‘Perceived Authenticity’ and ‘Trust’ in Social Media driven Influencer Marketing and their influence on intentions-to-buy of 18-24-year-olds in Ireland

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business Administration in Marketing
at Dublin Business School

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DECLARATION

I, Isabel Bruns, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 20th of August 2018
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At this point, I would like to thank all those who supported and motivated me during the process of writing my dissertation.

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Finally, I would like to thank my parents, who made my studies possible with their support.
In the recent years, we have experienced a completely new form of brand communication: Influencer Marketing. Besides, companies are facing digital natives who do not correspond to the traditional ways of marketing. The characteristics of generation Z reveal that they are avid Social Media users and are less likely to build up brand loyalty because they prefer to trust authentic sources. A new conceptual model has been developed, examining the factors of Perceived Authenticity and Trust in Social Driven Influencer Marketing and their influence on the intention to buy. These considerations are following a thorough literature review where relevant literature on Influencer Driven Marketing, generation Z and the key variables Trust, Perceived Authenticity and Intention to Buy is discussed. Finally, the model was tested with the data emerged from a survey of people aged 18-24. The results of this dissertation show that Perceived Authenticity plays a key role and has a direct effect on the Intention to buy. In turn, PA has an effect on Trust which can be considered as positive. Moreover, Trust and its influence on Intention to Buy is also considered as a contributory factor. At the end of the paper, the findings are discussed, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations for future research are given.
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INFLUENCER DRIVEN SOCIAL MARKETING

Daniel Newman describes Influencer Marketing as the “next golden goose” of Marketing (Newman, 2015). It is, therefore, no surprise that in recent years we have experienced an entirely new form of brand communication via Social Media: Influencer Marketing.

The term Influencer can be defined as follows: “A third party who significantly shapes the customer’s purchasing decision.” (Brown and Hayes, 2008) However, this form of marketing is not a new concept. For decades, paying well-known and influential personalities to promote a brand has long been part of the marketing strategy. What is new in the current research is that the advertising media are not celebrities in the classical sense. Instead, they are convincing, brand-aware multipliers which are also consumers themselves. (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2018)

The need for Influencer Marketing is highlighted by a study conducted by “The State of Influencer Marketing 2018,” a survey of 181 marketers 86% of marketers have been using Influencer Marketing in their web advertising strategy: Moreover, 92% of the marketers surveyed said it is an effective strategy. (Sweeney, 2018)

In addition to that, the survey also found that 39% of marketers will increase Influencer Marketing budgets in 2018. Following up on this, the majority planned to spend between $25,000 and $50,000 on Influencer Marketing. The top three
platforms to follow Social Media Influencers are Facebook, Youtube and Instagram. This trend is also used by companies in Ireland. Most of the Influencers are very active on Instagram. For illustrative purposes, the following example of an Irish Influencer which is sponsored by a well-known Irish company was chosen:

(Instagram, 2018)

As one may see, an Influencer has to indicate a paid partnership with a brand. Which is then placed directly in an Instagram post under the name of the Instagram-Influencer with the label: “paid partnership with (COMPANY) (LOCATION)” (Instagram, 2018) Besides, the most popular types of followed content are Lifestyle, Beauty and Travel.
1.2 Generational Differences and Influencer Marketing

Generations (a group of people who were born around the same time and shared similar characteristics, preferences and values) are influenced by fashion trends, shared life experiences, language and nowadays, in particular, Social Media. (Yadaf, 2017) These influences are determining the way Generations view the world and how they will interact with consumers. (Armstrong, 2017) Some Generations are more likely to follow Influencers. A study conducted by Olapic (2018) indicates that people who are between 19-24 years old are especially likely to follow Influencers on Instagram.

In contrast, people between 25-and 35 years have been more likely to follow Influencers on Facebook. In this dissertation, the focus will be on people who belong to the very first category. Young people, the so-called digital natives, are continuously and in almost every situation online and look for new shopping inspirations. Generation Z describes the people born between 1995 and the late 2000s (Mastroianni, 2016). Companies pay attention to this target group -, especially in content marketing.

Furthermore, Generation Z is extremely demanding: Brand or company content is only shared if it is quickly receptive, entertaining, new and above all relevant. The content must, therefore, be authentic and creative. Moreover, research has found out that this Generation is more likely to trust authentic sources and communicates via visual language.
Consequently, marketers cannot target them efficiently. (Schneider, 2015) For this reason, Digiday's quote describes this Generation excellently and once again emphasizes their affinity to individualism especially about fashion.

“Their sense of style is their own, of course, informed by what they see and how they see it — but prescription does not appeal to them. It seems too contrived” (Digiday, 2017)

This thesis aims to show how Social Driven Influencer Marketing is impacting the purchase decision of Generation Z. Recent researcher in Influencer Marketing has heightened the need for Authenticity. It has to be discussed that researchers have not treated the effect and co-relations of Trust and Authenticity and its effect on the purchase intention of Generation Z. This dissertation aims to test a conceptual model which is then tested on Generation Z. Furthermore, the results of this dissertation will be helpful for research and companies to create more effective Influencer Marketing campaigns.
1.3 **Research Question**

The research question was inspired by the rising popularity of Social Media Influencers and the significant needs of marketers to reach Generation Z. Marketers need to change their communication strategy or the young people will move on to brands that do. (Schneider, 2015). There is no doubt that Generation Z is most likely to be reached through content on Social Media platforms, but there is still much scope for research. It turned out that Influencer Marketing proves to be particularly useful in order to target Generation Z. Also, the Perceived Authenticity of Influencer Driven Social Marketing and its effect on trust are believed to be closely linked.

Consequently, the objectives of this research are to test the factors (Influencer Marketing, Perceived Authenticity, Trust and Intention to Buy) on Generation Z. In the context of this dissertation, Generation Z is defined as people between 18 and 24. This age group should have the same characteristics as Generation Z and may also participate in surveys from a legal point of view.

This line of argument raises the following **research question:**

**Influencer Driven Social Marketing:**

*How the factors of ‘Trust’ and ‘Perceived Authenticity’ in Social Media driven Influencer Marketing shape the intentions-to-buy of 18-24-year-olds in Ireland?*

Current statistics show that Influencer Marketing can be used in every industry and on every Social Media platform. These same statistics also show that Influencer
Marketing is highly accepted in the fashion industry as well as on Instagram. (Launchmetrics, 2017) The term fashion industry was deliberately not limited because it offers me the possibility to use different examples and then to investigate them especially in connection with the Social Media Influencer and the digital natives.

There is a great need for the current research since Influencer Marketing is the assumed key to Generation Z through its Perceived Authenticity. Moreover, marketers, agencies and companies and perhaps Influencers themselves need to understand the connections between Influencer Marketing and the other constructs such as Perceived Authenticity, Trust and the Intention to Buy. Until now, there is no model which can be applied to unite these factors. As a result, it was decided to build up a conceptual model who takes these key variables into account. A conceptual model can be used as a guideline for Companies, Marketers, Agencies and Influencers.

No research has been done on this particular topic. There are a few already existing article about Gen Z and fashion and Influencer Marketing. However, they do not explain how Influencer combined with Perceived Authenticity and Trust is impacting the Intention to Buy of young people.
Our development of a conceptual model started with a thorough literature review surrounding the key phenomena of Social Media Marketing. This resulted in uncovering, comparing and analysing existing communication and influence models such as the Theory of Reasoned Action. Having discovered that the continuous dynamics of the marketplace and consumer behaviour rendered existing models inapplicable in many cases, a need was felt to design a new model. This new model, as proposed in this chapter, encompasses other existing and recognised models and fits well within the literature and theory. The aim is to test this proposed model through primary research.

In this thesis, the research proposes a conceptual research model. Four main factors (artefacts) were used in this modelling process. **Influencer Driven Social Marketing, Perceived Authenticity, Trust** and the **Intention to Buy**.

In the following section, the original model on which the conceptual model of this dissertation is based upon is explained first. Subsequently, the conceptual model is introduced and supported by hypotheses.
2.1 The original model - Hajili 2014

The first step to create a conceptual model is to choose the appropriate initial model which fits best to the current research situation and is hence able to improve the understanding of the subject. Some models have been tested for their suitability in the field of consumer behaviour. Finally, a suitable model was found in the International Journal of Marketing Research. The original model was taken from the article: “A study of the impact of Social Media on the consumers” written by Nick Hajili, published in 2014.

The multidisciplinary model from Hajili consists of four constructs: Social Media, Trust, Perceived Usefulness and Intention to Buy. Two of the four constructs (Perceived Usefulness and Intention to Buy) are building on the famous Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Furthermore, in the 30 years since its introduction, the TAM has been empirically tested and developed on many occasion. The constant development of the TAM can be explained by the rapid technological growth, especially in the e-commerce sector, where the construct “consumers trust” was added in the electronic vendor (E-vendor) as a determining factor to shop online (Gefen et
al., 2003) while the other two resulted from the literature review. This aspect of the research was also included in the model of Hajili. Also, the model has been validated by SEM-PLS. The structural equation modelling method SEM-PLS relies on component based-estimations and is estimating complexes which are based on the so-called cause-effect relationships. (Monecke and Leisch, 2012)
2.2 Development of New Conceptual Model

A model represents only certain aspects of the original. (Yilmaz et al., 2015). Based on the definition, it was decided to keep two constructs of Hajili's model to be precise: Intention to Buy and trust. Accordingly, two constructs of the model have been renamed and adjusted. The component Social Media was replaced with Influencer Driven Social Marketing which represents the core topic of this dissertation. Perceived Usefulness was replaced with Perceived Authenticity. From these four constructs, the conceptual model was formed and is named as follows:

**Bruns-Siddiqui Intention-to-buy Model 2018**

![Bruns-Siddiqui Intention-to-Buy Model 2018](image)
The purpose of this conceptual model is to highlight the effect of Influencer Marketing on the purchase intention of Gen Z while relying on the factors of trust and connection to Perceived Authenticity. Since the model is the central point of this work, it is frequently referred to in the course of the dissertation.

This dissertation aims to test the model on the people who are 18-24. This, in turn, should prove the hypotheses and answer the research question: How the factors of ‘Trust’ and ‘Perceived Authenticity’ in Social Media driven Influencer Marketing to shape the intentions-to-buy of 18-24-year-olds in Ireland?
3 **Hypothesis**

In this section, the hypotheses are formed and hence assume a pivotal role in the dissertation. The illustration of the conceptual model above indicates that the model also serves as a hypo dissertation model. Therefore, they are shown in the model as H1-H4 and function as a connecting link between the constructs. Also, hypotheses were developed for each construct of the model. For this reason; they are described in the following section combined with the model's constructs, as they are closely related to each other. The following hypotheses (H) are developed to measure the perception of consumers in this respect. Furthermore, the model's hypotheses and constructs are revisited in the literature review, and important literary background facts are clarified.
**Influencer Driven Social Marketing**

The component of Social Media in Hajili’s model has been changed to Influencer Driven Social Marketing which is supposed to be the key to the population of interest. Breuer (2017) argues that the number of followers does not matter. This point is in contradiction with the identified trend of 2018, in fact, the so-called Micro Influencers. On the other hand, you can see on Instagram that the obsession to gain new followers is immense. Based on observations and the fact that this has never been researched before the suggestion is that the number of followers is influencing the Perceived Authenticity of the Influencer which postulates the hypothesis:

**H1: The number of followers of the Influencer has an impact on the Perceived Authenticity of the Social Media Influencer**

**Effect on Perceived Authenticity**

The term which is often used in Influencer Marketing is Authenticity. Nowadays, consumers become increasingly aware of why Influencers work with the particular brand. The evaluation and success of the sponsorship with a brand are still decided by the community. Moreover, Authenticity is of great value for Generation Z. Among other things, Generation Z is only known to trust authentic sources. This statement postulates the hypothesis:

**H2: Only when an Influencer has proven to be authentic, trust/confidence can be built.**
Effect on Trust

The construct trust was adopted from the model of Hajili. In the past, trust has been proven to have a positive effect on attention to buy. (Hajili, 2014)

The prediction therefore is: young people tend to trust the actions of Social Media-driven Influencer Marketing when Influencers have proven to be authentic regarding brand content and how well this content matches the influencer. If these criteria are successfully implemented, the Influencer or the brand has gained the trust Generation Z. It is expected that this confidence will have a positive effect on the Intention to Buy of this Generation which postulates the following hypothesis:

**H3: Trust in the Influencer has a positive effect on the Intention to Buy.**

If an Influencer is not classified as authentic, then the Generation is also not capable of building up trust. The assumption is that without building Trust, no Intention to Buy can be created. This result in the following hypothesis:

**H4: Lack of Authenticity has a negative effect on the Intention to Buy**

### 3.1 Hypothesis Conclusion

In conclusion, one can say that the hypotheses will appear again in the course of this work. Finally, the four hypothesis all assume that the model's constructs are related to one another. With the possible exception of the first, because it does not cross-constructionally act. The necessary null hypothesis to be formulated for later research purposes is: the constructs are not correlated to each other.
4 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 LITERATURE INTRODUCTION

This literature review is divided into three sections. First of all, the basics of communication will be reviewed which will then lead to the theory of Opinion Leaders and then Social Media communication. Subsequently, the literature about Social Media Influencers will be examined as well as their characteristics and hence the overall credibility of Influencer marketing. Finally, the literature about Generation Z will be reviewed which includes characteristics, affinity to social media, purchasing behaviour and general relation to Influencer marketing. Last but not least, key variables will be elaborated that had a great influence to develop the conceptual model.

4.2 COMMUNICATION AND INFLUENCE

4.2.1 Basics of communication

In the literature of Communication Science, the sender receiver model, invented by Shannon and Weaver (1949) is still widely cited among the core authors (Krotz, 2009, Sender and Decherny, 2016) as the basic communication. This model defines communication in a message from sender A to receiver B. For this message to be clearly understood, sender and receiver must use the same coding or decoding. Communication problems evolve if they do not use the same code. This could occur if the sender and receiver understand something else under one term. (Krotz, 2009, Sender and Decherny, 2016)
Communication in networks is of great importance in this work. Most authors in the area of online communications have recognized that social-network platforms describe themselves as a network of social relationships consisting of several actors, connected to each other through emotional connections. (Karlsen, 2015) For example, recent research suggests that within the framework of network communication, the individual members are assigned different roles.

4.2.2 Influence & Opinion Leadership

After a quick look at the basic models of communication, the basic influence model is now scrutinized. Kratz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and Watts (2007) argue that some members have a stronger influence than other members. In this role, these members are referred to as Opinion Leaders. The realization that Opinion Leaders play a decisive role in communication was first discovered in the scope of the popular choice study by the Lazarsfeld, Barelson, and Gaudet in 1944. This study aimed to investigate the influence of the mass media on voting behaviour during the presidential election. It was found
that voters’ opinions were not influenced to the expected extent by the mass media, but rather by the personal transmission of individuals, the Opinion Leaders. Based on these findings, Kratz and Lazarsfeld (1955) then developed the two-step flow model. They define Opinion Leaders as follows: “individuals who were likely to influence another person in their immediate environment”. (Watts, 2007) Within the framework of this model, the message is conveyed through the mass media to the Opinion Leader, who finally transmits the information in a personal conversation to other recipients. The Opinion Leader takes, on the one hand, a so-called relay function, which means that he serves as the transmitter of the medial contents. Due to his position in the social network, he influences the effect of the message and takes on, on the other hand, an additional amplifying function. The role of the Opinion Leader may vary and cannot be determined by easily identifiable personal characteristics. According to Kratz 1955, however, certain characteristics have a positive effect on Opinion Leaders. The author states that the leadership of opinion can essentially be traced back to three attributes. One decisive aspect here are the personal characteristics of the Opinion Leader. Accordingly, sociability and assertiveness, among other things, have a positive effect. Also, the competence of the respective person has an impact on Opinion Leadership. In particular, increased interest and experience in a particular subject area can have a decisive influence. (Watts, 2007)

Furthermore, the Opinion Leaders often have a large number of contacts in their networks, often with different social backgrounds within different age groups. The sphere of influence of the Opinion Leaders is also an aspect to be taken into account. It can refer to one topic as a so-called monophonic Opinion Leader, or to several topics as a so-called polymorphic Opinion Leader. (Richmond; 1980)
A much more recent example demonstrates the genesis of Facebook. Facebook was first tested at renowned universities in the USA. It was known that the members of such universities were often regarded as Opinion Leader. Consequently, they assumed that a successful establishment of the social network would mean it would spread faster based on the influence potential of the students there. (Weinstein, 2017)

4.2.3 Communication in times of social media

Recent researchers in marketing have heightened the need for digital marketing since we are living in the era of digitalization. Thus, marketing takes place all over the world. In the last few years, a digital revolution has taken place, which is only pushed forward by the rise of social media. A considerable body of literature already exists about social media. For this simple reason, one should take a closer look at social media, which is responsible for the enormous growth of digital marketing. Most authors (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011, Mangold Faulds 2009, Sago 2017) define it basically as a term that describes a large number of digital media, applications, and technologies of Web 2.0. These have in common that the users can interact communicatively via posts and comments as well as actively participate in the design of media content via a certain platform on the Internet. Having established that, this user-generated content clearly differentiates Social Media from traditional mass media (e. g. print, film, radio, and television) Due to the broad possibilities and low entry barriers of social media, the users become a producer themselves: they can actively participate in the design and distribution of news and content.
Social Media has not only had an enormous influence on traditional marketing measures but also on traditional ways of communication. Hence, the recent finding of Zanger (2014) state that through the use of social media, the classic sender-transmitter communication model is changing fundamentally. The role of sender and receiver is no longer predetermined in the communication process, but the consumers as recipients of the communication message can themselves become the sender towards the company. Above all, they serve as senders towards other consumers, who in turn becomes the sender of messages. After this explanation, they refer to this process as electronic word of mouth.

Consequently, virtual communities evolve. Virtual and online communities use electronic platforms on the Internet via PC and mobile media to exchange communication content and maintain social relationships. (Zanger, 2014) This is an important finding in the era of digital communication along with the fact that members of the communities can come both from the company side and from the consumer side. An important role is played by the interaction between the members. This role aims to shape content and decisions in the sense of co-creation. Referring to co-creation, Kotler, and Keller, the core authors in the marking field, have discovered that the customer is offering invaluable insights. Most of the companies are embracing Social Media and are considering it as an important component of the communication strategy and thus enhance individual communication with the consumer. (Nikunen et al., 2017)
Moreover, Social Media narrows the gap between companies and customer and, therefore, is a useful tool in co-creating. (Nikunen et al., 2017, Kotler et al. 2017) After discussing this point, it is essential to consider how Opinion Leaders use Social Media to influence users in various ways. Since this research study is mainly focused on Ireland, it is necessary to take a look at the Irish Social Media behaviour.

Based on the latest statistics from the Central Statistical Office (2017), it appears that 70% of Irish people use the Internet daily. The question that arises is: which Social Media platform is used most? At the moment Facebook is still number one on the list of the most used Social Media networks in Ireland. 65% of Irish people have an account, and 69% use it daily. It is also noticeable that only 32% of Irish people have an Instagram account. 51% of Instagram users use the platform on a daily basis. However, statistics show that Irish Facebook account holders have only increased by 2%. In contrast, the number of Irish Instagram users has increased by more than 10 per cent in exactly the same period, which means that the Social Media will continue to show great growth potential in the future.
Figure 4-2 Social Media Usage Ireland Source (IPSOS, 2017)
In June 2018 1000 million active users were registered worldwide on Instagram. Nevertheless, the importance of Instagram for Influencer campaigns is increasing in almost all markets worldwide. In February 2018 a survey conducted by the Influencer marketing agency Activate, 88.9% of Influencers worldwide claimed they used Instagram for Influencer marketing campaigns more than a year ago. Instagram Stories was the most popular tactic for sponsored campaigns. (Enberg, 2018)

Figure 4.3 Tactic Used by Influencer Worldwide for Sponsored Campaigns on Instagram (Enberg, 2018)
The literature shows that Instagram offers the best communication policy opportunities when compared to other social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The Instagram platform was introduced in 2010 by Systrom and Krieger, as a further development of the App Burbn. (Instagram, 2018) As already mentioned, since its introduction, Instagram has quickly become one of the most popular and well-known Social Media platforms. However, the use of Instagram is not only restricted to private individuals but is also increasingly used by companies. Besides the constantly growing number of users, companies are particularly interested in the high openness of users towards brands on this platform. Another interesting fact is that Instagram is used by around 70 % of the businesses. (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2017)
4.3 SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER

4.3.1 Definition of Social Media Influencer

“Social Media Influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of others“(Freberg et al, 2011) In this work, Social Media Influencers are defined as follows: individuals who are regarded as Opinion Leaders on Social Media platforms in a certain topic of interests. (e.g. Beauty, Food, Lifestyle, Fashion...)

However, different kind of Influencers have been identified. First of all, the celebrity Influencer describes a person who has gained influence because of his or her fame. Due to the popularity, this Influencer type usually has a high range to exert an influence on other people (Senft, 2013) Influencers can be divided into three different categories regarding the number of followers. With some up to 1000 followers, we speak of the everyday Influencer. Influencers with a follower number of 10,000 to 100,000 followers are considered premium Influencers. An Influencer with over 100,000 followers as an a-list Influencer. The first two categories are often referred in the literature as micro Influencers, and as a result, the last category is macro Influencers. (Forbes, 2016)

First and foremost, Forbes (2017) claims Influencers with approximately 1 million followers can make up $50,000 per post. This existing fact has been contradicted with the new trend of 2018 being micro Influencers. Whereas celebrity Influencers have to be proven as ineffective, Micro-Influencers are momentary on the rise. (Mikro-
Marketers have observed that people become more sceptical to engage on content with a huge fan army. Another fact is that the like follower ratio decreases with the number of followers and causes fewer engagements. (Mikro Influencer, 2018) Moreover, it has to be criticized that although studies have been conducted by scholars in the field of Influencer marketing, this problem is still insufficiently explored and therefore has great potential for future research.

Back in 2015, Daniel Newman predicted Influencer marketing as the new golden goose of marketing. (Newman, 2015) Merely three years later this prediction has proven to be true. According to (Bladow, 2018) Influencer marketing is growing exponentially and shows no sign of decrease. This has already been predicted 7 years prior: Social Media Influencers are very successful, and companies can use tools to measure the Influencers’ relevance of the brand. (Freberg et al., 2011) This can be underlined by a recent article from (Laurée et al., 2018). The authors go so far and rate Influencer marketing as the most sought-after concept in the age of web advertising and hence companies who want to be successful in web advertising must pursue a so-called social strategy. These findings are directly in line with findings of other core authors such as (Freeberg et al. 2011,) Moreover; research has shown that consumers widely interact with the posts of Influencers by sharing, reposting or liking the content. (Freeberg et al., 2011)

### 4.3.2 Characteristics of Social Media Influencers

Although research has illuminated Influencer marketing, the range of scholarly articles about the characteristics of social Influencer marketing remains limited even though the topic is of high relevance. Based on the principles of Influencer marketing,
success factors arise which can be regarded as key factors for achieving the goals set within the framework of a brand’s sponsorship with an Influencer. Subsequently, the existing literature was investigated for these factors, and the results are represented in this section. A framework developed by Bryan Solis was chosen to elaborate the characteristics in detail.

First of all, (Solis) 2012 found out that the mandatory prerequisite for an Influencer to influence an individual in their behaviour is uncontroversial social capital. (Solis, 2012) According to scholars, Social capital can also be described as relationship capital and contains the potentials and advantages that individuals can experience through membership of a social network. Basically, social capital can be allocated to an entire network as well as to an individual. For example, social capital can be accompanied by advantages regarding useful information or connections. (Lounsbury et. al, 1999)

![Image: Foundation for Influence](source)

**Figure 4-4 Foundation for Influence Source: Solis (2012)**

According to Solis, the social capital of an Influencer is primarily determined by the factors reach, relevance and resonance. He also refers to them as the three pillars of influence, which serve as the foundation for Influence. (Solis 2012)
The first pillar indicates the reach of the Influencer which includes the connection to other users and hence indicates the potential spread of the information. Beyond that, the reach is also an indicator of the popularity, proximity, and goodwill that the Influencer can exert.

In addition to the total reach of an Influencer, the thematic relevance of the Influencer also plays an important role with regard to its influencing potential. This can be determined primarily by the factors of authority, trust, and affinity. The authority of the Influencer results from the invested time and energy of the Influencer in a certain topic. Instagram commonly post content about the lifestyle, which deals with content related closely linked with their own lives. However, some Influencers are also posting content about fashion, beauty, fitness, travel, which is not necessarily related to their own personal lifestyle. However, it has proven to be more realistic and connect such a topic with their lifestyle. Through their connectivity and engagement with the consumer, they are giving them the idea of a personal and exclusive

By trustworthiness as well as the perceived abilities or also the belief in the truthfulness of the statements of the Influencer, confidence in the Influencer is formed. The affinity, however, rewrites the natural affinity towards the Influencer. Together with the reach, relevance finally forms the basis for the resonance, i.e. the reactions of the community to the statements of the Influencer. From this standpoint, resonance is described with the help of key figures, such as the interaction rate of the community with content expressed by the Influencer. The factors, such as the number and duration of the presentation of the advertising content, affect the key figures. For this purpose, further success factors can be derived from research on the advertising effectiveness of celebrities. It was found that the perceived credibility of the advertisers
is closely linked to the success of the particular advertising measurement and the internalisation of the advertising message. (Solis 2012, Brown Hayes 2008, Kolbike 2016)

As central determinants of credibility, the perceived trustworthiness and the professional competence of the sender are often mentioned in the literature. (Solis 2012, Brown Hayes 2008, Kolbike 2016)

Furthermore, research has found that the perceived trustworthiness of the person suffers when the consumer assumes that the advertiser receives payment for this. (Solis, 2012) Since Influencers usually receive a monetary incentive for their cooperation within the framework of cooperation, it is often unclear to what extent the influence is still regarded as trustworthy. This problem has received substantial interest, but the literature has not revealed consistent results yet.

Influencers therefore often disclose extensive information. This is all the more so since from a legal point of view it is now necessary to mark the contributions as such for advertising purposes. Information about the cooperation partner does not necessarily have to be mentioned from a legal point of view. Another success factor is the perceived physical attractiveness of the advertising person. This is made up of the determinants of familiarity, sympathy, and similarity. (Influencer Marketing Hub 2017, Solis 2012)
4.3.3 Critical success factors for corporate Influencer marketing

The determinants mentioned, therefore, influence the degree of identification of the consumer with the advertiser's identity. The higher the consumer's prospects of improving his social reputation or similar benefits, the more likely he is to adopt attitudes and thus also the advertising message. However, the physical attractiveness of advertisers can only be identified as a success factor if it is an attractiveness-related product. The success factors, trustworthiness, and expertise are of much greater importance here. These literary research results already emphasize that the link between product and brand to influence be essential. According to Kahle and Homer (1985), Influencers which are perceived as attractive by the individual have more influence on consumers. Attractive Influencers usually have more influence if the product enhances the attractiveness of the user. These findings provide a potential mechanism for applying the match-up hypothesis. The so-called match-up hypothesis states that individuals who enter into social relationships take care that the attraction of the partner (through appearance, status, wealth, etc.) is comparable to their own. The two persons thus have a certain similarity, whereby the comparison criteria vary, and the respective dimensions can compensate each other. (Gwinner and Eaton, 2013) If one refers to this very hypothesis to the Influencer, a so-called fit is another success factor, which occurs between the Influencer of the product or brand. The fit describes the individually perceived accuracy of fit with the Influencer. The higher the perceived fit, the higher the credibility. In future work, investigating this phenomenon might prove important.
Some success factors emerge from the literature that companies must take into account when working with Influencer marketing. These must be considered in more detail in the following section.

Looking at the critical success factors for corporate Influencer marketing in the literature, it becomes obvious how important it is to choose the right Influencer that fits the company. If these are not followed, it could be that this promising marketing measure develops in an undesired direction. (Influencer Marketing Hub 2017, Brown Hays 2008) Decisive criteria include the reach of the Influencer, its relevance to the target group and the response of the target group to contributions from the respective Influencer. Also, an important success factor for the company is the connection between the Influencer and the company or brand, which ideally should have a positive effect on the success of the campaign. (Mirchandani, 2012)

Additionally, cooperation with the Influencers should be individually designed and adapted to the respective Influencer. The authors (Ceyb and Kurbjeweweit, 2017, Mirchandani 2012, Influencer Marketing Hub 2017, Brown Hays 2008) argue that it is important for companies to be aware that the Influencers are not dependent on the cooperation with the company and must, therefore, be convinced of the cooperation.

Furthermore, the Influencer is not a professional editor who can act independently after a short discussion, but rather a person who often has questions about the cooperation of companies should ensure that a corresponding contact person is available in the company and the Influencer framework of the cooperation is accompanied. Another important success factor is the perceived authenticity within the framework of the integration of the brand or product. This finding is important for this work because it is of great importance in the proposed conceptual model. The
decisive factor here is that the companies involve the Influencer in the implementation or development of the Influencer Marketing Campaign. (Ceyb and Kurbjeweweit, 2017) The Influencer himself knows the network members best and knows how messages can be integrated as authentically as possible on the respective platform. The Influencer’s advertising activity also affects the authenticity of the campaign. Thus, the credibility decreases seriously if the Influencer advertises several articles from various companies. In this context, the authors suggest positive long-term cooperation between the Influencer. Apparently, they make a positive contribution to the overall credibility. Ideally, long-term cooperation can lead to a continuous connection between the Influencer and the company. (Ceyb and Kurbjeweweit, 2017, Mirchandani 2012, Influencer Marketing Hub 2017, Brown Hays 2008) Again, testing the effect of long-term cooperation is on the target population would go beyond the scope of this work, but has undoubtedly research potential for future work. (Solis 2012, Kolbike 2016)

All in all, a significant number of success factors were identified in the literature, and future studies could investigate the association between them more intensely. For this thesis, the perceived credibility or authenticity and its relation to trust which then leads to the actual intention to buy are the focus of this work.
4.3.4 The credibility of Influencer Marketing

Moreover, only a few works in the literature demonstrate the negative side of Influencer marketing. In the journal of internet law, the authors shed light on the challenges opposed by Influencer marketing such as losing credibility among customers. Some consumers are surprised by the fact that they are receiving a marketing message rather than editorial content which is likely to lead to a disaster for brand equity and possible future consumer engagement. Consequently, the Federal Trade Commission which is termed by the authors Mudge and Shaheen 2017 as the consumer watchdog has taken note of this trend. Consequently, the following measurements regarding Social Media Influencers were introduced from FTC: First of all, Influencers have to clearly disclose when they have a relationship with a brand. Secondly, the sponsorship disclosure should be placed visibly. Thirdly, Influencers should treat sponsored tags like every other endorsement (Mudge and Shaheen 2017, Bladow, 2018, FTC, 2017) Bladow (2018) argues that it is still critical if the FTC clearly delivers the message that disclosure of material connection is not welcomed on Social Media platforms.
4.4 Generation Z

After examining the important facts about Social Media Influencer, one should now look at the generation, which according to most authors (Yadav 2017, Bradley 2017, Southgate 2017, Sago 2017) has a special affinity to Influencer marketing. The quote below highlights the connection between this particular generation and Influencer marketing:

“Gen Z craves a personal, authentic connection. We grew up watching and interacting with YouTube stars who were just like us, not elusive, Hollywood celebrities. As such, we appreciate the chance to engage with authentic, imperfect art” (CNBC, 2018)

Faith in companies, therefore, indicates a big issue for this generation due to the fact that companies are not perceived as authentic.

Moreover, only 19 per cent of the generation follows someone because they have a mass following. These were just brief insights into the characteristics of the generation. In the following section, this will be further researched and discussed based on current literature sources. (CNBC, 2018)
4.4.1 Characteristics

The core authors have identified all the characteristics in a common way Z (Yadav 2017, Bradley 2017, Southgate 2017, Sago 2017), so that the main characteristics of the generation: digital native, future-focused, communicating through image, self-awareness could be filtered out. Moreover, no author has addressed the issue of definition when it comes to generation Z. A clear point when the transition from millennials to Generation Z happened is not mentioned either in the literature reviewed. Armstrong (2017) counts the generation Z with to the millennials although there are some serious differences described by Yadav (2017) Throughout the literature, it becomes clear that there is no general definition of Generation Z. Several authors have attempted to define Generation Z (Yadav 2017, Bradley 2017, Southgate 2017, Sago 2017) but as yet there is no consensus definition. Schneider (2015) renamed Gen Z in igeneration. This change is justified by the fact that everything is about “me” in this particular generation. (Schneider, 2015) Akkucuk and Ulas 2014 refer to them as Generation C where the C stands for Communication, Creativity, and Collaboration which underlines anew that the scholars agree on their general characteristics but refer to different terms with regard to etymology.

Moreover, Bradley (2016) is referring to microgeneration which we will have to face in the future. Usually a new generation is formed after about 15 years. However, scholars warn that this margin is reduced to three years and that microgeneration are thus formed. Furthermore, the argument of Bradley can be underpinned by a study conducted by the Pew Research Centre, 92 per cent of teens aged 13-17 go online every day (Lenhart, 2015). Nowadays, it is indeed a challenge for this I-Generation to put down their phones, even for a short period of time (Palge, 2016).
4.4.2 Purchasing Behaviour

A recent study conducted by the Obuda university stated that only one respondent of the Gen Z does not use the internet on a daily bases. (Hidvégi and Kilemen-Erdös, 2016) According to them, Gen Z are able gathering information quicker than previous generations. At the same time, they not only have a more diverse Social Media presence than their predecessor generations but also use the digital channels more intensively. In particular, by their short attention span of an average of eight seconds, they prefer a visual, short-lived style of communication such as pictures, emojis or short videos. This short Attention span based on information overload on the Internet and MultiScreen usage and can be regarded as a highly developed information filter, which Gen Z helps to sort out the vast amount of content according to interest. (Armstrong 2014, Sago 2015) The majority of research states that the generation is using the internet as the source of information and in addition to that ask for the opinion of family and friend before making a purchase decision. One would also assume that the generation prefers online to offline shopping but the study recognized of (Hidvégi and Kilemen-Erdös, 2016) that no difference could be identified. The researcher explained that with their financial and economic status. However, this suffers from certain weaknesses because no proper information was given by the author and the study was conducted two years ago. It can be derived that future work should consider this subject more carefully.
4.4.3 Social Media

Social Media has had a great impact on how specific information is shared among a certain group of people. (Sago 2017) The authors (Yadav 2017, Bradley 2017, Southgate 2017, Sago 2017) agree on the fact that this generation spends most of their time on Social Media. In order to support this argument Sago (2017) refers to the MMNPL survey which has found out that 81% of generation Z use Social Media as a resource for online shopping. According to them, Facebook is the most popular platform. However, Bradley (2016) contradicts this by saying that Snapchat is the Social Media platform of generation Z. Bradley (2016), has a simple explanation of why Facebook and Twitter have lost popularity among young people, namely that their parents have been writing about them on Social Media since they were born. This point also implies to the fact that Facebook and Twitter are more used by individuals who are assigned to the generations before Gen Z. Because of this, Bradley (2016) argues that privacy is of great importance for them.

Moreover, Bradley (2016) says that they prefer Snapchat and Instagram over Facebook and Twitter because they are more likely to communicate via visual language. (Bradley, 2016)
4.4.4 Fashion & Influencer Marketing

The literature reveals that Gen Z has a particular interest in fashion. Moreover, Influencer marketing is very popular in the fashion industry. It would also be interesting to know if this generation is more likely to follow fashion and beauty orientated Influencers. Moreover, the facts speak for themselves: Traditional retailers such as Abercrombie and Fitch have suffered a loss of sales because they did not adapt quickly enough to the world of Social Media and therefore Gen Z. They were priced out by Zara and H&M (Pike, 2016). Referring to this particular topic social media, Southgate (2017) says that humour and celebrities are very effective for advertisements targeting young customers. Sago (2017) mentioned that businesses need to understand these impacts of media vehicles. Moreover, in accordance with the core authors (Yadav 2017, Bradley 2017, Southgate 2017, Sago 2017), authenticity is also a core value for Gen Z which results in the fact that they rather trust their friends than brands due to the fact they are not perceived as authentic by them. However, influencing is a way of gaining access to these young customers and also reach them. Influencer marketing will be to PR what digital was to traditional advertising. (Bradley 2016) Brands must create a relationship with Influencers. A message is also more authentic when it comes from an unexpected source argues Brandley (2016) such as ordinary people whereas Southgate (2017) says that celebrities are the adverting key to this generation, which does not correspond to the findings in the Influencer marketing section. Moreover, Generation Z likes to interact with an Influencer by liking posts, tagging friends in the post and also asking general questions in the comments. Often Influencers inspire these members of the other generation to also become Influencers. That is why many of today’s Influencers come
from the generation z. Brady (2017) emphasizes that they would rather hear from a friend or Influencer about a product than from the brand itself. Furthermore, brands must create the relationship with Influencers. According to Southgate (2017) and Bradley (2016), the forecast for Influencer marketing looks positive in the future. The next year is likely to see an enormous increase in Influencer marketing—perhaps Influencer marketing will even be the central way for the next few years in order to be able to reach the still fresh Generation Z. The fashion giant H&M is launching the fashion shop Nyden on the market: Nyden is an online fashion shop launched in January 2018. The highlight is that the collections are designed by Influencers. Moreover, some marketers have identified this as the future of fashion. (Young, 2017) The founder and creator of Nyden Oscar Osson states: “The future is more about authentic movements that are connecting deeply with groups of consumers.” (Segran, 2018)
4.5 PERCEIVED AUTHENTICITY, TRUST & INTENTION TO BUY

From the literature, some characteristics can be deduced that combine Influencer marketing with generation Z. These can be seen as intersections between Influencer marketing and the intention to buy from digital natives. These particular intersections have never been addressed in previous research. Prior studies have almost exclusively focused on either Influencer marketing or generation Z and thus have recommended Influencer marketing as an effective tool to reach the generation of interest. No researcher explored the field of how socially driven Influencer marketing is affecting the intention to buy of digital natives taking into account the factors of trust and perceived authenticity.

4.5.1 Perceived Authenticity

The literature review has shown that brands try to reach consumers more authentically with the help of Influencer marketing. Furthermore, the most important characteristic of an Influencer is to be authentic. On the other hand, generation Z prefers authenticity in every respect, whether for brands or companies. From this one can conclude that authenticity is the key to this generation. For this reason, the term authenticity must be considered in more detail so that it can be included in the research work and serves as a key variable for the developed conceptual framework.

First of all, it is necessary to shed light on the lexical definition of authenticity. The authors (Petromen et al., 2010) have discussed them thoroughly in their scholarly article: “Notes lexical definition of authenticity several definitions of authenticity”. In their conclusion, the final definition is addressed: according to their findings authenticity can be perceptual, conditionally as well as objectively or subjectively.
Another thing which is of great interest to this study is the definition which comes from the English dictionary and accordingly, it associates characteristics: credibility, quality and truthfulness to the term in question. However, a more systematic and theoretic approach is required for this study, namely the marketing definition of authenticity. In the literature brand authenticity (BA) and its measurement has been the main focus of researchers. Napoli et al. (2016) define BA as using different strategies and cues to enrich an object with authenticity. For the current work, it is also important to know how an individual constructs an authentic experience. Napoli et al. (2016) therefore rely on the initial findings of Rose & Wood, 2005. They describe the result of an authentic experience as blending the object based-cues which build a connection with their lived experience and aspirations and their imagination which is driven by fantastical elements. Following up on this statement it suggests that authenticity indeed is highly subjective and also changeable. Referring this to the recent findings of influence Marketing some authors like Solis (2012) already argue that the overuse of Influencer marketing as a negative effect on the authenticity and that this highly up-to-date marketing instrument will suffer the same fate as traditional mass marketing. This fact alludes to the assumption that the factor perceived authenticity proves to be one of the most important factors to explore within the Influencer marketing field.

Moreover, no study has focused so far if Influencer marketing is perceived as authentic by Generation Z. It is very likely that obvious advertising contributions from Influencers will have a negative impact on the authenticity of Influencers. However, it must be noted that these requirements can only be met if the Influencers themselves are regarded as authentic also distribute their products with the same intention. If this is not the case, it is not possible to build trust at all and has a negative influence on the intended purchase. The previous literature suffers from certain weaknesses because
this has not yet been investigated either. It is known that the generation no longer finds celebrity Influencer so authentic. It is also not proven that the follower number and above influences perceived authenticity. From the literature, it emerges that micro Influencer is more authentic than a macro Influencer. This reveals obvious gaps in the literature and this field of research still has to be explored.

4.5.2 Trust

The other key variable which has been identified is trust. Influencers need to gain the trust of their followers so that they can influence people's purchasing decisions. Moreover, generation z trusts friends and trusted sources. Previous literature has insufficiently explored the relation between trustworthiness and Influencer marketing. Most of the scholars refer to old research where they say trustworthiness is built when the Influencer is honest dependant and reliable. (Ohanian 1990) Researchers simply apply them to Influencer marketing on Instagram, which results in a lack of credibility because Social Media was not even thought of 30 years ago. Consequently, examining this phenomenon and its co-relation to other key variables can be regarded as extremely relevant.

The literature does not reveal a clear definition of trust. This results in the fact that different authors use different definitions. A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have been using the definition of Mayer et al, 1995: “Trust is the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.” Even though this definition is more than 20 years old, it is is still very appropriate and can therefore
also serve as a definition of trust for the research work. In addition to this Hajili (2014) mentions in his article the so-called credibility-based trust as well where he is relying on the observations of Ba & Pavlou 2002 that refer to the belief that the other party in the trust relationship is reliable and relies on reputation information. (Hajili 2014, Ba & Pavlou 2002). After the definitions have been clearly examined, it must of course also be examined how the population of interest establishes trust. The research of this dissertation aims to develop an overarching framework which is precisely tailored to people aged 18-24 which share the same characteristics as this generation. Broadly speaking, it must also be investigated how this generation builds trust-relationships. This answer can be found in some academic articles and reliable websites, which all have common results: First of all, Generation Z is a digital native. This fact is very important in this context because unlike previous generations; it significantly reduces the perceived risks and uncertainties in dealing with the online environment, which, however, were still soundly considered by previous authors. In this aspect, one must add that scholars found out that the perception of risk is to a large extent influenced by trust, both in a positive and negative sense. Pavlou (2003) mentions that trust and the perception of risk are closely linked and cannot be clearly separated (Pavlou, 2003). (IBM 2017, Hajili 2014). Given this orientation, and therefore applying this to the characteristics of generation it has to be clarified that the above-mentioned issue certainly does not assume that digital natives are gullible. The exact opposite is the case: these young people are very practically oriented and very sceptical by nature. That can be explained by the fact that they grew up in the era of fake news and have a tendency to strive for the truth. (IBM, 2017) Furthermore, they also have the digital savviness which makes them able to differentiate between fake and real news. This affects their brand loyalty as well because they would like to interact with brands on their term where they focus on quality and authenticity. Therefore it can be assumed
that this generation only builds trust when the sources are perceived as authentic. Subsequently, it can be concluded that the key variables of trust and authenticity are closely linked.

As a consequence, they are less likely than other generations to build up brand loyalty. (IBM, 2017) This confronts marketers with a major challenge. A study conducted by IBM showed that almost half of Gen Zers had a negative experience when communicating with brands. Considering their natural tendency to interact with; these facts are not conducive to the development of brand loyalty.

*Figure 4-5 Gen Z: Experience Brand Communication Source: IBM, 2017*
The innumerable articles which are desperately offering marketing advice for this generation underline this anew. However, the articles point out that brands need to demonstrate the following: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Resulting in the fact that authenticity is a core brand value which should be achieved by the integration of generation Z through specific events and experiences. Of course, all these characteristics apply to Influencer marketing, as Influencers contribute positively to brand value through their authenticity. In summary, they are the authentic bridge of trust between the brand and the generation.
4.5.3 Intention to buy

According to the core authors (Cheung and Thadani 2017, Ajzen 1985, Ayjen 1991, Brown et al. 2003), the overall aim of Influencer marketing is that it affects the purchase decision of consumers positively. According to Cheung and Thadani (2017), purchase intention can be defined as the great desire to buy a product in the very near future. However, the relationship between the final buying behaviour and the purchase intention is created up by the fact that people make decisions based on the information available. For a clearer understanding of this, it is necessary to jump into the year 1980 in the literature and deal with one of the most relevant models of consumer behaviour. The Fishbein model is a method which measures attitudes. From the subjective knowledge of the characteristics of an object (cognitive) and their evaluation (effective), the total value of a test person's attitudes to a test object is determined. (Fishbein and Azjzen, 1976) It can be derived from the well-known Fishbein model that an individuals impulse to take action can be seen as the most important determining factor when it comes to the actual behaviour.

Moreover, the relationship between attitude and intention to buy has been explored by many researchers and can, therefore, be validated by many authors. (Brown et al., 2003, Triandewi and Tjiptano 2013, 2007; Harris, 2012.) Referring this to social media, the recommendations of Opinion Leaders have a positive effect purchase intention.

Furthermore, some studies have looked at the importance of gender in the purchase decision, and they found out that females have a higher likeliness to pitch-purchase a product online. (Iakshmi et al, 2017) Some scholars also point out that the attractiveness of an Influencer also plays an important role in developing purchase
intentions. Future research could examine how this factor would fit into the conceptual model, but at this point, it would go beyond the scope of this research project. Other research regarding this highly important topic has also found out that a positive attitude is very likely to have an impact on the purchase intention of individuals. Having acknowledged this point, there are considerable scholarly studies about the attitude towards the purchase intention; this will not further be explored in this work. It can be argued that the general assumptions are generally accepted and validated these days and therefore were taken for granted when building the conceptual model. A study about the effect of Influencer marketing conducted by Tapfluence and Nielsen Catalina Solutions (2017) found out that Influencer marketing is able to generate 11 times the ROI of traditional marketing. Following up on this study, they also found out in a subsequent study that 83 % of consumers are more likely to buy a product because of recommendations received through trusted sources.

This section indicates that the main goal of advertising is to build some kind of a purchase intention, which is without doubt applicable to Influencer marketing. For this study, an intention to purchase occurs when Social Media users indicate: Firstly, a willingness to buy the product which was promoted by an Influencer. Secondly, when they are very likely to trust Influencers in terms of new products and trends. Thirdly, the intention to purchase increases when they have already bought a product on Social Media in the past.
4.6 LITERATURE CONCLUSION

Previous research can only be considered the first step towards a more profound understanding of how Influencers fit into the Social Media communication. The relevance of Influencers for consumers has developed so positively that more and more companies are now trying to incorporate these communication policy measures. Having discussed that the overall goal of Influencer marketing is to create an intention to buy. Moreover, although research has illuminated Influencer marketing, to the conducted literature reviews no research has been done to develop a proper conceptual model which looks at Influencer marketing regarding perceived authenticity and its effect on the intention to buy.

The literature on the generation Z is extensive, but it is too diversified, and studies measure too many factors without focusing on one thing. As a result, the whole issue lacks depth. A perfect example of this is the inconsistent definition of gen Z which reveals gaps and shortcomings. Moreover, there is barely literature which is connecting generation Z with Influencer marketing. Even though, the literature review has revealed that they have the perfect requisites to be reached through Influencer marketing.

There is still much scope for research into Influencer marketing and Generation Z. It can be derived that more work on this topic is needed. The conceptual model is specially designed for this generation and in testing the model with more valuable insights, and co-relations will be identified.
5 METHODOLOGY

First of all, the research design which consists of the research philosophy and the research approach is explained. After that, the research strategy is explained and therefore divided up into qualitative and quantitative strategy. Following up on this the sampling methods are explained which is followed by data collection methods. In addition to this, ethical issues are discussed. Finally, the limitations of the methodology were considered.

5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1.1 Research Philosophy

The term research design can often be referred to as the practical aspects, namely, how the research was conducted and is, therefore, an essential part of the overall research process. When adopting a particular philosophical approach, it will have an enormous impact on the following research strategy and the of how the data is collected. (Oliver, 2014)

For this study, the interpretivism philosophy was chosen. One of the reasons for it is that is subjective. In a nutshell, it also recognizes that business people are all different and research has to be done in a greater scope, looking precisely at the culture and living environment of the people. (Research Methods, Oliver 2014)
5.2 **Research Approach**

The approach of this dissertation is a mixed approach. On the one hand, data is collected through observation which justifies an inductive approach. On the other hand, the hypotheses which emerge from the conceptual model are tested. This fact also supports the deductive approach, which was selected in order to test the best-suited hypothesis approach (Creswell, 2007) One disadvantage of the interpretivism approach is closely related to its subjective nature. The chance that bias occurs on behalf of the researcher is very likely. As a result, primary data is hard to generalize due to the influence of personal opinions. This fact might have an impact on the representativeness and reliability of the data. However, the main advantage of interpretivism is highly suitable for exploring the new phenomenon.

The deductive approach is known for its suitability to test relationships and variables which is particularly demanded by the research question. (Research-Methodology, no date)

5.3 **Research Strategy**

The research strategy consists of mixed methods research approaches. That kind of approach includes collecting quantitative and qualitative data. This approach aims to integrate them in order to be able to draw conclusion and interpretations which are based on the combination of findings. According to an article about qualitative and mixed methods Social Media research, this approach is not unusual in Social Media research. (journals.sagepub, no date) In this case, the qualitative analysis of Instagram Influencer communication content combined with the questionnaire which attempts to test the hypotheses in order to validate the model.
5.3.1 Qualitative

The chosen qualitative research strategy was ethnography.

Modern ethnography is due to the work of Malinowski, the founder of modern ethnology, who established the method of participant observation within ethnology. (Hahn, no date) The aim of this method is in the broadest sense to grasp the participant's point of view. The ethnological approach: since May 2018, the ten most popular Influencers in Ireland were observed in accordance with their performance on the Social Media platform Instagram.

The Influencers listed below were observed primarily on the Social Media platform Instagram: The posts were saved as screenshots and their contents were analysed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instagram Name</th>
<th>Followers (05/18)</th>
<th>Followers (08/18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca O'Byrne</td>
<td>hautesofabulos</td>
<td>17,303</td>
<td>16,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Kavanagh</td>
<td>jamesalankavangh</td>
<td>101,006</td>
<td>111,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Cooney</td>
<td>louisecooney_</td>
<td>107,459</td>
<td>115,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erika Fox</td>
<td>retroflame</td>
<td>115,606</td>
<td>120,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doireann Garrihy</td>
<td>doireanngarrihy</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>155,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie Conolly</td>
<td>rosieconxx</td>
<td>181,583</td>
<td>192,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Jackson</td>
<td>sosueme_ie</td>
<td>234,685</td>
<td>235,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pippa O’Connor</td>
<td>Pipsy_pie</td>
<td>287,000</td>
<td>304,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Penna</td>
<td>georgiepenna 327</td>
<td>328,327</td>
<td>317,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Lipsett</td>
<td>roblipsett</td>
<td>437,000</td>
<td>460,007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 List of chosen Instagram Influencers (Instagram 2018, influencerdb 2018)
(Instagram 2018, influencerdb, 2018)

It was decided to observe Influencers with more than 100,000 followers because they are more likely to be sponsored by brands. However, the SERMO reports also ranks the rising stars in the Influencer business. This resulted in the fact that to observe the Instagram behaviour of Rebecca O’Byrne @hautesofabulous with barely 17.3 followers on Instagram since the literature has revealed that Micro-Influencers are on the rise. In her case, even more, attention was paid to whether she starts working with companies. (SERMO, 2017)

These Influencers were selected by the SERMO Influencer ranking. In this ranking, the best-known Influencers for each country are assigned. The best-known Influencer is Suzanne Jackson, according to SERMO. However, Suzanne Jackson reaches most of the audience via Facebook, which is not part of the favoured Social Media Platform of the target population. Otherwise, it would go beyond the scope of the work.

Some of the companies who work with Influencers have been identified as well as how the Influencer is integrating the branded content in the post.

The long time of ethnological research has helped tremendously to create the conceptual model. In this way, co-relations could be recorded, and the identification of key variables was supported by the qualitative findings. Moreover, qualitative research results were also the basis for developing the questionnaire.
5.3.2 Quantitative:

The quantitative data was conducted with a survey. The overall aim of the quantitative approach is to test the developed conceptual model. (s. Data Collection, Instruments and Tools) For this reason, the survey serves as the tool to test the model on people aged 18-24 which could close gaps exposed in the literature review and prove the stated hypotheses.

The ethnological approach illuminated Influencers and interplay of the brand-Influencer and consumer. Combining survey and ethnographic methods in order to arrive at rounded results so that a better analysis of the data is possible and reasonable conclusions can be drawn.

5.4 Sampling - Selecting Respondents

In this kind of research which employs qualitative data as well, there is obviously no need to use the probability sampling. Moreover, non-probability methods are usually within an interpretive approach and tend to be smaller than probability samplings. (Oliver, 2014) The sampling system might be different in this approach, but it is still of great importance to adequately justify the type of sample, the number of people in the sample and last but not least the process in which the participants were selected. (Oliver, 2014)
5.4.1 Qualitative:

Purposeful sampling is often used for the identification of cases which are full of information, and this information should be related to the phenomenon of interest. (Palinkas et al., 2015) In this case, the source of information is their Instagram page and their performance on it which should be put into the context of Influencer marketing of brands.

Participants (Irish Instagram Influencers) were selected for their status Instagram which includes at least 10,000 followers on Social Media. The SERMO Influencer ranking was used as a guideline for the choice of the Influencers which were later included in the questionnaire.

5.4.2 Quantitative:

The sampling for quantitative data is based on the outcome of the literature review, namely that generation or millennials are more likely to listen to friends or Influencer since they are digitally native and have been therefore identified to provide useful data on the research purpose. For the quantitative data, the participants have been identified due to their generational characteristics to provide extraordinary insights into the research question. This also justifies a non-probability sampling method and therefore can be assigned to the purposeful sampling. (Palinkas et al., 2015)
5.4.3 Sampling frame:

5.4.3.1 Population:

In order to be able to conduct a survey, a sampling frame is needed. First of all, the population, that is the total group of people of interested in had to be defined. (Oliver, 2014)

Furthermore, the target group of this thesis are people between 18 and 24. The Central Statistics Office (2018) provided the data. The population was found by people who are listed in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24. With this data, our population of interest could be identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19-year-olds</td>
<td>308,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24-year-olds</td>
<td>276,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Population 15-24-year-olds (Central Statistics Office, 2018)

(Central Statistics Office, 2018)

The data can be used to calculate the size of the target population:

\[
\frac{308,500}{5} \times 2 = 122,2122,2 + 276,3 = 398,5 \text{ thousand}
\]

(Central Statistics Office, 2018)

1 thousand
5.4.3.2 Sample Size

The larger the sample size, the more statistically relevant it is. This implies to the fact that the results will not happen just by coincidence, which is mandatory when testing a conceptual model for its relevance.

For the qualitative part of the research, it was necessary to calculate a sample size. For this reason, the following formula was applied to determine the sample size:

\[
\frac{z^2 \times p (1-p)}{e^2} \div \left(1 + \frac{z^2 \times p (1-p)}{e^2 N}\right)^2 = 384
\]

However, 384 is the optimal sample size. Unfortunately, the optimal sample size will not be reached in this dissertation. This is due, on the one hand, to the tight time frame that is given and on the other hand, to the fact that there are currently many surveys circulating on Social Media channels. This huge amount of survey related content has no positive effect on people's willingness to participate in surveys. That is the reason why the survey was conducted until the analyzed patterns repeat and stagnate.

The overall sampling frame can be summarized as follows:

\(N= \text{represents the population size, } e=\text{represents margin of error, } z=\text{z-score (z-score for desired confidence level of 95%=1.96) (SurveyMonkey, 2018)}\)

Confidence level: 95% Margin of Error: 5%
• Young people male/female 18-24
• Social Media users
• Students & young professionals
• Both Sex
• Location: Dublin Ireland
• Year: 2018

5.5 DATA COLLECTION

5.5.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Observation is one of the central data collection methods in empirical social research and describes the visual and auditory observation of events such as social or interactive processes and situations as well as courses of action. (Oliver, 2014) The data collected for the quantitative part of the dissertation was collected from the Social Media Content produced by Instagram Influencers, the brands they have sponsorships with and the activity of their followers especially the interactivity between Influencer and Follower.
5.5.2 Quantitative Data Collection

In order to conduct the quantitative data collection, it was decided on a standardized online survey. In an online survey, the questionnaire is saved on a web server and can be completed by the respondents and location as well as time-independently. Thus, the results cannot be manipulated by the interviewer. The disadvantage of online surveys is the high abort rate. Of course, this method has the advantage, especially in direct comparison with other survey methods, that it can be carried out particularly cost-effectively. Finally, the standardization of the questionnaire means that each participant in the survey was given the same questionnaire containing the same questions in the same chronological order. (Oliver 2014, Creswell, 2007) The questionnaire was designed with survey monkey because it is the most cost-effective method and offers better analyzing options than google docs.

The survey was spread among Social Media platforms because the target group is digital native and prefers that to face to face communication. The Social Media platforms selected were Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. The survey was posted in various Irish student groups and Marketing Groups on LinkedIn. Moreover, it was spread by one Micro-Influencer who lives in Dublin and has more than 3500 Followers. Furthermore, the survey was announced in Instagram Stories, and the survey-link was deposited in the biography on the profile page. Unfortunately, only Influencers with more than 10,000 followers can activate the link so that you can click on it directly in the Instagram story.
With the online survey-tool survey monkey it was possible to create different collectors, for various ways of collecting data so that one was able to see from which Social Media Platform most respondents come from.

A total of four collectors were created. The first two Collector counted the responses that were received through posts in certain groups on Facebook and LinkedIn. The fourth collector counted the responses from a post on Facebook. The third collector counted the responses received from Instagram. The following pie chart illustrates the number of responses collected by each collector.
In total, 125 people participated in the survey, but only 116 questionnaires respondents have filled out the survey entirely. The questionnaires that were partly not filled and had displayed errors were not included.

In this case, Facebook groups have proven to be the most effective tool for data collection.

The result was abysmal for the Linked groups. Only four per cent of the answers were received. Maybe it occurred because most of the people at LinkedIn are over the age of 25 and did not feel addressed by the survey. Although it was ensured that the survey was only posted in Irish groups, some of the respondents stated that they were not from Ireland. Unfortunately, it was not possible to influence this and thus represents a further disadvantage of an online survey. One has very little influence on whom one reaches geographically since all nationalities are represented on social media. The Facebook post was moderately effective and collected 15 % of the responses. Unfortunately, only a few answers (4%) have been received via Instagram, which may
be because one could not go directly to the link, but to the profile of the Micro-Influencer.

5.6 INSTRUMENTS AND TOOLS

Various methods were used to create the questionnaire. In addition to the mandatory content (anonymisation of data, informed consent), it was also ensured that the time required, and the objective of the survey was mentioned. Furthermore, the participants were given the opportunity to contact either the supervisor or oneself in case of any questions that might arise.

5.6.1 Design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed so that it aims to answer the hypotheses and represents the co-relations between the constructs of my model. After introductory demographic questions and questions related to the behaviour on Social Media platforms, the questionnaire was developed according to the model's constructs.

Nick M. Hajili, the developer of the original model on which the conceptual model is based, was asked to provide the questionnaire for research purposes of this work. This would increase the validity of this dissertation. He gave his consent, and the questionnaire was included in the development of the questionnaire. (s. Appendix A) However, Hajilis questionnaire was only partially used for the constructs "Trust" and
"Intention to Buy". It is worth mentioning that only those parts of the questionnaire were included which originate from the extracted constructs.

Moreover, the results of the ethnological research were of great value while designing the questionnaire

5.6.2 Question Types and Wording

For this questionnaire, closed questions were chosen. Moreover, closed-end questions are extremely useful when it comes to a quantitative research approach. It was decided on the following types of closed-end question: Dichotomous, also known as two-point question, multiple choice questions and scaled questions (Likert scale). (Reja et al., 2013)

Hajili (2014) used for all questionnaire items a 5 point Likert-scale. This was adopted for 7 out of 19 questions, What is more; the extensive quantitative research resulted in the ability to identify various multiple choice answer options.

The wording of the questionnaire is crucial because a quick and proper understanding of the questionnaire is time-efficient. Therefore, everyday’s language of the target audience was considered, and the wording of the questionnaire was adjusted accordingly. (s. Questionnaire)
1.1.1 Questionnaire

Demographic Questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am..</td>
<td>▪ Male&lt;br&gt;▪ Female&lt;br&gt;▪ Prefer not to tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am..</td>
<td>▪ Between 18 and 24&lt;br&gt;▪ Older than 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are you living in Ireland at the moment?</td>
<td>▪ Yes&lt;br&gt;▪ No, I only follow my friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 Questionnaire: Demographic Questions*

Social Media Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. I mostly use ... (Pick all that apply)</td>
<td>▪ Instagram&lt;br&gt;▪ Facebook&lt;br&gt;▪ Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I use Social Media ...</td>
<td>▪ Several times a day&lt;br&gt;▪ Daily&lt;br&gt;▪ few times a week&lt;br&gt;▪ weekends only&lt;br&gt;▪ Infrequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Questionnaire: Social Media Behaviour*

---

3 The Literature reveals that Marketing has an impact on the purchasing decision of young people aged 18-24 which share the characteristics of Generation Z..
Influencer Driven Social Marketing

Aims to test the attitudes of participants towards Social Media Influencers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. I follow Influencers on Social Media</td>
<td>▪ Yes ▪ No, I only follow my friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Which of these Irish Influencers do you follow…. (pick all that apply)</td>
<td>▪ eleven Irish Influencers 4 ▪ Other:__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I follow Influencers who specialize in…</td>
<td>▪ Fashion ▪ Beauty ▪ Fitness ▪ Lifestyle ▪ Travel ▪ Other:__________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 Questionnaire: Influencer Driven Social Marketing*

---

4 The eleven Irish Influencers emerged from the quantitative Analysis (s. Table on p. ___)
**Perceived Authenticity**

**Aims to test (H1):** The number of followers of the Influencer has an impact on the Perceived Authenticity of the Social Media Influencer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9. I think a credible\(^6\) Influencer has at least: | ▪ 10,000 – 30,000 followers  
▪ 30,000 - 50,000 followers  
▪ 50,000 - 100,000 followers  
▪ 100,000 + followers |
| 10. I trust the Influencers who have a brand’s sponsorship | 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree |
| 11. I prefer to read/follow the | ▪ Social posts  
▪ Personal posts  
▪ Product placement/promotion post  
▪ Product review post |
| 12. I think that the advertising messages do not affect the overall credibility of the influencer | 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree |

*Table 6 Questionnaire: Perceived Authenticity*

**Aims to test co-relations between PA and Trust (H2):** Only when an Influencer has proven to be authentic, trust/confidence can be built.

**Aims to test co-relations between PA and Intention to Buy (H4):** Lack of Authenticity has a negative effect on the Intention to Buy

---

\(^6\) In this context the word “credible” is used, although the term “Authenticity” was used in the model. The reason for this is that credible is more often used in everyday language and is easier to understand.
### Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I prefer to follow Influencers who post</td>
<td>- Social content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Product placement/promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Product review content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I think the Influencers who communicate with their followers,</td>
<td>- 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for example by answering questions asked in the comments) are more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Based on my experience with Influencers I know they care about</td>
<td>- 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their followers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Questionnaire: Trust

**Aims to test co-relation between Trust and Intention to Buy H3:** Trust in the Influencer has a positive effect on the Intention to Buy.

---

7 This question was taken from the questionnaire of Hajili (2014). Consequently, it had to be adapted to Influencer Driven Social Marketing and hence “favourite social networking site” Hajili (2014) was replaced by Influencers. “users” Hajili (2014) was replaced with followers. (s. Appendix: Questionnaire Hajili, last question under the section “Trust
### Intention to Buy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. My favourite Influencers are important to me when it comes to new trends/products(^8)</td>
<td>▪ 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 17. I interact with an Influencer by...\(^9\)                             | ▪ Liking the post  
▪ Comment on the post  
▪ Comment on the post by tagging friends  
▪ Comment on the post by asking a question  
▪ I have never done that \(^10\)                                                                 |
| 18. I am very likely to buy a product which has been promoted by an Influencer on Social Media | ▪ 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree                           |
| 19. I have already bought a product which has been promoted on...         | ▪ 5 Point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree                           |

\(^8\) Refers to the characteristics of Gen Z, they are always looking for new trends on Social Media.

\(^9\) Refers also to Gen Z due to the fact that they like to interact with brands. This behaviour was also identified by quantitative research on Instagram that is how the answer options emerged for this question.
5.6.3 Secondary Research Databases

The following research databases have been used to gather data obtained through pure observation on Instagram.

**INFLUENCER.DB** is a database for Instagram Influencer and additional information which goes way beyond the number of followers. (influencerdb, 2018)

**Deep social** is another Influencer database which analyses the Influencers performance as well and moreover develops detailed Influencer analyses reports with valuable information on for instance brands, consumer engagement and development as well as the target audience of the influencer. (s. Appendix reports)
5.7 **Research Ethics**

Since all research participants are human beings, were addressed with respect, care and sensitivity. Ethical issues are a complex theme, and people’s opinions differ about the way they should be addressed. Classical frameworks of ethics do not provide an absolute answer; they can only serve as general guidance. (Oliver, 2014) A few procedural principles are relevant to social-orientated research. The best-established principle is that of informed consent (Oliver, 2014). The participants were informed in an informed consent sheet about the key aspects of the study, the method for instance that everyone was provided with the same information. Another ethical issue is that of anonymity. This mainly includes that the name of the participants is not mentioned in the final research. Another aspect is that the opinion they state could in no way be associated with them. Without containing the consent, the research could not gather. Some researches argue that the interviewer should reward the participants because they are giving us their precious time. However, an incentive was not necessary for the scope of the survey. It is also worth mentioning that the primary research data is stored in an extremely safe place which is password protected and only accessible through the researcher. Last but not least, the research must be carried out without breaking any ethical rule. (Oliver, 2014)
5.8 LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

During the process of most of the limitation were faced during the data collection. Due to the massive overload of surveys on social media, the response rate was meagre. Also, collecting response from people who live in Ireland was extremely hard because social networks consist of various nationalities. Another concern is the credibility of followers on Instagram since everybody could buy followers. Moreover, would go beyond the scope of the dissertation even though they would have been a valuable addition to the dissertation. The obstacle is the narrow time frame that is given for the current research. Moreover, a full membership on influencerDB and deep social would have been beneficial in order to expand the qualitative analysis. It would have also been desirable to conduct the study on Generation Z only, but it had to be considered that a part of Generation Z is under 18. Primary research data would have been hard to collect.
6 DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 DATA ANALYSIS INTRODUCTION

This analysis aims to prove the developed conceptual model and to identify patterns and trends regarding Generation Z. The questionnaires have been coded and analysed with SPSS. After that, the data was put into graphs and tables which were constructed with SPSS as well. Moreover, the data analysis of this research can be divided into two sections:

First of all, an overview is given which represents the main findings without going into much detail due to the limited scope of the results. Some generational aspects and characteristics could be identified, and hence the results of a sample can be transferred to the population. This is necessary in order to examine the preferences of Generation Z and how they can be applied to the model. The analysis follows the structure of the questionnaire.

The second section deals with the hypothesis testing. The representation of the data follows in so-called cross tables and correlations tables. At the end of this chapter, the results of the analysis are included in the conceptual model, and the overall results can thus be visually summarized in their interaction and significance.
6.2 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

6.2.1 Demographic Questions

At the beginning of this analysis, demographic aspects are clarified. The following pie chart “Gender” shows the population of the survey by gender. The blue part of the pie chart represents the male participants, and the red part represents the female participants. Of the 116 participants, 36 (31%) per cent are male and 80 (69%) per cent female. It should also be noted that 61% of the male participants between 18 and 24 and 77% of the female participants belong to this age group. A total of 84 participants come from the target group 18-24. The other participants will of course also be considered. This makes it much easier to make comparisons, and the generational differences can be crystallised out all the better. As mentioned in the Data Collection chapter, not all survey participants live in Ireland.

Figure 6-1 Gender, Female and male between 18-24
Therefore, the two lower pie charts represent the people who are between 18-24 and live in Ireland. These are also divided into male and female. Here the blue slice stands for the people living in Ireland and the red one for the participants from other countries. However, it is interesting to know that 63% of the female participants are between 18-24 and live in Ireland. On the other hand, only 53% of the male participants live in Ireland.

6.2.2 Social Media Behaviour

Two questions were asked: on the frequency of use of the Social Media platform and which platform is used most. A prerequisite for this survey was that the participants use Social Media, which was also achieved because the survey was only distributed on Social Media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male 18-24</th>
<th>Female 18-24</th>
<th>Male older than 24</th>
<th>Female older than 24</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Other Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a day</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times a week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mostly use...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9 Social Media Frequently Divided by Gender, age and Country*

The table above combines demographical data with the Social Media component. Also, it emerged that 78 % of respondents use Social Media "Several Times a Day". 21 respondents stated that they use Social Media on a daily basis. Only one participant from the group of 18-24-year-olds has ticked the third option "Few Times a Week". Among people over 24 years of age, two people indicated "Few times a
Week" and one person crossed on Social Media to use "infrequently". The category "Weekends only" was not chosen by any of the respondents. After analyzing the frequency of Social Media usage, the most popular Social Media platform still needs to be determined. The Social Media platform Instagram is undoubtedly the most commonly used. 72% (84 respondents) said they would use Instagram the most. Facebook is used the most by 27% of respondents, and finally, Twitter was at the bottom of the list, with only one person (0.08%) using it the most. In the group of 18-24-year-olds, 78% preferred to use Instagram, while in the group of 24-year-olds and older, only 56% chose Instagram. 44% chose Facebook as their most used social network.

It can be concluded that Instagram is the most popular Social Media platform according to the survey. Moreover, 78% of the people living in Ireland used Instagram the most. Thus, no geographical difference can be determined.

6.2.3 Influencer Driven Social Marketing

The first pie chart shows that most participants (86% blue slice) follow Influencers and serves as an indicator that Influencer Marketing is widespread. Besides, the second pie chart, 89% (green slice) of the 18-24-year-olds follow Influencers on Social Media follow Influencers on Social Media whereas 11% (light blue slice) only follow their friends. This fact suggests that this form of marketing is particularly popular and respected by them.
The next question is the only question where it made a significant difference whether the participants lived in Ireland. The Influencers identified in the methodology chapter were integrated into a question of the Influencer Driven Marketing construct. As a result, most of the none Irish participant have often used the answer option "other; please name" and have usually answered with "none of them" or "American Influencers". That is why it was decided to exclude the non-Irish participants from the analysis of the question.
The bar chart clearly shows that Pippa O’Connor (dark green bar) can be held responsible for most followers among the participants of the survey. The bar chart reveals that 26 Irish people are following her. In contrast, 22 Irish people have stated that they are following Suzanne Jackson (light green bar). The unknown Influencers were: Jack Sceptcye, James Kavanagh and Doireann Garrihy.

Giving this orientation, the topics Influencer were followed on has to be taken into account as well. For this purpose, pie charts were created divided by Gender and Age, so that their preferences can be analysed.
As the pie charts show, the topics on which users follow Influencers are wide-ranging, and differences in age and gender can be observed. The pie chart representing the preferences of the 18-24-year-olds indicates a strong interest in fashion beauty and lifestyle (blue, red and purple slice). The participants who were older than 24 had a particular Interest in Beauty and Travel related topics (red and light blue slice). Hence, males tend to have a particular interest in Beauty and Fitness (red and green slice).
The first question of the construct "perceived authenticity" shows that 46% have agreed with either “Strongly Agree” or "Agree" that they trust Influencers who have a brand’s sponsorship. This is also shown in the bar chart above, where blue stands for the trust of Influencers who have a brand’s sponsorship. Only around 23% of respondents voted against with a strong disagree or strongly disagree vote.

The last question of the construct Perceived Authenticity was included in the same chart (orange bar). One can already see that the result of the investigation is very similar to that of question nine. 44% voted either strongly agree or agree that the advertising message did not affect the credibility of an influencer. In comparison,
30% voted against with disagree or strongly disagree. 16 per cent were not sure, which is a significantly lower proportion than in question nine. Most of the votes are above the centre of the Likert scale, so you can conclude that the advertising messages of Influencers are mostly accepted by the users. All in all, it was postulated that the majority of the participants do not perceive the advertising contents as disturbing.
6.2.5 Trust

Figure 6-6 Preferred Content vs. Preferred Posts

This question can also be related to the Perceived Authenticity construct. If you look at the preferences for posts in PA (orange bar), the "social posts" in particular stand out with almost 40%, which is still overshadowed by the personal posts with 41%. It can be concluded that almost 80% of respondents prefer these two species by far. Only 7% and 12% voted for the product review post.

The blue bar represents the results for Trust and determines the preferred content. Again, social content and personal content predominate at 80%. However, it can be observed that the proportion of personal content has increased by 7% and means that the participants focus more on personal posts than on social posts when it comes to Influencers. In return, product placement has lost one per cent, and product review content has increased by almost 2 per cent compared to the question from PA.
The analysis of another question from the construct Trust has shown that 84% find it more credible when Influencers communicate with their followers. Only 14% were not sure, and not even two per cent voted against. As a result, the importance of the interactivity of Influencers with their followers can be rated as high.

6.2.6 Intention to Buy

In the following section the general findings of the construct Intention to Buy are represented:

The general analysis of the Intention to buy Model leads to the following conclusion: 58% of the participants stated that Influencers are important when it comes to discovering new trends or products. 16% are not sure and 25% would never do that. Nevertheless, the findings confirm that most participants are influenced by Influencers in regard to their product choice or trend detection.

As we have argued earlier, it has already been found that the interactivity of Influencers with the followers is particularly respected. Ideally, it can be concluded that the followers are also communicating with their followers via Social Media communication. A total of 72% interact with Influencers by liking the post, 33% comment on it and 27% tag their friends in order to draw their attention to the influencer's post. 12% comment on the post by asking a question. Approximately 17% have never communicated with an Influencer in this way. It can be derived that the majority of people likes to communicate with an Influencer.

In addition, almost 50% of respondents would buy a product promoted by an influencer. 23% are not sure, and almost 30% would never buy a product promoted by
an Influencer. Ideally, these findings should be replicated in a study which completely focused on the Interactivity of Social Media User and Influencers.

Broadly translated the findings indicate that most respondents (54%) have already purchased a product on Instagram, which has been promoted on Instagram, making it the most popular platform to promote products successfully according to the survey. 9% have already bought a product on Facebook. Twitter is once again at the bottom of the league with just under 3% of the votes. 35% of participants said they have never bought a product online.

![Pie chart showing product purchase by platform](image)

*Figure 6-7 Influencer Driven Marketing / Intention to Buy*

The pie chart above shows that 69% (blue slice) of the people aged 18-24 who follow Influencers have already bought a Product on Instagram.
6.3 Conceptual Model

In order to prove the hypothesis, a simple descriptive analysis is not enough because connections must be analyzed between the constructs that can be used to validate the model. In this second part of the analysis, the Correlations are addressed who point to a connection of the constructs and serve to answer the research question according to which the generational differences in the descriptive analysis were identified. The hypotheses that connect the model’s constructs serve as a guideline for this section.

If the data is equally scaled for both variables, the correlation coefficient can be calculated according to Pearson. (Socistatistic, 2018)

The correlation coefficient $r$ is always between -1 and +1 and is interpreted as follows:

$r=0$: When two variables correlate about zero, no correlation can be seen. The variables are uncorrelated. $R>0$: When $r$ is greater than zero, one can speak of a positive correlation. (Socistatistic, 2018)

Moreover, the p-value or also known as calculated probability was also calculated with SPSS because it serves to test the hypothesis in order to apply the p-value, a null hypothesis, which is directly compared to the alternative hypothesis. It has to be mentioned that the null hypothesis often not the assumption that is of real interest, but the assumption that one wants to disprove. (p-value, 2018)

The following correlations between the constructs serve to prove the hypotheses. For this purpose, only selected key questions were taken from the individual constructs, where it is also ensured that they have the same measuring unit so that the coefficient can be calculated. For this reason, only questions with the 5 point Likert Scale were considered.
6.3.1 H1: The number of followers of the Influencer has an impact on the Perceived Authenticity of the Social Media Influencer

Unfortunately, in order to prove this hypothesis, we cannot refer back to the coefficient because there is no equivalent variable that can be tested with the key question of the hypothesis. That is why the review of this hypothesis is based on a cross table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between 10-30k followers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Cross Table Influencer Driven Social Marketing and Perceived Authenticity

As the cross table above indicates, 36 participants would find an Influencer with 10-30,000 followers authentic. Of these 36 persons, 50% stated that they did not interfere with the credibility of the Influencer. However, 39% of those who found Influencers with this number of followers authentic stated that the advertising messages decreases credibility.

The next category is that of 30,000-50,000 followers. A total of 29 respondents found this number of followers to be credible. 69% of those who voted in favour believe that the credibility of Influencers does not suffer from the advertising message. Furthermore, 14% voted against this statement. 17% have again voted "not sure".

Only 19 people have chosen the penultimate category 50-100000 followers. Of these, 58% do not think that the advertising message influences the credibility of the
Influencer. 42% of participants assume that the credibility of the Influencers is diminished by the advertising messages. No one voted "not sure" in this context.

Influencers with over 100,000 followers were classified as authentic by 31 participants. 51% do not think that the credibility of Influencers is diminished by advertising messages. 29% were against the stated statement, and 19% were not sure.

It can be observed that people who are opting for an Influencer with less Follower have a higher tendency to believe that the advertising messages are affecting the credibility of an Influencer in a negative way than the ones who voted for Macro-Influencer. The table above shows the results for Generation Z as well: 54% of them think that Influencer with less than 50,000 followers are authentic, whereas 25% think Influencer with more than 100,000 followers is more credible.

The analysis shows that one can clearly identify a trend that is heading towards Influencers with less than 100,000 Followers. The hypothesis can be therefore verified.
6.3.2 **H2:** Only when an Influencer has proven to be authentic, trust/confidence can be built.

Table 11.1.1: Only when an Influencer has proven to be authentic, trust/confidence can be built.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on my experience with Influencers</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I trust the Influencers who have a brand's sponsorship(^\text{11})</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think that the advertising messages do not affect the overall credibility of the Influencer(^\text{12})</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cross table above shows two questions of the Perceived Authenticity construct and one question from the trust construct. Of the 56 people who answered “Strongly Agree” or "Agree" in question item 10\(^\text{13}\) of the questionnaire, 20% chose "not sure" for Q15\(^\text{14}\), and only 1.79% chose "disagree". 78 % voted Q15 strongly agree or agree again.

Of those who chose to disagree or strongly disagree in Q10\(^\text{15}\), 42% opted for strongly agree or agree in Q15. Only 11 % voted against this statement in Q15 as well. A total of 36% then opted for "not sure", which is a much larger part than the Influencers had classified as authentic right from the start. The people who voted "not sure" also voted 60% not sure for Q15. 33 % of those surveyed who were not sure voted for “Strongly

\(^\text{11}\) Q10  
\(^\text{12}\) Q12
Agree” or "agree" in Q 15. One can, therefore, say that a significant proportion of those who previously agreed positively to Q10 did the same in Q15.

Q12 from the construct of Perceived Authenticity was also tested in the same way, and there were only a few deviations from the detected pattern.

For this current work, it is necessary to refer the results to Generation Z and look for possible positive relationships between the two constructs. If you look at this cross table only for generation Z, then one can conclude that the confidence in the Influencer is quite high. Furthermore, 77.5% of people who voted strongly agree or disagree at Q12 also voted strongly agree or agree again at Q15. This can be considered sufficiently unique and states a positive relationship between Perceived Authenticity and Trust.

\[Table 12 \text{ Gen Z } H2 : \text{ Only when an Influencer has proven to be authentic, trust/confidence can be built.}\]
**Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I trust the Influencers who have a brand's sponsorship</th>
<th>I think that the advertising messages do not affect the overall credibility of the Influencer</th>
<th>Based on my experience with Influencers I know they care about their followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I trust the Influencers who have a brand's sponsorship</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>451**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that the advertising messages do not affect the overall credibility of the Influencer</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.451**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on my experience with Influencers I know they care about their followers</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.324**</td>
<td>.275**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Table 13 Correlations H2

The table above shows the correlations between the items of the constructs.

The constructs were then tested for correlations. For this, the Pearson Correlation (marked in yellow) was determined as well as the p-value (SPSS labels p-value with Sig, marked in green). The correlations within the Perceived Authenticity construct are much higher than those of Trust. In all cases, R is more significant than 0.1, and so one can speak of a positive correlation between the constructs. The correlation between Q15 and Q10 is 0.324 and therefore slightly higher than the correlation between Q15 and Q12 is 0.275.

---

17 Q10
18 Q12
19 Q15
Another significant correlation was found, which is not intended to confirm the hypothesis, but an indicator for further connection between the constructs. As already described in the first part of the analysis, there is a connection between the individual personal preferences (Perceived Authenticity) of the posts and the preferences regarding the content produced by the Influencer (Trust). The social posts and personal posts were particularly popular here. As a result, it made sense to measure the correlations between these two constructs of the questionnaire. Consequently, the r-square is remarkably positive with 0.596 and the p-value<0.00 as well. It can be derived that the correlations between the constructs are quiet positive.

As already mentioned, a strong p-value (normally < 0.05) aims to reject the null hypotheses. The null hypothesis, in this case, would have been: HO: Authenticity and Trust are not interrelated. Based on the proven correlation and the small p-value the null hypothesis can be rejected.
6.3.3 H3: Trust and Intention to Buy

This takes us directly to the next hypothesis test. This test was conducted to prove the third hypotheses. The constructs Trust and Intention to Buy are compared because it is assumed that Trust has a positive effect on the intention to buy. Subsequently, Trust's last question, to be precise, was compared with two questions from Intention to buy and examined for correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Based on my experience with Influencers I know they care about their followers</th>
<th>My favourite Influencers are important to me when it comes to new trend/products</th>
<th>I am very likely to buy a product which has been promoted by an Influencer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on my experience with Influencers I know they care about their followers</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.298*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favourite Influencers are important to me when it comes to new trend/products</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very likely to buy a product which has been promoted by an Influencer</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 15 H3 Correlation

Looking at the above table, it immediately becomes apparent that the correlations within the construct intention to buy are very positive. For example, the coefficient \( r \) of Q15 and Q16 is 0.531, which indicates a positive correlation. However, a positive

---

20 Q15
21 Q16
22 Q19
correlation must also be noted between Q15 and Q16. As a result, Q15 and Q16 have an r- of 0.298 while Q17 and Q18 have a higher correlation with an r- of 0.367.

The p-value: HO: Authenticity and Trust are not interrelated. Based on the proven correlation and the small p-value the null hypothesis can be rejected.

6.3.4 H4: Perceived Authenticity and Intention to Buy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>I think that the advertising messages do not affect the overall credibility of the Influencer</th>
<th>I am very likely to buy a product which has been promoted by an Influencer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that the advertising messages do not affect the overall credibility of the Influencer</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very likely to buy a product which has been promoted by an Influencer</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.505**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 16 H4 Correlation

To verify the last hypothesis, one has to look at how Perceived Authenticity and Intention to Buy are related by checking Q12 from PA and Q14 for correlations because the same Likert scale was used for both questions. During the check, the Pearsons correlations coefficient is 0.505, which means that there is a positive correlation. However, in order to identify to what extent negative PA influences the intention to buy, we must again examine a cross table with the various variables.
The cross table shown above combines the two constructs Perceived Authenticity and Intention to Buy. Furthermore, only the target population is shown in the cross table. The results show that certain patterns are already visible. Most of the participants who voted positively on question 18 also voted “Strongly Agree” and “Agree" on Q12. Those who agreed to Question 15 with "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" voted 54 % against in Q15. While the others abstained by 23% and a further 23% voted in favour. You can already see from this cross table that the majority is not willing to make a purchase decision if the Influencer is not authentic.

As already mentioned, a low p-value (usually < 0.05) aims to reject the null hypotheses. The null hypothesis, in this case, would have been: HO: Lack of Authenticity has a no noticeable effect on the Intention to Buy. Based on the proven correlation and the small p-value the null hypothesis can be rejected, and H4 (Lack of Authenticity has a negative effect) on the Intention to Buy can be verified.
6.4 CONCLUSION

This section summarizes the findings and contributions made.

Figure 6-8 Bruns-Siddiqui Intention-to-Buy

The figure above of the conceptual model above shows the path coefficients and the p-value of the constructs. As a result, the path coefficients indicate that Perceived Authenticity and Trust have a significant effect on the Intention to Buy. It turns out that the path coefficient of Perceived Authenticity on Intention to Buy is higher than Trust on Intention to buy. Both hypotheses, H3 and H4, can be supported. The path coefficient between perceived Authenticity and Trust shows a moderate effect as well.

For H2, H3 and H4, the p-value is < 0.005, and it can be concluded that they are all supported which represents the key to answer the proposed research question.
One of the greatest limitations of this data analysis is that not all data collected could be equally analysed. There is still much more that could be analysed which probably could be related in particular to Generation Z through various cross analysis. Nevertheless, the main focus of this research is to answer the research question and hence the focus was laid on the hypothesis test.
7 **DISCUSSIONS**

7.1 **INTRODUCTION**

In the following chapter, the findings from the data analysis chapter are being discussed. The structure of the discussion is similar to the analysis. First of all, the findings from the demographic, Social Media and Influencer Marketing related components are being discussed and after that Perceived Authenticity Trust and Intention to Buy are discussed thoroughly. At the end of the chapter, the conclusion takes place, which then leads to the answering of the research question.

7.2 **SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE**

First, the general results of the general questions are discussed. Second, the hypotheses will be discussed in order to answer the research question.

Moreover, the sample showed that most participants use Social Media "Several Times a day" or at least "daily". Another vital aspect that emerges from the findings is that Instagram is the most popular Social Media network of those surveyed. As no geographical difference was found and 78% of Irish people also prefer to use Instagram. However according to the literature analysis, Facebook is the most popular Social Media platform. From these results of the sample, it can be concluded that there is a tendency that the use of Instagram could spread even further in the future. Based on this, the literature analysis also shows that Instagram is the favourite platform of
the Z generation. This fact was confirmed by the findings thus far: 78% of the respondents in the 18-24 age group chose Instagram as their most used Social Media platform. For Gen Z representatives, Instagram is the channel to share images with other people. The young target group appreciates Instagram especially for only getting targeted content in the form of pictures. (Sago, 2017) Facebook is more popular with the over 24-year-olds. A similar conclusion was reached in the literature.

7.3 Influencer Driven Social Marketing

Most of the respondents (86%) follow Influencers on Instagram. Moreover, 89% of the surveyed generation Z claimed that they do follow Influencers. According to the core authors from the literature review, they are more likely to follow Instagram Influencers. Giving this orientation, they are interested in the life of bloggers because they want to identify with them. It was found that the selected Influencers are only known nationally. As a result, they were relatively unknown to participants who did not come from Ireland. The Influencers who received the most response were Suzanne Jackson and Pippa O’Connor. The quantitative analysis also revealed that these Influencers mainly post personal content and report daily to their followers. In July 2018 Instagram introduced that Influencers can also include questions from followers in their stories and thus answer precisely to the questions of followers. (Instagram, 2018) It has also been observed that Suzanne Jackson and Pippa O’Connor actively use this tool. Pippa O’Connor, in particular, uses Instagram to present her collection of beauty products rather than to rely on targeted cooperation with other brands. However, the companies are also explicitly involved in her contributions.
The screenshot shows that Pippa O’Connor has her collection offered by Brown Thomas. This company is also included in the post. This goes very modestly so that one does not immediately think of a paid cooperation. She decided to forego the sentence: “Paid Advertisement With”.

The literature has shown that Generation Z has a keen interest in fashion. The results have confirmed this. It was also found that an interest in fashion usually comes with a pronounced interest in beauty products. Thus, it can be verified that the generation has a high interest in fashion. However, they are also very interested in lifestyle topics.

Furthermore, gender differences can be identified which were not mentioned in the literature before. Male participants showed a keen interest in beauty and fitness topics and not listed topics such as business or nutrition. The female participants were particularly interested in fashion travel and lifestyle. The question which arises now is: Do men and females respond differently to Influencer advertisement?
Unfortunately, this topic needs more attention than the framework of this dissertation allows.

Consequently, it remains an incentive for future research. For participants over 24 years of age, interest in fashion was less pronounced. However, the interest in beauty and travel themes was comparably high, which highlights the generational differences identified through primary research. Even though the sample size was quite small, generational patterns became obvious and as a result proved the characteristics of Generation Z, which is necessary when the discussion of the conceptual model is taking place.

7.4 **DISCUSSION CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

In order to test the conceptual model, Validity has been taken into account. In the following section, they are discussed separately and the primary constructs of the model: “Perceived Authenticity, Trust and Intention to Buy” serve as a guideline for the discussion of the hypothesis. Moreover, the model of Hajili (2014) is considered as well in order to explain the limitations which were faced. At the end of this chapter, it will be clarified whether the research question can be answered.
7.4.1 Validity

Validity can be measured through both: content validity and construct validity. (Hajili, 2014) The aim here is, to ensure the best result. The questionnaire items have been checked by Dr Shakeel Siddiqui. In order to increase validity recommendations of the scholars have been taken into consideration as well. Moreover, the model is based on the technology acceptance model which is often used in marketing research. Additionally, the research consists of a literature review which has been updated several times during the writing process.

7.5 Perceived Authenticity

The literature review has revealed that Micro-Influencers are supposed to be more authentic than Macro Influencer. As a result, the participants were asked for their opinion on an authentic number of followers an Influencer should possess. The results show that the Influencers with less than 100,000 followers appear more authentic than the ones with over 100,000 followers. Marketers have observed that people become more sceptical of engaging Influencers with a large number of followers.

Moreover, Generation Z only trusts authentic sources and are less likely to build up brand loyalty due to the lack of brand authenticity. The analysis has been done with cross tables because the question regarding the number of followers was not measured within a Likert scale. The statistical correlations could not be identified. Unfortunately, the results do not show to what extent the increasing authenticity of Micro-Influencers is related to the "paid partnership with" seal introduced in 2017. In the sense of ethical advertising behaviour, this development is highly appropriate.
and mandatory. To what extent this gives bloggers credibility and authenticity remains to be seen. It was found that the people who voted for Mikro-Influencers claimed as well that the advertising message decreases the credibility of the influencer. However it remains to be seen to what extent a connection to the obligation introduced in 2017 to label advertising contributors accordingly so that they are more conspicuous. When comparing the results to other studies, Micro-Influencers are addressed frequently. CNBC (2018) stated that only 19 % of Generation Z follows someone because they have a mass following. A similar pattern of results was obtained in the primary research and underlines the generations strive for authenticity and therefore contradicts Southgate (2017) who argued that celebrities are the key to Generation Z. According to the results, the hypotheses: “H1: The number of followers of the Influencer has an impact on the Perceived Authenticity of the Social Media Influencer” can be verified. The number of followers has an impact on the perceived authenticity which was proven by the majority of people who voted that Influencers with less than 100,000 followers appear more authentic. However, the topic is still very fresh, and the survey has shown that there is a common denominator. More research is definitely necessary on this topic. Further research should explore this vital aspect of Influencer marketing to further explore correlations with the new policies which were introduced in 2017. In addition to that, one should be able to draw more conclusions if more questions would be asked about the topic within the questionnaire with the same Likert Scale. This would lead to more statistical relevant results, and more profound conclusions could be drawn. Furthermore, the lack of transparency refers not only to the labelling of advertising content but also to the origin of followers on Instagram. Another factor that could affect the perceived authenticity of Influencers is the highly relevant topic of fake followers.
Despite the numerous analysis options, companies are often faced with the problem that they cannot fully understand the origin of the followers of the Influencer. Some Influencers have built up fake followership at the beginning of their Instagram or Social Media career.

The screenshot above also shows that it is possible for an Influencer to buy online follower due to the numerous offers which circulate on the Internet. When selecting Influencers, companies often pay attention to the potential range that they can achieve with the respective influencer. Also, the relevance of the Influencer about the target group and the fit between companies and Influencer should be taken into account. In order to analyze the followers, analyse programs such as influencerdb or buzzbird should also be used and have proven to be extremely helpful. The chosen Irish Instagram Influencer for this research has been examined on influencerdb to
determine certain conspicuousities regarding their followers. No anomalies were found, such as a sudden gain in a large number of followers. (influencerdb, 2018)

7.5.1 **Perceived Authenticity and Trust**

Unlike other generations, Generation Z is less likely to build up brand loyalty. They have already experienced a negative experience when it comes to communication with brands. (IBM, 2017) The results of the primary research have therefore shown that most of the participants assume that an Influencer is more trustworthy when he or she shows a high rate of interaction with the followers. However, this interactivity is also questionable. Since 2015 there is a so-called robot or algorithm, Instagress, which takes over the likening of pictures and writes comments under it. Instagress was shut down because Instagram claimed that it violated the terms and services of Instagram. Since the tool was prevalent and it helped Influencers to increase the account awareness and to grow followers, there are already numerous alternatives. The most famous and alternative marketing tools are SocialDrift, ViralUpgrade, Relaxed Social, Instagram, Combin and Kickstagram. (Influncive, 2018) This aspect was not included in the study, but more theoretical analysis is required for this and should be examined in further studies.

Consequently, Gen Z has a natural tendency to interact with Influencers. (Sago, 2017) The results of the online survey are consistent with findings emerging from the literature. The results of the study have shown that most of them like to interact with the Influencer by liking or commenting on the post or even tagging their friends. It was stated that the perceived authenticity has an effect on trust in the Influencer could be confirmed. Moreover, the consumer's previous experience with Influencers seems
to be of particular importance as well. The empirical investigation and analysis of the results have demonstrated that there is a connection between Perceived Authenticity and Trust.

Furthermore, it was stated, that the connection does not necessarily mean a positive one. Perceived Authenticity can have a negative effect on trust when the Influencer was not perceived as authentic.

Moreover, the majority which has rated Influencers and the advertising messages as authentic is more likely to build up trust, and therefore the hypotheses could be verified within the scope of the survey.

The statistical analysis shows a correlation between the two constructs. Unfortunately, the two constructs could not be tested for correlations as a whole due to the different answer options and not the consistent use of the same Likert-scale throughout the whole questionnaire. The final advantage of these different answer options is that one could gain more insights into the preferences and Social Media behaviour of the participants. In return, Hajili (2014) has used the same rating scale for all his question which resulted into a deeper and more accurate statistical analysis and his findings are more accurate regarding the statistical ratios of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>R square</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intention to buy</td>
<td>0.805993</td>
<td>0.891988</td>
<td>0.364183</td>
<td>0.759360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>0.812750</td>
<td>0.928666</td>
<td>0.312992</td>
<td>0.884904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>0.660775</td>
<td>0.906516</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.871111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>0.572564</td>
<td>0.869812</td>
<td>0.182861</td>
<td>0.813728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7-3 Overview Quality Criteria Source: Hajili, 2014*
As the table above shows, Hajili (2014) measured in addition to the r-square several other criteria such as AVE, Composite reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha. To anticipate all these investigations, it takes more time, and the analysis would exceed the scope of this work. However, the calculated correlation and the additional results are sufficient to prove the hypotheses, which ultimately leads to the research question being answered. However, this can be done in future research if further validation of the conceptual Bruns-Siddiqui-Intention-to-Buy-Model 2018 should be inquired.

7.5.2 Trust and Intention to Buy.

The primary research of this study has revealed: Generation Z is more likely to trust authentic sources and trust in an authentic source might lead to an Intention to Buy. The findings emphasise that there is a relationship between Trust and Intention to Buy. A correlation was proven between the two constructs of the conceptual model and leads to the assumption that has Trust has a direct positive influence on Intention to Buy. Having said that, it was found that the Gen Z participants are likely to get inspired by trends and new products, which underline the characteristics of Generation Z. Unfortunately, it was not possible to incorporate the effect of the factors’ interaction on the companies into the model and to what extent the purchasing decisions of this generation have an impact on the ROI. However, most of the actual purchases are happening on Instagram, which sheds light on the fact that Instagram is the ideal platform for Influencer Marketing. However, Hajili (2014) has already discovered in his work that trust has a positive effect on the intention to buy. The main conclusion that can be drawn based on the findings of this study is that Trust has a significant effect on the Intention to Buy and it can be argued that the factor trust in Social Media related purchases has even more significance.
7.6.2.1 Perceived Authenticity and Intention to Buy

The results of the survey show as well that a considerable amount of people are sceptical about Influencer marketing, especially when it comes to the purchase decision. This also proves that Influencer Driven Social Marketing faces some risks. One potential risk was identified from Solis (2012) in the literature. He claims that the overuse of Influencers has a negative affect. Unfortunately, the empirical study was not able to explore the motivation behind that an Influencer might be perceived as not authentic. The following example indicates how a drastic loss of authenticity can occur and even harm the company an Influencer is working with.

The American Influencer Disick had about 19 million followers and was supposed to upload an image with the company product to his Instagram profile. The company sent him the picture as well as an order instruction and prescribed text. (s. screenshot below) As a result, Disick had uploaded the image and order instructions to his Instagram profile. Moreover, the authenticity of the campaign suffered considerably. As this example shows, a positive image transfer between the company and Influencer can have an equally negative effect. Since such Influencer marketing fails naturally go viral on social networks, the danger exists that people get a negative image of Influencer marketing, which might have a lasting effect on the Perceived Authenticity. does not build up confidence and certainly never leads to an intention to buy. (Curalate, 2018)
The two constructs Perceived Authenticity and Intention to Buy were checked for correlation. As a result, the analysis found evidence for correlations. This verifies the hypothesis, but there is still more scope for further research. Furthermore, the individual constructs must be tested in their reliability, so that further conclusions can be drawn.
7.6 Conclusion

The results have shown that all four constructions are connected and build on each other. Even on a comparably small scale, the preferences and behaviours of generation Z could be proven. It was also found that the perceived authenticity of Influencers is incredibly important and only then trust can be built. Success was achieved when an intention to buy was awakened. This brings us to the most important point, namely answering the research question:

These statements serve to answer the research question:

The majority of respondents is more likely to follow Influencers who have fewer followers and can, therefore, be identified as Mikro-Influencers. This can probably attribute to the fact that Micro-Influencer is perceived as more authentic than Influencers with a large fan base. This, in turn, confirms that the number of followers does affect the perceived authenticity of the influencer. The hypothesis could be verified under the given circumstances and results of the primary research. Nonetheless, it is advised to further explore this field through research in order to gather specific insights and identify other correlations.

Also, it was also found that trust and perceived authenticity build on each other. The majority of those questioned could not build trust if the Influencer was not previously classified as authentic. In contrast, it is very likely that trust will be built if the Influencer is classified as authentic. It can be argued that the trust construct is omitted if the barrier of the influencer’s authenticity has not been approved. This phenomenon can be observed when there is no intention to buy, and the consumer has no desire to buy a product that has been promoted by an influencer, let alone inspired by the trends. With this result, the fourth hypothesis could also be proven, even if a
considerable amount of research is still needed to find out the exact background and motivations.

The results show that Trust encouraged through Influencer Driven Marketing, significantly effects the Purchase Intention. When individuals are trusting the Influencer, they are more likely to buy a product which has been promoted by the Influencer. If Trust is given, individuals tend to be inspired more easily by trends and products which have been promoted by an Influencer.

Since all hypotheses were proven with the means that were possible and within the time frame one can say that the presented model is of current relevance, but it needs further statistical investigation and improvement possibilities to lead to the complete verification of the model. All in all, the correlations between the constructs were proven, and the hypothesis verified which answers the research question due to the fact that all proposed requirements were fulfilled.
CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to summarize the main points of the dissertation as well as an outlook on future developments and research possibilities about Influencer marketing and the developed conceptual model.

This research was inspired by the urgent need of Marketers to target Generation Z and the evolvement of Influencer Marketing. As a result a need was felt to develop a conceptual model which combines the identified key variables Perceived Authenticity and Trust. After the theoretical basics have been presented, an empirical relevance test of the developed conceptual model was carried out. The results of the survey were clear: far more than the majority of respondents followed Influencer on Instagram and over 50 % would buy a product promoted by an influencer. Furthermore, it was found that the majority of respondents have already bought a product on social media. The most popular platform was Instagram. This is consistent with the findings of the literature. The most important part of this work is, however, the testing of the hypothesis which enabled us to answer the research question:

In this dissertation, it was shown that Perceived Authenticity plays a key role in Influencer Marketing and has, without a doubt, a highly significant effect on the Intention to Buy. Nevertheless, Perceived Authenticity has a highly significant effect on Trust. The main findings which were identified through primary research are consistent with the existing findings of the core authors revealed in the literature review, but the ultimate new finding is the key role of perceived authenticity. Social Media Influencer who perceived as authentic are very likely to build up trust relationships with the consumer and can, therefore, have a positive impact on the Intention to Buy. However, this research is not without limitations, the sample size
was considerably small and did not consist entirely from people between the age of 18-24 and live in Ireland. As a young field of research, Influencer Marketing also offers numerous possibilities for future studies. It would also be possible, through further research, to further develop the proposed model so that opportunities and risks or even further differences between the platforms could be uncovered. The decisive advantage of the model is that it can be implemented in numerous countries, which means that international differences can be identified or not.

Furthermore, it can also be tested by different generations to detect generational differences. Moreover, the outlook for Influencer Marketing is positive - the population of Generation Z is growing and are looking for authentic sources. The future is more about authentic movements that are connecting deeply with groups of consumers.” (Segran, 2018)
8 Reflection

8.1 Reflection Introduction

In the following reflection chapter, the skills and experiences that were gained during the MBA in Marketing and the writing process of my dissertation are discussed.

8.2 Strategic Thinking

First of all, I can say that strategic thinking develops and became more and more pronounced in the course of my studies. During the MBA, I have learned to focus on the targets not to lose valuable perspectives or deviate from the things I wanted to do especially when it comes to long-term goals. The MBA taught me to question everything strategically. This was tested anew in every course since one was often confronted with real-life problems, which require a strategic way of thinking. This acquired ability can be very good for the later professional life and lead to the fact that one organizes strategic decision processes so that a solution is found and leads to the desired success. It can be said that all the assignments completed required a strategic way of thinking right from the start, so that this could also be applied to other things, for example mastering a part-time job while studying. Furthermore, strategic thinking has also acquired the ability to prioritize tasks that need undivided attention and to postpone other tasks. In all situations, a strategic approach will be demanded and can only be of advantage, whether in private or in later professional life.
8.3 Goal Setting

Setting goals are important in order to be able to master all the tasks that lie ahead. However, the objective has taken on a different meaning in the Master. I am of the opinion that without objectives and plans, the Master's degree would not have been a success. On the one hand, it was always important to set goals and deadlines to be able to deliver the assignments on time. I have to say that the lecturers have always been very understanding and have always supported us in setting goals. This was especially promoted in the subject of personal and professional development. I have always defined the goals under the short-term goals, and after reaching a goal, of course, joy also came because one had the feeling to have achieved something. Goal setting is also of great relevance in professional life in order to meet its requirements. An important point is also that setting goals lead to a better work-life balance and one is also strengthened by achieving the goals in the belief that one can also achieve other goals as such as the professional goals.

8.4 Problem-solving

Another skill that I have developed during my studies at DBS is problem-solving. During the courses, I have learned to tackle and investigate problems of various kinds strategically. Of course, strategic thinking is also required here, as well as target-oriented thinking. This makes it clear that you have not only acquired a single ability, you can still combine it with each other, which leads to a better result. I was also confronted with problems that I have never faced in my life before. One example is the Financial Analysis. The requirement of the assignment was to suggest opportunities for improvement for an international company by ratio analysis. Here I got an insight
into the financially related problems, and the problem solution made me surprisingly much fun. A particularly important aspect is that it was necessary to apply problem-solving theories that emerged from the literature to assignments such as, for instance, the one in financial analysis.

Furthermore, I was able to include problem-solving approaches from my professional life in some assignments. Moreover, this capability is beneficial for your future career. My long-term goal is to pursue a career in management, and therefore this skill is obligatory.

8.5 Team Work

Teamwork was part of many different assignments. Also, there were a lot of different nationalities during the studies, which enabled us to get to know many cultures and thus improve our communication skills. For your future career, it is vital to be a very good team player and to be able to deal with many different cultures. In one assignment were people from 5 different nationalities: India, Egypt, Mexico USA and Germany. It was great fun to get to know so many different cultures and working together worked very well and led to a good result, as everyone from the group did their part so that it became an exceptional job. Since I was the only person with a marketing background in the compulsory marketing subject of the MBA, so I was able to lead the team, which is undoubtedly a proper preparation for my future professional life.
8.6 Research

First of all, I am a very curious person, and I love to research. The large online database and library provide a lot of valuable research material from DBS. Also, it was shown how to conduct reasonable academic research so that we could acquire new methods to complete our assignments with success and according to academic level. The great research opportunities have allowed me to read numerous academic articles and also had a positive effect on my academic writing.

8.7 Dissertation

I was very fortunate to have enjoyed the research on my topic because I have been interested in it for years. Furthermore, I was well supported by my supervisor. During the process of writing the dissertation the whole skill set needed to be combined. The obstacle I have faced was that I had a considerable amount of qualitative data and it was impossible to combine it with the quantitative data in the dissertation. Moreover, I liked the way of how an idea developed into a full research project.

8.8 Reflection Conclusion

All in all the experience at Dublin Business School was every educational and I have met a lot of people from various nationalities and cultures. Moreover, each required skill helped for my personal development and will be of great value in the workplace. Overall it was an outstanding student experience.
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**APPENDIX A**


**Questionnaire Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Promises made by my favorite social networking site are likely to be reliable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not doubt the honesty of my favorite social networking site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on my experience with my favorite social networking site, I know it is honest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on my experience with my favorite social networking site, I know they care about users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Purchase intention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purchase intention</th>
<th>I am very likely to provide the online vendor with the information it needs to better serve my needs through my favorite social networking site.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am happy to use my credit card to purchase from an online vendor through my favorite social networking site.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceived Usefulness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Usefulness</th>
<th>Searching and buying on my favorite social networking site is useful for me.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Searching and buying on my favorite social networking site makes my life easier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Websites of my favorite social networking sites enable me to search and buy materials faster.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social Media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>I use online forums and communities for acquiring information about a product.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I usually use people’s ratings and reviews about products on the internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I trust my friends on online forums and communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>