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The Face of an Influencer:

Investigating the Effects of an Influencer's Face on Consumer Responses and Influencer Marketing

Abstract

Influencer marketing is growing at a rapid speed as one of the hottest marketing trends in today's challenging media climate. As of now, little academic research exists on consumer responses to Influencer marketing and its effectiveness as a marketing strategy. Influencer marketing often appears through pictures on social medias and the way Influencers portray themselves in the pictures is likely to affect consumer responses. Further, faces are one of the most powerful stimuli for human attention and are often depicted in marketing. Faces in advertisement including models have, however, been proved to be negative for female consumer responses. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a deeper understanding of Influencer marketing and how the face of an Influencer can affect advertisement effectiveness.

A quantitative experimental study was conducted on female consumers, in which they were exposed to one out of eight different pictures showing either a model or an Influencer, with or without faces visible, wearing a fashion garment. The results showed an increase in self-referencing and credibility when the consumers were exposed to a picture of an Influencer, compared to a picture showing an unknown model. No difference in purchase intention could be noticed between the two categories. Additionally, when the Influencers were depicted with heads they generated a higher level of self-referencing and credibility, compared to Influencers without faces visible, but no difference could be noticed on purchase intention. For purchase intention, an indirect effect, mediated by self-referencing, was proved in both scenarios.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, social media marketing, faces, depictions of people, celebrity endorsement, consumer responses

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Definitions

Celebrity endorsement: Celebrity endorsement is when a well-known individual, who enjoys public recognition, appears together with a consumer good in an advertisement. (McCracken, 1989)

Credibility: Credibility is the combination of perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of a person. It is defined as a measurement of how a communicator's positive characteristics affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 1990).

Influencer: An Influencer is, in this thesis defined as, an individual, with a personal brand, who uses social medias to influence and communicate to a group of followers.

Influencer marketing: Influencer marketing is advertisement made by Influencers, where the Influencers use their own words and social media channels to promote an advertised good or service.

Social Media: "Websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone." (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2017)

Self-referencing: "A cognitive process where individuals associate self-relevant stimulus with information previously stored in their memory, in order to give meaning to new information". (Debevec & Romeo, 1992)

The self: "A person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action." (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017)

Unknown models: In this thesis, unknown models refer to models, which are unknown to the consumer, and used for advertisements in traditional media and in online retailing.

Meanings: Meanings are the information being transferred from a well-known person, to a consumer, through advertisements, according to the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken,

1989). Meanings include for example demographic information and information about lifestyle and personality.

Marketing effectiveness: In general terms, marketing effectiveness refers to the return on marketing investments in both long- and short term (Reach Force, 2017). In this thesis, marketing effectiveness is defined as the effectiveness in terms of self-referencing, credibility and purchase intention.

1 Introduction

This section includes an introduction to this thesis subject, the research questions and the purpose of this thesis followed by a presentation of the delimitations and the expected contribution to research.

1.1 Background

In a society where you are constantly exposed to advertisements from various companies, praising their own products and urging you to buy, Influencer marketing[1] has increased in popularity as *the* way to break through to the consumer masses. When looking at trends for marketing spending in 2017, Influencer marketing is predicted to continue to grow in both size and importance (Hardy, 2016). Companies are paying large amount of money to individuals, so called Influencers[2], hoping for them to promote the company's products in a convincing and suitable way that will give the company bang for the buck. In a conversation with Edell, K., an expert within the field of Influencer Marketing, on 16th March 2017 she says that one of Sweden's most well paid Influencers, Isabella Löwengrip, charge up to 40 000 SEK for one Instagram update and 80 000 SEK for a blog post often with no guarantee to companies of how she will depict herself or the product in the update.

Now, imagine scrolling through Instagram when suddenly seeing a new update from a well-known person that inspires you. In the picture the person is wearing a new pair of sneakers from a trendy Swedish brand. Maybe you have heard of the brand before, but now, after seeing the shoes worn by the person you admire and reading about how much he or she likes them, you just have to check them out! This, is how Influencer marketing works.

What distinguishes Influencer marketing from traditional marketing of celebrities is that Influencers promote products subtly and with their own words. Given the substantial amount of money companies spend on Influencer marketing today (Hardy, 2016), it would be logical to assume there is a positive effect on consumer behaviour. However, given that this is a new area in marketing, the effects of Influencer marketing has naturally not been vastly researched. Therefore, can we really expect Influencer marketing to pay-off?

[1-2] See definitions

In Influencer marketing, companies can often only control the company specific facts; the rest is up to the Influencer. It is the Influencer who chooses how to promote the products and what to include in an advertisement, in for example a sponsored Instagram picture (Edell, 16th of March 2017). Limited research has been made on the effects of different depictions of people in marketing. Research has shown that faces of unknown models in online retailing generated negative effects on female consumers (Berg, 2015). On the other hand, research demonstrates that faces in marketing are important and that people prefer to see familiar faces compared to unfamiliar ones (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007). Considering the amount of money spent on Influencer marketing, companies should be interested in finding out whether or not the face of an Influencer has an effect on marketing effectiveness[3], regardless of if it is positive or not. Therefore, the effects generated by Influencers, with or without faces in advertisements, will be examined in this thesis.

1.2 Problem Area

Despite the increasing amount companies spend on Influencer marketing, the effects of this marketing tool are, to our knowledge, still rather unexplored. Research on celebrity endorsement[4] is, however, extensive and this field is therefore used as inspiration to our study on the area of Influencer marketing.

Research made by McCracken (1989) points out the advantages a celebrity can bring to an advertising campaign and this research will be the primary source to understand the effects of Influencers. When advertising a product together with a well-known person, McCracken (1989) argues that the positive outcome lies in a celebrity's ability to transfer more meanings[5] to the consumer, than an unknown model can. On social medias[6], do Influencers manage to communicate more meanings which is required for them to be different compared to unknown models, or do companies spend money and effort on nothing? In this thesis, the consumer responses to advertisements including Influencers and models will be studied to determine who generates the best outcome in terms of marketing effectiveness, measured through self-referencing[7], credibility[8] and purchase intention.

[3 -8] See definitions

Previous research has touched upon the effects of people depicted in marketing, yet few have looked further into cropped pictures of people used in advertisements. Cropped pictures, where unknown models are depicted without heads, are commonly used in online retailing to save money on facial styling (Considine, 2011). The findings by Berg (2015) showed that cropped pictures of models generated increased purchase intention among female consumers. This result was due to a higher level of self-referencing, identification, between the female consumers and the models, when they were depicted without heads (Berg, 2015).

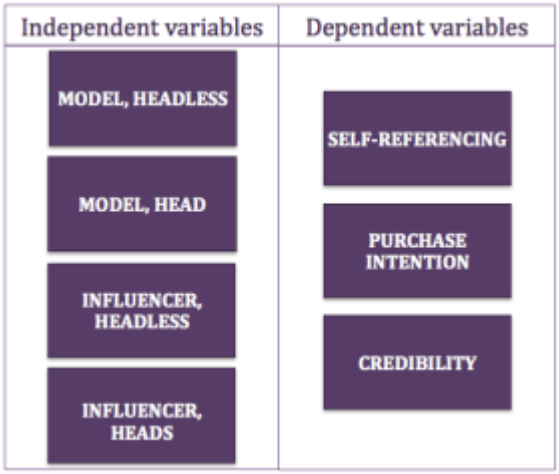
Nevertheless, faces in marketing have also proved to be effective for both attention (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007) and the overall attractiveness of a person (Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot, 2000). Additionally, a person's face is important for showing affections (Kanwisher and Mocovitch, 2000) and research has proved that people likes to view familiar faces (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007).

This can seem somewhat contradictory, what will generate the best outcome – an Influencer with a face visible in advertising or a cropped Influencer? This thesis further examines consumer responses to Influencer marketing when the Influencers are depicted with or without faces.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of Influencer marketing and how different depictions of Influencers are perceived among consumers. More precisely, it aims at comparing the level of purchase intention, self-referencing and perceived credibility among female consumers, in relation to a fashion product, when worn by either a model or an Influencer. It further aims at examining how the face of an Influencer affects the three dependent variables. Therefore, this thesis will include three dependent variables and four independent variables, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The independent and dependent variables in this thesis.



The research questions for this study are the following:

- *Are Influencers more effective than models when advertising a product?*
- *How will the face of an Influencer affect marketing effectiveness*[9]*?*

1.4 Delimitations

The study was made on the social media platform Instagram. This limitation was made since on Instagram, photos are the primary tools for marketing products and also since it mostly displays one photo per update. Hence, this enabled us to show our modified pictures with and without heads visible, one at the time, in a realistic social media feed. Additionally, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platform with over 700 million users worldwide (Constine, 2017) and therefore it should be a platform familiar to many of the survey respondents.

This thesis is further limited to consumers and Influencers on the Swedish market, since conducting a more extensive study would be beyond the scope of this thesis. This limitation will affect the generalisation of our findings due to geographic, social and cultural

[9] See definitions

differences. The survey was conducted in April and May 2017, primarily in Stockholm. This restraint can affect the results and one should therefore be careful when generalising the findings of this study on to other contexts. To examine a broader group, during a longer period of time and under different conditions would generate more reliable results that perhaps could be more broadly generalised, but it has however not been possible within the scope of our thesis.

Moreover, the study is limited to examine women between the ages of 18-35. Women were targeted since the results found by Berg (2015), regarding purchase intention and self-referencing, were only applicable to women. She found that men responded differently to cropped and uncropped pictures compared to women and because of this, women were of only interest for this study. Moreover, the age group of 18 to 35 years old were chosen to reflect the most active group on social medias (Duggan, 2015). The data was primarily collected at various universities and libraries in Stockholm. This was made since students were easily targeted and since within the chosen age group, a common occupation is studying (SCB, 2015). When mentioning consumers later in this thesis we refer to this target group, women 18 to 35 years old.

1.5 Expected Contributions

With this thesis we hope to contribute to a more comprehensive knowledge, to the yet unexplored area of Influencer marketing and the effects of an Influencer's face. This study assesses Influencer marketing via using of consumer behaviour research in order to understand what underlying factors that results in purchase intention for consumers. This knowledge could be useful for marketers and Influencers when collaborating with Influencers so that all parties have the same expectations on Influencer marketing. Lastly, due to the scope of this thesis, we think that our findings should be seen as inspiration for future research and to be generalised carefully to other contexts.

2 Theoretical Framework

The following section will firstly introduce two primary areas of research in this thesis; research regarding self-referencing and research on celebrity endorsement and further elaborate on how these two areas can form an understanding for differences from advertising with models or Influencers. Secondly, the dissertation "Faces of Marketing" will be presented followed by the hypotheses regarding consumer responses to Influencers depicted with or without heads.

2.1 Self-referencing in Consumer Marketing

Below, a presentation of the self and self-referencing in consumer behaviour research will follow.

2.1.1 Introduction to The Self

The creation and the development of a person's *self*[10] is an important factor in consumer behaviour research, since it drives people to consume (Belk, 1988). Belk (1988) argues that people are what they possess and that they consume in order to extend their self, this is because possessions are considered to be major contributors to people's reflection of their identities. Additional research made on the subject, strengthens Belk's (1988) assumptions of the connection between the self and consumption (Escalas and Brettman, 2005).

2.1.2 Previous Research on Self-referencing

Debevec and Romeo (1992) described self-referencing as; "A cognitive process where individuals associate self-relevant stimulus with information previously stored in their memory, in order to give meaning to new information". Debevec and Romeo (1992) could further prove that a high level of self-referencing lead to a more positive product attitude and increased purchase intention. The more consumers can relate to a product, have a higher level of self-referencing, the more they will elaborate on it, which in turn leads to an increased level of persuasion to buy the product (Burnkrant and Unnava, 1995). Likewise, if a consumer has

[10] See definitions

a low level of self-referencing it generates a negative effect on marketing (Englis and Solomon, 1995).

2.2 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a type of celebrity endorsement where a publicly known person, an Influencer, advertises a product or service, with its own words, through its own channels. Typically, the Influencer advertises a product or service through its personal blog, Instagram, vlog or other social media channels (Edell, 16th of March 2017).

2.2.1 Celebrity Endorsement Introduction

Celebrity endorsement has been used as a marketing tool since the late nineteenth century (Erdogan, 1995), but it has nowadays grown into becoming a large part in many marketing campaigns (McCracken, 1989). Research points at various positive effects from advertising with a celebrity endorser. One example of the positive effect a celebrity can generate in an advertisement is enhanced communication ability, where the celebrity can convey more than an unknown person is capable of. This is because a celebrity contains more meanings, generated from their previous actions and engagements known to the public, which can be transferred to the consumers (McCracken, 1989). Additionally, the McGuire Model of Persuasion (McGuire, 1985) holds that if celebrities are known to, and liked by consumers, they are perceived as more persuasive.

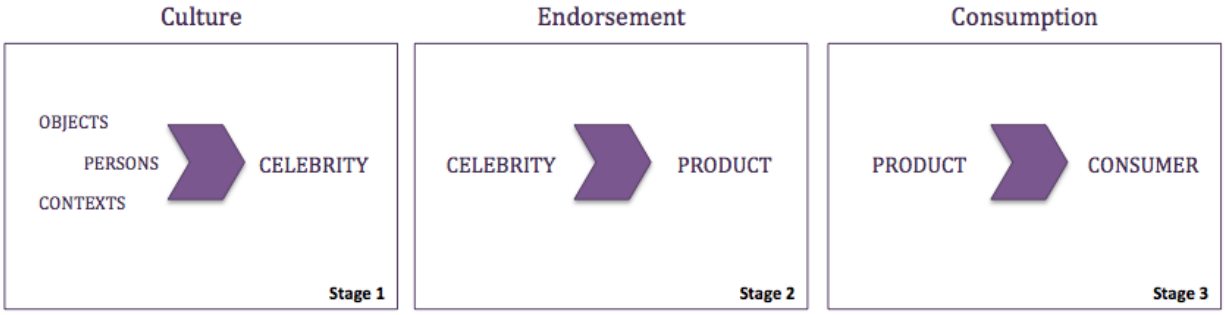
2.2.2 Meaning Transfer Model

Celebrity endorsement stems from the general Meaning Transfer Process, where meanings originate from an existing culture and are later transfers to a consumer good and successively, to the life of the consumer (McCracken, 1989). The advertiser chooses what meanings that should be transferred to a consumer good when choosing what the advertisement shall communicate. Essentially, any product can hold any meaning given the powerful tool of marketing (McCracken, 1989).

2.2.2.3 The Meaning Transfer Model and Celebrity Endorsement

The difference when adding a celebrity to the general Meaning Transfer Process is that the celebrity empowers the process (McCracken, 1989). This is visualised in Figure 2 and described in detail below.

Figure 2. The three different stages of the Meaning Transfer Model with Celebrity Endorsement



In the first stage, celebrities can transfer meanings with more depth, power and subtlety than anonymous models are able to do. Models only manage to transfer demographic information; such as age, gender and status, while celebrities can bring a much larger variety of personality and lifestyle meanings. In the second stage, the celebrity's meanings are transferred to the product through the advertisement. This stage is completed when the consumer "sees" the meanings communicated by the celebrity and accepts that these meanings now belong to the product.

In the third stage the consumer takes on the product as a part in their life. A consumer must actively do this in order for the meanings to be transferred from the product and to the consumer's life. Celebrities could be described as "super consumers" since in the eyes of the consumers, the celebrities have already created a self that is consistent, feasible and strong, a self that the consumers are searching for when buying products. By being a part of the endorsement process, a celebrity is making these meanings available in physical form to the consumers. Once the consumers have actively adopted these meanings from the celebrities, the last stage of the endorsement process is complete.

2.3 Source Credibility Scale

The Source Credibility Scale adds on to the Meaning Transfer Model as a measurement of how well meanings are transferred.

Much time has been put down into defining what makes a celebrity endorser successful and effective within marketing (Ohanian, 1990). This has generated many different definitions and theories, which primarily boils down to two different models: the Source-credibility Model (Hovland, et al., 1953) and the Source-attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985). Ohanian (1990) combined these two theories and created the Source Credibility Scale, Figure 3, in order to be able to measure a celebrity's credibility more accurately. Credibility is defined as a measurement of how a communicator's positive characteristics affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 1990).

2.3.1 Three Dimensions of Source Credibility

Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise are the three dimensions of the Source Credibility Scale. These dimensions are quantified using a scale of five items for each dimension, Figure 3.

Studies made on source expertise have shown that a higher perceived expertise generates a positive effect on attitude (Horai, Narci, and Fatoullah, 1974; Maddux and Roger, 1980; Mills and Harvey 1972; Ross 1973). When examining expertise in a retailing setting, a salesperson who was perceived as an expert sold significantly more products than a non-expert salesperson (Woodside and Davenport, Jr., 1974). Furthermore, trust is the level of confidence in and acceptance of the communicator's message (Giffin, 1967). Research has shown that trustworthiness is important for the effectiveness of communicating a message and that it increases persuasion (Miller and Baseheart, 1969). Lastly, the level of attractiveness of an endorser has proved to affect advertising and communication (Baker and Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979; Joseph, 1982; Kahle and Homer

Figure 3. The three dimensions of the Source Credibility Scale

THE SOURCE CREDIBILITY SCALE	
EXPERTISE	
Expert	*Not an Expert*
Experienced	*Inexperienced*
Knowledgeable	*Unknowledgeable*
Qualified	*Unqualified*
Skilled	*Unskilled*
TRUSTWORTHINESS	
Dependable	*Undependable*
Honest	*Dishonest*
Reliable	*Unreliable*
Sincere	*Insincere*
Trustworthy	*Untrustworthy*
ATTRACTIVENESS	
Attractive	*Unattractive*
Classy	*Not Classy*
Beautiful	*Ugly*
Elegant	*Plain*
Sexy	*Not Sexy*

1985; Mills and Aronson, 1965). Many researchers agree that physical attractiveness is positive for attitude (Simon, Berkowitz, and Moyer 1970; Kahle and Homer 1985), leads to positive product associations and that attractive persons are more liked than unattractive persons (Joseph, 1982).

2.4 The Effect of Using Influencers

Based on the previously presented research regarding self-referencing, the Meaning Transfer Model and the Source Credibility Scale, we believe that an Influencer, compared to an unknown model, will have an increased self-referencing for an advertised product and a higher perceived credibility.

We believe that a higher self-referencing will be generated for pictures showing Influencers given their enhanced ability to transfer meanings compared to models (McCracken, 1989). Moreover, an Influencer's capacity to transfer a broader spectrum of meanings, compared to a model, should likely contribute to an increased self-referencing for an Influencer advertisement. We further predict that an Influencer will be perceived as more credible since credibility is a measurement of the meanings transferred and, as earlier stated, an Influencer can transfer more and deeper meanings (McCracken, 1989). This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypotheses	
H1a	The use of an Influencer will result in higher self-referencing for the product compared to when using an unknown model
H1b	The use of an Influencer will result in higher credibility compared to when using an unknown model

Given the positive effects of communicating more meanings that a celebrity can manage (McCracken, 1989), we believe that an Influencer should generate a higher level of purchase intention compared to advertising with a model. Therefore, we hypothesise:

Hypotheses	
H2	The use of an Influencer will result in higher purchase intention for the product compared to when using an unknown model

2.5 The Face of an Influencer in Marketing

2.5.1 Introduction to Faces in Marketing

People like to look at faces, and already as babies, humans are drawn to face-like shapes (Johnson, Dziurawiec, Ellis, & Morton, 1991). A person's face is an important tool for expressing affections (Kanwisher and Mocovitch, 2000) and the face has proved to be the strongest biologically and socially significant stimuli to humans. Therefore, a face is among the most powerful feature for attracting advertisement attention (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007). When examining the impact of humans in consumer marketing, facial attractiveness is an important factor for overall attractiveness (Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot, 2000). Moreover, research shows that humans prefer to look at familiar faces, yet it is the unfamiliar faces that attract the most attention (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007).

Despite that the use of faces in marketing have proved to generate positive effects in multiple studies, Berg (2015) could demonstrate the opposite effect in an online retailing setting. In "Faces of Marketing", Berg (2015) examined cropped and uncropped models and proved that the uncropped models reduced self-referencing among female consumers. The uncropped models examined by Berg (2015) were considered as too different which resulted in a lower level of self-referencing. As further proven by Dittmar and Howard (2004), female models tend to be different in terms of younger, thinner and whiter than an average consumer. Other negative effects of using unknown models are that they often contribute to the creation of unrealistic beauty ideals (Richins, 1991) and generate low self-esteem and social comparison (Grabe, Ward & Hyde, 2008). Negative effects on ad efficiency for some female consumers have also been noted (Bower, 2001). The reduced self-referencing found by Berg (2015) ultimately lead to a lower purchase intention.

2.5.2 The Effect of an Influencer's Face in Marketing

In line with the earlier stated research on faces, we argue that when a consumer is exposed to a picture of an uncropped Influencer, the effect on self-referencing will be positive. Thus, the prediction is the opposite compared to the findings made by Berg (2015), regarding unknown models. We argue that an increased level of self-referencing should occur when an Influencer's face is visible since people generally have a preference for familiar faces (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007) and since the face is an important feature for expressing

emotions (Kanwisher and Mocovitch, 2000), which should help an Influencer to communicate more of its meanings.

Given our previous prediction, that an Influencer's face enables them to communicate more meanings, we reason that the credibility of an Influencer will be higher when the advertisement pictures an uncropped Influencer. The credibility is a measurement of how well meanings are transferred (Ohanian, 1990), and consequently a picture in which Influencers show their faces, must generate a higher level of credibility. Therefore, the following hypotheses apply:

Hypotheses	
H3a	Self-referencing will be higher (lower) for a product shown in pictures with uncropped (cropped) Influencers
H3b	Credibility will be higher (lower) for uncropped (cropped) Influencers when marketing a product

Lastly, we argue that an Influencer's face in advertisement will generate higher purchase intention given that the face plays an important part in the overall attractiveness (Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot, 2000) and since it is a person's primary tool for showing affections (Kanwisher and Mocovitch, 2000). Consequently, we believe that the face will be important to people's impression of an advertisement and therefore an advertisement of an Influencer with a visible face should lead to higher purchase intention, resulting in the fourth hypothesis:

Hypotheses	
H4	Purchase intention will be higher (lower) for a product shown in pictures with uncropped (cropped) Influencers

3 Methodology

In this section the choice of method will be presented. Firstly, an argumentation of the scientific approach is made and followed by a presentation of the main study. Choices regarding the experiment, questionnaire design, research variables, execution and pretest will be motivated to support the choice of method. Lastly, the validity and reliability will be assessed.

3.1 Scientific Approach

Since this study is based on existing theories, presented in section four, it applies a deductive scientific approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The result from this study intends to contribute to the already existing research on Influencer marketing and consumer behaviour research. This thesis aims at testing different consumer responses to modified pictures of models and Influencers and to examine differences in the effects of cropped and uncropped Influencers in a marketing context, on social media. Henceforth, an experimental study was made (Bryman and Bell, 2011), designed to replicate the real-life environment on social medias. An experimental study is most frequently conducted via quantitative methods (Bryman and Bell, 2011) and therefore we chose a quantitative method for this study. When using a quantitative method, it is important be aware of the risk that the written information in the questionnaire might be misunderstood by the respondents, which can lead to misleading answers (Malhotra, 2004).

3.2 Main Study

The main study was conducted to support or reject the six hypotheses and answer the two research questions;

- *Are Influencers more effective than models when advertising a product?*
- *How will the face of an Influencer affect marketing effectiveness[11]?*

[11] See definitions

3.2.1 The Experiment

This experiment tested differences in consumer responses to Influencers and models wearing similar fashion garments, to answer the first research question. Further, to answer the second research questions, regarding the face of an Influencer in marketing, Berg's (2015) study was resembled. Therefore, in both analyses, consumer responses were measured on a fashion garment, a T-shirt and a jacket, similar to Berg's choice of garment.

In the experiment, respondents were exposed to an authentic looking Instagram feed with an update showing a picture of either an Influencer or model advertising a fashion garment. Eight different picture were disposed at random and each respondent were exposed to one of them, however all respondents had the same questionnaire following the picture they saw. The survey included two different models and two different Influencers. The choice to include two persons from each category, wearing two different fashion products, was made since we wanted to eliminate potential effects driven by a specific person or product to be able to draw generalizing conclusion of the findings.

The survey was made concisely; it took approximately 2-3 minutes to answer, to reduce the risk of bias responses (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The respondents were first given a brief introduction to the subject and later asked to carefully look at the picture before continuing to the questions. The respondents were not informed of the purpose of the study, apart from that it was for data collection for a bachelor thesis in marketing, to limit biased responses.

3.2.2 Choice of Influencers and Unknown Models

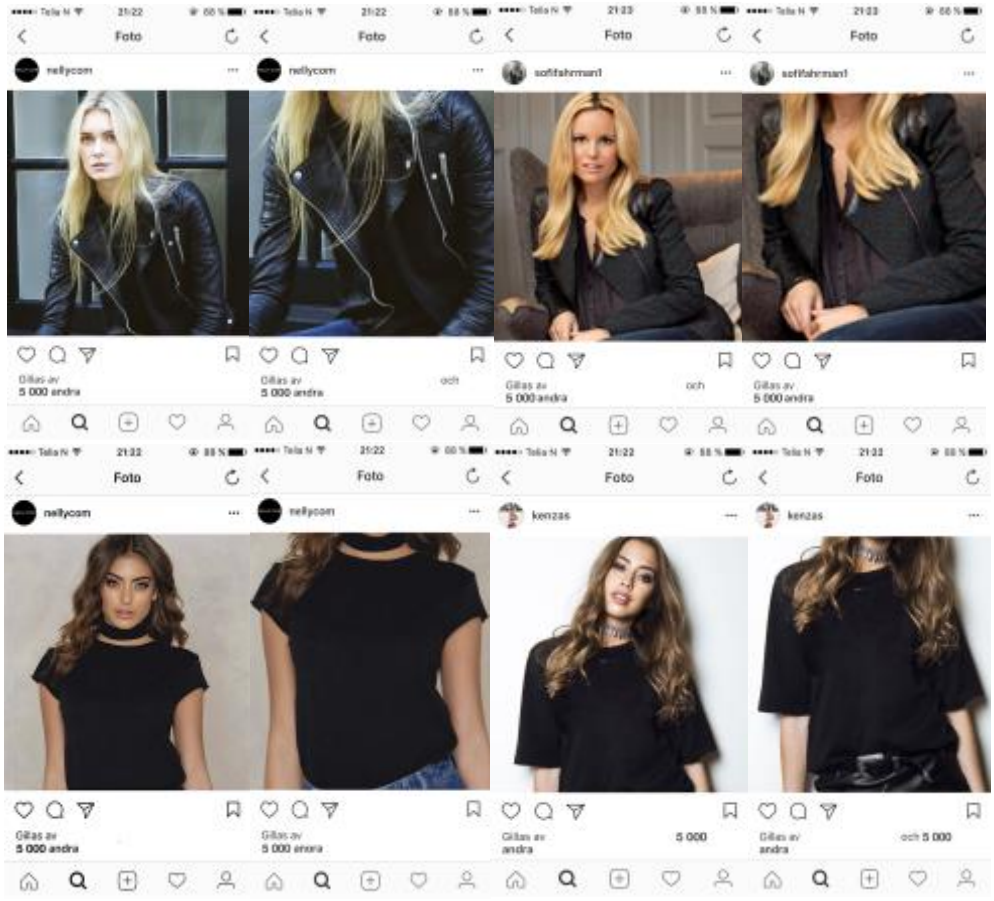
The survey included two influencers, Kenza Zouiten and Sofi Fahrman, and they were chosen based on the outcome of the pretest, presented in detail below [3.3]. The unknown models were chosen based on their resemblance with the influencers, measured on level of attractiveness. The level of attractiveness was tested for in the second pretest and will be presented below [3.3].

3.2.3 Choice of Product and Picture Design

The survey photos pictured the models and Influencers wearing either a dark coloured jacket or a black t-shirt. The Influencer and its lookalike model wore the same type of garment, i.e. either the jacket or the t-shirt, for the comparison to be as good as possible. Additionally, the garments were selected to appear as neutral in order to exclude the effect of personal taste. The effect of a respondent's personal taste was further reduced due to the size of the respondent group of 247 responses and because the respondents were picked at random (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The pictures of the models and Influencers were also chosen to resemble each other in other aspects, such as accessories worn and how the product was pictured. Further, the Influencers and their lookalike models had the same body position and the pictures were taken from the same angle. The Instagram posts had the same number of likes, the only difference was that the Influencers were sender of their own photo while the models were displayed on Nelly.com's Instagram.

Below, the eight picture types, used in the survey, are displayed. However, in the thesis the specific people liking an image have been erased, generating the blank-spaces before the total amount of likes on all pictures below.



3.2.3 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, and consisted of 26 questions. The design of the questionnaire was identical regardless of which of the photos the respondent was exposed to. The full questionnaire can be found in the Appendix (7.1).

The first part consisted of questions measuring the dependent variables; purchase intention, self-referencing and credibility. Additionally, the respondents were asked to what degree they knew who the person in the picture were and how much they liked her. All questions were asked in such way that the respondents had to rank how much they agreed with a statement. This was measured on a Likert scale from 1-10, where 1 = "Disagree completely" and 10 = "Agree completely". The choice to use a 10-point scale was made since then the respondents were unable to give a neutral answer, hence they had to take a stance which we predicted would make the respondents reflect more on the responses.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions such as age, gender and level of education.

3.2.4 Research Variables

The study was made on three dependent variables; credibility, self-referencing and purchase intention. These variables were chosen to determine the marketing effectiveness of the different picture types.

Self-referencing: This variable was used to answer two hypotheses; H1a and H3a. The method for measuring self-referencing was done in accordance with Berg (2015). The respondents were asked: *How much do you agree with the following statement?* and then exposed to the three statements; *"Someone like me could wear this garment", "This garment is intended for someone like me" and "Someone like me could own this garment",* all on a Likert scale of 1-10. These three questions were combined into the self-referencing index with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.869, hence the reliability of this variable was confirmed (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Credibility: The variable Credibility was used to answer the hypotheses; H1b and H3b. To measure the credibility, an index was composed out of 15 different questions, where the respondents answered on a scale of 1-10. The questions belonged to the three categories of the Credibility Scale; attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise. The index had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.952, which confirmed the reliability of the variable (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Purchase intention: Purchase intention was used to answer the hypotheses; H2 and H4. The two questions to measure purchase intention were: *"I would like to have this garment" and "I would like to buy this garment"*. They were also measured on a 1-10 Likert scale and generated a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.920, which ensured the reliability of the index (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.2.5 Execution

The main study was primarily conducted in Stockholm during April 2017, and during that time 184 valid responses were collected. A second data collection was done in May 2017, resulting in a total of 247 valid answers for the study. This number of respondents satisfied the requirements for the non-parametric tests and the generalizations this study aimed at carrying out (Malhotra, 2004).

The collection of data was mainly done though approaching female students at various universities and libraries in the Stockholm area, asking them to conduct a short survey for a bachelor thesis in marketing. Further, additional data was collected through sending private messages, using online messaging tools. All respondents were randomly exposed to one of the eight different pictures without knowing beforehand which photo they would be exposed to, to assure the validity (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.3 Pretests

Based on the two pretests we could decide which Influencers and models to include in the main study. Firstly, we wanted to select the Influencers with the highest recognition among the target group for this thesis. The Influencers were further picked based on their credibility because, as stated in [2.4], a high level of credibility is hypothesised to be a measurement of the ability to transfer meanings and hence a measurement of the difference between a model

and an Influencer. Secondly, we wanted to match the chosen Influencers with models that had the same level of attractiveness as the Influencers and hence the second pretest was conducted. The pretests were conducted to increase the quality of the main study.

3.3.1 Development of the Pretests

The first pre-test was conducted to select Influencers. Seven Swedish Influencers were included in the pretest and they were selected based on their large number of followers on Instagram, the platform for the survey, and their suitability for advertising a fashion garment. The second pretest was done to test if the model's level of attractiveness were comparable to the Influencer's. This pretest was made to further isolate focus on the manipulated variables, cropped or uncropped faces and Influencers or models.

3.3.2 Method and Result of the Pretests

For the first pretest an online survey questionnaire was made using the online software Qualtrics. The questionnaire was distributed to females, 18-35 years old, mainly through private messaging using online message applications and 76 valid responses were collected. Firstly, the names of the seven Influencers were displayed and the respondents were asked to rank how well they recognised the different Influencers on a scale from 1-5, where 1 = "Not at all", 5 = "Very well". Thereafter, the respondents were exposed to an overview picture of each Influencer's Instagram feed and following each photo, the respondents were asked to rank how they perceived the Influencers trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. This was measured on a Likert scale of 1 to 7, where 1= very high and 7= very low, additionally the option "Do not know" was available.

The results from the pretest were analysed with the use of the statistical program SPSS, by comparing means of awareness and perceived credibility. The Influencers with the highest awareness mean were Kenza Zouiten (4,75), Isabella Löwengrip (4,76) and Sofi Fahrman (4,50). Zouiten and Fahrman were finally chosen since their appearance were the most easily matched with lookalike models. Further, a credibility index was created out of perceived trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness and it had a Cronbach's Alpha of more than 0,7, which ensured the reliability of the pretest.

Table 1. Table displaying the result from the first pretest

Influencer	Awareness (1-5) $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Credibility (1-7) $\bar{x}$ (SD)
Angelica Blick	3.84 (1.34)	4.47 (1.26)
Janni Deler	3.97 (1.51)	5.05 (1.18)
Nicole Falciani	2.91 (1.66)	4.44 (1.23)
Sofi Fahrman*	4.50 (0.90)	5.61 (1.11)
Bianca Ingrosso	4.39 (1.02)	4.40 (1.31)
Isabella Löwengrip	4.76 (0.63)	5.52 (1.24)
Petra Tungården	4.05 (1.40)	4.59 (1.34)
Kenza Zouiten*	4.75 (0.59)	5.42 (1.30)
The Influencers marked with * were chosen		

The second pretest was smaller in scale and done with a qualitative method, to assure that the lookalike models had the same level of attractiveness as Sofi Fahrman and Kenza Zouiten. We asked 20 females in the target group to give their opinion on the models' and Influencers' attractiveness. A majority of the respondents perceived their attractiveness to be similar and we therefore decided to use these models.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data from the main study was collected in Qualtrics and then transcribed to, and analysed in, the statistical program IBM SPSS, version 24. A total of 333 responses were collected which later resulted in 247 valid answers. From the original number of responses, we excluded the respondents who did not perceive themselves as women, who did not qualify within the age span of 18 to 35 years old and who had a recognition level of less than five when exposed to an Influencer picture. Further, the respondents who had a level of recognition of higher than five when exposed to a model picture and the respondents who answered lower than five on their liking of an Influencer were excluded. The valid responses were then analysed through mainly comparing means of the three dependent variables, to answer the two research questions of this thesis.

Firstly, the four persons, two from each category, were computed into the two categories; model or Influencer. This was done after testing the effect of a specific person on the dependent variables, using a MANOVA test. Further, the two categories were divided into

cropped or uncropped groups, resulting in four independent variables. The respondents were exposed to a picture, at random, using the randomise tool of Qualtrics, however, to assure that the four groups became similar, we tested them on their average age and all groups had a mean of approximately 24 years old.

Secondly, the three dependent variables; self-referencing, credibility and purchase intention, were computed into indexes out of the multiple questions asked for the same variable. Further, the dependent variables were tested on the four different manipulated groups, using both ANOVA tests and independent sample t-tests for comparing means in the different cases.

Lastly, the mediation between the dependent variables were examined using the analytics tool of Preacher and Hayes (Hayes, 2013), PROCESS macro model 4. Through the test, indirect effects could be tested on purchase intention, effects potentially mediated by either credibility or self-referencing.

3.5 Data Quality

The *validity* and the *reliability* are assessed to assure the quality of this thesis (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.5.1 Reliability

An assessment of the reliability of this study was done to assure that the results in this study could be replicated and that they consisted of little random variation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The reliability of this thesis could have been increased if the study was conducted at additional points in time, with more time apart, however, due of the scope of this thesis it were not possible (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The choice to use two different models and Influencers, and later combining the responses into two categories, was done to exclude the influence of a specific product or person, and therefore increase the reliability. Additionally, a large sample set of 247 valid responses was collected to increase the reliability of the findings. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check for internal reliability of the indexes for purchase intention, self-referencing and credibility. All variables generated values above 0.8, which indicates a high reliability.

3.5.2 Validity

All dependent variables used in this study had previously been verified in prior research to increase the validity of the variables (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The respondents were randomly exposed to one of the eight photos and the chance of ending up with one of the photos was equally big, which was vital for the validity (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The age of the respondents assured a good spread between the groups.

For the findings to have external validity, the survey was designed to resemble an authentic Instagram feed and showed real Influencers and brand name (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Our study primarily tested female university students, and their responses might not be representable for the female population at large, which makes the results harder to generalise in broader terms, which often is the purpose of doing research (Malhotra, 2010). This would result in a lower level of external validity for this study, however the results we primarily think our findings are interesting to generalise for is our target group.

4 Result and Analysis

In the following section the results of the main study will be presented and elaborated on in order to answer the research questions of this thesis. Based on the findings, we will either accept or reject our hypotheses.

4.1 Control of Factors Affecting the Dependent Variables

Given that the first research question investigates two categories, models and Influencers, but it included two persons in each category, a test for person independence had to be made. A MANOVA test was therefore conducted to examine if the results in the study were linked to a specific person or if they could be representative for a category as a whole. The MANOVA test included all three variations of the independent variables; head or no head, Influencer or model and lastly, the specific person in each category, and tested them against the three dependent variables; purchase intention, self-referencing and credibility. No significant result was found when comparing the interaction of a specific person on the dependent variables and henceforth, the four groups could be merged into the two categories.

Further, the two categories, were filtered on two parameters; how well they were recognised and how liked they were. To certify that a respondent perceived the picture of an Influencer as different to a picture of an unknown model, we filtered the two groups on level of recognition. This would further ensure that the models appeared as unknown and the Influencers as familiar to the survey respondents, which contributed to a more precise study of the dependent variables. All respondents who had seen a picture of an Influencer, but answered less than five on a scale of 1-10 on *"How well do you recognise this person"*, were excluded. For models, all respondents who had a higher recognition than five were eliminated.

Additionally, for the Influencer category, responses were further excluded if they had an answer lower than five on "*I like this person"*. This selection was made in order to exclude the respondents who disliked the Influencer and therefore would rate them badly, consequently affecting the result and the accuracy of the manipulation.

4.2 The Differences Between Using Influencers or Models When Advertising a Product

In order to compare the effects generated by an Influencer or a model, a two-way ANOVA test was conducted, in which the means and significance was measured.

4.2.1 The Use of an Influencer Leads Increased Self-referencing and Credibility

The advertisement pictures showing Influencers generated a higher level of both self-referencing and credibility, compared to pictures including models. The differences noticed in these two variables were significantly different and hence the hypotheses, H1a and H1b, are empirically supported.

Table 2. Mean comparison on Self-referencing and Credibility between Influencers and models

Dependent variables	Model $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer $\bar{x}$ (SD)	*Significance*
Self-referencing	6.24 (2.11)	6.93 (1.90)	< 0.05**
Credibility	6.00 (1.36)	7.47 (1.34)	< 0.01***
* p<0.1 * p<0.05 **p<0.01***			

Hypothesis		
H1a	The use of an Influencer will result in higher self-referencing for the product compared to when using an unknown model	**Supported**
H1b	The use of an Influencer will result in higher credibility compared to when using an unknown model	**Supported**

4.2.2 Using an Influencer Have No Direct Effect on Purchase Intention

As argued for in [2.4], purchase intention is used as the measurement of marketing effectiveness of an Influencer or a model. Through the ANOVA test, no significant difference in purchase intention could be noticed between a model and an Influencer. However, using the PROCESS macro model 4 with a 50,000 bootstrapped sample (Hayes, 2013), an indirect effect on purchase intention could be proved, mediated by self-referencing (B= - .329, SE= .144, 95% CI: - .647, - .076), and evidenced by CI since it does not include zero. No mediation from credibility, on purchase intention, could be found using Hays' mediation test.

Consequently, the second hypothesis could not be supported, however an indirect trend was proved.

Table 3. Mean comparison on Purchase intention between Influencers and models

Dependent variables	Model $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer $\bar{x}$ (SD)	*Significance*
Purchase intention	4.72 (2.23)	4.88 (2.22)	0.67
* p<0.1 * p<0.05 **p<0.01***			

Hypothesis		
H2	The use of an Influencer will result in higher purchase intention for the product compared to when using an unknown model	**Not supported**

4.3 The Effect of an Influencer's Face When Advertising a Product

When comparing the effects generated when a respondent were exposed to an Influencer with either a head visible or not, three independent t-test were conducted, one for each dependent variable.

4.3.1 Perceived Self-referencing and Credibility Increased for Influencers Showing Their Faces

When an Influencer is depicted with a face visible the effects should be positive [2.5]. The result from the independent two-tailed t-test showed an increased value for both self-referencing and credibility with a 10 % significance level, Table 4, and therefore the third hypotheses are supported.

Table 4, Mean comparison on Self-referencing and Credibility between Influencers with heads and without

Dependent variables	Influencer, head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer, no head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	*Significance*
Self-referencing	7.26 (2.01)	6.58 (1.73)	< 0.1*
Credibility	7.68 (1.53)	7.24 (1.08)	< 0.1*
* p<0.1 * p<0.05 **p<0.01***			

Hypothesis		
H3a	Self-referencing will be higher (lower) for a product shown in pictures with uncropped (cropped) Influencers	**Supported**
H3b	Credibility will be higher (lower) for uncropped (cropped) Influencers when marketing a product	**Supported**

4.3.3 An Influencer's Face Can Not Directly Increase Purchase Intention

The last hypothesis states that when an Influencer shows their face in a picture, the purchase intention for the worn garment should increase. However, the independent two-tailed t-test showed no significant difference between the two alternatives and therefore the fourth hypothesis could not be supported. Still, using the PROCESS macro model 4 with a 50,000 bootstrapped sample (Hayes, 2013) an indirect effect on purchase intention could be proved, mediated by self-referencing (B= -.419, SE= .220, 95% CI: - .883, - .010), evidenced by CI since it does not include zero. No mediation was found from credibility on purchase intention.

Table 5. Mean comparison on Purchase intention between Influencers with heads and without

Dependent variables	Influencer, head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer, no head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	*Significance*
Purchase intention	5.06 (2.42)	4.68 (1.98)	0.37
* p<0.1 * p<0.05 **p<0.01***			

Hypothesis		
H4	Purchase intention will be higher (lower) for a product shown in pictures with uncropped (cropped) Influencers	**Not supported**

4.4 Summary of Hypotheses

Below, a summary of the six hypotheses is presented.

Hypothesis	Result
The use of an Influencer will result in higher self-referencing for the product compared to when using an unknown model	**Supported**
The use of an Influencer will result in higher credibility compared to when using an unknown model	**Supported**
The use of an Influencer will result in higher purchase intention for the product compared to when using an unknown model	**Not supported**
Self-referencing will be higher (lower) for a product shown in pictures with uncropped (cropped) Influencers	**Supported**
Credibility will be higher (lower) for uncropped (cropped) Influencers when marketing a product	**Supported**
Purchase intention will be higher (lower) for a product shown in pictures with uncropped (cropped) Influencers	**Not supported**

4.5 Additional Analysis

To further elaborate on the results, an additional analysis addressing the possible effect of an Influencer's likeability, on the dependent variables, was conducted.

In this thesis, we found that an Influencer's face generated positive effects on self-referencing and credibility, which was explain using the Meaning Transfer Model and previous research on faces in marketing. The face of an Influencer becomes a positive attribute since people like to see faces they recognise and because of that with a face visible, an Influencer can communicate more meanings. However, we believe that communicating more meanings only should be perceived as positive to a person that *likes* the meanings communicated and hence, likes the Influencer. Therefore, we examined how the means to cropped and uncropped Influencer pictures changed for self-referencing, credibility and purchase intention, when the liking of an Influencer varied. This was made through filtering the Influencer group on the statement "*I like this person?"*, on a 1-10 Likert scale, so that the lower level of liking included answers up to six whereas the higher level of liking only accounted for answers of seven and higher. From this, we could see that when the Influencer was more liked, their means increased on all three dependent variables. Furthermore, when an Influencer was less liked, a trend could be noticed in which the cropped pictures of Influencer had higher mean values on the three dependent variables.

Table 6, showing the difference in means between including a lower liking for the Influencers and a higher level

	Less Liked		More Liked	
Dependent variables	Influencer, head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer, no head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer, head $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Influencer, no head $\bar{x}$ (SD)
Self-referencing	4.78 (2.78)	6.23 (1.99)	7.65 (1.57)	6.68 (1.64)
Credibility	6.24 (1.12)	6.68 (1.10)	7.86 (1.50)	7.43 (0.98)
Purchase intention	3.25 (2.55)	4.19 (1.99)	5.32 (2.32)	4.83 (1.94)

5 Conclusion and Discussion

This section will further discuss and interpret the results and the theoretical framework in order to answer the two research questions. Firstly, the two research questions will be discussed, followed by a presentation of the findings, limitations and future research.

5.1 Are Influencers More Effective Than Models in Advertising?

It was previously noted in the result section [4.2.1] that respondents who had been exposed to advertisements depicting Influencers demonstrated a higher level of self-referencing, compared to respondents who had been exposed to advertisements with traditional models, a result predicted by the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989). We believe that when a consumer was exposed to a picture of an Influencer, a person they had prior knowledge of, they were exposed to more meanings that they could adapt to themselves and use in the creation of their own identities. A higher level of self-referencing for Influencers could also be interpreted as a stronger will, from the consumers, to take on the meanings communicated to them through the advertisement. Consequently, we argue that Influencer marketing manages to complete the last stage in the general Meaning Transfer Model better than marketing with unknown models, which generates a positive effect on consumers, in terms of increased self-referencing.

The level of credibility communicated through the pictures, increased when respondents were exposed to an Influencer compared to a model, as proved in the result section [4.2.1]. If we consider the categories in the credibility parameter (Ohanian, 1990); trustworthiness and expertise demonstrated the biggest difference between the respondents having been exposed to Influencers and models in advertisements. In line with the arguments presented on Celebrity endorsement (McCracken, 1989), an Influencer has the ability to transfer more meanings compared to an unknown model. We believe that being able to transfer a broad spectrum of meanings, as an Influencer manages, is vital for the performance on the trustworthiness and expertise parameters. Therefore, we reason that the increased credibility when advertising with an Influencer is connected to an Influencer's ability to communicate a more complex set of meanings compared to a model.

For purchase intention, no significant difference could be found between advertising with a model or an Influencer [see 4.2.2]. Repeated advertising campaigns have previously been

proved to increase marketing effectiveness (Pilcher, 2014) and we therefore believe that if an advertiser would like to increase consumer's purchase intention, regardless of if they are using models or Influencers, this would require more effort than one Instagram post. This was also shown by the low mean value for purchase intention compared to the other two dependent variables; self-referencing and credibility. The low purchase intention value may also be explained by the lack of suitability of Instagram as a platform for driving purchase intention. This particular platform might be more suitable for inspirational or brand building for both Influencer marketing and traditional marketing with unknown models, given the non-significant result.

Nevertheless, when applying a PROCESS macro model 4 analysis (Hayes, 2013), an indirect effect could be noticed on purchase intention, mediated by self-referencing. When analysed in this way the model showed that a higher level of self-referencing was correlated with increased purchase intention for both models and Influencers. However, no correlation between credibility and purchase intention, was found.

We conclude that, using Influencers in Instagram advertisements resulted in a higher level of self-referencing among the consumers and a higher level of credibility associated with the person in the advertisement. Further, no direct difference could be found on purchase intention between Influencers and unknown models.

5.2 How Will the Face of an Influencer Affect Marketing Effectiveness?

The result in section [4.3.1] showed an increased level of self-referencing for respondents who had been exposed to advertisements with uncropped Influencers, compared to those exposed to advertisement with cropped Influencers. This supports the hypotheses previously presented in [2.5.2] which states that the presence of an Influencer's face in an advertisement contributes to marketing effectiveness. We believe that the result can be explained by that the familiarity of an Influencer's face generates positive connotations for the respondents (Palermo and Rhodes, 2007). It has previously been shown that pictures of unknown models convey negative associations (Berg, 2015). A cropped picture of an Influencer would most probably be equal to a picture of an unknown model – in this case the Influencer *becomes* like the unknown model - which may explain the difference in self-referencing between cropped and uncropped Influencer pictures when included in advertisements. In that case, the

reasoning from the Meaning Transfer Model, for Influencers and models, apply to the difference between cropped and uncropped Influencers. In addition it is reasonable to believe that when Influencers show their faces, it would make them easier to relate to as they, with their faces fully visible, can convey more connotations, as discussed by Kanwisher and Mocovitch (2000). This further contributes to a higher level of self-referencing when respondents were exposed to influencers with faces.

Moreover, the credibility score was also higher for uncropped Influencers [4.3.1] as compared to the score for Influencers with cropped pictures. This result may be explained by the importance of a face for expressing feelings (Kanwisher and Moscovich, 2000). As argued in [2.5.2] a person should be able to communicate credibility better when being able to transfer more meanings, in terms of personality and lifestyle. Conclusively, the higher level of credibility reported for respondents having been exposed to pictures including Influencers with uncropped faces, indicates that the face is important for marketing effectiveness when using an Influencer.

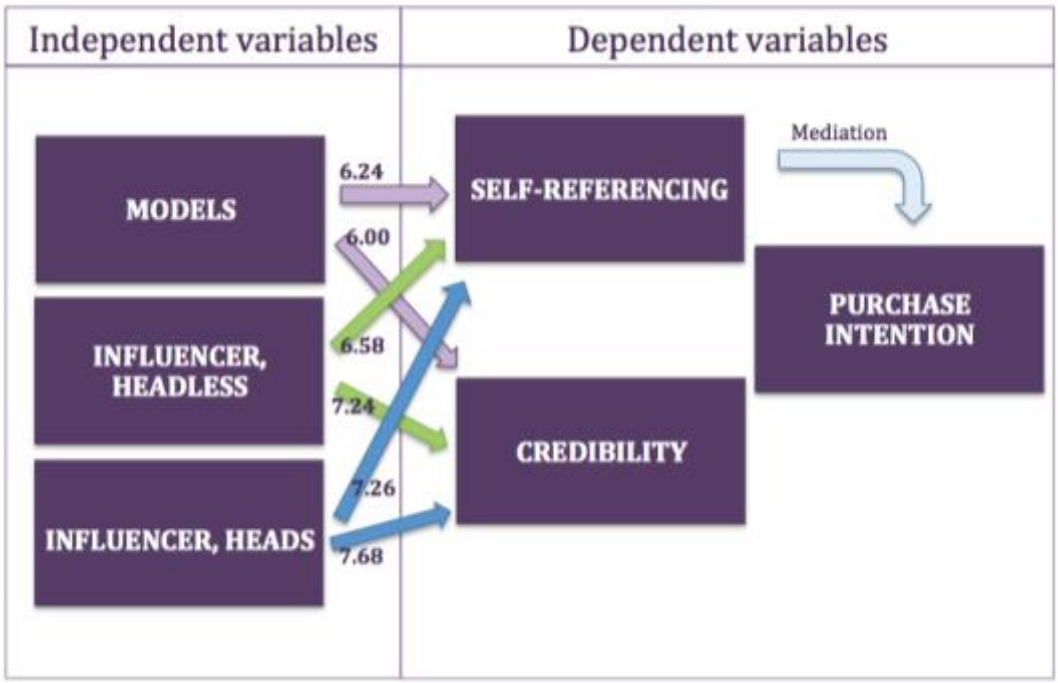
Results showed no difference in purchase intention between advertisement including pictures of uncropped or cropped Influencers [4.3.2]. We argue that the reasons elaborated on in section [5.1], regarding the lack of effect on purchase intention when considering Influencers and models, are applicable in this case as well. Still, an indirect effect on purchase intention could be shown in the model, mediated by self-referencing, using a PROCESS macro model 4 analysis (Hayes, 2013). Hence, purchase intention increased as a consequence of an increased level of self-referencing for both pictures with faces and without. The mediation between self-referencing and purchase intention was previously proved by Berg (2015). When examining the credibility parameter, we could not find any mediation by credibility on purchase intention.

As an additional analysis we looked into the effects of likeability, where the result showed that the more liked the Influencers were, the higher mean value they generated on self-referencing, credibility and purchase intention [4.5]. Furthermore, the Influencers with faces visible had a larger difference between the two levels of liking, for all variables, and when the Influencers were less liked, female consumers actually preferred cropped pictures. This tells us that a picture including a face of an Influencer makes the connotations stronger; it becomes

more positive if you like the Influencer and more negative when you dislike the Influencer, compared to cropped pictures.

Below, Figure 4 shows the results from this study. The figure only accounts for three independent variables since throughout the analysis, models have been categorised as one unit consisting of both the cropped models and uncropped models. Further, the numbers demonstrated in the figure represents the mean values the independent variables had on the dependent variables.

Figure 4, showing an overview of the results from this study



5.3 Conclusion

To summarise, through this study we were able to further understand the effects of an Influencer's face in marketing, proving that the face is beneficial for the performance of the advertisement since it improved self-referencing and credibility. Further, our findings support previous researches on differences between models and Influencers, where Influencers are more credible and increase self-referencing to a greater extent than models. Lastly, no direct connection between the advertisements and purchase intention was found.

Therefore, to the first research question; *"Are Influencers more effective than models when advertising a product?"* our answer is *yes*. However, if one only considers purchase intention as the most important measurement of effective in marketing then Influencers generated no direct improvement compared to using models. However, overall, the Influencer proved to be better given its increased level of self-referencing and credibility, two effects we argue to be desirable when advertising.

Likewise, the second research question; *"How will the face of an Influencers affect marketing effectiveness?"* can be answered in the same manner. We believe that an improvement on self-referencing and credibility is generally sought after, and hence the answer to our second research question will be *yes*.

5.4 Implications

The fact that the companies' spending's on Influencer Marketing continues to grow rapidly during 2017 (Hardy, 2017), findings on Influencers' effectiveness are highly interesting for both companies and marketers. The effect of an Influencer's face has, to our knowledge, not been examined before and these findings can therefore be useful to broaden the knowledge of Influencer marketing.

The study shows that Influencers are more effective than models, in terms of higher self-referencing and credibility, when advertising a fashion garment on Instagram. However, Influencers' do not directly affect purchase intention. This implicates that companies wanting to advertise with an Influencer to increase purchase intention, should not expect a change after just one Instagram update, probably more updates are required or a different platform or marketing method. However, if a company aims at increasing self-referencing and credibility, and have a more long-term perspective with their marketing efforts, Influencers on Instagram are effective marketing tools.

The results of this study, regarding the effects of an Influencers face, show that familiar faces are overall good for marketing performance. Using an uncropped Influencer, when advertising on Instagram, is more effective in terms of increased self-referencing and credibility. Hence, companies should ask Influencers to include their face in the Instagram post to ensure higher marketing effectiveness.

Furthermore, the absence of a direct effect from an Influencer on purchase intention is a useful insight for companies in order to know what to expect when advertising with Influencers. A greater understanding of how this type of marketing works can develop the industry and make the collaboration between companies and Influencers better.

5.5 Critique and Limitations

Due to restricted time and resources, limitations had to be made when writing this thesis.

Two methods were used for data collection; one was made through online messenger tools and the other through physically approaching people. We did, however, not examine the possibility of any differences in answers between the two collection methods. This could have been done in order to exclude the fact that the respondents might have answered differently depending on collection method. Further, the respondents group was homogeneous in terms of only including females between the ages of 18 to 35, with a majority of students. On the one hand, this strengthens the accuracy of the findings as valid for this particular group, on the other hand it makes the findings harder to generalise.

The effect from choosing Nelly.com, as the sender of the Instagram posts featuring the models, was not measured for and how it therefore affected the answers regarding models, is uncertain. Such a control could have excluded bias responses from consumers whose answers might have been affected by the brand, Nelly.com. Moreover, the Instagram posts could have been done to simulate a more authentic looking Instagram environment. For example, the pictures in this survey could have been viewed in an Instagram feed together with other updates, in order to simulate more of a real life Instagram environment where the user often scroll through a range of pictures. This was however not done, since a short and concise questionnaire was a bigger priority and therefore the answers might not accurately show how consumers would answer if the Instagram posts were real.

More extensive pretests could have led to a better main study. For example, a test of the attractiveness across all models and Influencers, not only between the lookalike and Influencer, could have been made. Furthermore, a more thorough pretest, in which the Influencers' specific types of associations and their suitability for the fashion segment could be measured, would have strengthened the results. However, given the scope of this thesis, such a test was not feasible. Additionally, through using a MANOVA test, presented in detail under 4.1, we showed that the result, after all, could not be linked to a specific person.

5.6 Future Research

The findings from this study should be interpreted as an inspiration for future research. Below, a presentation of the four areas we think are of highest interest will be presented.

Firstly, in this study the marketing effectiveness of Influencers is measured through self-referencing, credibility and purchase intention. These variables can give us an insight in how the face of an Influencer affects consumers, however they do not give us the whole picture. Therefore, to further expand the knowledge of Influencer marketing, and more precisely, depictions of Influencers, more variables should be studied. For example, the Influencers ability to affect a company's brand should generate interesting findings; given the amount of money corporations spend on Influencer marketing today.

Secondly, the findings made in this study are only applicable to women and female Influencers. In the dissertation by Berg (2015), men answered different compared to women when they were exposed to unknown models of both sexes. Therefore, future research should examine if the effects are the same for male respondents and male Influencers, or if they rather follow the findings by Berg (2015).

Further, marketing effectiveness was measured in relation to a fashion garment, using Instagram as the social media platform. Henceforth, broadening the study onto items in other categories and on other types of platform could give interesting results.

Lastly, the findings regarding the impact of liking on an Influencers performance [4.5] is a highly interesting field for future research as it can deeper the understanding for when and how Influencers can be effective in marketing, but also since it touches on the importance of choosing the *right* Influencer to generate output from the money a company spend. What effects and how to match an Influencer with a company profile is an interesting area for future research. This has previously been pointed out by McCracken (1989) as an important factor in the success of celebrity endorsement and should be further elaborated on in Influencer marketing research.

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7 Appendix

7.1 Questionnaire



Dear respondent,

This study will be used in our bachelor thesis which we are writing in marketing at Stockholm School of Economics. You will be asked to look at a photo and answer the five following questions. The photo will display a woman advertising fashion garment. Please look at the photo carefully and answer sincerely. The survey will take approximately 2 minutes to answer.

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this study!

Best,
Alice & Hedda

Stockholm School of Economics

How much do you agree with the following statements? (1 = Disagree completely, 10 = Agree completely)

	Disagree completely									Agree completely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
"I know who this person is"	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How much do you agree with the following statements? (1 = Disagree completely, 10 = Agree completely)

	1 =Disagree completely					10=Agree completely			11=do not know		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
"I like this person"	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you perceive this person to be...

(please answer the questions with the fashion industry in mind)

Attractive	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Unattractive
Classy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Not Classy
Beautiful	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Ugly
Elegant	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Plain
Sexy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Not Sexy
Dependable	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Undependable
Honest	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Dishonest
Reliable	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Unreliable
Sincere	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Insincere
Trustworthy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Untrustworthy
Expert	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Not an expert
Experienced	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Inexperienced
Knowledgeable	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Unknowledgeable
Qualified	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Unqualified
Skilled	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Unskilled

How much do you agree with the following statements? (1 = Disagree completely, 10 = Agree completely)

	Disagree completely									Agree completely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
"Someone like me could wear this garment"	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"This garment is intended for someone like me."	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"Someone like me could own this garment"	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"I would like to have this garment."	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"I would like to buy this garment."	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you identify yourself as a woman?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

What is your age? (enter in numbers)

What is the highest educational degree you have completed?

- ○ Upper Secondary School
- ○ University degree
- ○ Doctors degree or above

Handelshögskolan i Stockholm

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.