on Instagram as the selected social media platform, the Generation Z which has been selected as the target population and the organic hair care industry. The chapter provides a review on Instagram as a channel for influencer marketing and Instagram user demographics in the South African context. Additionally, the chapter outlines the demand for organic hair care products and the characteristics of the Generation Z demographic.

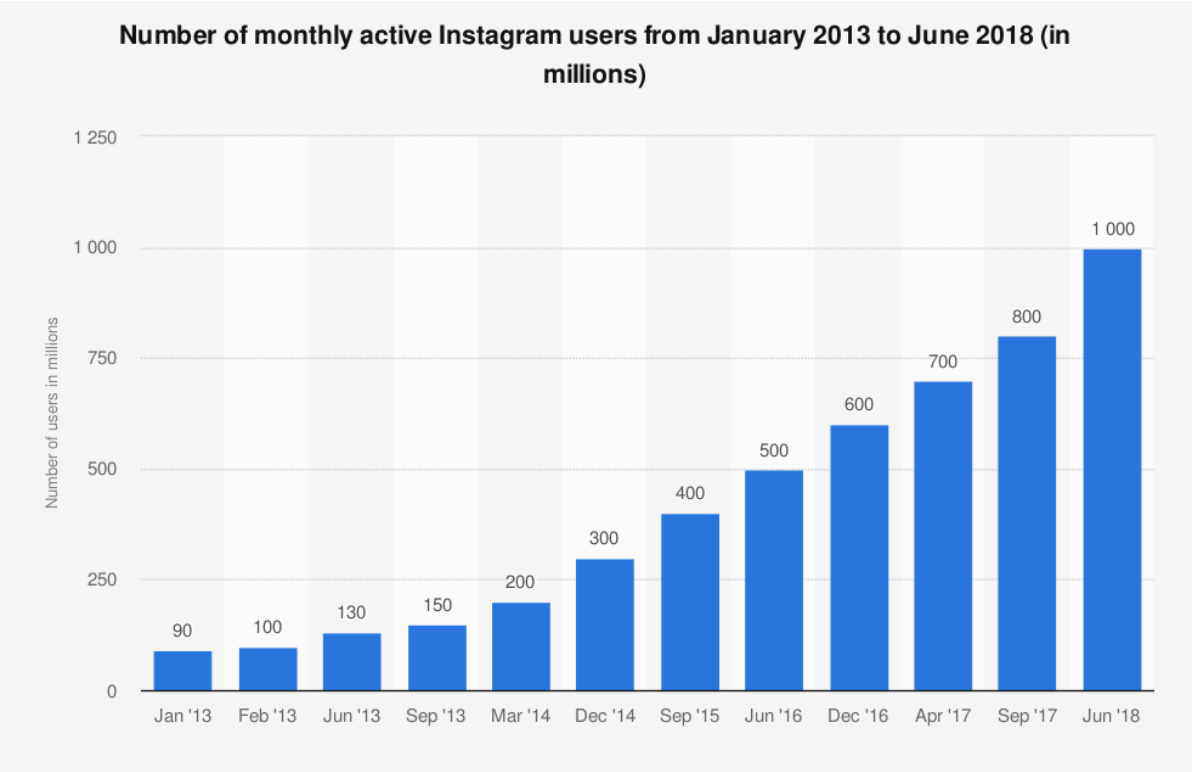
2.1. INTRODUCTION

The growing popularity of social media has changed the way brands interact with consumers to market their products and services (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Guidry Moulard, 2018). Consumers are now turning to social media to get information on the best products and services to use and social media has become an important marketing tool that allows brands to reach both large populations as well as specific target markets (Erz, Marder & Osadchaya, 2018). As previously discussed, the expansion and wide usage of social media platforms has led to the growth of influencer marketing (Hautz et al.,2014). This study sets out to investigate the topic of influencer marketing, with particular focus on Instagram social media influencers as the subject area. This chapter provides the research context by presenting information on the selected demographic, selected social media platform and the industry of choice.

2.2. INSTAGRAM AS A CHANNEL FOR INFLUENCER MARKETING

The selected social media platform for this research is Instagram. Instagram is an image and video sharing application which has become one of the most popular social networks worldwide with a large global community of users (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Instagram has seen increased growth over the years and reported that the platform has reached over a billion active monthly users (Instagram, 2018). The growth of Instagram over the years is shown in Figure 2 below. The social media platform is the largest social networking site for influencer marketing, with an estimated 12.9 million brand sponsored influencer posts being reported in 2018 (Statista, 2020). This number is expected to double next each year creating an even larger market size and thus increasing marketing opportunities for brands (Medium, 2018).

Figure 2: Growth of Instagram



Source: Statista, 2020

Instagram has been cited as the best social media channel for influencer marketing mainly because of the following reasons:

1. Instagram provides key features that allow influencers to easily share content and information to online communities. SMIs are able to make use of the video and photo sharing tools as well as new functionalities that the platform introduces (Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2017).

2. Instagram offers a transparent platform that allows influencers to indicate when a post is a sponsored and enables two-way communication between the influencer and their followers (Pöyry et al., 2019).

3. Influencers are not restricted to the type of content they can provide as Instagram allows influencers to display both visual and verbal content (Ki & Kim, 2019). Examples of such content includes images, hashtags, comments, videos and messages (Ki & Kim, 2019).

Research examining consumer behaviour on social media platforms indicate that users behave differently on Instagram in comparison to other social media platforms. Instagram users have been shown to be more active with interactions and engagements such as comments, shares, follows and purchases (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018). Most influencer marketing studies which have been carried out on Instagram have focused mainly on the quality of content provided by influencers and the motives for using the platform (Casaló et al., 2018). Previous research on influencer marketing has followed two main paths:

1. The characteristics of social media influencers, in particular identifying the role of personal traits and assessing trust amongst other aspects (Casaló et al., 2018 and Goldsmith & Clark, 2008) as well as the fundamental ways that consumers interact socially (Ki & Kim, 2019).

2. Identifying the influence of SMIs on consumer behavior, such as decision making in mostly text-based social medial platforms such as blogs and Twitter instead of visual based platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (Casaló et al., 2018).

A study carried out by Boerman et al. (2017) examined how sponsorship disclosure affects the effectiveness of sponsored content that is posted by influencers. However, the study was solely

limited to Facebook and it did not explore this phenomenon on other social media platforms (Boerman et al., 2017). The study also investigated disclosures made by celebrity influencers only and did not examine disclosures made by non-celebrity influencers (Boerman et al., 2017). This research aims to focus on Instagram as a social media platform as well as non-celebrity influencers, in an attempt to fill this gap in existing literature and to add to the existing research on influencer marketing.

2.2.1. Instagram user demographics in South Africa

According to the 2016 South African Social Media Landscape Report, Instagram has been the fastest growing social media platform in South Africa. The report estimated that 53% of local brands indicated that they planned to make use of this platform in developing social media influencer marketing strategies (Goldstuck & Wronski, 2016). Although the growth social media usage in South Africa provides opportunities for marketers, recent reports reveal that influencer marketing and WOM strategies are still in their infancy stage in South Africa (Goldstuck & Wronski, 2016).

Previous research which explores the potential of eWOM marketing strategies in South Africa is limited (Goldstuck & Wronski, 2016). Furthermore, a report by the Global Web Index (2020) revealed that research which involves testing the applicability of influencer models within the South African population is limited. This is mainly attributed to the fact that previous studies on Influencer marketing have focused mainly on developed countries who were early adopters of social media, and limited research has been carried out in developing and emerging markets (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). This presents an opportunity for further research to be carried out on influencer marketing in the South African context. For these reasons, the chosen geographical location for this study is South Africa.

Statista (2018) reports that approximately 54% of South Africans now have access to the internet and that there are 3.6 million active Instagram users in South Africa. The report also reveals Instagram usage has seen a 8.5% increase in the past year and is ranking the fifth most popular

social media platform in South Africa (Statista, 2018). As Instagram usage is growing in South Africa, research on the social media platform in the South African context will be valuable.

2.3. ORGANIC HAIR CARE MARKET INDUSTRY

2.3.1. The demand for Organic Hair Care Products

As the harmful effects of chemicals such as parabens, silicones and sulphates became widely advertised, consumers have become aware of the health implications they can cause (Stüve & Strauß, 2016). Subsequently, health concerns over the use of chemicals in personal care products has resulted in consumer demand for organic products that contain natural ingredients without harmful chemicals (Fortune Business Insights,2018). The term "organic hair care" refers to hair products which are made with natural, chemical-free ingredients (Stüve & Strauß, 2016). A global industry analysis by Kline Group on hair care research has revealed that the usage of organic hair care products has increased due to an increased demand in natural, chemical free ingredients (Kline Group, 2014). As brands strive to meet consumer demand for organic products, there has been an industry shift which saw a large number of brands replacing chemicals with naturally derived ingredients to produce products that cater for the health conscious consumer's needs (Drug Store News, 2018).

2.3.2. Organic Hair Care in South Africa

Hair care products are one of the fastest growing categories of products sold in South Africa, with a 38% increase in sales in the last five years (HuffingtonPost, 2020). Organic hair care products which are made with natural, chemical-free ingredients have increased in popularity (Chain Drug Review, 2011). Recent studies also show that there are more natural hair brands being introduced, as well as the extension of existing brands with organic options (Drug Store News, 2018).

According to the South African Pharmaceutical and Cosmetics Review, there has been rising interest in natural, organic ingredients in the personal care industry (Chain Drug Review, 2011). This trend has been prevalent across all genders, therefore presenting a need for research to be

conducted across the gender spectrum. The global research consulting group, Kline (2014) also notes that there has been an increased desire as well as consumer awareness for organic hair care. This increased demand has resulted in increasing sales for products produced from natural ingredients and nearly 54% of hair care products are now made from natural ingredients (Kline Group, 2014).

Moreover, a market research report by Euromonitor International (2018) found that the South African hair care market size has grown substantially. The value of hair care products in South Africa is worth an estimated R4.5 billion and is driven by the popularity in personal grooming trends as well as increased market size (Euromonitor International, 2018). There is therefore need to do research in this field to be able to gain expansive knowledge in this industry and identify opportunities that can be used in marketing strategies. For these reasons, this study will focus on SMIs who have entered into paid partnerships with brands that offer organic hair care products for all genders.

2.4. THE GENERATION Z AGE GROUP

2.4.1. The characteristics of the Generation Z

To ensure that the research contributes to existing academic literature, the target population chosen for the study is the Generation Z (Gen Z) who are also known as Centennials. The Gen Z are individuals who were born between 1997 and 2010 (Harshe, 2018). This demographic has been identified to be the true digital natives of technology as they grew up in the world of internet, smartphones and social media (Harshe, 2018). Additionally, this age group represents the majority of Instagram users. A 2018 report by Statista found that 64 percent of global active Instagram users were between the ages of 18 and 24 years (Statista, 2018). Most importantly, the Gen Z has been identified as being one of the most environmentally conscious generations (Stüve & Strauß, 2016).

According to a Nielsen Global Health & Wellness Survey, about 40% of this age group make purchase decisions based on the product ingredients. The Gen Z have a high preference for products which are made using healthy and sustainable ingredients (Nielsen, 2015). As this

research has selected the organic hair care industry, the Gen Z are a suitable demographic due to their health preferences. Past studies in influencer marketing have focussed largely on millennials and the Gen Z are under-researched (Harshe, 2018). The Gen Z differ from millennials in that they are considered to be more technologically savvy than the millennials (Harshe, 2018). An estimated 75% of the Gen Z have been reported to have access to a smartphone and approximately 92% of them access social media platforms on a daily basis. This percentage is higher than the reported 68% of millennials who use social networking sites daily (Housand, 2016). This information has motivated the Gen Z to be selected as the target population for this research.

2.4.1. The Generation Z in the South African context

In a Gen Z report by Liquid Telecom (2018) it is noted that 41% of the South African population is aged 21 years or younger. Although this generation may not currently have significant purchasing power, they have been shown to effect purchase decisions of the older generations therefore it is crucial to gain better understanding of this demographic. Historic data also suggests that 38% of the Gen Z spend more than 10 hours each week on social media platforms. Understanding how to market to this group of individuals online will be beneficial for businesses (GFK, 2018).

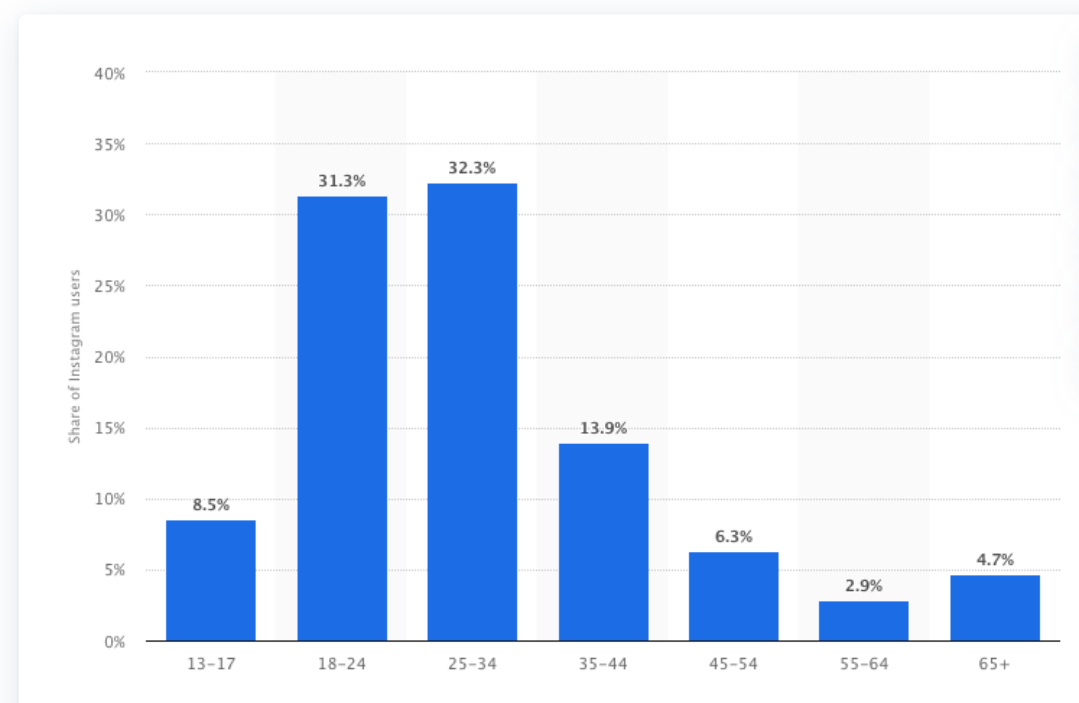
The African Generation Z Report (2018) takes an in-depth look at the differences between Africa's Gen Z and the Gen Z from developed countries. Internet penetration in Africa falls below international standards, averaging around 21% with South Africa having the highest internet penetration rate of 40%. This restricts a large population of Gen Z's from accessing the digital world (Liquid Telecom, 2018). Additionally, there's concern that Africa's Gen Z may not necessarily be "digital natives" in that they may not have grown up with access to technology due to restricting factor such as the lack of internet availability and data costs (Liquid Telecom, 2018).

In developed countries, 94% of young adults in the 15 -24 year age range use the internet daily compared to 67% in developing countries and only a small percentage of 30% were found to have internet access in the least developed countries ((Housand, 2016). By acknowledging the difference between the international Gen Z and Africa's Gen Z, it becomes apparent that there is

need for more research to be carried out on Africa's Gen Z as most research has focused on the Gen Z in developed countries.

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of Instagram users by age in South Africa. It is evident that that a large percentage of Instagram users in South Africa are between the age group of 18 to 24 years. As the majority of active Instagram users falls within the Generation Z age group, this provides further motivation as to why this demographic has been selected for this study.

Figure 3: Distribution of Instagram users in South Africa by age



Source: Statista, 2020

2.5. CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

This chapter provides the research context of the study. The first section provides a discussion of Instagram as a social media platform and its role in providing a channel for influencer marketing. The second section describes the growth of Instagram and its user demographics. Thereafter, an

analysis of the organic hair care market industry is conducted and the demand for organic hair care products is discussed. Lastly, the chapter provides a section which describes the characteristics of the Generation Z demographic and the rationale behind its selection as the target population for this study.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a discussion and evaluation of existing research which has been conducted on influencer marketing in order to provide a theoretical grounding for the study. Past research on the following marketing concepts is presented: Influencer marketing, social media influencers, sponsorship disclosure and referral marketing through eWOM. Additionally, this chapter reviews the topics of social media strategy and the consumer buying decision process which critical in understanding consumer behaviour and purchase decisions.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Recent trends in the influencer marketing industry show that the number of brands using social media influencers for product endorsements is increasing. Approximately 65% of brands are predicted to increase their influencer marketing budget in 2020, as opposed to only 39% of marketers who were willing to spend on influencer marketing in 2018 (Mediakix, 2020). Subsequently, many brands have started incorporating influencer marketing in their social media marketing strategies (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). In light of these developments, many have started to question the underlying reasons behind the effectiveness of influencer marketing as well as what type of individuals can be considered to be influential (GWI Report, 2020). Of particular concern is the limited knowledge on the factors that drive successful online brand engagement and influencer marketing campaigns (Hughes, Swaminathan & Brooks, 2019). A comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing requires identifying the characteristics of social media influencers as well as conducting an in-depth analysis of the drivers of successful influencer marketing (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). Most studies in the field of sponsored marketing campaigns have addressed how marketers can utilise influencers during paid partnerships, however very few studies address the characteristics of influencers, in particular their credibility (Hughes et al.,

2019). In the pages that follow, the literature review on influencer marketing, SMIs, social media strategy, sponsorship disclosure and eWOM will be discussed.

3.2. INFLUENCER MARKETING IN SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

3.2.1. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has changed the way brands communicate & interact with consumers (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). The term "social media marketing" refers to the use of social media platforms for advertising and promotional activities (Childers, Lemon & Hoy, 2018). According to Phung et al. (2018), social media platforms can be categorised into five groups; social networking sites, microblogging, video sharing, photo sharing and social blogging platforms. Social media platforms allow users to post and share content online and to connect through online interactions. Social media users are able to share content such as images, videos and messages with each other (Phung et al., 2018). Examples of social media platforms and social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and YouTube to name a few (Carlsson, 2017). As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the social media platform which has been selected for this research is Instagram, due to its growing popularity.

A large number of people are active on social networking platforms therefore making it easier for brands to reach their specific target audience online by identifying social media communities which have similar interests (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). Prior to the growth of social media marketing, consumers where passive recipients of marketing activities and could not actively engage & react to information provided on social media platforms (Abrahamsson, Lezis & Nilsson, 2018). Current research shows that consumers regularly obtain online reviews and recommendations through social media sites before making purchase decisions (Phung et al., 2018). Therefore, social media marketing facilitates online engagement and referral marketing through recommendations as users are able to connect directly with each other and brands regardless of location (Carlsson, 2017). These research findings emphasize the importance of social media marketing and for marketers to monitor social media platforms as part of their online marketing strategies.

There is a growing body of literature which recognises the importance of influencer marketing in social media strategy. Potential buyers are now consulting influential individuals instead of brands when searching for product information, recommendations or opinions regarding specific products or services (Phung, Luning & Wilde Björling, 2018). These potential buyers may not necessarily know these individuals at a personal level but are connected to them on social media networks, usually through having similar shared interests (Phung et al., 2018). Influencer marketing involves making use of these types of individuals, referred to as "influencers" to communicate messages from brands to potential buyers (Phung et al., 2018). Having established the significance of influencer marketing in social media strategy, the next section presents existing literature on influencer marketing as a marketing tool.

3.2.2. Influencer Marketing as a Marketing tool

Influencer marketing is defined as the use of individuals to drive a brands message in order to reach a specific target audience (Leavitt & Kesler, 2011). Paid partnerships are formed between brands and influencers whereby influencers receive compensation for posting and promoting the brand's products or services on social media (Audrezet et al., 2018). Influencer marketing is gaining recognition both in business and academia (Ki & Kim, 2019). More brands are making use of influencer marketing strategies as influencers are seen as a more credible source of information compared to traditional celebrity endorsers (De Vierman et al., 2017). Additionally, influencers make it easier for brands to communicate with their target audience (Ewers, 2017). Partnerships between brands and influencers have been proven to be effective and profitable. When measuring success in increasing sales and brand awareness, Influencer Marketing Hub (2019) reports that businesses had received a great return on investment from influencer marketing campaigns. Therefore, influencer marketing is an important tool in marketing strategies. As influencer marketing makes use of SMIs, it is important to understand the the characteristics of social media influencers. The next section presents literature on social media influencers.

3.2.3. Characteristics of Social Media Influencers

The literature on the classification of influencers highlights three main types of influencers: mega-influencers, macro-influencers and micro-influencers (Wiedmann et al., 2010). According to Abrahamsson et al. (2018) mega-influencers are usually famous individuals who may not necessarily be subject matter experts but have a large number of followers. Typically, mega-influencers have millions of followers and provide extensive reach to large audiences (Abrahamsson et al., 2018). Mega-influencers are considered to be highly influential as consumers think highly of their opinions and they are perceived to be experts. Macro-influencers are similar to mega-influencers, aside from the fact that they are usually non-celebrities and have gained their popularity through the internet and social media platforms (Ewers, 2017). Additionally, macro-influencers usually have a smaller audience size compared to mega-influencers, with followers that are in the range of 100 000 to a million (Ewers, 2017). Both mega and macro- influencers have been proven effective in increasing brand awareness during marketing strategies (Marketing Tech, 2018).

Micro-influencers, on the other hand, have a smaller audience size which usually ranges from 1000 to 100 000 followers (Ewers, 2017). Micro-influencers gain popularity through their knowledge and are known to be experts in niche areas (Wiedmann et al., 2010). The value of micro-influencers are that they have been shown to have a highly engaged and extremely attentive group of people in comparison to macro-influencers (Phung & Qin, 2018) The followers of micro-influencers usually represent specific demographic audiences that can be easily identified hence making it easy to target (Colner, 2018: 11). Marketers have found great success in working with micro-influencers to reach a highly engaged group of followers in specific niche markets.

Casaló et al. (2018) note that the number of followers that an opinion leader possesses can have an impact on their popularity and level of influence. Following studies on opinion leadership, Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) concluded that the buying behaviour of young female users was influenced by Instagram celebrities. Additionally, Instagram celebrities were shown to have higher credibility compared to traditional celebrity profiles (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). It was also noted that when influencers state that they are receiving payment from brands for posting content, it has an impact on their followers' attitude and intention to share the content provided (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The reason for this change in consumer behaviour was suspected to be that

the disclosure of sponsorship by an influencer, reduces the credibility of the influencer (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). However, these were merely assumptions and a deeper understanding of the consequences of sponsorship disclosure by influencers on Instagram is yet to be explored further (Stubb et al., 2019). Additionally, this particular study by Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) was restrictive in that it only focused on female users in the fashion industry. On the contrary, this study will research all genders in an attempt to obtain valuable insights on sponsorship disclosure across the gender spectrum.

3.2.4. The value of Social Media Influencers

According to a report by Influencer Marketing Hub (2019), consumers value the opinions and recommendations provided by micro-influencers. Apart from providing recommendations to their followers, SMIs have proven valuable in providing insights to marketers that can be used by brands to better understand their target audience and to create better advertising strategies (Wiedmann et al., 2010). Research has shown that micro-influencers are particularly effective in building social trust and driving consumers to take specific actions intended by a marketing campaign (Wiedmann et al., 2010). In most cases, macro and micro-influencers do not hold celebrity status, therefore, brands trust that using these types of influencers is effective based on the assumption that their followers are genuinely interested in their content (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019).

Although most research measures the quality of an influencer based on the number of followers they have, Abrahamsson et al. (2018) suggests that this is not the only factor to take into account when identifying influencers. Abrahamsson et al. (2018) recommends that the influencer's reach and engagement are more important factors to consider when assessing the value of an influencer. This theory is further supported by research conducted by Ewers (2017) which indicated that although micro-influencers have a small number of followers, they usually have a higher engagement rate with their followers compared to macro-influencers. Supporting data reported that on average, the engagement rate of micro-influencers is 0.10% higher than that of macro-influencers (Marketing Tech, 2018). Additionally, research findings suggest that the more engagement and reach that a SMI has, the more they are perceived to provide valuable information by their audience (Ewers, 2017).

Engagement and reach can be seen as great indicators that an influencer's followers are actively engaging with a particular message that has been delivered (Ewers, 2017). As mentioned earlier, influencers can have an impact on how users interact, recommend and follow the advice which has been provided to them (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). The perceived benefit of using influencer marketing is that if brands can successfully identify the right types of influencers in a specific community, the message can effectively spread via eWOM to reach the mass consumer market (Ewers, 2017). This marketing concept is known as referral marketing and it will be discussed in detail in the following section.

3.3. REFERRAL MARKETING

The term "referral marketing" refers to the marketing strategy that uses Word-of-Mouth (WOM) to promote products or services, by means of consumers making recommendations to others on their own initiative (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Langner, 2010). Previous studies such as those carried by Wiedmann et al. (2010) and Hussain et al. (2017) have highlighted that referral marketing is more likely to lead to successful marketing campaigns. Recommendations provided by friends, family or individuals, who do not have any affiliation with a given brand, were proven to be more effective in influencing consumers purchase decisions when compared to referrals provided from paid partnerships (Hussain et al., 2017). Hautz et al., (2014) suggest the possibility that a recommendation provided by a social media influencer carries the same weight as a peer recommendation.

Erkan & Evans (2016) discuss eWOM in social media and its influence on consumer's purchase intentions. In their research, they mention that eWOM can be used as a marketing approach by brands who want to increase information adoption in a digital age (Erkan & Evans, 2016). In their study, electronic word of mouth was used by consumers to obtain information on products or services from other consumers online. Social media websites were found to be the main platforms that individuals made use of when exchanging information before purchasing products and services (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Although these findings show the significance of eWOM, critics question the likelihood that all information provided through eWOM is influential on consumer's purchase intentions, considering that consumers are exposed to various marketing material and a

large amount of information (Carlsson, 2017). To shed light on this phenomenon, Erkan & Evans (2016) test the value, credibility, efficacy and adoption of information provided via eWOM in social media. The key findings from their research suggested that information credibility has a positive impact on information adoption (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Additionally, Erkan & Evans (2016) suggested that there was a need to further evaluate consumer behavior towards information together with the characteristics of the information. Hence, the concept of online referrals via social media marketing requires further exploration.

As mention earlier, previous studies in influencer marketing have focused mainly on the characteristics of influencers and the quality of their social media content along with their suitability to partner with brands (Ewers, 2017; Abrahamsson, Lezis & Nilsson, 2018). Despite the increased adoption of influencer marketing, the effect of sponsorship disclosure on source credibility remains under-researched in academia (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019). This presents a need for this gap in literature to be addressed. In the next section, literature on sponsorship disclosure and its implications is discussed.

3.4. SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE

Previous studies on influencer marketing indicated that consumers evaluate the credibility of influencer's based on the characteristics of the message provided (Carr & Hayes, 2014 & Liljander et al., 2015). One of the of the characteristics examined in a particular study by Liljander et al. (2015) was the message quality and the disclosure of a sponsorship in the message. The study found that when influencers provided messages which disclosed sponsorships and partnerships with brands, there was an impact on consumer's attitudes as well as their behaviour responses (Liljander et al., 2015).

According to Hwang & Jeong (2016), sponsorship disclosures can be divided into three categories:

1. Sponsorship disclosures which merely states that a post is sponsored, without providing any additional information regarding the sponsorship (Hwang & Jeong 2016).

2. Sponsorship disclosures which provide supplementary information regarding the sponsored collaboration. For example, highlighting the reason why the endorser and brand have entered into a paid partnership (Hwang & Jeong 2016).

3. Sponsorship disclosures that reveal information in the form details regarding the type of compensation that an influencer is receiving from a brand they are endorsing. Examples of such compensation are vouchers, money, free products and commission (Hwang & Jeong 2016).

More recent studies on sponsorship disclosure on blog posts revealed that readers responses to sponsored content depends on the type of sponsorship disclosure provided by the influencer (Stubb et al., 2019). This indicates that there is a need to distinguish between sponsorship disclosure type and the impact that it has on consumer behaviour. In this research, the focus is not limited to a specific type of sponsorship disclosure. The study examines the perceived source credibility of SMIs who reveal all types of sponsorship disclosure, in order to gain a broad understanding of the concept.

While past research has highlighted the negative impact of sponsorship disclosure, the purpose of disclosing sponsorships is mainly aimed at increasing consumers positive reactions towards sponsored content (Liljander et al., 2015, Hwang & Jeong 2016). The underlying justification for this theory is that revealing sponsorships provides transparency, which in turn increases consumers trust towards brands and reduces negative reactions to sponsored content (Hwang & Jeong 2016). According to Stubb et al. (2019), individuals process the information they receive from sponsored content to justify if it is valid or not before making purchase decisions. During this process, consumers assess factors such as information reliability, validity as well as credibility (Stubb et al., 2019). Based on this information, one can assume that the success of a brand sponsored marketing strategy will depend on the perceived credibility of the influencer. Hence, this study aims to examine perceived source credibility of SMIs when they disclose sponsorships from brands they have partnered with. As previously stated in Chapter 1, one of the theoretical objectives of this study is to evaluate existing literature on the mechanisms that SMIs use to influence

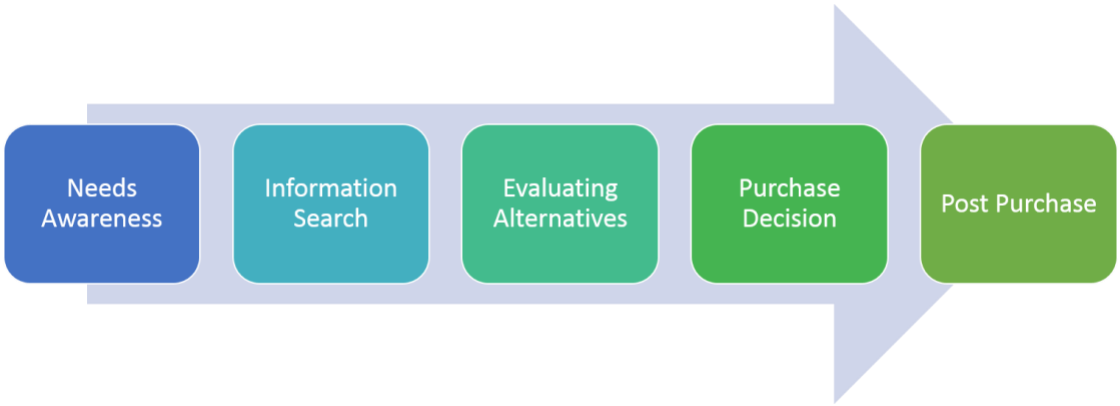
consumers. In order to meet this objective, the next section presents literature regarding the consumer buying process.

3.5. THE CONSUMER BUYING PROCESS

3.5.1. The buyer decision process

The consumer buyer decision process is critical in understanding consumer behaviour and purchase decisions (Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong, 2005). In addition to understanding purchase decisions, knowledge of the buyer decision process enables brands to target consumers at specific stages of the buying process (Carlsson, 2017). According to Kotler et al. (2005), the consumer buying process consists of five stages, as shown in figure 4 below. It is important to note that consumers may skip some of these stages during the buying process. Additionally, the decision-making process may be immediate or ongoing depending on the complexity of the consumer's needs (Kotler et al., 2005).

Figure 4: The consumer buying process



Source: Adapted from Kotler et al. (2005)

The five stages of the buyer decision process as described by Kotler et al. (2005) are as follows:

1. Needs awareness – this is the first stage of the buying process and involves the buyer identifying and recognizing that they need a product (Kotler et al., 2005). This stage can be stimulated by both external and internal factors. For example, an internal factor that may stimulate a particular need for a product could be physical needs such as hunger or thirst (Kotler et al., 2005). An example of an external factor that can stimulate a purchase need is when an individual watches a television advertisement. After watching the television advertisement, the individual would then identity and recognize that they have a need for the product being advertised (Carlsson, 2017).

2. Information search – this is the second step of the consumer buying process. This stage involves the buyer actively searching for information from different sources when intending to buy a particular product (Kotler et al., 2005). This type of information usually includes online reviews, peer recommendations and commercial sources such as advertisements (Kotler et al., 2005). During this stage, the potential buyer also has enhanced attention towards any advertisements that are related to the product their looking to purchase. Kotler et al., claims that the most effective sources of information are peer recommendations. Kotler et al. (2005) state that during this stage, the consumer decides if the product is able to meet their needs. If the product meets the consumer's needs, they proceed to purchase the product. If they do not proceed to buy the product, they retain a memory of the need for the product (Kotler et al., 2005).

3. Evaluating alternatives – this is the third stage of the buyer decision process. The consumer evaluates alternative options during this step and assesses the product benefits, types and other attributes that help them decide which product best suits their needs (Kotler et al., 2005). This process can either be simple or complex depending on the consumer's specific needs. De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders (2017) also argue that during this stage of evaluating alternatives, a buyer's choice is influenced by other factors such as brand loyalty and past experiences with a brand.

4. Purchase decision – this is the fourth stage of the consumer buying process where the consumer makes the decision to buy a product (Kotler et al., 2005). According to marketing principles by Carlsson (2017), this is regarded the most important stage of the buyer decision process by businesses and marketers.

5. Post purchase behaviour – this is the fifth and last stage of the buyer decision process. This stage involved the consumer critically evaluating their purchase and deciding if they are satisfied with it (Kotler et al., 2005). This stage is important for businesses who want to build their brand loyalty as the buyer makes the decision of whether the purchase will be a once-off purchase, or if it will lead to repeat purchases in the future (Carlsson (2017),

Research by De Veirman et al. (2017) shows that consumers are influenced by SMIs during the second and third stages of the buyer decision process. This is because these stages involve looking up online reviews and recommendations made by influencers during the search of information (De Veirman et al., 2017). This research aims to assess this theory through the second empirical objective of this study which is to investigate whether the perceived credibility of SMIs has an effect on consumers likelihood to recommend products via eWOM.

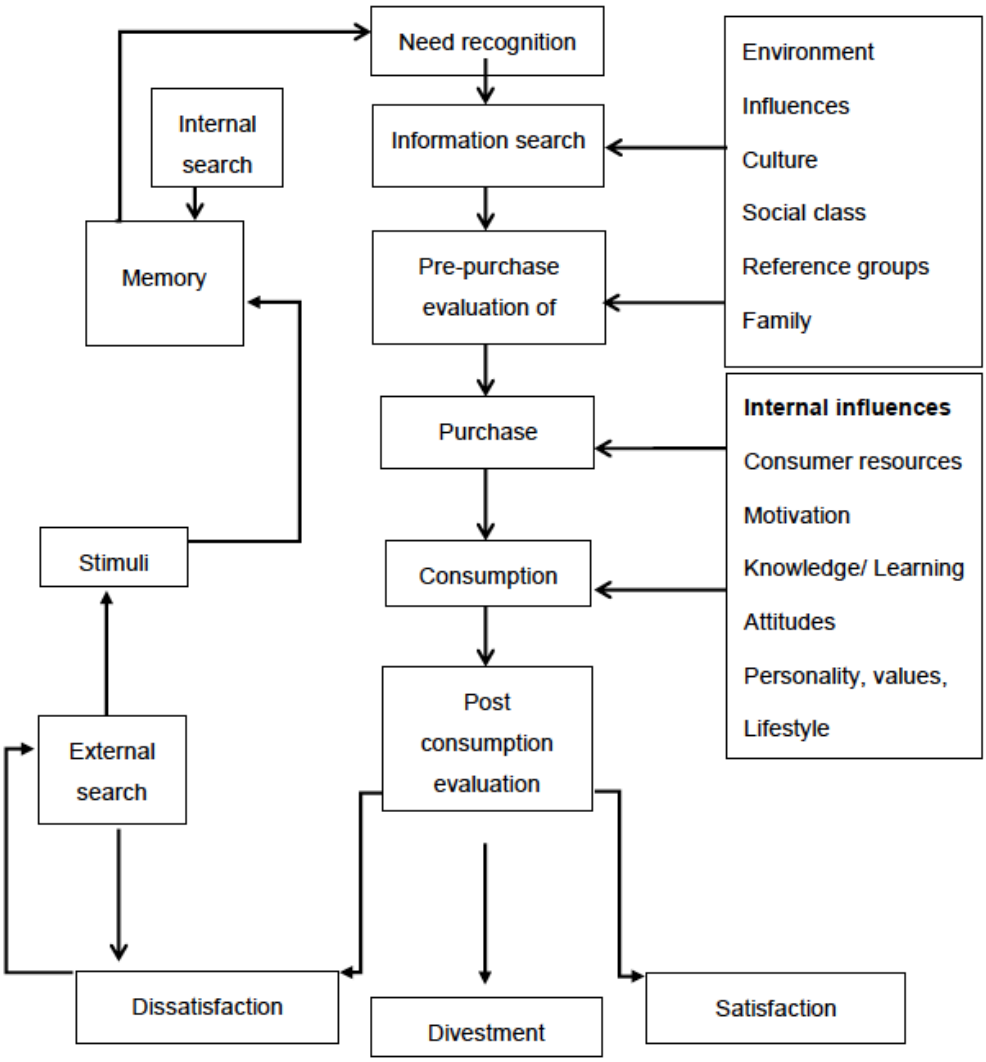
3.5.2. The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model

The Consumer Decision Model (also known as the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model) shown in figure 5 below. The model provides seven stages that influences consumer behaviour and the decision-making process: need recognition followed by information search, pre-purchase evaluation, purchase, consumption, post consumption evaluation and lastly divestment (Maziriri, Chuchu & Madinga, 2019). These decisions are influenced by two main factors. Firstly stimuli is received and processed by the consumer along with memories of previous experiences, and secondly, external variables in the form of either environmental influences or individual differences (Bray, 2008).

It is important to note that the information search stage is the one most relevant to this study. This is the stage in which the consumer looks for information from external sources which influences

them making a choice in the decision making process. Various environmental influences include: Culture; social class; personal influence; family and situation. The individual influences include: Consumer resource; motivation and involvement; knowledge; attitudes; personality; values and lifestyle (Maziriri et.al., 2019) An understanding of where SMIs fit in the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model will provide marketers with how to enhance influencer marketing strategies.

Figure 5: The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model of consumer behaviour



Source: Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006:85)

3.6. CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

This chapter provides a theoretical discussion and evaluation of existing literature which has been conducted on the topics of influencer marketing. Past research on the following topics is presented: Influencer marketing in social media strategy, referral marketing through eWOM and the characteristics of social media influencers. Additionally, the stages of the consumer buying process are discussed and the impact of influencers on the buying process is identified. By conducting the literature review, the following theoretical objectives are met:

- Evaluating existing literature on the characteristics of SMI
- Assessing the mechanism by which SMIs influence consumers
- Evaluating the implications of sponsorship disclosure by SMIs

This chapter explores existing theories on influencer marketing. Additionally, the need for expanding research on the impact of sponsorship disclosure on perceived credibility of SMIs is identified. In the pages that follow, the research model and hypotheses development are presented, in an attempt to address the research gap which has been identified.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

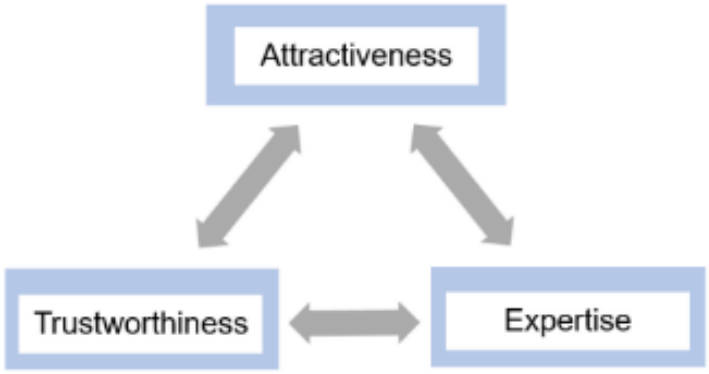
This chapter provides a discussion of the research model development. Ohanian's Source Credibility model is used as a theoretical framework. The model measures source credibility using three components; trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. A theoretical model is developed for the purposes of this study using the following research constructs: Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Source Credibility and electronic Word of Mouth. Lastly, hypotheses statements are formulated and developed based on the research model.

4.1. INTRODUCTION OF THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH MODEL

The theoretical model which will be used as a frame of reference in this research is Ohanian's (1990) Source Credibility Model. The term source credibility is used to define the characteristics of a source of information that have an impact on the receiver's perception of a particular message (Phan & Yedic, 2018). Ohanian (1990) found that there are three characteristics that contribute to the credibility of a source of information. The first characteristic is trustworthiness, which refers to the validity, consistency and reliability of information (Phan & Yedic, 2018). The second characteristic is expertise, which can be defined as how professional or qualified one is perceived to be. Additionally, expertise refers to an individual's competence, knowledge, proficiency and skill (Phung et al., 2018). The last characteristic is attractiveness, which can be described as the likeability and familiarity of a message (Phan & Yedic, 2018). All components are complex however Erkan & Evans (2016) suggest that attractiveness is a more complex characteristic compared to expertise and trustworthiness. This is due to the fact that the attractiveness of an

individual can be affected by additional traits such as personality. Figure 6 below illustrates a simplified version of Ohanian's model of source credibility:

Figure 6: Ohanian's Source Credibility Model



Source: Adapted from Ohanian's model of source credibility (1990)

4.2. THE PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL

The theoretical model which will be used as a frame of reference in this research is Ohanian's (1990) Source Credibility Model. This model has been used previously in past research for measuring credibility by using perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Benedic & Valentin, 2017). Ohanian (1990) was the first to apply these three factors in a study. These three components are now considered to be the essential determinants of the credibility of a source (Fanoberova, Kuczkowska & Biedenbach, 2016).

Ohanian (1990) uses the term source credibility to describe the extent to which an individual perceives a source of information to be believable, true and unbiased. Source credibility can enhance information acceptance during the advertising process (Fanoberova et al., 2016). It is important to note that Ohanian's source credibility model was applied to a traditional research context (Ohanian, 1990). Many studies have attempted to expand on this model so that it can be

more relevant in the current age of technology (Phung et al., 2018). One study made by Djafarova (2019) aimed to extend the source credibility framework in an attempt to make it applicable in the online context. This was done by studying micro-celebrities as a marketing tool through endorsements (Djafarova (2019). The following theoretical frameworks were used:

1. The source-credibility model
2. The self-presentation theory

The self-presentation theory refers to motives of self-promotion and self-branding according to Erz et al. (2018). However, this research will focus only on utilising the source credible model which is relevant to the study.

In this research, a theoretical model with the following research constructs is developed: trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise and eWOM. The aim of this research is to understand the effect of sponsorship disclosure on consumers' perception of source credibility and their likelihood to recommend a product via eWOM. To investigate whether consumers' perception of an influencer's credibility has an effect on their likelihood to recommend products; the Source Credibility Model was extended to include the eWOM construct. With this integration, the research model aims to take the Source Credibility Model one step further to understand the influence that perceived source credibility has on eWOM. The new proposed theoretical model has been presented in figure 7 below:

Figure 7: Proposed theoretical model

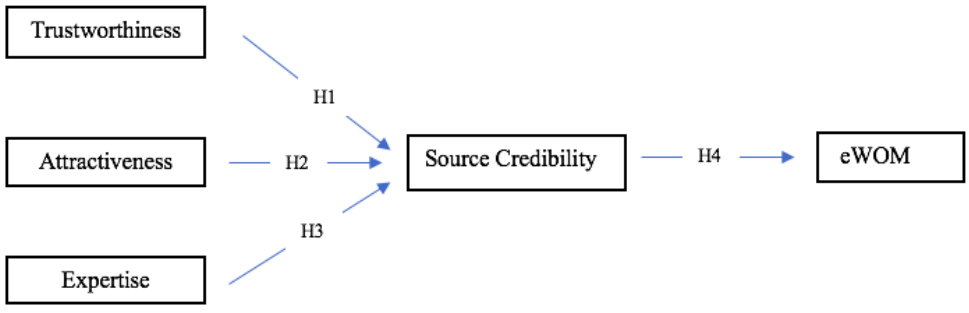


Table 1 below shows the definitions of the constructs used in this research:

Table 1: Definitions of constructs

CONSTRUCT	DEFINITION	SOURCES	ITEMS
Trustworthiness of social media influencers (TR)	The influencer's honesty and believability as perceived by the consumer	(Phan & Yedic, 2018)	TR1-TR7
Attractiveness of social media influencers (ATR)	The familiarity and likeability of an influencer in the eyes of the consumer	(Ohanian, 1990)	ATR1-ATR4
Expertise of social media influencers (EXP)	The level of knowledge and skill that the influencer is perceived to have by their target audience	(Phung, Luning & Wilde Björling, 2018)	EXP1-EXP3
Electronic Word of Mouth (WOM)	The process involving the online transfer of information from one consumer to another consumer	WOMMA (2007)	WOM1-WOM3
Sponsorship Disclosure by social media influencers (SD)	Revealing paid partnerships between a brand and an influencer.	(Hwang & Jeong, 2016)	SD1-SD3
Perception of a social media influencers (PERC)	Refers to the way influencers are regarded by the target audience	(Phung et al. 2018)	PERC1-PERC4

Source credibility (SCR)	The extent to which an individual perceives a source of information to be believable, true and unbiased.	(Ohanian, 1990)	SCR1-SCR4
Organic Hair Care products (OHC)	Hair care products which are made with natural, chemical-free ingredients.	(Stüve & Strauß, 2016)	OHC1-OHC3

4.3. HYPOTHESES STATEMENT DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned earlier, the source credibility model as defined by Ohanian, is used to measure credibility using three constructs: trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). This study makes use of the existing Source Credibility Model as a foundation for hypotheses development which will be used to test the theories set out in existing literature. The following section provides a discussion of the hypotheses statement development for the research constructs.

4.3.1. Trustworthiness construct

Trustworthiness refers to the endorser's honesty and believability as perceived by the consumer (Lu & Chang, 2014). This factor also determines whether or not the message delivered by an individual will be considered valid by the receiver. Honesty, consistency and reliability are qualities that can be categorized into the trustworthiness component. Previous studies have shown that if the credibility or trust of the referrer are doubted, this can lead to a negative impact on consumer purchase intention (Phung & Qin, 2018). Stubb et al. (2019) found trustworthiness to be the most valued trait in beauty categories when investigating the characteristics of influencers. The findings indicate that respondents considered influencers to be trustworthy if they shared honest and truthful information (Stubb et al., 2019).

This research uses the term "trustworthiness'' to refer to the establishment of trust between an influencer who provides a source of information and the receiver of the information. Previous

research on trustworthiness of influencers, portray the trust of influencers with regards to the integrity and character of the individual (Hwang & Jeong 2016). Trustworthiness in promotional studies, has been found to have a positive impact on consumer purchase intentions; in that consumers were found to be more likely to purchase a product from an individual that they trust (Stubb et al., 2019). Additionally, many studies investigating consumers propensity to trust have indicated that this trait can aid in building brand loyalty (Duffett, 2014, Campbell & Marks, 2015). Therefore, this research proposes the following hypotheses statement for the trustworthiness component:

H1: The trustworthiness of an SMI has a positive effect on consumers perception their source credibility.

4.3.2. Attractiveness construct

Ohanian (1990) defines attractiveness as the familiarity and likeability of an individual in the eyes of the receiver. Other studies on source credibility have defined attractiveness as an individual's physical desirable features (Caballero & Pride, 1984, Morrow et al., 1990). The main qualities which were considered attractive in these studies were facial and body appearance. However, a study by Benedic & Valentin (2017) revealed that physical appearance is not the only quality that individuals consider when assessing an influencer's attractiveness characteristic. Respondents in the study mentioned that they look at various lifestyle characteristics when choosing influencers to follow. Additionally, Benedic & Valentin (2017) suggest that attractiveness can be further divided into three factors: the similarity, familiarity and likeability of a source.

A number of studies in social media and branding marketing campaigns have indicated the significance of attractiveness in having an impact on the attitudes and behaviour intentions of consumers (Benedic & Valentin, 2017, Erz et al., 2018). Research made by Erz et al. (2018) suggests that attractiveness is a more complex factor compared to expertise and trustworthiness. This is due to the fact that additional characteristics, such as personality traits, were found to have an effect on the familiarity and likeability of an individual by the receiver (Erz et al., 2018). In marketing campaigns involving celebrities, these studies particularly showed that the perception

of the celebrity's character had an impact on consumers preferences towards the brand (Till & Busler, 2000). Previous literature relating attractiveness and its effect on perceived source credibility has also shown similar results (Fanoberova et al., 2016). In Ohanian's (1990) source credibility study, it was found that individuals who were regarded attractive had a stronger effect on consumer purchase intentions and positive outlooks, compared to those who were considered unattractive by their audience (Ohanian, 1990). Similarly, other studies support these findings and indicate that the attractiveness component is important in influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intention behaviours (Till & Busler, 2000, Fanoberova et al., 2016). The present study thus proposes the following hypotheses:

H2: The attractiveness of an SMI has a positive effect on consumers perception of their source credibility.

4.3.3. Expertise construct

Expertise is defined as the level of knowledge that the endorser is perceived to have by their audience (Phung et al., 2018). Competence, knowledge, proficiency and skill are all qualities that can be categorized into the expertise component. Additionally, the concept of expertise indicates the level of qualification and authority that an individual is perceived to have in a particular profession (Phung et al., 2018). According to Lu et al. (2014), when an endorser showcases their skills and professionalism, it has a positive impact on their perceived level of expertise in the eyes of the receiver. In addition to these findings, previous studies have indicated that social media influencers who are considered industry experts, have a positive impact on consumer's perception and consumer behaviour (Fanoberova et al., 2016). For example, in the research conducted by Stubb et al. (2019) on the effect of expertise, it was reported that there was a direct relationship between expertise, credibility and persuasion. Individuals who were considered experts in the field were shown to be able to persuade consumers more than those who were not considered to be experts (Stubb et al., 2019). Aside from research conducted by Stubb et al. (2019), additional studies by Erz et al. (2018) support the concept that the expertise of an endorser has an impact on source credibility. On the basis of this literature, this research proposes the following hypotheses statement:

H3: The expertise of an SMI has a positive effect on consumers perception their source credibility.

4.3.4. Electronic Word of Mouth construct

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing techniques are commonly used in marketing communications and have recently become more useful because of the global increase in online social connectivity amongst consumers (Hussain et al., 2017). Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) is defined as process involving the online transfer of information from one consumer to another consumer (WOMMA, 2017). A report by WOMMA (2017) indicates that eWOM can be used as a marketing approach by brands who want to increase information adoption in a digital age. A study by Erkan & Evans (2016) which tested the value and credibility of information provided via eWOM in social media suggested that information credibility has a positive impact on information dissemination (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

In this study, eWOM is added as a supplementary construct to the source credibility model in order to investigate the effect of source credibility on consumers likelihood to recommend via eWOM. Previous studies have examined the mechanisms of eWOM however few studies have investigated the effect of source credibility on eWOM and supporting behaviours (Hussain et al., 2017; Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). As the impact of source credibility on eWOM has not been fully explored in previous studies, this research proposes to investigate the following hypotheses:

H4: Consumers perception of the influencer's credibility has an effect on their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM.

4.4. CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

This chapter provides a discussion of the research model development. The chapter starts with an introduction of the theoretical background of the research model is discussed. Ohanian's source credibility model is used as the frame of reference for this research. The model measures source credibility with three components; trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. Consequently,

Ohanian's source credibility model is used to develop a new research model for the purposes of this study. The proposed theoretical model has the following research constructs: Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, Source Credibility and electronic Word of Mouth. Lastly, the following hypotheses statements were developed on the basis of existing literature: H1: The trustworthiness of an SMI has a positive effect on consumers perception. H2: The attractiveness of an SMI has a positive effect on consumers perception. H3: The expertise of an SMI has a positive effect on consumers perception. H4: Consumers' perception of the influencers credibility has an effect on their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM. In the next chapter, the research methodology and design will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter outlines the research methodology, research philosophy, research approach, research design and strategy. First the research philosophy, research approach and data collection methods used are explained. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds to explain the sampling techniques used which includes the sample frame, target population and sampling method. The research instrument is discussed as well as the questionnaire design. Additionally, the chapter outlines the data validation techniques carried out to ensure data reliability and accuracy. Lastly, ethical factors which were considered are discussed.

5.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter outlines the research philosophy, strategy and approach undertaken to ensure that the data collected is accurate, relevant and reliable. Saunders et al. (2012) advises that the research design should include a research strategy which provides procedure and steps that will be taken to ensure that research questions are answered, and quality results are obtained. The research strategy selected has been motivated by the purpose of this research. This study aims to test the hypotheses which have been formulated from existing literature on the topic of the credibility of social media influencers who reveal brand sponsored collaborations. Consequently, a quantitative research strategy has been selected to test the hypotheses as recommended by Saunders et al. (2012). Data is collected by means of a questionnaire and the results are later analysed through statistical methods.

The three types of research methods described by Fowler (2013) are qualitative, quantitative and mixed method. Saunders et al. (2012) advises that a quantitative research method should be used to test specific hypotheses for a particular problem which has been identified. Quantitative data is collected through the use of structured questionnaires and surveys that provide empirical data. On

the other hand, qualitative research is used when the researcher's main aim is to gain insights on a particular problem which has not been clearly defined (Fowler, 2013). Qualitative data is collected by methods such as interviews and focus groups. A mixed method approach is characterized by both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This research will implement a quantitative research approach to test the hypotheses and address the research problem. The next section outlines the rationale behind the research philosophy selected for the study.

5.2. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

A research philosophy is the belief of how data collection and analysis should be conducted to formulate insights for problems (Saunders et al., 2012). The four main types of research philosophies described by Saunders et al. (2012) are positivism, pragmatism, interpretivism and realistic research philosophy. These research philosophies differ from each other in approach, methodology and development of knowledge. The research philosophy chosen for this study is positivism. Saunders et al. (2012) defines positivism as a research philosophy that allows an objective and independent view of social factors. Additionally, Fowler (2013) states that positivism adheres to only observable and measurable facts which can provide accurate data. Positivism research philosophies usually employ a quantitative research approach which involves the use of a structured research instrument, such as a questionnaire or survey (Fowler, 2013). Therefore, the positivism research philosophy has been considered the appropriate choice for this study which undertakes a quantitative methodology which collects empirical data.

5.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

The choice of research approach depends on existing information on the research topic as well as the data collection method to be employed (Fowler, 2013). The three types of research approaches outlined by Saunders et al. (2012) are deductive, inductive and abductive. These research approaches differ in terms of their reasoning techniques. The abductive research approach is used to explore a research phenomenon which cannot be explained by existing theories (Saunders et al., 2012). In the inductive research approach, existing data is used to formulate new theories (Saunders et al., 2012). On the other hand, when conducting the deductive research approach,

previous research and literature is reviewed and hypotheses are formulated to test the existing theories (Saunders et al., 2012). As hypotheses have been formulated to test the existing theories, the research approach that has been chosen in this study is the deductive approach. Fowler (2013) defines quantitative research as an empirical method to collect numerical data. In opposition to qualitative research strategies, quantitative research allows statistical analysis of data to be carried out (Saunders et al., 2012). Taking into account the objectives of this study, the suitable research methodology that has been selected is the quantitative research strategy. In this research data cannot be collected from the entire population due to budget and time constraints, therefore there is need for sampling to be carried out as per Fowler's (2013) best practices in research methods. Following these recommendations, the next section outlines the sampling technique used when selecting the sample.

5.4. SAMPLE SELECTION

Saunders et al. (2012) defines data sampling as a statistical technique which involves selecting a small portion of a population that can be used to make generalisations of the broader population. It is considered best practice to conduct sampling before collecting data to ensure that research is feasible (Saunders et al., 2012). Moreover, data sampling can be used to save time and enhance accuracy when the researcher cannot collect data from an entire population (Saunders et al. 2012). There are two types of sample selection techniques; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves random selection of participants (Trustin, 2005). On the other hand, non-probability sampling is when the sample is selected based on convenience (Trustin, 2005). A non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling was selected for this research. This method was most suitable for this research as it is recommended when cost and time are restricting factors for a study (Trustin, 2005). Additionally, convenience sampling has been used for previous studies that investigate consumer perception, hence it has been found suitable for this study (Fowler, 2013)

The Central Limit Theorem (CLT) which is largely used by statisticians, dictates that the minimum sample required for accurate statistical analysis and reliable results is 30 participants (Stutely, 2003). Therefore, for this study the aim was to collect at least 150 responses. However, due time restrictions, data was collected from 118 participants. Although this number was lower than the

expected number of responses, it still met the sample size requirements for accurate statistical analysis. The next section discussed the data collection method. As discussed previously, research has shown that the Generation Z are the most active users on Instagram (Ho & Dempsey, 2010). Accordingly, the questionnaire was sent out to University students in the age range of 18 to 24 years. University of Cape Town students were specifically selected as the sample was readily available. This selection criteria falls in line with research recommendations provided by Fowler (2013) when conducting convenience sampling.

5.5. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

There are two types of data; primary and secondary data. Primary data collection is a type of data collection that suggests that the researcher is collecting new information which did not exist before. Saunders et al. (2012) defines primary data as firsthand information that has been gathered by a researcher for the purpose of a particular study. Secondary data collection is data that already exists and has been collected for previous studies (Saunders et al., 2012). The advantages of using secondary data are that it offers an easy way to compare information and can be used to assess the if the data collected is representative of the total population (Saunders et al., 2012). In this research, a combination of both primary and secondary data has been used to obtain extensive information on the research topic and to answer the research questions. For the purposes of this study, secondary data was collected from various academic sources; mainly journals, articles, internet sources, databases and research papers. Secondary data collection involved literature search through two main databases: Primo and Google Scholar. These databases were selected as they consist of a wide range of literature and peer reviewed articles which contain highly reliable information. For the present study, primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The next section details the primary data collection method which was conducted through the use of an online questionnaire.

5.6. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

5.6.1. Questionnaire Design

Surveys have been proven to be useful in conducting market research (Fowler, 2013). In this study a survey will be conducted in the form of a questionnaire in order to collect primary data. A questionnaire is defined as a research instrument that consists of a set of questions which are used to collect data from respondents (Saunders et al., 2012). To date, questionnaires are one of the most widely used data collection methods and provide an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample (Huang & Su, 2018).

The questionnaire that was used contained highly structured questions so as to obtain specific insights that can address the research objectives. This is in line with the positivism research philosophy outlined by Saunders et al. (2012). Additionally, the questionnaire was designed using a multi-item rating scale approach using Google Forms, an online survey administration software. Each construct was measured with different items. This method has been shown to improve validity and reliability of results (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Additionally, a five-point Likert scale, developed by Rensis Likert in 1932 to measure attitudes ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used to measure variables.

The questionnaire begins with a participant information sheet which details the purpose of the research and a request for participants to consent in the voluntary study. The participant information sheet can be found in Appendix 2. The questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix 3, consists of the following eight sections: A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. Participants were provided with five options for each question that contained a five-point Likert scale. The options ranged from 1 being strongly disagree, to 5 being strongly agree. Participants could also indicate Yes or No answers for the appropriate type of questions.

Section A is the first section of the questionnaire which consists of general questions which were used to identify the sample characteristics such as age of the participant and Instagram usage. The general questions were also used as filtering questions, to exclude respondents which were not part of the target population for this study. The respondent would either be able to continue with the questionnaire or not, depending on the response provided to these filtering questions. Additionally, filtering questions ensure that responses are collected from eligible participants only (Fowler, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the eligibility criteria included having an Instagram account

as well as making use of the account. It was a requirement for participants to have an Instagram account in order to provide answers which were relevant to the study because Instagram was the social media platform selected for the research. If the answer was no, when asked the following filtering question: “Do you have an Instagram account?”, the survey would automatically come to an end and participants were not able to continue with the rest of the questions. Participants were also required to answer the following filtering question: “How often do you use Instagram?”. The questionnaire would immediately come to an end for participants who answered that never made use of their Instagram accounts as this study would not be applicable to them.

The following sections consist of specific questions were drawn from previous literature on influencer marketing and applied to the context of this study. Section B concerns questions regarding the trustworthiness construct. The trustworthiness construct was measured by seven items or questions which were adapted from previous studies by Phan et al., 2018, Lu et al. (2014) and Abrahamsson et al. (2018). Participants were questioned on their propensity to trust and the types of influencers that they would regard trustworthy. The level of trust that participants have for SMIs who disclose paid partnerships was also examined in this section. Section C concerns questions regarding the attractiveness construct. The attractiveness construct was measured by a four item scale with questions adapted from Benedic et al. (2017). This section presents statements that investigate factors that participants consider when assessing the attractiveness and likeability of an SMI. Additionally, the level of attractiveness of an SMI is measured with questions relating to the size of their followers.

Section D presents questions regarding the expertise construct. A three item scale was used to measure the expertise construct, adapted from a study by Benedic et al. (2017). Questions focused on the level of skill and expertise that an SMI is considered to have when revealing brand sponsored partnerships. Section E concerns questions regarding the eWOM construct which was measured by a three item scale which was adapted from a study made by Phung et al. (2018). Participants were questioned on their likelihood to rely on online reviews made by SMIs as well as their willingness to recommend a product via eWOM. Section F provides questions regarding the sponsorship disclosure construct. The sponsorship disclosure variable was examined by seven item scale which was adapted from previous studies by Phan et al. (2018) and Abrahamsson et al.

(2018). Respondents were questioned on their overall perception of SMIs that disclose sponsored posts.

Section G concerns questions regarding the source credibility construct. The source credibility construct was measured by a three item scale adapted from Kleintjes, 2017 and Phung et al. (2018). The participants overall perception on the credibility of SMIs who enter into paid partnerships with brands is questioned in this section. Furthermore, this section presents questions on information preferences and which sources of information are regarded as credible by participants. Lastly, section H presents questions regarding the organic hair care construct. This section examines the participants involvement with natural hair care products as well as consumer's perception of influencers who endorse organic hair care products. A seven item scale consisting of questions adapted from a previous study by Stüve et al. (2016) was used to measure the organic hair care construct.

5.6.2. Questionnaire Distribution

As indicated earlier, University of Cape Town students were selected for the study. The rationale for sample selection has been explained in the sampling procedure described in section 5.4 of the dissertation. Past studies reveal that online surveying has gained popularity as an efficient and cost-saving method of collecting data (Luo et al., 2013). Subsequently, the selected method of questionnaire distribution was online, in the form of an anonymous survey link sent by way of email to University of Cape Town students. During the research design step, it was established that a conducive study would require a large sample size. Hence the aim of the questionnaire was to collect a minimum of 150 responses. Hussain et al. (2017) argue that response rates for questionnaires are usually low therefore the questionnaire was sent to a list of 350 registered undergraduate students in an attempt to ensure that the target number of responses was achieved. The distribution method was selected based on convenience, low-cost as well as the target population. As previously mentioned, the target group of the study is the Gen Z and the questionnaire was distributed to University students, on the assumption that these participants fall within the Gen Z age group.

5.6.3. Considerations for online surveying

The questionnaire was issued online to ensure a standardised administration method which is considered best practice by Fowler (2013). The following considerations were made to ensure that accurate results would be obtained:

- All questions allowed the participant to choose from a range of answers. Participants were provided with the option to select answers from a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree.
- Answer options included a neutral option to cater for respondents who neither had a negative nor positive response. This falls in line with best practices for writing survey questions (Fowler, 2013).
- The questions were phrased in simple English to ensure that the participants were able to understand all the information.
- The purpose of the study was provided along with definitions of all variables and terms in order to increase the validity of the responses.
- Participation was voluntary and respondents had the option to end the survey at any point.
- Ethical considerations were taken into account and participants responses were kept anonymous and all responses were used for the sole purpose of this research.

This research involves collecting primary data from human subjects. In order to adhere to the Ethics in Research Policy for the University of Cape Town Faculty of Commerce, an ethics approval and clearance certificate was obtained prior to commencing data collection. The ethics clearance certificate can be found in Appendix 1. Additionally, the participants involved in the study were given assurance of anonymity of their responses. This was disclosed in the participant information sheet which can be found in Appendix 2.

5.7. DATA ANALYSIS, VALIDIDTY AND RELIABILITY

5.7.1. Data analysis

Google Forms, an online survey provider, allowed data to be collected and recorded. Once the questionnaires were completed, data was imported from Google forms. Thereafter, the data was c cleaned and sorted using Excel. Data cleaning and sorting involved removing invalid data which had missing values. The mean values and standard deviation were calculated to find the distribution of the data. Thereafter, data analysis was carried out through inferential statistical tests. Data analysis was carried out by using the following software: the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS (Analysis of a Moment Structures). SPSS 24 was used to conduct statistical analysis as well as cleaning and coding the data, transforming it into descriptive numbers, reports and charts. Additionally, descriptive statistics which included the sample profile and Likert-scale results were calculated using SPSS 24. On the other hand, AMOS 24 software was used to check the fit of the data to the research model and to analyse the relationship between the measured variables. Additionally, reliability tests through Cronbach's alpha, the standard deviation and mean were also calculated using SPSS 24. Confirmatory factor analysis was carried out in this study in order to conduct the conceptual model fit assessment. Lastly, hypothesis testing was carried out through inferential statistics and structural equation modelling using AMOS 24 software.

5.7.2. Data validity and reliability

One of the most important criteria for determining the suitability of any data set is measuring data validity and reliability (Saunders et al., 2012). Data validity can be defined as the accuracy and quality of data. Data reliability refers to the measurement of data consistency (Saunders et al., 2012). To prevent obtaining results which are invalid, previous research that involves similar secondary data will be examined. If the measures that were used in the previous studies are found to be suitable, then these measures will be applied to answer the research questions for this study. The data set will also be evaluated to check if it contains the information required to answer the research questions for this study. Dochartaigh (2002), suggests that an assessment of data reliability can be conducted by making comparisons of similar studies made by reliable sources. Therefore, all secondary data sources that were used were obtained from reputable sources with the assumption that they were reliable. For the primary data, the Cronbach's alpha test was used to examine the reliability of data by testing for consistency. Additionally, data validity was carried

out by use of an Inter-construct correlation matrix. Further details regarding the reliability and validity tests carried out on the collected data will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.8. CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the research methodology and the quantitative research design which was implemented in this study. First, the research design, research philosophy and research approach are explained. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds to explain data collection methods and the sampling techniques used. The sampling procedure outlines the motivation behind the choice of the sample frame, target population and sampling method. Additionally, the research instrument is discussed which includes details regarding the questionnaire design and the method of questionnaire distribution. The rationale behind conducting an online questionnaire as opposed to a traditional questionnaire is discussed along with the considerations made for online surveying. Lastly, the chapter ends of with a description of the data analysis and validation techniques carried out to ensure data reliability and accuracy. In the next chapter, the research findings and discussion of results are presented.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the empirical research findings and discussion of the results. Firstly, the sample characteristics are described. Thereafter, the results from the questionnaire are presented in the form of tables and graphs. Reliability test results using Cronbach's alpha are discussed and presented. Following the reliability measurement, the construct validity test was carried out using the inter-construct correlation matrix. Lastly, inferential statistics are presented and hypotheses test results are analysed along with a discussion of the conceptual model fit assessment.

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results obtained from the questionnaire are presented and interpreted. As stated earlier in the methodology, the questionnaire was sent out to UCT students via email and online platforms. A total of 118 responses were collected, however 105 responses were considered valid. The questionnaire results are presented in tables, graphs, pie-charts and figures in order to present the research findings in a summarised manner. The results are also presented in the same order as the questions in the questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix 3.

Once the questionnaire results have been presented, the chapter proceeds to discuss the data analysis methods used and the research findings obtained. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 24) and the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS 24) software. Descriptive statistics which included the sample profile and Likert-scale results were calculated using SPSS 24. Reliability tests through Cronbach's alpha, the standard deviation and mean were also calculated using SPSS 24. Following the reliability measurement, the construct validity test was carried out using the inter-construct correlation matrix.

Lastly, hypothesis testing was carried out through inferential statistics using AMOS 24. The following four hypotheses were tested: H1: The trustworthiness of an influencer has a positive effect on consumers perception of their source credibility, H2: The attractiveness of an influencer has a positive effect on consumers perception of their source credibility, H3: The expertise of an influencer has a positive effect on consumers perception of their source credibility and H4: Consumer perception of an influencer's credibility has an effect on their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM. Following hypotheses testing, a structural model was produced. The hypothesis test results and structural model were analysed and interpreted based on the recommended thresholds required for data reliability and validity. The research findings obtained were used to make deductive inferences and to conduct the conceptual model fit assessment.

6.2. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

This section presents the results from the general questions which were used as filtering questions, to exclude respondents which were not part of the target population for this study. The respondent would either be able to continue with the questionnaire or not, depending on the response provided to these filtering questions. Additionally, these questions were also used to identify the sample characteristics. The first question requests the respondent to provide their age. This question was used to identify the target population for this study, which is the 18-24 year olds. The second question phrased: "Do you have an Instagram account" was used to eliminate participants who did not have an Instagram account as they would not contribute to this research. Those who answered no to the question, would not be able to continue with the questionnaire as it would automatically come to an end as they did not meet the requirements for the study. Lastly, participants were asked to answer how often they use Instagram. Those who answered that they never use the platform were not able to continue with the questionnaire. They were excluded from the study as this research focused on active Instagram users.

It can be observed in table 2 and figure 8 below that the most represented age group, which consists of the majority of respondents, is the 18 to 24-year-olds. This is indicated by 75.2% of the sample. The second most represented age group is that of 25-35-year olds, indicated by 22.9% of sample.

The least represented age group is that of 36-39-year olds. This is shown by 1.9% of the sample. As shown in table 2 and figure 9 below, the majority of the sample are active on Instagram; as 98.1% of the participants had an Instagram account and 1.9% did not have an Instagram account. Lastly, it can be observed from the data shown in table 2 and figure 10 that 80% of the sample use Instagram daily, 15.2% use Instagram weekly, 1% use Instagram on a monthly basis and 3.8% rarely use the social media platform.

Table 2: Sample demographics table

Age Group	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
18-24	79	75.2%
25-35	24	22.9%
36-39	2	1.9%
Total	105	100%
Instagram account	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	103	98.1%
No	2	1.9%
Total	105	100%
Instagram usage	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Daily	84	80.0%
Weekly	16	15.2%
Monthly	1	1.0%
Rarely	4	3.8%
Total	**105**	**100%**

Figure 8: Age Presentation Bar Graph

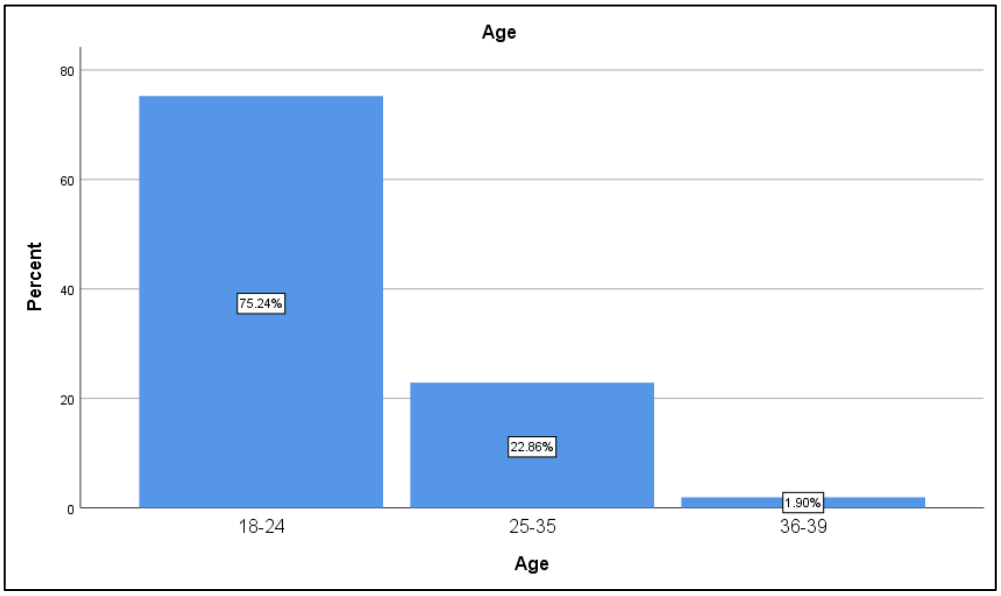


Figure 9: Instagram Account Bar Graph

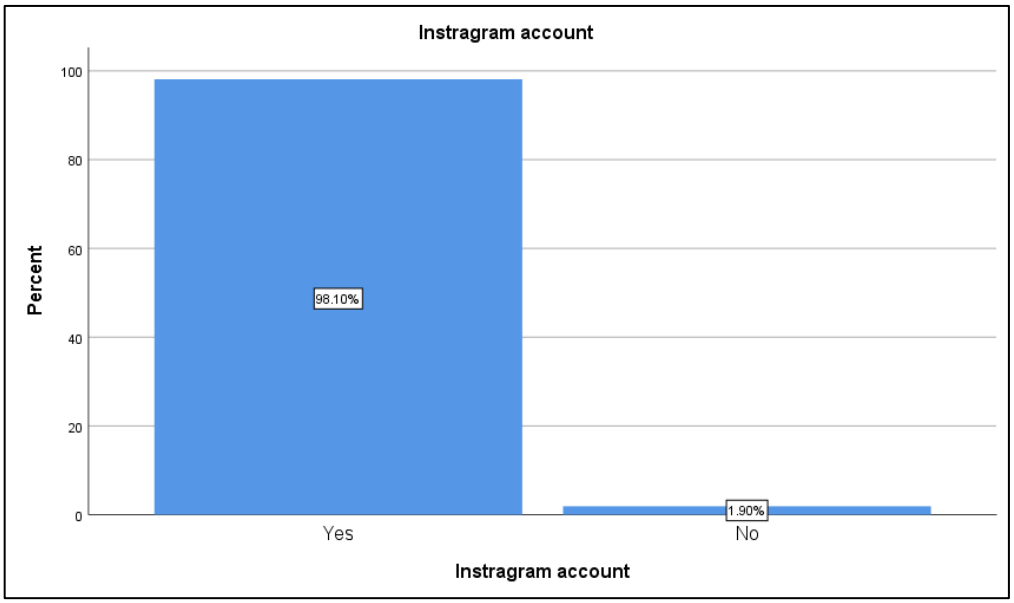
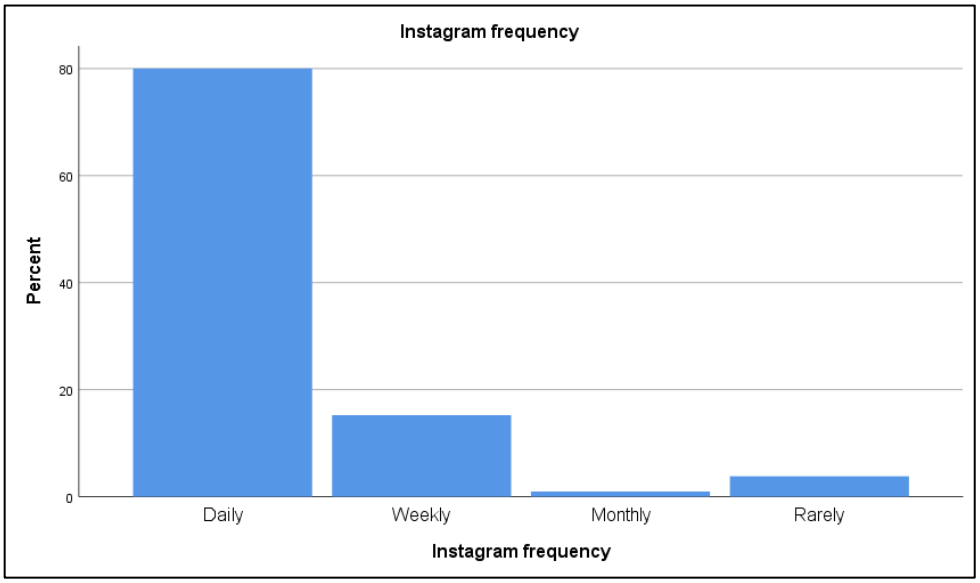


Figure 10: Instagram Frequency of Use Bar Graph



In this section, responses to the statement "I follow a Social Media Influencer on Instagram" are presented. Table 3 and figure 11 below show that 95.2% of the sample follow a social media influencer on Instagram and 4.8% of the sample do not follow a social media influencer on Instagram.

Table 3: "I follow a Social Media Influencer on Instagram"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	100	95.2	95.2	95.2
	No	5	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Figure 11: Pie Chart showing participants who follow social media influencers on Instagram

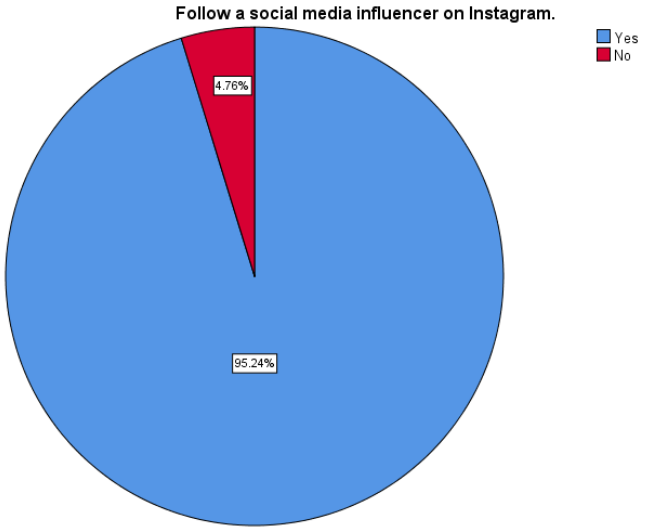
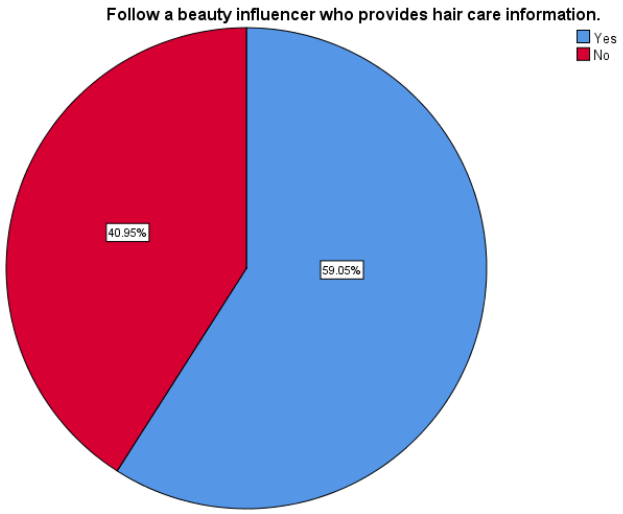


Table 4 and figure 12 below show that the majority of respondents follow beauty influencers; as 59% of the sample follow a beauty influencer on Instagram and 41% of the sample do not follow a beauty influencer on Instagram who provides hair care information.

Table 4: Table showing participants who follow a beauty influencer who provides hair care information.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	62	59.0	59.0	59.0
	No	43	41.0	41.0	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Figure 12: Pie Chart showing participants who follow a beauty influencer who provides hair care information.

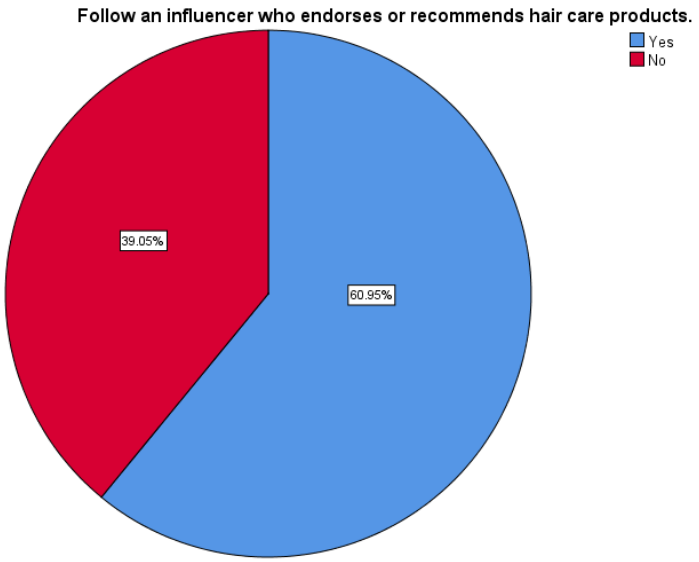


The following results are for the statement "I follow an influencer who endorses or recommends hair care products". Table 5 and figure 13 below show that 61% of the sample follow an influencer who endorses hair care products and 39% of the sample do not follow an influencer who endorses hair care products.

Table 5: Table showing participants who follow an influencer who endorses or recommends hair care products.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	64	61.0	61.0	61.0
	No	41	39.0	39.0	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Figure 13: Pie Chart showing participants who follow an influencer who endorses or recommends hair care products.



6.3. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The questionnaire consists of eight sections, A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. All research constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 being strongly disagree, to 5 being strongly agree. The first variable was “trustworthiness (TR)” was measured with seven items: ranging from TR1 to TR7. The second variable was “attractiveness (ATR)” measured with four items ranging from ATR1 to ATR4. The third variable was “expertise (EXP)” measured with three items, EXP1 to EXP3. The fourth variable was “electronic Word of Mouth (WOM)” was measured with three items: ranging from WOM1 to WOM3. The fifth observed variable was “sponsorship disclosure (SD)” was measured with three items: ranging from SD1 to SD3. The sixth variable was “perception (PERC)” was measured with three items: ranging from PERC1 to PERC4. The seventh variable was “source credibility (SCR)” was measured with three items: ranging from SCR1 to SCRC4. Lastly, the eighth variable was “organic hair care (OHC)”, measured with three items, OHC1 to OHC3.

6.3.1. Trustworthiness construct results

Trustworthiness, in the context of this study, is how honest and believable one is perceive to be. Responses to the statements on the trustworthiness construct are presented in this section. The statements examine what makes a social media influencer trustworthy and the importance of trustworthiness from the respondents opinion. The trustworthiness construct (TR) was measured with seven items, ranging from TR1 to TR7. The following results were observed and presented in tabular format, as shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Trustworthiness (TR) questions and responses

Research Question		Frequency	Percent %
Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more trustworthy than an SMI with a low number of followers?	Strongly disagree	7	6.7
	Disagree	21	20.0
	Neutral	26	24.8
	Agree	32	30.5
	Strongly agree	19	18.1
	Total	105	100.0
Do you trust SMIs when they disclose paid partnerships?	Strongly disagree	7	6.7
	Disagree	10	9.5
	Neutral	34	32.4
	Agree	37	35.2
	Strongly agree	17	16.2
	Total	105	100.0
It is important for me that I find the influencers I follow to be trustworthy.	Strongly disagree	6	5.7
	Disagree	5	4.8
	Neutral	26	24.8
	Agree	34	32.4
	Strongly agree	34	32.4
	Total	105	100.0
I find influencers to be more trustworthy if they share similar interests as me.	Strongly disagree	4	3.8
	Disagree	10	9.5
	Neutral	33	31.4
	Agree	32	30.5
	Strongly agree	26	24.8
	Total	105	100.0
I would not trust SMIs that only posts paid partnerships, because it feels like they only do it for the money	Strongly disagree	3	2.9
	Disagree	18	17.1
	Neutral	20	19.0
	Agree	14	13.3
	Strongly agree	50	47.6
	Total	105	100.0
I generally trust other people.	Strongly disagree	10	9.5
	Disagree	22	21.0
	Neutral	33	31.4
	Agree	25	23.8
	Strongly agree	15	14.3
	Total	105	100.0
I tend to trust other people even though I have little knowledge of them.	Strongly disagree	20	19.0
	Disagree	33	31.4
	Neutral	24	22.9
	Agree	20	19.0
	Strongly agree	8	7.6
	Total	105	100.0

As shown in Table 6 above, it is clear that the majority of the respondents agreed with the following statement: “Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more trustworthy than an

SMI with a low number of followers?". A total of 32 respondents agreed with the statement, which consisted of 30.5% of the total responses. Additionally, 18.1% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. On the contrary, only 6.7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. Therefore, the overall sentiment to the statement was that SMIs who have a large follower base are trustworthy.

In assessing the results for the statement "Do you trust SMIs when they disclose paid partnerships?", we can see that the majority of respondents agreed with the statement. A total of 37 respondents agreed with the statement, which consisted of 35.2% of the total responses. On the other hand, only 6.7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. These results indicated that SMIs who disclose paid partnerships were considered to be trustworthy by the respondents.

The results of the following statement: "It is important for me that I find the influencers I follow to be trustworthy?" indicate that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement. A total of 68 respondents agreed with the statement, which consisted of 64.8% of the total responses. In contrast, only 5.7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. These results reveal that trustworthiness is a significant trait that the respondents would consider when following influencers.

Table 6 above also shows results to the statement "I find influencers to be more trustworthy if they share similar interests as me". The majority of the participants were found to be leaning towards neutrality when responding to the statement. A total of 33 respondents stated they were neutral to the statement, which consisted of 31.4% of the total responses. Additionally, 32 respondents agreed with the statement, making up 30.5% of the responses. On the other hand, only 3.8% of the participants disagreed with the statement.

In assessing the results for the statement "I would not trust SMIs that only posts paid partnerships, because it feels like they only do it for the money?", the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. A total of 50 respondents strongly agreed with the statement, which

consisted of 47.6% of the total responses. On the contrary, only 2.9% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

Propensity to trust was measured by the following statement: “I generally trust other people”. When assessing the results for this statement: most respondents where either neutral or in agreement with the statement. A total of 33 respondents were neutral to the statement, which consisted of 31.4% of the total responses. The number of respondents who agreed with the statement were 25 and this consisted of 23.8% of the recorded responses. In contrast, a small percentage of 9.5% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

Lastly, the trustworthiness construct was measured with the following statement: “I tend to trust other people even though I have little knowledge of them”. The results, presented in table 6 indicated that the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement. A sum of 33 respondents were found to disagree with the statement, which comprised 31.4% of the recorded responses. On the contrary, only 7.6% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. These results reveal that most of the respondents who participated in this survey do not trust people that they have little knowledge of.

6.3.2. Attractiveness construct results

The term “attractiveness” refers to the familiarity and likeability of an influencer, in the context of this study. This section will present responses to the questions regarding the attractiveness construct. The questions examine what makes a social media influencer attractive based on characteristics such as the number of followers they have and whether they have sponsorship or not; amongst other attributes. The attractiveness construct (ATR) was measured with four items, ranging from ATR1 to ATR4. The following results were observed and presented in Table 7 below:

Table 7: Attractiveness (ATR) questions and responses

Research Question		Frequency	Percent %
Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more attractive than an SMI with a low number of followers?	Strongly disagree	16	15.2
	Disagree	35	33.3
	Neutral	25	23.8
	Agree	17	16.2
	Strongly agree	12	11.4
	Total	105	100.0
When an influencer has many followers, it makes him/her more attractive.	Strongly disagree	12	11.4
	Disagree	27	25.7
	Neutral	21	20.0
	Agree	25	23.8
	Strongly agree	20	19.0
	Total	105	100.0
When an influencer receives many likes and comments, it makes them more attractive.	Strongly disagree	13	12.4
	Disagree	25	23.8
	Neutral	19	18.1
	Agree	35	33.3
	Strongly agree	13	12.4
	Total	105	100.0
I find an influencer that is sponsored by companies as more attractive than one who isn't sponsored.	Strongly disagree	25	23.8
	Disagree	27	25.7
	Neutral	18	17.1
	Agree	28	26.7
	Strongly agree	7	6.7
	Total	105	100.0

As shown in Table 7 above, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the following statement: "Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more attractive than an SMI with a low number of followers?". A total of 35 respondents said they disagreed with the statement, which consisted of 33.3% of the total responses. On the other hand, only 11.4% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. These results indicate that the number of followers an SMI has does not have an impact on how attractive they are perceived to be by the respondents.

In assessing the results of the statement "When an influencer has many followers, it makes them more attractive", the majority of the participants were in disagreement with the statement. A sum of 27 respondents which comprised 25.7% of the total responses, disagreed with the statement. Additionally, 11.4% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. These results again

bring us to the same conclusion that was observed in the previous question, which is that the a large number of followers does not imply that an influencer is perceived to be more attractive. The majority of respondents agreed with the following statement: “When an influencer receives many likes and comments, it makes them more attractive”. A sum of 35 respondents which comprised of 33.3% of the total responses, agreed with the statement. Additionally, 12.4% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. The number of likes and comments that an influencer has therefore has an impact on how respondents viewed their level of attractiveness.

Lastly, when assessing the results for the following statement: “I find an influencer that is sponsored by companies as more attractive than one who isn’t sponsored” a total of 28 respondents, consisting of 26.7% of the total responses, agreed with the statement. Additionally, 6.7% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. These results indicate that influencers who are sponsored are seen to be more attractive by the respondents who participated in the questionnaire.

6.3.3. Expertise construct results

The term “expertise” refers to the level of knowledge or skill that an influencer is perceived to have, in the context of this study. This section will present responses to the questions on expertise. The statements examine what makes a social media influencer to be considered an expert based on a number of traits. The expertise construct (EXP) was measured with four items, ranging from EXP1 to EXP3. The following results were observed and presented in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Expertise (EXP) questions and responses

Research Question		Frequency	Percent %
Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more of an expert than an SMI with a low number of followers?	Strongly disagree	24	22.9
	Disagree	22	21.0
	Neutral	27	25.7
	Agree	22	21.0
	Strongly Agree	10	9.5
	Total	105	100.0
Similar social identities and expertise have been found to be factors that make SMIs influential. Do you agree with this?	Strongly disagree	12	11.4
	Disagree	20	19.0
	Neutral	22	21.0
	Agree	37	35.2
	Strongly Agree	14	13.3
	Total	105	100.0
I find an influencer that is sponsored by companies as an expert.	Strongly disagree	28	26.7
	Disagree	36	34.3
	Neutral	22	21.0
	Agree	15	14.3
	Strongly Agree	4	3.8
	Total	105	100.0

As shown in Table 8 above, the majority of the respondents were neutral to the first statement "Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more of an expert than an SMI with a low number of followers?". A total of 27 respondents were neutral to the statement. This number consisted of 25.7% of the total responses. On the other hand, only 9.5% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement.

In assessing the statement "Similar social identities and expertise have been found to be factors that make SMIs influential. Do you agree with this?", the majority of the respondents leaned towards neutrality. A sum of 37 respondents were neutral to the statement, which consisted of 35.2% of the total responses. On the other hand, only 11.4% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Lastly, table 8 presents the responses of the following statement: "I find an influencer that is sponsored by companies as an expert". The results indicated that the majority of the respondents disagreed with this statement. A total of 36 respondents, which made up 34.3% of the total

responses, disagreed with the statement. Additionally, the results indicate that only 4 respondents which comprised of 3.8% of the participants, strongly agreed with the statement.

6.3.4. Electronic Word of Mouth construct results

Electronic Word of Mouth is the process which involves the online transfer of information from one consumer to another. This section will present the results obtained from questions on eWOM. The statements examine the likelihood of an individual to recommend a product via electronic word of mouth. The electronic word of mouth construct (WOM) was measured with three items, ranging from WOM1 to WOM3. The following results were observed and presented in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Electronic Word of Mouth (WOM) questions and responses

Research Question		**Frequency**	**Percent %**
Have you looked up reviews of products from influencers before buying them?	Strongly disagree	11	10.5
	Disagree	23	21.9
	Neutral	15	14.3
	Agree	33	31.4
	Strongly Agree	23	21.9
	Total	105	100.0
Have you bought any products because of online recommendations from SMIs?	Strongly disagree	11	10.5
	Disagree	19	18.1
	Neutral	15	14.3
	Agree	29	27.6
	Strongly Agree	31	29.5
	Total	105	100.0
I would rely on the recommendation made by a SMI I follow.	Strongly disagree	10	9.5
	Disagree	22	21.0
	Neutral	23	21.9
	Agree	39	37.1
	Strongly Agree	11	10.5
	Total	105	100.0

The first question presented in Table 9 above is “Have you looked up reviews of products from influencers before buying them?”. The results indicated that 33 respondents, which consisted of 31.4% of the total responses, agreed with the statement. On the contrary, 11 respondents which

comprised of 10.5% of all participants, strongly disagreed with the statement. We can conclude that the majority of the respondents look up online reviews of products before making purchases.

The second question was “Have you bought any products because of online recommendations from SMIs?”. The results reveal that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. A total of 31 respondents, consisting of 29.5% of the total responses, strongly agreed with the statement. Additionally, 27.6% respondents agreed with the statement. In contrast, only 10.5% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. These results indicate that online recommendations via eWOM have a positive impact on purchase decisions for the majority of the respondents.

Lastly table 9 presents the results of the following statement: “I would rely on the recommendation made by a SMI I follow”. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents agree with the statement. A sum of 39 respondents which consisted of 37.1% of the total responses, agreed with the statement. On the other hand, only10 respondents which were 9.5% of the participants, strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, the results of the statement indicate that online recommendations via eWOM have an impact of consumer behaviour.

6.3.5. Sponsorship disclosure construct results

Sponsorship disclosure is revealing any support or payment provided to an individual by a brand. The results obtained from questions regarding sponsorship disclosure by social media influencers are presented in this section. The sponsorship disclosure construct (SD) was measured with three items, ranging from SD1 to SD3. The following results were observed and presented in Table 10 below:

Table 10: Sponsorship disclosure (SD) questions and responses

Research Question		Frequency	Percent %
I like to look at sponsored posts.	Strongly disagree	26	24.8
	Disagree	30	28.6
	Neutral	28	26.7
	Agree	19	18.1
	Strongly Agree	2	1.9
	Total	105	100.0
Products shown in sponsored posts are better quality than others.	Strongly disagree	33	31.4
	Disagree	19	18.1
	Neutral	34	32.4
	Agree	11	10.5
	Strongly Agree	8	7.6
	Total	105	100.0
It is important that influencers share information on where I can find additional information regarding the sponsorship.	Strongly disagree	7	6.7
	Disagree	8	7.6
	Neutral	16	15.2
	Agree	50	47.6
	Strongly Agree	24	22.9
	Total	105	100.0

In assessing the results of the statement "I like to look at sponsored posts", the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement. A total of 30 respondents, which comprised of 28.6% of the total responses, disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, only 2 respondents which were 1.9% of the participants, strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, the general sentiment was that the respondents do not like to look at sponsored posts.

The results of the following statement: "Products shown in sponsored posts are better quality than others" are presented in table 10. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents leaned towards neutrality as 32.4% of the total responses indicated that they were neutral to the statement. Additionally, a small percentage of 7.6% of the participants stated that they agreed with the statement.

The results of the last statement; "It is important that influencers share information on where I can find additional information regarding the sponsorship" indicate that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement. Nearly half of the participants, 47.6% of the total responses, agreed

with the statement. In contrast only 6.7% of the respondents, strongly disagreed with the statement. These results indicated that sponsorship information was regarded to be an important aspect by the majority of the respondents.

6.3.6. Perception construct results

The following section examines how participants perceive brands that use social media influencers. The perception construct (PERC) was measured using four items, ranging from PERC1 to PERC4. The following results were observed and presented in tabular format, as shown in table 11 below:

Table 11: Perception (PERC) questions and responses

Research Question		**Frequency**	**Percent %**
I perceive brands that use influencers to be trustworthy.	Strongly disagree	10	9.5
	Disagree	10	9.5
	Neutral	53	50.5
	Agree	23	21.9
	Strongly Agree	9	8.6
	Total	105	100.0
I perceive brands that use influencers to be experts.	Strongly disagree	18	17.1
	Disagree	18	17.1
	Neutral	57	54.3
	Agree	8	7.6
	Strongly Agree	4	3.8
	Total	105	100.0
I perceive brands that use influencers to be attractive.	Strongly disagree	11	10.5
	Disagree	19	18.1
	Neutral	34	32.4
	Agree	32	30.5
	Strongly Agree	9	8.6
	Total	105	100.0
I perceive brands that use influencers to be credible.	Strongly disagree	11	10.5
	Disagree	15	14.3
	Neutral	49	46.7
	Agree	23	21.9
	Strongly Agree	7	6.7
	Total	105	100.0

In assessing the results of the statements above on how participants perceive brands that use social media influencers, the majority of the respondents leaned towards neutrality. The majority of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements. The results of the first statement; “I perceive brands that use influencers to be trustworthy”, indicated that 50.5% of the total responses were neutral to the statement. Additionally, only 9 respondents, which were 8.6% of the participants, strongly agreed with the statement.

In assessing the results of the second statement; “I perceive brands that use influencers to be experts” indicate that the majority of the respondents leaned towards neutrality. A sum of 57 respondents, which consisted of 54.3% of the total responses, were neutral to the statement. On the other hand, only 3.8% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. The results of the third statement; “I perceive brands that use influencers to be attractive indicate that 32.4% of the total responses were neutral to the statement. Only 9 respondents, which were 8.6% of the participants, strongly agreed with the statement. Lastly, the results of fourth the statement; “I perceive brands that use influencers to be credible” show that 46.7% of the total responses were neutral to the statement and only 6.7% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement.

6.3.7. Source credibility construct results

The term source credibility refers to the extent to which an individual perceives a source of information to be believable, true and unbiased. The following section examines the sources that were considered the most credible source of information by the respondents. Additionally, this section presents results for traits that are used to measure source credibility; specifically trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise. The source credibility construct (SCR) was measured with ten items, ranging from SCR1 to SCR10. The following results were observed and presented in tabular format, as shown in table 12 below:

Table 12: Source credibility (SCR) questions and responses

Research Question		Frequency	Percent %
A review on a brands official Instagram page is a credible source of information.	Strongly disagree	5	4.8
	Disagree	25	23.8
	Neutral	26	24.8
	Agree	36	34.3
	Strongly Agree	13	12.4
	Total	105	100.0
A review made by a Social Media Influencer is a credible source of information.	Strongly disagree	9	8.6
	Disagree	16	15.2
	Neutral	31	29.5
	Agree	47	44.8
	Strongly Agree	2	1.9
	Total	105	100.0
A review made by an Instagram user that I know, is a credible source of information.	Strongly disagree	1	1.0
	Disagree	10	9.5
	Neutral	21	20.0
	Agree	37	35.2
	Strongly Agree	36	34.3
	Total	105	100.0
A review made by an Instagram user that I don't know, is a credible source of information.	Strongly disagree	11	10.5
	Disagree	16	15.2
	Neutral	43	41.0
	Agree	29	27.6
	Strongly Agree	6	5.7
	Total	105	100.0
Expertise (The level of knowledge or skill that an influencer is perceived to have) is an important trait.	Least Important	3	2.9
	Not Very Important	3	2.9
	Neutral	13	12.4
	Important	52	49.5
	Very Important	34	32.4
	Total	105	100.0

Attractiveness (The familiarity and likeability of an influencer) is an important trait.	Least Important	4	3.8
	Not Very Important	10	9.5
	Neutral	34	32.4
	Important	44	41.9
	Very Important	13	12.4
	Total	105	100.0
Trustworthiness (How honest and believable an influencer is perceived to be) is an important trait.	Least Important	1	1.0
	Not Very Important	2	1.9
	Neutral	17	16.2
	Important	35	33.3
	Very Important	50	47.6
	Total	105	100.0
SMIs provide believable information.	Strongly disagree	5	4.8
	Disagree	18	17.1
	Neutral	53	50.5
	Agree	24	22.9
	Strongly agree	5	4.8
	Total	105	100.0
SMIs provide accurate information.	Strongly disagree	13	12.4
	Disagree	15	14.3
	Neutral	64	61.0
	Agree	12	11.4
	Strongly agree	1	1.0
	Total	105	100.0
SMIs provide credible information.	Strongly disagree	11	10.5
	Disagree	21	20.0
	Neutral	53	50.5
	Agree	20	19.0
	Total	105	100.0

As shown in table 12 above, the majority of the respondents agreed with the first three statements. The results of the first statement; "A review on a brands official Instagram page is a credible source of information" indicate that 36 respondents, which consisted of 34.3% of the total responses, agreed with the statement. On the other hand, only 4.8% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. In assessing the results of the second statement; "A review made by a Social Media Influencer is a credible source of information", we can see that a total of 47 respondents, which consisted of 44.8% of all the responses, agreed with the statement. Additionally, 1.9% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. The results of the third statement; "A review made by an Instagram user that I know, is a credible source of information" indicate that 37 respondents, which comprised of 35.2% of all the responses, agreed with the statement. In contrast, only 1% of the total respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

In assessing the shows the results of the statement “A review made by an Instagram user that I don’t know, is a credible source of information”, the majority of the respondents leaned towards neutrality. A total of 43 respondents, which made up 41% of the total responses, were neutral to the statement and only 5.7% of the total respondents strongly agreed with the statement. We also observe neutrality from the majority of the respondents for the following statement: “SMIs provide believable information”. 50.5% of the total responses were neutral to this statement and a small percentage of 4.8% of the total respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

The results of the following statement: “SMIs provide accurate information” indicate that a total of 64 respondents, which comprised of 61% of the total responses were neutral to this statement. Only 1% of the total respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The majority of the respondents also leaned towards neutrality for the following statement: “SMIs provide credible information”. A sum of 53 respondents, which consisted of 50.5% of the total responses were neutral to this statement. On the other hand, only 10.5% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. In assessing the results of the following statement: “Trustworthiness (How honest and believable an influencer is perceived to be) is an important trait”, the majority of the respondents indicated that it was an important trait. A total of 50 respondents, which consisted of 47.6% of the total responses, stated that this was a very important trait. In contrast, only 1% of the total respondents regarded trustworthiness as the least important trait.

When assessing the results of the following statement: “Expertise (the level of knowledge or skill that an influencer is perceived to have) is an important trait”, the majority of the respondents indicated that it was an important trait. A total of 52 respondents, which made up 49.5% of all the responses, stated that this was an important trait. On the contrary, only 2.9% of the total respondents regarded expertise as the least important trait. Lastly, the results of the following statement: “Attractiveness (The familiarity and likeability of an influencer) is an important trait” indicated that 41.9% of the total responses, stated that this was an important trait. On the other hand, a small percentage of 3.8% of the total respondents regarded attractiveness as a least important trait.

6.3.8. Organic Hair Care products construct results

Organic hair care products refers to hair care products that are made with natural, chemical-free ingredients. The following section presents the results obtained from statements on Organic Hair Care. The organic hair care construct (OHR) was measured with three items, ranging from OHR1 to OHR3. The following results were observed and presented table 13 below:

Table 13: Organic Hair Care (OHR) questions and responses

Research Question		Frequency	Percent %
I feel that environmental claims of organic shampoos are generally trustworthy.	Strongly disagree	7	6.7
	Disagree	19	18.1
	Neutral	33	31.4
	Agree	30	28.6
	Strongly agree	16	15.2
	Total	105	100.0
I believe that organic shampoos are safe for my health	Strongly disagree	1	1.0
	Disagree	4	3.8
	Neutral	26	24.8
	Agree	44	41.9
	Strongly agree	30	28.6
	Total	105	100.0
I am considering to buy organic hair care products.	Strongly disagree	7	6.7
	Disagree	8	7.6
	Neutral	17	16.2
	Agree	34	32.4
	Strongly agree	39	37.1
	Total	105	100.0

As shown in Table 13 above, 33 respondents, 31.4% of the sample, were neutral to the following statement “I feel that environmental claims of organic shampoos are generally trustworthy”. Additionally, 6.7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. 44 respondents, 41.9% of the sample, agreed with the statement “I believe that organic shampoos are safe for my health”. Only 1% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. As shown, 39 respondents, 37.1% of the sample, strongly agreed with the statement “I am considering to buy organic hair care products”. Only 6.7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

6.4. RELIABILITY RESULTS & ITEM ANALYSIS

This section discusses the reliability results of the data. Reliability of the data was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha (α) test. Cronbach's alpha is used to measure the internal consistency and accuracy for a set of test items (Phung, Luning & Wilde Björling, 2018). The formula for Cronbach's alpha is as follows:

$$\rho_T = \frac{k^2 \overline{\sigma_{ij}}}{\sigma_X^2}$$

ρ_T = tau-equivalent reliability
k = number of items
σ_{ij} = covariance between Xi and Xj
σ_X^2 = item variances and inter-item covariances

As shown in table 14 below, if Cronbach's alpha is between 0.60 and above, the results have satisfactory reliability as supported by Erz, Marder & Osadchaya (2018).

Table 14: Cronbach's alpha level of reliability

Cronbach's α	Description
0.49 and below	No Reliability
0.50 – 0.59	Poor Reliability
0.60 – 0.69	Satisfactory Reliability
0.70 – 0.79	Good Reliability
0.80 – 0.89	Excellent Reliability
0.90 and above	Excellent/ May also indicate Redundancy in Scale

Source: (Erz, Marder & Osadchaya, 2018)

As previously mentioned, the following constructs were measured: Trustworthiness (TR), attractiveness (ATR), expertise (EXP), electronic Word of Mouth (WOM), sponsorship disclosure

(SD), perception (PERC), source credibility (SCR) and organic hair care (OHC). Table 15 below shows the results obtained for the reliability tests which were carried out as well as the standard deviation and mean values for each item.

Table 15: Accuracy analysis

Research Construct		Descriptive Statistics		Cronbach's Test	
		Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's alpha (α) value	No. of Items
TR	TR2	3.45	1.083	0.602	6
	TR3	3.81	1.119		
	TR4	3.63	1.076		
	TR5	3.86	1.267		
	TR6	3.12	1.182		
	TR7	2.65	1.209		
ATR	ATR1	2.75	1.231	0.841	4
	ATR2	3.13	1.309		
	ATR3	3.10	1.252		
	ATR4	2.67	1.284		
EXP	EXP1	2.73	1.288	0.639	3
	EXP2	3.20	1.228		
	EXP3	2.34	1.134		
WOM	WOM1	3.32	1.319	0.758	3
	WOM2	3.48	1.359		
	WOM3	3.18	1.167		
PERC	PERC1	3.10	1.018	0.841	4
	PERC2	2.64	0.982		
	PERC3	3.09	1.119		
	PERC4	3.00	1.028		
SCI	SCI1	3.06	0.886	0.847	3
	SCI2	2.74	0.855		
	SCI3	2.78	0.877		
OHC	OHC1	3.28	1.131	0.641	3
	OHC2	3.93	0.880		
	OHC3	3.86	1.196		

*Scores: 1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5- Strongly agree

*Trustworthiness (TR), attractiveness (ATR), expertise (EXP), Word of Mouth (WOM), sponsorship disclosure (SD), perception (PERC), source credibility (SCR), organic hair care (OHC)

As shown in table 15, the Cronbach's alpha values for this study ranged from 0.60 to 0.90 and were deemed reliable. The Cronbach's alpha value for *Trustworthiness (TR)* was 0,602 which meets the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. The trustworthiness scale was initially made using TR1 to TR7. However, TR1 was removed as it was lowering the Cronbach's alpha value for the TR construct. Additionally, it can be observed that all the mean values are within a close range. The mean values range from 2.65 to 3.86, indicating that the data was normally distributed. The standard deviation values were all between the recommended of threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution. They ranged from 1.076 to 1.267.

The Cronbach's alpha value for *Attractiveness (ATR)* was 0,841 which exceeded the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. The mean values for ATR are within a close range as they range from 2.67 to 3.13; showing that the data was normally distributed. Additionally, the standard deviation values range from 1.231 to 1.309 which falls within the recommended threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution.

The Cronbach's alpha value for *Expertise (EXP)* was 0,639 which is higher than the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. It can be observed that all the mean values for EXP are within a close range. They range from 2.34 to 2.73; indicating that the data was normally distributed. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 1.134 to 1.288 which falls in the recommended of threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution.

The Cronbach's alpha value for *Electronic Word of Mouth (WOM)* was 0,758 which exceeded the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. It can be observed that all the mean values for WOM are within a close range. They range from 3.18 to 3.32; indicating that the data was normally distributed. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 1.167 to 1.319 which falls in the recommended of threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution.

The Cronbach's alpha value for *Perception (PERC)* was 0,841 which exceeded the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. It can be observed that all the mean values for PERC are within a close range. They range from 3.00 to 3.10; indicating that the data was normally

distributed. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 1.028 to 1.018 which falls in the recommended of threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution.

The Cronbach's alpha value for *Source Credibility -Information (SCI)* was 0,847 which exceeded the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. It can be observed that all the mean values for SCI are within a close range. They range from 2.78 to 3.06; indicating that the data was normally distributed. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 0.877 to 0.886 which falls in the recommended of threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution. It is important to note that Source credibility Traits SCT and Sponsorship Disclosure (SDC) were removed as the construct failed to meet the reliability threshold of 0,6.

The Cronbach's alpha value for *Organic Hair Care (OHC)* was 0,641 which exceeded the recommend threshold of 0,6 required for reliability. It can be observed that all the mean values for OHC are within a close range. They range from 3.28 to 3.86; indicating that the data was normally distributed. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 1.131 to 1.196 which falls in the recommended of threshold of -2 to +2 for normal distribution.

6.5. CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

Construct validity is required to assess the adequacy of tests, scale accuracy and reliability to ensure an accurate representation of information (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Following the reliability measurement, the construct validity test was carried out using the inter-construct correlation matrix. According Campbell & Fiske (1959), there are two types of construct validity:

1. Convergent validity – used to test how close variables are; different methods measuring the same construct should give scores that are correlated
2. Divergent (discriminant) validity – when the same method is measuring different constructs, it should give scores that are not correlated

(Chuchu, 2015) suggests that discriminant validity can be concluded if the correlations between constructs is below 0.7. As shown in table 16 below, it is evident that there's convergent validity.

This is because all the correlations are higher than 0.7, revealing that all the constructs are correlated.

Table 16: Inter-construct Correlation Matrix

	TR	ATR	EXP	WOM	PERC
TR	1	0.948**	0.967**	0.964**	0.964**
ATR	0.948**	1	0.975**	0.930**	0.973**
EXP	0.967**	0.975**	1	0.961**	0.973**
WOM	0.964**	0.930**	0.961**	1	0.949**
PERC	0.964**	0.973**	0.973**	0.949**	1

Key: TR - trustworthiness, (ATR) - attractiveness, (EXP) - expertise, (WOM) - Word of Mouth, (PERC) – perception

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

6.6. CONCEPTUAL MODEL FIT ASSESSMENT

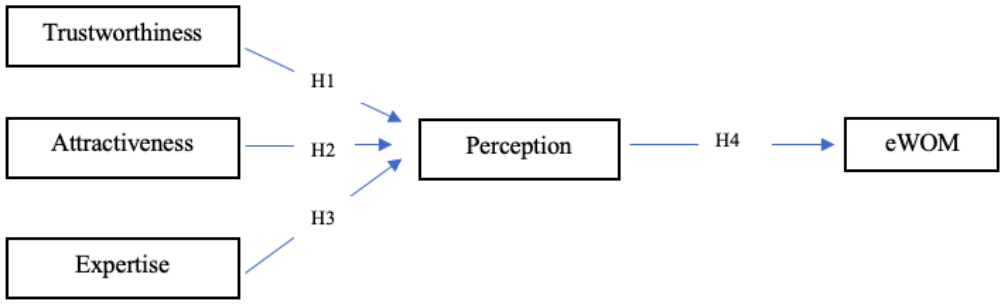
A conceptual model fit assessment can be performed in a two-way procedure; firstly by conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) followed by hypothesis testing (Hautz et al., 2014). As discussed in the previous section, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted instead of exploratory factor analysis (EFA). CFA allows hypotheses testing to confirm whether a relationship between observed variables and their latent constructs exists or not. On the other hand EFA is used to establish underlying constructs for a set of variables (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Langner, 2010). Confirmatory factor analysis has been carried out in this study in order to test the hypotheses and to conduct the conceptual model fit assessment.

6.6.1. Model fit results

As previously mentioned; the constructs for TR1, SDC, SRC and SCT were not included for hypothesis testing and were removed when conducting the validity test with the Inter-construct correlation matrix. The constructs were removed as they did not meet the necessary threshold requirements for reliability (Chuchu, 2015). Additionally, the source credibility (SCR) construct

failed to meet the required Cronbach's alpha threshold of 0.60 hence it was removed. As previously discussed, if Cronbach's alpha is below 0.60, the results are not considered satisfactory and have poor reliability (Erz et.al. 2018). These results indicate that the model fit was not acceptable as it failed to meet reliability requirements. Therefore, a new conceptual model has been proposed and presented in figure 14 below:

Figure 14: New proposed conceptual model based on hypotheses and reliability test results

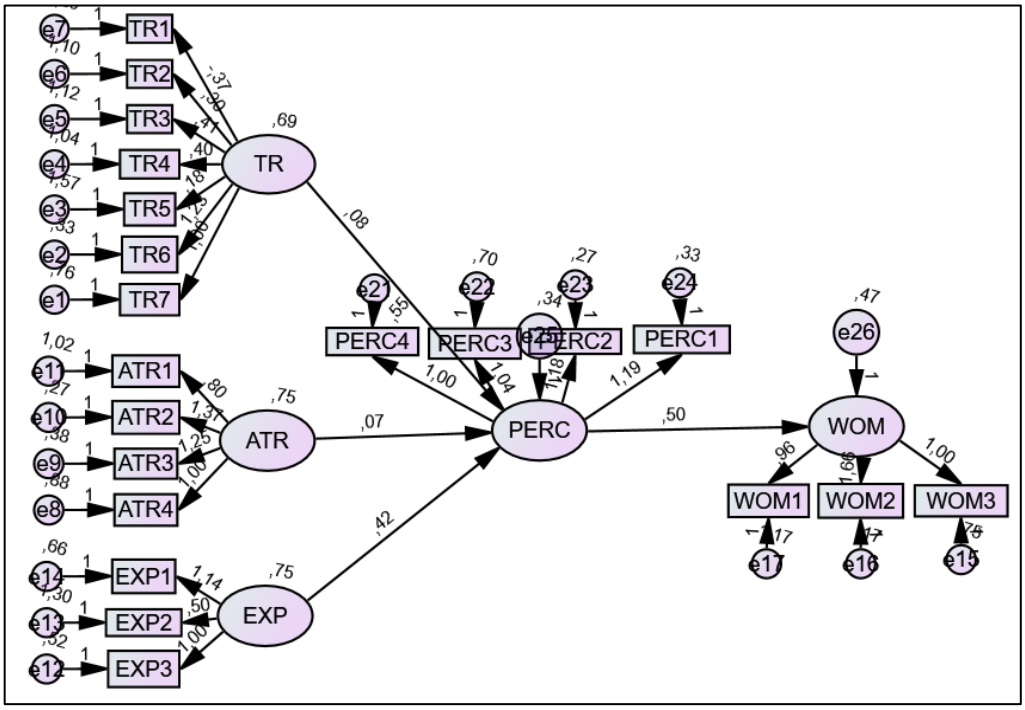


The new proposed conceptual model has the following constructs: TR, ATR, EXP, PERC and WOM. These constructs met the reliability requirements thresholds. Therefore, the model fit was regarded acceptable and the study proceeded to test out the research hypotheses. The following section discusses the hypotheses test results.

6.6.2. Hypotheses testing results discussion

Hypothesis testing was carried out through inferential statistics. Structural equation modelling was conducted using AMOS 24 software and the following structural model, presented in Figure 15 below, was obtained:

Figure 15: Structural model



Key: TR-Trustworthiness, ATR- Attractiveness, EXP-Expertise, PERC- Perception towards social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships, WOM-Word of Mouth

As indicated in Figure14 above, the relationship between TR, ATR, EXP, PERC and WOM is explored. The structural model generated values within 3 decimal places as indicated in Table 17: Hypotheses results; however Figure10 shows estimated values which have 2 decimal places which were generated by AMOS 26 software. For example the relationship between TR and PERC is 0.08 in Figure 15 and in Table 17 it is 0.083. The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: The trustworthiness of a SMI has a positive effect on consumer's perception.
H2: The attractiveness of a SMI has a positive effect on consumer's perception.
H3: The expertise of a SMI has a positive effect on consumer's perception.
H4: Consumers' perception of SMI influences their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM.

Table 17: Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesised Relationship		Estimate	P-value	Outcome
TR ⟶ PERC	H1	0,083	0,348	Supported but not significant
ATR ⟶ PERC	H2	0,067	0,400	Supported but not significant
EXP ⟶ PERC	H3	0,421	***	Supported and significant
PERC ⟶ eWOM	H4	0,502	***	Supported and significant

Key: TR-Trustworthiness, ATR- Attractiveness, EXP-Expertise, PERC- Perception towards social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships, WOM-Word of Mouth

P-Value level of significance is 0.05
*** P-Value <0.05

As shown in table 17 above, H1 (*The trustworthiness of a SMI has a positive effect on consumer's perception*) examines the relationship between Trustworthiness and Perception of social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships. The hypothesis test results indicate that the relationship has an estimate of 0,083 and a P-value of 0,348. Therefore, H1 was observed to be supported but not significant at p-value >0.05 significance level. These results suggest that there is a relationship between trustworthiness and perception of social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships however it is insignificant. Since this relationship is not significant, it suggests that trustworthiness was not an important factor when it came to consumers' perception of social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships. This indicates that regardless of whether social media influencers disclose paid partnerships or not, it does not affect consumers perception and consumers are likely to still trust them.

The results for the second hypothesis, H2 (*The attractiveness of a SMI has a positive effect on consumer's perception*) reveal that the relationship has an estimate of 0,067 and a P-value of 0,400. This relationship was observed to be supported but however not significant. As this relationship is not significant, it suggests that attractiveness was not an important factor when it came to consumers' perception of social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships. This indicates that regardless of whether social media influencers disclose paid partnerships or not, it does not have an effect on consumers perception, and they may still find them attractive.

The results for the third hypothesis, H3 (*The expertise of a SMI has a positive effect on consumer's perception*) indicate that the relationship has an estimate of 0,421 and a p value lower than 0.05 as indicated by ***. This means that there is a positive and direct relationship between expertise and perception towards social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships. This finding suggests that the more the social media influencer was considered to be an expert, the more positively that social media influencer would be perceived in relation to disclosing paid sponsorships.

Lastly, the results of the fourth hypothesis, H4 (*Consumers' perception of SMI influences their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM*) indicate that the relationship has an estimate of 0,502 and a p value lower than 0.05 as indicated by ***. This means that there is a positive and direct relationship between perception towards social media influencers who disclose paid partnerships and eWOM. This finding suggests that the more positively that social media influencer is perceived to be, the greater the likelihood of an individual to recommend products to others via eWOM.

6.7. CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has presented the research findings from the study. Firstly, a detailed description of the sample characteristics is provided. The sample description provided information on the sample demographics; the age groups of the participants and identifying participants that own Instagram accounts Additionally, results of the filtering questions were presented, allowing the respondents Instagram usage information. Thereafter, the results from the questionnaire were presented in the form of tables and graphs.

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine reliability and the results obtained were discussed and presented in tabular format. Following the reliability measurement, the construct validity test was carried out using the inter-construct correlation matrix. The test results were analysed along with a discussion of the conceptual model fit assessment. The recommended thresholds required for model fit assessment revealed that the initial conceptual model was not a good fit for the data therefore a new conceptual model was proposed. The new proposed model was illustrated in a diagram with the following constructs: TR, ATR, EXP, PERC and WOM.

Lastly, in-depth data analysis was conducted through inferential statistics to test the research hypotheses and to produce a structural model. The following four hypotheses were tested: H1: The trustworthiness of a SMI has a positive effect on source credibility, H2: The attractiveness of a SMI has a positive effect on source credibility, H3: The expertise of a SMI has a positive effect on source credibility and H4: Consumers' perception of SMI influences their likelihood to recommend organic hair care products to others via eWOM. The hypotheses test results were interpreted, and statistical inferences were made. It was concluded that hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported but statistically insignificant. On the other hand, hypotheses H3 and H4 were found to be supported and statistically significant.

In the next chapter, the research is concluded by providing research insights, implications and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 7: Research Insights, Implications, Conclusions and Future Research

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This research set out to understand the complex nature of the effect of sponsorship disclosure on perceived source credibility of SMIs. This chapter concludes the research by providing key research insights, contributions of the study, shortcomings as well as providing recommendations for future studies. First the research insights obtained from the study are discussed. Second, the contributions of the study are presented. Third, managerial implications for brands and marketers are provided. Fourth, possible limitations of the study are discussed as well as suggesting recommendations for future studies.

7.1. RESEARCH INSIGHTS

This study set out to investigate the impact of disclosing brand and influencer sponsored partnerships on the perceived source credibility of social media influencers. Ohanian's source credibility model was used as the frame of reference. The model measures source credibility based on three characteristics which are trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). In this research, hypotheses were developed based on the components of the source credibility model. Data was collected using a questionnaire and analysed though statistical methods. The findings obtained suggested that all three characteristics of the source credibility model were found to be valuable by respondents when assessing the credibility of social media influencers who disclose sponsorships. However, expertise was found to be the most valued characteristic as it had a more significant impact on perception of SMIs credibility, compared to trustworthiness and attractiveness. Questionnaire results indicated that there was a direct relationship between expertise and source credibility. Respondents indicated that when they considered an SMI to be an expert then they would also consider them to be a credible source of information. Similarly,

empirical findings revealed that the perception of SMIs credibility was found to have a positive and direct relationship with eWOM. Participants revealed that they were more likely to participate in eWOM recommendations for products endorsed by SMIs that they regarded credible.

7.2. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

7.2.1. Contribution to Academia

This study examined the impact of sponsorship disclosure on the source credibility of SMIs and how it impacts the likelihood of an individual to recommend a product. This field of research is still considered to be in its early stages (Liljander et al., 2015, Hwang & Jeong 2016, Campbell et al., 2013). Therefore, this study contributes to the emerging research on the effect of sponsorship disclosure on source credibility.

This study contributes to academia through the following theoretical objectives:

- Evaluating literature on the characteristics of SMIs
- Assessing the mechanism by which SMIs influence consumers
- Evaluating the impact of sponsorship disclosure by SMIs on eWOM

Additionally, the study contributes to academia through the following empirical objectives:

- Investigating consumer's perception of the credibility of SMIs who disclose paid partnerships
- To investigate whether consumer's perception of SMIs credibility influences their likelihood to recommend products; specifically, organic hair care products, via eWOM

By investigating the empirical objectives mentioned above, this study identified that there is a significant relationship between expertise and perception towards SMIs who disclose paid partnerships. This finding suggests that the more the influencer was considered to be an expert, the more positively that influencer would be perceived. Additionally, the research identified a

direct relationship between perception of SMIs who disclose paid partnerships and eWOM. This finding suggests that the more positively that influencer is perceived to be, the greater the likelihood of an individual to recommend products that the influencer promotes via eWOM. Moreover, empirical findings suggested that trustworthiness and attractiveness were not as significant as the expertise trait when consumers' assess the credibility of social media influencers who disclose sponsorships.

7.2.2. Contribution to Marketing Practice

The theoretical contributions of this research are threefold:

First, the findings showed that influencers can be classified by their characteristics. Knowledge of the characteristics of influencers is valuable in marketing practice as it provides information on the types of attributes that enable SMIs to exert influence over others opinions (Hautz et al., 2014). Additionally, existing literature revealed that influencer attributes can effect credibility and attitude of followers. The significant desirable characteristics of influencers for successful collaborations were found to be credibility, knowledge and skill, amongst others (De Vierman et al., 2017).

Second, when examining the impact of sponsorship disclosure by SMIs on consumer behaviour, the results confirmed that sponsorship disclosure has an impact on perceived source credibility. This information contributes to existing literature on brand and influencer collaborations in influencer marketing.

Third, when investigating whether consumer's perception of SMIs credibility influences their likelihood to recommend products via eWOM, the hypothesis was found to be supported. The results indicated that source credibility has an impact on consumer's likelihood to recommend a product via eWOM.

Overall, the findings of this research provide practical insights that can be used by marketers. This research contributes to marketing practice by aiding marketers to develop appropriate strategies

for sponsored influencer marketing campaigns. The empirical findings of this study put forward evidence of the important factors that consumers consider when assessing influencers. It was found that consumers consider expertise to be the most important factor when considering the credibility of an influencer. This knowledge provides marketers a framework to understand the effect of source credibility on influencer marketing campaigns and thus to develop better marketing strategies.

7.3. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study provide implications for brands that are considering influencer marketing and collaboration with influencers. As previously mentioned, advertising laws and regulations have been put in place, obliging brands and influencers to disclose sponsored collaborations (Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2016, FTC, 2017). The purpose of these laws is to protect consumers from false advertising and to give the opportunity for consumers to make sound evaluations of sponsored content before making purchase decisions (FTC, 2017). This research can provide guidance to businesses on the types of marketing strategies that can be implemented to ensure that source credibility is not compromised during paid partnerships. By understanding the effects of sponsorship disclosure on source credibility, businesses can find ways to improve the credibility of brand endorsements.

The potential negative effects of sponsorship disclosure on consumer perception of source credibility can be eliminated by making use of influencers who are credible. Making use of credible SMIs can lead to improved trust, which would make it easier for influencers to persuade their audience when they endorse products or services. This implication may be of importance particularly for brands that aim to enhance the effectiveness of sponsored content when collaborating with influencers. Additionally, this research has also provided implications for social media influencers. By disclosing sponsorships, SMIs are able to be transparent with their followers hence allowing open communication which can make them more credible and influential.

7.4. FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

As with any research, this study was subject to a number of limitations. This research investigates the effect of sponsorship disclosure on source credibility of SMIs who are making use of Instagram. Thus, it is recommended that future research should be carried out on alternative social media platforms which have not conducted the research in this context. A recent study by Colliander & Erlandsson (2015) which investigated the effects of sponsored posts on blogging websites suggested that the relationship between an endorser and their readers has an effect on the way the readers respond to the content. Therefore, future research should investigate the relationships between influencers and their followers as a possible mediating factor in sponsored collaborations. Moreover, past studies on celebrity endorsements reveal that there should be compatibility between the endorsers image and the product being endorsed (Stubb et al., 2019, Choi & Rifon, 2012). Similarly, this outcome would be expected to apply to SMIs as they have been given the same weight as celebrity endorsers (Hautz et al. 2014). Hence, future studies should include product-endorser compatibility when investigating the effects of sponsorship disclosure.
Saunders et al., (2012) state that the main disadvantage of convenience sampling is that it is subject to bias, which may over-represent or under-represent particular groups in the selected sample. On the other hand, probability sampling techniques are not subject to bias and hence provide more reliable results (Saunders et al., 2012). Therefore, it is recommended that future studies combine both convenience sampling and probability sampling during the sample selection process, in order to reduce bias. As the respondents were university students, they may not be a good predictor of purchasing power (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Therefore, future studies on influencer marketing should expand to the working demographic.

During data collection, it was established that a large sample size is recommended for accurate statistical analysis and reliable results. This research faced budget constraints which limited the scope of the study as the survey could only be issued out to a small sample size. Future studies may want to conduct the research on a larger population to increase the accuracy and generalizability of the findings. Additionally, respondents were not provided any incentives to participate in the study due to budget constraints and ethical considerations. Stubb et al., (2019 argue that when compensation is provided to respondents, it will increase survey participation. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies provide incentives to respondents to obtain a larger number of responses. Lastly, the social media platform selected for this research was

Instagram. Future studies may want to explore other social media platforms such as YouTube and Twitter which have been shown to be popular in influencer marketing.

Stubb et al., (2019) state that the credibility of a source can be evaluated differently depending on whether the consumer is making a high or low involvement purchase decision for a particular product. Additionally, the empirical findings showed that product involvement had a significant impact on source credibility considerations. One may argue that haircare products are high involvement purchases as there are many factors to consider when making a purchase such as the purpose, safety, trust, brand type and ingredients. On the other hand, for beauty care products such as fragrances, involvement may be low when making a purchase as choices would vary depending on the individual's preference. Thus, future researchers are advised to investigate source credibility for low involvement product categories.

7.5. CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY

This research set out to investigate the effect of sponsorship disclosure on source credibility and their likelihood to recommend products. Previous research in the field of sponsored collaborations has addressed how marketers can utilize SMIs in collaborations, however, few studies address the characteristics of SMIs, particularly their credibility. This gap in literature limits our understanding of this field as well as its future potential. This research addressed two main objectives:

- To investigate consumer perception of the credibility of SMIs who disclose paid partnerships

- To assess whether consumer perception of SMIs credibility influences their likelihood to recommend products; specifically, organic hair care products, via eWOM

This study provides valuable information which can contribute to existing academic literature on influencer marketing, as well as to provide insights and guidelines that can be used in influencer marketing strategies. Furthermore, the findings from this study provide implications for brands that are considering entering into sponsored collaborations with influencers. This final chapter

concludes the research by providing key research insights, contributions as well as recommendations for future studies.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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16/01/2020

Priscilla Dube

School of Management Studies

University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2020/01/006

The Effect of Sponsorship Disclosure by Social Media Influencers on Consumers' Outlook of Source Credibility and Their Likelihood to Recommend Organic Hair Care Products to Others.

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31 January 2021 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

2020.01.16
17:32:54 +02'00'

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APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Good day,

I invite you to participate in this voluntary research survey which will not take you more than 15minutes to answer. The purpose of this survey is to obtain your feedback on the implications of sponsorship disclosure by Instagram's Social Media Influencers on source credibility as well as its mediating effect on marketing communications such as electronic word-of-mouth and consumer's likelihood to recommend a product. The research is purely for academic purposes in fulfilment of my Master's Degree in Marketing.

The data collected will be used for research purposes only and will aid in obtaining a better understanding of influencer marketing. All responses received will be confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. Please note that your participation in this research is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from the research at any time, with no negative consequences. To ensure anonymity of your responses, you will not be requested to provide any identifiable information.

The questionnaire consists of eight sections, A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. Please read each question carefully and answer the questions without assistance, based on your own discernment and as honestly as you can. Please note that you will be presented with five options for each question for some of the sections. Please indicate the response that you find most appropriate from 1 being strongly disagree, to 5 being strongly agree. There are no correct or incorrect answers, however please only indicate one answer per statement.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me using the information below:

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APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A – General questions

Please indicate you answer by ticking/selecting the appropriate box

1. Please indicate your age _____
2. Do you have an Instagram account?

Yes	
No	

If no, please discontinue the survey. Thank you for your time.

3. How often do you use Instagram?

Daily	
Weekly	
Monthly	
Rarely	
Never	

Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are individuals with a significantly large number of followers (i.e. 1000 + followers).

4. Do you follow a Social Media Influencer on Instagram?

Yes	
No	

Beauty influencers are SMIs who provide information on hair care, skincare etc.

5. Do you follow any Beauty influencers who provide information on Hair Care?

Yes	
No	

6. Do you follow any SMI who endorses/recommends Organic hair care products?

Yes	
No	

Section B – Trustworthiness

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) the corresponding number in the 5-point-scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

Trustworthiness refers to the endorser's honesty and believability as perceived by the consumer.

Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more trustworthy than an SMI with a low number of followers?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
Do you trust SMIs when they disclose paid partnerships?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
It is important for me that I find the influencers I follow to be trustworthy.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I find influencers to be more trustworthy in they share similar interests as me.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I would not trust SMIs that only posts paid partnerships, because it feels like they only do it for the money.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I generally trust other people.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I tend to trust other people even though I have little knowledge of them.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Section C: Attractiveness

The attractiveness component can be defined as the familiarity and likeability of an individual in the eyes of the receiver.

Please mark only one number for each statement.

Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more attractive than an SMI with a low number of followers?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
When an influencer has many followers, it makes him/her more attractive.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
When an influencer receives many likes and comments, it makes them more attractive.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I find an influencer that is sponsored by companies as more attractive than one who isn't sponsored.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Section D: Expertise

Expertise is the level of knowledge that the endorser is perceived to have by the target audience.

Please mark only one number for each statement.

Do you consider an SMI with a high number of followers as more of an expert than an SMI with a low number of followers?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
Similar social identities and expertise have been found to be factors that make SMIs influential. Do you agree with this?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I find an influencer that is sponsored by companies as an expert.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Section E: Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is the process involving the transfer of information from one consumer to another consumer online.

Please mark only one number for each statement.

Have you looked up reviews of products from influencers before buying them?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Have you bought any products because of online recommendations from SMIs?	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I would rely on the recommendation made by a SMI I follow.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Section F: Sponsorship disclosure

Sponsorship disclosure is revealing any paid partnerships between a brand and an influencer.

Please mark only one number for each statement.

I like to look at sponsored posts	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
Products shown in sponsored posts are better quality than others.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
It is important that influencers share information on where I can find additional information regarding the sponsorship.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

How do you perceive brands SMIs disclose a paid partnership with a company? (Please tick the appropriate box)

Trustworthy	
Experts	
Attractive	
Credible	
None of the above	
All of the above	

Section G: Source credibility

The term source credibility refers to the extent to which an individual perceives a source of information to be believable, true and unbiased.

Which of the following do you regard as the most credible source of information on a product?

Please mark only one number for each statement.

A review on brands official Instagram page	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
A review by a social media influencer	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
A review by another Instagram user you know	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
A review by another Instagram user that you don't know.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

When you see a post from a SMI, how important do you think the following traits are:

Expertise	Least Important	1	2	3	4	5	Most Important
Attractiveness	Least Important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Trustworthiness	Least Important	1	2	3	4	5	Most Important

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

SMIs provide believable information.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
SMIs provide accurate information.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
SMIs provide credible information	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Section H: Organic Hair Care

Organic hair care are products which are made with natural, chemical-free ingredients.

Please indicate if you agree with the following statements:

I feel that environmental claims of Organic shampoos are generally trustworthy.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I believe that Organic Shampoos are safe for my health.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
I am considering to buy Organic personal care products.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

Imagine you are about to buy a hair care product and you are looking at a review of the product. Whose opinion would you value more?

Someone who is knowledgeable and experienced and has a large number of Instagram followers	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
Someone who has a large number of Instagram followers but is not specialised in hair care	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
Someone who is a professional in hair care (most likely working as a hairstylist) but only has a small number of Instagram followers	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
The level of experience and the number of Instagram followers that the person has makes no difference in how I value their opinion	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

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