



LUND UNIVERSITY  
School of Economics and Management

# Consumer Engagement on Instagram

Viewed through the perspectives of social influence and influencer  
marketing

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# Abstract

- Title:** Consumer Engagement on Instagram: Viewed through the perspectives of social influence and influencer marketing
- Course:** BUSN39 – Degree Project in Global Marketing - Master Level
- Authors:** Amanda Claesson and Nathalie Tägt Ljungberg
- Examiner:** Mats Urde
- Supervisor:** Clara Gustafsson
- Purpose:** The purpose consists of gaining an understanding of how young consumers engage on Instagram. This was done by applying the perspectives of social influence and influencer marketing.
- Methodology:** This study utilized a qualitative method from a social constructionist standpoint. The study has adopted an abductive approach. Ten semi-structured interviews with female participants have been conducted and were analysed by using a content analysis.
- Theories:** The main focus in the literature review consists of Instagram, Consumer Culture Theory, social influence and influencer marketing.
- Empirical data:** The key findings are summarized under four themes that emerged from the empirical material and consists of: consumers in the world of social media, the reasons behind the choices individuals make, scepticism towards the use of social media and lastly, view of the participants of what an influencer is.
- Conclusion:** The conclusions are presented under three aspects where their main findings are found within. These aspects are summarized under: consumers' engagement, social influence and influencers and a theoretical contribution consisting of a new tentative definition.
- Keywords:** *Consumer Engagement, Instagram, Social Influence, Influencer Marketing, Social Media,*

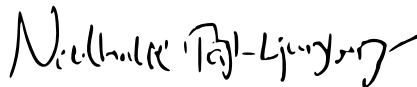
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# 1 Introduction

*This chapter entails the background and problematization around consumers, social media, Instagram, social influence and influencer marketing. The chapter continues with the purpose and the research questions of this dissertation. Lastly, the chapter ends with the outline of the thesis.*

## 1.1 Background

Social media applications such as Blogs can be dated all the way back to 1990s, but have gained popularity after web 2.0 (Fuchs, 2014). Social media can be defined as “*tools that increase our ability to share, to co-operate with one another, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutional institutions and organizations*” (Fuchs, 2014, p.35). Sudha and Sheena (2017) mention that digital marketing can be classified as a description of umbrella type that portrays the notion of marketing certain services or items through a sphere of technologies that are digital. Most of the time this takes place through the Internet this further, also involves doing so through for instance displaying advertising, as well as through mobile phones (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). The transformations that have occurred concerning marketing that is digital as of the 1990s, as well as the 2000s has put forward a shift concerning how businesses and brands decide to create their marketing, by using technology and digital options relating to marketing (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Moreover, social media can be linked to user-generated content (UGC), user created content (UCC) or be seen as a participative application (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). UGC refers to content that is forwarded by users and made by others and UCC are content made by the user (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). With that said, viewing the topic from a greater historical context. A new era in the digital world started in 2005 when Tim O’Riley coined web 2.0 with key features such as users as creators and participators (Fuchs, 2014). For businesses this meant interactions and engagement between consumers and brands, which opened up for a two-way communication instead of the previous one-way communication that characterized web 1.0 (Cosh, Burn & Daniel, 2008). Furthermore, the main difference between web 1.0 and web 2.0 is that it gives the user a richer experience with new applications such as Blogs, Google and Wikipedia (Fuchs, 2014). In addition, Hinton and Hjorth (2013) emphasize creative production within the context of web 2.0, which makes it simple for anyone who wants to post anything on the Internet.

Regarding the aspect of consumers the American Marketing Association (2018) states that a consumer is an individual that consumes products and services, as well as ideas. Moreover, the consumer does not only have to be the one consuming the goods, it can also be aimed at the buyer referred to as the ultimate consumer (American Marketing Association, 2018). Furthermore, connecting consumers to engagement a study by Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas (2016) define consumer engagement in the context of marketing as a cognitive and emotional state that take place through virtue of mutual, interactive and jointly produced experiences. In addition, the experiences of the consumer are often created with a brand to build relationships (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2016). Moreover, connecting this to social media Zolkepli, Hasno and Mukhiar (2015) mention that in an online and media context there are several literature streams within research that puts emphasis on consumers' engagement. Moreover, they mention that in a social media context, engagement is a concept formed from various aspects such as both creating and posting content online, which needs to be appropriate and serve a meaning to consumers (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015). In addition, the content can then be shared and modified by consumers to arouse a feeling of being in a community that is online (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015). Moreover, consumers' engagement in an online context is also about having a dialogue rather than a one-way communication (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015).

Moreover, social media marketing is digital marketing with the marketing tools of social networking websites and applications (Chen, 2018). As mentioned by Hassan (2014) social media marketing is closely related to word of mouth marketing and viral marketing, with the aim to influence consumers with consumer-to-consumer communication. Connected to the context, Sudha and Sheena (2017) explain that utilizing pathways to market an item or service through social media is what makes up social media marketing. The proceeding relates to a form of strategy to enable a heightened level of traffic, regarding a certain website or to enable a higher level of attention concerning buyers (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Continuing, Sudha and Sheena (2017) explain that constructed through various options of channels, is what enables digital marketing. The goal of the one who is behind the advertising is to enable a use of channels that has the possibility to create the highest attainable communication that goes two-ways, as well as the ability for a heightened general ROI concerning a brand (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Moreover, according to Evans, Phua, Lim and Jun (2017) companies uses many different approaches on social media applications to engage with consumers such as electronic word of mouth (eWOM), paid ads and sponsored posts. The expression eWOM can be defined as *“any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”* (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004, p. 39). Lastly, according to Byrne, Kearney and MacEvelly (2017) the aspect of the concept marketing that takes place through word of mouth can be linked to the concept of influencer marketing. This occurs in the sense that influencer marketing can be regarded as a version of word of mouth but in a digital form (Byrne, Kearney & MacEvelly, 2017).

Sudha and Sheena (2017) state that influencer marketing has placed itself as a vital element regarding targeting that is digital. Connected to this is what De Veirman, Cauberghe and

Hudders (2017) mention as brands that set out to gain influencers, who are willing to endorse the brands' various items enable the brand a possibility to construct the image they wish to communicate. This is directed towards various influencers' foundation of followers, such a strategy can be labelled influencer marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). As further stated by, De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) someone who has the ability to create content and at the same time has a firm foundation of followers can be regarded as an influencer. Furthermore, this takes place through platforms such as Blogs or content that has a shorter span such as for instance Instagram or Snapchat (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Influencers enable a window into how they personally live their lives, day to day, as well as various viewpoints and experiences (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). An advantage of influencer marketing on various social media channels, compared to traditional marketing is the fact that in a short time, the campaign reaches a large and more specific consumer segment, which makes it a low cost approach (Evans et al. 2017). Therefore, Evans et al. (2017) argue that influencer marketing has gained popularity for brands to market towards their consumers but also to engage with them online. One of the most popular social media platforms for brands to implement influencer marketing is on Instagram, due to the fact that the influencers often reach a large amount of people with the help of hashtags and inspirational photos their followers can relate to (Evans et al. 2017). This shows the significance of Instagram to marketers.

In relation to this, Roncha and Radclyffe-Thomas (2016) mention that Instagram is a social media application founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010. Instagram is a free mobile application with the main feature of photo-sharing, which allows their users to take photos, edit them and connect with communities, friends, families or influencers (Chen, 2018). As mentioned by De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) functioning as a site for social networking by enabling its participants the ability to distribute photos, as well as videos between one another, Instagram fits the frame well, of serving a mission connected to eWOM. This is due to the fact that images can present both brands, as well as items where the function of adding a title to the images exists (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). Lastly, Chen (2018) mentions the uniqueness of Instagram due to its differentiated characteristics of consumers' usage compared to Facebook and Twitter, other social media platforms, which also leads to differences in marketing on Instagram and consumers' perceptions of marketing communication. Therefore, one can understand that every platform is different. As of November 2017, Instagram had over 800 million monthly active users on their social media platform and over 25 million businesses (Instagram, 2017). This displays the vast impact Instagram could have for marketers.

## 1.2 Problematization

As explained by Sudha and Sheena (2017) as of today concerning the manner in which consumers stays up to date, regarding transitions of trends within the fashion sphere, social media can be considered rigidly cemented, regarding how they chose to conduct various habits in relation to the matter. In relation to this, Evans et al. (2017) mention that social media has gained popularity over the last years from companies, due to the opportunities for them to reach consumers online and have therefore become an essential marketing platform. This is in line with what is mentioned by Sudha and Sheena (2017) that there has been an alteration taking place in the past five years, concerning the method utilized to buy and sell something, this shift can be considered drawn upon due to the expansion of social media. In relation to this one can mention that, according to a survey made by CMO in February 2018, companies are currently spending 12 percent of their marketing budget on social media and are expected to spend 20,5 percent over the next five years (CMOSurvey.org, 2018). We argue that the above, shows the essentialness to investigate a topic within social media, due to its relevance and increase.

Furthermore, in recent years, brands and companies are dedicating increasingly more of their budgets towards marketing on social media (Mochon, Johnson, Schwartz & Ariely, 2017). In addition, companies and brands are using Instagram to communicate and create engagement with consumers, with the main goal to improve sales and ROI (Chen, 2018). Moreover, to advertise and market a company using social media marketing has become an essential feature of today's marketing (Chen, 2018). As explained by Sudha and Sheena (2017) with social media being present in today and the alterations concerning available options, there has been a tremendous impact on the model concerning buying behaviour. The model in itself can be considered to portray the more established way of commencing a purchase (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). As in line with the above, we argue the interest for understanding social media in connection to consumers. With that said, Voorveld, Van Noort, Muntinga and Bronner (2018) state that there is a shortage in how different platforms belonging to social media that have advertising included within them, are in fact experienced. Given that we argue for understanding consumers in relation to only one social media platform.

Moreover, as mentioned by Kapitan and Silvera (2016) today's market forum, within the sphere of media can be regarded as to a high extent being cluttered. With that said, the market forum is also perceived to be generated by the users, as well as being guided by the consumers (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). Moreover, Gürkaynak, Kama and Ergün (2018) mention the aspect of consumers being more active in taking note, when they are under the impression of not having items sold to them. Furthermore, Gürkaynak, Kama and Ergün (2018) explain that a level of communication that can be interpreted as masking itself as something else, if being assessed in regards to a commercial sphere, has the power to strip the consumers from a choice within the situation as to take part in such a commercial situation or not. As stated by Gürkaynak, Kama and Ergün (2018) advertising that can be labelled as

misleading or by the word covert, occurs at the point when a consumer fails to understand that what the individual is undertaking, takes place through communication that is distributed with a commercial purpose. With the above stated, we further argue the interest of assessing the topic from a consumer perspective. A parallel to the topic can be found in the findings of Lu, Chang and Chang's (2014) study that indicated the fact that consumers did not have a negative impression, when the influencers and bloggers revealed that they did a sponsored post with a brand. This is due to the fact that the consumers liked the influencers' honesty and the fact that they did not try to mislead them into buying something (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014).

Another aspect in relation to the context is what is also mentioned by Lu, Chang and Chang (2014) as before making a purchase decision, consumers are more likely to trust information from other consumers than brands and companies. A parallel can also be drawn to what is mentioned by Shalev and Morwitz (2008) as the manner to which influence from one consumer towards another occurs, is a topic of vast significance from a marketer's angle today. This is further in line with Hu, Milner and Wu (2016) who emphasize the decisions taken by consumers are subject to being impacted by what other consumers do. This impact can come in various forms, for instance through word of mouth such as in a face-to-face manner regarding an advice (Hu, Milner & Wu, 2016). Through the rapid acceleration of shopping in an online setting, the level to which social influence plays a part is at a highest level of importance (Hu, Milner & Wu, 2016). Hence, we further argue that this support the aspect for including and evaluating the topic from a consumer-to-consumer angle. Moreover, it also displays a connection to social influence within the context.

Furthermore, this is in line with what is mentioned by Pornsakulvanich (2017) as there is a scarcity regarding what has been produced within the academic sphere concerning how various social networking sites, as well as their applications, connect to the aspect of usage. Furthermore, this relates to being presented within a context of interconnection towards the aspects of attitude, personality and social influence in relation to support that takes place online, as well as on the social networking sites (Pornsakulvanich, 2017). The author further states that concerning this topic the academic sphere should pay greater attention to gaining knowledge concerning how utilization of these social networking sites occurs, as well as relations to various consequences (Pornsakulvanich, 2017). In addition, the author mentions the aspects of whether or not the utilization is hurtful in any way towards the users or if it is advantageous (Pornsakulvanich, 2017). Furthermore, a parallel can be drawn to what is mentioned by Thomas and Vinuales (2017) as there is extensive research in the field of social influence, however there is a lack of research regarding social influence in the context of social media. With the above, we argue for the essentialness of conducting a study that includes social influence connected to consumers on social media.

Connected to the context, is what Chen (2018) mentions regarding the findings of his study, which showed that Instagram is the perfect place for self-identification, recognition, leisure and social interactions with friends and celebrities or influencers. Chen (2018) goes on suggesting that future research within the same field namely consumers' perceptions

marketing through Instagram, should discover sub dimensions of the factors regarding how people perceive Instagram, or uncover consumers' openness and acceptance towards Instagram marketing. This is in line with, Ting, Ming, De Run and Choo (2015) who explain that regardless of the level to which Instagram is being used, in connection to a device that is linked to social networking, there is a scarcity in regard to the knowledge of various beliefs, in relation to how the element is being applied within a mobile device. Furthermore, Ting et al. (2015) state that regardless of the usage of the application, either in the form of a linkage to a networking of social context, or if it can be perceived as a newness in the way to communicate. The authors underline that the lack of knowledge is specifically prevalent within the markets that can be perceived as emerging (Ting et al. 2015). This is also in line with Djarfarova and Rushworth (2017) who explain the interest to study Instagram is due to limited academic research, but also because consumers spend more time on Instagram than other comparable social media applications. With support in the above, we argue that there is a lack within the research area of how consumers engage with Instagram, which further creates an interest to understand the topic of consumers' engagement on Instagram. Furthermore, Voorveld et al. (2018) mention that how engagement is presented within a social media platform varies regarding what type of platform it is taking place on, this is also the case concerning engaging within the advertising taking place on the platforms. The authors mention that their study highlights the aspects of this further connecting towards the topic of consumer experiences (Voorveld et al. 2018). With this, we further support our argument for investigating only one social media platform within this study.

Moreover, another perspective can be found in De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) study that emphasize the importance of influencer marketing as the consumers uses ad-blocking to a higher extent, which leads to difficulties for the brand to use traditional marketing tools. As further explained by De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) endorsements placed forward by influencers are most often integrated in a more seamless way with the influencers day to day narratives that the influencers choses to place on their account on Instagram. This element increases the level of attractiveness for brands given the fact that it comes across as heightened in efficiency if being compared to advertising that is more traditional in its sense (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). The reason for this is the element of credibility, as well as authenticity within the context, this furthermore, adds to a lessened degree of defiance of such messages (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). As in line with the above, we argue there is an interest to understand the topic of marketing from a consumer angle connected to the aspect of influencers. In contrast to this, Gürkaynak, Kama and Ergün (2018) explain that through the rapid acceleration regarding technology, as well as the rise in popularity concerning social media, consumers today are flooded by various means of communication from influencers active on social media, this occurs on a daily basis. Gürkaynak, Kama and Ergün (2018) continue to mention that choosing to conduct your advertising through the usage of influencers is a topic that has reached higher proportions in popularity throughout the last couple of years. In relation to this, Evans et al. (2017) argue that previous studies in the academic field of influencer marketing have utilized influencers as celebrities, members of brand communities and bloggers. This displays the complexity concerning how the concept of an influencer in a marketing context is in fact described.

Nonetheless, despite the large increase in the usage of influencer marketing in the past years, little research in the academic field has been constructed on the marketing phenomena of influencers (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Through the above, we further support our claim for conducting a study that touches upon various parts of the topic influencer marketing.

Moreover, according to Chen (2018) brands and companies have widely implemented social media and Instagram as a marketing tool, however, in the academic field they are lagging. Up until today, academic researchers have consisted of a few studies to explore and examine the usage of Instagram and marketing (Chen, 2018). Furthermore, Chen (2018) mentions two research gaps within the academic literature. The first gap within social media and Instagram, is the fact that a majority of the conducted studies have examined the strategic use of Instagram from a brand's perspective in a specific industry, instead of focusing on the consumer perspective and their perception and interest of Instagram marketing (Chen, 2018). The second gap emphasized by Chen (2018) is that a majority of the research conducted within the area, has utilized a method that displays the findings as more descriptive. Instead, a deeper understanding and systematic studies on consumers' perceptions on Instagram marketing are preferred to gain enhanced theoretical understanding (Chen, 2018). Given the above explained, we argue for the relevance to study the topic of engagement on Instagram from a consumer perspective and to further conduct a study that enables greater understanding, through a study with richer insights.

Furthermore, in relation to this, regarding people's experiences and usage of the social media platform Instagram, only a few studies within the academic field has been conducted (Chen, 2018). We therefore firmly argue for the need for conducting a study that investigates consumers' engagement on the platform Instagram. In addition, Instagram is mostly used by young people aged 12-15 and 16-25, this is evident since 86 percent and 81 percent of the individuals in the survey were using the platform in Sweden, the year 2017 (Statista, 2018). We further believe that the above illustrates the vast usage of the platform and therefore shows the relevance connected to the topic. Lastly, according to Chen (2018) theoretical research on Instagram marketing are lacking in breadth and depth and the author further identifies a research gap regarding qualitative studies within the topic. A positivistic quantitative approach has dominated earlier studies and due to this, research within Instagram marketing, needs to highlight sense making and understandings to a more comprehensive picture of Instagram with the help of qualitative research (Chen, 2018). We therefore finalize our argument for conducting this study using a qualitative approach.

## 1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of how young consumers engage within the platform Instagram, this is conducted through a consumer perspective. Furthermore, this study will be viewed through the theoretical perspectives of social influence and influencer marketing. This will be conducted through understanding social influence solely, as well as in combination with influencer marketing. Moreover, the study will contribute to highlighting the complexity of the many explanations of what an influencer is viewed as, from a consumer angle. This is done to enrich the theoretical body of literature within the academic field. The theoretical contribution of this study will therefore consist of setting out to make a contribution towards shedding light and adding to what is perceived as an influencer from a consumer angle. In addition, this thesis will strive to enrich the theoretical body of literature concerning insights regarding theories of social influence taking place in a social media context. The study will provide added sense making and an increase of insights derived from the consumer perspective, which is done by generating new perspectives. Lastly, this study contributes to the topic from a qualitative perspective, since it is as previously mentioned a need for further studies to be conducted within the area of Instagram.

## 1.4 Research Question

This study is constructed around addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: How is engagement between young consumers on Instagram taking place?

RQ2: In what manner does social influence and/or influencer marketing have a response on consumers?

RQ3: How are the theoretical explanations of influencers viewed from a consumer angle?



## 1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The outline of the thesis is displayed in *Figure 1.1- Outline of the thesis* below where each chapter is described with its overall purpose.



*Figure 1-1 Outline of Thesis*

## 2 Literature Review

*This chapter contains a literature review to gain an understanding of the concepts of instagram, consumer behaviour and lastly influencer marketing. The chapter begins with describing what the platform instagram is and how it is used as a marketing tool. Thereafter the chapter continues with a section about the consumer perspective where various perspectives are presented. Further the literature review continues with influencers and marketing. The chapter finalizes with a section that describes consumers in connection with the concept of influencers and influencer marketing, lastly a conceptual framework is presented.*

### 2.1 Instagram

Below is a presentation of the social media application called Instagram, which includes what the platform is and how it is used for marketers as a tool.

#### 2.1.1 What is Instagram?

According to Dahlén and Lange (2009) Internet is the fastest growing marketing channel and the use of it is increasing more than the traditional channels such as radio and television commercials. As previously mentioned in the introduction, Instagram is a social media platform that was launched in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). According to Chen (2018, p.22) Instagram is defined as “*a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever*”. Already in 2011, Apple titled Instagram as the iPhone App of the Year (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). The application gained even more popularity when it was launched on Androids, because it was downloaded more than one million times in less than a day after the launch (Chen, 2018). Furthermore, Instagram is one of the quickest growing social media applications and consumers spend more time on this application than other comparable social media applications (Djarfarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Lub, Trub and Rosenthal (2015) mention Instagram as a platform constructed for visual content such as pictures and videos, which has rapidly gained approval and interest from the young users. The users can choose between several filters to improve their photos and change

both colour and resolution before posting it on Instagram and after the content is posted, their followers can like or comment on the photo (Lub, Trub & Rosenthal, 2015). Furthermore, Sheldon and Bryant (2016) highlight the fact that Instagram is a free mobile application for sharing visual content with the help of a hashtag, so the content becomes easier to find. A hashtag on Instagram serves as an important function for the user due to the fact that it helps them to express feelings and describe their photo or video, but also to classify the post so others than their followers can find it easier (Ye, Hasmin, Baghirov & Murphy, 2018). Moreover, not only is a hashtag used by consumers on Instagram, businesses are also using it for the purpose of promotion of a specific product and to build brand awareness (Ye et al. 2018). As explained by Lee, Lee, Moon and Sung (2015) who mention two additional features referred to as photo map that entails enabling the ones using the feature to be able to keep an account, as well as follow the photos they have in a geographical manner. Another feature is referred to as the explore one, that can be regarded as a page that includes further advise towards other pages that one can decide to follow (Lee et al. 2015). Furthermore, there is a feature referred to as direct that instead includes the aspect of in a personal manner distribute image-messages (Lee et al. 2015).

### 2.1.2 Instagram as a tool

Since a couple of years ago, Instagram has been an effective marketing tool for brands to connect with consumers by creating an account and letting the users of Instagram follow their most liked brands (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Ting et al. (2015) explain that Instagram can be considered to be bringing forth the ability for actors such as firms, various groups with different viewpoints, as well as individuals to be able to distribute images and to share them further on, this enables a higher ratio of information to be distributed. Furthermore, Ting et al. (2015) mention that this shift has led to organizations that can be considered offline in their sense, to have started including and adding their offerings through the aspects of social networking, to be able to include this within their business. The inclusion is based on the ability to provide and increase their scope, as well as provide communication towards new, as well as established consumers through a means that can be perceived as higher in efficiency (Ting et al. 2015). In connection, Roncha and Radclyffe-Thomas (2016) mention the platform as a popular social media network for companies to market their products and services. In line with this, more companies are using Instagram to both create engagement, communicate with their consumers and to improve sales (Chen, 2018). For a marketer to decide upon the outcome of a social media campaign on Instagram, different engagement metrics are usually evaluated such as number of followers, likes, comments and how often the user interact with the campaign or content (Muñoz & Towner, 2017).

As mentioned by Ting et al. (2015) Instagram has proved to be utilized in a superior way as a great means of being able to distribute both marketing and communication. The ways in which this can be adapted is by enabling ocular demonstrations of various items (Ting et al. 2015). As further explained by Ting et al. (2015) the aspect of Instagram being purchased by the actor Facebook, has brought forth the possibility of facilitating Instagram towards the

users that are millions in numbers, into becoming higher in its level of appeal. Moreover, when thinking about Instagram as a marketing tool, they recently introduced a new technological algorithm on their social media platform Instagram (Chen, 2018). This means that instead of the earlier chronological feed where the posts and pictures come up in the order of being posted with the latest first, the platform has changed to an algorithm that will show the content Instagram believe the user likes the most and finds interesting (Chen, 2018). However, according to Chen (2018) this new algorithm can create difficulties for marketers to reach their target population because should the algorithm decide that the content posted by a brand is not suited for a user, that specific user might not see the content and brand at all. Lastly, Roncha and Radclyffe-Thomas (2016) emphasize that if brands have young adults and in addition females as their target group, they are more likely to succeed with their marketing activities on Instagram. This is because females are more active on Instagram and is also more likely to respond to marketing campaigns and impulse purchasing (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). The above displays that the platform could be considered to have great possibilities for being applied to more than one type of environment, as well as purpose.

## 2.2 Consumer Perspectives

In this section, aspects will be explained and highlighted concerning various consumer perspectives. Starting off, there will be a short account of the relevant aspects belonging to Consumer Culture Theory. Thereafter, an account of the topic of social influence is explained, the chosen examples are from two studies that are presented separately and the sections are furthermore supplemented by more up to date studies that are considered relevant. The section is finalized by presenting a part containing consumer perspectives linked to social media that ends with a short section about engagement linked to the perspective.

### 2.2.1 Consumer Cultural Theory

Arnould and Thompson (2005) mention Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as a group of different theoretical views that explains and addresses the relationships between consumer behaviour, its actions, the marketplace and culture. Furthermore, Arnould and Thompson (2005) interpret CCT as an integrative research field with excellent knowledge about consumers and culture. The CCT practice draws from various disciplines such as social science, public policy sectors and managerial divisions (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). In the study by Arnould and Thompson (2005) they propose a framework that consists of the four largest research areas within the field of CCT connected to consumer behaviour and sociocultural practices. These four areas are consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, sociohistoric patterning of consumption and lastly, consumer ideologies and strategies (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Below is a presentation of the two fields we argue are the most applicable for this study, due to the emphasize on consumer interactions.

The first one considered applicable for this study is the area mentioned as consumer identity projects in the study by Arnould and Thompson (2005). The first research field in Arnould and Thompson (2005) study suggested a framework for CCT that is consumer identity projects. Theories about consumer culture involve co-productive behaviours and consumers that are working with marketing materials falsify a fragmented impression of self (Arnould and Thompson (2005). Moreover, CCT has drawn more attention to connections between consumer identity projects and the influence of the marketplace (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). One example of this aspect is the study by Kozinets (2001) where fan identity is explored in connection to fantasy ideals in regard to Star Trek fans. Moreover, Kozinets (2001) mentions fandom as the more general term of literary fans and media fans a bit more specified to fans of television and videos. Kozinets (2001) continues to explain the difference between a fan and a follower as a fan is more of an active member within a fandom organization, while a follower is an audience of people who frequently watch and enjoy the media programs but do not have a social identity of the consumption. Additionally, fans are consumers that are more dedicated, loyal and invest more in their consumption and consequently expect more from it, than regular consumers or followers (Kozinets, 2001). In line with the above, the notion of consumer co-productive behaviours could be argued as relevant to assess, due to the consumer perspective being applied to this study.

The other research field applicable to this study, is mentioned by Arnould and Thompson's (2005) in their framework that they call the sociohistoric patterning of consumption. This field is connected to social constructions that have an influence on consumer behaviour and consumption, for example it can be communities and social class (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Furthermore, this research field investigates consumers' relationships in the context of experiences, beliefs and their social connections (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). In the study by Arnould and Thompson (2005) they mention a good example of this as brand communities. This can be linked with Muñiz and O'Guinn's (2001) study where they examine brand communities in connection to sociology, as well as consumer behaviour. According to Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) a brand community is defined as a non-geographically community specifically focused on something with strong relationships along the brand follower. Moreover, they mention a community as a network built on emotional ties and relations that are social (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Just like other communities, a brand community has specific rituals or traditions, shared intrinsic connections towards each other and moral obligations among the group in that specific brand community (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). In Muñiz and O'Guinn's (2001) study they also link brand communities to tribes and its consumption patterns, however tribes are explained more local and interpersonal than brand communities.

The study by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) examined the existence of brand communities both in real life and in the world of computers. The findings of their study highlight brand communities in both environments and these communities are connected to consumption around a specific brand (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Moreover, the findings of their study found three advantages of a brand community and these were the fact that a brand community enhanced the communication online and gave the consumers a voice (Muñiz & O'Guinn,

2001). The second advantage emphasized in the findings of their study were the information a brand community gave the consumers of that group, for example that they can turn to each other for advice regarding the brand (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Lastly, a brand community offers social benefits and a relationship between the members in that community (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Through the above, we argue that consumers in relation to brand communities is of importance to investigate, due to the fact that there could be a linkage between influence and the behaviour of consumers.

Turning the perspective towards tribes instead the following can be mentioned. As explained by Mitchell and Imrie (2011) tribal marketing concerns the aspects of to some extent being able to regard consumers as to be behind the element of initiating, as well as building and maintaining a collective of individuals that keep up some form of consumption. Furthermore, these tribes of consumers can be viewed as a form of individuals that through an emotional connection, that is visible through values connected to consumption that is very much alike each other's, as well as the discovered use within the consumption (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). This collective of individuals utilizes the aspect of a social value that is linked by the aspects of services, as well as items to be able to form a society where they are able to utter their identity (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Moreover, Mitchell and Imrie (2011) explain that identities of a social notion belonging to consumers, as well as their decisions of what to consume alternates due to the lifestyle, as well as the circumstantial elements that play a part. Within this perspective the tribes of consumers may be comprehended and penetrated via common understandings, as well as beliefs and lastly what to consume (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). In addition, Mitchell and Imrie (2011) mention the aspect of that there could be expressions that were related to the fact that persons during the same time span, are associating with more than one tribe, where they are able to utter various perspectives related to identity's they have.

The study by Mitchell and Imrie (2011) chose to highlight and investigate the connection amidst tribes of consumer in relation to the concept of loyalty. Moreover, companies aiding consumer-to-consumer connections, as in the case of tribes of consumers are predicted to foster loyalty that lasts for a long time (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Continuing, Mitchell and Imrie (2011) mention that the advantages that comes from placing forth marketing towards consumer that are in tribes, concerns the aspect of having social influences to be perceived as the most essential influence, in regard to what a person is determined to consume. Being active within the environment of a tribe can be perceived as a way to utter one's self-identity (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). This means that the tribes of consumers have common moral beliefs, as well as viewpoint, they furthermore also have common ideas relating to consumption, as well as preferences (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). In addition, Mitchell and Imrie (2011) mention that here lie possibilities related to marketers being able to penetrate a cluster of consumers, that can be regarded as a segment within a market. This segment can further be able to be linked towards one another, where there is a distribution regarding what to consume (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). As mentioned by Mitchell and Imrie (2011) the participation a consumer has with a tribe, is very fluent and rests upon how engaged the person actually is. Through the above, there is a presented linkage between consumers and tribes that could be perceived as further connected to the matter of influence and engagement taking place.

## 2.2.2 Social Influence

Dahl (2014) mentions that social influence as a topic area has a history in different fields of research such as psychology, marketing and sociology. Moreover, social influence and its role is of significance to understand consumer behaviour to be able to understand consumption, how people affect others emotions and their opinions (Dahl, 2014). Social influence in regards as research fields is extremely broad (Dahl, 2014). As mentioned by Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011) social influence can be regarded as a highly effective way to form the behaviour of people. Furthermore, social influence has the ability to make an impact on more than just one type of behaviour, it could impact most of the behaviours (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2011). The impact in itself is most of the time not noticed, as well as could take place unconsciously, this further embodies aspects such as rewards and punishments, it further includes impacts that are informational (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2011). Nevertheless, the element occurs on the basis of other people as their origin (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2011). Moreover, Kang and Schuett (2013) mention that social influence can be labelled as to what level of extent an individual believes in the aspect of operating through a specific behaviour, as a result of what other individuals in that person's surrounding wants.

### 2.2.2.1 Types of Social Influence

Connected to the topic is the study presented by Deutsch and Gerard (1955) who mention that previous studies within the field have utilized the term group influence to determine several social dimensions related to different experiments. Moreover, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) investigate social influence and characterize two different types of social influence, which are normative- and informational influence, which usually are discovered as composed. A normative social influence is described as an influence of someone's desire to adjust with the positive assumptions and beliefs of others (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Further, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) also mention normative social influence in regard to oneself to be able to adjust to a person's self and own reasoning, which is linked to a social process that is internalized. Moreover, the individual grasp influences and assumptions from his or her own behaviours and positive confirmations to oneself can lead to higher self-approval, self-esteem, as well as need satisfaction (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In contrast, if one's self-expectations are not confirmed, it can lead to feelings that concern guilt and uncertainty (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). The second aspects concerns an informational social influence, which is explained as an influence to obtain and accept knowledge and information gained from others as confirmation about existence and reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). The findings from Deutsch and Gerard (1955) imply that when group situations are shaped, the social influences linked to the normative type are increased, which generates more judgement mistakes for the individual. This can also produce larger group pressures that can lead to the individual being influenced by others (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Through the above, it is evident that social influence can take more than one type of shape.

Connecting this to a more current state of time, Johnstone and Hooper (2016) present a study that investigated social influence and its role with behaviours connected to green

consumption. According to Johnstone and Hooper (2016) social influences can take various shapes such as culture, peer pressures, socialisation or influences by the government. Johnstone and Hooper (2016) further draw upon the classification of social influence from Deutsch and Gerard and extend the normative influence to two different forms: utilitarian- and value expression influence. Utilitarian influence is explained as when someone follows what others expect, to receive some kind of benefit or simply to avoid being punished (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). The other kind of normative social influence is value expression influence, which appears when one's behaviour is driven by his or her ambition to conform due do the behaviours from the group (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). This study shows the essentialness for viewing social influence in a more current state of time.

Moreover, further connecting this towards a current state of time but within an online context, Chia-Ying (2013) presents a study that emphasizes social influence theory, in regard to convincing messages. Theses messages are for example source credibility and the quality of arguments of social influence in connection to the intention of an individuals' behaviour (Chia-Ying, 2013). When examining the social influence theory in the study solely, it also builds further on the existing categorization by Deutsch and Gerard (Chia-Ying, 2013). The author continues to explain that social influence in regard to how someone in a social network is being persuaded by others behaviours to adapt to the behaviour of ones network (Chia-Ying, 2013). According to Chia-Ying (2013) normative social influence takes place when groups want to maintain the positive social agreement. When someone is being under normative impact, they feel higher social pressure to act and align their thoughts like the rest of the group (Chia-Ying, 2013). Moreover, informational social influence is explained as the aspiration to make good decisions and the individual reevaluate his or her decision upon facts from group members (Chia-Ying, 2013). Lastly, Chia-Ying's (2013) study connects credibility with normative influence and the fact that when making a decision, an individual chooses identity and follow the suggestions of someone they find credible in their group.

Furthermore, another study by Xu, Li, Peng, Hsia, Huang and Wu (2017) examine consumer behaviour and social influence in connection to online shopping. The study touches upon Deutsch and Gerard's classifications of two types of social influence and connects it to an online context (Xu et al. 2017). According to Xu et al. (2017) informational social influence in an online context can be reviews, ratings and recommended information regarding a product, which can influence consumers' decisions towards purchasing the products. Moreover, normative social influence online is more about the opinions and judgment from important influencers, which will heighten the credibility and further influence individuals' actions (Xu et al. 2017). Moreover, the social influences mentioned can either be drawn from important people in our lives and social networks such as family members, friends or peers, or from endorsers such as celebrities, fashion leaders or members of a community (Xu et al. 2017). Another categorization from social influence is presented by, Xu et al. (2017) where they use endorsement influence and peer imitation as two sub-groups. Their findings show that the latter, peer imitation, has stronger influence online and on social influence (Xu et al. 2017). In addition, Xu et al. (2017) state that consumers believe what others believe and this indicate that the expert's opinion and recommendation is not as strong as the opinion and



recommendation that come from for instance a peer. As displayed through the presented studies above that draw upon Deutsch and Gerhard's categorization of social influence, social influence is also taking place within online contexts.

### **2.2.2.2 Processes of Social Influence**

As presented by Kelman (1958) who conducted a study that took its standpoint from a theoretical foundation of larger scale concerning the level to which attitudes alternate due to impacts of social influence. Kelman (1958) continues to explain that the level to which alternations in attitudes, as well as the actions that are derived from the aspects of social influence has the possibility to take place on various levels. Furthermore, these changes that correlate to the various changes that occur, responds to diversities concerning the process that relates to the notion of influence being subject to acceptance by an individual (Kelman, 1958). This can be further related to the word conforms (Kelman, 1958). The author continues by explaining that the series of actions that take place underneath, where an individual begins embracing a behaviour that is induced can take various forms (Kelman, 1958). However, the unconcealed public behaviour that takes place could be displayed as being identical (Kelman, 1958). In connection Kelman (1958) continues by mentioning that there are three various processes connected to the aspect of influence that can be visible. They are firstly, compliance followed by identification and lastly, there is internalization (Kelman, 1958).

Kelman (1958) states that the aspect of compliance takes place within a scenario that includes an individual, that accepts the aspect of influence due to the fact that the person aspires for a response derived from someone else within a circle, the reaction in itself longs to be that of a favourable one. The individual embraces the behaviour that can be labelled as induced, not on the basis of beliefs from the individuals side but instead due to the anticipation of either reaping rewards, as well as obtaining approval (Kelman, 1958). Furthermore, the individual seeks to stay clear with conforming, from not being gained approval, as well as particular penalties (Kelman, 1958). In this way the aspect of satisfaction is gained from deciding to accept the influence that is linked to the concept of social effect (Kelman, 1958). Further, Kelman (1958) mentions identification as taking place as a person decides to accept the aspect of influence, due to the notion of desiring the ability to create, as well as showing that the individual cares for a relation to someone else or to some group. The relation in itself can be considered that of a satisfying one, or a relation that is self-defining (Kelman, 1958). Kelman (1958) continues by explaining that the relation in itself can firstly, either be that of identification, this further portrays the aspect of the person in question deciding to adapt what can be perceived as a role taken from someone else. The second scenario is labelled as a role that is reciprocal, where the person in question instead truly believes concerning the reply's taking place, that further supports the person in question, who chooses to take this on by the means of identification (Kelman, 1958). Even so, the content from the response is of little significance, the behaviour that is induced by the individual is done so on the grounds of desiring a specific relationship (Kelman, 1958). Here the aspect of satisfaction that is connected to identification rests upon the aspect of conforming (Kelman, 1958).

The last one is internalization, this takes place as an individual chose to be of an accepting term towards the influence, due to the fact that what the behaviour that is induced consists of referred to as the actions, as well as the ideas is regarded as being subject to reward from an intrinsically viewed aspect (Kelman, 1958). A person chose this based on the compatibility to one's system related to values (Kelman, 1958). A person can see the value in it, in regard to solving various problems, as well as agreeable with ones needs (Kelman, 1958). The behaviour that can be considered as in line with this often is connected towards the current values an individual has (Kelman, 1958). The satisfaction that can be harvested from the aspect of internalisation, rests upon the content that is drawn from the behaviour of newness (Kelman, 1958). In addition, Kelman (1958) explains that the above indicated could be considered as three various approaches, concerning the manner of which influence is accepted. As presented in the sections above, it is demonstrated that the notion of social influence can include various processes.

Another connection can be explained as what is mentioned by Kapitan and Silvera (2016) who place forth a framework where they mention the aspect of inputs as perceived as handled by attributions that consumers choses to make, concerning the level to which an endorser actually believes in a certain item. Furthermore, this in the end result into social influence that the authors referred to as the processes presented by Kelman (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). The authors have chosen to exclude the aspect of compliance presented by Kelman within their constructed framework (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). Furthermore, Kapitan and Silvera (2016) mention within their review that the process presented by Kelman classified as identification, is derived from a foundation of desire for oneself towards turning into an endorser. This is done by copying the behaviour of the endorser, which further means utilizing the items that the endorser, endorses (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). Next, the aspect of internalization is mentioned as presented by Kelman and concerns the matter of the message in itself (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). When a content of a message is convincingly enough to a consumer, so that the consumers believe it to be in line with one's own ideas the consumers will internalize the message (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). This displays the various ways in which social influence can be adapted to different contexts.

Connecting this to a more current state of time and towards an online context is presented by the following. Kang and Schuett (2013) conducted a study aimed at understanding what explains the aspects that influence the behaviour that is connected to distributing within social media, experiences connected to various travels. The study utilized a framework constructed from the theory of social influence that includes the various three elements of compliance, internalization and lastly identification (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Furthermore, the study included the aspect of enjoyment that can be classified as perceived (Kang & Schuett, 2013). The results of the study conducted by Kang and Schuett (2013) displayed for instance that the level to which social media was used successfully depended upon the decision taken by the user's choices of usage, as well as the availability of distributing various experiences. The reasons harvested by dedicated users in connection to distributing their experiences of traveling, rested upon purposes connected to being meaningful on a personal level, as well as objectives of reward, this was further connected to the aspects of internalization, as well as

identification (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Moreover, users that did not view the usage within distributing their experiences of traveling within the sphere of social media as moving towards obtaining various goals of their own, those users could potentially withstand from engaging in a behaviour of distributing experiences from their travels (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Through the above, it is evident that Kelmans classifications of social influence can be intertwined into an online context.

The following study presents the theoretical contributions in conjunction, the study by Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) connects Kelman's three processes with the two different types of social influences by Deutsch and Gerard. They further mention each one of the social influence processes in Kelman's study in relation to one of the types in Deutsch and Gerard study (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Furthermore, informational social influence is linked to internalization with the main goal of increasing one's knowledge about the individuals' reality and credibility (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). In addition, normative social influence can be combined with two processes, which are compliance or identification (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Moreover, Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) mention the two processes in combination with normative social influence with different intentions such as the compliance process is linked to external awards, while the identification process is linked with self enrichment. With the basis in this, it is clear that it is also possible to view the concepts in conjunction with each other.

### 2.2.3 Consumers and Social Media

As explained by Saridakis, Baltas, Oghazi and Hultman (2016) platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have the ability to create possibilities for various participants in these platforms to distribute, as well as create various material concerning all kinds of topics from both brand related aspects, as well as products ones. The interplay connected to actions related to brands that can take place between those that chose to utilize social media has the ability to have an effect that is much higher in relation to consumer behaviour, if being compared to various classical means regarding advertisement (Saridakis et al. 2016). The authors mention the significance of the above in regard to managers in marketing (Saridakis et al. 2016).

Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2017) conducted a study aimed at understanding intentions related to various behaviours, the two that where selected consisted of firstly, the notion of choosing to follow a certain community related to a brand (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). The other aspect targeted the notion of choosing to recommend the community of a brand in question, towards other consumers (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). The authors chose to utilize a framework including the elements of usefulness and enjoyment as a double approach on the topic (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). The authors mention the aspect of connecting enjoyment as a determinant, in relation to influence connected to satisfaction for consumers, which was further contemplated within the study (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). Moreover, the aspects of

usefulness in regard to utilizing Instagram, was further included as a determinant in regard to the concept of satisfaction, this rests upon the notion of consumers adopting the platform to harvest information to be able to form various choices upon that information (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). In the end, the aspect of satisfaction serves as a scope to be able to weigh the relationship the consumer forms which in itself is expected to influence the aspects of following, as well as recommending the account on Instagram from a consumer angle (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). What has been presented shows the ways in which the above can be linked to behaviour.

Moreover, Voorveld et al. (2018) explain that in their study that had a central purpose of understanding the advertising that occurs on social media, in relation to the engagement that takes place on social media. The authors chose to utilize a framework connected to engagement experience (Voorveld et al. 2018). Moreover, the authors point out that to be able to comprehend that relationship there is an urge for being able to comprehend within the context of social media, the level to which consumers are linked to engagement (Voorveld et al. 2018). The study displays consumers level of engagement through eight various platforms used for social media, they consist of the following, namely Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Google+ and lastly YouTube (Voorveld et al. 2018). Another study related to the context, is explained by Sheldon and Bryant (2016) who conducted a study with the aim of understanding what motivates usage of Instagram. In addition, the study aimed at uncovering the participants' indicators for life position, this meant viewing firstly life satisfaction, secondly interaction of an interpersonal notion, as well as social activity (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Furthermore, there was also an inclusion of psychological factors connected to narcissism, which is then linked to the usage of Instagram (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). The authors took usage of for instance the theory connected to usage and gratification as included in the study (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). In addition, their study Sheldon and Bryant (2016) presented findings related to the question of motivation for utilizing Instagram, the findings revealed that there were four parameters that surfaced regarding the matter, these four were classified firstly as knowledge/surveillance where the aim was to do so towards other ones. Within the study the aspect of knowledge referred to the notion of placing likes, as well as following what others decide to post (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Secondly, there was the aspect of documentation, followed by the third one that was labelled as coolness and lastly the fourth one was creativity (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). This further displays the different spheres one can connect consumers and social media with.

Linked to this is what is mentioned by Lee et al. (2015) who conducted a study concerning the usage of Instagram and the reasoning of trying to understand why individuals in fact used it. The study placed forth five various reasons behind the matter that were linked to motives of psychological aspects, as well as social ones (Lee et al. 2015). These five consisted of social interaction, as well as archiving and self-expression, the authors continue by also mentioning escapism and peeking as reasons (Lee et al. 2015). The aspects of social interaction were perceived in the study, as a firm parameter behind the choice of forming and keeping up with social relations with other people by using Instagram (Lee et al. 2015). The authors state that individuals might decide to utilize the platform as a way to dismiss being lonely, as well as

connecting with other people and lastly, to gain some form of support that is social (Lee et al. 2015). Moreover, concerning the matter of archiving targets, it was used as a means of being able to keep an account on what is going on in one's life, by so doing forming some form of report of it (Lee et al. 2015). Continuing, the aspects of motivations for self-expression was found as in line with the idea that pictures were made us of, to be able to express one's way of life and one's personality, it could also be used to display the notion of taste (Lee et al. 2015). In addition, Lee et al. (2015) explain that followed by this as what motivated the usage was the aspects of escapism followed by peeking.

Within the study by Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez, (2017) they presented for instance the results of connecting satisfaction taken from an Instagram account belonging to a brand, as being derived from both aspects of usefulness, as well as enjoyment. This means that the ones utilizing Instagram will amount to being satisfied through the usage, as they are able to retrieve information that is considered to be supplementing the consumers to a high extent, in relevance to usefulness concerning an area that has intrigued them (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). Furthermore, the information in itself has to be regarded as fun (Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2017). In addition, Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2017) mention that satisfaction can further be linked to the intention concerning the concepts of both recommending an account on Instagram, as well as following one. Another finding presented by Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2017) were they claim that usefulness that can be classified as perceived, displayed a clear effect in regard to intentions concerning recommendations.

The study conducted by Voorveld et al. (2018) presents an analysis where the various platforms firstly are presented through information of experience connected to each platform. This is followed by, making sense of how the different platforms scored regarding various dimensions presented within the study (Voorveld et al. 2018). Some of the findings regarding the platform of Instagram, displayed firstly a high number in the connection to for instance the word pastime, the platform was many times utilized as a way to make use of periods of time that where emptier in their sense (Voorveld et al. 2018). Furthermore, Instagram was utilized as a way to stay in toned with what is going on and being able to do so at a fast pace (Voorveld et al. 2018). Instagram further presented high levels within the researcher's study for utilization of entertaining purposes, as well as interaction of a social kind (Voorveld et al. 2018). Another result that surfaced from the study was the aspect of that advertising was observed by the participants in the study, nonetheless there was overall a very low degree of negativity towards the topic (Voorveld et al. 2018). Moreover, advertising that was deemed as enabling the users to stay in the loop, resulted into the advertising in itself being viewed in a greater positive light, this was displayed for all the platforms within the study (Voorveld et al. 2018). Even so, the authors also displayed that in the surroundings where Instagram was channelled to aggravate the concept of cheerfulness, advertising that emerged within the context had the ability to take away the cheerfulness, which brought forth assessments of higher levels of negativity (Voorveld et al. 2018). Nonetheless, the result presented by the authors was that the advertising that did occur on the platform Instagram, was perceived if being assessed in regard to the other mediums, as higher concerning the entertainment aspect

of it (Voorveld et al. 2018). Lastly, the authors mention that concerning advertising that takes place on social media, the context is more important than the content in question (Voorveld et al. 2018). The above demonstrates that there is more than one usage to be found on social media platforms.

Connecting social media to the aspect of engagement, Muñoz and Towner (2017) mention that Instagram has a much higher engagement rate when being compared to other social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, which are due to the various functions of the platform. The reason for this was that the social networking application Instagram allows its users to engage with each other by posting, commenting, liking and sharing the content (Muñoz & Towner, 2017). As further explained by Zolkepli, Hasno and Mukhiar (2015) there are more than one type of way to define engagement that takes place in the context of a social network in an online environment. Furthermore, the notion of engagement can be considered related in a close way to the movement that relates to having experiences that are interactive in their sense as well as, the aspects of enabling value co-creation (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015). Moreover, the authors state that engagement can be regarded as an antecedents concerning what consequences are found as for instance affect as well as, response and usage (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015). In addition, what can be regarded as the basic insight that concerns engagement is derived from the means in which Instagram was experienced (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015). Lastly, the authors state that to be able to comprehend engagement, involves being able to figure out in what manner the consumers experiences related to the linkage concerning the platform (Zolkepli, Hasno & Mukhiar, 2015). As in line with this, we place emphasis on the fact that engagement can be linked to Instagram.

## 2.3 Influencers and Marketing

In the last years, new kinds of celebrities within the digital world and online platforms have gained popularity such as Bloggers, Vloggers and Instafamous people, also known as influencers or celebrity endorsers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). According to De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) influencers within the context of social media, are presented in the study as individuals who have managed the craft of obtaining other individuals to follow that person in question, within the sphere of a social network (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Additionally, according to De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) influencers are interpreted by their followers as credible, which translate to credible eWOM for brands that uses this marketing tool, due to the fact that the influencers create the content around the product to fit their daily narratives they post on Instagram. Another perspective offered by Chae (2018) is mentioned by the word micro-celebrity that includes a newness to the word celebrity, the shape in itself entails the aspect of self-presentation, in relevance to taking place on social media. Chae (2018) continues by mentioning that the individuals that can be placed within that category are many times referred to as influencers on social media.

Furthermore, these individuals include a vast scope from for instance models, people with wealth that are prone to have affection for brands of a luxury sense, to people active within fitness, or actresses with a low degree of fame (Chae, 2018).

According to Sudha and Sheena (2017) influencers that are considered as social ones have a vast amount of influence concerning what a consumer decides to purchase. They further, have the ability of being able to exuberate influence, that later can turn out into becoming trends (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). In addition, this is due to the aspects of various consumers imitating them, due to the aspect of being under the impression that the influencers are knowledgeable concerning a certain type of product (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). In addition, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) mention the rise of influencers is also because they are perceived as more easily accessible and authentic than other traditional celebrities and their influence will continue to grow in the future. Moreover, De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) mention that during the last years, social media influencers have been discovered as an effective marketing tool for brands to promote their products due to their viral growth potentials online and their wide-reaching impacts. Moreover, brands start utilizing influencers more and move away from the traditional marketing tools (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Influencers are considered to create a positive eWOM, add value to a product or a brand and are more credible than traditional and well-known celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Even so, as mentioned by Chae (2018) influencers that have amounted to success put forward what the influencers followers desired to obtain but do not possess at the moment. Chae (2018) continues by mentioning that through what the influencer choses to post often concerns elements such as displaying a life of luxury with vacations in alluring places, as well as presenting meals taking place in restaurants that are notable and products belonging to fashion that is high-end. According to Chae (2018) assessing what these influencers posts are met with entails for instance from parts of the individuals, a display of satisfaction for another person. For others it can stir up negative feelings regarding the people that can be referred to as common and are unable to reach a life lived in luxury (Chae, 2018). Lastly, Chae (2018) claims that the feeling of envy is the negative one, that can be linked in connection to the context. This shows the significance of influencers in connection to marketing.

### 2.3.1 Various Theoretical Classifications of an Influencer

An influencer can be perceived as existing with many different definitions that portray what they could potentially mean. Further, several types of influencers seems to exist with dissimilar names. When examining various definitions of influential individuals in a social media context, several different theoretical classifications of the concept was found such as influencer, digital influencer, social influencer, micro-celebrity, opinion leader and lastly, celebrity endorser. The definitions of the different names vary between distinctive authors, while some people have adopted the same definitions. That scenario which presented itself seemed to create a complexity in comprehending what the concept in fact entailed. This formed the basis for an attempt to create an overview of the matter concerning defining the

word influencer in a social media context. Some of the different definitions found in the literature in regards to influential individuals are presented and compared in *Table 2.1 Definitions of Influencers* below.

*Table 2-1 Definition of Influencers*

<b>Author, year, page, type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) pp.801</b> , Influencer	“Influencers are content creators who accumulated a solid base of followers. Through blogging, vlogging or creating short-form content (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat) they provide their followers an insight into their personal, everyday lives, their experiences and opinions.”
<b>Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014) pp.592</b> , Digital influencer	“Companies considering the Internet as a strategic communication tool have also recognized the power of influential members of this platform, i.e. bloggers... These digital influencers have an effect on the members of particular communities gathered around similar interests.”
<b>Sudha and Sheena (2017) pp.16-17</b> , Influencer	“Influence can come from a wide range of places. Any person, group, brand, or place could potentially be an influencer.”
Traditional influencer	“These are the individuals that conventional PR agencies and celebrity figures in a specific area of subject expertise.”
Emerging (digital) influencer	“These poster-tech bloggers and emerging digital influencers have recognized a large audience following and drive thought leadership in a specific space.”
Influencers by connection	“People who have hundreds of Facebook friends and Twitter followers.”
Influencers by topic/ Opinion leader	“People who are opinion leaders for the certain topics.”
Social influencer	“...social influencers, like journalists, celebrities, bloggers, magazines and brand advocates, are regarded as the most powerful force in the fashion marketplace.”
<b>Langner, Hennigs and Wiedmann (2013) pp. 31-35</b> Social influencer	“...social influencers that act as role models – and even as leaders – inside social groups and that affect group (and buying) behaviour... Not everyone who claims to be a leader and source of advice in a social group can be a convincing social influencer.”
<b>Chae (2018) pp.246</b> , Micro-celebrity/ Social Media Influencers / Influencers	“Referred to as micro-celebrity, this new type of celebrity involves the practice of self-presentation on social media... People with micro-celebrity on social media are often called social media influencers (influencers). Influencers can range from would-be or unknown actresses and models, fitness trainers, friends of celebrities, and wealthy people who love luxury brands to pretty high school girls.”
<b>Araujo, Neijens and Vliegenhart (2017) pp.498</b> , Influencer/ Opinion leader	“Influencers or opinion leaders have generally been described in diffusion literature as people who are able to influence others because of their central position in communication networks.”
<b>Carr and Hayes (2014) pp.40</b> , Opinion leader	“These influential others, regarded as credible and informed individuals regarding specific topics, are referred to as opinion leaders and pass along opinions and information to influence members to their social groups.”
<b>Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) pp.2</b> , Celebrity endorser, Digital celebrity	“Celebrity endorsement is currently prevalent in online platforms... In recent years there has been a rise in new types of digital celebrity groups such as bloggers, vloggers and ‘Instafamous’ personalities.”
<b>Jain and Roy (2015) pp.267</b> and <b>Jin and Phua (2014) pp.182</b> , Celebrity endorser	McCracken (1989, pp.310) defined a celebrity endorser as: “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement.”
<b>Xu, Li, Peng, Hsia, Huang and Wu (2017) pp.248</b> , Endorsers/ Celebrity endorser	“Endorsers such as notable successful people reputable early adopters and fashion leaders... Celebrity endorsement enhances the perceived quality of the item... Therefore, people would like to imitate the endorsers’ behaviors, since they are believed to have better information and make correct decisions than the general public.”



The first definition in *Table 2.1* is an influencer and several authors' touches upon it and defines the concept (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017; Sudha & Sheena, 2017; Chae, 2018; Araujo, Neijens & Vliegenhart, 2017). According to De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) influencers are sharing their everyday lives through for example blogging or content created for Instagram to their mass of followers. Moreover, Chae (2018) mentions micro-celebrities or influencers and he describes it as self-presentation on social media. Further Chae (2018) explains that an influencer can be both known celebrities or models and unknown wealthy people or just a high school girl. This is in line with Sudha and Sheena (2017) who explain in their study that anyone could potentially become an influencer, as long as they influence someone. Lastly, this is also mentioned by Araujo, Neijens and Vliegenhart (2017) who connects influencers to opinion leaders and state that they are individuals who can influence others due to their stand within the network. The above four different definitions found in the literature on influencers are not differentiating to a large extent. The first one by De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) are more specific and the other three are more general, however they do not contradict each other. Lastly, an interesting aspect is the fact that Chae (2018) mentions a micro-celebrity as an influencer, while Araujo, Neijens and Vliegenhart (2017) mention an opinion leader as an influencer. Through the above a wide range of definitions and a complexity in understanding the concept of an influencer has been presented.

The second definition is an extension of the influencer concept and is called digital influencers, which both Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014) and Sudha and Sheena (2017) define as for example Bloggers. According to Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014) digital influencers are influential individuals who have an impact on members of a specific community on the Internet. This is in line with what the authors that defined influencers mentioned, except that they do not mention Internet in their definitions. However, all definitions are in an online context. Additionally, Sudha and Sheena (2017) also highlight digital influencers to have influence in a specific space, which is in line with what Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014) mention. Sudha and Sheena (2017) further mention that digital or emerging influencer has a large audience of followers. The third type of influencer is called social influencer and is defined in *Table 2.1* by Sudha and Sheena (2017) and Langner, Hennigs and Wiedmann (2013). The definitions of a social influencer highlighted by the scholars do not point towards the same direction. According to Sudha and Sheena (2017) a social influencer are regarded as an effective force within fashion and can be considered to be for instance a journalist, Blogger, or a celebrity. On the contrary, Langner, Hennigs and Wiedmann (2013) mention a social influencer as a role model or a leader within a social group that influence the behaviors of the group. Throughout this literature review we argue this shows the confusion of the concept influencer.

Another type of influential individuals that we have touched upon earlier is called opinion leaders and is defined by several authors (Sudha & Sheena, 2017; Araujo, Neijens & Vliegenhart, 2017; Carr & Hayes, 2014). One thing that all three authors and their definitions have in common is the fact that they all mention opinion leaders as informed people in regard to a certain topic. Moreover, Araujo, Neijens and Vliegenhart (2017) highlight opinion

leaders or so called influencers as individuals who influence others within networks. This is in line with Carr and Hayes (2014) who define opinion leaders as influential members who pass on information and opinions in their social groups. A key word mentioned by Carr and Hayes (2014) is that opinion leaders are regarded as credible individuals.

Lastly, another type of endorsers that was found in the literature in the online context was celebrity endorsers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Jain & Roy, 2015; Jin & Phua, 2014; Xu et al. 2017). According to Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) they mention celebrity endorsers as dominating on online platforms and the new types of celebrities in recent years are Bloggers, Vloggers and individuals known from Instagram called Instafamous. Moreover, Jain and Roy (2015), Jin and Phua (2014) have adopted the same definition of a celebrity endorser in their study by McCracken (1989). According to McCracken (1989) a celebrity endorser is someone who likes being recognized and appears with marketing campaigns. Another definition mentioned by Xu et al. (2017) where they define endorsers as popular individuals such as fashion leaders. They further describe celebrity endorsers as someone with better information than others and therefore people are influenced by the behavior of the endorser (Xu et al. 2017). The three different definitions found in the literature on celebrity endorser are not contradicting each other, however they highlight different perspectives. To sum up, the different definitions and types of influencers presented in *Table 2.1* vary, and there are some differences that make it confusing and complex to understand what an influencer refers to in a social media context. Especially when the same type of influencer contradict each other's definitions such as a social influencer. Through this literature review, we have discovered that the most commonly found definition in qualitative research articles within an online context was referred to as a celebrity endorser.

### 2.3.2 Influencer Marketing

According to Sudha and Sheena (2017) influencer marketing can be labelled as a way to be able to identify, as well as activate various persons that hold a certain influence above for instance a certain part of a target crowd. Furthermore, this is done to be a member of a brands campaign that is targeting boosting sales, level of reach, as well as engagement (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Moreover, a continuation of the concept word of mouth marketing is where the element of influencer marketing can be placed (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). In addition, the actions can be considered directed towards a context that is social in its sense, as well as conducted in a more skilful manner (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). According to Evans et al. (2017) influencer marketing is a rapidly growing area due to the fact that it is more cost efficient and cheaper than less traditional advertising, but also because it reaches a more specific and targeted audience that is more engaged than for example the audience of a television commercial. Sudha and Sheena (2017) continue by mentioning that influencer marketing can be regarded as a manner of constructing relationships that has the possibility of aiding brands that are in the process of generating a greater scope, concerning their audiences. Furthermore, this implies shifting those audiences into becoming customers that are loyal, this

is done through aspects related to authenticity, as well as trust (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). This displays the various ways influencer marketing can be applied.

Continuing, Sudha and Sheena (2017) state that influencer marketing often seems to have two categories, these consist of influencer marketing that can be labelled as earned. This means that the arrangement is not paid for, or that there was a prior relation where promotion is conducted to boost the influencers' personal acceleration (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). The other one is influencer marketing that is paid for (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Such as, communicating messages of testimonial essence, sponsorships or through an aspect of advertising that can be labelled by the authors as pre-roll (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). This is also stated by Evans et al. (2017) who mention two different types of eWOM, unpaid and paid. Unpaid eWOM is linked to organic advertising by consumers who voluntarily share their experiences connected to a specific brand or a product (Evans et al. 2017). Moreover, paid eWOM is more popular in today's online marketing and are amplified by influencers (Evans et al. 2017). In addition like stated before, influencer marketing is a type of eWOM, a challenge is the fit between the influencer, its followers and the brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). However, if the match is a perfect fit, the influencers' followers perceive them as more unbiased compared to traditional advertising and they have large influential power towards their followers, which can be seen as potential consumers to the brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). This is in line with what Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) mention as an essential marketing objective for a marketer to consider is the fit between the brand and the influencer to be able to reach the right audience. Hence, the above illustrates the different types of influencer marketing that exists.

Moreover, Sudha and Sheena (2017) claim that influencer marketing is utilized by marketers in various ways, for instance it can concern enabling credibility within a market. Moreover, it can concern the establishment of constructing a conversation in a sense that is social regarding the brand in question (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Further, the reasons could be to accelerate sales both on a physical in-store aspect, as well as an online one (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). An advantage of influencer marketing is that it can lead to lower resistance towards the information by the consumers or followers because influencers have higher authenticity than traditional marketing (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). On Instagram, consumers usually perceive influencer marketing between an influencer and a brand in various ways, it can for example be a sponsored post, a product placement in pictures, or a story with an event or an experience with the brand (Evans et al. 2017).

Previous studies on social media marketing and Instagram have shown the significance for the individuals to have an interest in a specific celebrity in order to later be influenced by the endorsements of that celebrity (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Furthermore, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) emphasize that positive feedback from followers in relation to those large profiles on Instagram are created by positive perceptions an individual has towards the specific celebrity endorser. The positive feedback is further linked to enhancing an individual's self-esteem and higher confidence online leads to an increase in impulse purchasing behavior (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Moreover, lower confidence correlates

with being easily influenced on social media by influencers and especially women are more likely to be influenced online than men (Djarfarova & Rushworth, 2017). Another perspective connected to the topic is provided by Chen (2018) who mentions in his study that the young consumers did not care if the influencers did collaborations with brands, if they only could identify with the celebrity endorser or so called influencer on Instagram. However, the participants of Chen (2018) study were suspicious towards purchasing products that the endorser recommended. They further believed endorsers on Instagram to be more about building awareness for the brand and gaining attention, rather than changing consumers' behavior and purchase intention (Chen, 2018). The above shows how influencer marketing can have an impact on consumers purchase decisions.

Even so, De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) argue that influencers with more followers' results in a larger reach of the marketing information by the brand. In addition, previous studies in the field of influencer marketing have showed positive links between consumers' attitude towards the influencer and the brand, meaning that a collaboration between a positively valued influencer can result in a affirmative attitude towards the product and brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). A connection with the above can be drawn to what the findings in Chen's (2018) study displays, his participants were young consumers and they were more believable to trust information related to marketing for a product if it were from people they considered their friends. Furthermore, the participants of Chen's (2018) study also mentioned that they pay more attention to a post or a recommendation from a friend than from companies' promotions. In addition, the participants mentioned that they did not have a negative perception of celebrity endorsements, specifically not if they identify themselves with the specific endorser (Chen, 2018). Lastly, an interesting finding from Chen's (2018) study was that young consumers are accepting more marketing material that looks less traditional and not obvious marketing campaigns. This displays the various perceptions consumers can have of influencers.

Furthermore, provided by Djarfarova and Rushworth (2017) who in their study investigated consumers on Instagram and how influencers influence young female users in regards to credibility, buying intention and social identification. Moreover, Djarfarova and Rushworth (2017) mention that consumers perceive influencers credible and knowledgeable of the endorsed product than if the brand would post the same picture. Even so, an interesting finding from Djarfarova and Rushworth's (2017) study was the fact that young individuals seemed to trust influencers with lower number of followers over the famous celebrities, due to the fact that they seemed more trustworthy and credible. The reason for this was because these types of influencers often promoted more affordable products and therefore had a larger impact on consumers' purchasing decisions (Djarfarova and Rushworth, 2017). This shows the linkage between consumers and their understanding of influencer and how that can vary.

## 2.4 Consumers in Connection with Influencers and Influencer Marketing

As mentioned by Youn and Jin (2017) who conducted a study to explore social influence in the context of the social media site called Pinterest, in connection to nostalgia and consumers' judgment. Social influence in regard to social network sites is mentioned by activities that the users on the specific platform engage with, such as following someone, liking or commenting the content (Youn & Jin, 2017). The study further identifies three different types to analyse social influence and they are through self-generated information such as the individuals' profile, other-generated information such as comments, or system-generated information like the number of friends or followers (Youn & Jin, 2017). According to Youn and Jin's (2017) findings in their study showed that the social influence theory can be applied to social media marketing and can be linked to credibility, engagement and buying behaviour. They further state that a celebrity endorser with more followers is recognized as more credible, which is linked to their definition of system-generated information (Youn & Jin, 2017). Moreover, online acceptance or a positive social influence shows connectedness from others of like mind and illustrates building relationship on social media sites with both groups and brands (Youn & Jin, 2017). This displays that there is a linkage between social influence and networks of a social sense.

Another study connected to a similar notion, is explained by Johnstone and Lindh (2018) concerning the possible role an influencer can play concerning condensing the aspects of the gap between intention and purchase. This was conducted through two ways where the first one concerns understanding the relation between the parameters of firstly age, secondly the significance of the influencer and lastly the awareness connected to sustainability (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). The second part of the study concerned understanding the beliefs that were linked to influencers as a way to distribute communication derived from the perspective of a generation that is perceived as younger, in the study referred to as millennials (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). Continuing, Johnstone and Lindh (2018) mention that all the participants in the study where on social media following various individuals, the authors therefore mention that due to that aspect some type concerning influence, was taking place on a daily basis, within the sphere no restraints on geographic placement is occurring. Johnstone and Lindh (2018) continue by mentioning that with that, participants on a broad scale had various reasons for following these individuals, such as humour, respect as well as style. Moreover, through the study the authors Johnstone and Lindh (2018) explain that for instance what can be found behind the aspect of believing in these influencers, was one of the main concepts within marketing, namely trust. Furthermore, the participants in the study highlighted honesty, as well as benevolence in the aspect of being significant to them (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). Moreover, the authors Johnstone and Lindh (2018) discovered that the level to which influencers could have an impact on alternations depended upon spatial, as well as temporal

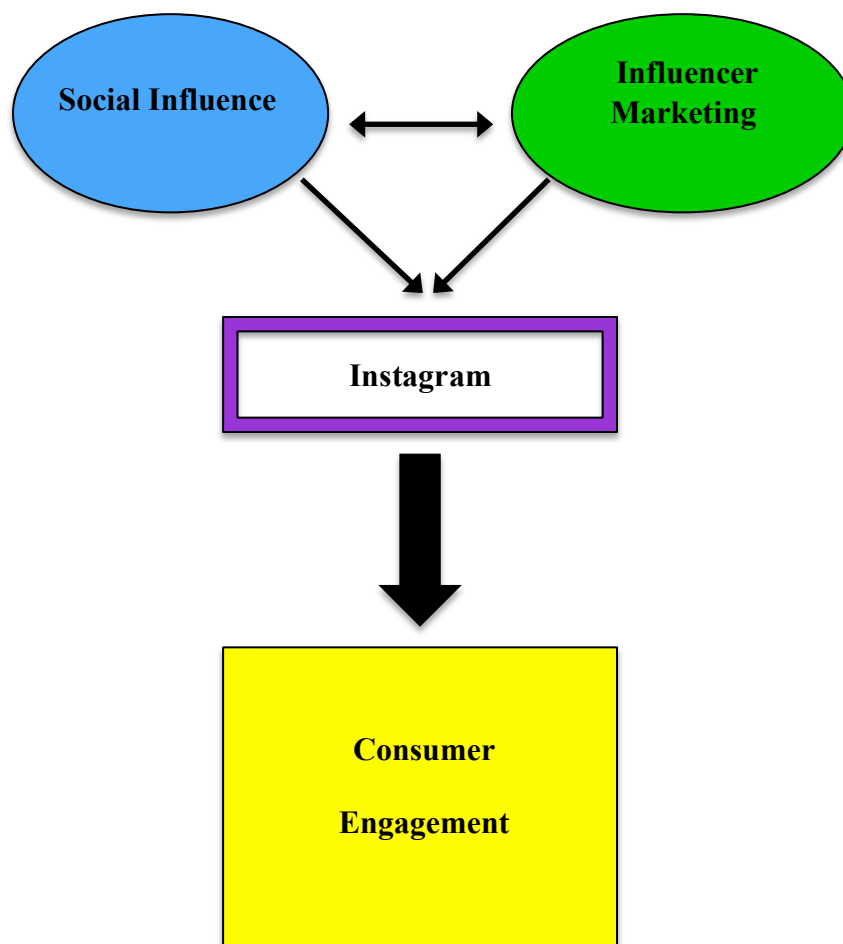
elevations, displayed as connected to the extent a person on an individual bases acted as acceptor.

Continuing on the aspects of influencers connected to an online context, the study as previously mentioned by Djarfarova and Rushworth (2017) examined for instance how influencers online affect an individuals buying behavior. Their findings showed that influencers and eWOM is linked to an individuals' purchase intention and buying behavior and a majority of the participants in the study had bought items from a influencer on Instagram that they trusted (Djarfarova & Rushworth, 2017). Another interesting finding by Djarfarova and Rushworth (2017) is the fact that even though consumers on Instagram are aware of the fact that posts by influencers and celebrities are paid sponsorships it does not affect their purchase intentions. This is because the consumers believe that the influencers are unlikely to endorse products they do not like or stand behind (Djarfarova & Rushworth, 2017). The study displayed that smaller influencers are mentioned to have a higher impact on influencing the consumers, particularly in regards to purchase intentions, due to the fact that they seem to recommend more affordable products (Djarfarova & Rushworth, 2017). With that said, the study by Chen (2018) showed that celebrity endorsements and influencers on Instagram has the ability to build awareness and attention for the brand, however, a link between the influencer and purchase intentions was not found in the authors study.

Lastly, another perspective is mentioned in the study by Pornsakulvanich (2017) who examined the social networking sites Facebook, Instagram and Line in Thailand, with the purpose to investigate and find connections between different personal traits, social influence and individuals' perceptions towards using the three platforms. According to Pornsakulvanich (2017) the consumer behaviour towards the social networking sites, the usage and social influence are important dimensions to be able to understand the social support in an online context. Moreover, Pornsakulvanich (2017) mentions online social support as something positive individuals that are using social networking sites both give and receive from others, aiming at behaviours such as higher self-esteem and emotional support. The findings in the study by Pornsakulvanich (2017) displayed that behaviour and different traits had both positive and negative impacts on online satisfaction as well as social influence. Another finding in the study was the fact that happiness and positive feelings in the participants' private life could encourage the individuals to give positive social online support (Pornsakulvanich, 2017). This further demonstrates how social influences can affect consumer behaviour such as one's feelings and willingness to support others online on social networking sites (Pornsakulvanich, 2017). Hence, the above shows that the aspects of social influence can be connected to the behaviour of consumers.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

Through the presented literature review we have further constructed a conceptual model, in order to present how the main concepts in the dissertation are linked to each other. They further portray the background of the presented research questions that are formed around the concepts. As previously mentioned this study concerns an understanding from a consumer perspective of how they engage on the social media platform Instagram. This is further connected and viewed from the perspectives including social influence, as well as influencer marketing. The model presented is an illustration of how the concepts are linked to each other, see *Figure 2.1 – Own Model of Conceptual Framework*. Social influence and influencer marketing are viewed solely, as well as in connection with each other. Therefore, they are presented in the circles alone with arrows pointed firstly on their own to the platform Instagram and secondly in connection with each other that further points to the platform Instagram. From the platform the perspective is later turned to aspects of consumer engagement that is illustrated by the square figure at the bottom of the model. The conceptual framework acts as a visual illustration of the chain of thought behind the linkage of the previously presented literature.



*Figure 2-1 Own Model of Conceptual Framework*

## 3 Methodology

*This chapter will account for the methodological choices, as well as the aspect of why they were chosen and made use of. The chapter consists of research philosophy, research approach, research design, data collection and data analysis. The chapter ends with discussing the quality of the study and ethical considerations of this study.*

### 3.1 Research Philosophy

This section explains the authors' view of research philosophy and how they affect this study. The section starts with an ontological reflection and continues with an epistemological one and a reflection upon choices of theory, the section ends with explaining the authors' preknowledge.

#### 3.1.1 Ontological Reflection

According to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) ontology is the philosophical belief about the nature of life and reality, which is divided into four different ontologies called realism, internal realism, relativism and nominalism. Depending on if you are a natural science or a social researcher you usually draw from different ontologies (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). The natural researcher often observes the phenomenon examined for the study while the social researcher is more concerned about individuals and their behaviours (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). Since this study is about gaining an understanding of consumers and how they engage on Instagram, we argue that this study belongs to the social science, due to the fact that our study concerns an interest in individuals' behaviours.

According to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) social sciences mostly draw from internal realism, relativism or nominalism. The ontology called realism belongs more to the natural sciences and they believe that there is a single truth and that fact exists and can be discovered (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). The next ontology is a part of realism and is called internal realism, which is also about a single truth, however it is not easily understood and facts are concrete but accessed indirect (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). Furthermore, relativism suggests that there are many truths in the world to be found and they are created by people, which imply that facts are dependent on the view and



perspective of the observer (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). The last ontology presented by Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) is nominalism and it suggests that the reality and facts are created by individuals through for example their language. Further, nominalists believe that there is no truth out there and that people try to create different truths (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). With that said, the nature of this study can be considered to belong to the relativist position, due to the fact that this research rests upon the perspective provided by consumers. Further, these consumers have different views and provide different ideas connected to the topic, which makes it suitable for this study.

### 3.1.2 Epistemological Reflection

Epistemology concerns the aspects of understanding the character that surrounds knowledge, as well as various means of asking questions regarding the two worlds that consists of the social one and the physical one (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, this means that epistemology can be considered the learning concerning theories that relate to knowledge (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In connection to this, the authors mention this as in what way do we actually know, that we have actually learned (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Two various contradictory perspectives exist concerning the ways in which the research should be performed, they are social constructionism and positivism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

As mentioned by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) the main belief found behind positivism can be referred to as considering that the world being referred to as social, lives externally. In addition, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) explain that the various properties can be subject to being measured by using manners that are conducted objectively, instead of being understood from a more subjective aspect. This subjective aspect includes reflecting, feeling, as well as the aspect of intuition (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). What can be regarded as the hearth of social constructionism starts firstly with the notion of reality that is societal, being decided upon on the grounds of individuals instead of being decided upon impartially, as well as on outside determinants (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This means that a scientist within the social field, should aim for more than just harvesting information and meaning, or finding repetitiveness within behaviours that can be regarded as social ones (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The assignment should further include appreciating the dissimilar creations, as well as various meanings related to what individuals connects and decides to put as belonging to their experiences (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The centre of attention is to be connected to the aspects of thoughts and feelings, that individuals both in a singular form and a collective one has, further their manners of communicating in between one another, should be highlighted (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

As stated by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) there exist as presented a connection between the aspect of ontology in correspondence with epistemology. This further implies that the aspects of positivism are suitable for an ontology that concerns realist, whilst the

aspect of constructionism can instead be regarded as suitable for nominalism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Continuing, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) mention that the aspect of positivism, as well as constructionism is further connected to the spheres concerning ontologies referred to as, internal realist and the ontology labelled as relativism. The aspects concerning strong positivism, as well as the one called strong constructionism can instead be found to have linkages with the ontology referred to as realist and the one labelled as nominalist (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Concerning the element of strong positivist there is the assumption that the real world is manifested outside of what the person observing is able to observe, the task for the individual investigating is therefore to understand what theories or laws could clarify the reality in this aspect (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The degree of positivist that is not as strong instead is acceptant of the notion that reality in itself is unable to be accessed in a direct manner, this means that there is an urge for research conducted to figure out what can be considered the nature connected to the reality in an indirect way (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Assessing the standpoint from a constructionist point of view the viewpoint instead entails regarding the beliefs that there are more than one reality, which further means that the one investigating needs to harvest for instance more than one perspective (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Lastly, the element referred to as strong constructionist has the outlook that by believing that no earlier reality exists, the assignment for the researcher is therefore to comprehend the ways in which individuals create structures that will aid them in understanding, as well as influencing the surrounding that exists amongst them (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Given the nature of our topic, we argue that this study belongs to social constructionism, due to the fact that this study concerns consumer engagement on Instagram. The study therefore concerns feelings, as well as various views connected to various experiences and therefore we argue that this study falls within the scope of social constructionism.

### 3.1.3 Preknowledge

In this section the relevant preknowledge of the authors will be briefly explained. As mentioned by Patton (1990) a researcher connected to a hermeneutic context, utilizes methods of qualitative nature to be able to build a framework and a meaning concerning other individual's decision on what they are doing. Furthermore, Patton (1990) mentions that information regarding the ones conducting the research, together with the ones being researched is a topic one should have information about. This is done so that the investigation of qualitative nature can be placed in a suitable context connected to hermeneutics (Patton, 1990). The theory belonging to hermeneutics is of the standpoint that one is only able to take in the understandings connected to the significance of a topic derived from a specific perspective, praxis connected to a topic, a particular viewpoint, as well as a framework of a situation (Patton, 1990). This applies in the scenarios of reporting concerning the viewpoints held by individuals within a study, as well as reporting what has been detected on the researchers own account (Patton, 1990).

Both of the researchers have a great interest for the topics presented within the study. This interest is applied in both an academic setting, as well as considered highly relevant for their up and coming professional lives, which is what drove the authors to write a thesis on the topic. Due to the interests that the authors have, they have previously touched upon the topic in various manners. In line with this, one of the authors in this study has greater preknowledge than the other one, due to the fact that she has developed an Instagram account into a hobby where the author publishes sponsored posts and paid collaborations with brands. Moreover, the author states that she has a practical understanding of Instagram and influencer marketing from the influencers- and consumer perspective but not to a large extent within the academic field. Moreover, within the academic field, she has written an academic blog post on influencer marketing from a manager perspective. Both of the authors have previously touched upon the topic of Instagram in a smaller case study targeted at understanding advertising on Instagram for a specific brand. Even so, the second author does not have as great of practical preknowledge as the first one, as the understanding in that regard steams from only privately having an account on Instagram. In this study, the authors are aware of their preknowledge in regards to various interference that could occur. Moreover, we further argue that this preknowledge could make it possible to see interesting nuances from the study that could otherwise have been missed and therefore function as an asset to this study.

#### 3.1.4 Reflection upon Choices of Theory

Due to the nature of our topic the presented literature has derived from more than one stream, which included for instance consumer journals, psychology, management, social media and technology ones. This resulted into the inclusion of articles from such journals within this thesis. As explained by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) they mention that some references are more applicable and trustworthy within a literature review than others. For instance, they mention that articles from peer-reviewed journals are more reliable than an academic website (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015). With a firm basis in the above, the inclusions of our articles in the literature review are all peer-reviewed. Moreover, due to the topic revolving around the social media platform Instagram it was necessary to include other perspectives, to present a comprehensive overview to be able to conduct this study. The inclusion of social influence as part of the theoretical foundation further opened up for the inclusion of perspectives derived from a more psychological aspect. Furthermore, the emphasis within this study on the consumer angle led us into including journals within the field of consumer research, as it was necessary to be able to explain the consumer perspective. With that said, the greatest part of the included articles steams from journals within the field of marketing. Due to the lack of qualitative articles within marketing, the majority of the included articles are conducted in a quantitative manner.

## 3.2 Research Design

As mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) what can be regarded as a research design can be referred to as a blueprint. This plan includes the design behind the idea of how to gather, as well as measure and analyse information that has been harvested in order to find an answer for the proposed questions within the research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The authors, Sekaran and Bougie (2016) further explain that the decision behind the strategy connected to the research will rest upon various aspects, such as what is the objective of the study, as well as the proposed research questions. Furthermore, it will also be connected to the perspective that the researchers have regarding the idea behind what constitutes as good research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Moreover, considerations have to be thought upon concerning the ways of collecting data, such as the included sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Lastly, the aspects of in what way various parameters will be measured, as well as in what manner they are to be subject to analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The proposed and constructed research design will be explained in the following section, where the various decisions behind the choices are subject to being explained and argued for its relevance.

### 3.2.1 Research Approach

The research approach shows and guides the researcher on how to include and make use of theory in the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) there are two main approaches, which are the deductive- and the inductive approach. However, the approaches can be mixed and is then called the abductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The deductive research approach first develops theories around a subject to later go out and test the theories with hypothesis conducted from existing literature (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). On the contrary, an inductive approach starts with collecting data and later tries to build theory with the analysis of the material (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) it is often an advantage to combine the two approaches, called the abductive approach, due to the fact that you can change between the literature and theory to the collected data in the research process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

This thesis has utilized an abductive approach. This study is about gaining an understanding of how consumers engage on Instagram, this is viewed through the previously presented theoretical framework. The data was collected through interviews where the questions in the interview guide were built from theory in the literature review and was then analysed by the use of the theories. We therefore argue that the abductive approach was suitable for our study since this research is about developing a richer understanding from the consumer perspective from existing literature but also from the collected data, which might lead to new and interesting insights and adjustments to the theory. Hence, one can argue that it is necessary to go back and forth. Furthermore, as in line with the abductive approach we have supplemented

our literature with additional sources found to be well in line, with what was found within the empirical material in order to approve the analysis.

### 3.2.2 Exploratory

As mentioned by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) a study that is exploratory is a highly important tool to being able to understand for instance, the occurrence of various things to be able to provide new awareness. It is also important when trying to figure out a phenomenon in a new way, as well as being able to put forward questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The study of exploratory character is suitable at the highest level when there is a need for further looking into a problem, this is additionally relevant when there is a level of uncertainty in regard to how the character of that problem manifest itself (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). One of the most essential upsides of conducting an exploratory study, concerns the matter of the study being adaptable in its nature, as well as flexible in regard to alternations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The authors explain that one who takes on a study of exploratory essence, is needed to be acceptable of alternating the path of the study, as an outcome of having information that is new turn up (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This further also applies to the scenario of having new awareness emerge from the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

In addition, the authors highlight that concerning the aspect of flexibility within an exploratory study, at the starting point there is a broad spectrum of focus, that later on turns into a smaller one as in line with the research advancing (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). By using a study of an exploratory type, interviews that are in-depth in their sense are perceived as a good fit, in order to be able to comprehend what is in fact taking place (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, the authors, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) explain that this also applies to the circumstance of understanding new awareness connected to the study. In addition to this the utilization of interviews in a semi-structured format may be adapted towards a study of exploratory essence (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Through what has been stated above, we argue that conducting a study of exploratory sense was suitable for a study that needed to be flexible due to our topic and the circumstances related to that topic. We furthermore, argue that utilizing semi-structured interviews was a good fit connected to the exploratory study and was therefore applied.

### 3.2.3 Sampling Strategy and Selection of Participants

This study utilized a non-probability sample to be able to select relevant participants. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) a non-probability sample is a strategy that selects the participants from the population, some individuals are more probable to be chosen than others. In comparison, a probability sample uses a random sampling strategy where the whole population have a chance of getting selected for the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this

research the authors used their own social network to find candidates that would give the study relevant information. Moreover, the authors had an idea of what type of participants were needed to be able to answer the research questions, as well as some criteria for the participants to be able to be selected. This is in accordance with what Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) call a purposive sampling, which has the possibility of selecting individuals upon whether they meet the criteria the researcher has set out for the study. Moreover, the researcher often has a set idea of what individuals are needed for the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The sampling method used in this thesis is linked to what is called a purposive sample. We started from our own social network and asked our friends to further invite their friends, to be able to participate in our study if they met the criteria that were shaped.

As the focus of this research was to examine how young consumers engage on Instagram, the sample needed to be that of young consumers who had an account on Instagram. Another criterion to be a participant was that the individual was Swedish, young adult between 18-30 years old and female. We wanted the participants to be Swedish due to the possibility of a more similar viewpoint on the matters brought up. Moreover, the authors only chose to examine young adults because several studies explained that the social networking platform Instagram is heavily used by young adults in the age of 18-30 years old (Chen, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworh, 2017; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). In addition, Instagram influences the younger generation (Ting et al. 2015; Muñoz & Towner, 2017). Furthermore, the authors limited the participants to only include females because several studies mentioned that there are more females using instagram than men (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Muñoz & Towner, 2017; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). In connection to this, females were also chosen due to the fact that studies mentioned them as more likely to be influenced and impulsive to purchase products than men (Djarfarova & Rushworth, 2017; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Lastly, the authors wanted the participants to have an Instagram account and follow at least one influencer, this was to make sure that they would provide us with more detailed answers concerning the topic.

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) who mention that when there are no more interesting and relevant data to be found when conducting and adding more interviews, it is called that the study has reached saturation. The authors, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), mention saturation as a useful method to use when considering how much data to collect. In this study, the sampling size was ten participants. In line with what has been mentioned, we argue that after the tenth interview we reached what is referred to as saturation. In the later conducted interviews the majority of what was mentioned most of the time had already been highlighted by earlier participants. We therefore argue that the later interviews did not to a high extent give a lot of new insights into the topic. Therefore the interviews did not continue after the tenth one. The participants of this study are summarized in *Table 3.1- Participants Profile*. The names in the table are not the actual names of the participants since this study has utilized pseudonyms to conceal the identities of the participants.

Table 3-1 Participants Profile

Name	Sex	Age	Residence	Occupation	Time
Sara	Female	22	Malmö	Student	2/5-2018
Laura	Female	22	Malmö	Student / part time employee	3/5-2018
Molly	Female	25	Malmö	Student	3/5-2018
Leah	Female	26	Malmö	Part time employee	4/5-2018
Isabelle	Female	25	Copenhagen	Full time employee	6/5-2018
Olivia	Female	23	Lund	Student	7/5-2018
Erica	Female	24	Lund	Student / part time employee	7/5-2018
Marie	Female	21	Malmö	Student / part time employee	8/5-2018
Alice	Female	24	Lund	Student / part time employee	9/5-2018
Julia	Female	25	Malmö	Student / part time employee	9/5-2018

### 3.2.4 Qualitative Method

This research has implemented a qualitative method to meet the research purpose and research questions. The aim of a qualitative research is to provide greater understanding, to gain insights and richer data of what is being studied and also to build theory, not to reach statistically valid conclusions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). As explained by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) a lot of authors emphasise that there is a clear line of difference relating to research that is quantitative from research that is qualitative. The authors explain that the significance of something does not always rely upon numbers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Something that entails more than one meaning or perhaps a concept that is more flexible in its nature reduces the possibility of quantifying the information in question that enables it to be done with the greatest possible meaning (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Data that is perceived as qualitative are in line with the concepts of such sort, the data is further regarded as inhabiting element of richness, as well as having an abundance related towards the possibilities of investigating a topic in a setting that can be perceived as real as it is available to be investigated within (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Through this, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) explain that a differentiation can be found amidst what is regarded as for instance smaller accounts of data that has been harvested in a quantitative way and data that is regarded as more thorough and deep, in its accounts and can be characterized as data harvested in a qualitative way. As in line with the above, this study seeks to provide a richer understanding and greater meaning to the topic of consumer engagement on Instagram. Therefore, the choice of conducting this study in a qualitative manner was a well-suited one.

Furthermore, as mentioned by Patton (1990) methods that are considered qualitative allow for an evaluator to be able to investigate various picked out matters by the aspects of both in detail, as well as in depth. In addition, Patton (1990) mentions that methods that are considered qualitative usually produce large amounts of accurate knowledge concerning a scope of cases or individuals that are much smaller in scale. Furthermore, this brings an

expansion regarding what is understood from for instance the situation or the case in question but decreases the level to which it can be generalized (Patton, 1990). Since this study is about gaining an understanding into situations with a greater depth, the choice of conducting a study through the usage of qualitative method further seemed appropriate.

### **3.2.4.1 Interviews**

As mentioned by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) more than one situation calls for the need to utilize research of qualitative nature such as interviews as the chosen methods for harvesting data. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) go on mentioning four various situations where this is specifically relevant, the first one relates to the purpose in regard to the research being conducted. In a situation where the aim is to gain information concerning a study that is exploratory in its sense, the usage in the design of interviews in a qualitative manner is relevant (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The same goes for studies that are more explanatory in their sense, this applies due to the aspect of including the casual relation that applies amidst variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The method is relevant regarding situations in need of comprehending the logic behind the decisions with taken by the ones included in the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This furthermore, applies in a context where the various opinions, as well as attitudes of the various participants in the study are in focus, when these scenarios apply the usage of qualitative interviews is relevant (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Through the above, we argue that the nature of our topic calls for the usage of interviews as a method, since the study wishes to understand what lies behind various decisions and viewpoints, this in our view can best be understood through asking questions.

The ambition behind conducting interviews consists of discovering what lies within someone's mind (Patton, 1990). Furthermore, the ability of being able to conduct interviews is derived from the aspects of being able to discover things that are otherwise unattainable through the means of just observing someone (Patton, 1990). In addition, the author mentions shortly that there are things we are unable to observe such as intentions, ideas and feelings (Patton, 1990). The author also mentions the aspect of being unable to observe things that have happened at an earlier stage such as behaviour (Patton, 1990). Regarding things such as the above questions needs to be asked (Patton, 1990). Being able to conduct interviews enables us to voyage towards someone else's viewpoint, this forms the goal of conducting interviews (Patton, 1990). The starting point for what is perceived as interviews of a qualitative nature is the belief regarding the essentialness of the perspectives provided by another person (Patton, 1990). The perspectives are expected to be that of meaning and being distinct, as well as specific (Patton, 1990). With what is stated above, we further argue that in order to comprehend the viewpoints, as well as the behaviour highlighted within this study there is an urge for having utilized a study of qualitative nature that included questions. We therefore finalize our argumentation for having chosen to conduct this study with the usage of questions in a qualitative manner.



### 3.3 Data Collection

As mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) what can be regarded as various ways of collecting data, is an aspect that is an essential part of the research design. Research conducted within the field of business has several methods that have gained popularity, such as interviews, surveys and observations (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The usage of interviews, as well as surveys and observations open up for possibilities of the investigator being able to extract a large scope of various types of information from human participants (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In the section below the included data within this study is presented and explained.

#### 3.3.1 Primary Data

As mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) the choice of what primary data to include entails for one thing the aspects of how to retrieve the information desired, the process is further interlinked towards the other portions belonging to the various parts of conducting the research. As further explained by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) information that is collected for an intended meaning, as well as on a first-hand basis, by a person conducting research can be considered primary data. This type of data can for instance consist of interviews and observations, as well as experimental tests and surveys (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Within this thesis the primary data that has been collected and made use of have consisted of ten interviews performed in a semi-structured manner. The interviews have been harvested for the intended goal of this thesis.

#### 3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

To be able to understand how young consumers engage on Instagram, interviews have been conducted to get a richer understanding of consumers and gain insights about how they perceive and view the topic. According to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) interviews are an interactive discourse and the interviewers collect clear answers from the questions asked, but can also let new topics emerge from follow-up questions. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) there are three main types of interviews, which are structured-, unstructured- and semi-structured interviews. The two latter, are widely applied in qualitative research and are sometimes called qualitative interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) semi-structured interviews are popular due to their flexibility and the fact that the interviewee has the opportunity to influence the structure of the interview. Semi-structured interviews are usually used to receive open answers around a topic as the interviewer has an interview guide with set questions, but the interview may not follow the exact order and the interviewee can reply very openly around each question (Bryman and

Bell, 2011). With the above mentioned, the chosen interview type that was made use of in this research was semi-structured interviews, to be able to collect detailed and nuanced answers from the participants. Moreover, this type of interview method was chosen over the other ones because we wanted to ask the same main questions to all participants, but at the same time let new questions arise from the participants' answers.

When conducting interviews, there are some things that need to be considered (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). The atmosphere where the interview is held can have an impact on the interviewees' answers, so for the collected data to be trustworthier, face-to-face interviews are preferred (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). This is also highlighted by Bryman and Bell (2011) where they mention face-to-face interviews as more reliable due to the fact that the interviewer build relationships and trust with the interviewee during the interview. Therefore, all the interviews in this study were performed face-to-face with the same structure to be able to present trustworthy data and for this study to be considered reliable. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) mention a possible negative effect of group interviews, as the participants may be distracted and affected by someone else's actions. In order to avoid this, the authors chose to interview one participant at a time. The location of the interviews differed, but they were all conducted in the south of Sweden and Denmark in the cities of Lund, Malmö and Copenhagen. This was done to make it more convenient for the participants to be able to take part in this study.

Moreover, according to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) the interviewers' role during the interview is to guide the discourse in the right way but also to find important information from the participant also called interviewee. Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2011) highlight the advantages of using multiple interviewers as one can steer the communication while the other one can take notes and interrupt with follow up questions at any time. In this study when conducting the interviews, one of the interviewers asked all the questions while the other one made sure that all the questions were asked, as well as being able to interfere and ask follow up questions. Moreover, the interviewers changed between the positions when conducting all interviews. Ten interviews were accomplished with a median length of 20 minutes. To have the empirical material easily accessible to be able to properly interpret the data, all interviews were audio-recorded on several devices. This was done to make sure that we had access to all the data at any time.

### 3.3.3 Interview Guide

To conduct the semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was made use of, see *Appendix A- Interview guide*. According to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) it is important to keep in mind that the interview guide does not include theoretical concepts as the questions can come off as leading or biased. Therefore, the questions in the interview guide were designed from the theoretical framework and contained questions that touched upon each section of our conceptual framework. However, the questions did not cover the theoretical concepts, instead they contained more open questions. Moreover, it also contained questions

regarding what an influencer is to be able to build on theory and develop new insights concerning how an influencer is perceived from a consumer perspective.

In the interview guide, there is a mix between open-ended and closed questions. As mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2011) this is done to retain concrete answers from the participants, but also to gain in-depth answers and new insights to the topic. In addition, the interview guide contained three sections with opening questions, questions connected to each theme in our study and lastly, an ending question. We argue that we followed a logical order as the questions started with the general and continued to more specific ones. The interview guide commenced with some questions that concerned background information about the participants such as age, occupation and the section finalized with open-ended questions about the general overview and purpose of Instagram and influencers. In addition, the opening questions were more general to get the participants to be comfortable with the topic and familiar with the interviewers and the situation. After the opening section, the following part was divided into different categories concerning the literature review to be able to answer the research questions. Most of the questions in this part were open-ended questions with follow up questions to ensure that the participants gave detailed answers, which was done in order to gather new insights and an understanding of the consumer perspective from the participants. The questions concentrated on the consumer perspective with CCT, social influence, consumers and social media, influencers and marketing. Moreover, a part about consumers in connection with influencers and influencer marketing was covered. Lastly, an ending question finalized the interview and gave the participants time to add to the interview if they wanted to.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) they emphasize the importance to make use of pilot interviews and try the interview guide so there are no misunderstandings of the questions, but also for the interviewers to get a feeling for the collected data. Therefore, two pilot interviews were conducted to be able to see if the questions were understandable, easy to answer and if the participants would give the study useful information to analyse. After the two pilot interviews were conducted, the interview guide was revised and the formulation of some questions was changed to give the study applicable data. Further, the revised interview guide was the one that was intended to be utilized in our following ten interviews, with some follow up questions and small modifications made to each interview depending on the participant being interviewed. The pilot interviews were conducted in English since this was our intended language to conduct the interviews in, due to limited time the authors felt it was more convenient to collect the data in English. However, during the first interview the interviewee mentioned that she was not comfortable answering in English and explained that the interview would retrieve richer answers if she were able to answer in Swedish, her mother tongue. On the spot, the authors and the interviewee decided that the questions would be asked in English and the interviewee would then answer the questions in Swedish. After the first interview, the authors translated the interview guide into Swedish to have all the interviews in the same language when later transcribing and analysing the data.

During the interviews, the interviewees were not interrupted and they spoke freely around each question to encourage new findings to the study. However, the interviewers sometimes encouraged the participants to provide a more detailed explanation with follow up questions and were therefore making use of the laddering up technique. According to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) laddering up means asking why questions to explain and reveal the individuals thoughts. Moreover, Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) explain that open questions are great for qualitative research due to the fact that it avoids asking leading questions and becoming biased. However, it does not always give the best information, and to sharpen up some answers in the interview, probing is a useful technique (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). In addition, Bryman and Bell (2011) explain the technique of probing as asking direct questions to follow up the answer. To avoid being biased during the interview, we therefore used probes. This was done to easier interpret what they meant and to lead the interviewees when they seemed to speak around things that were off topic. These two techniques were put to use to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees' views and also to ensure we received relevant answers. Moreover, like previously mentioned, we asked the same main questions from the interview guide to all participants, as well as the follow up questions if the participants did not provide a detailed enough answer and sometimes we asked other follow up questions connected to the topic. Due to this, the length of the interviews varied. This could have also depended upon how talkative the interviewee was but also due to the fact that some participants did not answer all the follow up questions. However, we argue that all interviews were still interesting and provided us with relevant data.

### 3.3.4 Transcription

Like mentioned earlier, all interviews were audio-recorded and the data was transcribed into separate documents, which amounted to around 96 pages of data. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) in qualitative studies it is not only about what the interviewee says, but also how they mention it. An advantage with transcribing the data is that it gives the researchers the opportunity to go over the collected material several times to examine the data repeatedly to find new insights that might not be picked up during the interview (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, Bryman and Bell (2011) also highlight some disadvantages with audio-recorded interviews, such as the fact that the interviewee might not give the same interesting answers when they know they are being recorded. In this study the authors attempted to avoid this bias by opening the interview with some general and open questions to make the interviewee feel more comfortable speaking and answering questions connected to the interview.

There are several ways to transcribe an interview and one approach that is mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2011) when transcribing the collected material from an interview, is that it is essential to transcribe exactly what the audio-recorded material says, meaning that the researcher should transcribe word by word. This is done to easily be able to analyse the data and to pick direct quotes from the participant to incorporate in the analysis part, which is done to gain a better understanding (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In this research, we divided the

interviews and transcribed the material word by word to be sure that we did not miss any important material when later analysing the material. In addition, the authors listened to the recordings again to make sure that nothing was missed out on. Moreover, the language in the interviews was, as mentioned previously in Swedish. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) they highlight some problems with translating the recorded material, such as the fact that some words might not translate into English very well and due to cultural differences. On the contrary, Bryman and Bell (2011) mention that the participants might have difficulties to express themselves as greatly in another language other than their mother tongue. Due to what has previously been mentioned when interviewing, the authors transcribed the collected data into Swedish and only translated important quotes used in the analysis. This was done to eliminate the interviewers from missing out on any important statements made by the participants, which could have been unnoticed if the authors were to translate everything to English. The authors argue that they gained greater insights by having conducted the interviews in Swedish. By transcribing word by word we argue that we avoided misunderstandings and eliminated biases for the findings and analysis.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

As mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) the target for an analysis that is conducted in a qualitative manner, is directed towards enabling valid conclusions derived from a great volume that can be found within the data that has been gathered. The data in itself can be derived from many different types of both primary, as well as potentially secondary origins as for instance interviews (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In the following section, the approach for the analysis of the gathered data is presented, as well as explained in what manner it was adjusted and utilized within this study. As explained by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) prior to commencing an analysis regarding data that is qualitative, the investigator conducting the research should firstly draw up, as well as organize the data that has been collected. The data should be done so in a manner that will aid the series of actions related to the analytic method (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, the information gathered should be given a label done so in a systematic manner, in order to facilitate the manner of harvesting various fragments (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The aspect of being able to assess the data towards the analysis can be considered the premier move when it comes to the analysis (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Here the aim is to be able to get a more holistic view of what has been gathered, as well as being able to spot fragments that could present an interest, here the aspect of transcriptions plays a part (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). To be able to analyse our data after having transcribed in totality, we have both individually and together read the transcripts. The reason why we read the transcript separately was so that new and interesting insights were able to appear. This was later followed by a discussion to be able to form some type of initial overview to what themes could be interesting to look further into.

The most commonly used way to take on an analysis of qualitative manner entails the aspect of framing the information gathered (Easterby–Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This is done with the aim of establishing a repetitive way to be able to decrease the level of complexity and to be able to form a step-by-step way of developing theories that is being regarded such as a phenomenon (Easterby–Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The manner in which this is conducted differs a great deal concerning the various approaches utilized (Easterby–Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). All the various approaches presented by the authors frames what has been harvested using alternate ways, as well as entails more than one way of being able to explore, as well as interpreting and lastly comparing the information gathered (Easterby–Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). A parallel to this, is also mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) who mentions the aspect of decreasing the amount of data gathered by utilizing what is referred to as coding, as well as categorization. The main goal with utilizing coding can be found in the aspect of being able to make conclusions from the information that has been gathered, that in their sense are meaningful (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Lastly, the authors highlight that the aspects of codes, can be considered a label, for which they are placed towards parts within the text, these parts are then subject to being formed into various categories at a later state (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). To be able to decrease and comprehend the large amount of data that surfaced, we have color-coded various parts applied to the analysis. This was for instance done regarding how the construction of the new tentative definition was shaped. We started the formation of the definition by translating the quotes from Swedish to English. Through the translation various abundance word were removed from the citations. Furthermore, due to language and grammatical reasons, we had to make small alterations to the structures of the sentences, in order for the quotes to make sense in English. This was followed, by color-coding various keywords under several categories that we argue entailed the same thing. Afterwards the keywords were compared in order to summarize what were the main characteristic mentioned that could make up the foundations of forming a new tentative definition.

### 3.4.1 Content Analysis

According to Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) one method of analysing the data is called content analysis, which is about tracing and drawing repetitive conclusions from data collected in a qualitative manner that has been framed from theory and concepts. The data is further examined to find meanings, as well as relationships of pre-existing theories and concepts to be able to answer the research questions (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). Content analysis can be applied in a quantitative manner when testing hypothesis, as well as in qualitative one when building towards theory and clarification around a topic (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). Given what has been stated above, we argue that content analysis was suitable for the nature of this study since it is conducted in a qualitative manner. The study further has a purpose of gathering patterns that are repetitive, as well as in line with the presented theoretical framework. This further made content analysis a good option to make use of, as a way to analyse the collected data within this study. In addition,

Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) claim that content analysis is suitable when one is seeking to find content, as well as concepts that by chance are connected between each other. Furthermore, Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe (2015) explain that content analysis can be linked to the aspect of subjectiveness. Therefore, we argue that content analysis suited the nature of this study and was therefore chosen as a suitable method for analysing the data.

The process of a content analysis is forthright and the first step in the process is to decide upon some criteria to select the relevant data, these criteria are established upon the research questions (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). The next step in the process is to select the material from the criteria and then to analyze the data with the perspective of what concepts and aspects that appear important and relevant to answer the questions of the study (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). These concepts and aspects can be derived from both the research question and existing theories, but can also be identified from the selected data (Easterby-Smith, Jackson & Thorpe, 2015). Relying upon the foundation of content analysis as the chosen method for analysing the data, we formed four various themes that surfaced through the empirical material. When going through the data, we have contemplated the interview guide and the connection it had to our research questions. Keeping this in mind, we constructed these various themes to be able to mirror not only what is in line with the research questions but also to be able to bring forth interesting new insights under suitable themes. When analysing the data, we have done so in waves to be able to present an interesting and comprehensive overview that still includes but does not display repetitive findings that have emerged in prior sections. We therefore argue that, our analysis has been thoroughly conducted considering the vast amount of empirical material that surfaced through our transcript.

### 3.5 Trustworthiness

As in line with Guba and Lincoln there is an urge for putting forward various ideas of in what way qualitative research should be assessed from a quality perspective, this to be able to suggest the usage of other options than validity and reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Within the concept of trustworthiness there are four various parameters that consists of credibility and transferability, these are followed by dependability and lastly confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). They serve as counterparts to criteria's that belong to the quantitative sphere where internal validity and external validity are in focus, as well as reliability and lastly objectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The first one consists of credibility, where a parallel can be drawn to internal validity (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1982) explain that the aspect of credibility is most excellently described, via the term isomorphism, it can also be described by verisimilitude that occurs amidst the information that has been gathered for the study and aligned towards the actual phenomenon, that represents what were to be studied. Guba and

Lincoln (1982) continue, by explaining that naturalist have to work with more than one reality, that can be found within various individuals minds, here lies an opportunity to put forward questions that aim to target whether the reality of the individuals in question have been accurately pictured within the study. The bottom line question for a naturalist emerges as concerning the following is the analysis conducted, as well as the formulations and lastly, the interpretations made within the study credible in their sense (Guba & Lincoln 1982). As in line with the above, we argue that we have conducted our study in as thorough manner as we could possibly do. For instance we did not interfere to a great extent during the interviews but instead tried to stay close to the main questions in the interview guide. Furthermore, the adaption of changing the language the interviews were performed in, has affected the study in the sense of translating the various quotes that have been used within this thesis. Even so, we have tried to be as transparent as possible and staying as close as possible to the answers provided by the interviewees.

As further mentioned by Guba and Lincoln (1982) the second one concerns transferability, where a line can be drawn towards external validity instead and further connecting to the aspect of generalizability. The aspects emerge as it is evident that the information that has been harvested, has been gathered from a sample that can be compared, in the matter of generalizing towards the population, concerning that the sample wishes to demonstrate (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In addition, Guba and Lincoln (1982) mention that if conditions in which the possibility presents itself, where characterizations of such can be classified as thick, from both a receiving end as well as, a sending one there lies an opportunity to assess the level to which transferability is attainable. The ability to attain such a scenario is presents if thick explanations have been supplemented (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Since this study has made use of a non-probability sample and a purposeful sampling strategy, where we do not use a random selection of the population. We therefore, cannot generalize our findings due to the fact that we have chosen criteria, as well as having an idea regarding what participants were to be chosen. Nonetheless, there are still rich explanations to be retrieved within the study.

The third one consists of dependability, where a line can be drawn to reliability, that is referred to as being able to replicate an investigation through an alternate location, or place of time but through circumstances that are identical (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Should differences emerge through an investigation it would be referred to as a state of unreliability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Bryman and Bell (2011) explain that in order to secure that this does not occur the element of auditing should be included, this furthermore includes the aspect of holding on to various parts of the research voyage, such as who took part in the study and how were they selected. In addition, the elements of how the problem was constructed, notes taken in the field, transcripts concerning conducted interviews and in what manner is the analysis constructed should be held on to (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The ones acting as the audit in the situation should be a peer, the peer will then deem to what level accurate procedures are subject to have been included (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As in line with what has been mentioned earlier, the nature of this study relies upon inputs from various individuals and it is therefore harder to replicate the study since various individuals present various viewpoints. With that said, we decided to do our transcription in totality and translate our presented quotes



to stay as close as possible to the original answers given in the interviews. We argue that this supports the claim for being able to conduct a similar study, since it displays in a more transparent way what answers were retrieved and incorporated into the analysis.

The fourth one concerns the aspect of confirmability where a parallel can be drawn to objectivity instead (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). As mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2011) the notion of amounting to objectivity in totality, is not possible within the context of research in the field of business. Nonetheless, the investigator can account for having conducted the study by the notion of taking a role connected to good faith (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This furthermore, entails withstanding from including personal principles, as well as inclinations connected to the theory to implicate the way the study was performed, as well as the findings that have been harvested from the study itself (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As in line with that, we argue that by staying close to our interview guide, as well as being transparent in how we have kept our data supports the claim for displaying a transparent manner, as well as a sign of good faith. Moreover, we have considered the aspects of keeping the study within the later presented ethical considerations, which we argue displays another sign of good faith that is in line with the aspect of confirmability.

### 3.6 Quality in Qualitative Studies

As explained by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) what can be perceived as the quality in relation to a qualitative study, basically relies upon the level to which researchers decide to approach what is to be investigated. Researchers that set out to perform their study in a manner that is to be perceived as transparent, as well as reflexive very seldom put forward research that is poorly conducted (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Moreover, the authors Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) mention that concerning what strategies were utilized regarding sampling, here the aspect of bias is to be regarded with a cautious eye. Here there should be an evaluation as to the level of inference one can make conclusions upon (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Keeping in mind what is stated above, we decided to transcribe the interviews in totality. This was done to be able to be as unbiased as possible and not exclude any data that might be relevant for the analysis and further conclusion of the study. We argue that this aspect, further heightens the level of transparency within this study, which we altogether argue produces a better quality of the study altogether.

Furthermore, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) explain that elements of having material taken out or subject to being disregarded in relation to the analysis can have a vast impact regarding the conclusions, as well as generalizations one can draw from the research. Moreover, there is the aspect of the consequences of the researcher (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, interviews most often take place within a short time span, amidst someone being interviewed and someone else conducting the interview (Easterby-

Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This further implies that there is little room for being able as an interviewer to evaluate the complete background concerning the one being interviewed, as well as what lies behind the various answers provided by the interviewee (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This further means that the ones being interviewed might for instance attempt to try and impress them (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Moreover Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) explain that research that is conducted in a qualitative manner that can be regarded as good is perceived to be thorough, as well as orderly performed. Analyses of thematic kind that can be perceived as reliant upon informal proofs, as well as lacking depth very seldom enables one's reasoning to progress (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As in line with what is stated above, we decided to support our analysis with direct citations derived from our transcripts, in order to further anchor our analysis in a transparent way. Furthermore, we are aware of the fact that all participants might not have fully understood all questions being asked, as well as having interpreted things in different ways. Even so, we argue that the retrieved data was still relevant and useful for the analysis concerning what this study is about. Moreover, due to the time constraints there was not enough time to take in account, as well as analyse the behaviour and interactions present during the interviews. To counter these shortcomings we have in the best way possible, put forward as much depth and richness derived from our data, as we were able to, in order to strengthen the quality of this study.

In addition, the authors Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) explain the topic of interpretations that are alternative, which serves as a good way to generating theory. These interpretations have the power to for instance be formed and undertaken by conducting the research in a reflexive manner, as well as critically assessing that the study brings forth (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). We not only wanted to present data that was meaningful and interesting but also the possibility of explaining new insights and interesting findings derived from the analysis. We have strived to do so in as thorough manner as possible but also as unbiased as possible.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

When conducting a study there are several ethical principles that are needed to take into consideration, for instance harm to participants and invasion of privacy (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) harm to participants concerns the researchers to not harm their respondents in any way, such as dealing with sensitive and personal information to treat the recorded interviews with confidentiality. In this research, we argue that the presented topic is not a sensitive one and therefore the questions asked to the participants were not harming nor do they touch upon sensitive information. Even so, as previously mentioned, we chose to keep the participants anonymous to make them feel more comfortable in answering all the questions, with as detailed information as possible. Before the interviews started the participants were told that they would be anonymous and that the

researchers were the only ones who would listen to the audio-recorded files, except maybe the supervisor and the examiner if needed. Further, instead of presenting their actual names the authors have chosen to adapt pseudonyms in the analysis and to present the participants in *Table 4.1* together with their background information. Moreover, invasion of privacy concerns privacy and that the researchers do not force the participants to answer questions that they find sensitive (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Instead Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that the interviewers should treat each participant individually and give the participants options to not answer specific questions. We argue that, we have never forced the participants to answer the questions. This study even changed the language for conducting the interviews when it was discovered that the first participant did not feel comfortable in giving her answers in English. Due to this, we argue that, this study cared about its participants and did not force anyone into doing something they were not comfortable with.

## 4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

*In this chapter the empirical findings of the collected material are presented and analysed in conjunction with pre existing theories from this studies theoretical framework. The themes that emerged from the empirical material have been summed up into four different sections and will be presented in this section. They are the following: consumers in the world of social media, the reasons behind the choices individuals make, scepticism towards the usage of social media and lastly, view of the participants of what an influencer is.*

To be able to portray how consumers engage on Instagram, we wanted firstly to present a general overview of their overall social media usage. All participants mentioned that they were using the social media platforms called Facebook and Instagram and a majority of the participants mentioned those two platforms as top of mind. Two other platforms mentioned by almost half of the participants, were LinkedIn and Snapchat. A minority of the participants also mentioned Youtube and Twitter. Lastly, one participant mentioned using Pinterest and Tumblr and another one, mentioned Tinder as social media platforms she was using. Furthermore, in general the participants had on average been using Instagram between six to seven years. Moreover, a majority of the participants estimated that they followed between five to thirty influencers on Instagram. Standing out in the context was for instance Laura who mentioned that she was currently following a maximum of ten influencers but had earlier, before she unfollowed influencers, followed around two hundred of them. Lastly, during the interviews the topic of having your Instagram account open or private surfaced and it was visible that roughly six participants brought up the topic themselves. Out of the six, two stated that their Instagram accounts were open. Three participants mentioned having their accounts private instead of open to anyone, another one mentioned sometimes having her account open and sometimes having it closed. Therefore there was an evident difference between the participants on the matter.

Through the interviews it was displayed that the participants differed in their views on how they perceived Instagram, social media in general, as well as advertising and influencers. There were both positive and negative views aired during the interviews. This for instance could potentially be related to the matter as brought up by one of the participants, Isabelle, were she for example mentioned that she works within social media. Through what has been presented concerning the surroundings, various themes have been constructed and formed. The interests detected have further layed the foundation for these themes, which are divided into four different ones that will be mentioned in the following sections.

## 4.1 Consumers in the World of Social Media

This theme concerns how consumers overall perceive, interact and engage within the world of social media, with a primary focus on the social media platform Instagram. It was visible within the empirical material that various reasons, such as for and in what manner one interacts within social media differs to some extent, even so there are various conducts that a majority seemed to agree on. This sparked an interest to understand and explain the reasons behind these various interviewees' attitudes and choices.

### 4.1.1 When in time you use Instagram

In order to present a picture of when Instagram was used by the participants we wanted to gain a better understanding of the moments in time when they in fact used the platform. We therefore present the following, a majority of the participants highlighted that they had a positive mindset towards the platform Instagram and an overall good impression. Around half of the participants mentioned the word fun in connection to their impression. Isabelle mentioned the following in the context *"simple, user friendly, inspirational"*. Furthermore, several of the participants explained that they like it because they are able to share pictures with friends and families on the platform, as well as being able to see what their friends are up to. An example of this was highlighted by Alice who states *"share your life in pictures, show what nice things you are doing"*. Continuing, a majority also mentioned the usage of Instagram for marketing purposes. Lastly, the wide perception of purposes that Instagram could provide can be summarized with what Julia pointed out as *"it is different one can really use it to what one self feels that one wants to do"*. The above is in line, with what is mentioned by Ting et al. (2015) as the fact that the platform Instagram has been displayed in a higher way for the construction of delivering communication, as well as marketing. In connection with what has been mentioned, one could argue that the above shows the wide spread of purposes found amongst consumers concerning the platform Instagram.

Regarding when consumers use Instagram in general and on average in a day the participants described various ways and reasons. Three participants, Sara, Julia and Erica mentioned using Instagram during the morning. In the context, Julia explained:

"tragically, it is among one of the first thing I check in the morning, you wake up lying in bed, checking if something has happened on the phone for roughly five minutes and then you get up and get ready"

This shows the significance for the participants for using the app early in the day. With that said, Isabelle had a contrasting viewpoint on using Instagram in the morning and therefore mentioned that:

“I try to avoid not going into it in the morning because I think you start the day better if you do not see a lot of content, so if it is a perfect day than I will look at it for the first time when I am on my way to work, on the bus”

This shows how the views can vary on when to use the platform. The above, regarding the usage of Instagram while travelling on the bus is further in line with what is mentioned by Molly, who also claimed to be using Instagram when she is waiting for the bus. This is also highlighted by Julia, who stated that she was using Instagram while commuting. A parallel to this is further in line with what was mentioned by Alice who stated that she used Instagram on occasions when she was waiting for something. This can be linked to what is mentioned by Voorveld et al. (2018) who mention in their study that, Instagram was many times served as means of being able to find something to do, for occasions where there was a need to fill the time with something. One could argue, that the empirical data is in line with the above since Instagram was utilized for moments where one was waiting for something, either the bus, commuting to something or just trying to fill out the time. One could therefore further claim that the collected data supports the above and displays when in time Instagram is used in some ways. One rich explanation of how Instagram is used by a consumer during a day can be found in what Erica explains as:

“so in an ordinary day maybe I can say that I am in there at least 10-15 times and it is right when you wake up and when you go to bed, when you set your alarm, when you watch a movie while talking on the phone, when you do other things, also because it does not require much brain capacity to scroll though, it feels like you can do it all the time”

Connected to this, using Instagram in the evening was also mentioned by Isabelle and Olivia. This again displayed the wide usage of when in time the social media platform Instagram was used. To summarize, a majority of the participants used Instagram frequently in their lives and on a daily basis. An interesting, contrasting view to this was mentioned by Leah who stated that she barely used Instagram at all, it could take place very occasionally perhaps only once per day, the reason why was due to the feeling of being stressed when using Instagram. Through the above mentioned, it is visible that Instagram is used very differently by various individuals, as well as when these individuals in fact used the social media platform. One could therefore understand and highlight that there are reasons to withstand from the platform.

#### 4.1.2 Where and in what manner you use it

In order to portray a more comprehensive picture of in what manner the interviewees explained Instagram the following can be highlighted. Out of the participants in the study, a majority mentioned that they used Instagram to be able to check up on what their friends where up to. In addition, they wanted to know what was going on in their friends' lives. Furthermore, the participants Sara, Laura and Isabelle mentioned that they also used the feature referred to as explore that exists on the application. In line with that, one could argue this displays a sense of curiosity amidst the participants. Continuing, Isabelle, Olivia and Julia

further explained that they also viewed content through the usage of a feature on the application referred to as Instagram stories. Concerning the matter of uploading pictures oneself, half of the participants mentioned doing so every now and then. For instance as mentioned by Sara who claimed to be posting what she does, selfies as well as, pictures of her apartment. Erica mentioned that she posts on special occasions whilst Alice posts when something fun happens. A contrast to this was found in what Isabelle explained as only presenting within a month two posts. Another view on the matter is what Leah mentioned as *“I want to maybe to post like a postcard once a year, I do not want to share my everyday”*. One could argue, that this shows the wide difference in how much the participants post on Instagram. Further, this could contribute to the interest in understanding the reasons behind these decisions, since they seemed to differ. Moreover, four of the participants explained that they liked various influencers on the platform, two other participants mentioned that they like influencers profiles if it was displayed through good content. Even though, it was a criteria to follow an influencer to be able to take part in this study it was noticed during the interviews that three of the participants only liked posts by their friends, which they brought up themselves during the interviews.

In that context, an interesting finding revealed itself during the interviews and it was the matter of mostly placing likes on your friends’ pictures. Erica and Isabelle mentioned the aspect of doing so to show support. Isabelle explained this by stating *“like and comment, yes I like friends’ pictures, I like people I likes pictures sometimes even though the picture is not very good, I think this is because you want to support”*. Furthermore, this was also mentioned by Molly who claimed that she liked posts on Instagram to be able to show appreciation. A linkage to this can be found in what is mentioned by Lee et al. (2015) that by making use of Instagram linked to social interaction there is a possibility of not only shaping but also maintaining social connections that one has with other people. Through the above, one can argue that what has been displayed in the empirical material is linked to what could be argued as caring for other people. This is further in line with what is mentioned by Pornsakulvanich (2017) were the author states that individuals are using social online support on social networking sites to positively give and receive with the purpose of emotional support, as well as higher self-esteem. In connection to this, one could argue that this illustrates that some consumers like their friends’ pictures to show support. Hence, one can further claim that, this is an interesting behaviour, which could present an interest to better understand for the future.

Concerning the matter of commenting derived from what the participants mentioned, no one would comment on an influencers or someone they did not know on Instagram. Instead, almost all the participants who mentioned it would comment their friends Instagram accounts. In addition to this, Molly and Erica further claimed that they place their friends in tags through various of posts. Through what is mentioned above, a parallel can be drawn to the topic of social influence. As stated by Kang and Schuett (2013) the aspect of social influence has the possibility to be regarded as in the manner of how much one person in the context, places faith regarding the matter of deciding to perform a particular behaviour. The behaviour acts as an outcome that rests upon the wants by other people in their neighboring (Kang & Schuett, 2013). One could argue that, through the empirical material it has been evident that

various manners of conducting oneself in the context of social media can rest upon what one believes others want. Therefore, one could further argue that social influence could play a part in how and why this is done. This argumentation can also be found to have connections with what Pornsakulvanich (2017) mentions as in what way the aspect of social influence has the possibility to influence the behaviours of consumers. This behaviour could concern for instance the eagerness of being able to show support, as well as the feelings one has on sites within a social networking context (Pornsakulvanich, 2017). Hence, one could further argue the essentialness of regarding how social influence in connection to how consumers conduct themselves online could be connected. Moreover, Muñoz and Towner (2017) emphasize that the users of Instagram are able to engage with one another on the application when they post, comment, like and share the posts. Therefore, one could conclude that the above shows the various levels of engagement consumers have when they use Instagram in different ways. The engagement differed and some consumers are more engaged where they post, comment and like much more than others. Further, one could conclude that this makes the aspect of engagement able to vary in its level between individuals.

#### 4.1.3 The reasons behind it

In addition, to the context of in what manner and when in time consumers used Instagram, one could argue it is interesting to further discuss the reasons behind the choices of why participants were doing certain things. This has also been highlighted within the empirical findings as previously presented. As in line with what this study is about, namely being able to display how consumers engage on Instagram. To be able to do so there is a need to gain a greater understanding of the consumers reasoning and attitudes behind their actions. Concerning why the participants were using Instagram, various answers were displayed for instance Marie, Erica and Julia mentioned the reason of boredom as why they used it. This can be linked to what Alice mentions as the reason being restlessness and in addition to this she stated *“most generally just because filling out boring time”*. Moreover, Sara claims the reason was to fill up time and Erica further added the reason of wanting something to do. Another reason only mentioned by Sara, was the fact that she was using Instagram for relaxation in situations such as during her lunch break. Further reasons to why they used it was for instance mentioned by Erica and Alice, as the reason of keeping oneself in tune with what is going on. Continuing, Sara explained that she does so for the reason of being intrigued by what is going on. Marie stated that by doing so, she was able to view what people were up to. This is further connected to the statement by Molly of utilizing the function of scrolling, to be able to take part in what other people are up to. In addition, to the context Isabelle connects this to obtaining a feeling of being in a community. A parallel to this can be drawn to what is explained by Voorveld et al. (2018) as the fact that Instagram displayed itself as a means of being able to stay in the loop regarding current events, as well as the possibility to connecting in this way at an accelerated tempo. As in line with the theory, the empirical material supported the statement of the participants using Instagram to stay



connected with what is going on in their surroundings. In addition to the above, Sara, Molly and Isabelle also mentioned using Instagram for inspirational purposes.

An interesting finding connected to the context presented itself by one participant, Isabelle, who mentioned that she made use of Instagram as a way of being able to conduct stalking, this was further mentioned in the relation to visiting various individuals accounts on Instagram. Another interesting finding was presented by Erica, Sara and Julia, who mention that they click themselves, one step further in the world of Instagram. Erica highlights this in regard to being bored and finding new accounts on the platform when clicking on to one account and then further on to another one. Sara further mentions this aspect when viewing who one specific profile in fact follows and then clicking oneself further along to another account that she finds interesting. In contrast to this, Julia was instead using the notion of being able to click yourself further in the following context:

“if they have posted some tasty lunch or something like that, then I can go in and check it out, so if they have tagged the place, then I will go into it and maybe look at some pictures that people have posted with the same tag”

This is in line with what Sheldon and Bryant (2016) explain as various aspects of motivation concerning how one decides to use Instagram. One of the parameters displayed within their study, concerned what can be labelled as the aspect of surveillance and the aspect of knowledge connected towards other individuals (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). The aspect of knowledge related to decisions of giving out likes, it could also concern tracking the post published by others (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). In connection to what is mentioned above, one can argue that the findings supports the theoretical framework regarding reasons related to both surveillance, as well as knowledge for using Instagram. In addition, the aspect of curiosity was highlighted as an added nuance to the reasons for being very active on the platform. The aspect of being active on Instagram can further be linked with the following. According to Zolkepli, Hasno and Mukhiar (2015) they mention engagement in connection to an online context as prior to the results that occur from things such as the response, usage and impact. As in line with this, one could conclude that both the aspect of clicking oneself further on Instagram, as well as being curious could be linked to being active and presenting a higher engagement rate on the social media platform.

Moreover, several other interesting findings that revealed themselves concerned for instance the aspect of entering the platform without placing much thought into why they actually did so. Olivia mentioned doing so on the grounds of a habitual behaviour and the fact that Instagram has become a daily routine. This is in line with what Alice explains as the matter of not placing much thought into the action of the usage of Instagram. Lastly, Laura highlights a similar perspective on the matter by mentioning doing so on the grounds of an automatic behaviour. Linked to this matter, Erica and Olivia also mentioned placing likes in the context of Instagram without much thought into it. Moreover, there was a mentioning of publishing posts on the grounds of displaying it to others. This was for instance explained by Sara who stated that she posts to be able to display what she does to other people. A connection to this was also found in what Laura mentioned as posting for family and friends.

In the context, an interesting mentioning of the topic related to narcissism emerged, the participant Isabelle stated:

“partly for myself, that I want to have the best pictures in an accessible way to be able to look back on, it is also to show others what I am doing, I do not know why one does it, it is some kind of sick narcissistic behavior, one wants to show what one does, show you have a good life, receiving likes and brag with having nice friends”

Sheldon and Bryant (2016) mention the aspect of a potential linkage between the utilization of Instagram connected to the aspect of narcissism in the context. Through the above one could argue that there could be a connection between what one does on social media with the aspect of narcissism. In addition, Isabelle also explained that after posting a picture she goes back and checks how many likes she has received. This can be linked to one type of social influence mentioned by Johnstone and Hooper (2016) that is called value expression influence and they further explain this as an individual's attitudes are guided by the ambition to conform due to the attitudes from the group. In line with what has been mentioned, one could draw the conclusion that, it is important to find out how much one resonates with others on Instagram. Further, one could argue the reason why could perhaps be related to self-esteem.

Moreover, viewing the aspects of why the participants commented on the platform. They mentioned for instance the following reasons. Sara commented on the grounds of staying in touch with friends she does not see on a regular basis. Isabelle mentioned the aspect of viewing the part of commenting on the grounds of actually having a relationship with these people and feeling that by commenting on someone, it could be seen as a way of communicating through the comments. We argue that a parallel to the above can be drawn to what is mentioned by Voorveld et al. (2018) who claim that within their study Instagram in itself, was connected to being used for aspirations of leisure. It was further used as a means of forming connections, that where more social in their sense (Voorveld et al. 2018). As in line with the above, one could argue that the aspect of communicating through the comments could be perceived as a way of keeping up social relations with others. One could further claim that the behavior visible through the comments serves as an example of such behaviour. Through the above one could further draw a parallel that is in line with the aspects of brand communities. Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) mention that a brand community can be rearranged as a community that is not concentrated to one geographical location, as well as a community focusing on emotional- and social relations between the so called members. One could argue that the platform of Instagram can in this context be seen as an illustration of a community, due to the fact that you can stay in touch with friends that are not on the same geographical location as you are, as well as having social relations with one another through commenting on each others posts. Moreover, as explained by Mitchell and Imrie (2011) the notion of taking an active role inside an atmosphere that is found in a tribe, has the ability to be displayed by the means of in the context expressing the self-identity belonging to someone. Mitchell and Imrie (2011) further state that within these tribes consumers that are placed within them, share similar standpoints of beliefs concerning moral aspects. In addition, they share the same way of thinking as well as having similar standpoints related to choices and

consumption (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). In line with this and through the empirical material, it has further been visible and highlighted by the participants that they uphold some form of communication between each other, through the feature of using the comments on Instagram. As described in the literature review concerning the matter of tribes one could draw a parallel towards the manner of further relating it to behavior. Since the commenting only took place towards people that the participants knew and almost never to an unknown person on the platform, one could argue that their behaviour could therefore be seen as similar to the behaviour found within tribes but in the context of Instagram. One could therefore argue that through the empirical material there could be a displayed behaviour that relates and resembles that performed within tribes.

In contrast to the matter of instead choosing to comment, Laura, Isabelle, Erica and Julia gave their viewpoints on why they were not commenting on posts from influencers and people they did not know. Their answers differentiated and for instance Julia mentioned she did not comment on people she did not know because it felt a bit strange. In connection to this, Julia explained that if she comments, she wants the comment to be retrieved by the receiver, which she does not feel that someone with many followers will do. Another view on the topic is mentioned by both Isabelle and Erica where they explain that they do not comment on people they do not know, due to the fact that they do not want to be perceived as a fan of that influencer or of an Instagram account. Connected to the matter, Erica stated *"I know why I do not comment on influencers and that is because I think it might seem stiff, thus that you are such a real fangirl and just wow what good looking you are"*. Here lies an argument that could be in line with what Kozinets (2001) explains regarding the differences of a follower and a fan, where it is explained that a fan is more engaged around a fandom group, while the follower is more of an audience to that group. In addition, fans as consumers are more committed and loyal towards the fandom group than regular consumers (Kozinets, 2001). With support in the above stated, one could argue that an interesting finding that emerged from the empirical material, was the fact that you want to stay up to date of what is happening on your Instagram feed related to influencers. However, you do not want to comment on people you do not know, because you do not want to be perceived by your own community as a fan. Through the empirical data it has been detected that there are links that have displayed behaviours that could be related to CCT, as well as links to the aspects of communities and tribes. Through the above, one could therefore argue that this illustrates and supports our claim for including theories in the literature review from more than one type of research stream. Thus, this was needed to be able to gain a greater understanding of consumers' engagement on Instagram.

Lastly, an interesting finding that emerged was the usage of the feature on the application referred to as Instagram stories, which was mentioned by Julia, Olivia and Isabelle. In addition, Julia highlighted the fact that she also liked to post her stories, but she further mentioned that she thinks it is a bit sad that this feature on Instagram offers the opportunity to see who has viewed your story. Further, Julia mentioned this feature as something people use to receive affirmation from others. Isabelle explains her view on stories as *"it feels more genuine, images may be a bit more staged I think"*. In relation to this and the interest from the

participants concerning their feelings about the feature, one could argue the relevance of looking into the matter further. One could therefore argue, this is an interesting finding that emerged from the empirical material since the future seemed to be widely used by more than one participant. Moreover, to date there are to the best of our knowledge no pre-existing theories on the topic of Instagram stories, within the context of business and marketing.

## 4.2 The Reasons Behind the Choices Individuals Make

This theme concerns the aspects of the topic of social influence and how it relates to the viewpoints of the participants concerning how it further relates to their engagement. The topic is highlighted from being viewed through both the aspects of influence and advice. There is further a connection towards the matters of inspiration and advice taking place both generally, as well as in the context of social media. Through the empirical material both similarities and differences have emerged. Continuing, reasons behind the viewpoints were further brought up. As a general overview, it was visible that a majority viewed the topic of inspiration as being derived from both a general context, as well as one taking place on social media. Concerning the matter of advice, a majority brought up connections to this and various reasons why. This section starts off with displaying inspiration, followed by advice. Furthermore, the section will continue with the part explaining influencers in relation to consumers. The section will finalize with the topic of viewpoints on socially accepted behaviours.

### 4.2.1 Inspiration

Through the empirical material, it was displayed that all participants found inspiration within social media. Furthermore, seven participants explained finding inspiration both within social media, as well as generally in life. Common meaning as to why concerning the matter of it generally in life, was for one thing finding it within the context of friends and family. This was mentioned by for instance Laura, Molly, Isabelle, Olivia, Erica and lastly Julia. One reason as to why is what Laura states:

“my big brother who is my role model, he is very very driven person and have also kept up with or keeping up with IT like me, so for me it will be a very big source of inspiration, because he can share thoughts and ideas”

Another reason as to why, was mentioned by Isabelle concerning best friends, her mom is her best one. In addition, concerning the aspect of wisdom she finds her mom to be one of the wisest. Moreover, Julia mentioned friends, parents and people further ahead of herself such as her teacher to inspire her. In line with this, she stated “*on different things in one's life, you have different people who inspire you*”. As in line with the above, regarding the matter of inspiration generally in life, it was visible that the common denominator as to where the

inspiration could be found was amongst friends and family. Continuing, viewing the matter of inspiration found both generally in life, as well as in an context that was as previously mentioned, taking place within social media. Some of the reasons as to in what way, as well as the reasons behind it linked to social media were described as the following. Out of the seven previously mentioned participants, six of them mentioned influencers in relation to inspiration on social media. Laura, Leah, Isabelle and Julia had a positive view on the matter, while Olivia and Erica did not have any specific influencer that inspired them. One example as the reasons behind finding inspiration, meaningful could be found in what Leah emphasized, as feeling inspired by influencers that touch upon important subjects such as for instance mental illness. Furthermore, Isabelle explained her view on what she regards inspiration as *“inspiration for me is partly shallow like clothes, but then it is also more this business self improvement”*. Another perspective connected to the context concerns what was explained by Erica as:

“trips, gems that people have found that they then post, it is sort of not secret in any photo book at home anymore, but now you can see, devils that vineyard in Italy, looks real nice, had never found it myself”

Three interviewees only mentioned finding inspiration within the context of social media this was mentioned by Sara, Marie and Alice. Sara for instance mentioned she found inspiration within interior, while Marie and Alice mentioned inspiration in regards to clothes and styles. Marie further mentioned that she uses social media to find inspiration for travel destinations.

A parallel from the aspects of finding inspiration from social media can be drawn to what is mentioned by the following. Kang and Schuett (2013) state that to the extent social media displayed usage, could rely on the aspect of decisions regarding how it was used. As in line with the above, one could argue that being able to find inspiration for things such as traveling destinations could act as a way to finding use for social media platforms. Moreover, according to Deutsch and Gerard (1955) they mention one type of social influence as normative social influence. It is further explained as the influence of one's aspiration to conform positive assumptions of others (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In addition, Xu et al. (2017) draw upon the classification of social influence from Deutsch and Gerard and mention normative social influence in the online context as one can be influenced from important people in one's life such as family or friends. Moreover, one can also be influenced by different types of endorsers such as celebrities or fashion leaders (Xu et al. 2017). To summarize through what has been mentioned regarding inspiration, one can find a linkage between the empirical material and what has been mentioned in the presented literature review. With that said, inspiration can be found to be derived from various people such as family members, social media and influencers.

### 4.2.2 Advice

Through the empirical material the aspect of where advice in life is located, as well as for what reason similarities, as well as some differences emerged from the data. This also applied in the context of why these various reasons existed. Within the context, Molly placed emphasis on the separation between advice from inspiration as *“advice is something your are looking for”*. Firstly, a majority of the participants stated that they all found advice derived from either their friends and or their family members generally in life. Olivia, Erica and Marie constituted three of the majority of the participants who highlighted that they most of the time found advice from friends and family, due to the fact that they feel like they are the ones that know you the best and can therefore give the best advice. Erica explained *“advice is often someone who is very personal and then you want the people who give advice to know you and know how one is and what one can take on”*. Moreover, Sara, Molly and Alice highlighted that in the matter of advice, whom you ask it off depends on what kind of advice one is searching for. For instance, Alice mentioned that she uses Google to find superficial advice and concerning more in depth advice she has a conversation with her friends.

Moreover, the aspect of seeking a discussion with someone else relating to the matter of advice was brought up by Molly, Alice and Julia. Molly explained that she desires a discussion with someone that could be outside of the surrounding, which would enable perspectives on the matter. Alice mentions in connection to this that she craves some form of dialogue concerning things that she worries about. Julia mentions in connection to this that she desires the environment of shifting ideas in between herself and someone else. Even so she states *“then it always ends with that you go for your own gut feeling in the end, but you just want to check like this, yes it is alright”*. As in line with the above explained, parallels can be drawn to what has been mentioned in the literature reviews such as the following. In what is explained by Kelman (1958) related to the mentioning of the phrase compliance, the author states that a person, who decides to be acceptant in regards to influence, does so on the grounds of being eager in receiving an answer from another person within their clustre. This answer in itself is aimed for being that of an encouraging one (Kelman, 1958). Furthermore, Kelman (1958) explains in connection to that, relating to the notion of behaviour that is referred to as induced, that it occurs on the grounds of the person in question expecting either rewards or perhaps approval. With the basis in that, connections can be found within the empirical material provided by the participants as being in line with wanting approval. Another parallel can be drawn towards the contribution by the following.

Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) mention a type of social influence as a normative one and explained it as adapting to an individual's reasoning. One grasp acceptance, as well as influences from oneself attitudes and to get these confirmed can in fact lead to a heighten self-esteem, need satisfaction and self-approval (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). With the above said, a linkage can be found in what the empirical material displayed in the views from Julia and the presented literature review. Hence, one could argue that the reason for Julia to ask friends and family for advice, even though she in the end goes for her gut feeling, rests upon the fact that she wants to get their opinion and some kind of approval on the matter. Lastly,

the above can be further linked to the frameworks presented in conjunction as having a linkage. According to Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) the normative type of influence from Deutsch and Gerard's classification of social influence can be linked to the process referred to as compliance mentioned by Kelman. These two social influences can be combined and is further connected to awards that are exterior (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Through this one can argue, that the empirical material connected with the presented theoretical framework is not only supported individually but can also be found to be supported in conjunction with each other. This is displayed by being connected through the aspects of wanting approval by someone as displayed in the empirical data. One can therefore argue that, awards that are found to be outside of oneself could be linked to wanting approval from someone other than oneself. Further this means that one can conclude that the notion of social influence seemed to be connected to how the participants mentioned that they behaved.

Two of the participants, namely Molly and Leah explained reading books to find advice. Moreover, Leah mentioned that she also searched for advice on the social media platform called Youtube and through listening to podcasts for instance to get motivated or gaining knowledge concerning a subject she wants advice about. In line with this, Isabelle claimed she finds advice on the social media platforms called Youtube and Pinterest. In regard to Pinterest she mentions *"you can be quite general and then the platform solves a flow, I think it is very simple"*. A linkage to this can be found in what is displayed in the following statement. As explained by Youn and Jin (2017) who mention the aspect of acceptance within an online environment, as well as mentioning the notion of social influence that in itself is uttered in a positive sense, as displaying a further linkage towards other people that share a similar mindset. Furthermore, as well as portraying the aspect of forming connections that take place within an environment belonging to sites within the sphere of social media (Youn & Jin, 2017). On these sites not only groups are included but also brands (Youn & Jin, 2017). Through what has been mentioned, there could therefore be a displayed linkage between searching for advice from like-minded, which is in line with what the participants mentioned such as using the social media platforms to do. Hence, a connection between social influence in regards to advice and social media could therefore be perceived to exist.

#### 4.2.3 Influencers in relation to consumers

Instead viewing the matter of influencers in relation to consumers, it has been visible through the empirical data that the aspect regarding if the participants had for instance previously bought products that were displayed to them by an influencer. A majority of the participants, namely Sara, Laura, Isabelle, Erica, Marie and Alice firmly stated yes to the fact that they had bought products from viewing them previously on or with an influencer. Regarding the matter, Laura explained that she had done so many times, while Isabelle stated doing so a maximum of two times. Furthermore, Leah, Olivia and Julia were unsure about it, but thought that they might have bought something. In addition, the products that most of the participants stated having bought were clothes and skin care. A contrasting view to the matter was presented by Molly, who was the only participant that firmly stated no to previously having

bought anything displayed to her by someone she follows. A parallel to the above, can be drawn to Sudha and Sheena (2017) who mention social influencers and the large impact they have on consumers regarding purchase decisions. This is further mentioned by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) who did a study that displayed the fact that influencers affect consumers purchase decisions and that a majority in their study had previously bought products from influencers on Instagram. One can therefore argue, that the empirical material supports the theory on this matter since it was displayed in the empirical findings that influencers influence consumers into buying products that have been displayed to them. However, a contrasting view to the matter can be found in Chen's (2018) study where the participants were sceptical towards products the influencer recommended, and thought influencers were more about building awareness than influence purchase intention. This does not support the empirical material in this study, as mentioned there were several views on the matter. Another aspect that one can link to what has been displayed is presented with the following. According to Chia-Ying (2013) they draw upon the classifications of social influence from Deutsch and Gerard and specifically normative influence. In their study, they link credibility to normative influence and state that when an individual is making decisions, the individual follows the suggestions of the individual in their group they find credible. As in line with this, one can argue that social influence can be understood to have been uttered in the context and played a part. Another interesting finding connected to the matter, were presented by both Erica and Marie who mentioned buying the products displayed to them by influencers on the feature called stories on Instagram, which further has also been mentioned in other aspects related to the empirical material. As in line with this, as well as what has been stated earlier regarding the usage and interest of the feature referred to, as stories on the application there is an evident interest to look into the matter further in the future.

Moreover, placing emphasis on another interesting finding connected to the context was given by Erica, Laura and Molly who highlighted that they believe influencers unconsciously affect consumers. Erica's perception of an influencer is that they have a large impact on consumers, much more than anyone believes. In line with this, Laura explained:

“I think that many many more than who says that one is influenced by them in fact are, because they make up a big part of one's everyday life and as soon as you have an account on Instagram I think it affects you, it is only when you decide to delete it as it may set you free”

This can be linked to Johnstone and Lindh (2018) who mention that if you follow someone on social media there is a type of influence taking place everyday. This can be connected to what is explained by Laura and what she described regarding having an Instagram account. The platform affects you and this occurs until you remove your account, which can be further related to being influenced on the platform. Another view was displayed by Molly as she stated that one can be indirectly affected towards purchasing products displayed by an influencer. A linkage to the matter can be drawn to Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011) where they mention social influence as for instance taking place unconsciously and further in regard to having an impact and changing individual's behaviours. In line with the above, one can therefore conclude that influencers could be regarded as the aspect of social influence that



further can influence and have an impact on consumers, as for instance purchasing products and also unconsciously by potentially changing consumer behaviours.

#### 4.2.4 Socially accepted behaviours

An interesting finding that appeared from within the data, related further to the matter of in what manner one conducts oneself within a social media platform, such as Instagram. Through the findings, further reasons that could relate to the actions that was explained by the participants, displayed various reasons as to why they acted in certain ways. The findings that presented a linkage to such a topic and were perceived as relevant in such an environment have therefore been highlighted.

As previously stated, Isabelle brought up the topic of why she decides to post her pictures on Instagram and the reasons behind it. She for instance as previously highlighted mentioned it concerned the aspect of displaying to other people that she has a good life and what she does. Further, she also mentioned collecting likes from her posts, as well as the aspect of bragging with friends that are regarded as good. Therefore, one can make a connection to this as how one presents themselves on a social media platform such as Instagram, could only be reliant upon what you think others want to see instead of the whole picture of your life. Through this one can argue that, there is a connection that concerns portraying an image that might not be the whole picture that has been previously mentioned in the literature review as the following. There could be a linkage towards the aspect of what Arnould and Thompson (2005) refer to as portraying consumer culture, that would include aspects such as behaviours that are co productive, as well as having consumers who themselves conduct labour within the sphere of materials within marketing. These themselves misrepresent an impression of themselves that comes off as fragmented (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Hence, there could be a link between the notions of consumers that present an image of themselves in a somewhat fragmented light. In addition, there could also be a link to what is mentioned by Kang and Schuett (2013) regarding sending travelling experiences further on within the context of social media, relied upon aspects such as receiving rewards, as well as enabling significance taking place on a level that is personal. One could then further argue that, through the empirical material it has been displayed that to be able to receive likes in the context of social media could be related to the aspects of receiving a reward. One could then further argue that what has been visible within the empirical material, supports the theoretical foundation concerning that specific matter.

Continuing, another participant aired a view that could be further linked to the matter of how one views the behaviour on social media. Erica lifted her view concerning the matter of why she mostly likes post instead of commenting on them as:

“you do the like more because it feels more socially accepted to like around and there is no need for any special thought behind it really without that, you say a bit more indirectly, a little smooth that yes that was a nice picture you were nice so it is therefore more smooth it is why there are more likes and less comments I think at least from my side”

A link to what has been mentioned in the empirical material concerning presenting a behaviour that related to the aspect of social acceptance can be connected to the following. As in line with Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011) social influence has the ability to be perceived as an efficient means concerning the matter of shaping how people behave. Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011) add the aspects of more than one type of behaviour could be affected, further how the effect takes place can often occur without detection, in addition, it could occur unconsciously. One can therefore argue that, through the empirical material there has been a display of adapting your behaviour as to what is perceived as in line with how one should behave on the social media platform Instagram. One can therefore draw the conclusion that a type of social influence takes place on Instagram and further shape the behaviours of the ones that use Instagram in several ways. One can then further conclude that social influence is connected and takes place on Instagram.

### 4.3 Scepticism Towards the Usage of Instagram

This theme will entail and explain views concerning the matter of how advertising and communication was perceived in relation to for instance Instagram and influencers. Connections concerning these matters have emerged from the empirical material and will therefore be aired and explained in the following section. The section starts off with advertising and communication, the theme will end with a section mentioning negative associations by consumers.

#### 4.3.1 Advertising and communication

Concerning the matter of how the interviewees in general viewed advertising on the platform Instagram, there was no unanimous consensus around the matter. Firstly, Isabelle and Marie mentioned that they were positive towards advertising taking place on Instagram. Erica instead uttered that she had a negative standpoint and viewed it as scary, only in connection to the fact that things you have googled are later displayed as ads in your Instagram feed. One participant namely, Olivia did not contemplate the fact that there was advertising at all on the platform. Moreover, Sara and Alice mentioned their view on the matter as having both

positive and negative perspectives related to when the advertising occurs. Lastly, Laura and Molly explained that they had somewhat conflicting viewpoints, where they mentioned both positive and negative aspects concerning the shape the advertising could appear in. As in line with what is mentioned by Voorveld et al. (2018) the intensity of which there was negative viewpoints connected to advertising was displayed in their study as rather low in the context. Through that and what has emerged in the empirical material there is both support, as well as divergence from the above statement since there was no unanimous picture presented. An interesting finding that emerged was from Laura who mentioned advertising on Instagram and the fact that it has not gone out of hand as on Facebook, she further explains “*but on Instagram, I still think it is on a good level and I hope they will keep it like that*”. Hence, one can conclude that there existed a very fragmented picture on how one views advertising, even so concerning the platform Instagram the participants seemed to have a more positive standpoint if compared to the platform Facebook.

On the matter of how the participants viewed communication by an influencer, several viewpoints were aired. Starting off, half of the participants, namely Alice, Julia, Molly, Marie and Olivia mentioned that they in general viewed the matter in a positive light. None of the participants firmly aired a negative view, regarding information displayed to them by an influencer. One interviewee, Isabelle explained that she had conflicting views on the matter. Nonetheless, she highlighted that in contrast to how marketing was done in the past, where the focus was on sales, she now believes it instead concerns relationship building “*now I think it is a good platform to create a community around the brand, I believe that many want it*”. A connection to this is found in what is mentioned by Sudha and Sheena (2017) who explain that there is a linkage between the aspect of influencer marketing and the act of forming relationships. One can therefore argue that, there could be a connection between how marketing by an influencer is perceived and what it could achieve.

As highlighted by Sara and Leah who mentioned that they were cautious in how much they in fact believed in what they read from the information communicated to them by influencers. A conflicting view to what was then seen in the empirical material can be linked to what is presented by De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) who highlight that influencers have higher credibility than marketing that are more traditional. They mention that influencer marketing can therefore lead towards a reduced refusal from the consumer to the information displayed by an influencer (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudder, 2017). Through the above, it is visible that the presented theoretical contribution is not supported by what the empirical data in this matter in fact showed. Lastly, connected to the matter the interviewees Erica, Julia and Laura placed emphasis on the aspects of finding relief in the matter of having posts by influencers in fact state that they are sponsored or advertising that is paid for. Hence, this shows that there is an eagerness by consumers to be informed that what they take part in is in fact advertising.

Continuing with an interesting aspect that emerged from the empirical material concerns the topic of should one, trust information from influencers, which has previously been mentioned by Sara and Leah. Continuing on this, Sara mentioned that the information by an influencer

may not always be correct and that one should therefore not always believe in everything they post. In addition to this, Leah had a similar view and highlighted that she is sceptical towards when an influencer does collaborations with brands, due to the fact that she does not know if the presented information is from the influencers' point of view. Instead she stated:

“I do not often choose to follow what an influencer has to say instead I trust more on reviews and as well as where people may have actually bought it and not been paid to promote the product”

This shows that instead of being influenced by an influencer, Leah seemed to trust information from reviews to a larger extent. This perspective can be found in Xu et al. (2017) where they draw up on the classifications of social influence from Deutsch and Gerard. They further mention that informational social influence can be linked to recommended information and reviews regarding a product, which can later influence consumers purchase intentions (Xu et al. 2017). Moreover, Xu et al. (2017) explain that consumers trust information from reviews and peers much more than from experts within the field. One can therefore argue that, the empirical material above mentioned is supported by the theory presented in this section. Another view is presented by Chen (2018) who states that consumers pay more attention to recommendations from peers than promotions. A linkage to this, can be found in the empirical material as two participants mentioned being sceptical towards information by an influencer and one of them further mentioned trusting reviews more. This shows the different views that exist concerning communication that takes place on social media.

#### 4.3.2 Negative associations by consumers

Several interesting findings that emerged from the data concerned the viewpoints of negative associations that could come out of the interactions that took place on social media. Some of these are found to be linked to each other and touches upon a similar topic and present the participants various decisions that are connected to aspects within this. For instance, Olivia brought up the topic concerning what could be negative implications that derived from being considered to be about the platform of Instagram, where she explained for instance the relation to potentially allow others to define you in various ways, which could possibly result in the matter of editing your pictures. She further adds to the matter concerning the platform *“so it may become a forum that can create an uncertainty among girls especially, maybe otherwise I think it is a nice thing that you get to take part of people's pictures”*. Hence, there are standpoints that relate to the matter of viewing negative consequences that could emerge from a platform such as Instagram.

A linkage within this can also be found in what is mentioned by Laura who placed emphasis on the matter connected to Instagram, that it could be perceived as a platform that contributes to the appearance of mental illness and the added sensation of oneself placing added demands further on oneself. She adds to the context that circumstances that are not very good in themselves, could present themselves when you for instance follow other people that in what they portray and present, is an image that perhaps could be far from the truth. Therefore, one

can argue that there is a perception of not displaying your entire life in an accurate way on Instagram that potentially could impact other people. A further linkage to the aspect can be drawn to what Leah explained as the significance within the context to explaining your everyday life. Towards the context she added the viewpoint “*it is really so that Instagram has really become so superficial*”. Through this, one can further claim that there is an idea that what is portrayed on Instagram could perhaps not be in line with the world outside of Instagram.

Another interesting insight that emerged within the data was from Julia, where she emphasized that if you do not have a high amount of self-esteem, she believed that Instagram can create a lot of stress relating to that you start comparing yourself with others. She continues:

“some of my friends they think that it may be tough sometimes and maybe they have closed down their accounts some periods because they think that it is tough with all these fitness girls”

Continuing, this also supports the idea that Instagram has the potential to create an environment where individuals compare themselves with others. Moreover, an added interesting finding that further builds on what has been mentioned before, by both Leah and Isabelle regarding how active they are on Instagram concerning posts. In addition to this, Leah stated that she earlier was more active and posted many images but it had a negative impact on her, due to that she used to check how many likes she received on the post and also who commented it. As explained by Zolkepli, Hasno and Mukhiar (2015) understandings regarding engagement can be perceived as harnessed from in what way Instagram is linked to experience. As in line with the above, one can argue that the experience of Instagram changed due to the negative impacts of, which resulted into the participant reducing the number of post. This can further be argued is connected to the aspect of engagement since the level of engagement seems to have gone down. Further connected to the matter and building on what Isabelle mentioned before regarding posts, she further adds that she used to post more in the past and the reason why this has changed as “*why I do not post as often as before is probably because it feels like it is a trend that it has gone down to post and then you follow it, in some way unconsciously*”. Hence, one could argue that, the behaviour to not be as open an active on Instagram is something that could potentially be a trend. As in line with Deutsch and Gerard (1955) in the surrounding of having group contexts formed, they mention the aspect of normative in connection with social influence as raising in scale, this furthermore created an added sense of perhaps making mistakes. In addition, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) explain this has the ability to create bigger pressures in group context that in itself can make the individual be subject to influence from others.

Through what has been stated in the sections above, there is a displayed linkage within the empirical material that the platform Instagram has the ability to form behaviours displayed in groups that further have the ability to affect other individuals later on. This can further be linked to the aspects of how influence on the actual platform could take place and perhaps have an impact on other people, one can therefore further claim that the aspects of social

influence can be linked to the platform. Through this, there is further a displayed significance into looking into the negative consequences of Instagram in the future.

## 4.4 View of the Participants of What an Influencer is

This last theme concerns the topic of influencers. As presented through the literature review it was displayed that there is a vast scope of what is classified as an influencer. This sparked an interest in contributing towards this confusion. We have therefore summarized and constructed a tentative new definition, formed from the views of the participants of what the word could in fact mean. The confusion between influencers and celebrities was further displayed in the empirical material and to be able to present some form of clarity from the views, the differences between the two needed to be highlighted. They are therefore summarized and presented in *Table 4.1 - Participants Definitions of an Influencer and a Celebrity*. The aspect of an influencer in contrast to a celebrity will be further discussed below the table. Lastly, this section will end with new and interesting findings from the empirical material, regarding influencers and influencer marketing.

*Table 4-1 Participants Definitions of an Influencer and a Celebrity*

Participants		Definitions
Sara	Influencer	“a person who shares both his or her life, what they do on the days... a lot of collaborations with other companies or they try on something and one get to hear their comments about it”
	Celebrity	“...it depends a bit on how the celebrity seems by themselves, so if they are open to sharing a lot or if they might be closed and that it might be noticeable that it is someone else that may be sitting and thus posting the posts than themselves”
Laura	Influencer	“...they are probably a source of inspiration, actually it depens a little on what kind of influencer it is...”
	Celebrity	“celebrity, I would like to say that they do not actually have any great purpose... they use social media actually more as a way to show their everyday life, show their artistry than that they would do to inspire people... it feels like there is a pretty big difference”
Molly	Influencer	“I think it is someone who has a lot of followers... an influencer, I would well, someone who influences others, and they exist within everything...”
	Celebrity	“It is probably someone that many people know about”
Leah	Influencer	“there can be many different genres... for me so it is more fashion people and then lifestyles, there are both Bloggers and Youtubers...”
	Celebrity	“a celebrity, so in one way it is someone that is visible in several different contexts... those who in a way have a large number of followers...”
Isabelle	Influencer	“I think that it is someone who earns money on their posts and who is with the trends”
	Celebrity	“one who has over a million followers I would say is a celebrity”

Olivia	Influencer	“...anyone who can influence people in some way, they do not have to be, do you have ten thousand followers, for example there is still ten thousand people who see what you do and then you can make an impact...”
	Celebrity	“I also think they are the same, equivalent influencers because they influence”
Erica	Influencer	“before I thought it was people that had at least many followers, over five thousand... but now I feel like I have said before that it is starting to be almost everyone...”
	Celebrity	“I probably think it is influencer that are a little talked about or are well-known with the public... it is probably very based on where one is located, who is a celebrity but otherwise it is people who use social media who are artists or actors or doing something else too, they are of course celebrities in my eyes...”
Marie	Influencer	“It is well someone who works with advertising, trying to reach out to others to buy the products”
	Celebrity	“a celebrity, yes kind of artist or actor”
Alice	Influencer	“someone who has a lot of followers maybe, in relation to how many they follow themselves and someone who maybe inspires, posts a lot of pictures maybe a lot of collaborations”
	Celebrity	“...these influencers that are a little bigger might also be some kind of celebrity actually... before the influencers time kind of actor and singer...”
Julia	Influencer	“I think that an influencer is yes... it can be different things... my first thought when I think about it is more like a Blogger...”
	Celebrity	“...a celebrity is more, than I think more maybe if there is any model or if it is any actor or artist or anyone who still may be more famous out of all instead of you needing to have these media to know who you are”

#### 4.4.1 The resemblance with an influencer

Through the empirical material it has been evident that there are both similarities, as well as differences in what and influencer is perceived to be in the context of social media, see *Table 4.1*. In order to summarize the similarities, the most frequently mentioned aspects one can argue displays a connection between them, which consists of for instance the idea that they can come in more than one shape and within more than one category. This was highlighted by Laura, Molly, Leah and Julia, where for instance Leah mentioned that an influencer can exist within various genres, for instance within fashion and lifestyles. In addition to this, she also mentions Bloggers and Youtubers. Moreover, there was a vague mentioning of inspiration in connection to what an influencer is perceived to be, this was mentioned by Laura and Alice. Further, Molly and Olivia placed emphasis on the fact that they believe an influencer is anybody who influences others in any type of way. Another aspect regarding what is perceived as an influencer, is mentioned by Sara who states that they are someone who shares their everyday life with their followers. A parallel to this can be drawn to what Alice highlights as the fact that an influencer posts a lot of content on social media. Furthermore, two of the participants, namely Sara and Alice mention a lot of collaborations in the context of what an influencer is perceived as. In addition to this, Marie highlighted an influencer as

someone who performs labour through advertising. This can further be linked to what Isabelle states as the fact that they make money regarding what they in fact post.

Regarding the volume of followers, the participants explained that one should have to in their view, be regarded as an influencer was highlighted by four of the participants, Molly, Olivia, Erica and Alice. However, their thoughts on the matter differentiate to a large extent. Firstly, Molly explained that she views it as an individual that has amounted to having many followers. Secondly, two of the interviewees had similar takes on the matter of that it could concern lower numbers of followers. Olivia uttered that she for instance regarded the matter of being followed by ten thousand followers, where the aspect of the possibility to forming an impact could be relevant. In a similar standpoint Erica explained that in a current state of time, it could perhaps concern the matter of anyone being an influencer. Lastly, Alice had a different view regarding the matter. She highlighted the aspect instead as in relation to being viewed between how many people the influencer in fact followed, in connection with how many followers the influencer themselves had, which was to her an important aspect. Since the participants' views were not unanimous on the matter of how many followers one should have to be able to be perceived as an influencer, we argue that it is not usable to forming a foundation of any type of tentative definition.

Moreover, through the empirical material several aspects were found to have a linkage towards each other from what the participants mentioned, it therefore formed the basis for what could be perceived as a new tentative definition on what can be regarded as an influencer in a social media context. The new tentative definition is presented in the box below.

An <b>influencer</b> exists within different genres and is someone who shares their lives, inspire and influence people in ways such as for instance with collaborations
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Parts of the new tentative definition have similarities with pre-existing definitions on the topic presented in the literature review, displayed in *Table 2.1*. As in line with this, the found similarities are further presented. Firstly, a similarity of the aspect of utilizing influence on others can be found to what Uzunoglu and Misci Kip (2014) mention as an influencer. This is also mentioned by Araujo, Neijens and Vliegenhart (2017) when they define an influencer or an opinion leader. Secondly, there is a linkage between what the new tentative definition refers to as the aspect of an influencer existing in more than one genre. A linkage to this can be found within the presented definition by Sudha and Sheena (2017) who state that an influencer has the possibility to be found within more than one environment. This is further also in line with Chae (2018) who claims that the aspect of an influencer can be derived from more than one origin, such as for instance actresses who at the time are not known, or for instance people who have a lot of money. Lastly, there is also a connection with the viewpoint concerning the matter of as an influencer distributing their life. A connection to this can be found in what is mentioned by De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) as their inclusion of the aspect of having an influencer present the ones following them with a take on their day



to day lives. Even though, there are these similarities the presented connections does not in totality include all aspects mentioned in the new tentative definition. Hence, the new tentative definition brings forth a nuance to the perception of how an influencer is viewed in social media and therefore could be used to describe all aspects connected to each other in a new way.

An interesting finding found in the empirical material in *Table 4.1* is the fact that Leah referred to influencers as for instance found within the context of fashion and could be a Blogger or a Youtuber. This is further supported by the literature review where Bloggers or Blogging are mentioned in several definitions of for instance an influencer (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017), a digital influencer (Uzunoglu & Misci Kip, 2014; Sudha & Sheena, 2017), social influencer (Sudha & Sheena, 2017) and celebrity endorser (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). In addition, the aspect of fashion in the context is highlighted from what Sudha and Sheena (2017) explain as a social influencer. This is also in line with Xu et al. (2017) where they mention endorsers as for instant fashion leaders. This shows the significance for including Bloggers to the context in finding clarity surrounding what an influencer is perceived as.

#### 4.4.2 The resemblance with a celebrity

Through the empirical data there has been similarities and differences related to the concept of what a celebrity was viewed as, in the context of social media by the participants. Firstly, there were similar viewpoints by three of the participants namely Olivia, Erica and Alice, relating to the view of a celebrity in contrast to the view of an influencer. Olivia stated that they are pretty much alike, furthermore Erica and Alice highlighted the aspect of influencers that have amounted to being a little bigger in scope as similar to celebrities. Two similar views were presented by Leah and Isabelle, who explained that a celebrity could be regarded as one with many followers. Further, Isabelle claimed that this would apply if someone in the scenario would have more than a million ones. Through the above, there is a vague similarity displayed towards the definition of an influencer in the context of social media. Moreover, half of the interviewees namely, Laura, Erica, Marie, Alice and Julia all highlighted the connection between a celebrity and the words artistry or actor, as well as artist. Here there seemed to be a difference from the viewpoints of what an influencer is from what a celebrity was defined as.

Lastly, four interviewees mentioned the connection between a celebrity and someone that is more known within the public. This was for instance highlighted by two interviewees who claimed that the matter would concern someone who is by Molly referred to as rather known and by Erica as frequently mentioned. Leah explained it as someone who can be featured within more than one environment. Whilst, Julia connected it to someone who is known without there being a need of social media in the context. This aspect was visible within the empirical material, where a parallel can be drawn to what is mentioned by Jain and Roy (2015), Jin and Phua (2014) who see a connection between a person that is able to savor being

identified by the public. As in line with that, the empirical material could display some support for the aspect of being known in regards to the public. This further supports the previously explained confusion that exists between the two elements. Through the above, it has been displayed that there was both support for the similarities between the definitions, as well as differences that still exist between them. Connected to this, an interesting finding that emerged was the fact that three of the participants mentioned the same people as an example of an influencer, as well as an example of a celebrity while asked about the matter. For instance, Molly mentioned Zlatan as both an influencer and a celebrity. In addition to this, Leah stated Kenza as an example and lastly, Olivia mentioned Bianca Ingresso being both an influencer and a celebrity. This further shows the confusion regarding what an influencer is and the blurry differences between an influencer and a celebrity found amongst the participants.

## 5 Conclusion

*This section presents the conclusion of what this thesis has amounted to and where the main findings are summarized and presented in a firm way. The chapter will furthermore include sections that explain what theoretical contribution can be derived from the study, as well as what managerial implications can be found and taken to use. The chapter ends with a section presenting limitations, as well as suggestions for future research that could be derived from the study.*

### 5.1 Conclusion

As in line with the purpose of this thesis, the study set out to retrieve a greater understanding of how young consumers engage within the platform Instagram, The perspective utilized have been that of a consumer one. This has been conducted by using the theoretical viewpoints entailing the perspectives of social influence and influencer marketing. Furthermore, the study set out to contribute towards highlighting the confusion surrounding what an influencer is perceived as. In addition, this study has targeted being able to enrich the literature about theories revolving around social influence in a social media environment. Lastly, the study set out to contribute in a qualitative way with new insights and interesting findings that had a greater meaning. To be able to answer the purpose of this study, we have chosen to present three main insights derived from the analysis. The three research questions that this thesis has been constructed around have been the foundation for which the main findings have been grouped and further presented. The presented findings have in a great way added to the contribution towards a richer understanding of how consumers in fact engage on Instagram.

In order to place emphasis on the findings that contribute to amounting to the purpose of this dissertation we presented the following. When presenting an illustration of how consumers engage on Instagram several findings have emerged, as linked to how the engagement took place. These have in detail been explained grouped under when, where and in what manner as well as the reasons behind what was further linked to engagement in the end. An interesting finding that emerged from the empirical material concerned negative aspects connected to Instagram that could further be related to the level of engagement found amongst the consumers. In conclusion, one can understand that engagement on Instagram can present itself in various shapes and in both positive and negative light.

The empirical material has further displayed that there are various aspects that could impact and influence the behaviours of individuals in various ways. When examining social influence solely, it was displayed that for instance advice could occur more generally in life, as well as in an online context. The aspect relating to wanting approval from someone else in life could be found to be linked independently by both presented theoretical contributions relating to social influence, as well as the frameworks together, this was further connected to how the participants behaved. One can therefore conclude, that social influence is linked to the behaviours by the participants in this study. In addition, social influence was also perceived to be connected to finding advice in an online context. Moreover, viewing the matter of influencers in connection to consumers, we conclude that influencers influenced the participants towards purchasing products displayed to them by influencers. Furthermore, to this matter we can conclude that there was a displayed connection between the aspects of social influence and the matter of influencing consumers that could take place both visible, as well as unconsciously. These aspects could further be presented to have a linkage with behaviour. In connection to the topic an interesting finding emerged concerning the forms of socially accepted behaviour that takes place on Instagram. For instance, it overall seemed more socially accepted to like someone's post then to comment on it. We can therefore conclude that social influence does exist within the context of Instagram and has the ability to form behaviours of the ones using the platform.

As in line with our purpose of shedding light on the previously presented confusion regarding how consumers perceive an influencer. In line with this, we present a contribution towards this complexity that surrounds the area of trying to understand what an influencer is. We have through our empirical material been able to form an attempt of a new tentative definition that could aid in the process of better perceiving from a consumer angle what the definition could include. The definition was found to have linkages with established theories but what the empirical material displayed could not in totality be linked to a presented one and therefore a new one was shaped. The new tentative definition presented below is a compilation of the participants' views of what an influencer is.

An <b>influencer</b> exists within different genres and is someone who shares their lives, inspire and influence people in ways such as for instance with collaborations
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## 5.2 Theoretical Contribution

Through this dissertation there are several theoretical contributions we agree are relevant. Firstly, as has been presented through the literature review, as well as the empirical material there is wide difference of perceptions as to what an influencer is perceived as from a consumer angle. This led to the formation of a new tentative definition derived from the

insights of the participants. This new tentative definition could aid to perhaps make a contribution to clarifying how an influencer is perceived by consumers in today's society in an online context.

Secondly, the further theoretical contribution placed forth in this thesis consists of arguing the relevance that the pre-existing theories concerning social influence that was not produced for online purposes, are supported and applied to contexts of social media. One could therefore further mention that social influence as a theoretical foundation is adaptable to more than one type of behaviour, both individually and in a group setting regardless of the context the theories are relevant to being further applied into social media contexts. Lastly, as has been highlighted in previous chapters, there is a lack of qualitatively produced contributions within the sphere of consumers and Instagram, concerning matters such as marketing taking place on Instagram. With support in this we argue that, this makes this thesis a relevant contribution towards the field and should therefore be regarded as such.

### 5.3 Managerial Implications

In this thesis there have been various matters that relate to parts that could enable managerial implications as emerged from this study. Viewing the thesis from such an angle there are various contributions we argue surfaced. For instance, this dissertation has produced a contribution that could be relevant for managers in understanding how consumers in fact conduct themselves and behave on the social media platform Instagram. Furthermore, the reasons behind these behaviours have further been presented and placed emphasis on. We argue that this could be relevant for companies to gain insights into if they should conduct marketing on the platform and be in need of insights into how best to take on the task, insights such as what has been produced in this dissertation could then be highly relevant. In connection to this, there has also been insights displayed relating to the matter of constructing relationships, as well as understanding what spurs engagement. Further knowledge into matters such as that, can be retrieved within this thesis and add to companies and managers understanding in a better light how to engage their consumers, as well as form relationships with them. In addition to this information into what consumers perceive and believe to be superficial, as well as viewed in a more negative light could be essential to understand, in order to avoid situations that could create negative associations from the consumers.

Moreover, through the empirical material there has been mentionings of the feature stories on Instagram, as having been used in more ways than one for various reasons such as for example being influenced by an influencer to purchase a product that was seen through the Instagram feature referred to as stories. There could therefore be great insights for managers to retrieve concerning how they could utilize their companies into placing emphasis on using the feature stories to either spread information or perhaps generate awareness and increase their sales. Such insights could be especially interesting for new companies that are in the

beginning of their company journey. Due to this, we argue the relevance for exploring and using new features on the application Instagram.

## 5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Addressing the limitations that were present during the formation of this thesis concerned the following. This study has been constructed on the viewpoints derived from participants between the age gaps of 18 to 30 years old, there is therefore no insights into how older or younger consumers would interpret the topic presented within this study. The study only takes into account the viewpoints of people between that age group, referred to in this study as young consumers. In addition, the sample that took part in this study was only consistent of ten participants and there are therefore no possibilities of generalizing the findings in any way due to the size of the sample. Furthermore, all interviewees were Swedish that took part in the study and their viewpoints are so fort derived from a Swedish geography and there are no possibilities of generalizing the finding towards other geographical locations.

Through this dissertation, various ideas for future research have emerged such as the usage of the feature stories on Instagram. Through the empirical material the participants have highlighted that they use the feature on the platform for several reasons and we therefore argue that there is a vast significance in better understanding how this feature is in fact utilized by consumers in a social media context. In addition, to this to the best of our knowledge to date there are no prior research within the field of marketing that has been conducted on the topic, which further supports our claim for the need for future research concerning the matter. Furthermore, there has been mentionings within the empirical material that the usage of Instagram could lead to negative implications for consumers today. Therefore, we further argue that this is interesting to continue to explore and research within, since the reasons why and how they were uttered, seemed to differ amongst the consumers.

Furthermore, through the empirical material it has also been visible that there is a somewhat ongoing trend of not being as active and open within social media, namely that you decide to be in line with the trend of being less frequent in posting and perhaps having your account private rather than open to anyone. As in line with that, we argue that there is further interest in understanding the reasons behind decisions such as that. We therefore argue, the added relevance of investigating such matters further as to why that seems to take place. Moreover, within the empirical material, there was no consensus regarding the matter of how advertising was perceived by the consumers, their views seemed to differ. In line with that, we argue that there is a further need to investigate and understand the topic of how consumers perceive the advertising and the reasons behind why they were perceived in various ways. We therefore argue that there is an added need for conducting future research regarding that matter.

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# Appendix A: Interview Guide

Before starting the interview we wanted to ask you if it is okay that we audio-record you on our computers/mobile phone and we also wanted to let you know that you will be anonymous in this study.

## **Background information:**

- Can you please state your age
- Can you shortly explain what you do and your background

## **Opening questions:**

- What social media platforms do you use?
- Approximately, how long have you been using Instagram?
- What do you in general think about Instagram?
- What purpose do you think Instagram is used for?
- Approximately, how many influencers do you follow on Instagram?

## **Questions to the different theories:**

### **1) Consumer perspectives**

#### ***Consumer Cultural Theory***

- How do you choose who is a member of your account on Instagram?
- Can you tell us a bit about how you in general view influencers?
- Can you you tell us a bit about how you in general view influencers followers?

#### ***Social influence***

- Can you tell us a little bit about what happens when you go through your Instagram feed
- Is there anyone in your life that inspires you? If yes, could provide an example?
  - Follow up: Looking at the matter connected to Instagram how do you view the matter then?
  - Follow up: Looking at the matter generally in life?
  - Follow up: How would you describe the situation?
- If you look for advice in your life, where in general do you look?
  - Follow up: Could you please elaborate on why?

#### ***Consumers on social media***

- Can you in more detail describe how you use Instagram on a typical day?
  - Follow up: Could you elaborate on why you do those things?
- Do you post, like and comment on Instagram yourself and if so what kind of things?
  - Follow up: Is there any reasons for you to do /not to do those things?
- If you look at advertising in general on Instagram, how do you view it?

## **2) Influencers and marketing**

### ***Definitions***

- What do you in general think an influencer is on social media?
  - Follow up: Could you please elaborate
- What do you in general think a celebrity is on social media?
  - Follow up: Could you please elaborate

### **3) Influencer marketing and social influence**

- If you look at influencers in relation to people, how do you view that situation?
- How do you view information communicated by an influencer?
- Have you ever bought a product that was shown to you by an influencer?

### **Ending question:**

- Lastly, is there anything you would like to add to the interview?