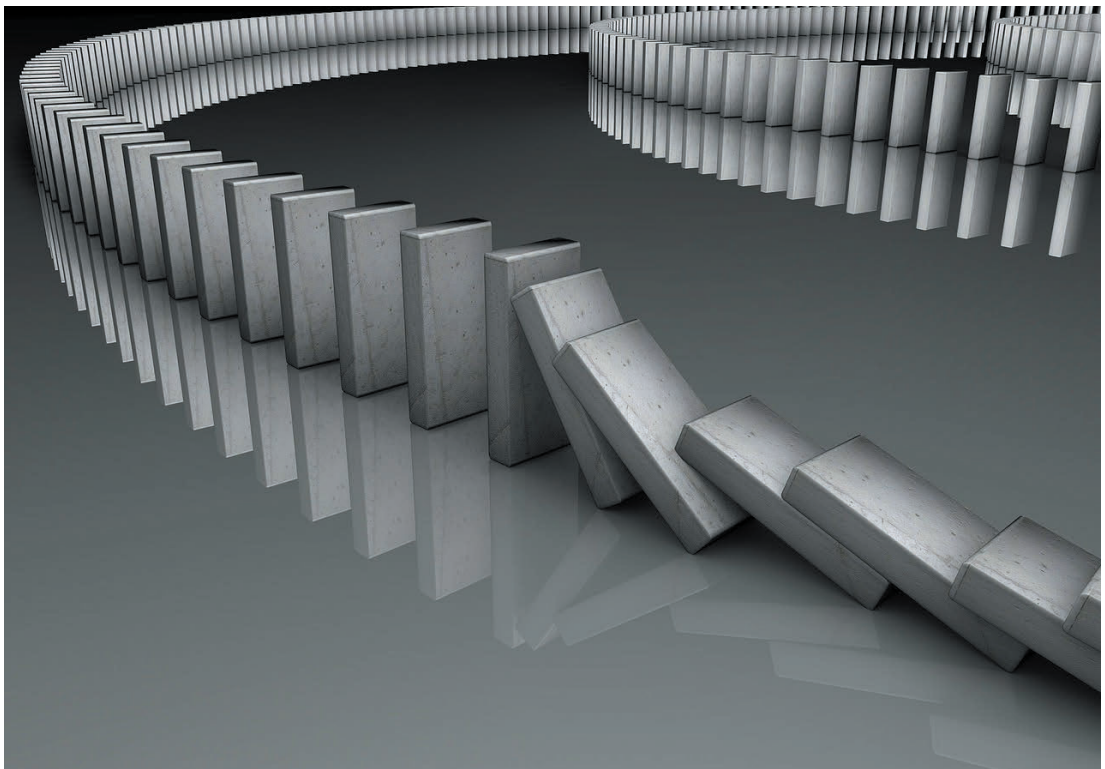Åbo Akademi
University

Carolina Stubb

The Gray Zone in Marketing

Consumer Responses to Influencer Marketing

Carolina Stubb

Born 1988, Åbo, Finland

BSc in Economics (International marketing),
Åbo Akademi University, 2013

MSc in Economics (International marketing),
Åbo Akademi University, 2014

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Carolina Stubb

Abstrakt

I den här avhandlingen undersöker författaren konsumenters reaktioner på olika innehållselement i influens marknadsföring (eng. *Influencer marketing*). *Influens marknadsföring* är en samtida form av marknadsföring som innebär att företag eller organisationer låter individer med starkt inflytande i sociala medier marknadsföra produkter eller tjänster. Inom ramen för den här marknadsföringsmetoden får influens marknadsföraren vanligen kompensation av företaget för att skapa och publicera en rekommendation i sina sociala medier kanaler. Influens marknadsföraren påverkar starkt sina följare i det avseendet att denne ofta ses som en förebild när det kommer till bland annat livsstil, mode, trender, hobbys och intressen; det influens marknadsföraren gör kan dennes följare bli inspirerade till att göra. I forskningstermer benämns det innehåll som skapas inom ramen för influens marknadsföring som sponsrad reklam, sponsrade inlägg i sociala medier, eller sponsrade produktrekommendationer. Den här typen av reklam har blivit populär i takt med att konsumenter spenderar allt mer tid i sociala medier och följer kända influens profiler i sociala medier. Genom att använda influens marknadsföring hoppas företagen på att kunna utnyttja den påverkan som influens profiler har på sina följare genom att skapa uppmärksamhet kring och begär efter deras produkter och varumärken.

Forskning inom influens marknadsföring har utvecklats under de senaste tio åren och ännu finns det mycket som är outforskat. Den här avhandlingen bidrar både teoretiskt och empiriskt till forskning om influens marknadsföring, reklam, och sociala medier genom att undersöka konsumenters reaktioner till tre olika typer av innehållselement i varumärkeskommunikation av influens profiler i sociala medier. Innehållselementen utgörs av 1) kommunikationstekniker för att fånga konsumenternas uppmärksamhet till sponsrade inlägg, 2) sponsormärkningar för att informera konsumenterna om innehållets karaktär, 3) interaktiva länkar i varumärkesinnehållet som kopplar ihop influens profilens sociala medier kanaler med online butikers nätsidor. I fyra separata studier har författaren tillämpat kvantitativa forskningsmetoder i form av konsumentexperiment och online beteende analys för att undersöka konsumenters uppmärksamhet, varumärkesattityder, köp intentioner samt attityder till influens profilen, till följd av konsumenternas exponering för de olika innehållselementen som studeras.

Nyckelord: *Influens marknadsföring, sociala medier, sponsrade rekommendationer, konsumentbeteende, kvantitativ metodologi, konsumentexperiment, online beteende analys*

Abstract

In this dissertation the author investigates consumer responses to various executions of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is a contemporary form of marketing in which companies and organizations let influential social media profiles market products or services. Companies compensate these so called social media influencers (SMIs) to craft and publish product recommendations through their social media accounts. SMIs have a strong impact on their followers as they are often seen as role models when it comes to lifestyle, fashion, trends, hobbies and interests; others are inspired to do what influencers are doing. In research terms, the content that influencers create as part of influencer marketing is often referred to as sponsored content, sponsored posts in social media or sponsored product recommendations. This contemporary form of marketing has become popular as a result of people spending more time in social media and following various social media influencers. Through the implementation of influencer marketing, companies hope to capitalize on the power of these influencers to create awareness towards and desire for their products and brands.

Research within influencer marketing has evolved during the last decade, and there is still a lot to be discovered. This dissertation contributes both theoretically and empirically to research on influencer marketing, advertising, and social media by investigating consumer reactions to various executions of influencer marketing. The focus is on different content elements in social media influencer posts that contain brand information, and consumer responses to these different elements. The content elements examined are categorized into three different types: 1) content elements that are related to the advertising message appeals used in sponsored content to persuade consumers, 2) content elements that are related to sponsorship disclosure issues to inform consumers about the characteristics of the message, and 3) content elements that are related to external hyperlinks in influencer posts that connect the influencer post with web store pages. In four separate studies, the author employs quantitative research methods in the form of consumer experiments and online behavioral analysis to investigate consumer responses in terms of their message attention, brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and attitudes towards the influencer as a consequence of their exposure to the various content elements under study.

Keywords: *Influencer marketing, social media, sponsored product recommendations, consumer behavior, quantitative methodology, consumer experiments, online behavioral analysis*

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"Power lasts ten years; influence not more than a hundred."

– Ziad K. Abdelnour

1 INTRODUCTION

Digital and social media environments have drastically transformed the way advertisers reach consumers (Kumar & Gupta, 2016). Today's consumers are exposed to an abundance of persuasive messages, fragmented in their media choices, and often choose to avoid advertising content, which makes it challenging for advertisers to capture their attention (Childers, Lemon, & Hoy, 2018). In response to these challenges, advertisers are turning to influencer marketing to focus consumers' attention on their brands. This thesis examines *how consumers respond to various executions of influencer marketing in social media*.

Influencer marketing is "the art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand messages with their audiences in the form of sponsored content" (Sammis, Lincoln, & Pomponi, 2016, p. 7). It is, thus, a contemporary form of marketing that involves the facilitation and dissemination of brand messages through *social media influencers* (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Scholars acknowledged the social media influencer phenomena in the earliest stages of online media (Foux, 2006; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Muñiz & Schau, 2007). Specifically, Mangold and Faulds (2009) proposed that social media would be a key component in future integrated marketing strategies by acknowledging that brands no longer only talk directly to consumers, but instead they communicate with one another about brands via social media. This highlights an early affirmation of the power of online word of mouth in the advertising and marketing industries, in which social media influencers play a key role. Word of mouth (WOM) is "conversations between consumers about a product, service or brand" and is estimated to increase in volume as interactions and engagement on social media channels are continuously expanding (Romaniuk & Hartnett, 2017, p.1).

Among the estimated 2.77 billion social media users in the world today (Statista, 2019), a few have managed to make a full-time career of creating content in social media that thousands of people want to engage with (De Veirman et al., 2017). These social media influencers have established authority in a specific industry, and have a highly persuasive impact on others by virtue of their authenticity and credibility (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Today, being a social media influencer is considered a profession that involves the production and distribution of original and commercial content in social media (Erz & Christensen, 2018). While companies have their customers, social media influencers have their followers. Companies realize the strategic potential of collaborating with social media influencers to reach a large group of followers, who are their potential customers (Childers et al., 2018). The clothing brand Old Navy, and the watch brand Daniel Wellington are examples of companies that have frequently collaborated with social media influencers to create brand awareness and positive word-of-mouth (Billing, 2018; Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). Among marketers, 58% believe that influencer marketing will be integrated into all of their future marketing activities (Statista, 2017). According to a recent report by the World

Federation of Advertisers, the main reasons for brands to invest in influencer marketing are to boost brand awareness, to reach new audiences, and to improve brand advocacy (Lawley, 2018).

Despite the many benefits of influencer marketing, the practice has also received criticism among national regulators such as the Federal Trade Commission in the U.S (FTC), and the Consumer Agency in Sweden. In April 2017, the FTC made an official warning to influencers and brands to underpin the legal obligation to disclose sponsorship (DeMers, 2018). In January 2018, the first Swedish influencer was convicted for unclear disclosure of commercial content in social media (The Swedish Consumer Agency press release, 2018). These actions are undertaken to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive practices in the marketplace. The controversy of influencer marketing lies in its execution. Influencer marketing is often executed in the form of *sponsored content* (Evans et al., 2017). What distinguishes sponsored content from traditional advertising formats, is that it often resembles the original content on the platform where it is published (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), which places it under the umbrella term *native advertising* (Faber, Lee, & Nan, 2004; Wojdynski, 2016). Thus, the line between what is original and what is advertising becomes blurred, and as a result, it is harder for consumers to distinguish commercial content from non-commercial content (Shrum, 2012). While traditional online advertisements, such as banner ads, are more easily recognizable by consumers as advertising, sponsored content is less so (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Social media influencers are continually sharing their life stories and opinions about various topics in social media, many of which circles around products and brands (Gillin, 2008). Therefore, consumers that follow social media influencers are continuously exposed to brand content that can either be classified as genuine WOM or sponsored content that is paid for by a brand. Influencer marketing is, thus, the gray zone in marketing, and is receiving an increasing amount of attention from legislators and marketing researchers. In order for influencers, brands, and policymakers to optimize the application and distribution of influencer marketing in an ever-changing marketing landscape, research on consumer responses to various executions of influencer marketing is needed.

1.1 Research problem

The contemporary marketing practice that distinguishes influencer marketing from traditional marketing practice is a relatively new field of research that has developed during the last decade. To date, the majority of marketing research involving social media influencers has focused on the impact of influencer variables (e.g., number of followers, perceived credibility) on consumer outcome variables (e.g., brand attitude and purchase decision) (Chu & Kamal, 2008; De Veirman et al., 2017; Hsu, Lin, & Chiang, 2013; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Zhu & Tan, 2007), or the impact of consumer variables (e.g., consumers' perceived similarity or attachment to the influencer) on their reactions to influencer marketing

(Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019; Xu & Pratt, 2018). Moreover, in relation to the publicity effectiveness of brand communication by social media influencers, researchers have compared this type of communication with more traditional forms of marketing communication in digital media (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011), and investigated the impact of negative publicity concerning sponsored content directed towards social media influencers on consumer responses to influencer posts about brands (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). In general, these studies indicate that the effectiveness of influencer marketing is contingent upon consumers' impression of the influencer's credibility or popularity, and consumers' perception of being similar to or feeling attached to the influencer, thus affecting outcomes linked to both brand and sales positively when these variables are strengthened.

Additionally, in relation to the main focus of this thesis on consumer responses to various executions of influencer marketing, recent research has addressed the following issue that is of particular interest; the effects of different sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses to influencer posts (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Evans et al., 2017; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Liljander, Gummerus, & Söderlund, 2014; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). Sponsorship disclosures are written disclaimers or text labels that are inserted in sponsored content with the primary goal to inform viewers that a message is advertising (Cain, 2011). As influencer marketing is a relatively recent phenomenon, and research within this area is still in an early phase, it is comprehensible that the majority of studies on influencer marketing have focused on the ethical dimensions of this advertising format. While these previous studies provide valuable insights regarding sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing (as discussed more thoroughly in chapter 2), there are still several theoretically and managerially relevant issues that remain unexplored.

First, the majority of previous studies have focused on the isolated effects of sponsorship disclosures, ignoring other content elements in the sponsored message that might interact with disclosure information to invoke consumer responses. Researchers have, thus, measured and compared the direct effects of different sponsorship disclosure texts on consumer responses to influencer posts (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Evans et al., 2017; Liljander et al., 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). Only a few studies have considered additional factors (e.g., product type and message sidedness) in the influencer post and their interaction effects with sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses (Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Lu et al., 2014). Consumers are seldom processing information from advertisements in isolation, but may instead consider several message cues simultaneously (Houston, Childers, & Heckler, 1987). Consumers might, therefore, be affected by additional message cues besides the information provided in the actual disclaimer when they evaluate sponsorship disclosures. One such cue is external hyperlinks to brand pages and e-commerce sites that are often included in product recommendation posts by influencers (Zhu & Tan, 2007). However research on

external hyperlinks in influencer marketing, and their potential moderating impact on consumer responses to sponsorship disclosures is missing.

Second, the sponsorship disclosures investigated in previous studies can be characterized as either disseminating a personal and direct communication about sponsorship from the influencer to the audience (e.g., "Canon pays me every time I plug their product…" in Carr & Hayes (2014)), or an impersonal and indirect communication about sponsorship as a formal label (e.g., "This post was sponsored by…" in Hwang & Yeong (2016)). In a recent study on sponsored posts by celebrities in social media, Boerman and colleagues (2017) found differences in consumer responses depending on if the brand or a celebrity disclosed sponsorship. The study provides evidence that source type of sponsorship disclosures can have an impact on consumer responses. Surprisingly though, no previous studies in influencer marketing have compared the effects of source type of sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses.

Third, previous studies on sponsorship disclosures have mainly been conducted in the context of blogs. Thus different results may apply in other social media contexts. A study by Smith and colleagues (2012) showed that there is a difference in how users produce and interact with content depending on the social media platform. Dynamic product presentation formats (video and moving images) are found to be more vivid than static ones (still images and text), which consequently increase consumers' involvement with, and elaboration of the content (Roggeveen, Grewal, Townsend, & Krishnan, 2015). Blog content is often rich in text and represents a more static atmosphere, while visual and audial presentations of content, on for example Instagram and YouTube, represent a more dynamic atmosphere. Presumably, messages on YouTube and Instagram are presented in a way that increases consumers' recognition and assimilation of the content in sponsorship disclosures, while on blogs disclosures might more easily disappear in the abundance of text. Hence, research on sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing that considers other contexts than blogs is needed.

Besides looking at sponsorship disclosures, previous studies on influencer marketing have considered other elements of this marketing format on consumer responses. Chiang and Hsieh (2011) examined different blog marketing elements, including interactivity, novelty, and professional characteristics, and how these elements impacted consumer responses. De Veirman and colleagues (2017) examined the impact of product design features displayed in product recommendations by Instagram influencers on consumer responses. In the context of blogs, Chu and Kamal (2008) investigated the quality of arguments in brand-related messages on consumers' brand attitude. However, what remains unexplored is the impact of different advertising message appeals on consumer responses to sponsored content by influencers. Comparing the effectiveness of different message appeals in advertisements has interested advertising researchers for many decades (Deighton & Hoch, 1993; Edell &

Staelin, 1983; Holbrook, 1978), and these are considered a vital part of persuasive marketing communication (Etgar & Goodwin, 1982), that constitute a core component of advertisements (Snyder & DeBono, 1985). Thus, more research is needed that investigates how different message appeals in sponsored influencer posts are applied and how consumers respond to them.

Finally, researchers have acknowledged that social media influencers, and more specifically bloggers, are increasingly introducing their personal selling platforms, referred to as blog shops (cf. e.g., Abidin & Thompson, 2012; Greenhill & Fletcher, 2010; Lim, Diaz, & Dash, 2013). However, research on consumer responses to this specific type of retail setting is scarce. The primary function of a blog shop is an instant generation of revenue through the direct selling of products, a mechanism that is quite distinct from more common methods of revenue generation employed by bloggers (for example brand collaborations or affiliate marketing activities) (Lim et al., 2013). Thus, by including external hyperlinks in blog posts, bloggers can stimulate consumers to purchase recommended products from their blog shops, or/and engage in affiliate marketing activities by driving consumer traffic to external retailers' online stores. Consumers are likely to react differently to these distinct retail settings. However, research in this area is lacking.

To conclude, several research gaps related to influencer marketing execution that involve advertising message appeals, sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks in influencer posts as discussed above, remain unexplored. These are addressed in this doctoral thesis.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine various executions of influencer marketing in social media on consumer responses. The focus is on different content elements in social media influencer posts that contain brand information, and consumer responses to these different elements. The content elements examined are categorized into three different types: 1) content elements that are related to the advertising message appeals used in sponsored content to persuade consumers, 2) content elements that are related to sponsorship disclosure issues to inform consumers about the characteristics of the message, and 3) content elements that are related to external hyperlinks in influencer posts that connect the influencer post with other online pages. This purpose is approached through four research questions derived from the research problem.

RQ1: How do different advertising message appeals in sponsored influencer posts impact consumers' responses?

RQ2: How does the content and level of transparency in sponsorship disclosures impact consumers' responses to influencer posts?

RQ3: How do sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks in influencer posts interact to invoke consumer responses?

RQ4: How does the store type behind external hyperlinks in influencer posts impact consumers' responses?

The research questions are addressed in four separate articles (Appendix 6). Table 1 summarizes the methods, contexts and key variables used in each study.

Table 1 Overview of the research articles

Studies and method	Influencer marketing context	Effects under study	Psychological processes	Mediators (ME) and/or moderators (MO)	Consumer response	Research question(s) addressed
Article 1: Story versus info: Tracking blog readers' online viewing time of sponsored blog posts based on content-specific elements Single authored Published in Computers in Human Behavior (2018)						
Content analysis + Online behavior analysis	Sponsored blog posts	Effects of advertising message appeals	N/A	N/A	Online viewing time	RQ 1
Article 2: Influencer marketing: The impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness Co-authored, first author Published in Journal of Communication Management (2019)						
1 between-subjects controlled experiment	Product review-video on YouTube	Sponsorship disclosure effects	Persuasion knowledge activation	N/A	Sponsorship compensation attitude Source credibility Message credibility Brand attitude	RQ 2
Article 3: "This is not sponsored content" – The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts Co-authored, first author Published in Computers in Human Behavior (2019)						
2 between-subjects controlled experiments	Product-review video on YouTube (Experiment 1) Instagram influencer posts (experiment 2)	Sponsorship disclosure and external hyperlink effects (landing page type)	Persuasion knowledge activation	Landing page type (MO)	Message credibility Source credibility Brand attitude Purchase intention	RQ 2, 3
Article 4: Starting a blog shop or relying on affiliate links? – Investigating direct and indirect selling in blogs on consumer responses Co-authored, first author Under review at Electronic Commerce Research and Applications						
1 between-subjects controlled experiment	Blog product recommendation post	Effects of external hyperlink store type	N/A	Perceived store reputation (ME) Susceptibility to SMI influence (MO)	Store trust Store purchase intention	RQ 4

1.3 Research approach

When conducting research, every scientist needs to make certain core assumptions concerning what constitutes reality (ontology), what is the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and how can knowledge be acquired (methodology) (Remenyi, Williams, Money, & Swartz, 1998). An ontological assumption that concerns the nature of society and how it can be examined sets the direction of the researched phenomena (Burrel & Morgan, 1979). Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998), and is concerned with the philosophical

question of "what is reality?" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The ontological assumption that a researcher makes, affects how she or he approaches science. Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose two distinct ontological approaches, an objectivist and a subjectivist approach. In this dissertation, an objectivist approach is applied. Objectivists approach science like natural scientists by identifying causal explanations and fundamental laws that explain regularities in human social behavior (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991). Epistemology relates to the study of the nature of knowledge, and is concerned with the philosophical question of "how is it possible, if it is, for us to gain knowledge of the world?" (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997, p. 5). A realist would define knowledge as something "real" that can be acquired, while a nominalist would define it as something "fluid" that has to be personally experienced (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). In line with the ontological approach, in this dissertation a scientific realist and post-positivist epistemology is assumed.

The final assumption, methodology, can be described as the researcher's tool-kit. It represents all the means available to social scientists to investigate phenomena. In this dissertation, knowledge is examined and acquired through a nomothetic-deductive approach (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). A nomothetic-deductive process involves the generalization of results from sufficient sample sizes. The process requires the formulation of hypotheses developed from the researchers' conceptualization of a particular phenomenon. Objectivists believe in causality, that is, "there are independent causes that lead to the observed effects" (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 32), and hypotheses are either supported or rejected by the observed effects. The nomothetic-deductive approach involves a quantitative operationalization of concepts that involves reductionism, which means that the problem is reduced to its smallest elements. In this way, a problem's comprehension is enhanced. Central methodological preoccupations involve internal validity, external validity, reliability, generalizability, and operationalization (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). In this dissertation, the studies are conducted by assuming a deductive approach; hence hypotheses are generated based on theory and tested in quantitative empirical studies through experiments or online consumer behavior analysis. In this way, the thesis seeks causal relationships aiming to explain the researched phenomena. However, this research aims, in accordance with the post-positivistic view, to seek *probable* facts or laws, and thereby deprecate from a positivistic view that sees facts and laws derived from hypotheses as definite (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This is also in line with a scientific realism epistemology, which accepts that "all knowledge claims are tentative, subject to revision on the basis of new evidence" (Boal, Hunt, & Jaros, 2003, p. 89). Nonetheless, scientific realism highlight the importance of all knowledge claims to be "critically evaluated and tested to determine the extent to which they do, or do not, truly represent, correspond, or are in accord with the world (Hunt, 1994, p. 24).

Positivistic and post-positivistic scientific approaches have been dominating in advertising and consumer behavior research. Consequently, the theoretical framework in this

dissertation comprises of literature by authors who mainly adopt a positivistic approach to science, and my aim is to contribute to this stream of research. Hence, employing a post-positivistic research approach was a rational choice since it enables me to interpret the findings of this dissertation in line with this stream of research.

1.4 Definition of key concepts

The key concepts used in this dissertation are defined in Table 2. The majority of the concepts are further elaborated in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

Table 2 Key concepts

Concept	Definition
Social media influencers	Social media users who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a particular topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views.
	In this dissertation the definitions: *influencer*, *social media influencer* and the abbreviation *SMI* are used interchangeably and incorporate influencers on any social media platform (i.e. blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram etc.), unless otherwise specified.
Advertising message appeal	A message element in advertisements designed to evoke a specific response by the receiver.
Sponsorship disclosure	A notification or label in editorial content, which mentions that the content is sponsored, so that consumers are able to recognize the persuasive and commercial intent of the content.
External hyperlink	An interactive link integrated into online content that allow viewers to access information on other websites (e.g. e-commerce sites) by clicking on the link. In this dissertation different landing pages from external hyperlinks are investigated, and not the content of the link itself. A landing page is the first page that a consumer lands on after clicking on the hyperlink.
Sponsored content	Material in an online publication which resembles the publication's editorial content but is paid for by an advertiser and intended to promote the advertiser's product. In this dissertation, the definition "sponsored content" is used when specifically referring to content posted by social media influencers, which is sponsored by a company or a brand.
Product recommendation/ Product review	In this dissertation, the definitions *product recommendation* and *product review* are used interchangeably to describe a message written and distributed by an influencer in social media in which the influencer recommends a product or a brand without any sponsorship attachment. The nouns *non-sponsored* or *sponsored* are sometimes

	used prior to these definitions to highlight the characteristic of the product recommendation.
Influencer post	A message that is written by an influencer and distributed through his or her social media platform.

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation is structured into five chapters. Following the introduction (Chapter 1), the theoretical framework of the dissertation is presented (Chapter 2). Next, the methods used in the five empirical studies are described (Chapter 3). This is followed by Chapter 4, which introduces and summarizes the four articles. Chapter 5 consolidates the findings of the dissertation, discusses its contributions to research and business practice, considers its limitations, and provides suggestions for future research.

2 Influencer marketing and consumer responses

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature that will serve as the theoretical framework for the empirical studies in this dissertation. It also represents the streams of research that this dissertation aims to contribute to.

An overview of the theoretical framework is illustrated in Figure 1.
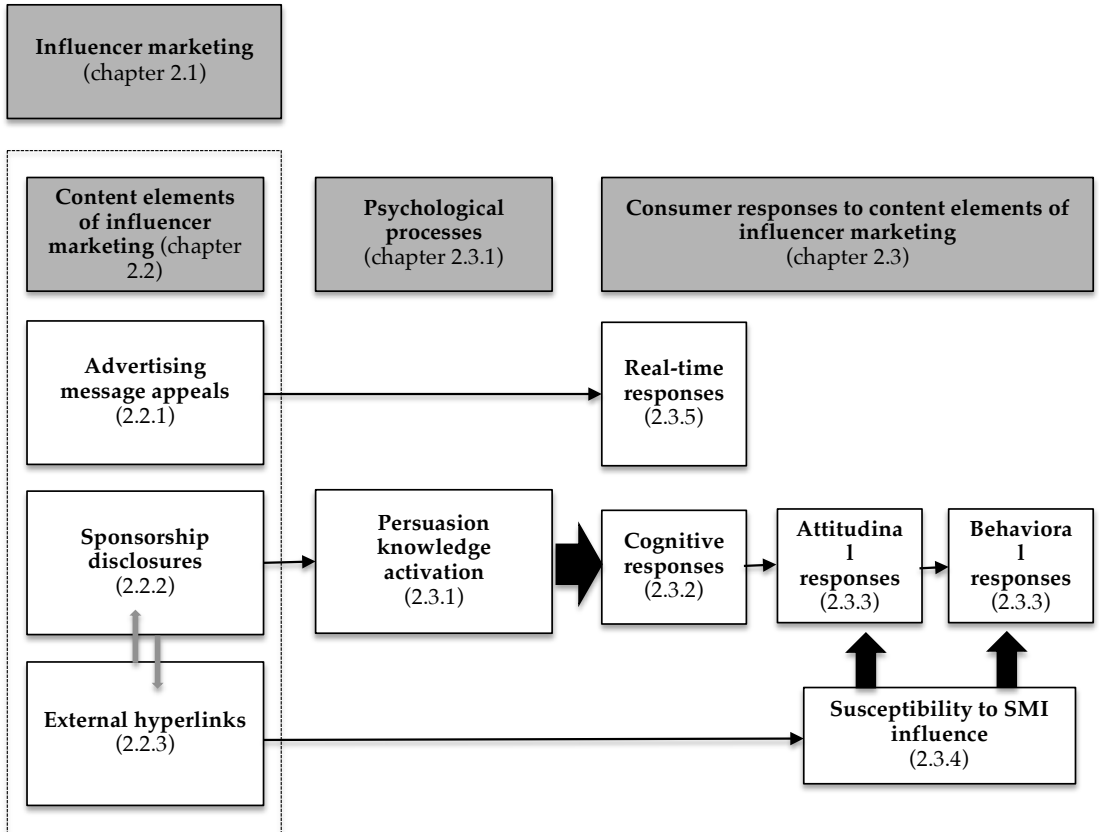
Figure 1 Overview of the theoretical framework

Figure 1 demonstrates the content elements of influencer marketing that were investigated in this dissertation. The dissertation studies the effect of various content elements on consumers' cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral, and real-time responses. The study considers persuasion knowledge activation as a psychological process to explain consumers' responses to sponsorship disclosures. Consumers' susceptibility to SMI influence is specifically considered as a consumer characteristic that affects their attitudinal and behavioral responses to store type behind external hyperlinks. The hypotheses that were derived from the theoretical framework and tested in the empirical studies are presented in connection with the summary of the articles in Chapter 4.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the emergence and definition of influencer marketing based on previous research. It also discusses relevant concepts and contexts in relation to influencer marketing. In the second part, a review of the definitions, functions and applications of the different content elements addressed in the research questions of this dissertation are given, that is, advertising message appeals (RQ 1), sponsorship disclosures (RQ 2 and 3), and external hyperlinks (RQ 3 and 4). In the third part, potential consumer responses to the different types of content elements are discussed.

2.1 The emergence of influencer marketing

Marketing research has evolved from a transaction perspective to one focusing on relationships (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), with increased attention towards the role of consumer networks, groups, and communities (Cova & Cova, 2002; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Consumers are considered as active co-producers of value and meaning, who contribute to the dissemination of marketing communication (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008). The emergence of social media has provided an opportunity for individuals to create, publish and share content with others of similar interests, and has had a crucial impact on the nature of message dissemination (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). This effect can be reinterpreted through related theories of information flow and influence. The two-step flow theory developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), propose that messages disseminated in mass media are not directly communicated to people, but instead filtered through opinion leaders, who decode the messages and mediate the dissemination of information through several group interactions. The theory suggests that compared to mass media, interpersonal communication has a stronger impact on individuals' attitudes (Weimann, 1994).

The main focus of the two-step flow of communication is opinion leaders who act as intermediaries in the network of social interactions. As McQuail and Windahl (1993, p.63) indicate, communication involves individuals: "Those who are active in receiving and passing on ideas from the media, and those who mainly rely on other personal contacts as their guides." Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955, p. 3) define opinion leaders as "the individuals who were likely to influence other personas in their immediate environment." Opinion leaders are individuals with an extensive social network, who play an influential critical role in information dissemination, acting as both source and guide (McQuail & Windahl, 1993; Weimann, 1994). The influence that opinion leaders possess is not based on power or prestige, but instead on their ability to serve as the connecting communication source that informs their peers about what matters in politics, in society and among consumer choices (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009).

During the 20ᵗʰ century, the majority of related studies considered face-to-face contact and personal interaction dominated by physical presence as a crucial factor for the existence of opinion leadership. However, in today's digital society, physical presence is no longer the

sole determinant of personal interaction, these are instead online communities closely connected through the Internet as opposed to in geographical space (Boase & Wellman, 2006). In addition to traditional forms of opinion leadership, the existence of digital online leaders, identified as social media influencers in this dissertation, is therefore increasingly acknowledged. Social media influencers are considered a new type of opinion leaders or independent third party endorsers, who shape audience attitudes through blogs, and other social media networks (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). De Veirman and colleagues (2017) refer to social media influencers as people who have built an extensive social network of people following them. They have similar characteristics with traditional opinion leaders, such as being open to messages, incorporating the role of discussant, and being influential and valued among their followers. Besides, they are considered as being trusted judges about what is right and fashionable in various niches (Laurell, 2014).

Recently, brands realized the strategic potential of forming alliances with social media influencers to promote their products. Influencers are content creators in social media who disseminate information through blogging, vlogging (video blogs on e.g., YouTube), or creating content in short-form (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, etc.) (De Veirman et al., 2017). Through social media, followers can take part in influencers' everyday lives, experiences, opinions, and feelings. By collaborating with influencers (e.g., by sending them sample products to test, organizing events for them to participate in, or by directly paying them), brands aim to motivate influencers to endorse their products and by doing so hope to increase brand awareness and brand image among influencers' large base of followers. This contemporary form of marketing is called *influencer marketing* (De Veirman et al., 2017). In short, influencer marketing is "the art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand messages with their audiences in the form of sponsored content" (Sammis, Lincoln, & Pomponi, 2016, p. 7). In this dissertation, the focus is on the outcome of influencer marketing on consumer responses.

2.1.1 Third-party endorsement

While influencer marketing is a relatively new phenomenon, the marketing format that characterizes influencer marketing is comparable to other forms of third-party endorsements, such as celebrity endorsement. Celebrity endorsement refers to the use of a publicly recognized spokesperson to appear in an advertisement for a consumer good (McCracken, 1989). The perceptions that consumers have about the celebrity can be transferred back to the brand, and vise versa, in the form of co-branding practice (Seno & Lukas, 2007). There is substantial research on the topic of celebrity endorsement, suggesting that companies employing celebrities in advertising campaigns can improve their financial returns (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Farrell, Karels, Montfort, & McClatchey, 2000).

Correspondingly, influencer endorsement refers to the use of social media influencers in marketing communication. Compared to celebrities, however, influencers are found to be more accessible, more believable, more intimate and more natural for people to relate to as they share the personal aspects of their lives with their audience (Abidin, 2016; Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003). This close interaction may result in people experiencing a para-social interaction with influencers that they follow, which has been described as the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with a media character and make them more susceptible to influencers' opinions and behavior (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Knoll, Schramm, Schallhorn, & Wynistorf, 2015). This illusion is probably enhanced by the fact that it is possible to interact with influencers via social media to a greater extent than with traditional celebrities, because this interaction is a fundamental driver of their fame. Influencer endorsements and celebrity endorsements also differ in how their marketing messages are disseminated. Celebrity endorsements are usually disseminated through the brand's marketing channels in the form of advertising campaigns, influencer endorsements, on the other hand, are highly personal and integrated into the continuous stream of textual, visual and audial narratives from influencers' everyday lives. Thereby influencer endorsements are likely to be perceived as the influencer's authentic opinion rather than paid advertising (Abidin, 2015). The line between celebrities and influencers is somewhat blurred, and conceptually it seems that influencers are a subcategory of celebrities.

2.1.2 Brand content by influencers

Social media influencers are continually sharing their life stories and opinions about various topics in social media, many of which circles around product- and brand-related topics (Gillin, 2008). Therefore, consumers that follow social media influencers are continuously exposed to brand content that can either be classified as genuine word-of-mouth (WOM) or sponsored content that is paid for by a brand. Dichter (1966) specified that traditional WOM assume that the communicator is not receiving any monetary benefits for referring products to others. Similarly, Silverman (2001) suggested that WOM communication is neutral since the aim is not to create company profit. Thus, WOM has its origins in personal, genuine and non-commercial communication about products, brands, services, or other items between private consumers in a social network (Arndt, 1967; Wilson, 1994).

However, as WOM communication has moved online (Vilpponen, Winter, & Sundqvist, 2006), the social network that previously consisted of an individual's close friends and acquaintances has expanded to include other forms of social connections, among these social media influencers (Kozinets et al., 2010). The result of having a large number of consumers with the opportunity to convey their opinions, and marketers having the ability to recognize those consumers - is both engaging and problematic. Engaging, since marketers can target and employ those consumers who post about their product-related experiences and evaluations (Chen & Xie, 2008). Problematic, if the receiver of those messages is not able to

discriminate between a spontaneous post conveying someone's genuine product opinion, and a post by someone who is initiated or rewarded (via free products or money) by the marketer (Forrest & Cao, 2010). Accordingly, the controversy of brand content posted by influencers in social media lies in its execution. In a blog context, Kulmala and colleagues (2013) reported that bloggers' genuine WOM recommendations and sponsored content in fashion blogs were identical in terms of format and style. What distinguishes sponsored content from traditional advertising formats, is that it often resembles the original content on the platform where it is published (Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), which places it under the umbrella term *native advertising* (Faber, Lee, & Nan, 2004; Wojdynski, 2016). In native advertising, there is no clear line between commercial and original, authentic content, such as opinions, feelings, and experiences (Chia, 2012). Therefore, consumers may not always register sponsored content as advertising (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016), nor realize the commercial intent of the message (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2016). They might thereby process the content in a more objective light then should be done (Balasubramanian, 1994). Therefore, a crucial element when examining consumers' responses to product recommendations by social media influencers is an assessment of whether they perceive the recommendation as advertising or not (Evans et al., 2017).

2.2 Content elements of influencer marketing

In this section, the content elements of influencer marketing that are the focus in this dissertation will be discussed. The section provides definitions and theoretically reviews the functions and applications of the different content elements based on previous literature. However, previous findings on consumers' responses to the content elements under study will be discussed more thoroughly in section 2.3.

2.2.1 Advertising message appeals

An advertising message appeal refers to the approach used to attract the attention of consumers and to influence their feelings toward the product, service or cause (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Moreover, message appeals are used to help consumers form and change attitudes, and to persuade them to purchase (Edell & Burke, 1987; Ratchford, 1987; Rossiter & Percy, 1991). Researchers have also referred to advertising message appeals as advertising execution styles (Cutler, Thomas, & Rao, 2000), or creative strategies employed in advertising to enhance consumer motivation, opportunity and ability to process information from an advertisement (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991). These strategies are related to both product attributes and how the ads are presented. Comparing the effectiveness of different advertising message appeals has interested researchers for many decades (Deighton & Hoch, 1993; Edell & Staelin, 1983; Holbrook, 1978). Indeed, knowing what makes one advertising appeal more effective than another in a specific context is essential for

advertising results.

Two approaches that have been widely acknowledged and compared in advertising research are the *storytelling message appeal* and the *informational message appeal* (e.g., Deighton & Hoch, 1993; Deighton, Romer, & Mcqueen, 1989; Polyorat, Alden & Kim, 2007). Storytelling ads, also called narrative ads (Brechman & Purvis, 2015; Eunjin, Ratneshwar, & Thorson, 2017), transformational ads (Puto & Wells, 1984), drama ads (Deighton et al., 1989), and slice-of-life ads (Mick, 1987), utilize an advertising format that conveys a commercial message through a story (Escalas, 1998). Moreover, story ads often include emotional appeals that are designed to establish a favorable selling climate (Brechman & Purvis, 2015). An informational ad, on the other hand, typically conveys a commercial message through arguments and explanations (Eunjin et al., 2017), with the objective of providing valuable facts to recipients (Cutler et al., 2000).

Advertising researchers have extensively explored the effectiveness of using different message appeals in advertisements, and many of these appeals are more or less present in storytelling or informational advertisements (Cutler et al., 2000). There are studies comparing thinking versus feeling (emotional) commercials (Vaughn, 1980), factual versus evaluative claims (Holbrook, 1978), objective versus subjective content (Edell & Staelin, 1983), informational versus transformational advertising (Puto & Wells, 1984), arguments versus drama (narrative) (Deighton et al., 1989; Wells, 1998), and instrumental versus expressive appeals (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In this dissertation, storytelling message appeals and informational message appeals are used as umbrella terms that incorporate the above terminology to a great extent. Hence, a storytelling message appeal often contains emotions and feelings, is subjective from the perspective of the storyteller, can transform (move) readers emotionally to the point of greater product acceptance, uses drama and narratives to tell the story, and is expressive and evaluative in its communication. In contrast, an informational message appeal often contains facts and arguments, uses objective presentation, and can be instrumental or rational in its communication.

Research has indicated that there are differences in how consumers are affected by these appeals. Studies have shown that informational appeals result in higher purchase intentions than emotional appeals (Coulson, 1989; Golden & Johnson, 1983). Aaker and Norris (1982) also demonstrated higher effectiveness ratings from informational appeals compared to emotional appeals. In some contexts, factual evidence can induce higher credibility scores than narrative (story) evidence (Holbrook, 1978; Allen & Preiss, 1997). Zebregs and colleagues (2015) found that particularly in health communication, statistical evidence has a stronger impact on beliefs and attitude, whereas narrative evidence has a stronger influence on intention. Other studies, however, indicate higher levels of brand awareness and brand trust, as well as an enhanced perception of brand uniqueness, for storytelling message

appeals compared to informational message appeals (Kaufman, 2003; Kelley & Littman, 2006; Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus, & Van Riel, 2013). In tourism marketing research, Adaval and Wyer (1998) found that stories or narratives improved the evaluation of tourist destinations, compared to a list of facts and features. A study by Polyorat et al. (2007) shows that narrative print advertisements elicit higher ad message involvement than factual print advertisements, which consequently resulted in more positive product evaluations. Thus, all of these studies indicate that, depending on the strategic purpose and context of the communication, both message appeals can be useful.

While these different message appeals have been widely examined in traditional advertising contexts, no previous research has compared the persuasiveness of these appeal strategies in sponsored content by influencers. In the context of influencer marketing, research has identified storytelling as a standard execution style applied by especially bloggers to convey sponsored content messages (Hsiao et al., 2013; Kozinets, 2010). Online blogs are interactive platforms where individuals tell stories about their lived experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that often include pictures and videos (Woodside et al., 2008). These stories include experiences related to consumption and the use of brands (Hsiao, Lu, & Lan, 2013). Therefore, applying a storytelling message appeal in sponsored blog content fits well with the overall communication style in this medium, enhancing ad-context congruity[1]. However, excellent consumer storytelling requires that the storyteller has some previous experience from using the brand or the product that serves as the core component in the story (Lund, Cohen, & Scarles, 2018). Favorite bloggers frequently receive sponsorship invitations from companies to review products for promotional purposes. Thus, there might not always be sufficient time to test all of the sponsored products. In these circumstances, writing a sponsored blog post in an informational format is presumably more natural and less time-consuming. The blogger can instead focus on providing information and facts about the product and let readers test the product themselves. Previous research also states that bloggers are applying several different strategies for brand placement on their blogs (Segev, Wang, & Fernandes, 2014). By comparing the effects of these two distinct appeals that are found to persuade consumers in profoundly different ways (Deighton et al., 1989), and their application in sponsored blog content, the dissertation provides insights into how to strategize advertising execution in this context more effectively.

2.2.2 Sponsorship disclosures

Sponsorship disclosures are written disclaimers or text labels that are inserted in sponsored content with the primary goal to inform viewers that a message is advertising (Cain, 2011). This implies that a disclosure that effectively communicates the commercial nature of the

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[1] Ad-context congruity is defined as the degree to which advertising content is thematically similar to the original content of the media platform (Zanjani et al., 2011).

message should make viewers realize that the content is advertising (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2016). To protect consumers from being misled or deceived, the presence of sponsorship disclosures is especially crucial in contemporary forms of advertising where the advertising message is disguised as editorial content (Faber et al., 2004; Wojdynski, 2016). Sponsored content by influencers in social media falls under this advertising category (Evans et al., 2017). As previously discussed in section 2.1.2, consumers might not be able to distinguish influencers genuine WOM from sponsored content. Therefore a necessary caution to clarify the nature of the message is the inclusion of sponsorship disclosures. It is especially crucial since withholding information about the source of funding for an endorsement prevents consumers from making fair and well-informed purchase decisions (Walden, Bortree, & DiStaso, 2015). In other words, knowing whether a recommendation was based on the products qualifications or was given because the influencer was compensated may have an impact on consumer behavior.

To assure transparent communication and avoid misleading consumers with advertising, regulations that obligate third-party endorsers and advertisers to disclose sponsored content have been developed and adopted in several nations. These differ between countries and medium types (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2016). Since the development of these guidelines, the effects of sponsorship disclosures have received a considerable amount of attention among advertising researchers. The effects of sponsorship disclosures have been investigated extensively in relation to brand placement in the following advertising contexts: [1] in television programs (Boerman et al., 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; Cain, 2011; Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2013; Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013; De Pauw, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2018; van Reijmersdal et al., 2017), [2] in radio shows (Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008), [3] in movies (Bennett, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 1999; Tessitore & Geuens, 2013; van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013), [4] in online games (Evans & Hoy, 2016; van Reijmersdal et al., 2015), [5] in video news releases (Nelson, Wood, & Paek, 2009; Nelson & Park, 2015; Tewksbury, Jensen, & Coe, 2011; Tuggle & Ferguson, 1994; Wood et al., 2008), [6] in news media (Cameron & Curtin, 1995; Kim, Pasadeos, & Barban, 2001; Wojdynski, 2016; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016), [7] on Facebook (Boerman et al., 2017), and [8] in online brand videos (Choi et al., 2018).

In the context of influencer marketing, researchers have only recently started to examine sponsorship disclosures. The majority of these studies are conducted in the context of blogs (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Liljander et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016), and one study can be found in the context of Instagram (Evans et al., 2017). These studies have focused on the effects of different disclosure types on consumers' responses, ranging from simple disclosures (cf. e.g., Hwang & Jeong, 2016, "This post was sponsored by {Brand}"), to disclosures providing additional information about the

sponsorship by revealing forms of compensation (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Lu et al., 2014; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2016), or mentioning the influencer's "honest opinion" (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). Furthermore, researchers in this area have examined more elusive forms of sponsorship disclosures where the blogger made a brief mention in the blog post about receiving products from a brand (Liljander et al., 2014). Evans and colleagues (2017) investigated different language use of sponsorship "hashtags" on Instagram, ranging from the elusive "#SP" to the explicit "#Paid Ad," on consumer responses. In these studies a variety of moderating, mediating and dependent variables have been measured (these are discussed in sections 2.3.1, 2.3.3, and 2.3.4). An overview of the studies conducted in this area is provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Overview of sponsorship disclosure studies in influencer marketing

Disclosure	Disclosure characteristics	Effects		Conditions	Findings	Reference
		Consumer responses	Processing (additional factors)			
Blog posts **Explicit disclosure:** "Canon pays me every time I plug their product and a percentage of the camera sales." **Implicit disclosure:** "Amazon gives me a small commission for every camera bought through the link." **Impartial disclosure:** "I did not receive any personal benefit from reviewing this product."	Textual; separate disclaimer, bottom of the blog post	Source credibility Message influence	Perceived brand influence	Content	Implied and explicit disclosures increased consumers' perception of blog post being influenced by brand. Source credibility and message influence were higher from explicit disclosure.	Carr & Hayes, 2014
Blog posts **Explicit disclosure:** "Yesterday, I made this pie with wonderful Mediterranean influences, which [Manufacturer inserted] gave me the ingredients for". **Implicit disclosure:** Branded ingredients in the blog post.	Textual; explicit: within text mention of manufacturer, implicit: within text mention of branded ingredients	Source credibility Behavioral intention (intentions to read the blog in the future, intentions to purchase ingredients)	Belief of sponsorship Acceptance of sponsorship	Content	Explicit disclosure decreased behavioral intentions. No impact of disclosures on source credibility. Sponsorship acceptance had no impact on consumer responses.	Liljander et al., 2014
Blog posts Mentioning of direct-monetary or indirect-monetary sponsorship in the post	Textual; no information about disclaimer positioning	Sponsored post attitude Purchase intention	Brand awareness (Product type)	Content	Sponsorship type had no effects on sponsored post attitude. Consumers' with high brand awareness expressed greater sponsored post attitude. Sponsored post attitude had a positive effect on purchase intentions.	Lu et al., 2014

Disclosure	Disclosure characteristics	Processing (additional factors)	Effects Consumer responses	Conditions	Findings	Reference
Blog posts **Explicit disclosures:** "[BRAND] paid for this blog to persuade you" (Study 1) "[BRAND] has paid for this blog and it aims to influence you." (Study 2)	Textual; before the blog post, in bold font	Persuasion knowledge activation Resistance strategies (cognitive and affective)	Brand attitude Purchase intention	Content	Explicit disclosure activated consumers' persuasion knowledge, which triggered cognitive and affective resistance, which decreased brand attitude and purchase intentions.	van Reijmersdal et al., 2016
Blog posts **Explicit simple disclosure:** "This post was sponsored by the Seychelles Tourism Board." **Explicit additional info disclosure:** "This post was sponsored by the Seychelles Tourism Board but the contents are based on my honest opinions."	Textual; separate disclaimer, bottom of the blog post	Advertising skepticism (Message sidedness)	Source credibility Message attitude Brand attitude Behavioral intention (intention to visit the Seychelles)	Content	The honest opinion disclosure increased source credibility and message attitude. Advertising skepticism moderated the effects; consumers' high in skepticism were more positively affected by "honest opinion" than those low in skepticism.	Hwang & Jeong, 2016
Instagram posts **Explicit 1:** "#SP" **Explicit 2:** "#Sponsored" **Explicit 3:** "#Paid Ad"	Textual; after the Instagram post as a hash-tag	Advertising recognition Disclosure memory	Brand attitude Purchase intention Intention to spread eWOM	Content	The presence of a disclosure (regardless of language used) produced higher advertising recognition compared to no disclosure. Paid Ad produced highest advertising recognition. Disclosure memory and advertising recognition mediated the effects of disclosure language on brand attitude and eWOM intentions, so that high increased memory and recognition decreased brand	Evans et al., 2017

The content of the disclosure types studied in previous research (see Table 3), could be categorized as being either personal (from the perspective of the source), where the

influencer talks directly to the viewers by stating, e.g. "Canon pays me every time I plug their product…" (Carr & Hayes, 2014), or impersonal by stating, e.g. "This post was sponsored by…"(Hwang & Jeong, 2016). Hence, in all of the studies, it is either the influencer or an unidentified (impersonal) source disseminating disclosure information. However, none of the studies have looked at the effects of the sponsoring brand disseminating the disclosure, nor compared the effects of different source types of disclosures. In a recent study on sponsored posts by celebrities in social media, Boerman and colleagues (2017) found different consumer responses depending on if the brand or the celebrity disclosed sponsorship. However, in this study, the variation of source type was not in the actual disclaimer but rather part of the sponsor message. Nonetheless, the study provides evidence that source type of sponsorship disclosures can have an impact on consumer responses. Therefore, in this dissertation, the effect of source type of sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses is examined.

Furthermore, while these previous studies provide valuable insights regarding sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing, the majority of them have focused on the isolating effects of sponsorship disclosures, ignoring other content elements in the sponsored message that might interact with disclosure information to invoke consumer responses. Only a few studies have considered additional factors. Lu and colleagues (2014) investigated the impact of product type and brand characteristics as contributing factors in consumers' evaluations of sponsorship disclosures. Hwang and Jeong (2016) examined the moderating effects of message sidedness [2] on consumer responses to sponsorship disclosures. Consumers are seldom processing information from advertisements in isolation, but may instead consider several message cues simultaneously (Houston et al., 1987). Consumers might, therefore, be affected by additional message cues besides the information provided in the actual disclaimer when they evaluate sponsorship disclosures. In this dissertation, external hyperlinks (discussed in section 2.2.3) are examined as message cues that might moderate the effects of sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses. External hyperlinks to brand pages and e-commerce sites are often included in product recommendation posts by influencers (Zhu & Tan, 2007). However, research in this context on the impact of external hyperlinks on consumers' responses is yet missing.

2.2.3 External hyperlinks

As discussed in the previous section, sponsorship disclosures in influencers' product recommendation posts can function as cues that alert viewers towards the influencer's motivations for writing the product recommendation. In addition to sponsorship disclosures,

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[2] The authors (2016, p. 530) define message sidedness in this context as " a sponsored post can contain either the advantages of a sponsored brand only (i.e., one-sided message) or both the advantages and disadvantages of a sponsored brand (i.e., two-sided message)".

the product recommendation can also contain other cues that relate to products and brands that impact consumers' evaluation and processing of the message. One such cue that is usually present in influencer postings in social media is external hyperlinks to brand pages and e-commerce stores (Zhu & Tan, 2007). When the influencer promotes a product in a post, it is reasonable that he or she would also include external hyperlinks in the message that direct consumers to websites from where the product can be purchased.

DeVries and colleagues (2012) discussed brand page hyperlinks and referred to them as interactive functions integrated into social media content that provides users with a short cut to brand pages. Burton and Soboleva (2011) described embedded hyperlinks in content on Twitter as a form of machine interactivity that allows a tweet receiver to access information on other websites by clicking on these links. Trammel and colleagues (2006) made a distinction between internal and external hyperlinks on Twitter. They proposed that an internal hyperlink continues organizational communication with the visitor to the internal site following the hyperlink, while an external hyperlink leads the viewer to an external site that may contain information which compromises (or improves) the organization's message. This insinuates the importance of alignment between social media content and landing page content from external hyperlinks that strengthens the communication outcome. A landing page is the first page that a visitor lands on as a result of an organization's online traffic acquisition efforts (Ash, 2008). In other words, online retailers and brands continuously strive to drive consumer traffic to their websites, and they do so, among other things, through external hyperlinking in social media and landing page optimization (i.e., by designing landing page content that is appealing and relevant to the visitor). The content on these landing pages is likely to affect how consumers react to the overall marketing attempt. This includes consumers' first evaluation of the social media content where the external hyperlinks appear, and their second evaluation of the landing page content that they are exposed to after clicking on the hyperlink.

External hyperlinking in influencer product recommendations can be categorized into three different forms depending on the purpose and intentions behind the hyperlink. The influencer might include a hyperlink in a non-sponsored product recommendation post to genuinely help followers find the recommended product. Also, the influencer might include a hyperlink in a sponsored product recommendation post on behalf of the sponsoring brand to increment sales as part of the sponsorship agreement, or the influencer might include hyperlinks in product recommendation posts as part of an affiliate marketing program (without sponsorship attachment). Affiliate marketing is essentially a form of pure-commission selling (Duffy, 2005). The affiliate (in this case the influencer) directs a visitor to a landing page on a website, and the affiliate that the visitor originated from is recorded (Ash, 2008). If that visitor converts by taking the desired action (e.g., making a purchase, fills

out a form, or clicks through to another web page), the affiliate receives payment for the action (Quinton and Khan, 2009).

Regardless of the influencer's intentions behind the inclusion of external hyperlinks, the external webpage content that consumers land on after following the hyperlink in a product recommendation post can impact their consumer behavior. Thereby, suggesting that influencer intentions and landing page content should be in sync. In an interpersonal selling context, researchers have distinguished between soft selling and hard selling tactics (DeCarlo, 2005; Jolson, 1997; Weitz, Castleberry, & Tanner, 2001). DeCarlo (2005) found that when consumers were unprepared for a persuasion situation, a hard selling tactic employed by a sales agent in a store (i.e., the salesperson indicating his eagerness to sell due to monetary incentives) resulted in decreased purchase intentions. Though a different selling context applies for influencers' online recommendations than for in-store selling, the content that consumers are exposed to on external websites following hyperlinks could be similarly categorized into a hard selling or soft selling tactic employed by the influencer. Ash (2008) proposed that the primary objective of commercial hyperlinks is to speed up sales, and for this purpose, the product page is more connected to sales than the start page of a web shop. This insinuates that different web page content has different goals in terms of selling intent and consumer influence. When consumers are simultaneously exposed to sponsorship disclosure information (in influencer postings) and landing page content on external websites, the level and congruency of selling intent between these are likely to affect how they respond to the information. However, research in this area is missing. In this dissertation, the interaction effect between different sponsorship disclosures and different landing page content (from external hyperlinks) on consumer responses is examined.

Another crucial dimension as regards influencer product recommendations and external hyperlinks is store type effects of e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses. Researchers have acknowledged that social media influencers, and more specifically bloggers, are increasingly introducing their personal selling platforms, referred to as blog shops (cf. e.g., Abidin & Thompson, 2012; Greenhill & Fletcher, 2010). The primary function of a blog shop is an instant generation of revenue through the direct selling of products, a mechanism that is quite distinct from more common methods of revenue generation employed by bloggers (such as affiliate marketing practices discussed previously) (Lim et al., 2013). Thus, through external hyperlinking bloggers can stimulate consumers to purchase recommended products from their blog shops, or/and engage in affiliate marketing activities by driving consumer traffic to external retailers' sites. Consumers are likely to react differently to these distinct retail settings.

From an online retailing perspective, the conversion of online visits on e-store sites to actual purchases is considered a challenge (Eastlick & Lotz, 2011), and has been linked to consumers' lack of trust in online retailers (Bart, Shankar, Sultan, & Urban, 2005; Grabner-

Krauter & Kaluscha, 2008; Holsapple & Sasidharan, 2005). While researchers have considered several different drivers of online store trust (Beldad et al., 2010), an important determinant of consumers' perceived store trust, especially when consumers are visiting an online store for the first time (i.e., initial store trust) is merchant characteristics (Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004). Thus, consumers are evaluating the retailer based on website information to determine if the retailer can be trusted (ibid.). While previous research has compared the effects of different online store types on consumers' store trust, these have all considered company-level organizations (Casalo, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2007; Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky, & Vitale, 2000; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004; Metzger, 2006). However, no previous studies have compared store types that include person-level organizations such as blog shops. Lacking is also research within influencer marketing on the phenomenon of blog shops and consumer responses. In this dissertation, store type effects of e-commerce landing pages, comparing blog shops and external retail sites on consumers' responses, is examined.

2.3 Consumer responses to content elements of influencer marketing

In this section, potential consumer responses to the different content elements of influencer marketing addressed in the previous section will be discussed. The section provides insights regarding how these responses have been investigated previously in related studies, and how they are implemented and examined in the studies of this dissertation.

2.3.1 Persuasion knowledge activation

Persuasion, which is a vital and constitutional part of communication, plays an essential role in marketing communication (Taillard, 2000). Persuasion means, "attitude change resulting from exposure to written or spoken messages delivered by a source to a recipient" (Olson & Zanna, 1993, p. 135). O'Keefe (2002) describes persuasion as the communicator's deliberate attempt to influence the mind of the opposite side through communication where the receiver is free to a certain extent. Others have proposed that any communication is persuasive if it causes a change in the receiver's attitudes, beliefs or actions (Uztuğ, 2003). Briefly stated, the goal of persuasion is to influence someone by using different tactics and motivating him/her in the desired direction.

When marketers use persuasion in their advertising and sales presentations, they look for ways of influencing consumers. Simultaneously, consumers try to interpret and cope with marketers' tactics used in these attempts and develop personal knowledge about persuasion. This knowledge helps them identify how marketers try to persuade them. This phenomenon is referred to as persuasion knowledge and conceptualized in Friestad, and Wright's (1994) highly acknowledged and applied model, the "Persuasion Knowledge Model" (PKM). Persuasion knowledge enables people to "recognize, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and remember persuasion attempts and select and execute coping tactics believed to be effective and appropriate" (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 3). It refers to consumers' knowledge and

beliefs about marketers' persuasion goals and attempts (e.g., in advertising), marketers' tactics, the effectiveness and appropriateness of these tactics, and also beliefs about one's coping tactics (Hibbert et al., 2007). According to PKM, people learn about persuasion tactics from social interactions with others, from conversations trying to influence people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, from observing marketers and salespeople, and from news commentaries about advertising and marketing tactics. Thus, peoples' persuasion knowledge is a fluid state of mind, developing throughout life.

Persuasion knowledge activation (PKA) refers to whether and to what degree consumers' persuasion knowledge (PK) is activated when they are being exposed to a persuasive marketing tactic (Boerman et al., 2016). While the purpose of sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing is to inform audiences about the relationship between an influencer and an advertiser (FTC, 2015), its main goal is to help consumers' recognize that the message is advertising, which is considered a first and crucial step of activating their PK (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Researchers have been interested in how and when consumers activate persuasion knowledge and how a specific situation invoking persuasion knowledge impacts persuasion outcomes (i.e., consumers' responses). Studies in related fields show that disclosures of brand placement and sponsored content can activate consumers' PK (e.g., Boerman et al., 2012; Boerman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017; Ham et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2009; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012; van Reijmersdal et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2008). In these experimental studies, PK has been measured to ensure that the manipulation is successful, and to measure the direct influence of the situational PK on dependent variables, or to test the mediation effects between independent and dependent variables. A variation of multi-item measures and single-item measures has been used to measure consumers' persuasion knowledge activation in these studies. However, following Rossiter's (2011) proposal that a single-item indicator is sufficient to measure a concrete, singular object, a majority of the most recent studies in this field have applied a single-item measure for persuasion knowledge activation (i.e. "To what extent do you perceive this {insert relevant content here} as advertising") (Boerman et al., 2012; Boerman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017; Ham et al., 2015). Furthermore, in some of these studies, researchers have acknowledged that individuals' persuasion knowledge is not always consistent but a certain situation activates higher (versus lower) PK, which alters how the target copes with the given persuasion tactic (Boerman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012; van Reijmersdal et al., 2015). For example, Evans and colleagues (2017) found that the use of "Paid Ad" and "Sponsored" disclosure language-usage lead to higher persuasion knowledge activation than the use of an "SP" disclosure, only because the two former contained a more explicit disclosure language that increased consumers' advertising recognition of the influencer sponsored post.

Following these previous studies, in article 2 and article 3 of this dissertation PKA is measured, 1) by using a single-item measure, 2) as "manipulation check" to ensure that the designed situation has been successfully manipulated, 3) to examine the direct influence of the situational persuasion knowledge on dependent variables, and 4) to compare different degrees of persuasion knowledge activation (high versus low) on dependent variables.

2.3.2 Cognitive responses

2.3.2.1 Sponsorship disclosures and cognitive responses

The advertising literature on endorsement effectiveness provides insights into the prominence of endorser effects, the underlying processes, and the conditions under which endorser effects may be strengthened (Erdogan, 1999). A dominant factor in this stream of research to explain endorser effectiveness is *source credibility* (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Source credibility refers to whether an individual perceives a source of information as unbiased, believable, true, or factual (Hass, 1981). The source credibility model (Hovland & Weiss, 1953) stresses that the effectiveness of the message depends on the degree of expertise and trustworthiness conveyed by the source. Rossiter and Percy (1987) suggested that when a brand uses an external spokesperson to promote products, consumers' attention is focused on the spokesperson rather than on the brand, which signals the importance of source credibility in research that evaluates the effectiveness of third-party endorsements. Accordingly, in research on influencer endorsement, source credibility has been applied to explain the effectiveness of influencer marketing (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Chu & Kamal, 2008; Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Hsu, Chuan-Chuan Lin, & Chiang, 2013; Liljander et al., 2014; Williams & Hodges, 2016; Zhu & Tan, 2007).

The focus of this dissertation is on the effects of different content elements of influencer marketing on consumer responses. Furthermore, a majority of the empirical studies presented in chapter 4, uses unfamiliar or fictional influencers to increase the internal validity of the conducted experiments. Therefore in this dissertation, source credibility is assessed through internalization processes rather than identification processes. Identification processes refer to consumers' identification with and previous perceptions about a source of information on their evaluations of source credibility (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). However, internalization processes depend upon the trust consumers have for the nature of the persuasive message an endorser presents (Kelman, 1958; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In other words, consumers' perception of source credibility is generated from message cues. Therefore, applying an internalization process when evaluating source credibility is more in line with the empirical specifications in this dissertation.

A message cue that can impact consumers' perception about the credibility of the source (i.e., the influencer) is sponsorship disclosures. Research on sponsorship disclosures of product recommendations by influencers has examined how different disclosure types impacts the credibility of the source. Carr and Hayes (2014) compared three types of disclosures of blog

posts: an explicit disclosure that mentioned compensation from the company for reviews of their products, an implicit disclosure that mentioned that the blogger accepted forms of sponsoring and that the content may be influenced without giving specific information per blog post, and an impartial disclosure stating that the blog is not sponsored at all. They found that the explicit disclosure resulted in the highest credibility scores, presumably because openness increases trustworthiness. However, when no disclosure was given, the blogger was still perceived as quite credible, probably because consumers' suspicion about sponsorship was not raised. The implicit disclosure raised the most suspicion, which resulted in the lowest blogger credibility. Liljander and colleagues (2014) also compared different types of sponsorship disclosures in blog post. They compared an explicit disclosure where the blogger mentioned receiving ingredients from a manufacturer to make a pie and an implicit disclosure where brand ingredients where only mentioned in the post without any information about sponsorship. However, they found no effects between the disclosures on blogger credibility. Hwang and Jeong (2016) compared two different types of explicit sponsorship disclosures: one that mentioned that a company sponsored the post, and a second one that in addition to the sponsorship information, also mentioned that the content was based on the blogger's honest opinion. The findings showed that the "honest opinion" disclosure resulted in the highest credibility scores; however, this effect was only significant among consumers who reported high advertising skepticism. The findings of these studies are inconclusive, suggesting that consumers' perception of source credibility varies between disclosure types and is dependent on the context of the studies. In this dissertation, the direct effect of different types of disclosures, in different contexts, on the credibility of the influencer (source) is investigated.

Another type of cognitive consumer response that is closely related to source credibility, and an important factor when assessing consumers' responses to persuasive communication is *message credibility* (also referred to as *advertising credibility* when the message is advertising). Just as source credibility asks the extent to which an audience believes the source, message credibility asks the extent to which an audience believes a message (Metzger et al., 2003). Some researchers have even suggested that message factors are more important than source factors in credibility judgments (Austin & Dong, 1994; Eastin, 2001; Slater et al., 1997). Especially in situations where little information is available about the source, message cues may be more prominent in consumers' credibility assessments (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). Surprisingly, though, few studies on sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing have measured consumers' perception about message credibility (i.e., the credibility of the sponsor message or product recommendation under study). These have instead focused on consumers' general skepticism towards advertising, and referred to it as "sponsorship attitude" (Lu et al., 2014), or "skepticism toward product review posts" (Hwang and Jeong, 2016). Others have focused on media credibility, for example, Carr and

Hayes (2014) asked consumers whether they perceived the blog as credible after exposure to a blog post with varying types of disclosures. However, while consumers' general level of advertising or sponsored content skepticism that relates to all forms of advertising messages, may impact how they react to sponsorship disclosures, this insight provides little knowledge about their credibility judgment regarding a specific message during a single exposure occasion. In order to determine how different disclosure types in influencer posts impact the credibility of the content, this information is crucial. In this dissertation, message credibility is examined in addition to source credibility as cognitive consumer responses to sponsorship disclosures in article 2 and article 3.

2.3.2.2 External hyperlinks and cognitive responses

Research on e-commerce has established that consumers' perception of *store trust* is an important factor to ensure the success of an online retailer as it increases purchase intentions, which consequently, increases online sales (Gefen & Straub, 2004). Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395) describe trust, as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another." In an e-commerce setting, trust has been defined as an individual's belief about the online retailer's competence and dependability (Bhattacherjee, 2002; Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002a). Researchers have frequently examined different merchant and website characteristics that can signal an online store's trustworthiness. One such merchant signal that has been acknowledged, and is especially relevant in studies comparing familiar and unfamiliar online stores, is *store reputation* (Casalo et al., 2007; Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky, & Saarinen, 1999; Jarvenpaa et al., 2000; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002b; Teo and Liu, 2007). In this context, reputation has been defined as the degree to which consumers believe that the selling organization is honest and concerned about its customers and, thus, function as a trust mechanism because it generates a "belief that a seller will act in the interest of the consumer" (Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2000, p. 400). Several studies have found that perceived reputation has a positive effect on web store trust (Casalo et al., 2007; Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2000; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Metzger, 2006). Metzger (2006) compared a well known and a fictional (thereby unknown) store and found that reputation influences trust, which resulted in higher trust scores for the well-known store. In line with these previous findings, it is expected that consumers are likely to react differently in terms of their judgments about store trust when they are exposed to a product recommendation blog post containing external hyperlinks that either direct them to a blog shop (i.e. the blogger's personal online store) or to an established retailer's online store (affiliate links). Thus, in this dissertation store reputation and store trust are measured as cognitive consumer responses in article 4.

2.3.3 Attitudinal and behavioral responses

Although it is not their primary goal, sponsorship disclosures could also alter the effect of the influencer's product recommendation and hence elicit brand-related responses. An increased level of attention to advertising that activates peoples' persuasion knowledge can lead to diminished persuasion (Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981). Since people usually do not want to be persuaded (Brehm, 1966), people tend to resist persuasion attempts when they recognize them as such (Sagarin et al., 2002; Wei et al., 2008). This resistance can have a spillover effect on the brand, leading to decreased brand attitude and purchase intentions. In line with the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), stating that an individual's intention to perform a behavior is dependent on the individual's attitudes toward the behavior; consumers' brand attitude is likely to explain their purchase intentions.

Research on sponsorship disclosures in influencer product recommendations demonstrates different effects on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intentions. Van Reijmersdal and colleagues (2016) found that explicit disclosures activated persuasion knowledge, which triggered cognitive and affective resistance, leading to decreased brand attitude and purchase intentions among consumers (compared to when the message contained no sponsorship disclosure). Similarly, Evans and colleagues (2017) reported lower brand attitude and WOM intentions from sponsorship disclosures that generated higher advertising recognition among consumers (i.e., PKA). In contrast, Hwang and Jeong (2016) found no direct effect of different sponsorship disclosures on brand attitude. However, they found an indirect effect on brand attitude through message sidedness, suggesting that other content elements that are more closely related to the brand were more likely than sponsorship disclosures to elicit a change in brand attitude among consumers. In this dissertation, brand attitude and purchase intentions are measured as attitudinal and behavioral responses to sponsorship disclosures in article 2 and article 3.

In addition, store purchase intention is measured as a behavioral consequence of store trust in the empirical study (article 4) comparing the effects of store type behind external hyperlinks on consumer responses. While purchase intention considers consumers' intentions to purchase a specific product (here: displayed in a product recommendation post), store purchase intention considers consumers' general intentions to purchase any product from a specific store (here: from a blog shop or a retailer e-store).

2.3.4 Susceptibility to SMI influence

Persuasive communication in a social context, such as in influencer marketing where the source is highly present and communicates directly to the audience, can not be fully understood unless considering the social interaction as a mechanism underlying judgments in response to the communication (Erb & Bohner, 2007). Similarly, researchers in consumer

behavior have proposed that to fully explain consumers' development of attitudes, norms, values, and purchase behavior, one must consider the influence of others in this process (Stafford & Cocanougher, 1977). For this reason, consumer behavior models frequently include interpersonal influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). However, some authors have suggested that people differ in their responses to interpersonal influence (McGuire, 1968), with some individuals being permanently more susceptible to social influence than others (Mourali, Laroche, & Pons, 2005). Research has, thus, demonstrated differences in how people respond to interpersonal influence. In a study on the effects of word-of-mouth (WOM), it was found that consumers who were highly susceptible to interpersonal influence were more influenced by WOM when making product evaluations than consumers who were less susceptible to interpersonal influence (Bone, 1995).

Bearden and colleagues (1989) developed a scale to measure individuals' susceptibility to interpersonal influence (the SUSCEP scale). They distinguished between normative and informational interpersonal influence, of which informational interpersonal influence is applied in and adapted for this dissertation. Informational interpersonal influence refers to the propensity to accept information from others as evidence about reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Individuals may either seek information from knowledgeable others or make decisions by observing the behavior of others (e.g., social media influencers) (Park & Lessig, 1977). Informational influences thus affect consumer decision processes and product evaluations. Presumably, the impact of interpersonal influence on consumer behavior has become even more important with the rise of social media. Social media platforms constitute a public online forum that provides individual consumers with their own voices, as well as access to product information that facilitates their purchase decisions (Kozinets et al., 2010). Consumers, thus, frequently visit social media websites to communicate with others and seek information that helps them make various consumption-related decisions (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). In this context, research has demonstrated that the degree to which consumers are affected by social media content depends on individual consumers' engagement with or commitment to social media. For example, Goh and colleagues (2013) examined social media brand communities and consumer behavior. They reported that users who frequently engaged in social media brand communities were profoundly affected by both marketing-generated content (MGC) and user-generated content (UGC) on these platforms, which resulted in increased purchase expenditures.

Similarly, Kwahk and Ge (2012) examined the effects of social media on e-commerce. They reported that consumers who were highly committed to social media were more affected by informational social influence than consumers who were less committed to social media. Consequently, they found that the positive effect of informational social influence on consumers highly committed to social media resulted in increased e-commerce visit intentions.

In this dissertation, a modification of Bearden and colleagues' (1989) SUSCEP scale to measure informational influence is applied. The scale is modified to fit the context of the study, and thereby introduces a new variable that is considered relevant in research on influencer marketing. While the scale by Bearden et al. (1989) considers any social influence, including influence from friends and family, the scale applied in this dissertation is modified to measure social influence from social media influencers specifically. The context of the thesis propose that individuals who already seek information about products and brands from social media influencers (SMI) when making purchase decisions in their daily lives, are likely to respond differently to influencers' persuasive attempts than individuals who do not engage in such activities. Therefore, consumers' susceptibility to SMI influence is considered as a potential boundary condition, specifically in article 4, when examining consumers' responses to actions taken by social media influencers.

2.3.5 Real-time responses

Article 1 applies a methodological approach that is distinct from the other three articles in this dissertation. Instead of measuring consumers' responses in a controlled, experimental setting, consumers' real-time responses to content elements of influencer marketing are observed and measured. The study in article 1 specifically investigates consumers' responses in terms of real-time attention, measured as online viewing time, to storytelling and informational message appeals in sponsored blog posts. Research on consumers' attention to advertisements has been faced with methodological challenges (Mormann, 2014). Using self-report measures is not optimal since media consumption behavior is habitual, and therefore difficult to recall (Saling & Philips, 2007). Adams (2000) also found that peoples' stored mental-models influence their media selection and attention. Previous research on attention inactivity within media confirms that, generally, people have little real-time awareness of their media consumption behavior (Anderson, Choi, & Lorch, 2007). To overcome these challenges, researchers have used behavioral eye-tracking studies to measure consumer attention to different marketing activities (cf. e.g., Krugman et al., 1994). However, most of these studies are conducted in a laboratory setting, and might, therefore, face external validity issues. In order to answer the call for more research on consumer attention in a non-laboratory setting (Daugherty & Hoffman 2014), this study used web analytics to measure the potential difference in consumers' online viewing duration (i.e., real-time attention) to storytelling- and informational sponsored blog posts. Previous research has noted that the time an online user spends on a particular web page corresponds with how valuable the user perceives the content on that page to be (Chandon, Chtourou, & Fortin, 2003; Kent et al., 2011). Suggesting that if consumers spend more time on some sponsored blog posts than on others, and providing that these sponsored blog posts can be systematically categorized by the advertising message appeals that they convey, one can make predictions regarding the effectiveness of using different message appeals in sponsored blog posts on consumers'

responses.

As discussed earlier (section 2.2.1), previous advertising research has frequently compared the effectiveness of storytelling and informational advertising appeals, presumably because these are likely to persuade consumers in profoundly different ways (Deighton et al., 1989), providing an interesting point of comparison. How the content is structured in these message appeals, that is, as a story or a description of factual information, is found to have an effect on how consumers process and consequently judge the information (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Escalas, 2004). It is the actual story in storytelling ads that captivates the audience. An intriguing story makes people engage in mental simulation and imagine hypothetical scenarios of the events described in the story (Escalas, 2004; Taylor & Schneider, 1989). When consumers simulate an event, they often relate to their own actual or potential behavior (Fiske, 1993), making them feel more involved in the story. Thus, the underlying mechanism of processing storytelling ads reflects higher involvement than the processing of an informational argument-based ad (Polyorat et al., 2007). Involvement is a motivational state that affects the degree and focus of consumers' attention processes (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Hence, the more involved a consumer is with an advertisement, the more attention will be dedicated to the content. Escalas (2004) proposes that stories have the ability to involve consumers by what is called narrative transportation. Transportation consolidates consumers' attention, imagination, and feelings to focus on the events in a story (Green & Brock, 2000). Narrative transportation occurs when the consumer becomes absorbed in the story, both cognitively and emotionally (Mossberg & Nissen Johansen, 2006). In a state of narrative transportation, the immediate surrounding disappears in the same way as when a person is daydreaming. While consumers are seldom emotionally involved in processing informational ads, storytelling ads engage the audience through several senses (Brechman & Purvis, 2015). Research has also found that the individual's processing of narrative text requires higher cognitive capacity than the processing of informational text (Petrova & Cialdini, 2008). There are no previous studies that investigate how storytelling and informational message appeals in advertising content affect consumers' viewing time of the advertisement in a natural setting. While consumers' attitudinal and behavioral response to different persuasive messages is an important indicator of overall advertising success, a pre-condition for consumer attitudes to be formed or actions to be taken is that consumers are paying attention to the persuasive message in the first place (Hovland et al., 1953; McGuire, 1968). Thus, the connection between advertising attention and viewing duration is closely related to the information processing of advertising content (Danaher & Mullarkey, 2003). Thereby, previous research, as discussed above, suggest that storytelling and informational sponsored blog posts are likely to affect consumers' attention differently, and evidence to this should be found by analyzing the online viewing time that these message appeals

generate. In article 1, consumers' real-time attention, measured as online viewing time, to storytelling and informational message appeals in sponsored blog posts is examined.

3 Methodology

This chapter aims to present the methodological choices and procedures applied in the empirical studies. The purpose of the doctoral dissertation, to examine consumers' responses to different content elements of influencer marketing, is addressed in five empirical studies. These studies and their results are reported in four articles. In four of the studies, an experimental research design was used. In one of the studies, a combination of content analysis and online behavior analysis was applied.

Table 4 summarizes the methods and designs used in each study.

Table 4 Summary of research methods and design

Study design	Content elements and study context	Data collection	Sample	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Empirical mediators ([ME]) and moderators ([MO])
Article 1: Story versus info: Tracking blog readers' online viewing time of sponsored blog posts based on content-specific elements						
Content analysis + Online behavior analysis	Advertising message appeals in sponsored blog posts	Blog site user data	94 sponsored blog posts	Message appeal (storytelling vs. informational)	Online viewing time	N/A
Article 2: Influencer marketing: The impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness						
1 between-subjects controlled experiment	Sponsorship disclosures in YouTube product review-video	Online consumer panel	493 respondents	Sponsorship disclosure (SMI sponsorship compensation justification vs. Brand sponsorship compensation justification vs. Simple sponsorship disclosure vs. No disclosure)	Persuasion knowledge activation Sponsorship compensation attitude Source credibility Message credibility Brand attitude	N/A
Article 3: "This is not sponsored content" – The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts						
2 between-subjects controlled experiments	Experiment 1: Sponsorship disclosures in YouTube product-review video Experiment 2: Sponsorship disclosures + External hyperlinks in Instagram product recommendation posts	Experiment 1: Online consumer panel Experiment 2: Snowball sampling through Facebook	599 respondents	Sponsorship disclosure (Impartial disclosure vs. Explicit disclosure vs. No disclosure) External hyperlink landing page content (Product page vs. Start page)	Persuasion knowledge activation Message credibility Source credibility Brand attitude Purchase intention	Degree of landing page selling intent [MO]
Article 4: Starting a blog shop or relying on affiliate links? – Investigating direct and indirect selling in blogs on consumer responses						
1 between-subjects controlled experiment	External hyperlinks in blog product recommendation post	Online consumer panel	478 respondents	Store type of external landing page content (blog shop vs. retail e-store)	Online store trust Store purchase intention	Perceived store reputation [ME] Susceptibility to SMI influence [MO]

In the following sections, the choice of research methods and research design are explained and discussed. Detailed descriptions of the methods of each study are reported in the article manuscripts in Appendix 1.

3.1 Choice of research methods

The majority of the empirical studies conducted and reported in this dissertation adopted between-subjects controlled experiments. However, one of the studies adopted a combined-method of content analysis and online behavior analysis. The increasing availability of online behavioral data has impacted advertising research to incorporate to a greater extent "big data" in research on advertising effectiveness (Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 2017). While an experimental research design focuses on causation and explanation of phenomena, the use of online behavioral data seeks to make predictions regarding the researched phenomena. Hence, these are very distinct methods, and each comes with its strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of controlled experiments can be translated into weaknesses of using online behavioral data, such as bias in collection and interpretation (Bottles, Begoli, & Worley, 2014); validity, transparency, replicability and interpretation of online data (Lazer et al., 20014; Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Bollier & Firestone, 2010); and lack of theoretical considerations (Bottles et al., 2014). In contrast, the strengths of using online behavioral data can be translated into weaknesses of using controlled experiments, such as whether the tasks, stimuli, and settings employed in experiments are realistic (Lynch, 1983); participants' forced exposure to experimental stimuli (e.g., advertisements) (Vargas, Duff, & Faber, 2017); and the use of homogeneous sampling (e.g., student samples) (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

These research methods are considered appropriate due to the nature of the research questions and hypotheses set in this dissertation, the chosen research philosophy, and the stream of research to which this dissertation intends to contribute. Because of their respective weaknesses, a combination of both research methods is highly appropriate and strengthens the dissertation as a whole. Besides, any weaknesses identified in the applied methods of this dissertation can be overcome by assuring that the studies are guided by theory and logic, by striving to control for confounding effects, and by maintaining high ethical standards. The procedures and actions taken to increase the validity and reliability of the studies are discussed more thoroughly in the following sections.

3.1.1 Controlled experiments

Experimental design involves manipulating the independent variable to observe the effect on the dependent variable(s). This makes it possible to determine a cause and effect relationship. A controlled setting was applied in the experiments of this dissertation. This allows for a more precise manipulation of the stimuli, and a more exact measurement and examination of the experimental effects, as well as a more effective reduction of any potential confounds that might affect the results (Aronson et al., 1985). Controlled experiments are usually high in internal validity (Lynn & Lynn, 2003).

An experiment is carried out through three main steps. In the first step, the researcher manipulates the independent variable to create a systematic variation in it in terms of different treatments or stimuli (Perdue & Summers, 1986). In most of the experiments carried out in this dissertation, sponsorship disclosure information was one independent variable that was manipulated; hence a variation in this variable was achieved by designing disclosures that communicated different information to participants to assess how the variation in information affected their responses to a product recommendation.

In the second step, participants are randomly assigned to different versions of the treatments (Aronson et al., 1985). In this way, participants are assigned by chance, rather than by choice to either of the experimental conditions. Randomization is designed to reduce any bias that may affect the outcome of the experiment (e.g., an overrepresentation of male participants in one group) (Aronson et al., 1985). In addition, the inclusion of a control group in the experiment that receives no treatment is encouraged as it can significantly increase the internal validity of the experiment (Kirk, 1982). Moreover, the presence of a control group isolates the independent variable's effects on the experiment and can help rule out alternative explanations of the results (Kirk, 1982). In the experiments of this dissertation, randomization was achieved by an automatic function in the online software used to collect the data. In all of the experiments, except in article 4, a control group was included. The absence of a control group in article 4 was deemed suitable, as the study aimed to compare two alternative versions of a web shop display on consumers' responses.

In the final step, the researcher measures the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable(s) (by levels of the dependent variable), and results between the groups in the experiment are compared to assess causality (Perdue & Simmons, 1986). A causal effect is said to occur if variation in the independent variable is followed by a variation in the dependent variable when all other things are equal (Söderlund, 2010).

Validity is an important concept to describe factors that can impact the quality of the research. An extension can be made between internal validity, external validity and construct validity (Aronson et al., 1985). Internal validity refers to whether the effects observed in the study are due to the manipulation of the independent variable and not some other factor (Aronson et al., 1985; Söderlund, 2010). In other words, there exists a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Internal validity can be improved by controlling extraneous variables, using standardized instructions, random assignment of participants into groups, and by eliminating investigator effects (Perdue & Summers, 1985; Söderlund, 2010). External validity refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized to other settings (ecological validity), other people (population validity) and over time (historical validity) (Aronson et al., 1985), while construct validity refers to the extent to which a study captures a specific theoretical construct or trait

(Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). The validity assessments that were considered when conducting the experiments of this dissertation will be further discussed in the following sections.

Stimuli development

The stimuli used in the four experimental studies were following the purpose of the dissertation: to examine consumers' responses to content elements of influencer marketing in terms of sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks in product recommendations by influencers. The stimuli consisted of 1) sponsorship disclosure information in YouTube product recommendation videos (Articles 2 and 3) and Instagram posts (Article 3); 2) external hyperlinks in Instagram posts (Article 3) and a blog product recommendation post (Article 4), and 3) landing page content from external hyperlinks (web shop displays) (Articles 3 and 4).

The intention was to use as realistic stimuli as possible in order to increase the ecological validity of the studies. Therefore, a mix of real influencer posts by current influencers and designed posts from fictitious influencers were used. However, sponsorship disclosure information and external hyperlinks were included in the original versions to fulfill the purpose of the study and to ensure the right manipulation of the experimental conditions. In order to design realistic sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks following the social media platforms where they were placed, the researcher consulted the guidelines and policy of these social media platforms prior to designing the stimuli. Similarly, to design realistic web shop platforms, real web shop displays were used and edited by replacing any original brand- or product-related content with the content needed to achieve the purpose of the studies. Importantly, to increase manipulation control, only the elements related to the manipulation were changed in the stimuli, and everything else was kept constant across the manipulated conditions.

The stimuli contain a mix of real brands and fictitious brands depending on the study situation. However, as the intention of the studies was not to compare different brands or product categories, the choice of brands and products applied in the different studies was merely a decision based on the appropriateness of using them in the specific study. The choice of brands and product categories are discussed more thoroughly in the original articles (see Appendix 6).

Other experienced researchers and practitioners in the field reviewed the manipulations of the stimuli, and manipulation checks were performed in the main experiments, to ensure that the stimuli portrayed what was intended (Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 2017).

Sampling and data collection

Data were collected in two ways: through an online consumer panel consisting of registered participants and by recruiting participants through Facebook from a pool mostly consisting

of university students (two master students provided an appeal to this group to participate in the study, hence the researchers had no attachment to these participants). The sampling and data collection procedures are elaborated below.

The online consumer panel Mechanical Turk (MTurk), operated by Amazon, was used in article 2, in the first experiment of article 3, and article 4. In these experiments, participants were randomly assigned to view a stimulus online, after which responses were collected with an online questionnaire. Compared to face-to-face settings, online experiments have the advantage of being fast and cheap and involving a more representative sample (Vargas et al., 2017). Moreover, online studies enable respondents to work at their own pace, and thereby avoid the presence of an interviewer (and a corresponding interviewer bias) (e.g., Catania et al., 1996; Davis et al., 2010). However, while results obtained with an MTurk sample appear to correspond well with other online and offline samples (Shank, 2016), so-called "super-Turkers" (respondents with excessive experience from completing MTurk studies) and "spammers" (i.e., respondents only interested in maximizing their pay rate) are a critical concern when collecting data through MTurk (Deetlefs, Chylinski, & Ortmann, 2015). Researchers have proposed some control procedures and measurements that should be conducted to ensure data quality from MTurk (Deetlefs et al., 2015; Peer, Vosgerau, & Acquisti, 2014). These suggestions were followed in all of the studies. First of all, only MTurk workers with high reputation (above 95 % approval ratings) were allowed to participate in the studies. Second, standard-deviation tests were run on each participant's answers to detect any straight lining. Third, hidden timers were inserted in the online surveys that measured the time duration participants looked at pages containing manipulation stimuli. Moreover, at the end of the survey participants were asked questions related to their attention to the manipulation documents. The answers of those who did not comply with the standards of these measures and procedures were discarded from the sample.

In experiment 2 in article 3, participants were recruited through Facebook and randomly assigned to view a stimulus online, after which responses were collected with an online questionnaire. Similar control procedures and measurements discussed above were conducted to ensure data quality. As the sample in this study mostly contained students, it can be characterized as a convenience sample. However, student samples are frequently utilized in controlled experiments and have become an accepted standard in marketing studies (Söderlund, 2010). Nevertheless, many researchers criticize and discourage the use of student samples. Critics claim that students do not represent the broader population they belong to in terms of demographic, socioeconomic, or personality traits, and are thereby considered to make decisions that cannot be comparable to "real consumers" (Croson, 2002; Södelund, 2010; Wells, 1993). However, especially in psychological or behavioral experiments that focus on differences between groups and assume that people will react in a certain way regardless of their traits, student samples are not considered a problem

(Söderlund, 2010). Furthermore, experiments aim to test theory, not to create an exact picture of reality (Aronson et al., 1985), and theory is by nature comprehensive, which suggests that it should be applicable for all kinds of individuals, students included (Söderlund, 2010). Hence, students were considered appropriate to use in the experiment for the above reasons.

Measurements and questionnaire construction

Consumer responses in the four controlled experiments were collected through questionnaires that measured the effects of the content elements under study on the dependent, mediating, moderating and control variables. In other words, the participants completed questionnaires by evaluating a set of items after being exposed to a stimulus. The majority of the measures were based on established measures used in previous studies. Most measures consisted of multi-item seven-point Likert scales, which is consistent with a general recommendation in the literature to use between five and nine scale points (Cox, 1980; Schwarz et al., 1991). However, when measuring a singular concrete object, single-item scales was deemed more appropriate to use (Rossiter, 2011). The reliability of the measures was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha, which estimates the internal consistency between items in a construct (Hair et al., 1998). All final constructs showed a good or excellent level of internal consistency; individual results of the scale-reliability measurements are reported in the articles.

The dependent variables, mediating and moderating variables, as well as the control variables were measured in reversed causal order, to steer participants' attention away from the assumed logic. To avoid any bias a manipulation check can cause, these were inserted at the end of the questionnaire (Geuens & De Pelsmacker, 2017). The questionnaire results were analyzed using appropriate quantitative methods, such as t-tests and analysis of variance.

3.1.2 Content analysis

In article 1 of this dissertation, content analysis was used as an observational research method in combination with online behavior analysis. The purpose of the content analysis was to categorize the sample sponsored blog posts by the advertising message appeal that they conveyed as an initial step to make predictions regarding the effects of different message appeals on consumers' online viewing time of the sponsored blog posts. Content analysis is a research method for systematically comparing the content of communications (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). It has been widely used in research exploring communication content such as advertisements, media stories, and websites (Kassarjian, 1977; Roznowski, 2003; Jose & Lee, 2007).

As with any research method, content analysis has its strengths and weaknesses. The method allows for an unobtrusive evaluation of communications, which can be especially beneficial in situations in which direct methods of inquiry might render biased responses (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). It can also serve as an empirical starting point especially when new

research evidence is generated about the nature and effect of specific communications (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Also, content analysis is beneficial as a companion research method in multi-method studies to enhance the validity of results by reducing method biases (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). For these reasons, content analysis was deemed suitable as a research method in article 1. The content investigated in the study consist of different advertising message appeals in sponsored blog posts. However, the types of message appeals under study have not previously been investigated in this advertising context. Hence it was appropriate to conduct a content analysis in order to generate evidence about the characteristics of the message appeals in this specific communication context. Content analysis was also deemed appropriate to apply in the study as it allows the maintenance of a non-intrusive research approach when assessing consumers' attention to the different message appeals in a natural setting.

While the potential benefits of applying content analysis in consumer research are many, some consideration regarding its weaknesses should also be given. This method is quite sensitive to the effects of researcher biases, which, consequently, may affect decisions taken during the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Kassarjian, 1977). Also, the exploratory nature of this research approach makes it challenging to consider theoretical perspectives, and as a consequence, only specific elements or characteristics of content can be reported (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Lastly, content analyses often generate categorical data, which, although rich in descriptive and identification quality, may be less sensitive to nuances in communications than data obtained from higher-order scales (Kassarjian, 1977).

Content analysis can thus provide many benefits to advertising research, but it requires that some methodological standards be undertaken. These include considerations regarding the objectivity, the systematization, the interjudge reliability, and the sampling during the procedure. In order to maintain objectivity, the content analysis procedure requires that the categories of analysis are precisely defined so that other analysts can apply them to the same types of content and generate the same results (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Formulating and applying a set of rules and procedures to the content under analysis is therefore encouraged. To ensure objectivity, a coding scheme of operational definitions and message constructs based on previous literature was created prior to the content analysis conducted in article 1. A credit-system was also developed to score the different posts by the degree to which they contained specific elements that were crucial for the specific categorization.

The second requirement, systematization, demands that the inclusion and exclusion of communications content are done consistently with a set of rules to avoid that only content which fit the researcher's study purpose is selected (Holsti, 1969). The sample sponsored blog posts applied in the study were not selected based on the message appeals that they already conveyed; instead all sponsored blog posts published by a blogger during over two years were selected and analyzed to ensure systematization. Those that did not meet the

requirements of the content analysis were then excluded from the sample, and the number of excluded samples was reported in the study.

The third requirement, interjudge reliability is the degree of consistency between independent coders applying the same coding scheme to analyze the content under study (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). This also implies, that in order to minimize the researcher's subjectivity, a content analysis should be conducted by at least one independent coder in addition to the researcher. To fulfill this requirement, an independent coder who had no previous knowledge of the research agenda also coded the sample sponsored blog posts in the content analysis of this dissertation. The independent coder was given the coding scheme and explanation of the codes. Inter-coder reliability, as calculated using Perreault and Leigh's (1989) formula, was approximately 0.9, falling within the accepted range of 0.8-1.0.

Finally, regarding the sampling in content analysis, it is proposed that the sample should be of manageable size, randomly drawn, and it should be representative of the defined universe to increase generalizability (Kassarjin, 1977). The sample used in the content analysis in the dissertation consists of 120 sponsored blog posts and should be considered a convenience sample. However, since the content analysis conducted in the study served as an initial step towards measuring consumers' online viewing time of the different sponsored blog posts rather than examining content elements of sponsored blog posts in general, this sample was deemed suitable to fulfill the purpose of the study.

3.1.3 Online behavior analysis

Following the content analysis in article 1, each sponsored blog post in the sample of the study was linked with real-time online behavioral data on consumers' viewing time of the sponsored blog posts, which were utilized with a web analytics tool. Web Analytics (WA) can be defined as "the measurement, collection, analysis, and reporting of Internet data for understanding and optimizing web usage (Web Analytics Association, 2016, p. 3). The use of WA in digital marketing practice has been described as an essential change towards measurable marketing (Järvinen & Karjaluoto, 2015). It can be a useful tool to predict, among other things, online users' real-time engagement with web content (Phippen, Sheppard, & Furnell, 2004). In marketing research, the use of WA enables the investigation of consumer behavior in digital channels, and the evaluation of consumer responses to marketing stimuli in a natural setting (Järvinen, 2016). It thereby provides a research method that is unobtrusive, and do not involve direct elicitation of data from the research subjects. However, unobtrusive measures should not be perceived as a replacement of more reactive methods such as interviews and experiments, but rather as a complement and addition to the researcher's tool kit of data collection methods. Thus, this method was deemed appropriate to use in combination with the content analysis in article 1 in order to evaluate consumers'

real-time attention to different advertising message appeals employed in sponsored blog posts.

The use of WA in research is considered a very technical approach, which involves software that collects information of a web site visit; tracks visitors' navigation paths and actions based on tags and cookies, and generate raw data to be analyzed (Nakatani & Chuang, 2011; Wilson, 2010). Similar weaknesses from using web log data in research can be distinguished when using WA to collect behavioral data; the data only report the actions taken by the user (e.g., click behavior, viewing time etc.), not users' perceptions, feelings or attitudes in relation to these actions (Kurth, 1993; Phippen et al., 2004). Another limitation of using WA in consumer behavior research is that these tools typically produce data on an aggregate-level about website visitors' behavior; hence they are limited in terms of identifying visitors and following their individual behavior over time (Phippen et al., 2004). Non-human "visitors" can also inflate the data (Järvinen, 2016). The solution to some of these issues is to adopt an extended period of analysis in order to determine website traffic patterns that are stable over time and not based on coincidental or confounding factors (Kent et al., 2011). The sponsored blog posts used as a sample in the online behavioral analysis in article 1 of this dissertation, were extracted from a period of 2 years. The blog platform, from which the data was extracted, employs a crawling feature that detects and reduces the possibility of non-human visitors or "bots" inflating the data.

The procedure of the study was as follows. The blog under investigation is part of an online platform that hosts several blogs and continuously registers online data on visitors' activity by using web analytics software. The researcher was granted access to extract the data needed for this study. The blogging platform uses tracking cookies to collect data on visitors' activity on an aggregate level. A tracking cookie is a text file that a web browser stores on a user's machine to track a user's activity online (Järvinen, 2016; Phippen et al., 2004). The metric "average viewing time per landing page" was used to predict readers' attention duration for each sponsored blog post in the sample. Average viewing time per landing page is the amount of time in minutes a visitor has spent on a specific page during a visit (Phippen et al., 2004), with the specific page being the sponsored blog post under study. The procedure is discussed more thoroughly in article 1 (see Appendix 6).

4 Summary and contributions of the original articles

The empirical section of this thesis consists of four articles featuring five studies. The articles are published, or intended for publication, in academic marketing and communication journals. The four articles investigate different content elements of influencer marketing on consumer responses. This chapter briefly introduces the articles that can be found in their entirety in Appendix 6.

4.1 Article 1: Story versus info: Tracking blog readers' online viewing time of sponsored blog posts based on content-specific elements

(Single authored. Published in Computers in Human Behavior, 2018)

The purpose of the study was to investigate how consumers' real-time attention, measured as online viewing time, was affected by different advertising message appeals used in sponsored blog posts. The advertising message appeals used in the study were a storytelling and an informational message appeal. An advertising message appeal can be described as the hook that companies use in ads to persuade consumers. Previous research has noted that sponsored blog posts are often structured as a narrative or a story (Hsiao et al., 2013; Papacharissi, 2007; Pulizzi, 2012). However, the content analysis conducted in this study revealed that this is not always the case. While the dominating message appeal used in the sample sponsored blog posts indeed comprised of a storytelling message format, a vast amount of the sponsored blog posts also comprised of what Aaker and Norris (1982), as well as Cutler and colleagues (2000), describe as informational advertising messages. Thereby setting the agenda for this study: to compare how these distinct and contrasting message appeals affect consumers' real-time responses towards sponsored blog posts. Real-time evidence that considers which type of advertising content is successful in capturing audience attention is important in a digital society where consumers are faced with ad clutter and media proliferation (Teixeira & Stipp, 2013), which also applies in the context of influencer marketing. Thus, the article explicitly deals with the following research question:

RQ1: How do different advertising message appeals in sponsored influencer posts impact consumers' responses?

In the study, a methodological consideration to keep a strict, non-intrusive research approach when collecting the data was applied. The purpose of the theoretical framework was thereby twofold. The first purpose was to incorporate previous research on how storytelling and informational message appeals in advertisements are distinguished in terms of how the message is structured, how the message is communicated, and how the brand is represented in the message. From this process, a model was developed that applied the above construct dimensions into the context of sponsored blog posts. The second purpose

was to set a hypothesis pertaining to the purpose of the study based on existing literature. Previous research on consumers' processing of storytelling and informational advertisements in terms of their involvement and cognitive capacity to process the message was applied. Additionally, previous research on para-social interaction and advertising contextual congruity was applied. By implementing the previous research findings into the context of the study, it was stated that storytelling sponsored blog posts were more likely than informational sponsored blog posts to: 1) capture readers' attention and stimulate involvement through narrative transportation, 2) require higher cognitive capacity to process the advertising message, 3) engage readers through several senses (emotionally and cognitively), 4) convey positive effects of para-social interaction with the blogger, and 5) convey positive effects of medium context and advertising content congruity. All reasons were likely to increase readers' attention duration towards the sponsored posts. Therefore the following hypothesis was stated:

H1. Blog readers' online attention duration (viewing time) of sponsored blog posts will be longer for posts that are high in storytelling message appeals compared to posts that are high in informational message appeals.

This study applied a combined method of content analysis and online user behavior analysis to test the hypothesis. The unit of analysis comprised of 120 sponsored blog posts from a western European lifestyle blog. The blog had about 15 000 unique weekly readers, with the majority being female (88,60%) in the age range of 25-44. The blog posts were extracted during a period of 2 years. First, a content analysis was conducted in order to categorize the posts as either storytelling or informational sponsored posts. Sponsored posts that could clearly be distinguished as having a storytelling or an informational message format were used in the data analysis, leaving a sample of 94 sponsored blog posts (*Storytelling* = 55 posts, *Informational* = 39 posts). Examples of a storytelling and an informational sponsored blog post that were used in the sample can be found in Appendix 2. Second, web analytics data were extracted for each post in the category. The blog was part of an online platform that hosted several blogs and continuously registered online data on visitors' activity by using web analytics software. The researcher was granted access to extract and register the data needed for the study. The metric "average viewing time per landing page" was used to predict readers' attention duration for each sponsored blog post in the sample. Average viewing time per landing page is the amount of time in minutes a visitor has spent on a specific page during a visit (Phippen et al., 2004), with the specific page being the sponsored blog post under study. The recording time for each sample was one week from the publishing date. To control for the number of words in each blog post, a function was used to enable comparison of uneven post lengths. An independent samples t-test was then performed to compare the viewing time (seconds/100 words) of storytelling sponsored blog

posts and informational sponsored blog posts. The results showed significantly longer viewing time for storytelling sponsored blog posts compared to informational sponsored blog posts. The average difference was approximately 10 seconds, and the effect was consistent across product and service categories. Hence, the hypothesis was confirmed.

The study contributes to research on advertising and sponsored content effectiveness in three ways. First, it presents a conceptual framework for how storytelling and informational message appeals can be characterized and distinguished in sponsored blog content. Second, the results provide insights regarding the effectiveness of capturing consumers' online attention with different advertising appeals in sponsored blog content. Third, the study introduces a non-intrusive research approach to measure audiences' real-time attention to online sponsored content, and by doing so answers the call for more research on consumer attention in a non- laboratory setting (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014).

4.2 Article 2: Influencer marketing: the impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness

(Co-authored, first author. Published in Journal of Communication Management, 2019)

The purpose of the study was to investigate a particular form of sponsorship disclaimer applied by influencers in social media, namely a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure. While a simple sponsorship disclosure merely informs viewers that the content is sponsored, a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure includes additional information regarding why influencers and brands engage in sponsorship collaborations by providing a normative reason that justifies the existence and dissemination of sponsored content. Commentary sections on SMIs' channels often reveal frustration and anger from skeptical followers towards sponsored brand content (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Moreover, despite the best efforts of SMIs to clarify sponsored content with disclosures, past research has noted the negative effects of simply disclosing sponsorship (Campbell et al., 2013; van Reijmersdal et al., 2015; Hwang and Jeong, 2016). Social media influencers have thereby started to justify their right to receive sponsorship compensation for distributing content in social media that consumers can enjoy for free. Sponsorship disclosures come in various forms, and the content elements of disclosures are found to affect consumers' responses to the message and the source of sponsored content (Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Evans et al., 2017). Investigating the effects of different sponsorship disclosure types on consumer reactions is therefore important for both marketers and policymakers to develop standards that simultaneously protect consumers and improves the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Thus, the article explicitly deals with the following research question:

RQ2: How does the content and level of transparency in sponsorship disclosures impact consumers' responses to influencer posts?

The study incorporated persuasion knowledge theory to conceptualize the effects of a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure compared to a simple ("this content is sponsored") sponsorship disclosure and when no disclosure is present, on consumers' responses to a product-review video by a YouTube influencer. Furthermore, the study investigated the effects of source type of sponsorship compensation justification disclosures on consumers' responses. Source type refers to the influencer or the brand sponsor disseminating a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure.

A number of hypothesis pertaining to the purpose of the study were set based on existing literature. The hypotheses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Article 2 hypotheses

Hypotheses	Empirical results
H1: A sponsorship compensation justification disclosure will generate more positive attitude towards influencers receiving compensation for sponsored content than a simple sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is present.	Supported
H2: A sponsorship compensation justification disclosure will lead to higher source and message credibility compared to a simple sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is present.	Supported
H3: A sponsorship compensation justification disclosure will generate higher brand attitude compared to a simple sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is present.	Not supported
H4: A brand compensation justification disclosure will generate more positive consumer responses than an SMI compensation justification disclosure.	Partly supported

The hypotheses were tested in a one-factor (disclosure type) between-subjects experiment. The experiment (N = 493, 50.3% male, M_{age}= 37.04, SD_{age}= 12) compared consumer responses to an influencer (SMI) sponsorship compensation justification disclosure, a brand sponsorship compensation justification disclosure, a simple sponsorship disclosure, and a no disclosure control condition (4 conditions in total). The different disclosure texts used in the study are presented in Appendix 3. Participants were exposed to the disclosure information (excluding the control condition that had a neutral instruction text) before watching a YouTube video in which an influencer demonstrated the features and benefits of a Patagonia (brand) backpack.

The results showed that consumers' persuasion knowledge (i.e., advertising recognition) was significantly more activated when being exposed to a sponsorship compensation justification or a simple sponsorship disclosure compared to the no disclosure control condition. However, consumers' attitude towards influencers receiving compensation for sponsored content was significantly more positive after being exposed to a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure compared to a simple sponsorship disclosure and no disclosure. Consequently, source credibility and message credibility were significantly higher in the conditions containing a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure compared to the simple sponsorship disclosure condition. However, brand attitude was only significantly higher in the condition containing a brand sponsorship compensation justification disclosure compared to the no disclosure control condition. Regarding the effects of source type, we found the brand sponsorship compensation justification disclosure condition to induce significantly higher source (influencer) credibility compared to the influencer sponsorship compensation justification disclosure condition. No other significant effects were found between these two conditions.

The study contributes to the emerging research stream on the effects of different types of sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing on consumer responses (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Evans et al., 2017; Hwang & Jeong, 2016), by introducing and investigating a new type of sponsorship disclosure, namely a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure. The theoretical contributions are twofold. First, regarding the effects of sponsorship disclosure, the findings showed that emphasizing sponsorship compensation justification could induce greater source credibility and advertising credibility, as well as a more positive attitude among subjects towards SMIs receiving monetary compensation for sponsored content, compared to merely disclosing sponsorship. The findings thereby support previous studies on sponsored recommendations showing that pinpointing the truth in advertising efforts would increase source credibility (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Lu et al., 2014). Thus, potential adverse effects on source credibility that a simple sponsorship disclosure mentioning monetary-compensation might have (cf. e.g., Petty & Andrews, 2008), can be reduced by the inclusion of a compensation justification disclosure that provides additional information regarding why monetary compensation is distributed between influencers and brands from sponsored content.

Second, in comparing the effects of different source type of sponsorship disclosure on sponsored content effectiveness, the results make an essential contribution to the brand endorsement literature. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to provide evidence of reversed endorsement effects of brand collaborations with a third-party source. When the brand sponsor disseminated compensation justification, source (influencer) credibility was significantly higher in comparison to when the SMI declared compensation justification. In line with previous research that stated when a brand chose to collaborate with a certain blogger, this could be evaluated among followers as an indicator of the blogger being powerful and sought after (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). This current study revealed that a brand compensation justification could prime such cognitions. Even though participants were not actual followers of the influencer, the realization that he was collaborating with a brand such as Patagonia, might transfer meaning that is more positive to their evaluations of the influencers' credibility.

4.3 Article 3: "This is not sponsored content" – The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts

(Co-authored, first author. Published in Computers in Human Behavior, 2019)

The purpose of the study was twofold. First, the study investigated and compared consumers' degree of persuasion knowledge activation from impartiality and partiality sponsorship disclosures in influencer posts, and consequently, consumers' cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral responses to the influencer posts were measured. Social media influencers are daily conveying their opinion regarding products and brands through social

media postings. Many of these posts are sponsored by a brand (partial), while others are in the form of genuine advice (impartial). Influencers might choose to add a disclosure ("This post is not sponsored by any brand or company") in non-sponsored product posts that highlight their impartiality to mitigate any suspicion of sponsorship among followers. Carr and Hayes (2014) have provided some valuable first insights into the effects of impartiality disclosures on the source credibility of the influencer. However, more research is needed to unveil the mechanisms behind SMI impartial and partial brand communication in social media. The study, thereby, extended Carr and Hayes'es (2014) research by, a) investigating effects beyond the credibility dimensions of impartiality disclosures in also looking at the corresponding effects on other variables such as consumers' brand attitude and purchase intention, which is often a more stated goal of those who pursue social media marketing, and by, b) studying the effects in different social media settings, namely on YouTube and Instagram as opposed to in the context of blogs, the medium employed by Carr and Hayes (2014). Previous research has shown differences in how users produce and interact with content depending on the social media platform (Smith et al., 2012). Suggesting that they are also likely to react differently to sponsorship disclosures in different social media settings. Furthermore, while previous research on sponsorship disclosures have focused on the positioning of, and wording of the sponsorship disclosure (Evans et al., 2017; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016), and the disclosing of sponsorship type (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Hwang & Yeong, 2014; Lu et al., 2014), the study extends previous research by not only focusing on the isolated effects of sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses, but also focusing on other content elements that may interact with sponsorship disclosures to form consumer opinions. This leads us to the second purpose of the study, to investigate how sponsorship disclosures and landing page type (product page vs. start page of e-commerce sites) from external hyperlinks interact to invoke consumer responses. The underlying proposition is that the effects of impartiality disclosures (vs. explicit sponsorship disclosures) are contingent upon which type of e-commerce landing page consumers are directed to from hyperlinks in SMI posts, either conveying high or low selling intent and thereby validating or contradicting consumers' belief in the SMI's impartiality. Thus, the article explicitly deals with the following research questions:

RQ2: How does the content and level of transparency in sponsorship disclosures impact consumers' responses to influencer posts?

RQ3: How do sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks in influencer posts interact to invoke consumer responses?

The study incorporated persuasion knowledge theory to conceptualize the effects of an impartiality disclosure compared to a simple ("this content is sponsored by a brand")

sponsorship disclosure and when no disclosure is present, on consumers' responses to product recommendations by influencers. Previous literature on persuasion and selling tactics in interpersonal selling contexts were applied to predict the moderating effects of landing page type from external hyperlinks on consumers' responses to sponsorship disclosures in terms of their brand attitude and purchase intentions.

A number of hypothesis pertaining to the purpose of the study were set based on existing literature. The hypotheses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Article 3 hypotheses

Hypotheses	Empirical results
H1a: Persuasion knowledge activation will be lower after an impartiality disclosure than after either an explicit sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is made. Consequently,	Supported
H1b: Product-review (message) credibility will be higher after an impartiality disclosure than after either an explicit sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is made.	Supported
H2: Source credibility will be higher after an impartiality disclosure than after either an explicit sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is made.	Supported
H3: Brand attitude and purchase intention will be higher after an impartiality disclosure than after either an explicit sponsorship disclosure or when no disclosure is made.	Partly supported (Experiment 1) Not supported (Experiment 2)
H4: Landing page content from brand hyperlinks will have a greater effect on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intention when they are exposed to an impartiality disclosure as compared to an explicit sponsorship disclosure.	Supported

The hypotheses were tested in two between-subjects experiments. The first experiment (N = 375, 50.7 % male, M_{age} = 37.27, SD_{age} = 11.80) compared consumer responses to a product-review video on YouTube posted by an influencer that contained an impartiality disclosure, or an explicit sponsorship disclosure, or no disclosure about sponsorship. The second experiment (N = 224, 70% women, M_{age} = 34, SD_{age} = 7.81) replicated the disclosure testing in experiment 1 in another social media setting (i.e. Instagram), with another product (experiment 1 = backpack, experiment 2 = watches) to investigate if the findings can be generalized across social media channels and product categories. In addition, experiment 2

examined a potential moderating effect between disclosure types (Impartial vs. explicit sponsorship disclosure) and landing page types (e-commerce product page vs. start page) from brand hyperlinks in the Instagram influencer post on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intentions. The stimuli are presented in Appendix 4.

The findings showed that participants were less likely to perceive the influencer product review as advertising (lower persuasion knowledge activation) when they were exposed to an impartiality disclosure compared to when they were exposed to an explicit sponsorship disclosure or when no information about sponsorship was present. Consequently, participants evaluated the influencer (source) and the product review as more credible than if they were informed that the product review was sponsored, or when they received no information about sponsorship.

The findings also suggest that disclosure information alone has no impact on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intention, which is also in line with related studies showing similar results (Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013; van Reijmersdal et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2008). Thereby, the study makes an important contribution by showing the joint effects of disclosure information and landing page type in generating a change in consumers' brand attitude and purchase intention. These were significantly affected in the impartiality disclosure condition, showing lower brand attitude and purchase intention when participants were directed to the product page compared to the start page of a web shop. Suggesting that a product page that is focused on directly selling the reviewed product in the Instagram post calls into question the SMI's impartiality. No significant effects on brand attitude and purchase intentions were found between the product page and the start page after consumers had been exposed to an explicit sponsorship disclosure.

4.4 Article 4: Starting a blog shop or relying on affiliate links? – Investigating direct and indirect selling in blogs on consumer responses

(Co-authored, first author. Under review at Electronic Commerce Research and Applications)

The purpose of the study was to investigate consumers' responses to different store types from external hyperlinks in blog product recommendations. Bloggers have primarily secured their blog earnings through indirect selling mechanisms by engaging in, for example, brand collaborations (sponsored content) and affiliate marketing activities (third-party links). However, as these types of income streams can be fluid and unstable over time, more and more bloggers choose to start their personal blog shops. Nonetheless, one of the biggest challenges for any online retailer is the establishment of consumer trust to instigate online sales (Eastlick & Lotz, 2011). This study applied an experimental research design to investigate how consumers' store trust and store purchase intention is affected when they are either directed to a blogger's online shop or an external retailer's online store (affiliate

link) after reading a blog post. While researchers have recognized that blogging has become professionalized (Pihl, 2013), and consumer bloggers have managed to become influential actors in established organizational fields, particularly observable in the fashion and beauty industry (Erz & Christensen, 2018; Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips, 2012; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2012), little research is available on retailing and the commercial aspect of blogs. This study intended to contribute to this research gap, and explicitly deals with the following research question of the thesis:

RQ4: How does the store type behind external hyperlinks in influencer posts impact consumers' responses?

Hypotheses pertaining to the purpose of the study were set based on existing literature on online store trust, store reputation, store purchase intention, and consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence. The hypotheses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Article 4 hypotheses

Hypotheses	Empirical results
H1: Store trust is greater for a highly reputed e-store than a less reputed blog shop.	Supported
H2: A retail e-store induces greater store purchase intentions than a blog shop.	Supported
H3: The effects of store type on store trust and store purchase intentions will be moderated by consumers' susceptibility to SMI influence. More specifically, consumers, who are highly susceptible to SMI influence, express greater blog shop store trust as well as intentions to purchase from the blog shop than consumers, who are less susceptible to SMI influence.	Supported

The hypotheses were tested in a between-subjects experiment with a female-only sample to fit the target customer segment of the stimuli material. The experiment (N= 478, M_{age} = 38.82, SD_{age} = 12.76) compared participants' responses to different online store displays (blog shop vs. retailer e-store). We used watches as the product category in the stimuli. The stimuli are presented in Appendix 5.

The findings of this study show that consumers who are directed to an external retailer's e-store after reading a blog product recommendation post, express greater store trust and store purchase intentions than consumers, who are directed to the blogger's online shop. Consumers' perceived store reputation explains this effect. The findings thereby contribute to the stream of research highlighting the importance of perceived reputation as a determinant of store trust (cf. e.g. Casalo et al., 2007; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; McKnight et al.,

2002), and, more specifically, confirm research showing that a well-established retailer is more likely to generate store trust than a new market entrant (Metzger, 2006).

However, this study is also the first to include the importance of consumers' previous SMI following behavior (susceptibility to SMI influence) as an indicator to explain their assessment of SMI activities. The findings show that consumers, who frequently consult and observe influencers in social media to find inspiration and information about brands and products before making a purchase-decision, express greater blog shop store trust and intentions to purchase from the blog shop than consumers, who rarely engage in such activities. The "mere exposure"-principle might explain this effect, which states that individuals' repeat exposure to a certain stimulus enhances their attitude towards it since the stimulus becomes more accessible to the individual's perception (Zajonc, 1968). Thus, consumers' frequent observations of various influencers in social media make them more prone to accept and understand the blog shop concept, and, as a consequence, they respond more favorably towards it. This study also contributes by shedding light on two emerging online retail trends that have rarely been investigated, namely affiliate marketing through blogs, and the phenomenon of blog shops.

5 Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to summarize the findings, contributions, and implications of this dissertation as well as to discuss its limitations and provide suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary and consolidation of the findings

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine consumer responses to different content elements of influencer marketing in terms of advertising message appeals, sponsorship disclosures, and external hyperlinks. To fulfill this purpose, four research questions were set. These questions were addressed in four articles comprising of five empirical studies. The main findings with regards to the research questions are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8 Summary of the main findings

Consumer responses	Content elements		
	Advertising message appeals (RQ 1)	Sponsorship disclosures (RQ 2)	External hyperlinks (RQ 3,4)
Persuasion knowledge activation		**Higher degree of persuasion knowledge activation** from more explicit sponsorship disclosures.	
Cognitive responses		**Higher source and message credibility** from sponsorship disclosures that provide additional information about the sponsorship (compensation justification), or clearly state in the form of impartial disclosures that no sponsorship exists (compared to simple disclosures and no disclosures). **Higher source (influencer) credibility** when a brand disseminates sponsorship disclosure compared to when the influencer disseminates sponsorship disclosure.	**Higher store trust** towards a retail store type compared to a blog shop store type. The effect is mediated by store reputation.
Attitudinal & Behavioral responses		No effects of sponsorship disclosures alone on brand attitude and purchase intentions.	**Higher store purchase intentions** towards a retail store type compared to a blog shop store type. **Higher brand attitude and purchase intention** from a web shop start page compared to a web shop product page when being simultaneously exposed to an impartial sponsorship disclosure.
Susceptibility to SMI influence			**Higher level of susceptibility to SMI influence leads to increased store trust and store purchase intentions** towards a blog shop store type.
Real-time responses	**An increased online viewing time (real-time attention)** for storytelling message appeals compared to informational message appeals in sponsored blog posts. The effect is significant across product and service categories.		

Next, the main findings are discussed in more detail in relation to the four research questions.

5.1.1 The impact of advertising message appeals in influencer sponsored posts

The first research question, "How do different advertising message appeals in sponsored influencer posts impact consumers' responses?" was examined in article 1. The findings showed that sponsored blog posts with a storytelling message appeal generated longer online viewing time from blog readers than sponsored blog posts with an informational message appeal. This finding is in line with previous studies showing increased effectiveness of using storytelling message appeals compared to a list of facts or features (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Lundqvist et al., 2013; Polyorat et al., 2007). While previous studies have frequently compared the effectiveness of these message appeals in different advertising contexts, the findings of this study are novel since they are obtained in a natural setting, capturing consumers' real-time viewing duration of storytelling and informational message appeals in sponsored blog posts. In contradiction to extant literature (e.g., Golden & Johnson, 1983; Holbrook & Shaughnessy, 1984; Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Shavitt, 1990, Shavitt, Lowrey, & Han, 1992), the study showed that the effectiveness of using one message appeal over another message appeal in capturing consumers' attention duration is not dependent on product or service type. The longer viewing time of storytelling message appeals over informational message appeals in sponsored blog posts held consistent across seven different product and service types consisting of both hedonic and utilitarian products and services.

Since the study did not measure consumers' cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal responses towards the sponsored blog posts, the reason for the longer attention duration can only be anticipated based on the content analysis and previous literature. One reason might be that the storytelling sponsored blog posts, due to their personal format, capture blog readers' longer attention through emotional involvement, which is less likely to occur with informational ads (Mossberg & Nissen-Johansen, 2006). Another explanation could be that storytelling ads have the ability to involve the audience through narrative transportation (Escalas, 2004), i.e., the viewer becomes intrigued by the events that are described in the story, and wants to know how the story ends, and therefore dedicates more attention to storytelling ads than to informational ads in the same advertising context. Furthermore, a storytelling sponsored blog post is more congruent than an informational sponsored blog post with the original blog content, and might, therefore, be less disruptive for blog readers.

5.1.2 The impact of content and level of transparency in sponsorship disclosures

The second research question, "How does the content and level of transparency in sponsorship disclosures impact consumers' responses to influencer posts?" was examined in article 2 and article 3. In article 2, with regards to the level of transparency in sponsorship disclosures, the findings showed that a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure

that provides an additional explanation (compared to a simple sponsorship disclosure that only mentions that the content is sponsored) regarding why influencers and brands engage in sponsorship collaborations, generated an equal degree of persuasion knowledge activation as a simple sponsorship disclosure, and a higher degree than when no information about sponsorship was provided. However, a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure generated more positive attitudes among consumers towards influencers receiving compensation for sponsored content than a simple sponsorship disclosure, which resulted in increased source and message credibility from the former type of disclosure compared to the latter. This suggests that the adverse effects that sponsorship disclosures might have on consumers' responses through the activation of their persuasion knowledge are mitigated when the disclosure contains additional information regarding why monetary compensation is distributed between influencers and brands from sponsored content. While this study is novel in investigating this particular type of disclosure, the findings are in line with previous studies showing that more detailed information in sponsorship disclosures increases consumers' perception about source credibility (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Lu et al., 2014).

With regards to the content of sponsorship disclosures, the findings of article 2 make an essential contribution to the brand endorsement literature. This study is novel in providing evidence of reversed endorsement effects of brand collaborations with a third-party source. Previous studies on celebrity endorsement have mainly focused on the source effects of the celebrity on consumers' brand evaluations (e.g., Eisend & Langner, 2010; Lafferty & Goldsmith, & Newell, 2000; Ohanian, 1991; Rossiter & Smidts, 2012; Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011), however the study in article 2 shows evidence that the reverse is also possible. When the brand disseminated the sponsorship compensation justification disclosure, the credibility of the influencer (source) was significantly increased compared to when the influencer communicated the disclosure information. In line with previous research that stated when a brand chose to collaborate with a certain blogger, this could be evaluated among followers as an indicator of the blogger being powerful and sought after (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). This current study revealed that a brand compensation justification disclosure could prime such cognitions. Even though participants were not actual followers of the influencer, the realization that a brand chose to collaborate and sponsor the influencer might transfer meaning that is more positive to their evaluations of the influencer's credibility.

In article 3, with regards to the content of sponsorship disclosures, impartiality, and explicit sponsorship disclosures were tested and compared in two different studies consisting of different influencers, and social media platforms (YouTube and Instagram), as well as containing different product types (backpack and watches). The findings showed that an impartiality disclosure ("This content is not sponsored by any brand or company.")

generated lower persuasion knowledge activation among consumers compared to an explicit sponsorship disclosure ("This content is sponsored by {brand}."), and compared to when no information about sponsorship was available. Consequently, consumers evaluated the influencer (source) and the message (product recommendation post) as more credible than if they were informed that the post was sponsored, or when they received no information about sponsorship. In contradiction to the study by Carr and Hayes (2014) who found that explicit disclosures generated higher source credibility than impartial disclosures, the current study showed the opposite. The different social media contexts investigated in the studies could explain this. While Carr and Hayes'es (2014) study was conducted in a blog context that represents a more static social media environment, the studies in article 3 were conducted in the more dynamic social media contexts of YouTube and Instagram. Dynamic product presentations (video and moving images) are found to be more vivid than static ones (still images and text), which consequently increase consumers' involvement with and processing of the content (Roggeveen et al., 2015). Presumably, messages on YouTube and Instagram are presented in a way that increases consumers' recognition and assimilation of the content in disclosures, while on blogs disclosures might more easily disappear in the abundance of text.

The studies in article 2 and article 3 showed no direct effects of different disclosures on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intentions, which is in line with previous studies (e.g., Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013; van Reijmersdal et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2008).

5.1.3 The interaction effect of sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks

The third research question, "How do sponsorship disclosures and external hyperlinks in influencer posts interact to invoke consumer responses?" was examined in the second study of article 3. The findings showed a joint effect of disclosure information and landing page content from external hyperlinks in generating a change in consumers' brand attitude and purchase intentions. These were strongly affected in the impartiality disclosure condition, showing lower brand attitude and purchase intentions when consumers were directed to the product page compared to the start page of a web shop. Indicating that a product page that is focused on directly selling the product in the influencer post calls into question the influencer's impartiality. In contrast, a start page that displays several products without prompting any specific product onto the consumer conveys a more soft-selling tactic that is congruent with the influencer's impartiality. Consumers who were exposed to an explicit sponsorship disclosure expressed no difference in brand attitude and purchase intentions from exposure to a start page or a product page, presumably because they were prepared for the persuasive intent (higher persuasion knowledge activation) and therefore the content of the landing pages made less of an impact on their consequent responses. These findings are novel and indicate that while sponsorship disclosures first and foremost directly impact

consumers' perceptions of source and message credibility, they can, in a second vein, impact consumers' evaluations of other message cues in the sponsor message.

5.1.4 The impact of store type behind external hyperlinks in influencer posts

The final research question, "How does the store type behind external hyperlinks in influencer posts impact consumers' responses?" was examined in article 4. The study compared direct selling in blogs through a blog shop, and indirect selling in blogs through affiliate marketing activities. The findings showed that the retail e-store generated higher store trust than the blog shop, and that consumers' perceived store reputation mediated the effect. Consequently, the retail e-store generated higher store purchase intentions among consumers. The findings thereby contribute to the stream of research highlighting the importance of perceived reputation as a determinant of store trust (cf. e.g. Casalo et al., 2007; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; McKnight et al., 2002b), and, more specifically, confirm research showing that a well- established retailer is more likely to generate store trust than a new market entrant (Metzger, 2006).

However, this study is the first to include the importance of consumers' previous SMI following behavior (susceptibility to SMI influence) as an indicator to explain their assessment of SMI activities. The findings showed that consumers, who frequently consult and observe influencers in social media to find inspiration and information about brands and products before making a purchase-decision, expressed greater blog shop store trust and intentions to purchase from the blog shop than consumers, who rarely engage in such activities. The "mere exposure"-principle might explain this effect, which states that individuals' repeated exposure to a certain stimulus enhances their attitude towards it since the stimulus becomes more accessible to the individual's perception (Zajonc, 1968). Thus, consumers' frequent observations of various influencers in social media make them more prone to accept and understand the blog shop concept, and, as a consequence, they respond more favorably towards it. Though the study investigated a specific form of social influence, that of social media influencers, the findings are in line with previous studies showing a positive effect of social influence on consumers who are susceptible to such influence on their consequent consumer behavior (Goh et al., 2013; Kwahk & Ge, 2012).

5.2 Theoretical contributions

The theoretical contributions of this dissertation to influencer marketing and additional streams of research are discussed below. The contributions are five in total and based on the research problems discussed in Chapter 1.1.

The first, second, and third contributions extend research on sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing. First, previous research has shown that different content elements of sponsorship disclosures in influencer posts have different effects on consumer responses (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Evans et al., 2017; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Liljander et al., 2014; van

Reijmersdal et al., 2016). This dissertation extends the findings by examining and demonstrating the effects of source type of sponsorship disclosures on consumer responses. That is, the communicator of disclosure information was adjusted in such a way that it was either the influencer or the brand sponsor who announced the sponsorship disclosure information. Although one previous study has investigated source type of disclosures in a celebrity context (Boerman et al., 2017), this dissertation is, to my knowledge, the first to compare source type in the actual disclosure message on consumer responses.

Second, previous research has mainly focused on the isolated effects of sponsorship disclosures and demonstrated their direct effect on consumer responses (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Evans et al., 2017; Liljander et al., 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). This dissertation extends the findings on disclosures in influencer marketing by demonstrating their joint effect with other content elements in influencer posts on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intentions. More specifically, this dissertation examined the combined effect of disclosure information and landing page content from external hyperlinks on consumer responses and demonstrated the importance of consistency between these elements to generate increased effectiveness.

Third, while previous research on sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing has mainly been conducted in the context of blogs (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Liljander et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016), this study extends previous research by investigating sponsorship disclosures on Instagram and YouTube. Specifically, YouTube, which consists of video material, is very distinct from text-rich social media environments such as blogs. The dissertation also demonstrates different effects of similar disclosure types as in a study on blogs (Carr & Hayes, 2014) in the more rich social media environment of YouTube. This indicates the importance of media-contextual factors on consumer responses to sponsorship disclosures.

Fourth, this dissertation extends research on sponsored content by presenting a conceptual framework for how storytelling and informational message appeals can be characterized and distinguished in sponsored blog content. Previous research has demonstrated through experimental research consumers' higher involvement and increased processing of storytelling advertisements compared to informational advertisements (Escalas, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000; Petrova & Cialdini, 2008). This dissertation extends this stream of research by demonstrating consumers' real-time attention duration of storytelling and informational message appeals. Furthermore, it offers an empirical contribution by introducing a non-intrusive research approach to measure audiences' real-time attention to online sponsored content, and by doing so answers the call for more research on consumer attention in a non-laboratory setting (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014).

Fifth, this dissertation contributes to research on e-commerce and new formats of retailing by introducing the phenomenon of blog shops and affiliate marketing activities. To date, a few studies on blog shops can be found, of which the majority are conducted in the South-East Asian blogosphere (Ng and Matanda, 2009; Fletcher and Greenhill, 2009; Greenhill and Fletcher, 2010; Abidin and Thompson, 2012; Lim et al., 2013). Most of the studies have focused on the concept of blog shops, and how these have reformulated the e-commerce scene in South-East Asia (Fletcher and Greenhill, 2009; Greenhill and Fletcher, 2011; Lim et al., 2013), while some have examined blog shops in relation to e-service quality (Ng and Matanda, 2009). However, the majority of these studies refer to blog shops as the direct selling of products displayed in blog photos. This dissertation extends research on blog shops by introducing blog shops in the form of real online stores connected to but separate from the actual blog. It also extends research on blog shops by investigating and demonstrating consumer responses to this type of retail setting. Furthermore, previous research has compared the effects of different online store types on consumers' store trust. However, these studies have all considered company-level organizations (Casalo et al., 2007; Jarvenpaa et al., 2000; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004; Metzger, 2006). This dissertation extends this research stream by introducing the blog shop as a person-level organization and by demonstrating its effectiveness in generating consumer store trust in comparison to a company-level organization.

5.3 Implications for business practice

The dissertation offers several implications to influencers, as well as to marketers and companies working with influencers. The implications will be discussed below and categorized concerning the content elements to which they relate.

How should sponsored blog content be designed to capture consumers' attention?

Grabbing consumers' attention with advertisements can be challenging in a cluttered media environment where consumers are exposed to an abundance of information, and deliberately choose which content to attend to and which content to avoid (Rosengren, 2008). Thereby, choosing the right strategic execution when designing advertisements is important in order to capture consumers' attention in different media contexts (ibid.). The findings in this dissertation show that blog readers are not paying an equal amount of attention to all forms of sponsored blog posts in a blog, even though the blog is presumably a medium that they attend to deliberately. The findings indicate that bloggers and brands that collaborate with bloggers should strive to design sponsored blog posts in a storytelling format rather than in an informational format to generate longer attention duration from blog readers. While consumers' attitudinal and behavioral responses to different persuasive messages is an important indicator of overall advertising success, a precondition for consumer attitudes to be formed or actions to be taken is that consumers are paying attention to the persuasive

message in the first place (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; McGuire, 1968).

The advertising and media industries have always thrived on being able to tell compelling stories to their audiences. In a blog context, a compelling narrative involves personal reflections and life stories from the blogger. Loyal blog readers are visiting the blog to "hear the voice" of the blogger. Therefore, companies that want to advertise through personal blogs should trust the bloggers to know their readers, and therefore give them the freedom to craft the sponsored blog posts so that the content resonates with the blog audience and the overall blog content. This might involve getting rid of jargon and buzzwords that the company might use in other advertising contexts. Especially in blogs that resemble a personal online diary, the sponsored posts should be personally drafted, conveying the blogger's consumption experience to maintain blog readers' attention. What distinguishes a storytelling sponsored blog post from an informational sponsored blog post is that (1) the focus in the post is on specific events rather than on generalizations about product benefits; (2) the blogger expresses his or her feelings and opinions regarding the product; (3) the blogger may refer to the brand but the focus is on consumption experiences; (4) any visual elements originate from the blogger rather than from the brand; (5) the blogger provides claims about brand value rather than about brand features; (6) the blog post contains characters (the blogger or other) acting out the product benefits rather than providing facts and statistics that originate from company reports in support of claims. These storytelling elements should be considered when bloggers are designing sponsored blog posts to grab the attention of readers.

What should be considered, and what actions should be taken regarding sponsorship disclosures in influencer marketing?

In several nations, there are strict rules and guidelines regarding paid partnerships between companies and third-party sources such as influencers. When influencers receive payment or free products to write a post or review a product, it has to be disclosed according to governmental regulations in many countries, and also according to internal policy statements on many social media platforms. The purpose of these regulations is to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive practices in the marketplace and to help them make sound evaluations of brand endorsements. It is, however, essential to avoid criticism and resistance among viewers, taking into account that people are generally skeptical about advertising (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 2000), and even more so in media contexts, such as social media, where they are not susceptible to advertising messages (Moore & Rodgers, 2005). Therefore, the findings regarding sponsorship disclosures in this dissertation can help influencers and marketers design and communicate brand content that is transparent and yet effective in reaching positive consumer responses.

A positive effect of impartiality disclosures (i.e., disclaimers in non-sponsored product recommendation posts that informs viewers that the influencer's opinion is not attached to any sponsorship agreement) was found on consumers' evaluations of influencer credibility and the credibility of the product recommendations under study. This implies that adding a brief note that the influencer's product recommendation is not sponsored when that is the case can reduce consumers' suspicion of sponsorship that a product recommendation post without any sponsorship information might generate. In contrast, under circumstances when the product review is sponsored, information about sponsorship should always be included. The brand sponsor should ensure and encourage that correct disclosure directions are followed to avoid any liability issues. However, the findings of this dissertation show that a simple sponsorship disclosure that merely informs viewers that the content is sponsored results in reduced influencer and product recommendation credibility (which could have negative effects on consumers' brand attitude and purchase intentions, even though these effects were not obtained in this dissertation). Therefore, a more nuanced sponsorship disclosure that provides detailed information about why the influencer and the brand have decided to collaborate (i.e., a sponsorship compensation justification disclosure) is more effective in generating positive consumer responses. By keeping an open and continuous dialogue with followers that include sponsorship compensation justification messages, influencers can increase their credibility among followers, and reduce followers' skepticism towards sponsored content, which is beneficial in the long run. To further enhance the positive effects of this type of disclosure, the content in the sponsorship disclosure should be designed as a message communicated by the brand sponsor. This type of disclosure was found to increase the credibility of the influencer more so than if the influencer communicated the disclosure information. This finding should be especially lucrative for brands that plan long-term collaborations with influencers. By strengthening the credibility of influencers that they collaborate with, brands can potentially increase the persuasiveness of influencers that promote their products. This can be done either through the inclusion of a compensation justification disclosure as a personal message from the brand in direct relation to influencer posts in social media or through messages where the brand promotes and introduces influencers that they collaborate with, in their communication channels. Brands could also educate and involve consumers in the process behind influencer-brand collaborations by creating and distributing content that shows behind-the-scenes material from collaborations to showcase the effort and involvement behind such content, while simultaneously generating sponsorship transparency (Evans & Hoy, 2016).

Additionally, this dissertation demonstrates the importance of consistency between disclosure information and landing page content from external hyperlinks in influencer posts. The direction of brand page hyperlinks in influencer posts should support the content of disclosure information to generate positive effects. When publishing an impartial product

recommendation, influencers should incorporate brand page hyperlinks that direct readers to a start page of a web shop rather than a product page, to convey a more soft-selling tactic that strengthens consumers' belief in the influencer's impartiality. This in order to generate higher brand attitude and purchase intentions among consumers. System developers together with brand managers should incorporate instructions and guidelines on social media platforms that support influencers in the process of designing posts that strategically connects disclosure information and brand hyperlink content. As the findings of this dissertation suggest, these instructions should include examples of brand page hyperlink content that is less focused on direct selling and therefore more suitable with non-sponsored product recommendations, for example, start pages of a web shop or a brand's social media pages. Consumers can thereby read more about the brand and the product without feeling forced to buy the product. In contrast, when the influencer post is sponsored, and increased sales is highly sought after, these instructions can instead include examples of brand page hyperlink content that is more effective for this purpose, for example, product pages of a web shop where consumers can instantly buy the product.

What should influencers take into account when considering starting online stores or when they are engaging in affiliate-marketing activities?

The findings of this dissertation imply that bloggers who choose to adopt affiliate marketing activities can benefit from the reputation of the online retailer to yield sales, and should thereby aim to collaborate with highly reputed retailers to secure a higher commission when more products are being sold. Potentially, by engaging in affiliate marketing activities, the blogger can also create initial dependability within the online retail environment as a first step towards opening a personal blog shop. Hence, consumers' notice of the blogger's frequent collaborations with well-established retailers might make them perceive the blogger as more experienced and capable of running an online store. As soon as the blogger decides to start a personal blog shop, a sound strategy would be for the blogger to target influencer advocates to create initial store trust. These include the blogger's followers or followers of social media influencers in general. They are more likely to be receptive and positively affected by influencer activities than consumers who rarely follow influencers, and are therefore more likely to evaluate the blog shop as trustworthy. In line with previous research showing the importance of consumer reviews to positively impact perceived trustworthiness of online stores (Utz, Kerkhof, & Van Den Bos, 2012), the blogger could then address these influencer advocates to function as peer agents and let them create blog shop trust among those who are more skeptical.

5.4 Limitations and future research

The findings of this dissertation should be interpreted considering a number of limitations. These limitations along with avenues for further research are discussed below.

The first limitation pertains to the nomothetic-deductive research design adopted in this thesis. In the majority of the studies, an experimental research approach was applied, and items from the literature were used to measure psychometric variables related to a complex and evolving psycho-sociological phenomenon. Future research could approach the subject by using a qualitative research design to explore emerging insights from influencer marketing and consumer responses. This could be done, for example, by monitoring and evaluating comments and reactions from followers on different influencer posts in social media.

The second limitation pertains to the controlled setting used in the experimental studies in articles 2, 3 and 4. The participants were exposed to photos, videos or web shop displays in an online setting that is not entirely comparable to a natural setting in which consumers would be exposed to these elements when they are scrolling through the Internet in their daily lives. Hence, the results provide information on how consumers respond to these elements when they are "forced" to pay attention to them, but cannot estimate their reactions to these elements when they are included in consumers' everyday stream of social media content. Future research should therefore attempt to capture consumer responses to these content elements by, for example, targeting a panel group of social media users and monitor their real social media usage. The content elements under study could then be included in their everyday stream of social media content to measure how participants respond to them in a more natural setting.

The third limitation relates to the use of fictitious influencers, or influencers that were unknown to participants in some of the studies. This was done in order to maximize internal validity and the effects of the manipulation stimuli. To improve external validity, future researchers could use well-known influencers and question their actual followers. Previous research shows that real followers of bloggers establish strong attachments (i.e., para-social relationships) with the bloggers they follow and this impacts how they respond to, for example, sponsored content by these bloggers (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). This implies that real followers of an influencer are likely to respond more favorably to content produced by the influencer than those who have no previous experience with the influencer, due to their strong relationship ties with the influencer.

Fourth, the experimental material comprised of products that can be categorized as search goods (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010), hence different results may apply for experience goods. Lu et al. (2014) showed differences in consumer reactions to blog product recommendations due to product type. They argue that features of search goods are more stable and objective than experience goods, and therefore consumers tend to believe more in recommendations about search goods than about experience goods due to their unstable nature. Future research may explore the effects of the content elements in this dissertation in product categories comprising of experience goods. A further limitation that relates to the point above is that

the majority of the studies were conducted using a single exposure to the different stimuli under study. Future research may explore the generalizability of the results over an extended time period in multiple product categories and different social media platforms to examine whether the effects hold across different social media environments, different product categories and over extended periods.

As influencer marketing is continuously expanding and evolving, more research is needed to bring light on this new and complex marketing phenomenon. Several important issues need further research. First of all, as regards policymaking around influencer marketing, and which also pertains to the title of this thesis: is influencer marketing a gray zone? When considering sponsorship disclosure regulations regarding influencer marketing, the answer to that question would be "yes, it is a gray zone." The plethora of sponsorship disclosure types, differing between nations and social media platforms (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2016; Evans et al., 2017), is in itself likely to confuse consumers. Also, some countries lack policies regarding sponsorship disclosures of influencer marketing (Walden et al., 2015). Still, for most consumers, the consumption of information on the Internet is conducted on a global level. The inconclusive rules regarding sponsorship disclosures is a concern for marketing policy makers and for consumers who encounter product reviews from influencers who are from countries in which disclosure rules do not apply. Future research should thereby address the international implications of sponsorship disclosures, and compare the effects of disclosures across social media platforms on consumers in multiple countries. This could eventually lead to a joint policy regarding sponsorship disclosures of influencer marketing across nations and social media platforms, which, in the long run, is likely to benefit all parties involved.

Second of all, advertisers have traditionally employed three types of spokespersons to promote their brands: celebrities, experts, and typical consumers (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Similarly, more recent studies have categorized social media influencers into (1) mega influencers/celebrity influencers with over 1 million followers; (2) macro influencers, experts with 10 000 to 1 million followers; and (3) micro influencers, typical consumers whose influence is experience-based and who have 500 to 10 000 followers (Gottbrecht, 2016). These different types of influencers are likely to convey certain levels of expertise and obtain various levels of connection with their followers, which is likely to affect how consumers react to their marketing efforts. Thus, providing a promising avenue for future research.

A third promising research direction is to explore whether the impact of influencer marketing differs depending on certain personality traits of the consumer (e.g., self-esteem, need for uniqueness etc.). Because people give meaning to the commercial messages they receive, different people may have different preferences for different types of influencers and brand posts, depending on their characteristics (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Stern, 1994).

On a final note, robots might rule the future of influencer marketing. Society and research have acknowledged the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and predicted its impact on society and firms (Makridakis, 2017). It seems that the revolution of AI technology has also found its way into the world of social media influencers. The Los Angeles based tech-company "Brud" recently launched a computer-generated Instagram-influencer called "Lil Miquela" (Shieber, 2018). She has 900 000 plus followers on Instagram and is collaborating with big fashion brands to promote their products through her Instagram profile (Jones, 2018). Similarly, Isabella Löwengrip, a Swedish influencer, and entrepreneur, is in the process of launching a virtual version of her, a clone that she named Gabrielle (Bach, 2018). This, of course, provides an exciting avenue for future research. How will consumers react to the fact that the social media influencers they follow are, potentially, robots with human-like features? Will they form similar attachments with these robot-influencers as they are found to do with human-influencers (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)? Only future research can tell.

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APPENDIX 1 LIST OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Article 1
Stubb, C. (2018). Story versus info: Tracking blog readers' online viewing time of sponsored blog posts based on content-specific elements. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 82, 54-62.

Article 2
Stubb, C., Nyström, A-G, & Colliander, J. (in press). Influencer marketing: The impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness. Accepted for publication in *Journal of Communication Management* (2019).

Article 3
Stubb, C., & Colliander, J. (2019). "This is not sponsored content" – The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 98, 210-222.

Article 4
Stubb, C., & Colliander, J. (2018). Starting a blog shop or relying on affiliate links? – Investigating direct and indirect selling in blogs on consumer responses. Unpublished. Under review at *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*.

STORYTELLING SPONSORED BLOG POST

Going to "afterwork" in slippers rather than in heels

This post is a commercial collaboration with Hotel X

This autumn it seems like I have been going to more afterwork events than ever before. I guess it is mainly because I have felt more energetic than I would normally feel this time of the year. Or ... perhaps it is just because at the moment we have such a good feeling among colleagues at work, so we simply want to hang out all the time! It is few things that beat a cozy Friday evening at home with the family, but every now and then you just want to experience an evening of gossiping away with your colleagues over a drink or two.

Normally, we would just go to a restaurant or a bar, but this time we went all in and booked the sauna department at Hotel X. We thought that changing up things a bit would motivate more people to join us. The first thing everyone asked when we entered the place was "when can we take our clothes off and go in the hot tub?" "NOW!" someone shouted. After this evening, I can honestly claim that I have taken a dip and a zip (of champagne) in the highest placed hot tub this town has to offer. The view was amazing. Anyways, we had a great evening of food, drinks and laughter. The staff kept bringing us more snacks so that we would not suffer from low levels of blood sugar. I think it is this type of evenings that really creates the strongest bond among employees. At the next office meeting, you could suggest to your colleagues to organize something similar.

INFORMATIONAL SPONSORED BLOG POST

Why not go out for dinner this weekend?

### *This post is a commercial collaboration with restaurant X*

Restaurant X opened just recently in the old harbor. I haven't had the chance to visit the place yet. However, I have heard from friends that the food is superb. They only serve dishes made of locally produced ingredients. You can find everything from fish, meat, vegetables, cheese, and even crab (!) on the menu. I don't think any other restaurant serves crab in this town. The place is children friendly, so you can bring along your toddlers. They have a separate area for guests with children and guests without children, to please everyone. The prices range from 10 to 15 euros for a starter, and 20 to 35 euros for a main course. Quite decent, considering the support of local farmers. They are open everyday except Mondays. So, maybe you should leave all the duties at home and go out for dinner this weekend. If you mention this blog when booking a table, you will receive a 10% discount off your purchase (excluding alcoholic beverages).

APPENDIX 3 DISCLOSURE TEXTS (ARTICLE 2)

| Condition 1: No disclosure	Condition 2: Simple disclosure
Please watch the following video before you proceed to the questions.	The video you are about to watch is sponsored by Patagonia.
Condition 3: SMI compensation justification	Condition 4: Brand compensation justification
My name is Jack. I'm a full-time YouTuber, which means that my work consists of producing content for my YouTube-channel X*. On my YouTube-channel you can follow me on my adventures out in the wilderness. To earn my living, I do commercial collaborations with brands. I therefore frequently publish sponsored content on my YouTube-channel. It is both time-consuming and difficult to create quality video-content. To be able to continue as a full-time YouTuber, the commercial collaborations with brands are an important source of income for me. The video you are about to watch is sponsored by Patagonia.	We are Patagonia, an American clothing company that sells sustainable outdoor clothing. We frequently collaborate with influencers in social media to spread knowledge about our products. This time we have partnered with YouTuber, X Jack. We understand that being a full-time YouTuber is a profession like any that takes both time and effort. Jack has received monetary compensation from us to review one of our products through his YouTube-channel. The video you are about to watch is sponsored by Patagonia.

Note: The name of Jack's YouTube channel has been replaced with X.

No disclosure   Impartiality   Explicit Sponsorship
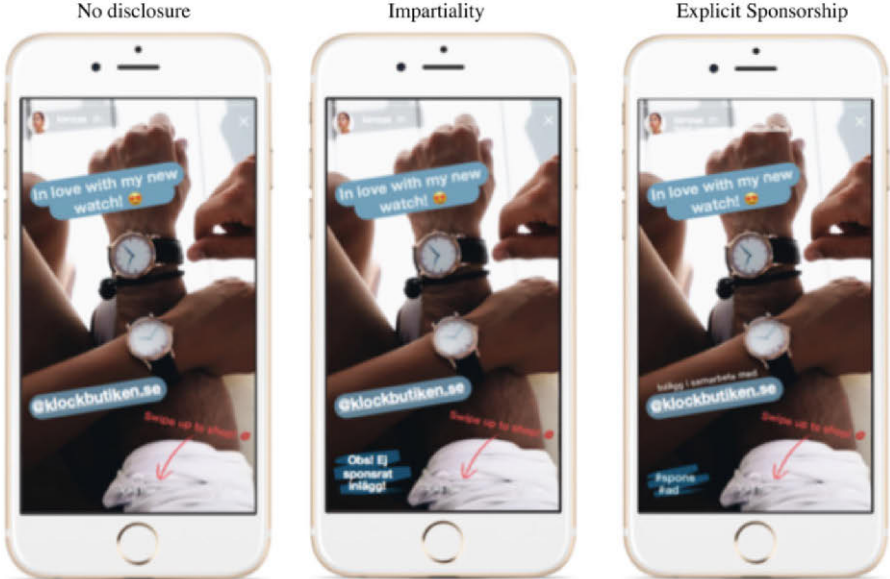
Start Page   Product Page
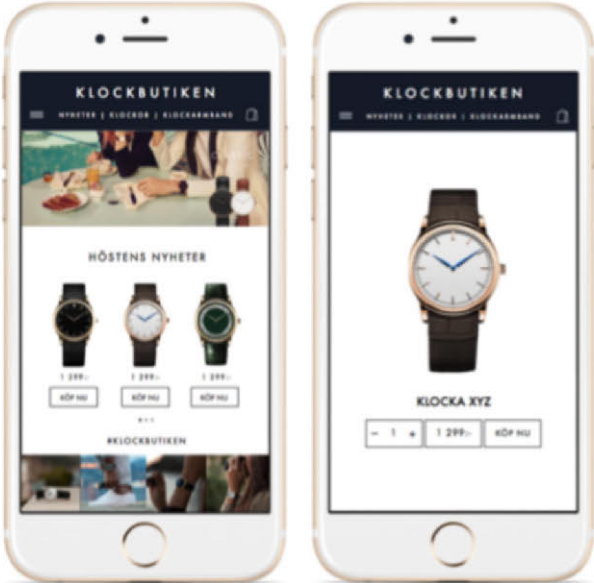
BLOG PRODUCT RECOMMENDATION POST

Sophia Tengara Blog

MY STYLE   COLLABS   COLLAGES   LIFESTYLE   SHOP SJ   LATEST THING   HELLO   CONTACT

WATCH it!

May 25, 2018 by Sophia Tengara

Ever since Citizen watches became popular with bloggers a few years ago, I've been lusting after one. I've been missing a classic style in my collection for some time now, so when my eye was caught by this beauty I was seriously tempted, and the fact that it was on sale at almost half price sealed the deal! I ordered the black and gold bracelet watch straight away, and once it arrived, I started wearing it immediately. As you can see from the photo, it's quite big, but I love when a watch stands out and grabs attention. I think the price is really affordable considering its quality. I have several different brands in my collection of watches, but Citizen really knows how to combine style and quality. You can buy it here.

Sophia's Shop

Welcome to Sophia's shop.
Here you will find watch accessories that are carefully selected by fashion influencer Sophia Tengara.

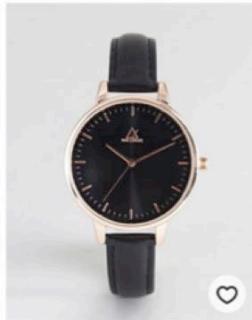WATCH STRAPS ⌄   TRAVEL CASES   TOOLS & SUPPLIES   WATCHES   BELTS & WALLETS   GIFT CARDS   W&W   ABOUT ⌄   CLEARANCE

TIMEX
Tonal Black Mesh Watch
$ 50

CITIZEN
Black and Gold Leather
$ 75

SEIKO
Gold Watch
$ 85

RETAIL E-STORE DISPLAY

★macy's

Welcome to Macy's, one of the nations premiere retailers.

WATCH STRAPS ˅ | TRAVEL CASES | TOOLS & SUPPLIES | WATCHES | BELTS & WALLETS | GIFT CARDS | W&W | ABOUT ˅ | CLEARANCE
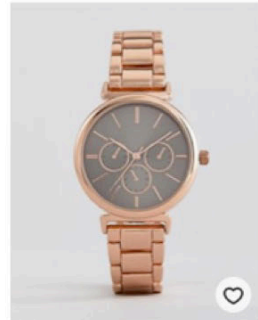
TIMEX
Tonal Black Mesh Watch
$ 50

CITIZEN
Black and Gold Leather
$ 75

SEIKO
Gold Watch
$ 85