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**EFFECTS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON FINNISH
YOUTHS PURCHASING BEHAVIOR**

Bachelor's thesis

Programme International Business Administration, specialisation Marketing

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to consider the target group of Finnish youth, aged from 15 to 25-year olds, and to research the effects influencer marketing has on the target groups purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions. The empirical research is conducted using a quantitative research method through an online survey. The survey is designed using a five-step consumer purchasing model and it shows the effects that influencer marketing has on the target groups purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions.

The main results of the survey indicate that influencer marketing has a favourable effect on different stages of purchasing behavior of the target group and has notable positive influence of the target groups purchasing decisions. It can be concluded that influencer marketing on social media has a positive impact on Finnish youths purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions. Even though not all of the respondents think that influencer marketing has an effect on their purchasing behavior and purchase decision making as a consumer, the results indicate that the majority of the target group finds that influencer marketing has a positive effect on their purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions as a consumer.

Keywords: Social media, Influencer Marketing, Consumer, Consumer behavior, Purchasing decision, Purchasing behavior, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing is an ongoing trend these days. Now in the time of social media boom, influencer marketing has got advisable platform to perform on. Since consumers are more likely to act on products which are recommended by someone they follow on social media, companies are more eager to invest in influencer marketing on social media. When searching the different platforms of social media, it can be seen that there is a vast number of different operating influencers. Many of these influencer accounts appear to have multiple collaborations with different companies' products and services.

Because social media and influencer marketing combined are such a phenomenon it is important for us to investigate consumer attitudes, motives and intention to purchase of people when it comes to social media influencer marketing.

The subject of the thesis is the effects of influencer marketing on Finnish youths purchasing behavior, focusing on the target group of 15 to 25-year olds. The topic was chosen because it is relevant in the contemporary marketing since a powerful presence in social media these days can possibly be higher valued and have a preferable impact on consumer purchasing behavior than more expensive means of marketing. This is why the role of influencer marketing continues to grow. There is not much research done on the topic because it is a rather new theme. The main research question of the thesis is that what are the effects of influencer marketing done on social media on consumer purchasing behavior and purchasing decision among young Finnish consumers. The additional questions were asked in order to support the main issue by asking Finnish consumers from the age range of 15 to 25-year olds questions such as whether they make their purchasing decisions based on influencer marketing they see on social media, what type of influencer marketing has an effect their consumer behavior, does the consumer feel that influencer marketing on social media has created new needs for him or her and whether, for example, influential people have a stronger impact on what they are buying compared to traditional marketing.

The aim of this bachelor thesis is therefore to discover what effects does influencer marketing on social media have on Finnish youths purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions. The aim will be carried out by answering three partial research questions:

1. In what ways does influencer marketing effect purchasing decisions of young Finnish consumers?
2. How do young Finnish consumers make their purchasing decisions based on influencer marketing seen on social media?
3. What effects does influencer marketing on social media have on Finnish youths purchasing behavior?

The bachelor thesis is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter discusses the theory about influencer marketing. It specifies the topic of influencer marketing and gives an overview of influencers and influencer marketing done on different social media platforms. The second chapter of the thesis focuses on the theory about consumer behavior and consumer purchasing decision. In addition, a five-step consumer purchasing model is introduced. In the third chapter of the thesis the empirical part of the research will be presented. The research part of the thesis consists of quantitative research in the form of an online survey aimed towards Finnish consumers in the age group of 15 to 25-year olds. Young Finnish consumers as a target group for the research was chosen because there is not much research done on the topic of the effects of social media influencer marketing on purchasing behavior specifically among Finnish youth. In the fourth chapter the results of the research will be discussed. After the main chapters there is also a conclusion presented from the research conducted.

1. INFLUENCER MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Morteo (2018) the definition of influencer previously provided emphasizes the main features that identify a regular individual who creates and shares content with other individuals connected to them in the wide variety of social networks currently active and available, from an individual who has acquired an audience, with the main distinction of being considered a referent in the specific topic about which said individual has developed expertise. The relevance of this distinction lies in the potential effect on behavior that an individual with credibility has acquired, which in turn can be translated into changes in behavior from their audience.

Influencer marketing can build strong customer relationships. It differs from other means of marketing, focusing on co-operation with individual opinion pollsters. These factors have a far greater impact on their followers, as for many consumers than for advertising. A close relationship between the target group and the actor makes it possible to move the brand forward and even change attitudes and behaviours without the need for dampening. In the marketing sector, influencers of social media are needed in order for a commercial message to come from someone who resembles the consumer. For the brand it is difficult to create a closer relationship with the consumer than the influencer can create (Hämäläinen 2016). According to Indieplace (2018) influencer marketing is one of the strongest trends at the moment, according to the latest survey, influencer marketing can generate a 960 percent growth in investment. It is believed that the trend will continue to grow until the social media becomes complete marketplace. According to them, 92% of consumers believe that influencers are more reliable as a message creator than the brand itself. The effectiveness of influencer marketing is based on customer relationships and customer loyalty, not with the company itself, but with the influencer. According to a research conducted by Nielsen (2015) over 65% of consumers have trust in product reviews carried out online, whereas under 35% of consumers had trust in traditional advertisements they had seen.

Kauvosaari (2018) argues that the popularity of the social media has changed the playing field for marketing. Marketing has become more rapid and round the clock reaching more people than ever.

Businesses need to keep up with this ever-changing new marketing trend with the wave brush to thrive. Companies have had to adapt and be able to generate added value through their knowledge and experience sharing with their target group. Marketing in social media and its growing popularity also have a positive side; inexpensive and easy-to-use social media channels are more easily exploited by businesses and this has made content marketing easier to target. Chatzigeorgiou (2017) further claims that the marketing industry needed to cope with the growth of social media users and especially the millennials, the generation with the biggest purchasing power.

It has been studied that the role of social media is even higher among young people. According to Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Gruber and Solnet (2013) generation Y actively contributes, shares, searches for and consumes content on social media platforms. Service managers and researchers are interested in Generation Y's social media usage because it may be a harbinger of how people will behave in the future.

Kuuki Marketing (2018) further claims that social media provides businesses with a broad platform to approach their consumers, but it does produce challenges for many companies and raises a lot of questions. Even with billions of users, the successful content of a company receives much attention in social media and generates positive images in consumers.

1.1. Most commonly used social media channels in influencer marketing

Since there are an endless amount of social media channels to choose from, five of the following social media platforms were chosen to be discussed.

According to Icono Square (2017) Instagram is an ideal platform for sharing visual content. Visual content is the best way to tell the target audience what kind of business it is, what it represents and at the same time create and grow relationships with customers. With the knowledge and visibility of the target audience, people can feel emotions and create a positive image of the brand. Instagram also combines many marketing communication tools on the same platform; such as ads, co-operation and sponsored impact marketing, competitions and customer feedback.

Juslèn (2012) states that Facebook is spending time with friends and various interests' items. In Facebook users can add or upload content such as videos, pictures, writings and send direct

messages to other users. People can connect with other users and see each other's content posted on the front page. In Facebook people can create groups and verified accounts, for example news sites, celebrity sites and influencer sites (Puotiniemi 2018). Also, companies can create their own pages on Facebook and post content.

Unlike Instagram and Facebook, Youtube is a platform that consists of content only in the form of videos. According to Youtube (2017) Youtube works as a forum for communicating with others, sharing information and inspire others. It also serves as a platform for small and large advertisers. Youtube is a free service and downloading videos is free of charge. By registering, the user has more versatile features than unregistered. Google-owned Youtube is one of the popular social media tools, but at the same time the world's second largest search engine after Google. Youtube (2017) further claims that their service is used by over one billion people. Videos on Youtube are watched millions of hours a day. It reaches more US mobile users 18 to 50 years olds than any other US cable channel. Most of the watchmakers comes via mobile devices. Currently, Youtube can be used in 88 countries in 76 languages. This covers 95% of Internet users. Popularity of Youtube has also appeared in Finland. In 2015, the service was the largest online video service with a reach of 2.2 million people per week (Tubettajayhteistyöopas 2017). Troot, Annalect & OMD (2017) further claim that in Finland, most popular content on YouTube includes music videos, video blogs, humour and video games.

Snapchat unlike the ones mentioned above is both a messaging platform and social network. Users can chat with their friends by sending them photos, short videos up to 10 seconds long, text chats and video calls. Photos and videos essentially disappear a few seconds after they've been viewed by their recipients. Snapchat stories are feed feature where you can post photos and videos for all your snapchat friends to see, these clips are posted for 24 hours only before they disappear. Users of snapchat fall mostly into the age range of 13-30, which makes it a vital part of global marketing strategies. In snapchat marketing you can use unique features that marketers can use to stand out from the crowd. According to a study conducted by Ruotsalainen (2016) Snapchat is used by 5% of Finnish people in the age gap of 15-75-year olds, but up to 30% of 15-24-year olds. All in all, Snapchat publishes around 700 million photos or videos every day around the world.

In addition to the social media platforms mentioned above different blogs play a big part in marketing these days. Many social media influencers are bloggers who have originally gained a huge following through more traditional blogs. As Newlands (2011) stated that blogs were, at the

time, one of the most effective ways to communicate and market to consumers. With trust in blogs, they also serve as an excellent marketing channel for businesses.

1.2. Influencer marketing tools and social media platforms

According to Asikainen (2017) when designing influencer marketing, it is important to consider what kind of consumers the potential influencer followers consist of. Do they fit the target group's target group or not? The impulse must also be genuinely interested in the branded market and agree with the image of the company. What are these influencers through which companies work? According to media director Heli Ruotsalainen, *Markkinointi ja Mainonta* (2016), five criteria affect the person's choice: a person's experience, how much a person has experience in influencer marketing, reachability in social media, how much a person reaches people in social media through their publications, search capability, how easily a person can be found in different search engines and, for example, how high-quality content is the content cost for the buyer. Purcarea (2017) is recommending approaching the influencer marketing campaigns as a marriage of both opportunities, avoiding thinking of influencers in a linear way. Influencers are innovators and early adopters within a brand's target audience, having the ability to create and distribute content.

Even though it can be stated that when influencer marketing is done after thorough research and planning the results of the marketing strategy can still vary. Roberts (2010) discusses that businesses have surely noticed that even though all the criteria are met, marketing through an influencer has not produced the desired results. When investing in marketing, much planning and research is required. The strategy for action only works if the goals are realistic and enough work has been done to reach the goal.

Furthermore, influencer marketing only works when enough research and realistic goals are set for certain products. The different tools of influencer marketing play a big role in all of this as well. By using the tools that are the best suited for the product or service that is being marketed marketers are able to achieve good results out of influencer marketing. As Hämäläinen (2016) claims that in addition to the choice of the influencer, it is important to be aware of what is sought through influencer marketers and to whom to primarily influence. Since the goal of effective marketing is not always to promote sales but to increase, for example, brand loyalty and the

company's overall reputation and successors, the tools of effective marketing should be based on these goals.

Next three different tools of influencer marketing on social media will be discussed and examples are given in the form of screen captures from social media.

One of the most cost-efficient tools in influencer marketing of certain products are gifted products. Companies send their products to influential people in the hopes of them giving it a positive review on their social media channels. These kinds of product reviews are very popular in social media marketing these days and are actually considered to be one of the most influential ones. As Hämäläinen (2016) further claims that one of the influential marketing tactics is to ask an influencer to review company's products or services on their own channel. In this case, the influencer gives his/her neutral opinion on the desired product or service to his/her followers; if he/she is satisfied with your product, the followers are very likely to be willing to try it. If he is not satisfied, the brand may have bigger concerns than impressive marketing.

Collaborations between influencers and marketers have been an ongoing trend for some time now. It is a form of influencer that can be incorporated in all of the social media platforms discussed above. Next a few examples from collaborations done on Instagram. According to Hämäläinen (2016) one of the most effective and fastest growing Instagram marketing tools is collaborations with public figures and opinion leaders. Opinion makers, such as bloggers, can quickly increase consumer brand awareness by publishing a social media image of the brands products or services. If the target audience of a blogger is well suited to the target audience of a brand, it is easy to reach potential customers.



Figure 1. Collaboration example from Instagram

Source: Janni Olsson Delèr, Instagram (2018)



Figure 2. Collaboration example from Instagram with a Finnish influencer

Source: Metti Forssell, Instagram (2018)

Hämäläinen (2016) states that product placement is a widely used in influencer marketing done on the social media. In product placement, the desired influence implies incorporating the company's products into their own images and adds, for example, a company name to its hashtags or a product link to its published content.

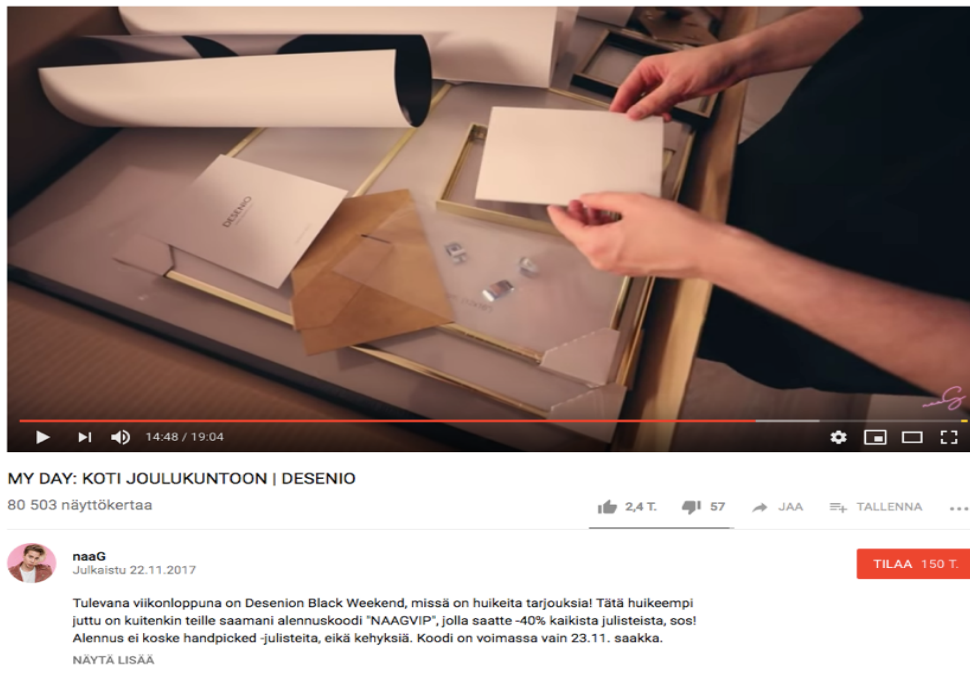


Figure 3. Example of Influencer marketing in social media and product placement

Source: Janne Naakka, Youtube (2017)

All in all, it can be said that influencer marketing on social media is an effective way to market and have an impact on consumers and their purchasing decisions. On the other hand, in order for it to be effective it requires that marketers are able to execute the necessary research on what influencers, what social media platforms to use and to investigate which of these tools are the most efficient for their product or service. When all of these factors are met, it has been shown that it will have a positive influence on consumer behavior towards the product or service that is being marketed.

2. THEORY ON CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

Since social media and influencer marketing are both big phenomena in the marketing field these days they also have a direct effect on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions of consumers. Solomon (2013) argues that consumer purchasing behavior is affected by the purchasing power of the consumer. Purchasing ability means an economic opportunity to buy a product. Availability is influenced by available funds, payment terms, price developments and available time. The purchasing spirit, on the other hand, raises the needs and motives of the individual, which is shaped by the buyer's characteristics and the seller's function. Understanding consumer behavior is important for businesses to target their products and marketing to the right people. As Bergström and Leppänen (2013) state that purchasing decision is driven by external stimuli such as various marketing measures, cultural or economic situations. Another factor affecting purchasing behavior is the customer's own personal characteristics. On the basis of these factors, the company selects its target group and implements its targeted marketing campaign.

Consumer behavior entails the following factors which effect consumer purchasing behaviour. According to Virtanen (2016) demographic factors for consumers are those characteristics of an individual that can be measured, analysed and easily mapped. The most important demographic factors are: age, gender, marital status and stage of life; occupation, education, income and residence. Virtanen (2016) further claims that social need is one of the basic human needs and is mentioned separately in Maslow the need to continue the hierarchy. Man has the inherent need to become approved and be part of a group. The environment and other people influence consumer behavior, which is adapted to fit the motives and makes it social the circle is united and unique. Social factors also consist of the consumers culture, family and social status.

Psychological factors answer the question why and thus explaining the reasons for purchasing behavioral choices (Virtanen 2016). Psychological factors are driven by motivation, feelings, learning, values and attitudes and observation. As discussed before these factors are involved with influencer marketing as it heavily involves taking into consideration the feelings, values and attitudes of consumers.

Consumer behavior and social media can be interconnected so that in the social media of the Internet, consumers recommend each other products and services and thus either generate the buying percentage for other consumers or not. Consumer behavior in social media has the influence of opinions, such as social marketing through conversations. Consumers rely more on product information that they get from their close relatives or in social media rather than business advertising (Strategic Orientation, 2010).

In order to get advisable knowledge about consumer purchasing decision a five-step consumer purchasing model, adapted from Kotler (2000), will be discussed (see Figure 4). This purchasing model demonstrates the general purchasing process of consumers.

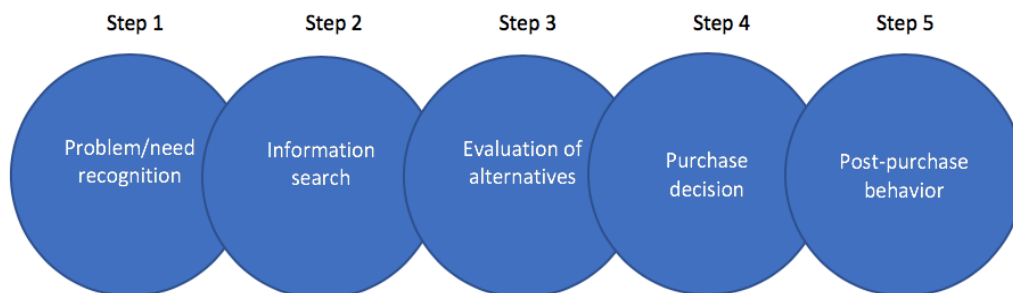


Figure 4. Consumer purchasing model

Adapted from Kotler (2000)

Step 1. Problem/Need recognition

Kotler (2000) states that the purchasing process starts when the consumer wants to satisfy the need he/she sees. This is not an automatic reaction, but the consumer must be somewhat dissatisfied with his/her situation and wants to change it. The need arises either through internal or external stimuli. Personal needs and desires work as internal stimuli and external stimuli include, for example, messages sent by businesses and the social environment. Ylikoski (2000) further claims that through marketing communication companies can seek to awaken the consumer to discern their dissatisfaction creating images of the ideal. Kotler (2000) states that the marketing company

has to collect information about customers in order to identify those stimuli that most effectively affect the consumer and create commercial activity.

Step 2. Information search

After identifying the need, the consumer searches for information about the options that he/she needs. First, the consumer searches for his/her memory, that is, he/she uses the internal search for information. If memory information is not sufficient, the consumer will seek more information in support of his/her decision-making. Positive experiences of similar services affect how much the consumer feels the need to acquire new knowledge. Consumer search for external decision support information will then be used by external information exploration. In this regard, consumer activity levels vary individually. External search is also a consumer attention will be increased, making it more receptive to the service in question information. In general, external information search is the wider the more important. The service product for the consumer is the longer the time the consumer is committed to the service and with a wide variety of alternatives. Consumer's ability to use information the expertise of the service product and the risk experienced in the purchase situation are affected also essentially for seeking information. Paradoxically inexperienced, for the first time they buy the service product, seek information least and often focus on irrelevant information. Consumers with a bit of experience are looking for information in the most proportionate way, and experienced buyers, in turn, are able to find essential information and rely on the existing information they possess. The consumer tries to reduce the risk associated with the purchase by seeking information. In terms of services, the risk of successful selection is often higher than the products (Ylikoski 2000, Kotler 2000). As Zhurylo and Prygara (2017) specify this stage by claiming that at this stage, a potential user will appeal to a significant amount of information sources, will interpret the information obtained to form the minds of the advantages/disadvantages of the company and the product.

Step 3. Evaluation of alternatives

When selecting, the consumer evaluates the service provided by the service, such as the need for recourse and other positive impacts compared to the cost and effort of the service. The benefit of the service is related to the expected quality of service, for example the quality of the product and service to meet customer's needs. In the selection case, the consumer estimates the ability of those in the spectrum of services to satisfy the expectations of the service. The selection criteria are the characteristics of the service and its benefits. Selection criteria for products and services are as follows. Technical criteria related to how well a product and service are meet customer needs. The

criteria include: reliability, appearance, comfort, taste, service speed and friendliness and ease of use. Financial criteria are related to the price and what you get in return for the bidding. Social criteria mean, in turn how the purchase of a product or service affects the customer's relationship with other people. Personal criteria relate to the moral and ethical principles of the consumer. Consumer give the selection criteria their own weight and then consider the suitability of the alternatives (Ylikoski 2000, Kotler 2000).

It is often challenging to estimate the benefits of a service in advance. That is why the consumer must develop hints about the quality of service. As Saarto (2009) claims that in lack of selection criteria or ambiguity the tips serve as a benchmark for selecting services. The core of the service can be seen in the following tips: staff training, service coverage, and reliability and accuracy of the service. Psychological benefits can be assessed by the following the following hints: staff attitude, privacy and security, ease of use, atmosphere, speed, customer status, reputation, and reputation credibility. When evaluating a service process, it is possible to use the timetable stability, responsiveness and courtesy, communication, flexibility and error-correcting ability. The criteria for evaluating the goods included in the service are the quality, quantity and range. The final selection criteria, the service environment, can be summarized as a clue utilize the comfort, functionality and cleanliness of the premises, interior decoration and service delivery equipment and auxiliary equipment used.

Step 4. Purchase decision

The fourth stage is where the purchase itself takes place. According to Ylikoski (2000) the more the service is perceived as personal and the more demanding the skill is. The qualifications and courtesy of the service provider's staff are the criteria for selection. Less in personal services, in particular easy accessibility and employee responsiveness the needs and wishes of the customers are emphasized. According to surveys for services especially the recommendations of friends and acquaintances, and the essence of the staff of the service company behavior gives important tips on the service. Based on the behavior of the staff, it is determined often a more permanent customer relationship. Usually, the final choice made by the consumer occurs by using a few selection criteria at the same time. This way consumers make different decision-making rules according to which they make their choices. Consumers less consciously think about their decision-making rules due to this it is possible for a marketer to get information on these factors through various consumer surveys.

Step 5. Post-purchase behaviour

By giving the consumer what he/she expects, the consumer is generally satisfied. As Saarto (2009) further claims that satisfied customers have a higher probability of using the service again and are willing to share their positive experiences with non-dissatisfied customers. If you expect were bigger than the desktop experienced by the consumer, this is disagreeing and dissatisfied. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is generated by comparison of expectations and experiences and may arise from the outcome of the service or service process. A dissatisfied customer can leave behind, stop using services of the organization in question, tell others about the bad experience, complain and request a refund or take the case forward to an outside organization. For marketers the negative communication caused by dissatisfied consumers is extremely damaging. Whether or not the consumer is complaining, there are many things to do. First, the level of dissatisfaction and the importance of the service to the consumer determines how sensitive the consumer is to go to complain poor service experience. Also, the ease of appeal and the fact that consumers believe clearly to benefit from the appeal affect the likelihood of the appeal. The behavior of appeal of course, also defined by the personality of people, the level of education and the time available. Especially for services, it is also how much the consumer is feels that he or she is responsible for a poor service experience, for example by bringing in their needs unclear in the service situation, will affect whether the consumer has to complain fairly.

Ylikoski (2000) and Kotler (2000) state that with the help of post-purchase communications, the marketer can strengthen customer satisfaction and confidence to successful shopping. This is a good way to maintain and develop customer relationships, and so on the likelihood of repurchase increases. Especially for products with recycling and ecological due to the reasons, the post-purchase and disposal of products has become increasingly important.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In the following chapters the research methods are introduced. The data collecting methods and research design are presented and the sample and its characteristics are introduced. The purchasing model is discussed, and the author shows how the questionnaire correlates with the model represented in the theoretical framework of this paper.

3.1. Data collecting methods

A quantitative research in the form of an online survey in Google Forms was conducted. The survey was aimed towards Finnish consumers in the age group of 15 to 25-year olds in order to get the data needed to evaluate the effects of social media influencer marketing on Finnish youths purchasing behavior. This method was chosen because it enabled obtaining a large number of responses, which was important in this case when a specific nationality group was researched. The goal was to obtain responses from a large number of people and to make the survey as quick and easy as possible for the respondents to answer.

3.2. Research design

The online questionnaire was distributed through Instagram, e-mail and Facebook to the target group of 15 to 25-year-old Finnish people. The questionnaire was open for two weeks in between of October and December of 2018. The total number of respondents was 112.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions. The questionnaire was designed to match the consumer purchasing model discussed above. The first two steps in the purchasing model, problem recognition and information search, are affected by social influences. Questions 6, 7 and 8 measure the level of awareness of products consumers see influencers market and their opinion on how much information they can get from seeing products and services being marketed through social media influencer marketing. Questions 9, 10 and 11 related to making a purchasing decision based

on influencer marketing are related to steps 3 and 4 in the purchasing model, evaluation of alternatives and the purchasing decision itself. These steps are mostly affected by marketing influences. Questions 12 and 13 are associated with post purchase behavior which is the fifth and final step of the purchasing model. In addition to these questions which match the purchasing model, background information and questions were asked about social media channels, influencers the respondents follow and how frequently they are used, in order to get a better picture about what the influencer marketing they consume consists of.

The author decided to design the survey to match the consumer purchasing model since according to, for example Ylikoski (2000), the purchasing process takes place in the minds of the consumer, and thus the exact separation of its various stages in practice is difficult and the consumer does not always know that he/she is going through this type of a process. For consumers it is not necessary to be aware of these stages, but for marketers identifying these phases allows them to have an influence on the consumer behavior of their target crowd. Thus, when matching the survey with the model presented it allows the author to receive essential knowledge about the effects that influencer marketing has on the target groups purchasing behavior.

Non-probability sampling method was chosen to be used in this research because of the particular age group and nationality of the target group.

The analysing of the data happened through Microsoft Office Excel. The data from the online questionnaire was transferred to Excel and figures were formed from the answers. The figures formed are represented in the results and analysis part of the thesis below.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In the next paragraphs the author is going to present the results of the research and the findings of the research. In the results section the figures are introduced and explained. The findings section explains more detailed how the theoretical framework supports the results in order to get reliable knowledge about the findings.

4.1. Research results

In total 112 respondents took part in the research. Of them 54% were female and 46% were male, it can be stated that the gender distribution was quite even in this research. The age groups in this research were based on the required age of 15 to 25-year olds. In the online questionnaire the respondents were asked in what age group they belonged from the four age groups given. 28% of the respondents belonged to the age group if 15 to 18-year olds. 37% belonged to the age group from 19 up to 21, this was the largest age group in the study. Furthermore, 35% answered that they belong in the age gap of 22 to 25-year olds.

In order to get advisable knowledge about the types of influencer marketing the respondents consume questions related to their social media habits were asked (see Figure 1. and Figure 2.). When asked about the social media channels the respondents use the most frequently it can be seen that the target group uses Instagram and Snapchat, both obtaining 85% of the answers, the most frequently of the options given. Majority of these respondents were in the age groups of 15-18- and 19-21-year olds. The second most used social media channel among the target group was YouTube with 58%. This indicates that more than half of the respondents watch video content online. The third and fourth most popular channels used were blogs with 15% and Twitter with 12% of the responses. Other option was given since the amount of different social media channels is large and the respondents might use some other social media channels more frequently than the ones given. 5% of the respondents chose the option other, these other social media channels could

be channels such as Facebook, Linked in etc. These respondents were mostly in the age group of 22-25-year olds.

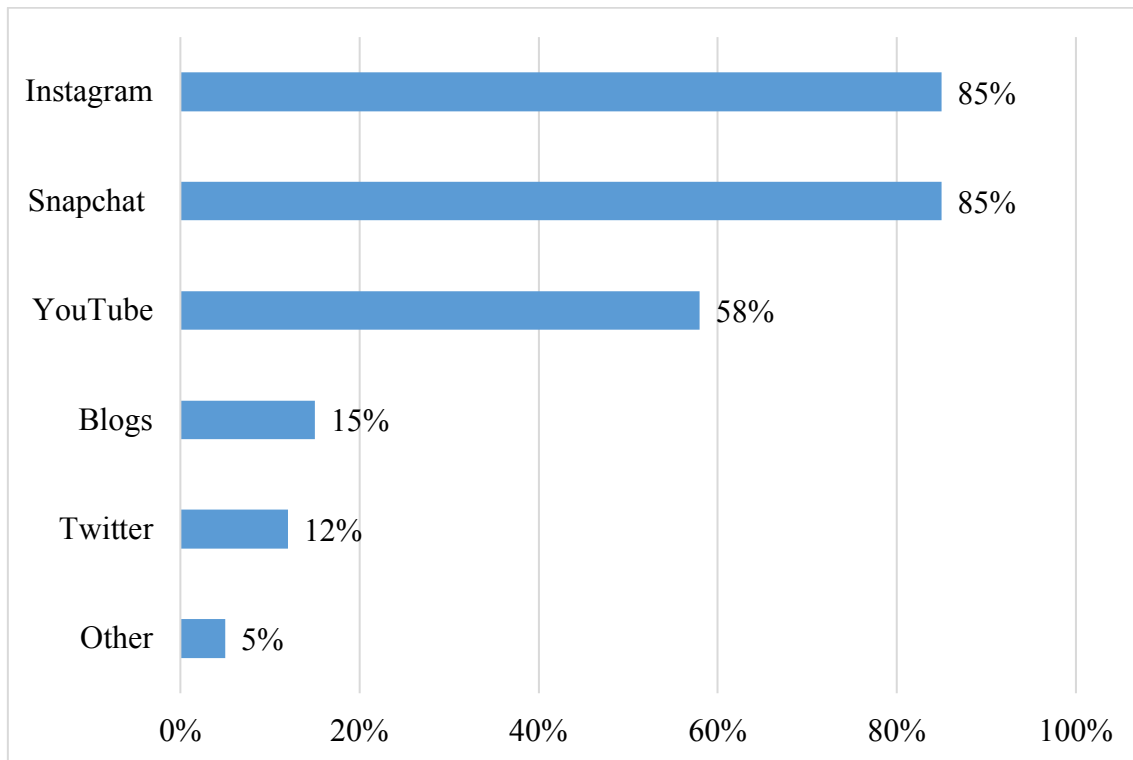


Figure 1. Social media channels used most frequently (n=112)

In the beginning of the questionnaire the respondents were asked whether or not they follow celebrities, bloggers or other influencers on social media. 97% of the respondents answered yes and 3% that they don't. This means that 3% of the 112 respondents in total are not directly affected by influencer marketing on social media through the accounts they follow. Although this doesn't indicate that their purchasing behavior wouldn't be affected, since consumers are indirectly affected by influencer marketing even if they don't necessarily follow influencers on social media.

The fourth question in the online questionnaire was related to the types of influencers the respondents follow on social media (Figure 2). 46% of the respondents answered that they follow celebrities on social media. Since many social media influencers can be considered celebrities it is hard to say which type of celebrities the respondents follow. The second most popular influencers the respondents followed were bloggers with 29% of the respondents answering that they follow mostly bloggers on social media. Majority of the respondents who follow bloggers were female and from the age group of 22-25-year olds. 16% of the respondents answered that they mostly

follow normal people with high numbers of followers. This is a diverse question as well, since many bloggers and vloggers for example, consider themselves as "normal" people and the respondents might feel this way also. 9% of the respondents answered that they follow vloggers on social media.

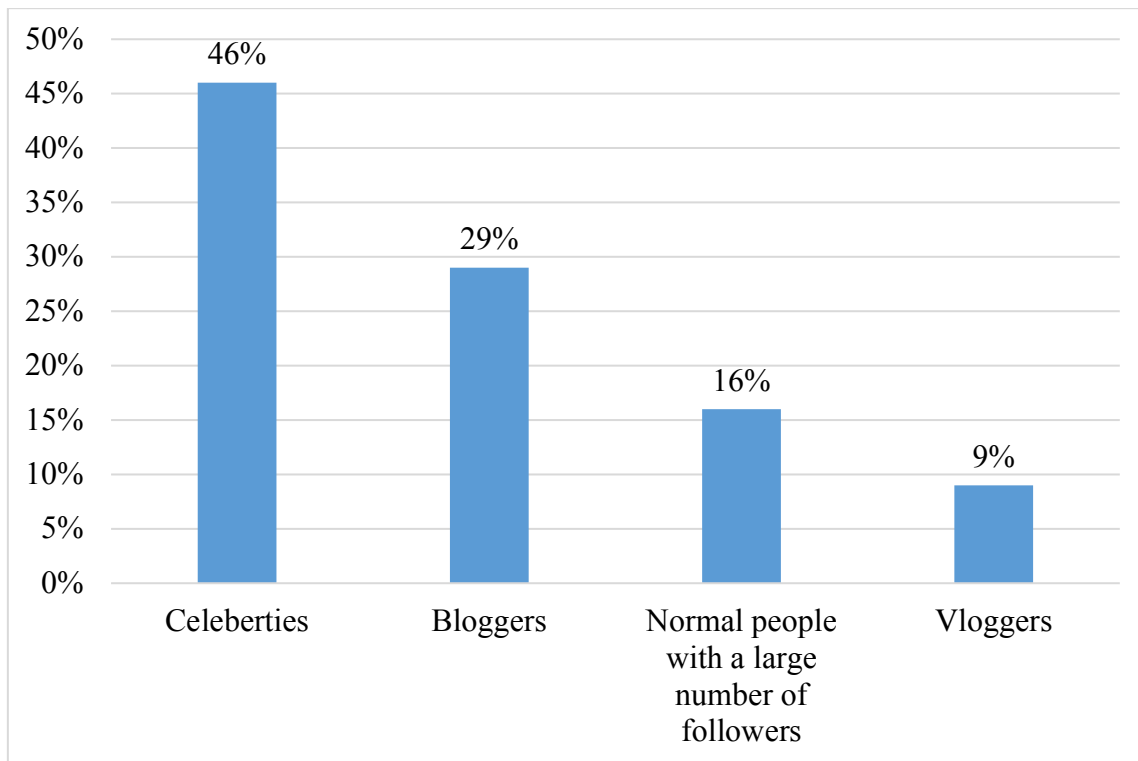


Figure 2. Types of influencers followed on social media (n=112)

The next question was related to awareness of new products through influencer marketing seen. The respondents were asked whether or not they have become aware of new products or services through influencer marketing they have seen on social media. A vast majority, 95% of the respondents, answered yes. This indicates that a large majority of the respondents felt that influencer marketing on social media has brought awareness of new products/services for them. Furthermore, 4% of the respondents answered maybe and 1% answered no.

Opinions related to purchasing behavior and influencer marketing were asked in the questionnaire in the form of a Likert scale (see Figures 3. and 4.). When asking the respondents their feelings regarding the information they acquire through influencer marketing on social media the responses were mostly positive. 42% of the respondents totally agreed that influencer marketing gives good information about a product/service and 38% of the respondents felt that they mostly agree on the statement. Furthermore, 14% of the target group felt neutral about the statement and 4% mostly

disagreed. A portion of the respondents, 2%, felt that they totally disagree with the statement. This means that approximately 6% of the respondents don't think that influencer marketing gives them good information on products/services.

When asked whether the information acquired from influencer marketing makes it easier to make a purchasing decision 23% of the respondent felt that they totally agree that it helps them in making a purchasing decision. Over half of the respondents, 53%, felt that they mostly agree that influencer marketing helps them on the purchasing decision. Approximately one fifth, exactly 19% of the respondents felt neutral about the statement. Furthermore, 5% answered that they mostly disagree with the statement but none of the respondents, 0%, felt that they totally disagree with the statement. This indicates that the respondents might not have such negative thoughts on the issue and only mostly disagree but not totally.

When asking about influencer marketing creating a new need for the respondents the answers divided more evenly compared to the previous statements. From the 112 respondents in total, 34% totally agreed on the statement and 44% answered that they mostly agree on statement. This indicates that a large portion of the respondents feel that influencer marketing they have seen in the past twelve months has created a new need for them. In addition, 16% of the respondents felt neutral about the statement, 4% respondents felt that they mostly disagree with the statement and 2% respondents answered that they totally disagree with the statement. From this it can be seen that 6% respondents of the 112 in total felt that there hasn't been a new need created for them in the past year through influencer marketing.

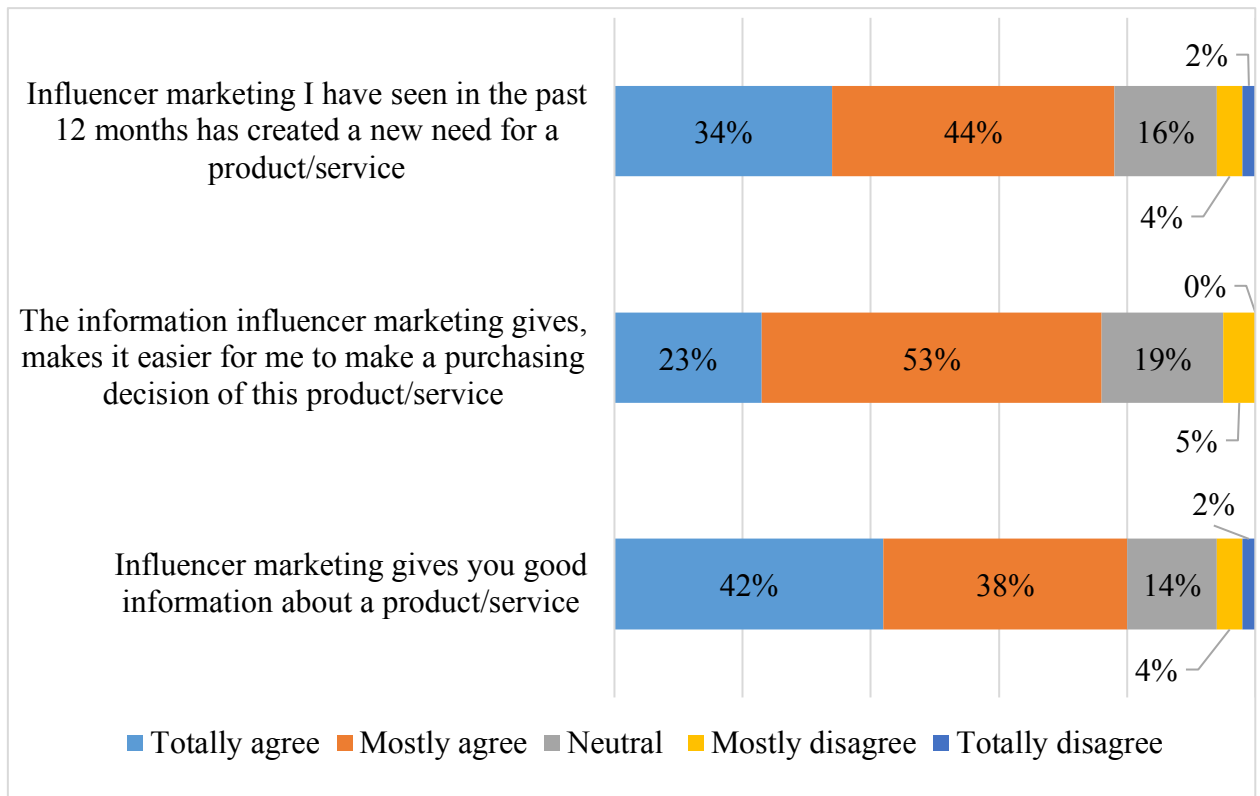


Figure 3. Opinions on influencer marketing related to pre-purchase behavior (n=112)

The following question on the opinions focused on trust and opinions on influencer marketing compared to traditional marketing (Figure 4.). When asked whether the respondents trust influencer marketing on social media more than traditional marketing 20% of the respondents felt they totally agree with the statement and 37% respondents felt that they agreed. This shows that half of the respondents' trust influencer marketing more than traditional marketing. 36% of the respondents felt neutral about the statement. This is a large portion of the respondents and it indicates that the target group might not be able to say whether they trust traditional marketing or influencer marketing more. 6% of the respondents answered that they disagree with the statement and 1% totally disagreed with the statement. This means that 7% of the respondents felt that they trust traditional marketing more than influencer marketing on social media.

The next statement was related to the effects of the respondent's feelings towards the opinions of the influencer, whether or not they feel that the opinions of social media influencers have an effect on their behavior as a consumer. 27% of the respondents felt that they totally agree with the statement and 45% respondents felt that they agree with the statement. This indicates that 72% of the 112 respondents felt that the opinions of social media influencers do have an effect on them as a consumer. 24% of the respondents felt neutral about the statement. 3% of the respondents

disagreed with the statement and 1% totally disagreed with it. This indicates that only a small portion of the respondents feel like the opinions of influencers don't have an effect on their behavior as a consumer.

When asked whether social media is easier to identify with than other means of marketing the answers appeared relatively even. 15% of the respondents felt that they totally agreed and 45% of the respondents agreed with the statement. 37% respondents felt neutral about the statement. 2% disagreed and 1% totally disagreed with the statement. This indicates that a large portion of the respondents felt that influencer marketing is easier to identify with than more traditional marketing. A big portion of the respondents also felt neutral about the statement which indicates that it is hard to say or that they feel equally easy to identify with influencer marketing and other means of marketing.

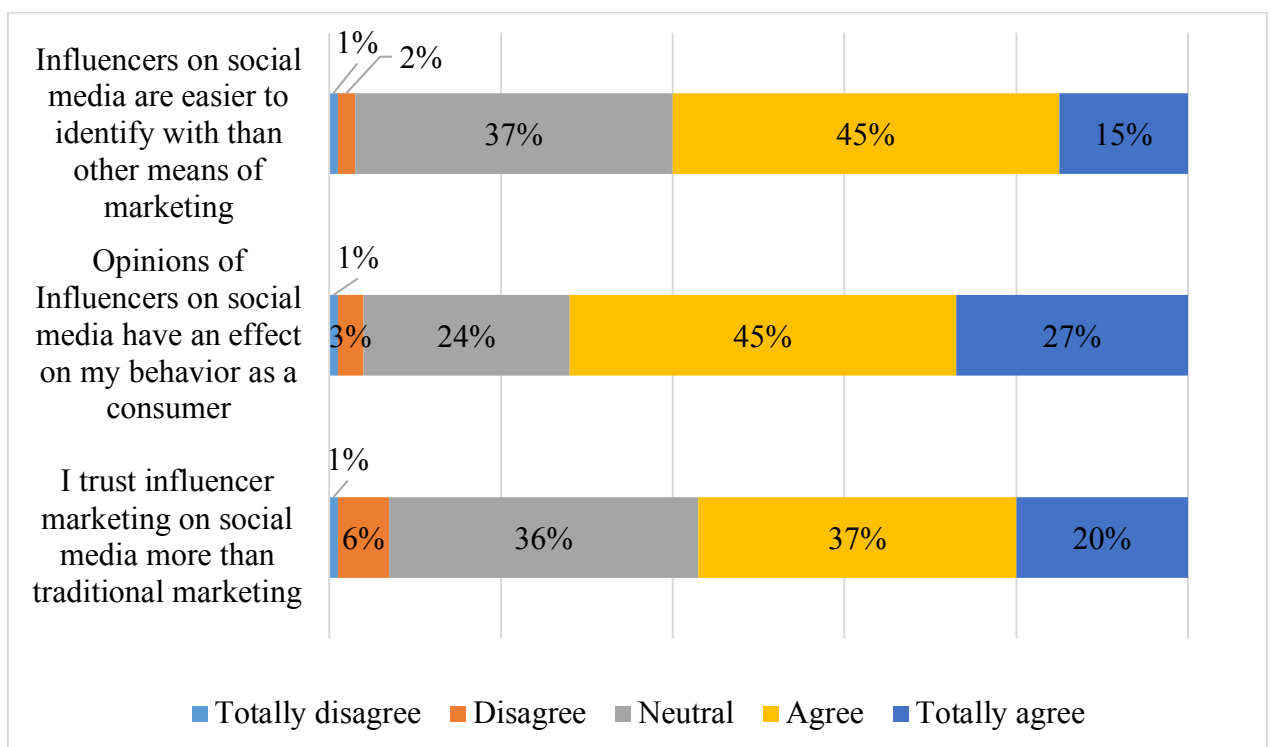


Figure 4. Information on the consumer trust related to influencer marketing (n=112)

In the next question the respondents were asked that have they made their buying decision based on influencer marketing seen on social media. A majority of the respondents, 88%, answered yes. This indicates that majority of the target group do make some of their purchasing decisions based on influencer marketing they consume from social media. 12% of the respondents answered no.

This would indicate that not all consumers in the target group felt that influencer marketing has had an effect on their purchasing decisions.

The next question regarded not the influencer marketing but the influencers themselves. The respondents were asked that have they made their purchasing decision because someone else has showcased the product/service on social media. 78% answered yes, 18% maybe and 4% no. This would indicate that majority of the respondents felt that they have purchased a product/service solely on the fact that they have seen someone else showcasing it on social media.

Question regarding the products they would consider buying based on influencer marketing they encounter on social media the respondents were able to choose multiple different choices from a list of product or service groups (Figure 5.). The largest amount of responses got fashion (clothes, shoes, bags) with 82%. The second largest product group was beauty products/services with 61%. The third largest group was Fitness & Well-Being products/services with over half, 55%, of the respondents choosing it. Fourth group restaurants with 46%. 30% of the respondents felt that they would consider buying electronics based on the influencer marketing they encounter on social media. Almost fifth, 18%, of the respondents would consider buying groceries and 4% answered other. The choice other could for example indicate travelling or other cultural products and services.

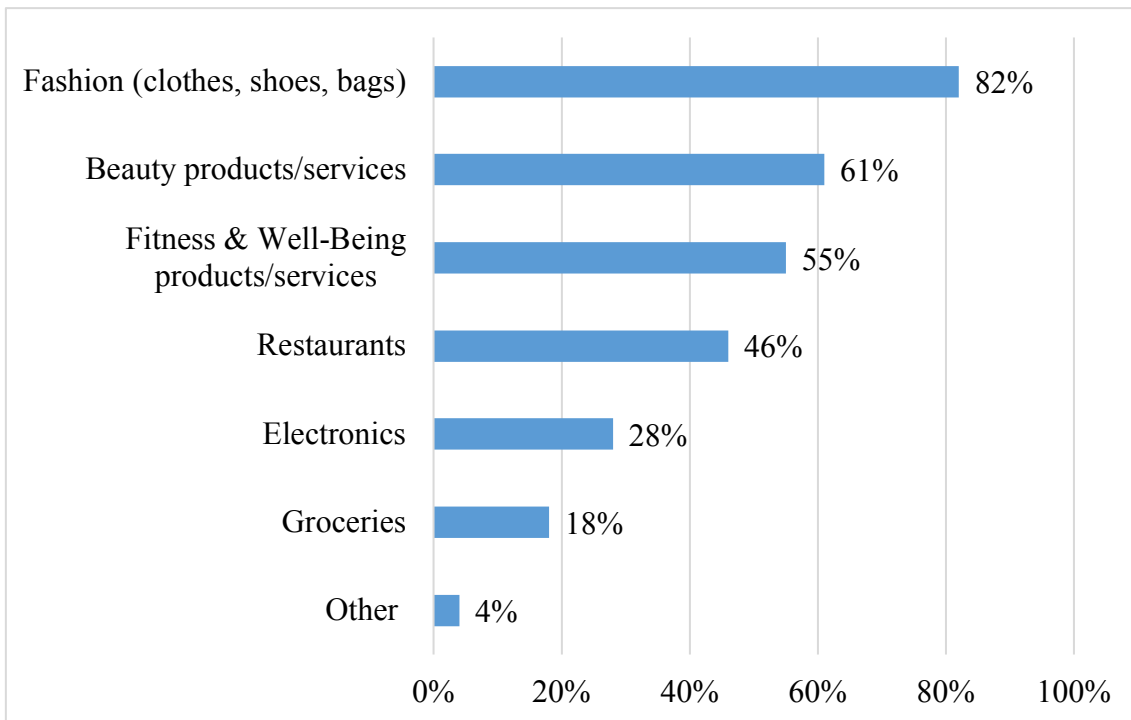


Figure 5. Information on the products/services the respondents would buy based on influencer marketing (n=112)

The last two questions in the questionnaire were related to the last step in the purchasing model introduced previously in this paper. The respondents were asked whether they have seen influencers make negative reviews on products/services on social media after using the product or not. The results showed that 87% answered yes and 13% answered no. This question is also related to the truthfulness of influencer marketing.

The last question was related to post purchase fulfilment of the products bought on the basis of influencer marketing seen on social media. The respondents were asked; When buying a product/service you have seen influencers marketed on social media, have your expectations been fulfilled post-purchasing the product/service? Furthermore, 89% of the respondents agreed and 18% disagreed with the statement. This indicates that a vast majority of the respondents were satisfied with the products and services they had bought on the basis of influencer marketing.

In the end of the questionnaire the respondents were thanked, and they were able to leave any comments regarding the questionnaire and their feelings towards the topic.

4.2. Research findings

From these results acquired from the research conducted it can be stated that influencer marketing has positive effects on consumer purchasing behavior among Finnish youth in the age group of 15 to 25-year olds.

When looking at the results of the questionnaire conducted for this paper it can be stated that influencer marketing has a positive effect on the target groups purchasing behavior. From the questions designed to match the consumer purchasing model it can be seen that influencer marketing has affected the target groups purchasing behavior positively in all of the five steps discussed above.

Questions related to awareness of new products through influencer marketing the target groups have seen, related to step 1 in the purchasing model, show that 95% of the respondents felt that they have become aware of new products/services through influencer marketing they have seen. This indicates that a large majority of the respondents felt that influencer marketing on social media has brought awareness of new products/services for them. Altogether 78% of the respondents either totally agreed or mostly agreed with the statement that the influencer marketing they have seen in the last 12 months has created a new need for them. From this it can be concluded that influencer marketing that the respondents consume through social media has a favourable effect on the target groups problem/need recognition.

Questions regarding their opinion on how much information they can get from seeing products and services being marketed through social media influencer marketing show that altogether 80% of the respondents either totally agreed or mostly agreed that influencer marketing gives them good information about products and services. This indicates that a vast majority of the respondents feel that influencer marketing on social media has a positive impact on their information search, which is step 2 in the purchasing model. The results also show that altogether 76% of the respondents either totally agreed or mostly agreed that the information they get from the influencer marketing they consume makes it easier for them to make a buying decision of the product or service in question. From this it can be concluded that the information the target group gains through influencer marketing has a favourable outcome towards consumer purchasing decision among Finnish youth. This is also related to step 4 in the purchasing model and the results will be further discussed farther in this chapter.

Regarding the reliability of the information they get out of influencer marketing they consume, altogether 57% felt that they trust influencer marketing more than traditional means of marketing. This indicates that the information the target group seeks to find from influencers is considered quite reliable in the eyes of the respondents. Approximately one third, 36%, of the respondents felt neutral about this statement. This could indicate that they either trust them equally as much/little or that they didn't have an answer to this statement. This reliability towards influencers is connected to the evaluation of different alternatives which is step 3 in the purchase model. Altogether 7% of the 112 respondents felt that they disagree or totally disagree on the statement, which indicates that they trust traditional means of marketing more than influencer marketing. These respondents were mostly male in the age group of 21-25-year olds. These respondents had also mostly felt that they haven't made their buying decisions based on influencer marketing and that they haven't seen any negative reviews on products/services made by influencers.

Step 4 in the purchasing model regards the purchasing decision itself. Questions related to this step in the model showed for the main part positive results. As mentioned above, majority of the respondents, 76%, felt that the information gained from the influencer marketing they consume on social media makes it easier for them to make a buying decision. In addition, 88% of the respondents answered that they have made their buying decision based on influencer marketing they have seen on social media. This indicates that influencer marketing does have an affirmative effect on the consumer purchasing decisions among Finnish youth, in the way that they feel that the target group base their buying decision on influencer marketing they have seen. The information, the awareness and the reliability of this marketing tool are all factors which summed up have an impact on the final decision to purchase a product or a service. When focusing on the influencers, 78% of the respondents felt that they have made their purchasing decision because someone else has showcased the product or service on social media. This would indicate that majority of the respondents felt that they have purchased a product or a service solely on the fact that they have seen someone else showcasing it on social media.

The final step in the purchasing model is post-purchasing behavior. The results of the questionnaire show that 87% of the respondents have seen influencers make negative reviews on products and services. This question is also related to the truthfulness and reliability of influencer marketing in the eyes of the respondents. Furthermore, 12% of the respondents answered that they haven't seen any negative reviews on products and services done by influencers. This would indicate that not all consumers in the target group felt that the influencers they follow or perceive on social media

do negative reviews at all on products and services and that the content influencer marketing they consume consists mostly about positive reviews on products and services. Results on the question related to post-purchase fulfilment of the products bought on the basis of influencer marketing seen on social media showed that 89% of the respondents have had their expectations fulfilled post-purchasing a product/service they have seen marketed on social media. This shows that also the post-purchasing behavior of young consumers in Finland can be looked at as positively affected by influencer marketing on social media.

When looking at the research results and reflecting them on the purchase model it can be seen that altogether influencer marketing on social media has a positive effect on all steps of consumer purchasing model and the purchasing behavior among the target group of young Finnish people in the age group of 15 to 25-year olds.

CONCLUSION

The research problem of this thesis was that there is not much research on the topic of influencer marketing and its effects on purchasing behavior among Finnish youth in the age group of 15 to 25-year olds. The aim of this bachelor thesis was therefore to discover what effects does influencer marketing on social media have on Finnish youths purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions. The aim was carried out by answering three partial research questions, and through them acquire a solution for the main research problem of the thesis. The research questions were as follows; In what ways does influencer marketing effect purchasing decisions of young Finnish consumers? How do young Finnish consumers make their purchasing decisions based on influencer marketing seen on social media? and What effects does influencer marketing on social media have on Finnish youths purchasing behavior?

The main results obtained from the research were that influencer marketing seen on social media has positive effects the purchasing behaviour and purchasing decisions of the target group of young Finnish people. The questionnaire was designed using a purchasing model discussed in this thesis, therefore the results reflect on the model. Majority of the respondents felt that influencer marketing helps them in the process of making a purchasing decision. In addition, a vast majority of the respondents stated that they have made their buying decision based on influencer marketing they have seen on social media. Majority of the respondents also felt that they trust influencer marketing. Furthermore, a vast majority of the respondents felt that influencer marketing has created a new need for them in the last 12 months. All of these factors show that influencer marketing has multiple effects on different segments of the purchasing behaviour and purchasing decisions of the target group.

Regarding the three research questions the results of the questionnaire indicate that the overall effects of influencer marketing on the purchasing behavior of young Finnish youth are positive. When looking at the different aspects regarding purchasing behavior in the research, it can be pointed out that the respondents in the research feel that their purchasing behavior is effected

mostly by the reliability of influencer marketing and the influencers they follow, through the information they are able to obtain through influencer marketing of a certain product or service and by the amount of awareness the respondents have towards influencer marketing seen on social media. Influencer marketing has an effect on the target groups awareness of products or services and creating new needs. This effects consumer behavior so that it makes it effortless for them to recognize new products and services and subconsciously or consciously creating a new need for the consumers in the target group. Without the awareness and need for a certain product or service it is impossible for a consumer to purchase a product or service. The research results also indicate that the information the respondents acquire through influencer marketing on social media has a notable effect on the making of the purchasing decision. It can have, for example, an effect on the time they spent towards obtaining information on products or services and in this way speed up the purchasing decision process of the target group.

Some additional questions were asked in order to support the main issue. A vast majority of the respondents used Instagram and Snapchat the most frequently. Almost half of the respondents follow celebrities on social media. The results show that the target group would consider buying most preferably buy fashion and beauty products based on the influencer marketing they consume.

To summarise the research, it can be stated that influencer marketing has positive effects on the purchasing behavior and purchasing decisions of young Finnish people in all stages of the purchasing decision making process. The reader gets an overview on the topic of influencer marketing and the basics of consumer purchasing behavior and purchasing decision. The research gives the reader an outlook on the different effects' influencer marketing has towards the target group of young Finnish people in the age group of 15 to 25-year olds. With influencer marketing being an ongoing trend, these days and social media giving it a brilliant platform to work on, it is recommended from the results obtained for companies that want to market and sell their products or services for young Finnish consumers, that it may be a favourable choice for companies to use influencer marketing as a marketing tool. It is also recommended that when focusing on this specific target group to choose a celebrity or a blogger as the influencer and focus on Instagram and Snapchat as the social media channels they use in marketing in order to potentially increase their sales and consumer awareness of their products.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire results

Q1: Gender

Male 46%

Female 54%

Prefer not to say 0%

Q2: Age

15-18 28%

19-21 37%

21-25 35%

Q3: What social media channels do you use the most frequently?

Instagram 85%

Youtube 58%

Snapchat 85%

Twitter 12%

Blogs 15%

Other 5%

Q4: Do you follow celebrities, bloggers or influencers on social media?

Yes 97%

No 3%

Q5: What kind of content providers do you follow?

Bloggers 29%

Vloggers 9%

Celebrities 46%

Normal people with a large number of followers 16%

Q6: Have you become aware of new products/services through influencer marketing you have seen on social media?

Yes 95%

No 1%

Maybe 4%

Q7: How do you feel about the following statements

Statement 1 Influencer marketing gives you good information about a product/service

Totally agree 42%

Mostly agree 38%

Neutral 14%

Mostly disagree 4%

Totally disagree 2%

Statement 2 The information influencer marketing gives, makes it easier for me to make a purchasing decision of this product/service

Totally agree 23%

Mostly agree 53%

Neutral 19%

Mostly disagree 5%

Totally disagree 0%

Statement 3 Influencer marketing I have seen in the past 12 months has created a new need for a product/service

Totally agree 34%

Mostly agree 44%

Neutral 16%

Mostly disagree 4%

Totally disagree 2%

Q8: Do you trust influencer marketing on social media over traditional marketing?

Statement 1 I trust influencer marketing on social media more than traditional marketing

Totally agree 20%

Agree 37%

Neutral 36%

Disagree 6%

Totally disagree 1%

Statement 2 Opinions of Influencers on social media have an effect on my behavior as a consumer

Totally agree 27%

Agree 45%

Neutral 24%

Disagree 3%

Totally disagree 1%

Statement 3 Influencers on social media are easier to identify with than other means of marketing

Totally agree 15%

Agree 45%

Neutral 37%

Disagree 2%

Totally disagree 1%

Q9: Have you made your buying decision based on influencer marketing you have seen on social media?

Yes 88%

No 12%

Q10: Have you purchased products or services because someone else has showcased them on social media?

Yes 78%

No 4%

Maybe 18%

Q11: What products would you consider buying based on Influencer marketing you encounter on social media?

Beauty products/services 61%

Fashion (clothes, shoes, bags) 82%

Fitness & Well-Being products/services 55%

Groceries 18%

Restaurants 45%

Electronics 28%

Other 4%

Q12: Have you seen influencers make negative reviews on products/services on social media after using the product?

Yes 88%

No 12%

Q13: When buying a product/service you have seen influencers marketed on social media, have your expectations been fulfilled post-purchasing the product/service?

Yes 89%

No 11%

Q14: Thank You for answering! If you have any further comments, please leave them below

Answer: I believe that influencers give me more ideas and brings new products/services visible and near to me more than effects on my decision whether to purchase or not.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Influencer marketing & Consumer behavior

The following questionnaire is a part of my Graduation Thesis on the topic Social media Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behavior in Finland.

It consists of 13 questions related to the topic, and it will take a few minutes of your time to answer.

The aim is to find out the effects of social media influencer marketing on consumer behavior. What effects does it ultimately have on consumers buying decisions in Finland.

Thank you in advance for Your answers.

*Pakollinen

Gender *

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Age *

- 15-18
- 19-21
- 22-25

The questionnaire continues

What social media channels do you use the most frequently? *

- Instagram
- YouTube
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Other

Do you follow celebrities, bloggers or influencers on social media? *

- Yes
- No

What kind of content providers do you follow?

- Bloggers
- Vloggers
- Celebrities
- Normal people with a large number of followers

The questionnaire continues

Have you become aware of new products/services through influencer marketing you have seen on social media? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

How do you feel about the following statements? *

	Totally agree	Mostly agree	Neutral	Mostly disagree	Totally disagree
Influencer marketing gives you good information about a product/service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information influencer marketing gives, makes it easier for me to make a purchasing decision of this product/service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influencer marketing I have seen in the past 12 months has created a new need for a product/service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The questionnaire continues

How do you feel about the following statements?

	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
I trust influencer marketing on social media more than traditional marketing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinions of influencers on social media have an effect on my behavior as a consumer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influencers on social media are easier to identify with than other means of marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you made your buying decision based on influencer marketing you have seen on social media? *

- Yes
- No

Have you purchased products or services because someone else has showcased them on social media? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

The questionnaire continues

What products would you consider buying based on Influencer marketing you encounter on social media? *

- Beauty products/services
- Fashion (clothes, shoes, bags)
- Fitness & Well-Being products/services
- Groceries
- Restaurants
- Electronics
- Other

Have you seen influencers make negative reviews on products/services on social media after using the product? *

- Yes
- No

When buying a product/service you have seen influencers marketed on social media, have your expectations been fulfilled post-purchasing the product/service? *

- Yes
- No

Thank You for answering! If you have any further comments please leave them below.

Oma vastauksesi

Note: Pakollinen = Compulsory, Oma vastauksesi = Your own answer

Since the online questionnaire was conducted in Google Forms the words listed in the notes section above are presented in the language of the country where internet is used to respond to the questionnaire.

