TALLINN UNIVERISTY OF TECHNOLOGY

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THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AMONG YOUNG FINNISH PEOPLE

Bachelor's thesis

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Supervisor: Merle Ojasoo, PhD

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I declare that I have compiled the paper independently

and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors

have been properly referenced and the same paper

has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine the target group of Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24, and the attitudes and awareness of them concerning the topic of influencer marketing, and through that to get a solution for what the role of influencer marketing is among the target group. In this empirical research a quantitative research method is used, and the research is conducted with an online questionnaire. The research questions are what is the awareness of influencer marketing among the target group; what is the level of usefulness for that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services; how does the target group follow influencers on social media; what are the attitudes of the target group concerning influencer marketing; and what are the buying considerations based on the recommendations of an influencer. The main results of the research are that the target group is well aware of influencer marketing and finds it mainly useful. The majority of the target group follow influencers on social media and could consider buying based on their recommendations. It can be concluded that influencer marketing plays a very important role among the target group. Although there are always some people who do not find influencer marketing useful, who do not follow influencers on social media, or do not let influencer marketing have an effect on them, the majority finds influncer marketing good and useful.

INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing is a form of marketing which has increased its popularity a lot during the past years. Especially, now in the time when social media is a big phenomenon, influencer marketing has got a great platform to work on. When looking at the different social media channels, there can be seen a plenty of different influencer accounts, including accounts of celebrities, bloggers, YouTubers, and basic people who have a lot of followers, for instance. Many of the owners of those accounts work in collaborations with different companies, and promote their products and services. Those collaboration posts appear on the social media channels a lot, and it does not seem that the phenomenon of influencer marketing is fading away that fast.

The topic of influencer marketing was chosen for this paper since as described above it is a very topical issue. There has been some influencer marketing before, but at the moment the topic seems to be bigger than ever before, since nowadays social media enables so many things that the influencer marketing can benefit from. However, it was still very difficult to find scientific researches or articles about the topic. Probably it was like that because influencer marketing is still such a new issue, and was not even an industry when looking at a few years back (Patel 2017). The topic of this paper, the role of influencer marketing among young Finnish people, was chosen because there is no totally similar research made before. There are some researches such as Influencer marketing on Instagram (Heiskala *et al.* 2017), and The views of professionals of marketing and communication about the situation of influencer marketing in Finland (Indieplace, 2017), but those differ from the one that was made for this paper. The young people are the ones who the influencer marketing affects a lot so that is why it was found useful to make a research focusing only on them. Finnish people were chosen since the author of the paper found the target group useful when thinking about the work life in the future. In addition, the author of the paper is also interested in this particular topic, and that also supported the selection of the topic.

In this paper the role of influencer marketing among young Finnish people refers to that of how the target group experiences influencer marketing and what the attitudes and awareness of them are concerning it, for instance. So in this particular context the role of influencer marketing is not

considered to be literally about which kind of role the influencer marketing plays among young Finnish people. However, the word "role" was used because it covered the view of the author in the best possible way.

The research problem of this research paper is that there is a lack of information about what the role of influencer marketing is among the target group which is young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. The aim of the paper is to research the different attitudes and awareness of the target group concerning the topic of influencer marketing, and through that to get a solution for the research problem after analysing carefully the results acquired from the research.

The research object of this paper is to analyse and work on the data acquired from the research to find out the solution for the research problem. To achieve that object some research questions have to be formed. The aim of these research questions is to gather the infromation about the target group that is needed to find out the solution for the reasearch problem.

The five research questions are as follows:
1. What is the awareness of influencer marketing among the target group?
2. What is the level of usefulness for that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services?
3. How does the target group follow influencers on social media?
4. What are the attitudes of the target group concerning influencer marketing?
5. What are the buying considerations based on the recommendations of an influencer?

The main research task is to analyse the research answers after they have been answered and work on that data. After having a clear understanding of the results, the solution for the main research problem can be drawn. This will provide the information about what the role of influencer marketing is among the target group, which in turn can give benefits for sales agencies when planning their influencer marketing.

The research of this paper is empirical research, and a quantitative research method is used to find out what the role of influencer marketing is among the target group at the moment. This particular method gives a chance to acquire a large number of responses which is important to get results that can be generalized. The research is conducted with an online questionnaire in Google Forms, and the questionnaire is shared for the target people on different social media channels, such as on

Instagram and on Facebook, and by emails. In addition, the link to the questionnaire is also spread in some Finnish comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools, vocational schools, universities and universities of applied sciences to students who belong to that specific target group. The respondents have three weeks time to answer to the questionnaire.

This paper is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is about the theory about influencer marketing. It defines the topic of influencer marketing, and gives an overview of influencers and influencer marketing on different social media channels, in addition to the role of influencer marketing. The second chapter of this paper, in turn, is focused on the methodology of the research made for this paper. It presents the research method that was chosen for the research, defines the research object, and tells about how the research was conducted. There is also information about the sampling procedure and the data analysing methods provided. The third chapter of this paper, on the other hand, is about the empirical part of the research. It includes the results of the research with the figures, and the analysis of them. There is also some comparison provided. In addition, there is a discussion and recommendations part which deals with the findings in a way that takes into a consideration some information that was already known before conducting this research and gives recommendations concerning the topic of influencer marketing among the chosen target group. After the main chapters there are conclusions from the research presented.

The author of this research paper would like to thank the people who contributed to the finalisation of the paper; the respondents who took part in the research by giving their answers to the questionnaire, friends and family who supported the author when writing the paper, and the supervisor who gave guidance with the paper. The contribution of all those people was very valuable and highly appreciated by the author of this research paper.

1. THEORY ABOUT INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing is at the moment a growing form of marketing, and it is important to understand the basics of it so that it can be used well in real life, and its main advantages can be reached when using it as a marketing tool. This theoretical part of the research paper gives an overview of what influencer marketing really is about. It also defines who the influencers are and how to identify them. In addition, this chapter also describes influencer marketing on some different social media channels and the role of it.

1.1. Influencer marketing

The term influencer marketing can be defined clearly, but if one does not have any clue about it, it is neither that difficult to find out the basic meaning of the term by oneself just by looking at those two words. The word influencer is derived from a word "influence" which basically means an effect on people or things (Cambridge Dictionary 2018). Due to that it can be understood that a word "influencer" stands for a person who has an effect on somebody or something. Marketing, on the other hand, is a very wide term, but the basic idea of it in many cases is to meet the needs of customers in a profitable way (Kotler, Keller 2012, 5). Different kinds of marketing actions can be used by a company to promote the selling. Those two things put together it can be concluded that basically influencer marketing means using people who have an influence on other people to promote a product or a service.

Building up strong customer relationships between a company and its customers is valuable, and influencer marketing is a very effective way to do so (Hamalainen 2016). Since customers play an important role in marketing, it might be good to consider taking it up to one of the marketing tools. In addition, presenting a product or a service of a company to a consumer by using influencer marketing can be efficient because influencers can be considered convincing and approachable, and especially if they fit for a brand, it can increase the trust and interest of a consumer towards a product or a service, and hopefully in the end of the day make them potential buyers (Tähkäpää 2017, 15).

When establishing influencer marketing it is good to understand that it is persistent work that requires good planning and making up strategies, and not just doing campaigns that are conducted only when they are needed (Ahjo Communications, 7). A company has to know what the goals of its business are because that is the base for a goal-directed influencer marketing, and that, in turn, requires that everything is planned and controlled and four important things are thought thoroughfully through so that those can support the business and its values (*Ibid.*).

The four issues are: (*Ibid.*)
1) An influencer and a target group
2) The goals of a collaboration
3) Topics and themes
4) Exploitation of the content in an integrated communication

The main target group that a company tries to focus on and aims to promote its product or service to is not a consumer itself, which could be the most obvious option to think about, but instead of a consumer a company aims to target individual influencers (Haapasalmi 2017, 19). That is a thing that separates influencer marketing from many other marketing tactics since in many marketing cases marketing is focused straight on consumers, but in influencer marketing the focus of a company is on influencers (Hamalainen 2016). When the marketing people of a company direct their promotions to an influencer, it becomes the job of an influencer to pass the information and awareness of products and services to consumers, and get them to buy (Brown, Fiorella 2013, 79). Basically, that can be seen that the aim of the collaboration between a company and an influencer is to move the marketing work to an influencer who then delivers the marketing message to their followers who hopefully, in the end of the day, become consumers for a company.

Murphy & Schram (2014, 35) argue that influencer marketing comes with a variety of benefits for marketers. Furthermore, influencer maketing is a beneficial form of marketing since in addition to having benefit for consumers, the collaboration between a company and an influencer also brings advantages for both of them. Influencer marketing makes it possible to increase the visibility of a company and an influencer, while it also creates interesting and different marketing content to a consumer (Tähkäpää 2017, 15). This way influencers might get new collaboration offers from different companies, companies can improve their brands by having interesting and convincing

influencers promoting thir products or services, and consumers get to have marketing content that is interesting and maybe get them buy.

1.2. Influencers in influencer marketing

This part of this theoretical chapter is focused on the influencers. As it was described shortly in the previous part of this chapter, influencers are people who other people follow, and who have an influence on those other people. Some examples of influencers are, for instance, celebrities, bloggers, Instagrammers, ergo users of Instagram, and YouTubers, ergo people who make videos to YouTube (Hamalainen 2016). Basically, they are people who have a plenty of followers. Nowadays when social media has increased its meaning a lot in everyday life, influencers can be easily associated to it, since social media is a great platform for influencers to work on.

"Why is it worth to focus on one influencer? Because an influencer has a stronger effect on many consumers than what the advertising has." (Hamalainen 2016). That can be because when an influencer presents and tells about a product or a service, the consumers can find him or her very turstworthy and convincing (Tähkäpää 2017, 15). Especially if an influencer is very famous, and people can consider him or her for example as an idol, that can draw the consumers to make a decision to buy since they might want to own same products as the influencer and in that way to relate to them or to be like them (Haapasalmi 2017, 20). All in all, the core of influencer marketing is in the relationship between an influencer and his or her followers (*Ibid.*). In addition, with influencer marketing consumers can imagine through an influencer and an issue that is promoted about what kinds of people might buy and use a product or a service that the influencer presents, and since in many cases consumers buy stuff that are similar to stuff that the people who they admire might have, an influencer can use that to increase the effect of his or her promotion (Hamalainen 2016).

"Research has shown that celebrities can influence purchase intention, brand attitudes and attitudes towards an advertisement depending on their level of trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness." (Amos *et al*. 2008 referenced in Araujo *et al*. 2017). That means that celebrities as influencers can affect the decision-making process of consumers, and this way influencer marketing works well.

Different brands are different from each other, and as are also the influencers between each other. Not every influencer fits for an image of some particular brand, and vice versa. That is why it is important to clearly identify which kind of influencer goes well with a brand of a company that is trying to have influencer marketing as one of its marketing tools. Nowadays, there are so many different kinds of influencers working on different social media channels, and having different kinds of contents on their accounts. Due to that a company that is aiming to have influencer marketing as a marketing tool really should search for information on those different influencers, their brands and their accounts, and analyse those carefully before starting to collaborate with someone right away.

Booth and Matic (2011) have conducted a step-by-step social media strategy on the outreach of bloggers. Even tough the four steps were conducted for bloggers, they can also be followed in a case of other influencers on social media too to identify them.

The four steps are as follows: (Booth, Matic 2011, 189)
1) Set objectives and strategies
2) Search and analyze
3) Engage and socialize
4) Report and refine

By following those steps a company can identify the influencers better, and after that choose an influncer who fits the best for a brand and is suitable in other ways too.

1.3. Influencer marketing on different social media channels

As it has been already mentioned, influencer marketing on social media is at the moment very popular and there are a large number of influencer accounts on different social media channels. Different influencers can be concentrated on different channels, but the majority of the influencers have accounts on many channels. In social media new content is published all the time, and since people use social media and its contents a lot and to so many different things, it is a great platform for influencer marketing.

The Figure 1.1 below (see Figure 1.1) shows that in April 2018 the three most popular social networking channels used around the world are Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, and that those three networks have much more users compared to other social networking channels (Kallas 2018).
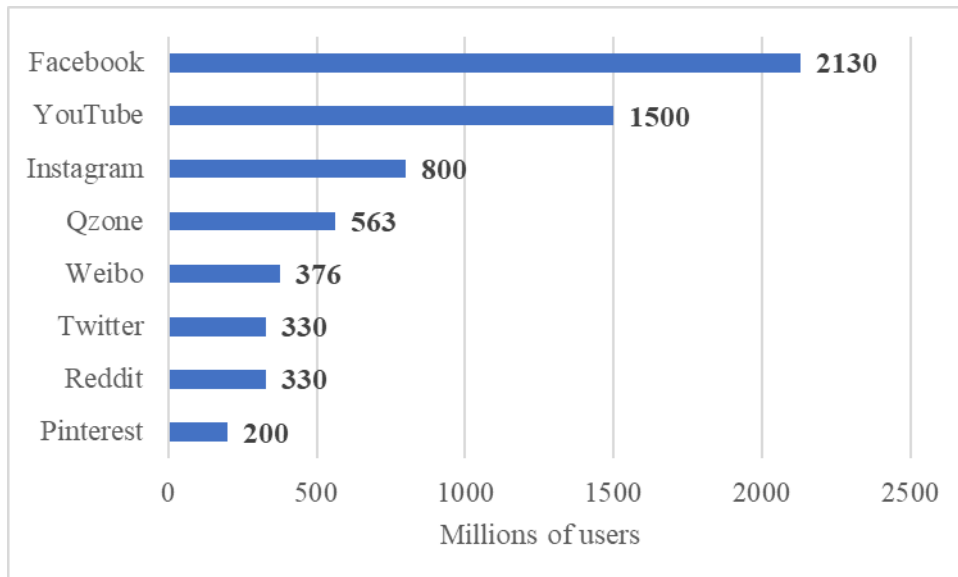

Figure 1.1. The most used social networking sites worldwide in April 2018
Source: Kallas (2018)

Later on in this paper a research concerning the role of influencer marketing among young Finnish people is conducted. One of the questions is about how often the target group sees or reads the posts of influencers on six particular social networking channels. Those chosen channels are Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook, Blogs and Twitter. In this theoretical part of the paper those channels are introduced.

Instagram is a mobile application in which its users can share photos and videos for their followers, or watch the posts of other people. In addition to those, the users can add photos or video clips to the Instagram Stories where those are available for other users to watch for 24 hours.

As Kallas (2018) has marked Instagram is the third popular social networking channel in the whole world at the moment. Due to that popularity it is a very good channel for influencer marketing since it reaches so many people. Furthermore, it is very quick and easy to add new content to Instagram, and share it to the followers, in addition to a fact that when influencers post photos, followers can see products and services well in action (Sammis *et al*. 2016, 10).

When thinking about Finland there has been a research made about influencer marketing on Instagram. All in all 1884 respondents were researched and 492 of them use Instagram (Heiskala *et al.* 2017). It was found out that 73% of the respondents who use Instagram follow influencers on it in addition to a fact that women and people under the age of 34 relate the most positively to influencer marketing on Instagram (*Ibid.*).

Snapchat is a mobile application in which its users can send "snaps" ergo photos or videos to other users. The specialty of Snapchat is that those sent photos and videos can be watched only one time, if a receiver is fast then she or he can replay it second time but not more, after which they disappear. The two biggest demographic age groups of the Snapchat users in the United States are 12-17 year old users with 83.4% of all social network users on that age group using Snapchat, and 18-24 year old users with 78.6% of all social network users on that age group using Snapchat (eMarketer 2017). It is stated that 7 out of every 10 Snapchatters, ergo people who use Snapchat, are millennials, ergo people who are born between the years 1981 and 1996 (Dimock 2018), and Snapchat is the third most used social media channel among them (Wade 2017).

Snapchat works in influencer marketing because as Instagram it is quick and easy to use it. In addition, snaps are based on a current situation and they can be taken anywhere and anytime, and that in turn can make the influencers seem to be more closer to the consumers. As mentioned before, young people are big users of Snapchat, and when a company wants to target them, Snapchat is a great platform for influencer marketing.

YouTube is a social networking channel were YouTubers can share videos for other people to watch them all around the world. When a person has an account to YouTube, she or he can comment and share videos, and subscribe to the YouTube accounts of other users. "Today, YouTube is the largest user-driven video content provider in the world; it has become a major platform for disseminating multimedia information." (Wattenhofer *et al.* 2012).

YouTube is a good channel for influencer marketing because people can easily relate to the YouTubers when they see them on different videos, and when a YouTuber is talking on a video, a consumer can feel that she or he is talking to just them. In addition, since the content on YouTube is in a video form, it is easy for an influencer to present different products and services to the viewers, and it can also be convenient for the viewers to watch those.

Facebook is a social networking channel in which its users can post pictures, videos, writings, and send messages to other people. In Facebook people can add other people to their friends and after that they see the posts of each other on their front pages. In addition, users can also follow some accounts, such as news accounts, accounts of famous people or influencers et cetera, or belong to different kinds of Facebook groups. "With over 800 million active users, Facebook is changing the way hundreds of millions of people relate to one another and share information." (Wilson *et al.* 2012, 203).

With many people using Facebook, it is a good platfom for influencer marketing. At the moment Facebook is the most used by 18-34 year old people worldwide (Statista 2018), so if a company wants the influencer marketing to work in the best possible way with Facebook as a platform, it could focus on the target group of those ages. There are many different ways to do influencer marketing on Facebook, but the three of the most effective influencer marketing strategies on it according to Barker (2017) are to have an influencer to tell a story to Facebook users through a video, to have an influencer to share some personal experiences through Facebook Live, or to have an influencer to promote some kind of Facebook contest (Barker 2017).

Blogs are websites on which different kind of content, such as writings, photos, videos et cetera, are published, and people can read those posts. The content of a blog can be provided basically by anyone who has the access for the writing settings of a blog. Blogs are a good networking channel, because users can comment on the blog posts and in that way interact with a blogger, ergo the one who makes the posts, and with other commentators.

For influencer marketing blogs are a great platform because there are blogs for so many different topics, and it is easy to follow and analyse the activity on the blogs and how much people visit the website (Sammis *et al*. 2016, 10). Those issues are beneficial, because many different topics on blogs enable influencer marketing for so many different products and services, and when the viewers of blogs can be measured, it is easier to provide influencer marketing that suits well for the viewers. In addition, one advantage of blogs in influencer marketing is that bloggers can create content that is interesting for the viewers and they can present stories which basic brands are not able to do (*Ibid.*).

Twitter is a social networking channel in which its users can send and read tweets, which are short messages. The users of Twitter can follow other accounts on Twitter, after which the tweets of

those followed people will appear in the front page of the user. Tweets can be almost about anything, such as news, opinions, links to some webpages, information about different issues et cetera. It is also possible to share photos and video clips on Twitter.

Twitter works as a channel for influencer marketing because influencers can spread information about different products and services easily through it, and they can have chats with users of Twitter who can be possible consumers about an issue that interests them (Sammis *et al*. 2016, 11). In addition, some brands are wanted to be in an active communication with users, and influencers on Twitter can easily deal with that (*Ibid.*).

1.4. The role of influencer marketing

Influencer marketing has been thought to be a trend that is popular for a some time and which will then be forgotten, but instead of that it is growing bigger very fast (Belagatti 2017). Marketing is important for companies to get consumers acquainted with their products and services. As influencer marketing is a form of marketing, it also plays an important role in different marketing activities. Some of the reasons for influencer marketing being important are that through it, it is possible to reach the target audience fast, it is more efficient compared to paid ads, and it is a good way to set the brand image and the brand identity (*Ibid.*).

The aim in marketing is not just to get a customer, but instead of that getting and keeping a customer (Christopher *et al*. 1991, 6). With the help of influencers who are followed on social media a company is able to keep its customers since the customers may follow those influencers, and the influencers can keep on promoting products or services of a company on social media. This way a customer is exposed to the marketing of a company even after buying something for one time.

There are some theories about why influencer marketing plays so important role in the lives of consumers. According to Stokes (2017) one of the theories is the mere-exposure effect. The basic idea of the theory is that when a person spends more and more time with something or somebody, the amount of preference towards it increases (Stokes 2017). "Equally, the more times we see someone on social media, the more likely we are to be influenced by what they post." (*Ibid.*). Since

people spend so much time on social media per day, this theory is very valid to show that influencer marketing really has a role in the lives of many people (*Ibid.*).

The second theory about the role of influencer marketing is the majority illusion which is about an influencer making a product or a service to seem more popular than what it really is (*Ibid.*). Since many consumers trust influencers they can start to consider buying that what an influencer is promoting as popular. Another theory is the halo effect which is about having opinions about other people based on just one issue (*Ibid.*). "As social media users, audiences tend to consider social influencers as experts in their particular field."(*Ibid.*). Consumers can easily get a feeling that since some influencer promotes something, it must be good, and then buy it. There is also a theory of conformity in which a consumer might buy products or services since an influencer has bought and praised those, and the aim of that is to belong to a same group with him or her (*Ibid.*).

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

In this methodological part of this research paper the research method and the selection of it are described. In addition, the research object, and the research design including some explanation about the questionnaire are also presented. In the end the sampling procedure and the data analysing methods used in this research are also introduced.

2.1. Research method

This research paper was based on empirical research, and in this paper a quantitative research method was used to find out what the role of influencer marketing is among young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. This method was chosen for this paper because it made it possible to acquire a large number of responses, which was important in this case when a specific age and nationality group was researched. In addition, the research aim was to find out the awareness and attitudes of the respondents concerning influencer marketing so there was no need for a qualitative research which would probably had given deeper and more thorough answers. With a qualitative research it would had also been very difficult to acquire as many responses as it was needed for this reseach, and due to that a quantitative research method seemed to be the most appropriate research method for this specific research.

The research was conducted with an online questionnaire in Google Forms. It was based on to provide information that shows different aspects of the role of influencer marketing among the target group and presents different viewpoints of the respondents. The goal was to acquire responses from many people, and to make the questionnaire as convenient for the respondents to answer as possible. The questionnaire was designed to be easy for the respondents to understand and quick to answer to. As Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, the questionnaire was in English. That enabled to acquire responses from the target people regardless of which one of those two languages they speak.

2.2. Research design

The research object of this research paper was to analyse and work on the data acquired from the research to find out what the role of influencer marketing is among young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. To achieve that object some research questions were formed. The questions were thought about to concern the awareness of respondents on influencer marketing and what their attitudes to it are. Furthermore, it was also relevant to find out if the respondents follow influencers themselves, and what kind of influencer content they are mostly interested in.

The research questionnaire was spread straight to those people who belonged to the target group of this research, ergo young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24, on different social media channels, such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram, or by emails. In addition, the link to the questionnaire was also spread in some Finnish comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools, vocational schools, universities and universities of applied sciences to students who belonged to that specific target group. The questionnaire was open for three weeks starting from the last week of February, 2018. The total number of people who answered the questionnaire was 158 people. As the questionnaire was filled online, there can always be a chance that some person from outside of the target group could have answered it although the questionnaire was spread only to the target people. However, because the total number of the respondents was so large, that amount of those chances is quite small.

The online questionnaire was chosen for conducting the research because it made it possible to acquire responses from the target group living in different parts of Finland, and also from target people who live abroad. In addition, the online questionnaire allowed the viewing of the responses for the questionnaire during the whole three week's response collection time, and that enabled the examining of the responses much more thoroughly and carefully in real time.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions at maximum. Every respondent was asked about some of their demographic facts, which were the gender and age of a respondent, and their highest education level. These questions were there for collecting some background information about the respondents. In addition to those, there were eight questions about the attitudes and awareness of the respondents concerning the influencer marketing and influencers, which were compulsory for every respondent to answer. Two of these questions were such that if a respondent answered from

two different response options the other one, she or he was presented a few specifying questions to find out more information concerning that topic.

In this research paper a non-probability sampling method was used. This sampling method was chosen for this research because the probability sampling was not proper since this research required a well-specified target group from young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. More precisely described, a quota sampling method was used in this research since the respondents were chosen based on their demographic factors which were in this case the age and nationality of the respondents.

In this research paper descriptive analysis was provided in addition to some comparative analysis. To analyse the data of this research, Excel, which is one of the Microsoft Office programmes, was used. The data that was acquired from the questionnaire answers of the respondents was moved to Excel, and some figures were made based on the answers. The main point in this was to make it more convenient to analyse the results. In addition, it also made it more clear to see the different answers and to compare them with each other. The figures are shown on the results and analysis part of the next chapter.

3. EMPIRICAL PART OF THE RESEARCH

In this empirical part of this research paper the main results of the research are presented and the analysis of them is provided. There is also some comparison between different views of usefulness of influencer marketing provided. In addition, after introducing the results and comparison, there is a discussion and recommendations part concerning the topic to describe some findings with previously known data, and to give some recommendations from the viewpoint of the author of this paper. Right after this empiricial part the conclusions of the research are presented.

3.1. Results and analysis

In total there were 158 people who took part in the research. From all of them 55% were female and 45% were male respondents, so the gender distribution was a quite even. The age requirement for the people who participated in this research was between the age of 15 and 24. In the research questionnaire the respondents were asked to indicate if they belonged to an age group between the age of 15 and 19, or to an age group between the age of 20 and 24. 56% of the respondents belonged to the first group so they were something between 15 and 19 years old. In turn, 44% of the respondents belonged to the latter group, so they were something between 20 and 24 years old.

The third demographic question was about the eduation level of the respondents, and they were asked to select their highest education level (see Figure 3.1). From all the 158 respondents 19% had their highest education level in comprehensive school. The two education levels which were answered the most were upper secondary school with 26% from all the answers, and vocational school with 25% from all the answers. In addition to those, there were 21% of the respondents who had their highest education level in undergraduate degree, such as bachelor's degree, and 9% of the respondents who had their highest education level in graduate degree, such as master's degree.
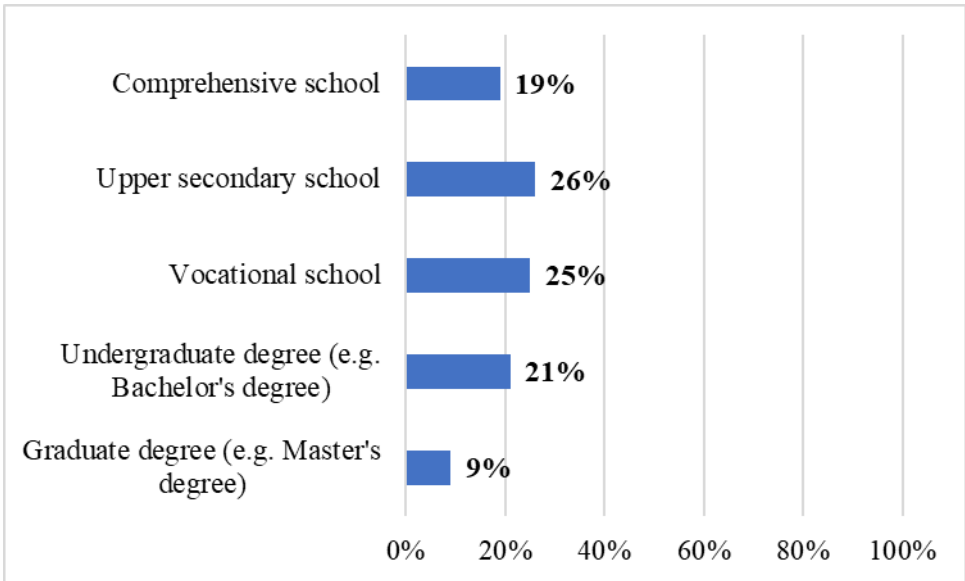
Figure 3.1. Highest education level (n=158)

One of the five research questions was to find out what the awareness of influencer marketing on social media is among the target froup (see Figure 3.2). From all the 158 respondents most people, 89%, answered that they are aware of influencer marketing on social media. However, there were 11% of the respondents who answered that they are not aware of that. Most of those who answered not to be aware of influencer marketing on social media were male from the age group of 15 to 19, and who had their highest education level in comprehensive school.
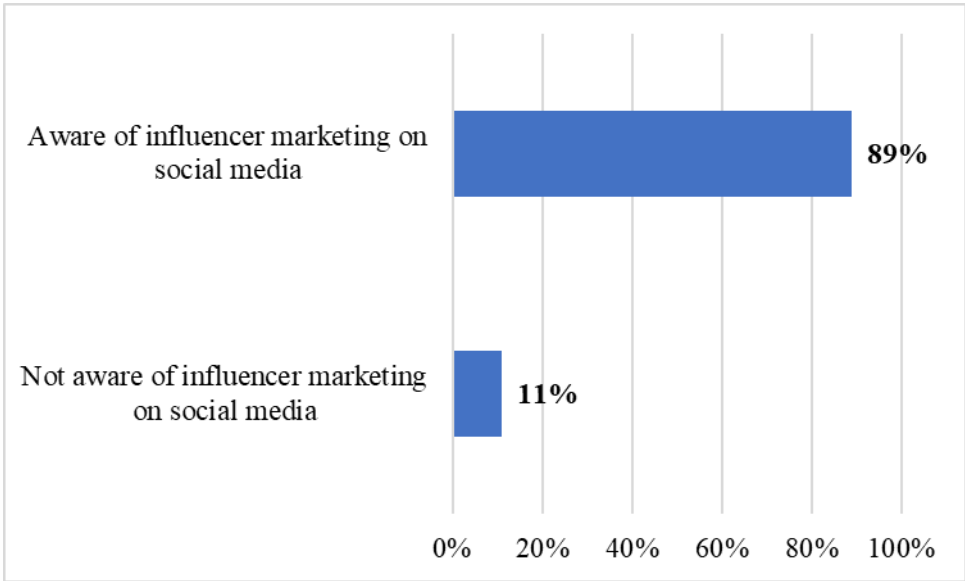
Figure 3.2. Awareness of influncer marketing on social media (n=158)

When the respondents were asked about if they remember seeing influencer marketing on social media, again most of the respondents with 83% of them answered that they remember seeing influencer marketing on social media (see Figure 3.3). Nevertheless, there were also 17% of the respondents who answered that they do not remember seeig influencer marketing on social media.
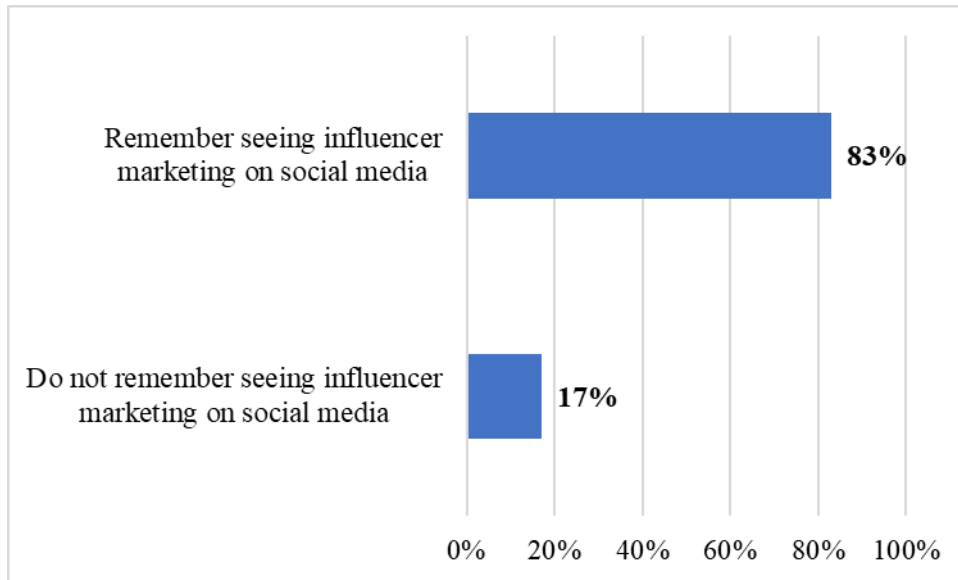

Figure 3.3. Remembering of seeing influencer marketing on social media (n=158)

The respondents were also asked if they recognize the hidden advertising that can appear on the accounts of influencers (see Figure 3.4). 82% from 158 respondents answered that they recognize it, but there were 18% of the respondents who answered that they do not recognize the hidden advertising on the accounts of influencers. Sometimes the advetising can be hidden well for example to description boxes, or in the caption in a case of a photo, for instance on Instagram, so it might not look so clear that influencer might be advertising something. In addition, sometimes the advertising is put so well in a photo or a video, for example, that it may not look like it really is advertising. Furthermore, sometimes a person might not pay attention to the small texts in the descriptions and captions, or to products or services seen on the posts, and in that case the hidden advertising might not be noticed. There are many reasons for that the hidden advertising can remain unrecognized, and those three mentioned are a few of those.
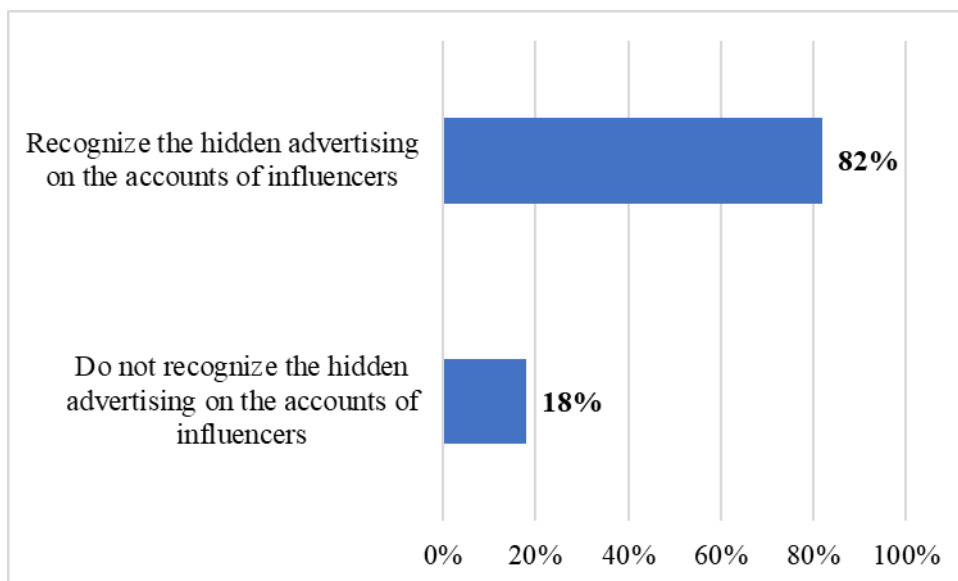
Figure 3.4. Recognition of hidden adertising (n=158)

Again one of the five research questions was to find out the level of usefulness for that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services. The respondents had five response options to choose from (see figure 3.5). 23% of the respondents thought that it is totally useful that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services, and 46% of the respondents thought that it is rather useful. This means that all in all over the half, 69%, of the repondents found it at least rather useful that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services. However, there were also some respondents who did not find it useful. 6% of the respondents found it rather useless that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services, and 3% of the respondents found it totally useless. Between the respondents who found the issue useful and useless there were also respondents who had a neutral opinion about the issue. That neutral opinion was mentioned approximately by one fifth of all the respondents with 22% of the responses.

The research also aimed to find out if the respondents follow influencers on social media or not (see Figure 3.6). As the author of the paper predicted before analysing the results, the majority, 84%, of the respondents answered that they follow influencers on social media. The minority of the respondents, with 16% from all the responses, do not follow influencers on social media. Most of those who answered that they do not follow influencers on social media were male, but there were also some females. Many of them had their highest education level in upper secondary school or in vocational school, and most of them belonged to the age group of 20-24.
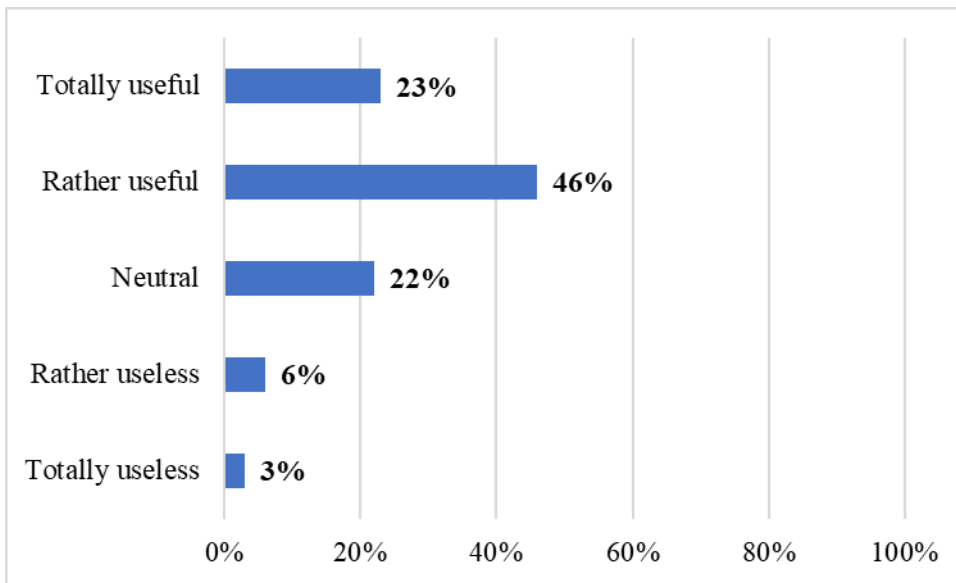
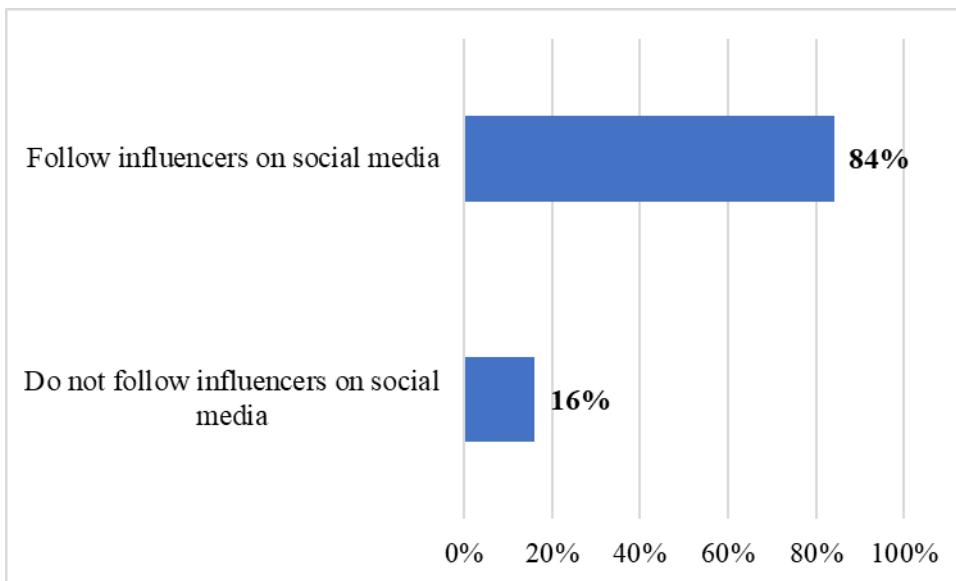Figure 3.5. Usefulness of influencer marketing (n=158)

Figure 3.6. Following of influencers on social media (n=158)

All in all 132 respondents answered that they follow influencers on social media, and for them there were some extra and more focused questions presented. One aspect of the research was to find out what kinds of influencers the target group follows on social media, and that was conducted by researching if the respondents follow Finnish or foreign influencers or both (see Figure 3.7).

Almost half of the respondents, with 46% from all the answers, answered that they follow as much Finnish as foreign influencers. Approximately one third of the respondents, ergo 30%, answered that they follow only or mostly foreign influencers. Nowadays when people can easily access Internet and search and follow there almost anything they want, people can also find foreign influencers easily and start to follow them and their life. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook also assist this interaction between people from all around the world. Although many respondents answered to be following foreign or both Finnish and foreign influencers, there were also some respondents who answered to be following only or mostly Finnish influencers with 24% from all the answers.
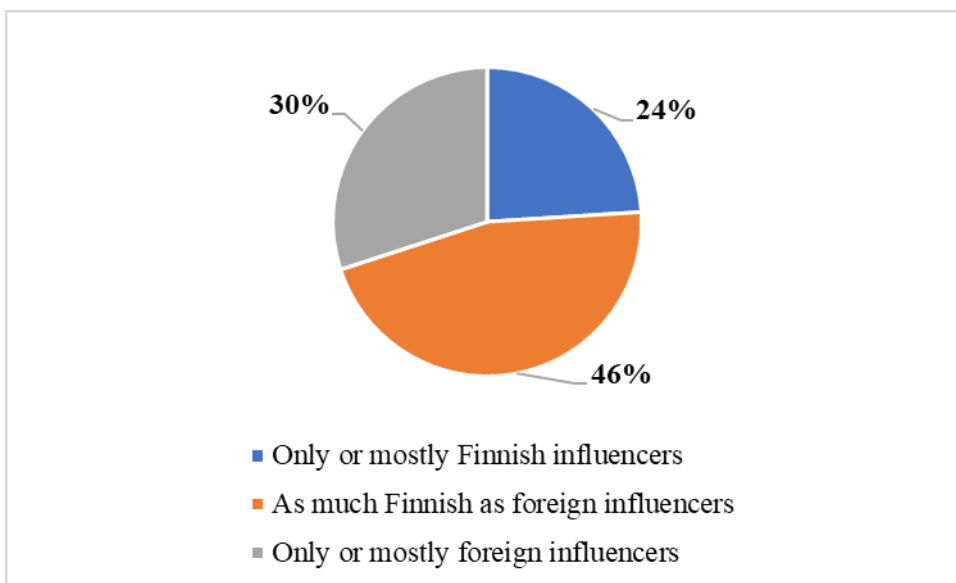

Figure 3.7. Influencers followed on social media (n=132)

On the research questionnaire there were six social media channels chosen and it was researched that how often the respondents see or read influencers' posts on those channels (see Figure 3.8). There were two social media channels, Instagram and Snapchat, which were so popular that over half of the respondents answered that they see or read the posts of influencers on those channels everyday, with 73% to Instagram and 61% to Snapchat. These respondents were mainly people from the age group of 15-19 and with the highest education level in comprehensive school, vocational school and in upper secondary school. Also YouTube and Facebook were quite popular with respectively 36% and 28% of the respondents seeing or reading influencers' posts on those channels everyday. YouTube was more preferred with the younger age group, and Facebook, in turn, with the older age group. Everyday Facebook posts were also more seen or read with

respondents who had their highest education level in undergraduate or graduate degree than with others.

The blog posts of influencers are seen by 13% of the respondents everyday, and 11% of the respondents 4-6 times a week. The blogs were more popular with female respondents than with male respondents. Twitter is the channel were the repondents see or read the posts of the influencers the least, only 4% of them seeing or reading the posts on it everyday and 4-6 times a week, and 10% of the respondents 2-3 times a week. Those respondents who answered one of those three options were mainly men who belonged to the age group of 20-24, and who had the highest education level in graduate or undergraduate degree.

When looking at the results from the point of view that on which social media channels the posts of influencers are the least seen or read, Twitter comes number one, since 36% of the respondents answered that they never see or read the posts of influencers on Twitter, and 39% of the respondents answered that they see or read those more rarely than once a week. The respondents who answered like that were mainly females from both age groups, and different education levels lower than graduate degree, but there were also many other respondents too. When looking at the results of blogs, it can be seen that 15% of the respondents never, and 21% of the respondents more rarely than once a week see or read the posts of influencers on this social media channel. These repondents were mainly males from the younger age group, and with the highest education level in comprehensive school, vocational school, or in upper secondary school.

4% of the respondents never see or read the posts of influencers on Facebook, while YouTube had that percentage 2%, and Snapchat 3%, so these were on a quite same level. However, with Instagram no one answered never. In addition, only one percent of the respondents answered that they see or read influencers' posts on Instagram more rarely than once a week, while Snapchat had that percentage 3%, YouTube 8%, and Facebook 7%.
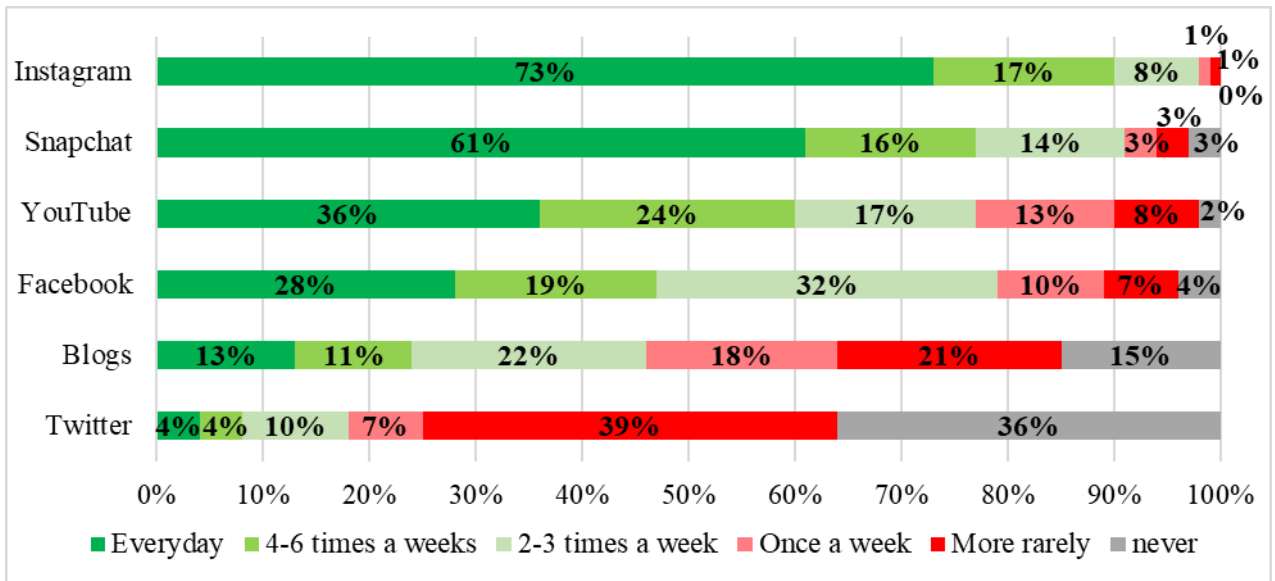
Figure 3.8. The posts of influencers seen or read on social media (n=132)

Those 132 respondents who answered that they follow influencers on social media were also asked about which topics are related to the accounts that they prefer when thinking about the influencers that they follow (see Figure 3.9). The respondents were able to choose many different options from different alternatives. The three topics that were answered the most by the respondents were beauty and fashion with 58% of the respondents answering it, sports with 55% of the respondents answering it, and well-being and fitness with 46% of the respondents answering it. These all are topics that have been big issues on social media lately. Beauty and fashion, and well-being and fitness were very popular especially within females in all different education levels and in both age groups, even though there were also males who answered those options. The topic of sports was the most popular among the males with the highest education level in upper secondary school or vocational school, and in both age groups. 37% of the respondents had entertainment related to their followed accounts, and 30% of the respondents preferred food and cooking on their followed influencer accounts. In turn, travelling, gaming and e-sport, and interior design, housing and gardening were all topics that were preferred on the followed influncer accounts for 23%, 22% and 20% of the respondents respectively. In addition, there were also 9% of the respondents who preferred influencer accounts with a topic of nature and animals. Only one percent of the respondents answered "other", but there was no explanation mentioned.
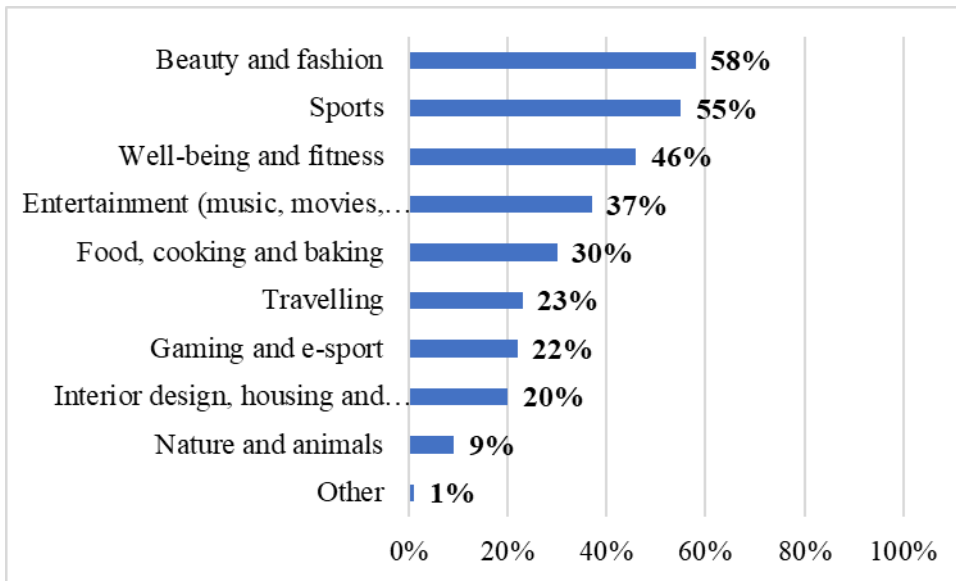
Figure 3.9. Topics related to the preferred influencer accounts (n=132)

One of the research questions was to find out what the attitudes of the target group concerning influencer marketing are. The respondents were presented to six different statements concerning the influencer marketing, and their job was to state if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree to each statement, or if they have a neutral opinion about them (see Figure 3.10). To a statement "It is important that an influencer tells about a collaboration with a company" the majority, ergo 89% of the respondents at least agreed, and 54% of them strongly agreed. This indicates that the most people in the target group find it important that they can see if the posts of influencers are made in a collaboration with a company since it can be found unethical if there is collaboration but it is not mentioned. However, there were also 3% of the respondents who at least disagreed the statement, with 2% of them strongly disagreeing. These answers were all from respondents who belonged to the age group of 15-19, and whose highest education level was comprehensive school. This can indicate that those people probably have not studied the topic of influencer marketing that much, so they do not know that influencers should mark their collaborations on their posts. There were also 8% of the respondents who had a neutral opinion about this statement.

72% of the respondents at least agreed that influencer marketing has offered them useful tips and recommendations, with 41% of them strongly agreeing it. Only under one tenth, 9%, of the respondents at least disagreed the statement, with 4% of them strongly diagreeing it. However, almost one fifth of the respondents with 19% of the answers had a neutral opinion about the

statement. The respondents who answered this neutral option were mostly those people who had answered that they are not following influencers on social media, and those who had answered that they are not aware of or do not remember seeing influencer marketing on social media.

Over the half of the repondents, 53%, agreed that influencer marketing is acceptable if an influencer is genuinely interested in a product or a service, and 34% of the respondents strongly agreed this particular statement. This shows that all in all the target group finds it important that an influencer really is interested in a product or a service that he or she is marketing. Only the minority of the respondents with 3% of the responses disagreed the statement, and of them 2% strongly disagreed it. One tenth of the respondents had a neutral opinion towards this statement, and once again those were mostly the respondents who had answered that they are not following influencers on social media, and those who had answered that they are not aware of or do not remember seeing influencer marketing on social media.

The majority, 76%, of the respondents agreed that influencer marketing gives good information about a product or a service to a consumer, and from those 27% of the respondents were strongly agreeing the statement. However, there were also 8% of the respondents who at least disagreed this statement, and 3% of them strongly disagreeing it. 16% of the respondents, in turn, had a neutral opinion about the statement. Those who disagreed, strongly disagreed and had a neutral opinion about the statement were mainly the respondents who did not find influencer marketing useful.

60% of the respondents agreed that it is easy to notice influencer marketing, with 23% of them strongly agreeing the statement. These were mostly the people with their highest education level in graduate or undergraduate degree, or in upper secondary school, both male and female, and most of them belonging to the age group of 20-24. 21% of the respondents disagreed the statement and 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed it. These were mainly respondents whose highest education level was in comprehensive school or in vocational school and who belonged to the age group of 15-19. This can be due to a fact that marketing and influencer marketing are not taught yet in comprehensive school so these young people may not have learnt to notice it that much. There were also 16% of the respondents who had a neutral opinion about the statement. Many of them were respondents who had previously answered that they do not remember seeing influencer marketing on social media.

The last statement was about if influencer marketing is trustworthy. All in all almost half, 47%, of the respondents agreed the statement, and 22% of the repondents strongly agreed it. Most of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed the statement belonged to the age group of 15-19, and had a highest education level in comprehensive school, vocational school or in upper secondary school. 18% of the respondents had a neutral opinion about the statement. There were also 9% of the respondents who disagreed the statement and 4% who strongly disagreed it. These answers came from the respondents with different highest educational levels, and from both age groups.
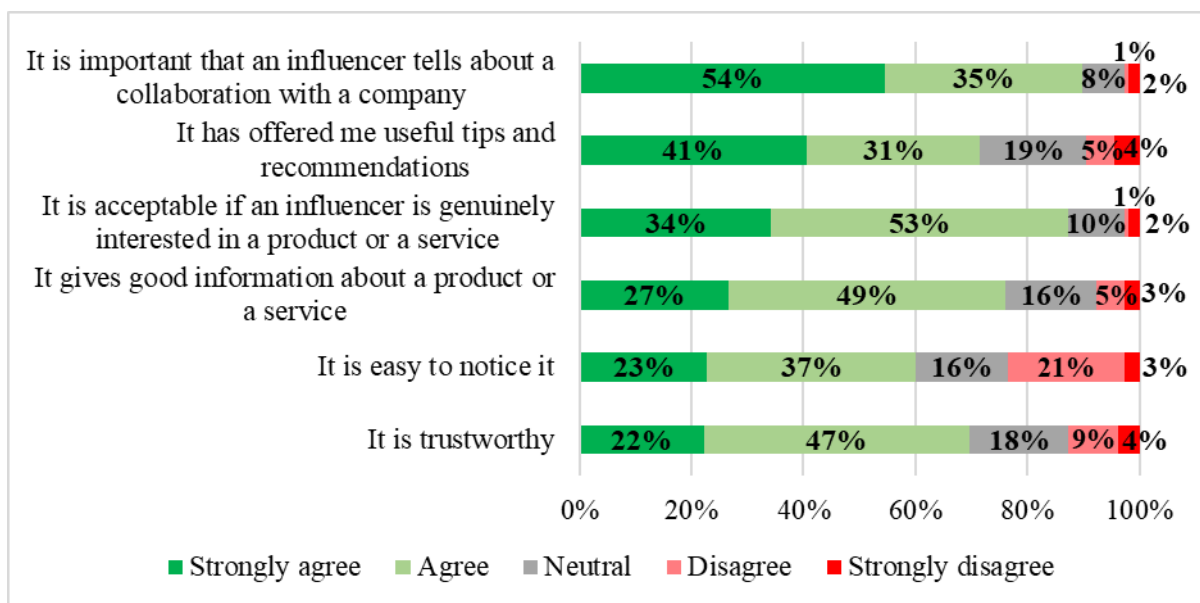

Figure 3.10. Attitudes about influencer marketing (n=158)

For the question of how influencer marketing has affected the target group during the past year, the respondents had different options from which they could choose all that were suitable for them (see Figure 3.11). 68% of the respondents answered that during the past year influencer marketing has made them be interested in a product or a service. For 58% of the respondents influencer marketing has made them be aware of a product or a service. In addition, it has made 39% of the respondents buy, and 37% of the respondents look for more information about a product or a service. During the past year influencer marketing has made 25% of the respondents consider a product or a service to be better than they thought before, and 18% of the respondents recommend. However, there were also 17% of the respondents who answered that influencer marketing has not affected them in any way. These were mainly the respondents who answered before that they do not follow influencers on social media.
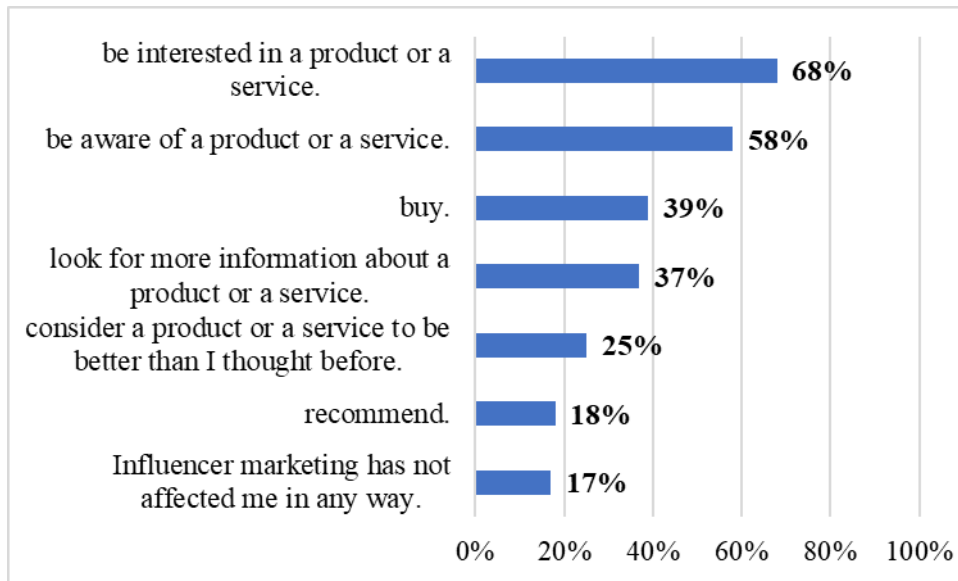
Figure 3.11.The effect of influencer marketing during the past year: Influencer marketing has made me… (n=158)

Almost all, 91% of the respondents could consider buying a product or a service based on the recommendations of an influencer (see Figure 3.12). The last 9% of the respondents who could not consider buying a product or a service based on the recommendations of an influencer were mainly male, and those who found it rather useless or totally useless that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services.

Those 144 respondents who answered that they could consider buying a product or a service based on the recommendations of an influencer were presented an extra question about what products or services they could consider buying based on those recommendations (see Figure 3.13). The respondents were again free to choose as many alternatives as they found suitable for themselves. There were three different product groups that were above everything else. Those were clothes with 81% of the responses, cosmetics or beauty products with 47% of the responses, and sports gear with 44% of the responses. In addition to those, approximately one third of the respondents answered also health or natural products, games and electronics. Around one fourth of the respondents could consider buying restaurant services, goceries and health or sports services based on the recommendations of an influencer. 20% of the respondents could also consider buying cosmetics services. Furthermore, 2% of the respondents answered "other", and clarified that they meant travelling services.
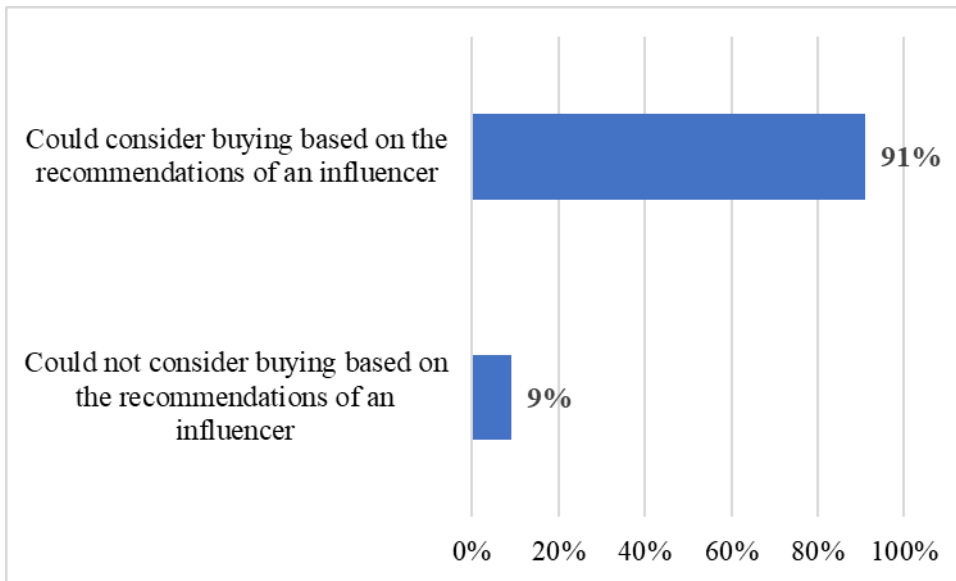
Figure 3.12. Buying considerations based on the recommendations of an influencer (n=158)
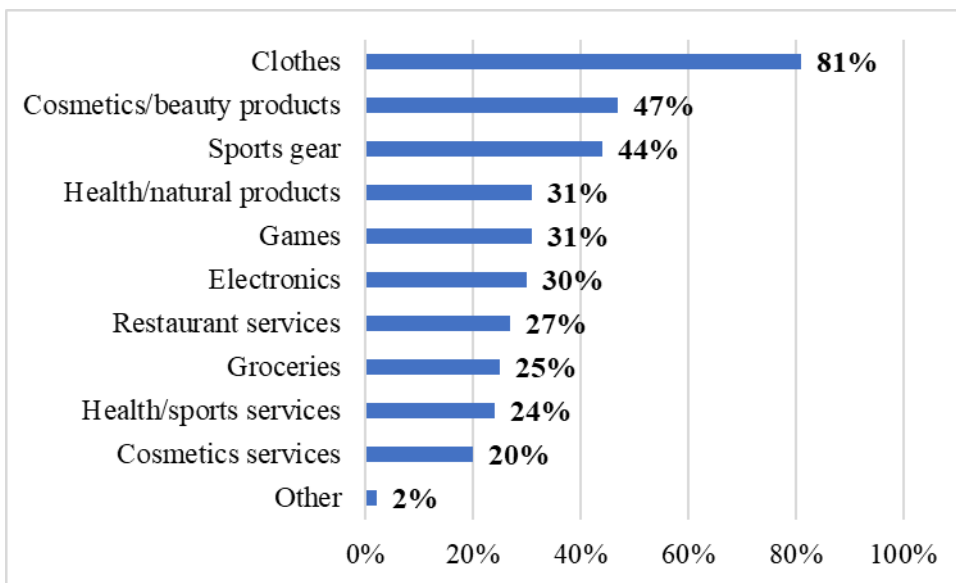

Figure 3.13. Products and services which could be bought based on the recommendations of an influencer (n=144)

3.2. Comparison between different views of usefulness of influencer marketing

So that the research was not only descriptive, also some comparison analysis was conducted. The comparison was made between three different views of the usefulness of inluencer marketing; those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful, those who had a neutral opinion

about it, and those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless. The attitudes of those three groups about influencer marketing were compared with each other.

The majority, 38% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless totally disagreed the statement that influencer marketing is trustworthy and 16% disagreed it. Nobody from that group totally agreed the statement, but there were 23% who agreed it and the same amount of those who had a neutral opinion about it. On the contrary, the majority, 52%, of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful agreed the statement, and also 30% totally agreed the statement. No one from that group disagreed the statement and only 6% disagreed it in addition to 12% with neutral opinion. The majority, 42%, of those who had a neutral opinion about the usefulness of influencer marketing, in turn, agreed that influencer marketing is trustworthy. Only 6% totally agreed it and 3% totally disagreed it, while 17% of them disagreed the statement and 32% had a neutral opinion about it.

With the statement about it is easy to notice influencer marketing, together 54% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless totally disagreed or disagreed it, while with those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful that percentage was 17% with nobody totally disagreeing the statement. In turn, 30% of the group who had a neutral opinion about usefulness of influencer marketing disagreed or totally disagreed the statement. The percentages of those who agreed and totally agreed the statement in those three groups were 23%, 67% and 53% respectively. Neutral opinion about the statement was quite equal in all the goups with 23%, 16% and 17% respectively.

The statement about influencer marketing giving good information about a product or a service was agreed or totally agreed by 89% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful, while that percentage was 23% with those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless, and 56% with those who had a neutral opinion about the usefulness of influencer marketing. On the contrary, the percentages of those who disagreed or totally disagreed were 1%, 46% and 13% respectively, while the neutral opinion percentages about the statement were 10%, 31% and 31%.

The majority, 88%, of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful agreed or totally agreed that influencer marketing has offered them useful tips and recommendations, while with those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless, nobody agreed the statement,

but the majority of them, 62%, disagreed or totally disagreed the statement. The neutral opinion about the statement was mentioned by 10% and 38% of the groups respectively. In turn, the majority of those who had a neutral opinion about the usefulness of influencer marketing agreed or totally agreed the statement with 47%, and 39% of them had a neutral opinion about the statement.

The statement about influencer marketing being acceptable if an influencer is genuinely interested in a product or a service was agreed or totally agreed in all three groups by 92% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful, 61% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless, and 84% of those who had a neutral opinion about the usefulness of influencer marketing. The neutral opinion was mentioned by 7%, 23% and 13% of the groups respectively whereas the statement was disagreed or totally disagreed by 1%, 16% and 3% respectively. It can be drawn that about this statement the groups think quite similarly.

The majoity of all the groups agreed or totally agreed the statement about that it is important that an influencer tells about a collaboration with a company with 93% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useful, 69% of those who found influencer marketing rather or totally useless, and 86% of those who had a neutral opinion about the usefulness of influencer marketing. 5%, 23% and 11% of the groups had a neutral opinion about the statement respectively, while only 2%, 8% and 3% of the groups respectively disagreed or totally disagreed the statement. This statement was the most similarly thought about by all three groups.

3.3. Discussion and recommendations

As it can be seen from the results, influencer marketing is a very effective tool of marketing among young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. In the previous research conducted by Heiskala *et al*. in 2017 it was found out that 73% of the respondents who use Instagram follow influencers on it (Heiskala *et al*. 2017). In the research for this paper it was found out that all together 84% of the target group follow influencers on social media. The differences between those two researches are that in the older research the respondents were between the age range of 15-65, and the research was only about the users of Instagram, so the results are not totally comparable between each other. However, from the research of this paper it was found out that no one answered that they would see or read the posts of influencers never on Instagram, so it can be concluded that

all of them are the users of Instagram because every respondent does that at least more rarely than once a week but more often than never. In the research of this paper the age range was between 15 and 24, so the age ranges of the two researches are not the same. Despite of that, thinking about influencer marketing especially on Instagram, if the results of this research are thought to be the probable answers of the young people in the previous research, they show similar kinds of orientations.

Kallas (2018) measured that the three most popular social networking channels used around the world are Facebook, YouTube and Instagram respectively in April 2018 (Kallas 2018). Even though the respondents of the research of this paper respondend the questionnaire in the end of February or in the beginning of March, the time difference is not that big. In the research of this paper, the most popular social networking channels, or the channels on which the respondents see or read the posts of influencers the most, are Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube respectively. It can be drawn that even though on the ranking of Kallas there are people from many different age groups and from all around the world, it still looks very similar to that of young Finnish people. Both researches have Instagram and YouTube in their top three, but one of those three is different. Kallas measured it to be Facebook, which was the fourth in the popularity of young Finnish people. In addition, young Finnish people preferred Snapchat which, in turn, was not even on the list of Kallas in the top eight.

The results of the research can be looked in light of the theories of the role of influencer marketing. According to the mere-exposure effect as people spend so much time on social media and see influencers on it they become influenced more easily by them (Stokes 2017). As the results show, young Finnish people see or read the posts of influencers on social media very often, especially on Instagram and Snapchat, and due to that they then probably become easily influenced by those posts. The majority illusion theory, in turn, can happen since 69% of the respondents at least agreed influencer marketing being trustworthy. Since they easily trust the influencers and their advertising, they might buy those products or services which are marketed although they would not really be so popular.

According to the halo effect consumers can have opinions about influencers based on just one issue (*Ibid.*). These opinions can affect the attitudes of consumers concerning influencer marketing. For instance, if an influencer is considered to be fashionable, his or her tips and recommendations about clothes can be considered useful, like 72% of the respondents of the

research agreed or strongly agreed, since it is considered that they know what they are talking about. However, if there is one aspect in an influencer that a consumer may not like, she or he can base the whole opinion just on that, and strongly disagree the statement. In turn, as people easily seek conformity it can be a reason for buying based on the recommendations of an influencer. 91% of the respondents of this research could consider that, and the role of conformity can be a reason at least for some of them.

Based on the conclusion acquired from the research it can be recommended that it can be beneficial for different companies to use influencer marketing as one of their marketing tools, especially if they want to concentrate on young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24 as their target group. This can be justified by a fact that the target group finds influencer marketing a quite useful in their lives. Based on the research it can also be recommended that the influencer marketing could be used mostly on the social media channels of Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Facebook when the target group for the promotion is the one mentioned above. That is because on those channels the target group sees or reads the posts of influencers the most. This way increasing the awareness of the target group about the products and services is possible, and hopefully in the end of the day it also makes them buy those.

Different products and different services have their own customer bases, but when thinking overall, the target group is the most interested in clothes, cosmetics and beauty products, and different sports gear. Due to that it can be recommended that influencers on different social media channels post about collaborations of those kinds of products. This way consumers can get good information about those products, which they might not get from elsewhere, and can make the buying decisions based on the recommendations of an influencer. An influencer, on the contrary, can benefit from this recommendation since as they publish posts about stuff that the target group is interested in, it can increase the popularity of an influencer, and increase the number of followers on the accounts of an influencer. This can also make them get more collaborations with different companies, and in that way bring them more profit as an influencer. A recommendation for a company is to choose influencers that fit for a style of a product or a service since that makes it more convenient for a consumer to relate to and trust the promotion.

Even though influencers has to mark their collaborations with different companies on their posts, it might be sometimes not so clear. As a result from the research it was found out that the target group thinks that it is important that an influencer tells about a collaboration with a company. Due

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to that it is recommended that collaborations are shown in a way that the target consumers can see those well, since it can affect their buying decisions. If a consumer sees that there is some influencer marketing on a post, but she or he does not notice the information about that, it can easily decrease their trust towards an influencer. Only a little over half of the target group thought that it is easy to notice influencer marketing on social media, so that also gives proof for a recommendation for influencers to mark their collaborations with different companies more clearly on the posts.

All in all, it is recommended to use influencer marketing among young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24, because many people from the target group think that it is trustworthy, and a huge number of them follow influencers on social media. That is why it is a great tool to market a product or a service. Influencer marketing benefits consumers by offering them information and recommendations of different products and services, influencers by offering collaborations with companies and probably increasing the number of their followers, and companies by helping their products or services get sold.

CONCLUSIONS

The research problem of this paper was that there is a lack of information about what the role of influencer marketing is among young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. Due to that the aim of the paper was to examine the target group and the different attitudes and awareness of them concerning the topic of influencer marketing, and through that to get a solution for the main research problem after analysing carefully the results acquired from the research.

The main results acquired from the research were that most of the people who belong to that specific target group are well aware of influencer marketing on social media, even though some of the target group think that it can be difficult to notice it. In addition, most of the target group also remember seeing influencer marketing on social media, which most probably means that they have then read or saw the posts of influencers on different social media channels. Most of the target group also recognize hidden advertising that can appear on the accounts of influencers, which can indicate that young people mainly understand what is the difference between advertising or promoting something, and posting posts without promotion.

The majority of the target group find that it is at least rather useful that influencers on social media introduce and tell about different products and services, although the target group also have a notable number of neutral opinions about that usefulness. In addition, most of the target group at least agree that influencer marketing gives good information about a product or a service, and for most of them influencer marketing has offered useful tips and recommendations about different products and services. Furthermore, many people from the target group find that influencer marketing is trustworthy.

Influencer marketing has made over half of the target group be interested in a product or a service, and be aware of a product or a service. This shows that influencer marketing really affects the consumers, and that is why it is not a useless tool of marketing. In addition, influencer marketing has also made the target group buy and look for more information about a product or a service

which also shows that it is a great way to get consumers aware of different products and services, and get them buy those. Most of the target group could consider buying a product or a service based on the recommendations of an influencer, and mostly those products would be clothes, cosmetics and beauty products, and sports gear.

Well over half of the target group follow influencers on social media. Almost half of those who follow influencers follow both Finnish and foreign influencers, and the rest are divided quite even between those who follow only or mostly Finnish influencers, and those who follow only or mostly foreign influencers. Because of that instead of focusing just on the origin of an influencer, it is good for a company to think also about other aspects, such as which kind of person can promote which kinds of products and services. Even though some may prefer foreign influencers over domestic ones, or the other way around, there will still always be some target group which is following influencers that some other people are not.

The three social media platforms where the target group sees or reads the posts of influencers the most frequently are Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube. The most beneficial for influencers is then to do marketing on those channels. On Twitter, in turn, the target group sees or reads those posts clearly the least. For the target group the most preferred topics on influencer accounts that they follow are beauty and fashion, sports, and well-being and fitness. Concluding from this result, influencer marketing could probably benefit the most when influencers focus on those topics when doing promotion on their posts to consumers. Since those are topics that interest the consumers, influencer marketing can work well because the consumers are already interested in those things that are marketed, and influencer marketing can work as a final boost to buy. In addition, influencers can also benefit from doing posts that the consumers are interested in, since it can increase the number of their followers.

A large majority of the target group at least agrees that it is important that an influencer tells about a collaboration with some company when promoting a product or a service. Marking the collaboration right and clearly can also increase the trust of a consumer towards an influencer. Most of the target group also agree that influencer marketing is acceptable if an influencer is genuinely interested in a product or a service, which she or he is promoting. Due to that it is important for influencers to choose collaborations which are interesting for themselves, because it also gives a good sign for the consumers and can increase the trust between an influencer and a consumer.

To sum it up, it can be stated that influencer marketing plays a very important role among young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. The social media is a big issue in their lives which can be concluded from that of how often they see or read influencers' posts on different social media channels. It can be very beneficial for different companies to try to acquire new customers and to promote their products or services through using that social media because it catches a lot of the target group. Influencer marketing really affects the target group for example by making them be aware of products. In addition, influencer marketing is a great marketing tool since most of the target group follow influencers on social media, and can consider buying a product or a service based on the recommendations of an influencer. Influencer marketing works well with both genders, and with different ages in the target group. Even though there are always some people who do not find influencer marketing useful, who do not follow influencers on social media, or do not let influencer marketing affect them, the majority finds influencer marketing good and useful. This research also proved that influencer marketing really works in this specific target group.

Based on the results acquired from the research it can be recommended that it can be beneficial for different companies to use influencer marketing as one of their marketing tools, especially if they want to concentrate on young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24 as their target group. It can also be recommended that the influencer marketing could be used mostly on the social media channels of Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Facebook when the target group for the promotion is the one mentioned above. In addition, a proposal for influencers is that they post about issues that the target group is interested in since in that way a consumer, and an influencer can both benefit.

The conclusions and proposals are applicable with the specific target group described before, and at the current time. If some other target group is researched about this same topic in a same way, the results can be totally different, because for example age is a thing that can make many differencies when talking about social media and influencer marketing on it. This could probably cause different conclusions, and proposals based on the results. However, the implementation of this research is basically still applicable for that too.

There are many future research possibilities for this research. On a long-run it can be researched that how the role of influencer marketing among the target group changes between the years or the decades. In addition, there can be a research made to concentrate more carefully to some specific

research question of this research. It can also be reseached of how the role of influencer marketing among young Finnish people differ from the same of some other nationality, for instance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Influencer marketing

Hello! I am a third year bachelor's student in Tallinn University of Technology and I am conducting a research for my bachelor's thesis about the role and significance of influencer marketing within the young Finnish people between the age of 15 and 24. Influencer marketing is a form of marketing in which people who have an influence on other people are used to promote a product or a service. Some examples of influencers are celebrities, Instagrammers, YouTubers and bloggers.

I would appreciate a lot if you could answer to this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of max. 15 questions and answering to it takes only a few minutes. The answers will be used only to this research and they will be confidential and anonymous. Thank you for your answers very much in advance!

*Pakollinen

Are you aware of influencer marketing on social media? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

Do you remember seeing influencer marketing on social media? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

The questionnaire continues

Do you recognize the hidden advertising on the accounts of influencers? *

○ Yes

○ No

How useful do you find that well-known users in social media introduce and tell about different products and services? *
1=Totally useless, 2=Rather useless, 3=Neutral, 4=Rather useful, 5=Totally useful

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally useless	○	○	○	○	○	Totally useful

Do you follow influencers on social media? (users you don't know personally such as celebrities, bloggers, content accounts) *

○ Yes

○ No

SEURAAVA

What kinds of influencers do you follow? *

○ Only or mostly Finnish influencers

○ As much Finnish as foreign influencers

○ Only or mostly foreign influencers

The questionnaire continues

How often do you see/read influencers' posts on these social media channels? *

	Everyday	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	Once a week	More rarely	Never
Instagram	○	○	○	○	○	○
YouTube	○	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○	○
Snapchat	○	○	○	○	○	○
Blogs	○	○	○	○	○	○
Twitter	○	○	○	○	○	○

If you think about the influencers that you follow, which topics are related to the accounts that you prefer? *

☐ Entertainment (music, movies, TV-shows etc.)

☐ Sports

☐ Beauty and fashion

☐ Well-being and fitness

☐ Interior design, housing and gardening

☐ Food, cooking and baking

☐ Nature and animals

☐ Gaming and e-sport

☐ Travelling

☐ Muu:

TAKAISIN   SEURAAVA

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The questionnaire continues

What do you think about influencer marketing? *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
It is trustworthy	○	○	○	○	○
It is easy to notice it	○	○	○	○	○
It gives good information about a product or a service	○	○	○	○	○
It has offered me useful tips and recommendations	○	○	○	○	○
It is acceptable if an influencer is genuinely interested in a product or a service	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that an influencer tells about a collaboration with a company	○	○	○	○	○

Influencer marketing that I have seen during the past year has made me... *

☐ be aware of a product or a service.

☐ be interested in a product or a service.

☐ look for more information about a product or a service.

☐ consider a product or a service to be better than I thought before.

☐ buy.

☐ recommend.

☐ Influencer marketing has not affected me in any way.

The questionnaire continues

Could you consider buying a product or a service based on the recommendations of an influencer? *

○ Yes

○ No

TAKAISIN   SEURAAVA

What products or services could you consider buying based on the recommendations of an influencer? You can choose many alternatives *

☐ Clothes

☐ Cosmetics/beauty products

☐ Electronics

☐ Sports gear

☐ Games

☐ Restaurant services

☐ Groceries

☐ Cosmetics services

☐ Health/natural products

☐ Health/sports services

☐ Muu:

TAKAISIN   SEURAAVA

The questionnaire continues

Demographic questions

What is your gender? *

○ Female

○ Male

How old are you? *

○ 15-19

○ 20-24

What is your education level? (Please select your highest education level) *

○ Comprehensive school

○ Upper secondary school

○ Vocational school

○ Undergraduate degree (e.g. Bachelor's degree)

○ Graduate degree (e.g. Master's degree)

TAKAISIN   LATAA

Note: Pakollinen = Compulsory, Seuraava = Next, Takaisin = Back, Lataa = Send

As Google Forms was used as a base for an online interview, the words marked in the note appear in the language of the country where the internet is used to fill in the questionnaire.