

OPTIMIZED INFLUENCER SELECTION FOR BUILDING A POSITIVE BRAND IMAGE

A study from Finnish consumer perspective

Master's Thesis
Anni Ilona Kämäräinen
Aalto University School of Business
Marketing
Fall 2022

Author Anni Ilona Kämäräinen

Title of thesis Optimized Influencer Selection for Building a Positive Brand Image – A Study from Finnish Consumer Perspective

Degree Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration

Degree programme Marketing

Thesis advisor(s) Henrikki Tikkanen

Year of approval 2022

Number of pages 81

Language English

Abstract

Due to the explosion of influencer marketing, the number of influencers has also increased which means companies now have more options when planning on new social media campaigns for their products and services. It might be a risk to recruit an influencer to be the face of a brand if the company does not know this person very well beforehand. Influencer marketing can make or break the brand image, just as any other kind of marketing. Hence, the challenging part is to select the right kind of influencer that fits both the brand and the group the marketing is targeted towards. What are the factors in an influencer that are relevant for building a positive brand image through a social media endorsement?

This quantitative study aims to find out the most relevant influencer characteristics that have a positive effect on perceived brand image from a consumer's perspective. More specifically, the study explores this theme in Finnish context by using Finnish influencer, Miisa Grekov and Finnish brand, Paulig. Moreover, the survey respondents are Finnish. The chosen independent variables are studied with the dependent variable which is, in this case, perceived brand image. Positive correlations are found by first conducting a survey that uses five-point Likert-type-scale, after which the data is analyzed by using Pearson's r correlation.

The findings show that all the independent variables, except for one, have at least slight positive correlation with perceived positive brand image. Moreover, the correlations seem to be stronger when the sample is narrowed to illustrate only the perceptions of the followers. In Finnish context, it is most important to find the right influencer-brand match to improve or maintain a positive brand image. The rest of most correlated independent variables in descending order are influencer expertise, influencer motive, influencer trustworthiness, influencer attractiveness and similarity with influencer.

The main realization is that influencer marketing is a multidimensional concept, and all the studied variables correlate with one another at some level. Companies should base their influencer characteristic estimations reflecting what is the target group of the brand or campaign. There are differences how people from Finland perceive some of the variables to affect the brand image versus people abroad do. There are also differences on the most impactful characteristics depending on whether the respondent is a follower or non-follower of an influencer. This thesis reduces the gap there is in Finnish research literature regarding the knowledge about influencer marketing and its connection to branding as well as brand image. This thesis additionally suggests further research to unravel whether there are other possible factors affecting branding through influencer marketing in Finland.

Keywords influencer marketing, branding, social media marketing, Finnish influencer marketing

Tekijä Anni Ilona Kämäräinen		
Työn nimi Optimized Influencer Selection for Building a Positive Brand Image – A Study from Finnish Consumer Perspective		
Tutkinto Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration		
Koulutusohjelma Marketing		
Työn ohjaaja(t) Henrikki Tikkanen		
Hyväksymisvuosi 2022	Sivumäärä 81	Kieli Englanti

Tiivistelmä

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin räjähdysmäisen kasvun myötä myös vaikuttajien määrä on lisääntynyt. Tämä tarjoaa enemmän valinnanvaraa yrityksille, kun he valitsevat vaikuttajia mainostamaan tuotteitaan tai palveluitaan sosiaalisen median kampanjoihin. Yritys saattaa ottaa riskin valitessaan vieraan vaikuttajan brändinsä kasvoiksi. Kuten mikä tahansa muu markkinointi, myös vaikuttajamarkkinointi voi parhaassa tilanteessa parantaa ja huonoimmassa tuhota yrityksen brändimielikuvan. Tästä johtuen onkin haastavaa valita vaikuttaja, joka sopii sekä brändille että yrityksen kohderyhmälle. Mitkä tekijät ovat vaikuttajassa sellaisia, joilla on positiivinen vaikutus brändimielikuvaan sosiaalisen median promotiivisen sisällön kautta?

Tämä kvantitatiivinen tutkimus pyrkii löytämään olennaisimmat vaikuttajan piirteet, joilla on kuluttajan näkökulmasta positiivinen vaikutus brändimielikuvaan. Tutkimus keskittyy erityisesti suomalaiseen kontekstiin käyttäen kyselyssä suomalaista vaikuttajaa, Miisa Grekoviä, ja brändiä, Pauligia. Myös kyselyn vastaajat ovat suomalaisia. Valittuja itsenäisiä muuttujia tutkitaan riippuvaisen muuttujan, brändimielikuvan, kanssa. Positiiviset korrelaatiot löydetään suorittamalla ensin kyselytutkimus, jossa käytetään viiden pisteen Likert-tyyppistä asteikkoa. Tämän jälkeen data analysoidaan Pearsonin r-korrelaatiota hyödyntämällä.

Tulokset osoittavat, että kaikilla muuttujilla, yhtä lukuun ottamatta, on vähintään heikko positiivinen korrelaatio positiiviseksi koetun brändimielikuvan kanssa. Korrelaatiot ovat vahvempia, kun tutkitaan ainoastaan vaikuttajan seuraajien vastauksia. Suomalaisessa kontekstissa tärkeintä positiivisen brändimielikuvan kannalta on, että vaikuttajan ja brändin välillä on hyvä yhteensopivuus. Lopuilla vaikuttajan piirteitä kuvaavilla muuttujilla on positiivinen korrelaatio brändimielikuvaan seuraavassa järjestyksessä (vahvimasta korrelaatiosta heikoimpaan): asiantuntijuus, motiivi, luotettavuus, viehättävyys ja samankaltaisuus.

Tärkeintä on ymmärtää, että vaikuttajamarkkinointi on moniulotteinen konsepti ja kaikki tutkitut muuttujat korreloivat toisensa kanssa jollain tasolla. Yritysten tulisi perustella vaikuttajan piirteiden arviointi brändin tai kampanjan tavoitellun kohderyhmän mukaan. Suomalaiset kokevat eri muuttujien vaikuttavan brändimielikuvaan. Kokemuseroja löytyy myös sen perusteella, onko kyselyyn vastaaja ollut vaikuttajan seuraaja vai ei. Tämä tutkimus pienentää suomalaisesta tutkimustyöstä löytyvää aukkoa, joka liittyy vaikuttajamarkkinointiin ja siihen vaikuttavien tekijöiden tuntemukseen, joilla myös on merkitys brändäyksen ja brändimielikuvan luomisen kannalta. Lisäksi tämä tutkimus toimii suosituksena lisätutkimuksille, jotta voitaisiin selvittää muita mahdollisia vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin kautta brändäykseen vaikuttavia tekijöitä.

Avainsanat vaikuttajamarkkinointi, brändäys, sosiaalisen median markkinointi, vaikuttajamarkkinointi suomessa

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES.....	7
1. INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 BACKGROUND	8
1.2. RESEARCH PROBLEM & AIM OF THE STUDY	10
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	11
1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS	11
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 INFLUENCER MARKETING FOR BRANDING PURPOSES	13
2.1.1 <i>Brand image</i>	13
2.1.2 <i>Online brand image</i>	15
2.1.3 <i>Use of influencer marketing for creating brand image</i>	17
2.1.4 <i>Para-social relationships and how it affects influencer marketing</i>	19
2.2 EVALUATING SUCCESSFUL ENDORSEMENT AND INFLUENCER CHARACTERISTICS	22
2.2.1 <i>Follower-count and likeability</i>	22
2.2.2 <i>Motive</i>	23
2.2.3 <i>Expertise and Trustworthiness</i>	24
2.2.4 <i>Source credibility</i>	26
2.2.5 <i>Influencer-brand fit</i>	28
2.3 THEORIES SUPPORTING INFLUENCER-BRAND FIT	30
2.3.1 <i>The match-up hypothesis</i>	30
2.3.2 <i>Categorization theory & The schema congruence</i>	31
2.3.3 <i>Meaning transfer</i>	32
2.3.4 <i>Theoretical framework & hypotheses</i>	32
3. METHODOLOGY	35
3.1 METHODOLOGICAL POSITION.....	35
3.3 DATA COLLECTION & PROCEDURE	41
3.3.1 <i>Sampling</i>	41
3.3.2 <i>Procedure</i>	43
3.3.3 <i>Survey structure</i>	43
3.3.4 <i>Scales and items</i>	44
3.3.5 <i>The example influencer and the brand in the survey</i>	48
3.4 METHODS OF ANALYSIS.....	49
3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY TESTS	50
4. FINDINGS	54
5. DISCUSSION.....	59
6. CONCLUSIONS	69
6.1 IMPLICATIONS	72
6.2 LIMITATIONS	73
6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	75
REFERENCES	76
APPENDICES.....	82

List of Figures

Figure 1	Conceptual model (Munnukka et al., 2016)	28
Figure 2	Theoretical framework	33

List of Tables

Table 1.	Descriptives	42
Table 2.	Cronbach's Alphas (α) of the variables	50
Table 3.	Validity and reliability test values of the variables	51-53
Table 4.	Correlation coefficient - all variables	54
Table 5.	Correlation coefficient – followers	55
Table 6	Correlation coefficient - non-followers	55
Table 7	Summary of the hypotheses' results	59
Table 8	Summary: Comparison of the extant studies' and findings of this study	68

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

By the prevalence of social media and marketing in different digital channels, has also the popularity of influencer marketing become popular among brands. Companies are increasingly replacing their old and traditional marketing activities with influencer endorsements and collaborations (Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget, 2019). In the report of 2022, Influencer Marketing Hub (Geysler, 2021) highlights the estimation of the influencer marketing industry to grow up to 16,4 Billion \$ in 2022. In addition, over 75 % of marketers dedicate own budget for influencer marketing today. The popularity of influencer marketing is no new information but the increased demand for influencer endorsement has raised discussion and academic research on the topic of how to select the right kind of influencer for a specific brand and what are the consequences of either successful or failed selection.

Influencer marketing is also common in Finland. A study conducted by IAB Finland (2022) showed that the amount of commercial influencer marketing grew 41% from 2020 to 2021. In 2021 the market was worth 39,4 million euros. This result has been collected from independent influencers as well as influencer marketing offices. As Finland represents only small fraction of people in the whole world, also the scale of influencer marketing is smaller. This means that there are less macro-influencer and influencers in the first place. According to the study about Finnish influencers by Promoty, a Finnish influencer marketing technology company, most Finnish influencers are millennials. 42% of the influencers who took part in their study are 25-34 years old. Promoty (2022) states that this age group is also the most relevant in the online business. Instagram remains to be the most popular social media channel for influencer marketing. What differentiates Finland from rest of the world is that Facebook holds the second place, blogs the third, and TikTok the fourth place in the popularity. Promoty compares the results with an international study conducted by Influencer Marketing Hub (Geysler, 2021) which showed that after Instagram, TikTok was the most common channel for influencer marketing in 2021. It is expected that Finland will also shift more towards TikTok regarding influencer

marketing. What is interesting is the estimation by Promoty that 80% of Finnish companies have outsourced the influencer marketing planning and execution for influencer marketing agencies that specify in this field. This would perhaps indicate that Finnish companies are not yet that confident with their knowledge of influencer marketing and its best practices in Finland. Or that inhouse resourcing for influencer marketing is not manageable or relevant yet.

The process of finding and working with the right influencer who fits the brand well is not easy and takes a lot of resources from a company (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021). In addition to this, recruiting an external content creator to promote a brand has risks if the influencer gets involved in crises or scandals. The worst-case scenario is that the influencer will cause negative associations on the brand or the endorsed products/service (Jiang, Huang, Wu, Cho and Lin, 2015). It seems like often the brands tend to recruit influencers based on their number of followers or general reputation. This is not necessarily a bad perspective from which to approach the process of evaluating the influencer. One simple reason why companies might want to go for these “bigger” influencers is the ‘popularity principle’. It suggests that for example the number of followers is valued because it means that the influencer has larger network and therefore also message reach is larger (Van Dijk, 2013 cited in Janssen, Schouten and Croes, 2022). However, the most important thing in choosing the influencer is to think what the target audience is that the brand/company wants to communicate with and whether this audience can be found from the follower base of an influencer. It is correct that through the collaboration with an influencer who has a large number of followers the campaign will gain more views, but it is negotiable whether all the viewers are really interested in the promoted product/service. With smaller number of followers, the “quality” and real interest of the followers could be better. What might be ignored, among other aspects, is the fact that people who already follow influencers are likely to have different opinion on the influencer than the people not following this specific media persona. This can reflect as biased opinion formation among the consumers. There are plenty of other factors that bring a lot of uncertainties and variables to influencer marketing. Even though influencer marketing is familiar to many companies; among marketers, there still exists a lack of an “--adequate understanding of its scope, effectiveness, and potential threats” (Leung, Flora, Gu, and Palmatier, 2021).

Therefore, it is crucial for companies to understand the process and carefully evaluate the influencer collaboration to serve both the target segment of the brand/product as well as the audience of the influencer (Breves, Liebers, Abt and Kunze, 2019).

Many theories have been created to evaluate the most meaningful factors when matching the influencer or celebrity with a brand, such as match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990), the source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990) and categorization theory (Cohen and Basu, 1987). However, the factors are often determined to either optimize the endorsement effectiveness or the effect it has on company sales. In addition, there is a difference whether the study considers celebrities or influencers (Gräve, 2017). Compared to purchase behavior, it is more complicated to specify how influencer marketing campaigns change consumer perception on overall brand image, whether the shift is positive or negative. And as Breves et al. (2019) state, the factors for optimized fit vary for example depending on the goals of a brand.

1.2. Research problem & aim of the study

Even though there is previous international research on what factors in social media influencers or the influencer campaigns are the most meaningful for the brand image, there is room for additional academic research of how the theories work in the Finnish context. Referring to the data and information Promoty has collected about influencer marketing in Finland, it can be concluded that the business is remarkable and constantly growing. Therefore, the deficiency of thorough, academic research on Finnish influencer marketing is surprising. The specific topic of this study, the research on influencer characteristics and their impact on perceived brand image, is already niche and fairly unexplored internationally. The situation of subject-related literature is not any better in Finland. What has not been proven academically, is that both Finnish and international influencer marketing would have the same criteria for succeeding. The topic needs to be addressed separately in different cultures in order to provide useful information for developing companies' decisions within influencer marketing.

The aim of this study is to determine the most influential factors of an influencer and the influencer-brand match that have a positive impact on the brand image. The same goal applies with other general factors that create a good brand match; what are the characteristics and how can brands recognize a great influencer match for them? Hence, the research questions for this thesis are as presented next.

1.3 Research questions

What are the factors that should help brands choose social media influencers to promote their products / services and simultaneously improve brand image among consumers?

Do the factors differentiate among Finnish consumers compared to general research findings?

What are the building blocks of a great influencer-brand match and to what extent it affects perceived brand image?

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis will follow a typical outline starting with literature review. Literature review has been divided into three sub-sections: 'Influencer marketing for branding purposes', 'Evaluating successful endorsement and influencer characteristics' and 'Theories supporting influencer-brand fit'. The first sub-section handles relevant topics and concepts for this research such as brand image, influencer marketing and para-social relationship. The second sub-section discusses the characteristics there seem to exist regarding successful endorsement and potential positive effect on perceived brand image. The third sub-section brings up more relevant theory for the research to enrich the understanding of influencer marketing and, for example, what is the perception formulation process based on psychologically. The learned theory is then combined into theoretical framework which is followed by the hypotheses for the research

After literature review there will be a methodology chapter that clarifies the methodological position and operationalization behind the hypotheses as well as concrete decisions and actions made for primary research. These include sampling, procedure, survey structure and the construct of scales and items. In addition, the case influencer and brand are presented. Lastly, the analysis methods will be presented, and the validity and reliability tests will be performed.

After this the thesis will present the research findings and analyze them in the discussion chapter. Finally, there will be conclusions and offered responses for research questions as well as implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research. List of references and appendices will be listed in the end of the thesis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Influencer Marketing for branding purposes

In the following sections different forms of brand image will be discussed. Furthermore, it will be clarified how influencer marketing can be used for branding purposes and what is the role of para-social relationship for branding.

2.1.1 Brand image

The definition of brand image has evolved over the years reflecting the development of many fields such as technology and culture. For example, just about 20 years ago American Marketing Association determined brand to be the company name, symbol or design and is supposed to improve the image of the company (Kotler, 2000). Today, the perspective is more holistic and covers a lot more than that; the brand is seen as the overall picture of a company that involves emotions and opinions. It can be something that people believe or think about a brand (Saini et al., 2021). The brand often supplements other business functions such as marketing and finance, but the connection to consumers is inevitable: the brand is the experience that consumer has with the product or service (Keller and Lehmann, 2006).

In this paper, the aim is to study the effects of influencer marketing to brand image. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly understand the concept of brand image. Contrasting to brand identity, which determines how a brand sees itself, brand image is precisely the way public perceives the company or its products/services (Kotler, 2000). However, for example Wijaya (2013) suggests through their framework, 'Dimensions of Brand Image', brand identity to be one building block of brand image. After all, different aspects of branding are more or less connected to each other. This can be seen as we proceed with the research paper and literature review. Additionally, Keller (1993) connects brand associations to the concept of brand image as it is the reflection of the associations a consumer has in one's memory. The author states that regarding the associations it is meaningful that they are favorable, strong, and unique. In other words, it would be recommended to communicate the brand messages in a powerful and different way that brings the

product/service in a good light. To conclude, most of the authors would characterize brand image to reflect what people or consumer have in their minds when thinking about a brand.

Wijaya (2013) refers to previous own research while explaining the position of brand image in the branding process. According to 'Hierarchy of Branding' (Wijaya, 2011 cited in Wijaya 2013), which is a map for branding journey, brand image takes place after brand awareness and brand knowledge. The whole journey starts from brand awareness and ends in the brand spirituality. So, the brand experience, from consumers' perspective starts from receptive (receiving the information and processing it) to forming different associations and opinions about it. Brand image is pictured in a stage of gaining mind- and market share for the company. It appears that those two "milestones" are reached easier than the latter stages that represent heart- and social share. Nevertheless, brand image seems to be a centric stage of branding, making it very important factor for the overall journey.

Wijaya (2013) also summarizes brand image as an important part of branding since it is associated with brand credibility and reputation. These aspects are meaningful when it comes to building strong and loyal relationships to consumers. Wijaya continues to state the other puzzle pieces of Dimensions of Brand Image to include brand identity, personality, association, attitude, behavior, benefit, and competence (Wijaya, 2013).

An interesting and context-related perspective of perceived brand image is presented by Drezner (2002) (in Wijaya, 2013). The statement is that consumers only react to what they think is reality, no matter if it really is or not. Therefore, every individual might have slightly different image of a brand, which depends on their experiences, knowledge, and feelings towards other brands as well. Despite this, it is possible to recognize some general perceptions among the larger mass. The list of concepts to explain brand image goes on. Brand image can also tell us about the perceived market position compared to other competitors within the same category. Moreover, people might even reflect their own identities or self-concepts by choosing a specific brand. They might understand themselves better through this (Wijaya, 2013). In this situation certain type of brand image is the reason why people

choose the specific brand over the other. This concept can be seen with fashion or dressing styles. People might choose a specific brand not even by the looks of the piece of clothing, but more because of the status the brand brings for its user. Therefore, it is important to carefully think what a brand wants to say or represent with its image. It will affect the target group as well as the evaluation process of influencer-brand matching.

2.1.2 Online brand image

Even though *the brand* is essentially supposed to be a universal concept, it clearly has changed along the emergence of the internet. Since the use and popularity of social media has become major during recent years, it has been easier for consumers to connect with other people and share information. This has, for example, increased people's trust in word-of-mouth and simultaneously made online communities significantly more meaningful for marketing. Because of this companies have had to develop their branding functions to fit the new normal (de Chernatony and Christodoulides, 2004; Heggde and Shainesh, 2018). In the media environment and through the new marketing options the consumers have more and more control. This means they do not only have more options to choose from, but they can also have impact on what advertisements they can see (Keller, 2009). Many of the social media platforms are smart in a sense that the algorithms can learn what type of advertisements have been the most interesting for the viewer (for example by the areas of interests or the time a user has viewed the advertisement). Internet user can also manually "tell" if that type of adverts are not wanted or seen interesting. Despite this, we still sometimes have adverts that do not fit our interests and that are poorly targeted. As the consumers make up most of the online communities, they have great power on the popularity and reputation of brands. Spreading the word through social media channels is very easy, so brands need to be highly considerate of their online marketing and branding functions.

Cheng, Wu and Chen (2020) describe the phenomenon of online communities as Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Typical SNSs would be our well-known social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or Twitter. Social Networking sites allow multidimensional interaction between the brand and consumers which

brings more opportunities for brands to build loyalty among people. These communities also cross geographical boundaries which creates a great platform for international communication (Heggde and Shainesh, 2018). Cheng et al. (2020) studied meaningful factors affecting brand loyalty in online communities and found that 'brand loyalty strategies' vary depending on the product. However, what seems to apply in most cases is that people participating in online communities (of brands) are seeking other people with similar interest. This would indicate their interest towards psychological or emotional bond they want to create. This makes sense because often when we have experienced something great or fun, we want to share it with others. And it is even greater if they agree and accompany with our opinions. Since good brand loyalty leads to better brand image, this finding is noteworthy also in the online branding and brand image creation context – consumers form perceptions and act through emotions and feelings, so this is what needs to be thought of with online branding as well. This statement is supported by Campbell and Marks (2015) who claim that in online advertising, and more precisely in the in-feed advertising in social media, the humanity and personal connection between the company and a consumer is the way to success.

But what is different with online branding and brand image compared to traditional activities? Simmons (2007) summarize online branding into four main pillars, three of which apply to traditional branding as well. Those are understanding consumers, interactivity, and marketing communications. The extra pillar that brings the branding to online era is the content. Online content includes everything that is produced online, whether it was text, visuals such as pictures, videos, designs etc. The list goes on. This concept brings us back to influencer marketing since the ground purpose of this marketing technique is to precisely have somebody to produce content in favor of a brand. Social media influencer is also often seen or called as a content creator or a producer as it usually is their job at least partially. To conclude, online brand image as a concept does not differ that much from off-line brand image. The same attributes that affect the brand image also apply in online environment but the path how these attributes, such as brand identity, association, behavior etc. might be reached in a different way. One way could be for example influencer marketing.

2.1.3 Use of influencer marketing for creating brand image

The research literature concerning influencer marketing and its effect on consumers or brands has evolved through research on celebrity marketing. Often in marketing context celebrities and influencers are studied side-to-side or even compared with each other (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al., 2019). However, influencers have already been part of marketing strategies for a while now. In fact, the role of sole promoter has shifted and now an influencer can play an important part on companies' product and communications development (Rundin and Colliander, 2021). Companies can also recruit a former influencer to do their marketing permanently, so it is not unheard of that influencers are starting to take place as credible marketers in today's world.

Social media Influencers are considered as media personas who have a large pool of people following them while simultaneously creating a network on one or more social media channels. Typically, influencers have started as "normal people" but have become "online celebrities" through their content on social media channels (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Influencers are often trusted by their followers and brands are increasingly focusing their market actions on influencer collaborations rather than traditional advertising (de Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). Compared to traditional celebrities, influencers are considered more credible when endorsing products/services, since they typically specialize in something and are seen as experts of some sort (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al., 2019). Celebrities, contrastingly, are often used in advertisement contexts that might not even align with their own profession. For example, an endorsement where an actress is promoting a perfume. The product or service endorsements seem more natural for the consumers when they are woven inside the daily content creation of an influencer. Therefore, it is an effective way to produce electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM) (Abidin, 2016).

Traditionally, word-of-mouth has been classified as local information sharing between people who share their experiences and expectations of a product or a service. This 'old-fashioned' word-of-mouth would take place f.e. at hairdressers' or somewhere where people meet face-to-face. Also, with this traditional WOM there

typically was a “key influencer” who had an opinion on something which this person told some people who then told that opinion forward. This creates a trickle-down effect, when one main opinion maker puts the word forward and it starts to spread through passive recipients. The theory of diffusion explains this situation of few influential people affecting masses (Heggde and Shainesh, 2018). Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) has been found to be an effective marketing technique (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner, 2010), and maybe even one of the most effective influential powers on brand image (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). The explosively increased number of smartphone users as well as easy access to social networks has brought the traditional experience and information sharing to social media (Heggde and Shainesh, 2018). This is relevant for influencer marketing, since SNSs, where also consumer-to-consumer communication and word-of-mouth happens, are often formed through a fandom of a specific subject or persona. In this context, around the social media influencer’s channels, eWOM works not only inside the SNSs that are often formed around an influencer, but the information can move from an influencer to consumers and even vice versa. As stated before, influencers are seen more credible since, before becoming vastly famous, they were normal consumers. Moreover, many of the influencers are not that famous which is why people are more likely to believe in their opinions. This creates an optimal starting point for brands to spread positive information or association of themselves. However, if there is a mismatch between the influencer and the brand, it has negative effects on eWOM and perceived brand image (Qian and Park, 2021). Moreover, contrastingly to traditional WOM, eWOM that often takes place in social media is more interactive which means that there might not always be just one opinion leader. The network and follower base of an influencer can also spread the word elsewhere as well as back to the influencer. (Heggde and Shainesh, 2018) . The authors also bring up the risk of brand alteration and this phenomenon getting out of hands. Sometimes large masses of people can have such a loud voice and power that it can cause harm to brand management or overall set a wrong brand image. This is unfortunate in the cases when something happened due to an accident after which the brand might suffer from overly extensive media scandal. But sometimes the power of large media masses brings out the negative sides of businesses when the aim is to stop for example unethical behavior. For that the phenomenon is also positive.

As a supportive statement to previous notes about online marketing and branding activities, it can be concluded that the more brand advertising content seems like something your friend would publish on social media, the more positive effect it will have on the overall interactions between the consumer and the brand (Campbell and Marks, 2015; Lee, Hosanagar and Nair, 2018). The human characteristics in the online advertising are almost necessary. This is the reason why online influencer marketing has become so popular - it is more effortless to create positive brand associations in collaboration with online personalities people already like and/or follow.

Not always are the influencer endorsements successful or positive. There are several risks and threats involved such as spillover risk due to negative impact or loss of credibility (Aaker et al., 1990) an influencer has caused to the brand by wrong type of behavior. Moreover, quality and content control and ability to build stronger long-term relationships with potential customers become more difficult with influencer endorsements (Leung et al., 2021). The risks lie in the fact that often the content influencer produce is done with their own terms and style, which of course gives them more creative freedom than for example celebrities used for same marketing purposes.

2.1.4 Para-social relationships and how it affects influencer marketing

The findings of influencers and their popularity has led researchers to study the phenomenon further. Why do people see influencers as more authentic and credible than for example traditional celebrities when it comes to recommending products or services? What makes people form SNSs and follow specific influencers every day in social media? When people follow an influencer and repeatedly are exposed to targeted and customized content, they might start developing a deeper connection and relationship with this influencer. In this para-social relationship (PSR), influencer has a great opportunity to also affect people's consumption habits (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Good relationship between a consumer/follower and an influencer, so to say para-social relationship, is also claimed by multiple authors to be one of the most important factors for effective influencer marketing (de Veirman et al., 2017;

Djafarova and Rushworth, 2016). Horton and Wohl cited in Yuan and Lou (2020) determine para-social relationship “--as audiences’ illusory social experiences with media personae”. They state that PSR is based on para-social interaction (PSI) and is seen as a socioemotional bond between a follower and an influencer. The difference with traditional, real-life social relationship is that PSR is one-sided and does not include reciprocity in between influencer and the followers (Calvert & Richards, 2014 cited in Yuan & Lou, 2020)

According to study by (Lin et al., 2021), there was no significant evidence that in endorsement context, the para-social relationship would have improved already positive attitudes towards a brand. Despite this, they found that instead of improving already positive brand perceptions, the para-social relationship would rather improve the bond between a consumer and the brand while maintaining the consumer loyalty towards the brand. This brings us to the conclusion that it is worthy for brands to pay attention that the chosen influencer mainly carries out positive PSRs. The followers are more engaged with an influencer who makes an effort to maintain the relationships which would indicate better chances for higher engagement level with the endorsements as well.

In next section we will go through influencer and endorsement characteristics that would, according to previous research, have a positive effect on brand image. One of the attributes is similarity, which is more connected to para-social relationship theory and therefore discussed here. Lee and Watkins (2016) cites Ballantine and Martin (2005) and claim that perceived similarity between oneself and an influencer increase the chances of para-social interaction to form. Philosophy explains similarity as remarkable concept in cognitive science. It explains many cognitive theories but for this context it is only important to understand that by ‘perceived similarity’ people group similar aspects in their minds and reflect them to for example on themselves. If an influencer is perceived as similar, the observer can sense some similar characteristics between an influencer and oneself. These can be various things such as demographical aspects but also for example interests would apply. Eyal and Rubin (2003) present a theory of homophily which explains the level of how people interact on similar aspects such as beliefs or social status. They state that the more similarities a person finds in oneself with another person, the more

likely it is that they will continue frequent interaction with them. This supports or explains para-social interaction: previous research has found homophily to be an antecedent for para-social relationship (Eyal and Rubin, 2003). Hence, through creating para-social relationships and interaction, similarity can be classified as important for positively affecting brand image.

Another theory that is related to why and how para-social relationship and influencer marketing works, is Self-Concept Clarity (SCC). According to (Campbell et al., 1996) SCC explains the structural aspect of the self-concept. It includes the clarity, confidence, internal consistency, and stability of self-beliefs. Essentially, the concept should explain how a person sees oneself. For example, it answers questions like: Who or what am I? How do I feel about myself? What are my traits or physical attributes? What kind of roles, values and goals do I have? The concept is divided into evaluative and structural characteristics, where evaluative part explains the overall feelings and views of oneself, when the structural part refers to how all the beliefs are organized (Campbell et al., 1996). People who have high SCC feel positively about themselves as well as trust themselves and their knowledge more when it comes to decision-making. Then again, people who have a lower level of SCC, tend to search for external cues to help their decision-making (Burger and Guadagno, 2003). This way people with lower SCC are more vulnerable to interpersonal influences (Isaksen and Roper, 2008; Qian and Park, 2021). This might be one of the reasons why especially young adults are idolizing and believing these influencers more easily – this group of people are typically more confused and even lost with themselves which would open a good opportunity for influencing. Qian and Park (2021) also found a connection to influencer-brand matching. Their research concluded that people who had higher level of SCC, clearer feelings about themselves and stronger knowledge, tended to react more strongly towards perceived poor fit between the brand and an endorser. To put it simply, those people are more skeptical towards the endorsements. This concludes that great influencer-brand match would matter even more for people who have higher SCC.

2.2 Evaluating successful endorsement and influencer characteristics

Researchers have previously presented factors that are repeatedly found meaningful for positive brand image building through endorsements. Some of them are for example trustworthiness, expertise, physical appearance, respect, and similarity. These factors are form a TEARS model that was used in research about celebrity characteristics and their effect on brand image (Chan et al., 2021). The authors stated that this model would be more suitable for their context since the study took place in Malaysia, Asia. Respect and similarity are more valued in the Asian culture and therefore added to accompany “more traditional” metrics of this evaluation. Especially, respect is seen a common norm in Asia and for example celebrities often arouse respect in people. These two attributes, however, would be suitable variables to study even more further in other countries and cultures. In fact, and to support the statement of previous section considering para-social relationships, Breves et al., (2019) and (Lee and Watkins, (2016) have found similarity to affect endorsement perceptions positively. Next, we will go through some other influential attributes as well as the rest of TEARS model attributes. Discussion for the importance for the topic will be provided.

2.2.1 Follower-count and likeability

As we can understand, the more followers an influencer has, the broader reach is the endorsement campaign likely to have. A presentable number of followers have been found to offer optimal starting point for successful endorsement and increase likeability, but large follower base alone does not yet guarantee anything (Janssen et al., 2022). Likeability of an influencer is also one factor that enhances the positive brand image creation. What brings additional perspective to follower number and its benefits is something related to psychology. According to de Veirman et al. (2017) it is more difficult for people to evaluate credible source, which results in people being more dependent on cues and heuristics while assessing influencers and their credibility on social media. This means, the information that is the quickest and easiest to digest, will be absorbed and learned first. This theory would support the fact that for example number of followers is fast and “superficial” information. Consumers use rather this kind of easy information for making judgements (Metzger

et al., 2010). A new, potential follower comes across with this media persona and notices there are a lot of other people following this person. *There must be a good reason why all these people are following the account.* Another fast cue people can base their judgements on is the visuality of the account as well as the looks of the influencer. The challenge is that the aesthetics that one finds attractive, the other finds not. In this situation, it is up to the brand what kind of people (and simultaneously the aesthetics) they would like to “talk” to.

Despite this theory, in some cases, on social media channels, smaller follower-count might be even seen as more positive than large number of followers (Westerman et al., 2012). The reason for this might be the assumption of an influencer being more relatable and credible before being highly popular. One could think that the larger follower base, the more likely it is the influencer uses it to earn money which increases skepticism towards authenticity. Wei et al. (2021) indicate that the reason why companies might recruit macro influencers is to maximize revenue and increase the number of potential customers. However, the engagement of large audience can be quite challenging, hence the use of micro-influencer marketing has become more popular. They cite McEachern (2020) to further state that through micro-influencer the branding messages are often targeted for smaller and more specific group of people. Having more focused targeting in influencer marketing seems to result in the higher engagement rate with followers/potential customers.

2.2.2 Motive

Since influencer marketing is quite well-known concept already and many people do endorsements for living, it might not be as easy to influence people as it used to be. People know that influencers need money from somewhere. Do the influencers only endorse this brand because of money, or do they actually believe in product? This makes the consumers wonder about the motive of the influencer which is another factor that affects the endorsement perceptions. As a matter of fact, it has been found to be a key determinant that affects the effectiveness of an influencer endorsement (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2016). Kelly (1972) and (Rifon, Sejung, Trimble and Li (2004) cited in Shan, Chen and Lin (2020) explains motive to stem from attribution theory where “--individuals make causal inferences of other’s

behaviors by attributing beliefs, perceptions, and intentions". Perceived influencer motive reflects of what consumers believe or what are their causal inferences on why influencer is promoting a product/service. Due to the increase in influencer marketing, it has become more difficult for consumer to differentiate between electronic word-of-mouth and subjective endorsement. Therefore, it is now required in many countries, Finland as well, from the influencer to clearly state if the created content is in collaboration with a separate brand (Shan et al., 2020).

Shan et al. (2020) also found through their research that the positive association the influencer might have generated for the brand by the endorsement could be destroyed if the motive is found or perceived to be egocentric and not genuine. They also state that influencer collaborations tend to keep consumers on their tip toes and pay more attention to promotional messages. Related to this, Rifon et al. (2004) present a theory according to which a consumers' level of information processing increases if they feel skepticism towards the endorsement. This creates a challenge for influencer marketing because it is not always certain that if the influencer is well-liked then people will also have positive feelings towards the advertisement. For a long-term follower it is easy to recognize whether the promoted product/service is in line with the interests of the influencer. They can see if the brand match is good, and it is more likely that the influencer would genuinely like to recommend this product/service to other people. If the brand and influencer do not match, it makes both the influencer's motive and brands marketing to look questionable. To conclude, a wrong kind of influencer motive can also affect the endorsed brand and perceived brand image negatively.

2.2.3 Expertise and Trustworthiness

Adding additional features to the mix; Kamins (1990) found through their study that if consumers had information of influencer liking and being knowledgeable about the products they were endorsing, it increased the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the influencer. These two aspects, perceived expertise and the trust consumers have for influencers, are important factors for influencer's reputation (Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020). This, of course, is meaningful not only for the influencer but also for companies because when they start to plan a social media

campaign and want to hire an influencer to endorse a product or service, it is the reputation through which they first start to look for an appropriate influencer for the endorsement. However, it is good to acknowledge that, for example according to Mayer et al. (1995) cited in (Yeon, Park and Lee, 2019), trust is a subjective concept.

According to (Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020), one's level of expertise measures the knowledge this person has about a certain topic. It can also involve a great experience on this topic or even problem-solving skills. The author states that expertise is typically something that only few people can reach and therefore the expert people stand up from the crowd. The issue is that unfortunately it is easy to manipulate expertise on social media. For example, Chrisci and Kassinove (2010) found that perceived level of expertise was higher when a psychologist used "Dr." instead of "Mr." before his name. These kinds of manipulations are easy to apply for getting more followers or seem more experienced than one really is. Therefore, both consumers and companies need to evaluate carefully of how authentic the influencer is. In addition to this, it can be debated whether expertise really is that important in influencer campaigns. Or at least whether the impact for brand image is that remarkable. The thing is that in today's social media, the most liked influencers might not even have certain skills or expertise in something that is rare. There are plenty of influencers who are great at creating content from their regular daily lives or doing gym sessions. And moreover, there are more of this type of influencers emerging every year. (Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020) state that there exists contrasting research findings about the importance of expertise, and found that whereas the two other attributes of the source credibility model were more important - trustworthiness first and attractiveness after - the level of influencer's expertise did not matter as much. Especially trustworthiness was found as the most important factor if the goal was to improve brand image, brand trust and brand satisfaction.

Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2020) claim trustworthiness to have a tight connection with honesty. Influencers are seen trustworthy if they can communicate their honest opinions about different things such as phenomena, products, services etc. Although, the typical assumption would be that a people with higher 'abstract credibility', prestige, would be more credible than the ones with lower prestige,

Walster, Aronson and Abrahams (1966) proved otherwise. They found that it is more impactful when the purposes for communicating something are not necessarily of best interest for the communicator/influencer. This means that it valued more, if the influencer is selfless – the fame and prestige come after.

Expertise and trustworthiness, alongside attractiveness are also presented as two main pillars of source credibility model by Hovland et al. (1982) and Ohanian (1990) presented in Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2020)

2.2.4 Source credibility

Credibility is also determined to be an important factor for evaluating influencers as well as for creating positive brand image associations. Its position as an impactful factor can be approached in several angles since for example Breves et al. (2019) state that for having a credible reputation, influencer should pay attention to their endorsements and that these collaborations match to who they are and what they present. This statement leaves the responsibility for the influencer but the question is, will all the influencers turn down large sums of money just because the brand was not precisely what they tend to represent? Probably they will not. Inversely, the endorsement itself and influencer-brand match will be perceived as better if the influencer is seen credible.

Breves et al. (2019) also discuss about the source credibility model which considers the factors that affect the perceived credibility of a communicator such as an influencer. As already stated earlier, many aspects in the brand-matching context affect in many directions. Regarding source credibility model, the original author claims that expertise, trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness are the main factors for individually perceived source credibility (Ohanian, 1990). There are, however, different opinions and studies conducted in terms of what are the most important factors for source credibility. As stated in previous section, Wiedmann & Mettenheim, (2021) did not find endorser expertise to play that relevant role in source credibility model whereas for example McGuire (1985) concluded it to be the most important factor. Moreover, Amos, Holmes and Strutton (2008) presented this following order for the most influential factors for source credibility: 1. Negative

information about the influencer 2. Trustworthiness 3. Expertise 4. Attractiveness. Furthermore, multiple authors connect this concept to the match-up hypothesis, that will be looked onto in the next chapter. For example, Kamins (1990) have found that perceived fit between the endorser/influencer and the brand leads to better source credibility.

A study by Munnukka, Uusitalo and Toivonen (2016) present a conceptual model that summarizes the factors they found to be affective for source credibility (Figure 1). More precisely it presents the factors for peer-endorser credibility and effects on brand and advertisement attitudes. Their study is in line with the findings of Amos et al. (2008) and Ohanian (1990) but suggest that trustworthiness and similarity play the most important role for peer-endorser credibility. Yuan and Lou (2020) also based their research on Munnukka et al.'s (2016) conceptual model while they simultaneously studied the connections to para-social relationship. Interestingly, they found that attractiveness and similarity are the most important factors for building para-social relationships. Authors claim that source credibility and justice are “the two important elements in interpersonal interaction”. This suggests that source credibility is also relevant for para-social relationships and vice versa. Furthermore, they found that a good communication process between the influencer and the follower is indispensable for para-social relationship. Of course, this is then connected to perceived source credibility and brand image of endorsed brand.

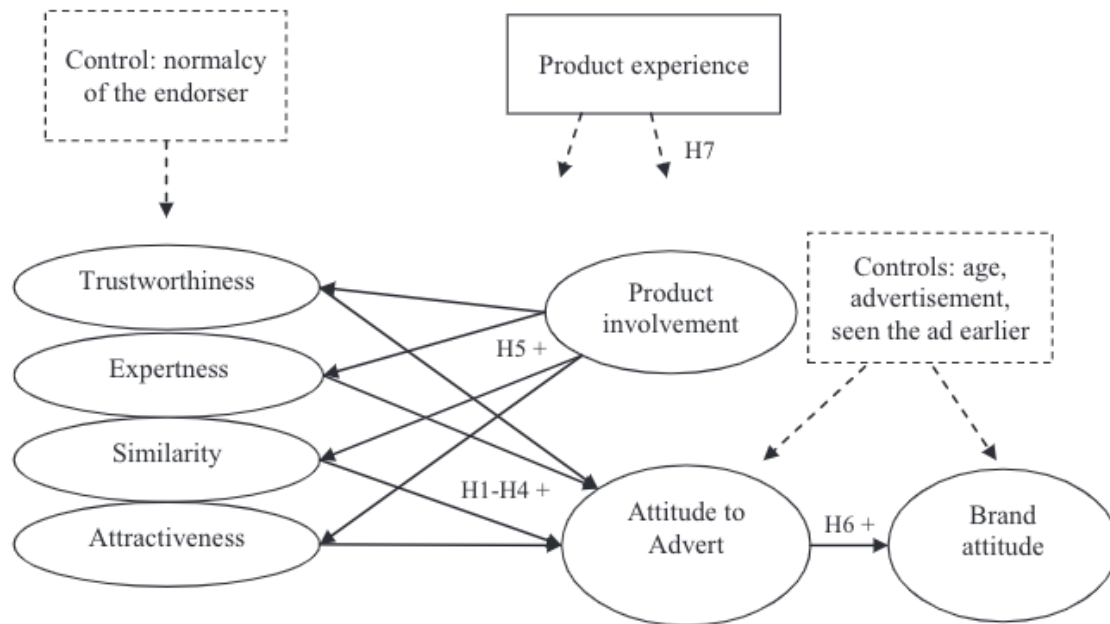


Figure 1. Conceptual model, (Munnukka et al., 2016): “The formation of peer-endorser credibility and its effect on attitudes toward the advertisement and the brand”.

The perceptions of what makes an influencer credible vary to some extent but what is meaningful is that overall, it is seen important to have a credible influencer to promote the brand if the goal is to reach for positive brand associations.

2.2.5 Influencer-brand fit

As stated, influencer-brand fit affects source credibility but it also has an impact on its own on the overall perception of the endorsement and brand image. Bergkvist et al. (2016) present views on influencer (celebrity-)brand fit from a different angle. They studied consumers’ attitudes towards the endorsement itself. They found that three variables of brand attitudes were remarkable: the expertise of the celebrity, the match between the brand and a celebrity as well as the motive of the celebrity. The study has slightly different context due to researching celebrity-brand match instead of influencers, but it still offers related insights for influencer-brand matching. They also found that from consumer perspective it is meaningful that the endorser is interested in the collaboration because the product or service has great quality, and not only for the money they make from it. This enhances the fact that different characteristics of the influencer as well as the nature of the endorsement have

impact not only on the brand image but also on each other. All the discussed factors create a multidimensional map of connections which is important for understanding the complexity of successful influencer selection for a brand.

2.3 Theories supporting influencer-brand fit

Research shows that the positive effect that brand initiated influencer marketing has is only as good as the match between the influencer and the brand (Qian and Park, 2021). In previous section discussion has focused on some endorsement or influencer attributes that affect the consumer perceptions on a great endorsement, and which might affect the perceived influencer-brand match as well as brand image. In following section, the understanding and the statements of previous section will be enhanced through relevant theories and frameworks that are repeatedly mentioned in influencer marketing research.

2.3.1 The match-up hypothesis

The match-up hypothesis (Kahle and Homer, 1985) is perhaps one of the earliest research projects done to investigate the endorsements and their functionality. The main focus of the study was to investigate whether the appearance has positive effect on the receiver/consumer perceptions, but the results were adaptable to other contexts as well. The hypothesis has been also studied and reviewed in latter studies. For instance, in his research Kamins (1990) focused on whether the physical appearance has an impact on a successful endorsement and that way an effect on perceived brand image. According to the study, the appearance or attractiveness does matter and affect positively the whole endorsement especially when the product/brand is appearance related (f.e. beauty product). However, when the endorsed product/service was not about appearance or attractiveness, it was not impactful either if the endorser was remarkably attractive or not. This same study strengthened the earlier findings by Kahle and Homer (1985) that indicate the importance of endorser and product/service characteristics being in line. When it comes to the findings about attractiveness affecting the consumer perceptions about the advert and the brand, it needs to be taken into consideration that the study and research by Kamins (1990) is over 30 years old. The world and humankind have changed which means we might not fit in the description of described consumer behavior or attitude forming as back in the days. Therefore, it is possible that attractiveness of an influencer has lost its position for being affecting attributor for match-up hypothesis even in the beauty industry. Despite this, previous research

has shown that attractiveness as well as similarity have been factors creating a phenomenon we now know as para-social relationship (Bond, 2018). Returning to the study and to conclude; the match-up hypothesis would suggest that to improve brand image through influencer campaigns, influencer should have clear and relevant connection to the brand or endorsed product. Even though the match-up hypothesis by Kamins focused on the appearance, it leads to conclusions of what Kahle and Homer had already generalized before. Therefore, the concept represents overall match between the endorser and the endorsed product/service.

2.3.2 Categorization theory & The schema congruence

Categorisation theory (Cohen and Basu, 1987) suggests that the knowledge consumers have of products or services are formed through the structures in our memory. When individuals learn something new, they evaluate new information via the category which their mind connects it to. Our minds connect the previous category information and helps with the evaluation of new information. Category-based information processing is said to enhance efficiency and cognitive stability (Sujan, 1985). But how this connects to influencer marketing and brand image creation? If people have already positive or relevant information about the endorser in their minds, and they associate the product/service to this influencer, it is easier and more likely they will form positive or wanted attitudes towards the brand as well. The information linked together in the same category is called a schema. Then according to schema congruence, people form brand images based on the associations stored in their memory (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). For our minds, congruency is easy to form which means our minds rather accept supportive objects to put into information categories. This all concludes that if the incoming information about a product has same characteristics as the endorser promoting the product (that people might know beforehand), consumers are likely to form positive associations towards the brand and form a better brand image (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). In addition, category-based information processing leads us to think about influencer selection and follower count. So, the theory leads us to conclude that people who follow an influencer should also like the influencer at some level. This means that the followers are more likely to think also about the endorsements more positively than non-followers. This is an insight worthy to take into

consideration while deciding whether to have the influencer on brand's own channels and pages or their own platforms. Is the target group same as the follower base of the selected influencer?

2.3.3 Meaning transfer

Meaning transfer is a theory that supports categorisation theory and schema congruence. The idea is similar; meanings are grouped in entities and when two entities are linked, such as a brand and an endorser, the meanings transfer from one entity to another (McCracken, 1989; Qian and Park, 2021). Therefore, brands can base their influencer selection on what kind of meanings (associations) they want to create for people's minds. Simultaneously, the knowledge of a brand is improved. (Keller, 2003). Meaning transfer is relevant for changing or strengthening brand image and as Aaker, Keller and Lane (1990) state, the brand extensions work in a same way; the extension, for example a new product line under the name of well-established brand, benefits from the image of a parent brand since the consumers associate quality or other parent brand attributes with the extension. This same logic can be applied with influencer-brand matching as well. However, yet again, for positive meaning transfer it is crucial that there is relevance between the influencer and the brand/product that is endorsed. A poor match inhibits positive meaning transfer and can cause negative associations towards the brand (Martinez and Chernatony, 2004).

2.3.4 Theoretical framework & hypotheses

This theoretical framework has been created to illustrate the findings of literature review and conclude elements of creating optimal environment and specific factors affecting successful influencer marketing. Successful, in this context, is classified as the optimal influencer-brand match to improve positive image of the brand that the influencer is endorsing. The theoretical framework pictures the two-way communication that is happening between the brand and the influencer as well as the influencer and the consumer. Para-social relationship, eWOM and SNS's are phenomena that either help with the interaction between the consumer and the influencer or even create an environment for smoother information transaction. Here

influencer has had a brand message to forward which moves to the consumers' end through these three intermediaries. The influencer characteristics (smaller blue boxes) are factors influencing how positively the influencer message is perceived. These characteristics are also important for the brand message the influencer is forwarding. Hence, after these points of intermediary communication platforms/aspects (PSR's, eWOM and SNS's) as well as perceived influencer characteristics, the consumer forms his/her/their own perception on the brand that is endorsed.

Even though the purpose of this study is to determine impactful influencer characteristics for the formulation of positive brand image, it is important to understand that there are other external factors affecting how well and effectively the wanted message is received. Hence, these aspects are taken along in the framework.

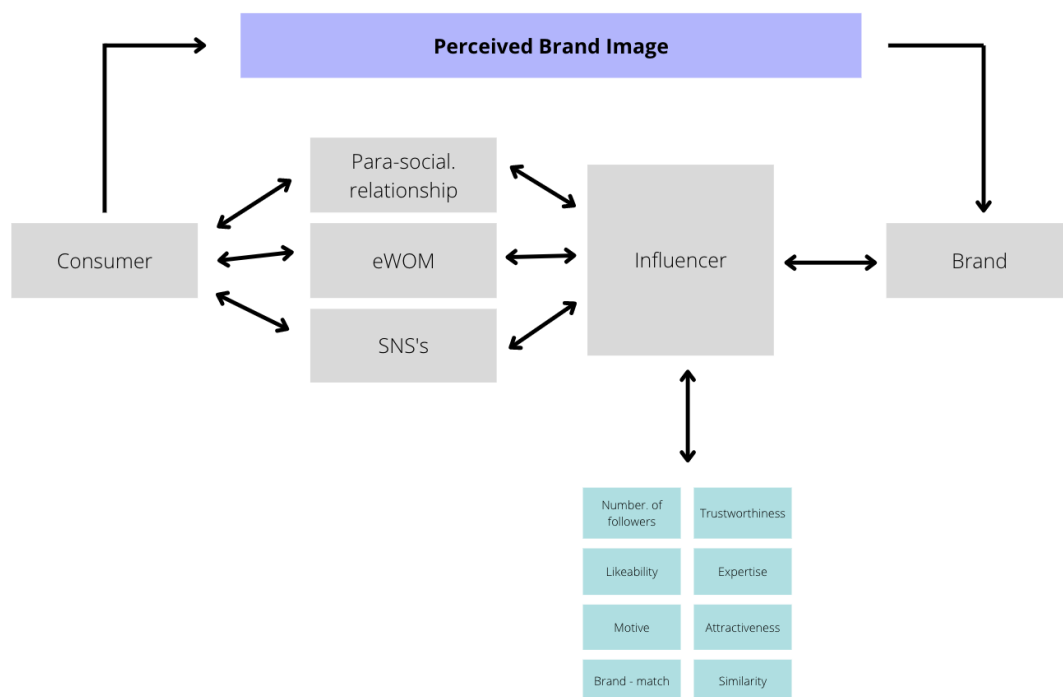


Figure 2. Theoretical framework – formulation of perceived brand image through influencer endorsement

2.4 Hypotheses

Based on the findings through literature review, benchmarking hypotheses model used in the study by Chan et al. (2021) and discussion about the chosen and relevant variables for this study, the research hypotheses are:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's trustworthiness and Paulig's brand image.

H2: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's expertise and Paulig's brand image.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's attractiveness and Paulig's brand image.

H4: There is a positive relationship between the perceived influencer similarity and Paulig's brand image.

H5: There is a positive relationship between influencer motive and Paulig's brand image.

H6: There is a positive relationship between the influencer-brand match and Paulig's brand image.

H7: Influencer characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, motive and match) are predictors of Paulig's brand image.

H8: Positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable is stronger when the respondent is a follower.

Hypotheses 1 - 6 are also shown in the theoretical framework. More discussion about the chosen variables and operationalization of the hypothesis will follow in the Methodology section.

3. Methodology

This chapter will explain the primary research which purpose is to provide further understanding on influencer marketing and influencer selection or social media campaigns. The object of this primary research is to determine whether the influencer characteristics, that were found as relevant for building brand image through literature review, have similar impact on perceived brand image in Finland as they have had in previous research. As literature review and theoretical framework has shown, there are many factors that play an important role in evaluating successful influencer selection. Moreover, this research aims to find out whether there are differences with the perceptions between the people who follow the influencer who is in the campaign versus the people who do not follow the influencer. To ensure concise and reliable results, some of the factors discussed in the literature review have been grouped together and some have been left out from this field study. The following sections will explain the methodological position, the research design process, hypotheses as well as the reasons for certain decisions regarding the research.

3.1 Methodological position

Research of influencer marketing has taken its place among academics and especially the number of published articles has grown massively after 2017, as shown by the review of Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi and Thrassou (2021). From their sample of 68 research papers about influencer marketing 6% were theoretical and 94% were empirical research. From these 94%, the amount of research following quantitative research methods was 81%. Hence, it seems quantitative research methods are more popular in the context of influencer marketing research.

In this case, for relevant results the research needs a fair number of responses. Therefore, it is more convenient to conduct a survey that is more likely have larger sample. Typically, a quantitative research method is convenient when the number of studied people is large (Holton III and Burnett, 2005). Moreover, the field study includes many different variables, and the aim is to reveal the connection of these for perceived brand image. According to Saunders (2009) cited in Kumar (2012)

quantitative research is supposed to form statistical relationships out of simple variables by using complex statistical modelling. Kumar (2012) further cites Cooper and Schindler (2006) while summarizing quantitative methods to be helpful in describing, explaining, and predicting a specific phenomenon. In the light of these statements about quantitative research and its functionality in similar research cases, this method is also chosen for this research.

The focus points of influencer marketing related research often vary. For example, studies may have been created for exploring the impact of influencer marketing on customer purchase intentions or brand loyalty (Lin, Crowe, Pierre and Lee, n.d.; Saini, Sharma, Gupta and Verma, 2021.. Or then the focus might have been on the source credibility of an influencer or para-social relationship (Breves et al., 2019; Shan et al., 2020). The differences between these research are obvious but their relevance for each other is remarkable. As the previous literature shows, and as presented in the literature review, the concept of branding and affecting factors form a multidimensional entity where it is difficult to determine what is the cause and what is the effect. The focus of this study is to explore what affects perceived brand image when it comes to influencer marketing and more precisely, what are the characteristics of an influencer that matter.

The typical way through which studies of influencer marketing have approached quantitative research, is to first select an influencer and a brand/product this influencer has promoted. In the beginning of research this combination is presented and the respondent could be provided with additional information of the influencer and/or the product/brand. After this, the example is followed by set of questions regarding the respondent's perceptions on the influencer and the brand. This method is used for example by Chan et al. (2021), Qian and Park (2021), Munnukka et al. (2016) and Belanche et al., (2021). Another way is to apply the same method but instead of real people or influencers the researchers can create fictional characters and influencer campaigns. A few examples of this style are presented by Till and Busler (2000) and de Veirman et al. (2017). For this study, the method is applied by using a real-life influencer and a campaign with brand that has actually happened. The field study will follow the research by (Chan et al., 2021) for inspiration and comparison.

3.2 Research design and chosen variables

This quantitative research will partially follow the same path as the study by (Chan et al., 2021) which explored ‘the influence of celebrity endorser characteristics on brand image’. The authors utilized a smartphone brand and a celebrity endorsement campaign as a stimulus in the questionnaire. The research studied both respondent perceptions on the celebrity but also the perceived brand image. For the latter part Chan et al. (2021) adapted brand image measurement related items to their questionnaire from the study of (Malik, Sudhakar and Dutta 2017. These measurements are also used in this research. There are a few reasons why the study was not strictly replicated for this research. Firstly, the brand and product are different in this research, so they fit better for the Finnish context. The aim of this is to study specifically how Finnish consumers perceive influencer marketing and its effects on brand image. Hence, this modification was made accordingly. Secondly, four out of five independent variables from Chan et al. (2021) survey model which are also in line with literature, were adapted for this conducted survey. As the authors explained, their research was based on the TEARS model which was originally created by Shimp (2003). The model considers five endorser characteristics that are the most meaningful for endorser’s success: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity. The variable of endorser respect has been identified important especially in the Asian context. It was suitable for Chan et al.’s research since it was conducted in Malaysia and this characteristic is highly valued in Asian culture. However, because this research takes place in Finland, there is not enough evidence that respect, as a variable, would be as relevant attribute to implement in this case, nor in other Western countries. Other variables that have been handled in the literature review emerged in the existing research more often. In order to keep the primary research in reasonable measures, few eliminations must be done regarding all possible variables. Therefore, ‘respect’ has been left out from this research.

The four adopted variables, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and similarity have, contrastingly, appeared to be relevant in other research as well. For example, the theory considering source credibility discusses trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness being some of the most influential factors affecting

influencer/endorser credibility (Amos et al., 2008; Munnukka et al., 2016; Ohanian, 1990). In addition, Munnukka et al. (2016) identified similarity to stand out as a remarkable factor which was supported for example by the findings of (Yuan and Lou, 2020) who also identified appearance to be one of the key influential factors. Simultaneously, source credibility has been identified to have an impact on influencer-brand perceptions (Erdogan, 1999; McGuire, 1985). Since other four factors (trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and similarity) are highly connected to source credibility, these variables are grouped under source credibility attribute and source credibility itself will not be its own variable in the questionnaire. This will be presented in the modified conceptual framework of the hypotheses (Figure 3).

Djafarova and Rushworth (2016) as well as Shan et al. (2020) point out the influence that endorser motive has on consumer perceptions. If the motive is perceived egoistic or non-genuine behind the endorsement, it can negatively affect the otherwise positive feelings towards the brand that the endorser has created through the endorsement. To support the importance of motive, (Bergkvist et al., 2016), determine endorser motive, expertise and endorser-brand fit to be the most impactful factors that form the overall endorsement perceptions in consumers' minds. Therefore, motive was also chosen as one of the variables for the questionnaire. In this context we hypothesize that precisely motive that is perceived good/positive has positive relation to the perceived brand image.

The last variable, which often is mentioned in relevant literature, is also often a result when the other so far mentioned meaningful variables are reached and combined together. It is the overall perceived fit or match between the brand and the influencer. Regardless of the fact that other variables form the good match between the brand and the influencer, one can perceive influencer as attractive, similar and trustworthy even though the brand is not perceived a good match for this specific influencer. For example, among many others, Kahle and Homer (1985) and Qian and Park (2021) have identified that for perceived endorsement success it is very important that there is match between the brand and the influencer. Poor matching makes neither the brand nor the influencer look good for consumers. Due to its fundamentality for

building positive impact for brand image and perceptions toward influencer marketing, influencer-brand match is the last variable for the research questionnaire.

Finally, as the aim of the study is to find out how all the independent variables (IV) affect the perceived brand image as dependent variable (DV), the last set of questions has been formed around brand image.

To conclude this explanation, the set of chosen variables (influencer characteristics) for this research study are:

1. Trustworthiness (IV)
2. Expertise (IV)
3. Attractiveness (IV)
4. Similarity (IV)
5. Motive (IV)
6. Influencer-brand match (IV)
- +
7. Brand image (DV)

Some of the impactful factors mentioned in the literature review has been left out of the conducted survey. One of them is likeability. Likeability, if explained in a simple way, means how effortless it is for a consumer to like something or somebody. In this case we are considering influencer likeability which has been found to affect the perceptions of endorsements and influencer marketing. However, the level of how liked an influencer is, is a sum of many things. For example, Bakker (2018) presents likeability to be one of two components that is included in attractiveness. The other one is similarity. Since both components themselves are included in the study as measured variables, it was not seen as relevant to add likeability as its own variable. Another variable left out, is the number of followers that an influencer has. Firstly, only one influencer will be used as stimulus in the survey, so there are no reliable resources to compare the impact of low, medium or high follower count. Secondly, there is contrasting literature depending on whether for example large number of followers affects the perceived endorsement positively (Janssen et al., 2022; Westerman et al., 2012). The decision was made to leave this variable out of the questionnaire.

After explaining background for the variable selection process there are some aspects that need to be noticed regarding this research. First, there would have been many other variables that could have been used for the research. As stated, the topic of research is complex and multidimensional which means there could have been other ways to approach the issue and form the used research methods. However, it is not a rational decision to explore all the possible variables that might affect the perceived brand image through influencer marketing at the same time. To narrow the study, and also keep the questionnaire respondent friendly and within reasonable length, only the most relevant variables for this case were chosen. Moreover, it remains for further research to find out relevant variables that are proved to be relevant in Finnish context. As this research is inspired by studies made abroad and as the aim is to see if the findings of previous literature are applicable to Finnish context, there were no Finland-specified variables taken into this survey.

3.3 Data collection & procedure

3.3.1 Sampling

The research adopted purposive sampling method which is a form of non-probability sampling. This means that the researchers subjective judgement determines which units will be selected or what kind of criteria the validated responses will have. (Rai and Thapa, 2015).

Chan et al. (2021) used a purposive sampling method and in the beginning of survey they ask respondents whether they a) owned the item of the endorsed brand and b) knew the endorser. The similar, and context modified questions, were applied in this research as well. In this research criterium for validated response was that the respondent knows the brand (Paulig). The sample was supposed to be Finnish consumers and therefore the survey language is also Finnish. Contrastingly, as Chan et al. (2021) only validated respondents who were aware of the endorser, in this research both yes and no answers are validated and considered in the analysis. This research wants to determine whether there is difference between people who follow the influencer versus people who do not. The reasoning for this is that even though the influencer might have been chosen for the social media campaign by how many followers this person has, often the campaign is created to be suitable also for non-followers. Social media posts can even be advertised so that the post will be pushed and promoted to people who fit the target group of the campaign. This is so-called behavior-targeting collects demographic information of social media users' accounts to find the optimal recipients for the advertisements (Li et al., 2014). There were no limitations for age or gender, but this information was collected in the beginning of the survey in order to make further analyses and conclusions between the groups, if needed. The identity of the respondents was not asked in the questionnaire so that the data would not be connected to individuals and their answers would be protected. In the beginning of the survey the respondents were informed that all the responses are anonymous.

The respondents answered the questionnaire voluntarily and in total 236 people finished the survey. Since every respondent stated they knew the brand (Paulig),

every response was accordingly valid. This can be resulted in the final sample size of $n=236$.

Table 1. - Descriptives

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Your age	236	19	71	26.59	8.541	72.949
Valid N (listwise)	236					

Count

		Choose which one describes you better		Total
		I follow this influencer (miisa) on Social Media	I do not follow this influencer (Miisa) on Social Media	
Your gender?	Woman	50	129	179
	Man	3	53	56
	Other	0	1	1
Total		53	183	236

75,9% (179) of respondents identifies themselves as women, 23,7% (56) as men and 0,4% (1) as other. This means that most respondents were female which will be taken into account in the analysis part. Regarding the age range of the respondents, the youngest survey participant was 19 years old and the oldest 71. The mean of respondents' age was 26,59. The results hence mostly represent the perspective of young adults and people who represent the same age group as the influencer in question. The mean for age under 30 years old was predictable since the channels for collecting responses were mainly social networks of the author from majority of which are represented by people in their twenties.

One of the two screening questions was whether the respondent followed Miisa on social media. From all the respondents, 22% followed Miisa when 78% did not. From descriptive statistics we can conclude that 28% of female respondents followed Miisa and only 5% of male respondent's followed her. From this we can say that it

is more likely that a randomly picked follower of Miisa is female or that the overall majority of Miisa's followers are females. However, since non-followers were the larger group to respond this survey, we must inspect the results from their point of view and generalize accordingly.

3.3.2 Procedure

The survey was created in Webropol survey tool and spread through link over the author's personal network. In addition, it was stated that one may share the link in one's own network. Hence the sampling framework (Malhotra, Nunan and Birks, 2017, p.415) was digital networks of the author as well as her acquaintances. Used channels included LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. Typically, quantitative research, such as descriptive surveys would require larger sample size. Moreover, the guide for sufficient sample size should be considered through reflecting sample sizes of similar studies (Malhotra et al. 2017, p.417). Sample sizes in other, similar studies have been varying. For example, in some previous research the samples have been as follows: n=89 (Kamins, 1990), n=160 (Shen, Program, Fang and Yang, 2015), n=207 (Chan et al., 2021), n=212 and 213 (Till and Busler, 2000) or n=396 (Lee and Watkins, 2016). The average for a sample size would be around 200 in this context. The goal was to collect as many responses as possible, since the larger sampling size the lesser is likelihood for sampling errors (Taherdoost, 2016).

The collection of responses went on until wanted number of valid responses were collected. In the end the collection of data went on from 30th of May to July 13th.

3.3.3 Survey structure

The survey consisted of 6 independent variables or scales that were followed by one dependent variable or scale. Each of the scales were studied with three statements that respondents were required to answer. Hence, in addition to screening questions there were 7 x 3 (=21) statements related to the variables. Answers were collected by using Five-point Likert-style scale that consisted of following answer options: (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree. The survey structure included two sections. Before the first

section was brief introduction to the study, estimated time of completion as well as assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. The first section itself had screening questions about respondent's demographics and their relationship with the influencer and the brand. Only the responses where the respondent knows the brand are qualified for the analysis.

3.3.4 Scales and items

In this section all the items in the scales will be reasoned or explained. Since the original survey language was Finnish, are the scales and items translated here in English. The original version is attached in appendix.

Trustworthiness

1. *I believe this influencer is honest in the campaign / Uskon että tämä vaikuttaja on kampanjassaan rehellinen*

Trustworthiness has been presented to have tight connection to honesty Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2021).

2. *I believe that this influencer likes the product as well / Uskon, että vaikuttaja pitää myös itse kyseessä olevasta tuotteesta*

Kamins (1990) recognized that impacts positively on perceived trustworthiness when the endorser likes the promoted product.

3. *I believe the influencer wants good for others / Uskon, että vaikuttaja haluaa muille hyvää*

Doney and Cannon (1997) define trust through dimensions, one of which being the benevolence. It measures the level of interest one party has for other party's welfare or joint gain.

Expertise

1. *I believe the influencer has great knowledge of Paulig and coffee in general / Uskon, että vaikuttajalla on merkittävästi tietoa Pauligista ja kahvista yleisesti*
2. *I believe the influencer has experience of the brand and coffee / Uskon, että vaikuttajalla on kokemusta brändistä ja kahvista*

3. *I believe influencer has problemsolving-skills related to these topics / Uskon, että vaikuttajalla on hyvä ongelmanratkaisukyky näihin aiheisiin liittyvien haasteiden kanssa*

All the items in this scale are based on how Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2021) have explained perceived expertise of a person. They state that knowledge of the topic, experience and problem-solving skills are some affecting factors

Attractiveness

1. *I think the influencer is physically attractive / Mielestäni vaikuttaja on ulkoisesti viehättävä*

This item strictly addresses the perceived attractiveness of the influencer.

2. *I think there is something in common between the influencer and myself / Mielestäni minun ja vaikuttajan välillä on jotain yhteistä*

This is explained by the statement of Tantisenepong (2012) in Agam, Nigol and Agam (2017) according to which consumers tend to see the endorser as attractive when they sense something in common between themselves and the endorser.

3. *I think the influencer looks credible / Mielestäni vaikuttaja näyttää uskottavalta*

According to (Ohanian, 1990) physical attractiveness is connected positively to perceived credibility of an endorser.

Similarity

1. *I think there are similar characteristics between myself and the influencer / Mielestäni minussa ja vaikuttajassa on samoja piirteitä*
2. *The influencer and I have similar interests / Minulla ja vaikuttajalla on samoja mielenkiinnon kohteita*
3. *I can identify with the influencer / Voin samaistua vaikuttajaan*

For example, Munnukka et al. (2016) characterize similarity to explain how the recipient and the source are seen similar (consumer and influencer). The similarities can be demographical and ideological. The items in this scale are not

retrieved from a ready-made scale; they are rather formed by using subjective consideration for what would be most relevant for the scale.

Motive

1. *I believe the influencer is happy to be connected to the brand / Uskon, että vaikuttaja tulee mielellään liitetyksi kyseiseen brändiin*

Shan et al. (2020) state that in process of consumer evaluating endorser's motive, they seek the cause or motive that would explain their willingness to be connected to the brand.

2. *I believe this influencer did not do this endorsement only because of money / Uskon, että vaikuttaja ei tehnyt tätä kampanjaa vain rahan takia*

This item is inspired by the scale item which was used in the research by (Rifon et al., 2004): "5) social media influencers recommend brands because they ultimately only care about their profits" Since in this research we study whether influencer motive has a positive impact on the perceived brand image, one could assume that the motive, as well, should be positive and genuine. Therefore, the formation of the item has been modified to suit the purpose.

3. *I believe the influencer is selfless by nature (and this shows in her brand collaborations) / Uskon, että vaikuttaja on luonteeltaan epäitsekäs (ja tämä näkyy hänen brändiyhteistöissään)*

In this context, influencer motive is perceived through the consumers view on why influencer is promoting a product or service.

Shan et. al. (2020) state that egocentric or non-genuine motives can ruin a good endorsement and views of a brand. Therefore, the items aim to explore the respondent perceptions whether the influencer seems genuine and selfless.

Influencer-brand match

1. *I think the endorsed brand and the influencer make a good match / Mielestäni mainostettu brändi ja vaikuttaja sopivat hyvin yhteen*
2. *I think the brand and the influencer represent similar values/style / Mielestäni brändi ja vaikuttaja edustavat samankaltaisia arvoja/samankaltaista tyyliä*

3. *I think the influencer could use the products of this brand or be in the target group of this brand / Mielestäni vaikuttaja voisi käyttää brändin tuotetta/olla brändin kohderyhmää*

The match-up hypothesis suggests that the effectiveness of an endorsement is dependent on the congruence (the match) between the brand and the influencer. Simply, it means how recipient experience the fit. Now, since the match itself is often studied through the other variables that are used in this questionnaire, right here the approach with the statements is more straightforward. The goal is to generalize whether the respondent sees the influencer and the brand a great match. The middle statement measures the perceived congruence and the last one refers to how genuine or logical the match might seem. It might not be a good match if the influencer does not belong to the target group of the brand. For example, a fitness influencer might not typically promote a fast-food brand if he/she/they does not usually consume the brand.

Brand image

1. *I really like this brand / Pidän kovasti tästä brändistä*

This item is taken from the brand image scale from Malik et. al. (2017).

2. *I think the brand has great reputation / Mielestäni tällä brändillä on hyvä maine*

Wijaya. (2013) connects brand reputation to one important factor in building positive brand image.

3. *My feelings/thoughts for this brand are mainly positive / Tunteeni/ajatukseni brändiä kohtaan ovat pääasiassa positiivisia*

The last item aims to generalize positive feelings towards the brand and for this reason are straight-forward.

3.3.5 The example influencer and the brand in the survey

The chosen social media influencer for this study is Miisa Grekov who goes by the username 'mmissas' on social media. By the time this survey was conducted Miisa still used her maiden name, Rotola-Pukkila, hence it is stated accordingly in the survey questionnaire. She started creating content on Youtube and is currently one of the most popular Finnish social media influencers. Mainly, she creates lifestyle content on her channels. At the time when the survey was published, she had nearly 440 thousand followers on Instagram and nearly 380 followers on Youtube. Besides creating content for social media and collaborating with brand, Miisa has published her own calendar (with side products), created her own handbag collection with Lovia, competed in Dancing with the Stars TV-show and hosted Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu (New Music Contest) in the spring 2022 (manageme.fi, n.d.) The reason why Miisa was wanted and chosen for this study is that the larger follower base an influencer has, the more likely it is that the survey sample will have more respondents who already follow Miisa. The permission for the usage of her Instagram campaign pictures and text was requested and accepted.

The main reason why Miisa was chosen for this research is because she is one of the most well-known influencers in Finland. The goal was to reach as many followers as possible to take part in the survey. If we take the word from Wei and Liang (2021) who state that micro-influencer is a media personality with under 100 000 followers, then Miisa would not be a micro-influencer anymore. However, there is a difference whether a person is a mid-size- or macro influencer or a celebrity. Another source sets the limit of a "premium influencer" to 500 000 followers and "mega-influencer/celebrity" to 1 000 000 followers (Caitlin, 2021). Wei and Liang (2021) state that often the followers of micro-influencers represent narrower pool of age and gender whereas the followers of celebrities might not even care about the content that the celebrity is publishing – they just view it. This theory is also applicable when comparing influencer like Miisa to huge celebrities. Of course the influencer's style and content matter here as well, but it is more fruitful to at least aim for choosing an influencer that is genuine and people have paid attention to.

The brand and example collaboration used in the survey was chosen to be Paulig. Paulig is a Finnish brand that operates internationally and produces different food concepts and products but is perhaps known for their coffee products and concepts, for example cafes (paulig.fi). The Instagram campaign produced in collaboration with Miisa promoted their new Café Singapore which came out during the fall 2021. The Instagram post was published on Miisa's Instagram account on the 27th of October 2021, and it consisted of four pictures as well as short text underneath. The pictures and the text (original and translated) will be found from the Appendix. As stated, the pictures and the text were shown right in the beginning of the questionnaire and on every page in the survey until the end. This way the respondents were able to go back to pictures at any time. This might have been useful for example with the questions about influencer attractiveness and match with the brand.

3.4 Methods of analysis

The Webropol survey responses were converted into numerical data once the collection of responses was over. The numerical data was then analysed with SPSS. Before moving onto actual analysis, the validity and reliability test was performed to ensure the analysis and the results would be reliable. Next, we had to choose the best method for analysing correlation between variables. There are multiple ways to analyse correlation, but the method must be chosen to suit for data type. Two analyses were thought of: Pearson's correlation as well as multiple regression analysis. However, multiple regression analysis does not support the data of this research hence Pearson's correlation (r) is the chosen method. This way of analysis is sufficient to tell us if there is positive correlation coefficient between the dependent variable (brand image) and any of the independent variables (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, motive and brand-match). Pearson's correlation, or Product moment correlation, is one of the most used statistics to measure association between two variables that are either interval or ratio -scaled (Malhotra et al., 2017).

3.5 Validity and reliability tests

According to Kumar (2012) it is necessary to report Cronbach Alpha (α) measures of the data, especially when the used survey method has been a Likert-type scale. Without the alpha values, the reliability of the results cannot be determined as valid or known. Below there will presentation of Cronbach Alphas calculated for each of the seven scales. The measures are collected in an excel sheet to make it easier to compare with one another.

Table 2 – Cronbach's Alphas (α) of the variables

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Trustworthiness	.780
Expertise	.699
Attractiveness	.735
Similarity	.902
Motive	.612
Brand-match	.787
Brand image	.720

Cronbach's Alpha (α) values range from 0 to 1 and typically a value greater than 0.60 is considered acceptable for analysis. This leads us to a conclusion that all the scales in this survey were reliable. Only the scale 'Motive' is close to a minimum acceptable value ($\alpha = .612$) whereas similarity scored the best ($\alpha = .902$). Cronbach's Alpha can also be used to test the items inside the scales and whether they are fitting to the scale or not. The results can be read from the values of 'Cronbach's Alpha when the item is deleted'. If this value is higher than the general Cronbach's Alpha of the scale that item belongs to, would the general value be better without that specific variable (Laerd Statistics a). Following tables will show the 'Alpha if item deleted' -values.

Table 3. – Validity and reliability test values of the variables

Scale – trustworthiness

Item–Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I believe this influencer is honest in the campaign	7.9364	2.179	.646	.420	.670
I believe this influencer likes the product as well	7.8856	2.357	.626	.397	.692
I believe the influencer wants good for others	7.4746	2.480	.580	.337	.740

Scale- Expertise

Item–Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I believe the influencer has great knowledge of Paulig and coffee in general	6.9958	2.336	.525	.276	.594
I believe the influencer has experience of the brand and coffee	5.9322	2.591	.499	.249	.627
I believe the influencer has problem solving skills related to these topics	6.6568	2.286	.522	.273	.598

Scale- Attractiveness

Item–Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I think the influencer is physically attractive	6.9322	3.434	.511	.261	.714
I think there is something in common between the influencer and myself	8.0932	2.204	.605	.370	.610
I think the influencer looks credible	7.2373	2.735	.601	.363	.599

Scale- Similarity

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I think there are similar characteristics between myself and the influencer	6.0763	4.096	.820	.672	.847
The influencer and I have similar interests	5.7966	4.588	.795	.633	.871
I can identify with the influencer	6.0254	4.050	.806	.651	.860

Scale – Motive

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I believe the influencer is happy to be connected to the brand	5.9915	3.123	.348	.122	.615
I believe this influencer did not do this endorsement only because of money	7.5000	1.902	.465	.226	.460
I believe the influencer is selfless by nature (and this shows in her brand collaborations)	6.9492	2.253	.485	.237	.416

Brand match

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I think the endorsed brand and the influencer make a good match	7.9195	1.964	.699	.510	.632
I think the brand and the influencer represent the same similar values/style	8.3305	1.839	.671	.491	.664
I think the influencer could use the products of this brand or be in the target group of this brand	7.5042	2.421	.525	.278	.812

Scale – Brand image

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I really like this brand	8.4831	1.442	.505	.256	.735
I think the brand has a great reputation	7.8432	2.048	.573	.370	.618
My feelings/thoughts towards this brand are mainly positive	7.8347	1.875	.605	.398	.568

There were three items without of which the Alpha scores of three separate scales would have been higher. Firstly, the first item in 'Motive' scale: *I believe the influencer is happy to be connected to the brand*. The Alpha value would grow from .612 to .615 if this item was removed. Secondly, the last (third) item in 'Brand match' scale: *I think the influencer could use products of this brand or be in the target group of this brand*. The Alpha value would grow from .787 to .812 if this item was removed. And finally, the scale of 'Brand image': *I really like this brand*. The Alpha value would grow from .720 to .735 if this item was removed. Despite these values, the variables were decided to take into the analysis since the differences were small. Therefore, we can conclude that the scales were internally consistent and valid for the analysis. In addition to this, every statement and question in the survey was set as mandatory, to eliminate missing responses. Hence, it is not possible that this act was made for data cleansing (Malhotra et al. 2017, p.541)

4. Findings

After making sure the data was appropriate for analysis, the aim was to figure out how the existence of independent variables predict the dependent variable. The table below shows the correlations when n=236, meaning both followers' and non-followers' responses are taken into the analysis.

The findings are represented in the following tables. Pearson's r values are highlighted with colorful boxes where strong correlation with perceived brand image is presented with green, moderate correlation is presented with yellow, slight correlation is presented with red and insignificant correlation is presented with black.

Table 4. Correlation coefficient - all respondents

		Correlations						
		All - Trustworthiness	All - Expertise	All - Attractiveness	All - Similarity	All - Motive	All - Influencer-brand match	All - Brand image
All - Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	1	.625**	.595**	.499**	.683**	.514**	.271**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
All - Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1	.539**	.410**	.584**	.514**	.303**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
All - Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	.595**	.539**	1	.774**	.632**	.550**	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
All - Similarity	Pearson Correlation	.499**	.410**	.774**	1	.586**	.443**	.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	.057
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
All - Motive	Pearson Correlation	.683**	.584**	.632**	.586**	1	.580**	.297**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
All - Influencer-brand match	Pearson Correlation	.514**	.514**	.550**	.443**	.580**	1	.432**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
All - Brand image	Pearson Correlation	.271**	.303**	.226**	.124	.297**	.432**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.057	<.001	<.001	
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236

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

Since the aim was also to figure out whether the results differ between the followers and non-followers, the similar test, Pearson's correlation coefficient, was taken separately from these two groups. Just like for general correlation results, new variables had been formed through calculating the mean scores from each three variables in each scale. This way, we had new variables to analyze with each other. To have correct analyses for followers' and non-followers' responses, we had to

form new scales including only those responses of sample group in question (either followers or non-followers).

Table 5. Correlation coefficient – followers

		Correlations						
		Followers – Trustworthiness	Followers – Expertise	Followers – Attractiveness	Followers – Similarity	Followers – Motive	Followers – Influencer-brand match	Followers_BrandImage
Followers – Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	1	.514**	.475**	.321*	.563**	.337*	.344*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	.019	<.001	.014	.012
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
Followers – Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.514**	1	.500**	.378**	.498**	.612**	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	.005	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
Followers – Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	.475**	.500**	1	.788**	.655**	.420**	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	.002	.008
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
Followers – Similarity	Pearson Correlation	.321*	.378**	.788**	1	.529**	.308*	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.005	<.001		<.001	.025	.007
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
Followers – Motive	Pearson Correlation	.563**	.498**	.655**	.529**	1	.512**	.518**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
Followers – Influencer-brand match	Pearson Correlation	.337*	.612**	.420**	.308*	.512**	1	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	<.001	.002	.025	<.001		<.001
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
Followers_BrandImage	Pearson Correlation	.344*	.507**	.362**	.364**	.518**	.667**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	<.001	.008	.007	<.001	<.001	
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Correlation coefficient - non-followers

		Correlations						
		Non-followers – Trustworthiness	Non-followers – Expertise	Non-followers – Attractiveness	Non-followers – Similarity	Non-followers – Motive	Non-followers – Influencer-brand match	Non-followers – Brand image
Non-followers – Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	1	.605**	.522**	.426**	.675**	.503**	.246**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Non-followers – Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.605**	1	.473**	.314**	.554**	.448**	.227**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.002
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Non-followers – Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	.522**	.473**	1	.712**	.565**	.537**	.183*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	.013
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Non-followers – Similarity	Pearson Correlation	.426**	.314**	.712**	1	.526**	.416**	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	.656
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Non-followers – Motive	Pearson Correlation	.675**	.554**	.565**	.526**	1	.569**	.213**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	.004
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Non-followers – Influencer-brand match	Pearson Correlation	.503**	.448**	.537**	.416**	.569**	1	.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183
Non-followers – Brand image	Pearson Correlation	.246**	.227**	.183*	.033	.213**	.368**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.002	.013	.656	.004	<.001	
	N	183	183	183	183	183	183	183

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As Pearson's correlation values vary between -1 and 1, the closer value is to -1, the more negative the correlation is. And vice versa; the closer value is to 1, the more positive the correlation is. According to Laerd Statistics b (n.d.) the correlation coefficient would be considered large (strong) if the value was .500 or more. Correlation coefficient is seen moderate if the value is between .300 and .500. Values under .300 are considered as weak.

Further notices from table values: p values determine whether the correlation between two variables is significant. In Table 4, the correlation is significant if the p value exceeds value of .01. In Table 4, all the other correlations were found significant except the correlation between similarity and brand image. The p value was .05 and correlation coefficient was in line with a value .124. In Table 5 and 6 there were two significance levels given, $p=.01$ and $p=0.05$. In followers group all the correlations were significant whereas in non-followers' group correlation between similarity and brand image did not reach the given significance level ($p=.656$).

Moving onto correlations between independent variables and the dependent variable. As we can see from Table 4 representing all respondents, all correlations are positive, hence all the independent variables have a positive effect on the dependent variable (brand image). However, in most cases the correlations are not very strong, and one correlation (between similarity and brand image) was found insignificant. There is moderate correlation between perceived brand image and expertise ($r = .303$) as well as brand match ($r = .432$). In addition, motive was close to having moderate correlation with brand image ($r = .297$).

The analysis found three strong correlations with brand image within the followers' group (Table 5). The results suggests that expertise ($r = .507$) and motive of an influencer ($r = .518$) as well as influencer-brand match ($r = .667$) have a strong positive correlation with perceived brand image when the respondent is a follower of the influencer. From these, the brand-match was the most significantly correlated variable. Expertise, motive and brand-match were also the highest scoring independent variables among all respondents, although in Table 4 the values were lower. This means the correlation was stronger within followers' group. What is

different compared to all respondents and non-followers, is that all the correlations in followers' group had at least a moderate level of positive correlation with brand image.

Within the group of non-followers, only brand match had resulted as having moderate correlation with brand image ($r = .368$). Rest of the values were between .183 and .246 except for similarity which had remarkably low value of .033. This was the lowest value in all the analysis results, and it also had very high p value ($p = .650$). It could be concluded that within this group of respondents, there was nearly zero correlation between similarity and brand image and therefore it was also found insignificant. Even though the correlations with other variables and brand image were weak with non-followers, they all were positive.

In the light of the results with the groups of followers and non-follower, *H8: Positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable is stronger when the respondent is a follower* is supported. The results show that the correlations between independent variables and dependent variable are significantly stronger regarding followers' responses than compared to non-followers' responses.

Each independent variable and their correlation with brand image will be inspected more thoroughly in the discussion section. Otherwise, Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis revealed interesting results regarding independent variables alone. It seems like they are often more correlated with one another than with brand image. This is intriguing but not very surprising. In the end, these are characteristics of the same influencer (except for the brand-match and brand image of course), so it makes sense that for example the higher expertise scores, the higher will also trustworthiness score. However, the correlation that scored the highest in all groups (all, followers, and non-followers) was between similarity and attractiveness ($r > .700$). The results suggest that people's perception of influencer's attractiveness is "strongly" in line with how similar they perceive themselves to the influencer. To put it simply, it is likely that the more attractive one finds an influencer, the more one can relate and feel similarity with the influencer. Or vice versa. Again, this is an interesting finding, but does not necessarily bring us closer to finding answers to

research questions of this study. These correlations can still be useful if companies wonder whether some characteristics of an influencer support their goals with the campaign.

5. Discussion

In discussion section every independent variable will be looked at in the light of previous academic research and theory as well as how it had resulted within the primary research in this study. The analysis results will be reflected with the hypotheses that were formulated after literature review and whether they came through with this research. The table below shows the summary of the results on all the hypotheses.

Table 7. Summary of the hypotheses' results

Hypothesis	Supported / Not Supported
H1: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's trustworthiness and Paulig's brand image.	Supported
H2: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's expertise and Paulig's brand image.	Supported
H3: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's attractiveness and Paulig's brand image.	Supported
H4: There is a positive relationship between the perceived influencer similarity and Paulig's brand image.	Not Supported
H5: There is a positive relationship between influencer motive and Paulig's brand image.	Supported
H6: There is a positive relationship between the influencer-brand match and Paulig's brand image.	Supported
H7: Influencer characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, motive and match) are predictors of Paulig's brand image.	Not (fully) Supported
H8: Positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable is stronger when the respondent is a follower.	Supported

Trustworthiness

Previous research has found influencer trustworthiness to be one of the most meaningful aspects affecting perceived brand image (Kamins, 1990; Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020). This research showed that in Finnish context it does have a slight positive impact on perceived brand image, but the impact is not very strong. The effect will only be moderate if the person is a follower of this influencer. We could conclude that when evaluating appropriate influencer for a company's

campaign, trustworthiness is relevant characteristic to consider if the campaign targets the followers of this influencer.

People consider an influencer trustworthy when this person shows their liking of knowledge of the endorsed product/service (Kamins, 1990). Going further, (Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020) found trustworthiness to be related to honesty. Influencer is seen as honest if they can express their genuine opinions about. Everything - also the subjects of paid collaboration. These findings might support what was found through this primary research; trustworthiness had fairly high correlation values with other independent values such as expertise and motive. This makes sense if we think of all of the variables together: *An influencer is seen trustworthy when he/she/they have strong expertise in the area of an endorsement. People trust their expertise and willingness to maintain their reputation which would result in more genuine motive.* This is, of course, very simplified and straight forward analysis, but it would make sense considering the theory and the results here. An interesting fact was, that these correlations with other independent variables were the strongest within respondents who were not followers of this influencer. As mentioned in the literature review, many of the variables discussed in the concept of optimal influencer. Selection for creating positive brand image, are often related to each other. Hence, this is a multidimensional concept. It is not very surprising that many of the variables correlate with one another but why are the correlations the strongest with non-followers? One possible explanation for this could be that when a non-follower does not know the influencer that is talked and asked questions about, the evaluation is based on their impressions and feelings. For example, source credibility model by (Ohanian (1990) suggests that trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity are all puzzle pieces of this bigger entity. This way it will make sense if people group them together for evaluating source credibility. In the end, credibility and trustworthiness do represent similar traits in person.

Despite great correlations with other independent variables, the correlation between trustworthiness and brand image did not reach even the moderate level regarding the whole sample. If compared to other variables, trustworthiness places as fourth (4/6) most relevant factor affecting perceived brand image within the group of all

respondents. Still, there is slight positive correlation which can be meaningful to think of in the long run of brand image creation. Hence, *H1: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's trustworthiness and Paulig's brand image* is supported

Expertise

Previous research has grouped expertise for example with trustworthiness attractiveness which altogether are part in creating source credibility (Ohanian, 1990). As (Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020) had stated, influencer expertise is often linked to how people perceive an influencer having knowledge on specific topic. Moreover, problem solving skills and experience within this topic increase the perceived expertise. This independent variable was found to have positive correlation with perceived brand image in Finnish context. The correlation score with brand image was the second highest among the studied variables and reached the moderate level. Just like trustworthiness, did expertise also correlate strongly with other independent variables (trustworthiness, attractiveness, motive, and brand match).

The results hence suggest that if the influencer has expertise within the topic or are of the campaign, it will positively impact the brand image. Now the research set up and context need to be considered critically for a few reasons. Miisa Grekov is a lifestyle focused influencer and hence does not specify in any specific are of interest like make-up of fitness. This does, however, work fine with the endorsed brand and the product which in this case was coffee. Coffee is a very commonly used product in Finland. As Miisa is not an expert within coffee business but rather a normal Finnish consumer that probably has a good experience and knowledge of coffee but nothing extraordinary, can she be seen as an expert in this situation, and can the results be generalized in this case? Regarding this variable the mean score of responses had the value of 3,2 making it very average within the 5-point Likert-type-scale (1 being highly disagree and 5 being highly agree). So, in this case Miisa was not seen either a huge expert in the topic or "non-expert". Despite this, since the values of brand image and expertise had formed a good correlation and were in a

positive line, can this variable be concluded as a meaningful influencer characteristic for creating positive brand image.

If we look at the followers and non-followers separately, there is significant difference with the scores. Within the followers' group, expertise reached the strong correlation with brand image whereas within non-followers group the score did not reach even moderate correlation level. This would indicate that for followers it is more meaningful that the influencer knows something about the topic she/he/they is campaigning about. Followers seem to trust the influencer and the opinions more compared to non-followers. So, if a company wanted to target the follower group of the influencer, they should make sure that the influencer has some extent of expertise of the industry/product/service they are marketing. Regarding non-followers, the effect is not that big, but still has positive correlation on perceived brand image. Hence, *H2: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's expertise and Paulig's brand image* is supported.

Attractiveness

Moving onto attractiveness. This variable had been found to play an important role for example in source credibility (Ohanian, 1990) but it has often been mentioned to come after trustworthiness and expertise when building a source credibility. According to (Amos et al., 2008) attractiveness was the fourth most influential factor affecting source credibility after trustworthiness, expertise, and negative information about the influencer. Then again, Yuan and Lou (2020) found that attractiveness alongside similarity would be the most influential factors in building para-social relationships.

In this study, attractiveness was found only slightly correlated with brand image in Finnish context. This variable was the fifth most correlated factor among the variables (5/6) when the last one was not found significant. The correlation was again positive but not very strong. The results would suggest that the way an influencer is attractive or not does only have a slight positive impact on the perceived brand image.

Something that needs to be taken into consideration is that perceived attractiveness is subjective. This means that other people might find something attractive that others do not. Moreover, people might think of attractiveness differently; others might give more weight on the physical features rather than the personality, which is more important for others. So, this might have affected the results even though the scale for attractiveness was formed of three questions concerning different possible views on the attractiveness.

Regarding followers and non-followers; again for followers the correlation with brand image was stronger. The value reached moderate level while the correlation within non-followers' group remained on the weaker level. Yet, both were positive. The same conclusion repeats and for followers it seems to have more positive effect on brand image if the endorsing influencer is attractive in their opinion. Hence, *H3: There is a positive relationship between the influencer's attractiveness and Paulig's brand image* is supported.

Correlations between independent variables follow the same pattern as with previously discussed variables but there was something interesting related to what also Yuan and Lou (2020) had found before. There was significant correlation between attractiveness and similarity within all the groups (all respondents, followers, and non-followers). This suggests that the similar a person finds oneself with the influencer the more attractive they also perceive the influencer. And vice versa. The finding makes you think about the attractiveness aspect a little more; even though the finding by Yuan and Lou (2020) editorialize the para-social relationship and its formulation, I think this is something that needs to be studied in Finnish context. The finding itself, in this primary study, does not tell whether people mean physical attractiveness or overall attractiveness, but it would make more sense that people find this influencer more attractive than present normality and that they can relate to. Therefore, similarity is that strongly correlated with attractiveness. So, as a conclusion and something to think about for companies is that perhaps while choosing the influencer, it might not always be the most effective to hire the most attractive influencer physically. Wiser would be to think about what normal Finnish people find attractive and what kind of persona they can relate to. This might have more positive and long-lasting results regarding the brand image. Of course,

it might depend as well that what kind of industry/product/service we are talking about.

Similarity

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, similarity has been found to be linked with attractiveness (Amos et al., 2008; Yuan and Lou, 2020). Regarding the correlation results, similarity had the poorest scores and was found not significant withing the group of all respondents. The same applied with non-followers' group making it irrelevant for creating positive brand image regarding these two groups of people. Therefore, it was the least influential variable regarding perceived brand image (6/6). However, within followers' group the correlation reached moderate level with perceived brand image. This means that it is more likely the followers will perceive the endorsed brand image more positive if they feel similarity with the influencer. It is easier to believe what an influencer is saying about a brand when people feel like they have something in common with the influencer or that they can relate to her/him/them. Because this variable could not be found significant nor correlated with brand image, the *H4: There is a positive relationship between the perceived influencer similarity and Paulig's brand image* is not supported.

With all the other variables similarity had at least moderate correlation within every group of respondents. This shows that similarity is a significant part of this mix of influencer characteristics and how are they perceived. Even though this variable may not have a straight impact on brand image, it does affect all other variables that are more correlated on perceived brand image. Therefore, it would not be necessary to ditch it completely while evaluating influencers. Regarding correlation coefficients, similarity was found to be most correlated with motive. It is more challenging to point out what this might be an effect of since there was no evidence in the previous research of topic literature that these two variables would be related or form another concept in this subject.

Motive

When it comes to motive, there has been previous findings about this variable to have a great impact on the effectiveness of an endorsement (Djafarova and

Rushworth, 2016). By effectiveness it is meant most likely, that the influencer endorsement would lead on more awareness of the brand or increased customers/sales of the product/service due to the endorsement. Even though, it does not necessarily mean that effective endorsement equals to positive brand image, it must have positive impact on it. This would support the findings that show the following: within followers' group the correlation with perceived brand image was strongly positive while within all respondents and non-followers, the correlation was slight but still positive. Within all respondents' group the Pearson's r value was .297 so it was very close of being on a moderate level. This variable was found as third most influential variable for perceived positive brand image within all respondents group (3/6). Hence, *H5: There is a positive relationship between influencer motive and Paulig's brand image* is supported.

A general conclusion out of these results would be that for followers it is more important that the intentions of an influencer are good and genuine whereas for non-followers and Finnish people in general, it does not matter that much. This is in line with other results that we have discussed so far; the followers tend to be more serious about the characteristics of the person they are following and be more critical towards the endorsements that the influencer proceeds with. They know the influencer better and have stronger para-social relationship with them. So, this makes sense in the light of the theory.

Motive had also quite strong correlations with other variables. Interesting was that within the non-followers' group, the correlation with expertise was higher than the same combination within followers' group. This is unusual in the light of rest of the results and how the variables have resulted within these groups. To put it simply, for non-follower, influencer's good motive has more positive effect on perceived expertise and vice versa. The reason why this might be true is that if a person does not know much about an influencer, they probably do not like nor dislike the person in the first place. So, the emotional starting point is very neutral while long-term follower might have more emotions stirring the pot. Let's use an example of an influencer who does fishing and has published a fishing equipment endorsement. It is an easy thing to notice from an influencer's social media profile, or the way they write, whether they do fish or not. It makes them more reliable and expert-like if they

are promoting something they are experts in. It also makes more sense that they would accept campaigns that are in line with their interest, and they probably would not recommend a bad product if they were considered an expert at the topic. As, (Shan et al., 2020) had found, bad motives behind endorsements might create a serious risk for an influencer's reputation. Through common sense we can assume that an influencer who does endorsements for living and has a significant follower base, would not risk their career like that. Therefore, the correlation between motive and expertise might have had exceptional results compared to other correlations within non-followers' group.

Influencer-brand match

The final independent variable was brand match. This is an interesting variable since it practically summarizes all the other variables into one. Of course, there would be more factors affecting how well the influencer is seen as a match with the endorsed brand, but other independent variables do have an impact on it. Therefore, it was found to be the most correlated variable to affect positive perceptions on brand image (1/6). Within all respondents' group, the correlation was moderate (close to strong), within followers the correlation was strong and within non-followers the correlation was moderate. Hence, *H6: There is a positive relationship between the influencer-brand match and Paulig's brand image* is supported.

From all the independent variables it is nice to know which one is the most impactful in terms of perceived brand image. But just knowing that it is the perceived match between the brand and the influencer does not take us far. How do we know if the match is good, and can we evaluate it through other variables?

If we look at the correlations between brand match and other independent variables in all respondent's group, the results do not vary that much. Pearson's r values are between .400 and .600. The strongest correlations were with motive and attractiveness which are interesting results. Both motive and attractiveness did have strong correlation with all the other independent variables, but they were not the most influential in terms of perceived brand image. Within followers' group, correlations were highest with motive and expertise. And finally, among non-

followers, the best correlations with brand match were with motive and attractiveness. Hence, motive seems to impact strongly on how good of a match an influencer and the brand is seen. As stated previously, motive was also found to be important factor in different ways, for example for non-followers. But if we were to evaluate whether an influencer creates a good match with a specific brand, we would need to think about what kind of collaborations the influencer would genuinely like to make and what would match her/his/their interests. For this, we would need to think about the areas of expertise of that influencer as well as whether our brand's target group can feel similarity with this influencer. Moreover, it is worthy to think about the influencer's personality and social media presence and if that is potentially in line with what Finnish people or the target group of a brand finds attractive in people.

Predicting variables

As the analysis results and the discussion shows, there are both significant and insignificant correlations between the chosen independent variables and dependent variable. The only factor or variable that did not correlate enough to have significant relationship with perceived brand image was similarity. However, this is enough for us to conclude that *H7: Influencer characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, motive and brand match) are predictors of Paulig's brand image* is not supported.. The results suggest that all the other factors related to influencer have at least a slight positive relationship with Paulig's brand image. However, the H7 was not supported in Finnish context and with this research set up.

Table 8. Summary: Comparison of the extant studies' and findings of this study

Findings	Previous research	Finnish context
Trustworthiness	One of the most influential for perceived brand image, related with influencer liking and knowing about the product, connected with honesty.	Only a slight positive correlation with perceived brand image, fairly high correlation with f.e. expertise and motive.
Expertise	One part of source credibility, it is linked to how people perceive an influencer having knowledge about something.	Moderate level of correlation with perceived positive brand image, might be linked on the fact that people perceive the influencer being somewhat knowledgeable about the brand. Strong correlations with other variables.
Attractiveness	Important role in source credibility, also important for para-social relationships. It is connected with similarity as a variable.	Only a slight positive correlations with perceived brand image, not very affective compared to other variables. Strong correlation with similarity.
Similarity	Connected to attractiveness as a variable.	No significant correlation with perceived brand image within all respondents, moderate correlation within followers' group. Connected moderately to other variables.
Motive	Has an impact on the effectiveness of the endorsement, a bad motive creates a risk for the endorser's reputation.	Strong positive correlation within followers' group, a slight positive correlation with all respondents and non-followers. Connected to other variables as well.
Influencer-brand match	Other variables "create" this variable, it is seen as one the most fundamental aspect for successful influencer marketing.	The most correlating variable (out of the studied variables) with perceived positive brand image, had a moderate correlation within all respondents' group. Had also good correlations with other variables.

6. Conclusions

In the conclusions section we will take a final look on the analysis and bring the results together. In addition to this we will reflect on the aim of this research and finally answer the research questions stated in the beginning of this study.

Previous research has proven many different aspects of influencer marketing and influencer itself to have an impact on whether the viewers of an influencer campaign will perceive the image of the promoted brand more positively. The aim of this research was to "determine the most influential factors of an influencer and the influencer-brand match that have a positive impact on the brand image". This led us to the first research question which will be answered next.

What are the factors that should help brands choose social media influencers to promote their products / services and simultaneously improve brand image among consumers?

In the findings and discussion sections we stated the most influential factors affecting brand image to be influencer characteristics/factors in the following order: influencer-brand match, influencer expertise, influencer motive, influencer trustworthiness, influencer attractiveness and similarity with influencer. Here, in Finnish context, the most meaningful factor was influencer brand-match, the second most meaningful was expertise, and so on. As stated, sense of similarity with the influencer was not found to have significant effect on how people perceive a brand image of promoted brand.

All the mentioned independent variables, except for similarity, that characterize social media influencers, should guide companies and brands to select the most relevant and suitable social media persona to collaborate with. All the variables resulted to have positive relationship with perceived positive brand image. At the same time, even though similarity did not show relevance for positive brand image, it did have relevant correlation with other variables, hence it should not be ignored as a guiding characteristic.

As the result comparison with different groups of people (followers, non-followers and both) showed, it is clear that the meaningful variables that should help the brand choose the influencers are different between these groups. Therefore, the brand needs to evaluate who is it targeting and think about the meaningful variables after that. Overall finding is, that since correlations are clearer and stronger within followers' group, the usage of studied characteristics is more applicable when the influencer campaign is targeted towards the followers of the influencer.

What are the building blocks of a great influencer-brand match and to what extent it affects perceived brand image?

The conclusion out of the results is that first and foremost it would be important to find an influencer that creates a good match with the brand. Comparing other independent variables and their correlations with brand match we found out what had the strongest correlations with it. It turned out that motive and attractiveness were the most important influencer characteristics that are related with brand match. Therefore, if a company wants to find an influencer to match their brand, they should first think about influencer's motive. What is important for people, is that the influencer cares about what is put out on her/his/their social channels and that they want to share honest opinions on brands. Every influencer may not like your brand, but we are closer to find an influencer who would like to give a genuine (and a good) review and promotion on your brand if it somehow matches the interests of the content style of this influencer.

As discussed in this paper, attractiveness might mean different things for different people. The conclusion from this study is that in Finnish context attractiveness also includes how normal, rational and relatable an influencer seems like. This is perhaps why attractiveness was strongly correlated with similarity even though similarity as a variable did not connect to perceived brand image.

It is important to remember that most relevant variables vary depending on whether we are targeting "all Finnish people", the followers of a specific influencer, or the people who do not follow this person. It must be uncommon to collaborate with an influencer whose follower base would not be taken advantage of, but it is insightful to realize how to please the non-followers' group with the same campaign that is

mainly targeted towards the followers of this influencer. Hence, it is the easiest option to reflect on what majority (“all Finnish people = all respondents”) think rather than just either or. Of course, it also depends on the marketing style – is the campaign only launched on the social media channel of this influencer, or maybe on the company’s social media page, or both? Or is the campaign perhaps launched as an ad when it’s not published in anyone’s account?

To answer the second part of the research question; to what extent does brand match affect brand image, the short answer is ‘to moderate extent’. This is what the analytics told us but smart thing to do is to look beyond that. A good brand match affects perceived brand image positively on a moderate level, but what if the match went terribly wrong? The negative effect of failed brand matching is supposedly more remarkable than the positive effect of successful brand match. The conclusion is that paying attention to with whom your brand is collaborating with has effect on your brand’s image and should therefore be taken seriously.

Do the factors differentiate among Finnish consumers compared to general research findings?

The study result revealed that there are differences on what factors in an influencer affect the perceived brand image. Other factors that have been found influential for perceived brand image were for example follower-count, likeability, and credibility of an influencer. However, these factors were not studied in this research so we cannot conclude these would not have an effect. Otherwise, regarding which influencer characteristics affect the perceived brand image, there are no right and clear answers as to which one is the most important. The reason for this is that often the research has studied how certain characteristics have affected influencer-brand fit or brand attitudes. This means that they do not strictly focus on the effect on perceived brand image even though they are tightly connected to the topic.

For example, (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2016) found that motive has an impact on the effectiveness of influencer endorsement. (Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020) then stated that expertise and trustworthiness affect influencer’s reputation. They, along side of Hovland et al. (1982) and Ohanian (1990) (Wiedmann and von

Mettenheim, 2020), present these factors and attractiveness to form the main pillars of source credibility model. Considering the model, there were differing opinions on what was influential and what not; McGuire (1985) claimed expertise to be the most important while Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2020) did not agree on that.

Then again, Munnukka et al (2016) found that attractiveness and similarity were the most important factors for forming para-social relationships. Finally, Bergkvist et al. (2016) concluded that (concerning celebrity endorsements) expertise, brand-match, and motive were to affect the endorsement perceptions the most.

So, there have been much research around the topic that have not presented the same results. This is also why it was challenging to pick up the possibly most relevant variables that might affect peoples' opinions on brand image through influencer campaign. The closest similar research by (Chan et al., 2021) used TEARS model to study peoples' perceptions on celebrity characteristics and how they might have affected brand image. They found out that in that context, which was significantly different compared to this research in Finland, all the variables had positive and significant relationship with brand image. Furthermore, they state that the main attribute to affect brand image was the trustworthiness of the influencer. In Finnish context trustworthiness was only the fourth most correlated variable whereas brand-match was the first and expertise the second. The study by (Chan et al., 2021) did not study influencer-brand match or its effect on brand image and this research did not include respect as one of the independent variables. Despite the differences, it is clear that the results do not match.

Hence, the conclusion is that the same influencer characteristics that affect the perceived brand image elsewhere in other countries and cultures, may not work similarly in Finland. There are same variables that do affect perceived brand image, but the strength of correlation and order of importance is likely to be different.

6.1 Implications

The implications of this research are relevant for marketing, social media marketing and influencer marketing in Finland. The results offer a guidance on what

characteristics should brands and companies pay more attention to while selecting an influencer for their campaign while they want to maintain a good brand image or even improve it. The outcome is useful especially regarding influencer marketing campaigns where the follower base of an influencer is the target group.

Furthermore, this research clarifies the reasoning of why the influencer characteristics discussed in this paper are relevant for the topic and what are they based on. This clarification includes discussion on individual's behavior as well as review on the theoretical side of the relationship between an influencer and an individual and why is it so powerful for marketing purposes.

The primary research suggests that in Finnish context, the match between the influencer and the brand has the strongest relationship on building a positive brand image. Hence, it is also the main aspect companies should target while scanning a potential influencer for their marketing.

One major finding and piece of advice revealed from this research is that it depends on the target audience of the campaign what influencer characters are seen as most important and positively influential for brand image. This suggests that it is highly important to know the target audience before evaluating the right influencer.

6.2 Limitations

For transparency and creating optimal starting points for further research, it is important to acknowledge some limitations this research had. The biggest limitation of this research was that we were not able to do everything at once, hence there were some potentially impactful variables that had to be left out of this research. Factors that might affect how people perceive brand image through influencer endorsements were the follower-count and likeability of an influencer as well as source credibility as its own independent variable.

Now, this research studied correlation between the chosen variables and perceived brand image. It needs to be acknowledged that correlation is different than causality. Therefore, we cannot for example conclude that variable x is the reason why a

follower of campaign influencer has a positive image of the endorsed brand. We can only state the correlations and conclude that it is likely that variable x has positive effect on positive brand image.

Another potential limitation is the selection of the influencer and the brand campaign. Both the influencer, Miisa Grekov and the brand Paulig are well liked in Finnish context. Why, at least Miisa is one of the most well-known influencers in Finland and has very little reasons why somebody would dislike her. Also, Paulig is an old and traditional brand in Finland, and in addition Finland is very much a coffee country where people would probably have positive feelings toward a coffee endorsement. The point is that the influencer and brand collaboration selection does not necessarily share thoughts or arouse negative feelings in people. This might have caused more positive results than perhaps in more general context.

Moreover, the fact that only the responses of people who knew the brand (Paulig) was accepted. This might have affected the end results, though there was no need to cancel a single response – every respondent already knew the brand. Additionally, it should be notified that there might have been an effect on the results that majority of respondents and majority of follower-respondents were female. Do females show less critique when it comes to influencer marketing and is it more common among females. Although this might have had an impact on the results, it is still fair to conclude that it also represents true population in Finland who is receptive towards influencer and more likely to be influenced. Surely, if the influencer campaign is targeted for males and it is likely that more male than female will be seeing the content, it should be evaluated whether the results of this research are applicable anymore.

And finally, since there has not been much research on the topic in Finnish context, the starting point was equal to zero. Even though there was great research made in other countries about similar topics, it was challenging to transform it to Finnish context. More thorough research would have required more inspection on Finnish culture which might have led us to different variables. Now only the most relevant variables were chosen by the discretion of the author.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

There are major gaps in Finnish academic research when it comes to branding and creating positive brand image through influencer marketing. To have more reliable results regarding the topic of this research paper, there should be more repetition and research on the same topic but in different scenarios.

The first suggestion for further research is to eliminate the limitations that this survey had. This includes studying whether there are differences on the brand perceptions if the respondent's do not know the brand beforehand. Moreover, as explained the example influencer in this research paper is one of the most popular and liked Finnish influencers, so by studying the effects of less popular media personalities or even micro-influencers might bring differing and interesting results.

In addition to further modifications and suggestions regarding the influencer and the brand, there are variable-related suggestions as well. Other kind of variables or influencer characteristics are recommended to test in Finnish environment, such as 'respect towards the influencer' which had been found relevant in Asia. Something that might be a relevant influencer characteristic regarding Finnish culture, could be modesty. Another suggested variable is source credibility and its testing as independent variable instead of the way it was measured in this paper; combined from three variables and discussed on a theoretical level.

The second and last suggestion is to simply conduct more similar studies in Finland. That is the way to strengthen the findings and conclusions of this paper and thus develop the knowledge on Finnish influencer marketing and its relevance as well as power for brand image. It is reasonable to study what other aspects there are that might affect consumer's thought process and what could be in favor for the brand? For example, it could be beneficial to see if specific visual looks of the influencers' social media accounts or their values and goals have effect on how the promoted brand is seen from consumers' perspective. Moreover, looking into a specific industry and its influencers might bring relevant insights and offer more niche results. By researching influencer marketing further and analyzing the effect it has on branding, Finnish companies and brands can improve their marketing and overall business performance.

References

- Aaker, D., Keller, A., Lane, K., 1990. Consumer Evaluations Of Brand Extensions. *J Mark* 54, 27–41.
- Abidin, C., 2016. Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia* 161, 86–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177>
- Agam, D., Nicol, D., Agam, L.A., 2017. Celebrity Endorser Physical Attractiveness Effect on Consumers' Attitude toward Online Advertisement.
- Amos, C., Holmes, G., Strutton, D., 2008. Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness A quantitative synthesis of effect size. *International Journal of Advertising* 27, 209–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2008.11073052>
- Bakker, D., 2018. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management*, *Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management*.
- Belanche, D., Casalo, L. v., Flavián, M., Ibáñez-Sánchez, S., 2021. Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *J Bus Res* 132, 186–195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.067>
- Bergkvist, L., Hjalmarson, H., Mägi, A.W., 2016. A new model of how celebrity endorsements work: attitude toward the endorsement as a mediator of celebrity source and endorsement effects. *Int J Advert* 35, 171–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2015.1024384>
- Bond, B.J., 2018. Media Psychology Parasocial Relationships with Media Personae: Why They Matter and How They Differ Among Heterosexual, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adolescents. *Media Psychol* 21, 457–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1416295>
- Breves, P.L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., Kunze, A., 2019. The perceived fit between instagram influencers and the endorsed brand: How influencer–brand fit affects source credibility and persuasive effectiveness. *J Advert Res* 59, 440–454. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2019-030>
- Burger, J.M., Guadagno, R.E., 2003. Self-concept clarity and the foot-in-the-door procedure. *Basic Appl Soc Psych* 25, 79–86. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15324834BASP2501_6
- Caitlin, L., 2021. Examples of Macro/Premium Influencers & Who They Are. Available from: <https://www.rhythminfluence.com/blog/examples-of-macro/premium-influencers-who-they-are> .

- Campbell, C., Marks, L.J., 2015. Good native advertising isn't a secret. *Bus Horiz* 58, 599–606. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.BUSHOR.2015.06.003>
- Campbell, J.D., Trapnell, P.D., Heine, S.J., Katz, I.M., Lavalley, L.F., Lehman, D.R., 1996. Self-Concept Clarity: Measurement, Personality Correlates, and Cultural Boundaries. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 70, 141–156. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.1.141>
- Chan, T.-J., Selvakumaran, D., Idris, I., Azura Adzharuddin, N., 2021. The influence of celebrity endorser characteristics on brand image: A case study of Vivo. *Journal of Media and Communication (SEARCH, MALAYSA)*.
- Cheng, F.F., Wu, C.S., Chen, Y.C., 2020. Creating customer loyalty in online brand communities. *Comput Human Behav* 107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.10.018>
- Cohen, J.B., Basu, K., 1987. Alternative Models of Categorization: Toward a Contingent Processing Framework. *Journal of Consumer Research* 13, 455–472.
- de Chernatony, L., Christodoulides, G., 2004. Taking the brand promise online: Challenges and opportunities. *Interactive Marketing* 5, 238–251.
- de Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., Hudders, L., 2017. Marketing through instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *Int J Advert* 36, 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- Djafarova, E., Rushworth, C., 2016. Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Comput Human Behav* 68, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
- Doney, P.M., Cannon, J.P., 1997. An Examination of the Nature of Trust in Buyer-Seller Relationships. *J Mark* 61, 35–51.
- Erdogan, B.Z., 1999. Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review. *Journal of Marketing Management* 15, 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870379>
- Eyal, K., Rubin, A.M., 2003. Viewer Aggression and Homophily, Identification, and Parasocial Relationships With Television Characters. *J Broadcast Electron Media* 47, 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4701_5
- Gräve, J.-F., 2017. Exploring the Perception of Influencers Vs. Traditional Celebrities: Are Social Media Stars a New Type of Endorser? Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, United States. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3097286.3097322>

- Heggde, G., Shainesh, G., 2018. Social media marketing: Emerging concepts and applications, *Social Media Marketing: Emerging Concepts and Applications*. Springer Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5323-8>
- Holton III, E.F., Burnett, M.F., 2005. The Basics of Quantitative Research. *In*: Swanson, A.R., Holton III, E.F., 2005. *Research in Organizations – Foundations and Methods of Inquiry*. [Online]. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. p.30. Available from: https://books.google.fi/books?id=AyMZt9AodEEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=fi&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false .
- Isaksen, K.J., Roper, S., 2008. The impact of branding on low-income adolescents: A Vicious Cycle? *Psychol Mark* 25, 1063–1087. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20254>
- Jalilvand, M.R., Samiei, N., 2012. The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* 30, 460–476. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02634501211231946>
- Janssen, L., Schouten, A.P., Croes, E.A.J., 2022. Influencer advertising on Instagram: product-influencer fit and number of followers affect advertising outcomes and influencer evaluations via credibility and identification. *Int J Advert* 41, 101–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1994205>
- Jiang, J., Huang, Y.H., Wu, F., Choy, H.Y., Lin, D., 2015. At the crossroads of inclusion and distance: Organizational crisis communication during celebrity-endorsement crises in China. *Public Relat Rev* 41, 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.PUBREV.2014.11.003>
- Kahle, L.R., Homer, P.M., 1985. Physical Attractiveness of the Celebrity Endorser: A Social Adaptation Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research* 11, 954. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209029>
- Kamins, M.A., 1990. An Investigation into the “Match-up” Hypothesis in Celebrity Advertising: When Beauty May Be Only Skin Deep. *J Advert* 19, 4–13.
- Keller, K.L., 2009. Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications* 15, 139–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527260902757530>
- Keller, K.L., 2003. Brand Synthesis: The Multidimensionality of Brand Knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research* 29, 595–600.
- Keller, K.L., 1993. Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *J Mark* 57, 1–22.
- Keller, K.L., Lehmann, D.R., 2006. Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing Science* 25, 740–759. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1050.0153>

- Kotler, P., 2000. *Marketing Management*, Millenium Edition, 10th ed. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey.
- Kozinets, R. v, de Valck, K., Wojnicki, A.C., Wilner, S.J.S., 2010. Networked Narratives: Understanding Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Online Communities. *J Mark* 74, 71–89.
- Kumar, D., 2012. GET ALONG WITH QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS Corporate Social Responsibility View project Tourism View project.
- Lee, D., Hosanagar, K., Nair, H.S., 2018. Advertising content and consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from Facebook. *Manage Sci* 64, 5105–5131. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2017.2902>
- Lee, J.E., Watkins, B., 2016. YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury brand perceptions and intentions. *J Bus Res* 69, 5753–5760. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.171>
- Leung, F.F., Flora, ·, Gu, F., Palmatier, R.W., 2021. Online influencer marketing. *J Acad Mark Sci* 50, 226–251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4> .
- Li, Y.-M., Lin, L., Chiu, W., 2014. Enhancing Targeted Advertising with Social Context Endorsement. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* 19, 99–128. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JEC1086-4415190103>
- Lin, C.A., Crowe, J., Pierre, L., Lee, Y., n.d. Effects of Parasocial Interaction with an Instafamous Influencer on Brand Attitudes and Purchase Intentions. *The Journal of Social Media in Society* Spring 2021 10, 55–78.
- Lou, C., Yuan, S., 2019. Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 19, 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- Malhotra, N., Nunan, D., & Birks, D., 2017. *Marketing Research: An Applied Approach*. (5 ed.) Pearson.
- Malik, A., Sudhakar, B.D., Dutta, D.S., 2017. Management-based Factors of Sports Celebrity Endorsement and Effect on Brand Image | Enhanced Reader. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review* 7, 75–87.
- Martinez, E., Chernatony, L., 2004. The effect of brand extension strategies upon brand image. *J Consum Mark* 21, 39.
- McCracken, G., 1989. Who Is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16, 310–323.
- Metzger, M.J., Flanagin, A.J., Medders, R.B., 2010. Social and heuristic approaches to credibility evaluation online. *Journal of Communication* 60, 413–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01488.x>


- Meyers-Levy, J., Tybout, A.M., 1989. Schema Congruity as a Basis for Product Evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16, 39–54.
- Munnukka, J., Uusitalo, O., Toivonen, H., 2016. Credibility of a peer endorser and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 33, 182–192.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-11-2014-1221>
- Ohanian, R., 1990. Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity. *J Advert* 19, 39.
- Paulig.fi, n.d. Tietoa meistä. Available from: <https://www.pauliggroup.com/fi/tietoa-meista>
- Qian, J., Park, J.-S., 2021. Influencer-brand fit and brand dilution in China's luxury market: the moderating role of self-concept clarity. *Journal of Brand Management* 28, 199–220. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-020-00226-2>
- Rai, N., Thapa, B., 2015. A STUDY ON PURPOSIVE SAMPLING METHOD IN RESEARCH. pp. 1–12.
- Rifon, N.J., Sejung, M., Trimble, C.S., Li, H., 2004. CONGRUENCE EFFECTS IN SPONSORSHIP: The Mediating Role of Sponsor. *J Advert* 33, 29–42.
- Rundin, K., Colliander, J., 2021. Multifaceted Influencers: Toward a New Typology for Influencer Roles in Advertising. *J Advert* 50, 548–564.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1980471>
- Saini, A., Sharma, D., Gupta, M., Verma, S., 2021. Effect of Social Media Influencers and Celebrity Endorsers on Brand Loyalty through Brand Image.
- Schouten, A.P., Janssen, L., Verspaget, M., 2019. Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising The Review of Marketing Communications* 39, 258–281.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898>
- Shan, Y., Chen, K.J., Lin, J.S., 2020. When social media influencers endorse brands: the effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive. *Int J Advert* 39, 590–610.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1678322>
- Shen, J.-F., Program, P.D., Fang, S.R., Yang, Y.F., 2015. EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF THE “BECOME ATTRACTIVE MATCH-UP” WITH CELEBRITY ENDORSERS, *The International Journal of Organizational Innovation*.
- Simmons, G.J., 2007. “i-Branding”: Developing the internet as a branding tool. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500710819932>

- Sujan, M., n.d. Consumer Knowledge: Effects on Evaluation Strategies Mediating Consumer Judgments. *Journal of Consumer Research*.
- Sukma Wijaya, B., 2013. Dimensions of Brand Image: A Conceptual Review from the Perspective of Brand Communication. *European Journal of Business and Management* 5. <https://doi.org/10.13140/ejbm.2013.55.65>
- Taherdoost, H., 2016. Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research, *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*.
- Till, B.D., Busler, M., 2000. The Match-Up Hypothesis: Physical Attractiveness, Expertise, and the Role of Fit on Brand Attitude, Purchase Intent and Brand Beliefs. *J Advert* 29, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613>
- Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., Thrassou, A., 2021. Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *Int J Consum Stud* 45, 617–644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12647>
- Walster, E., Aronson, E., Abrahams, D., 1966. On increasing the persuasiveness of a low prestige communicator. *J Exp Soc Psychol* 2, 325–342. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(66\)90026-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(66)90026-6)
- Wei, Q., Dai, Q., Liang, Y., 2021. Influencer Marketing for Start-ups: The Rise of Micro-influencers.
- Westerman, D., Spence, P.R., van der Heide, B., 2012. A social network as information: The effect of system generated reports of connectedness on credibility on Twitter. *Comput Human Behav* 28, 199–206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHB.2011.09.001>
- Wiedmann, K.P., von Mettenheim, W., 2020. Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise – social influencers’ winning formula? *Journal of Product and Brand Management* 30, 707–725. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2019-2442>
- Yeon, J., Park, I., Lee, D., 2019. What creates trust and who gets loyalty in social commerce? *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 50, 138–144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.05.009>
- Yuan, S., Lou, C., 2020. How Social Media Influencers Foster Relationships with Followers: The Roles of Source Credibility and Fairness in Parasocial Relationship and Product Interest. *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 133–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2020.1769514>

Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Tervetuloa pro gradu -tutkielmani empiirisen tutkimuksen kyselylomakkeeseen!

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, millä sosiaalisen median vaikuttajan piirteillä on brändiyhteistyön kautta positiivinen vaikutus suomalaisen kuluttajan brändimielikuvaan.

Tutkimus sisältää kaksi osiota - ensimmäisessä osiossa kysytään pohjustavia kysymyksiä vastaajasta, sekä suhteesta vaikuttajaan ja brändiin. Toinen osio sisältää 7x3 kysymystä liittyen tutkimuksen muuttujiin. Tähän kyselyyn ei ole oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia - kyse on kuluttajan näkemysten selvittämisestä.

Kaikki vastaukset ovat täysin anonyymejä. Kyselyn täyttämiseen menee aikaa n. 5 minuuttia.

Mikäli sinulle jää kysyttävää tutkimukseen liittyen, voit olla yhteydessä sähköpostitse (anni.kamarainen@aalto.fi).

Kiitos ajastasi!

Seuraava

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Vaikuttajan ja brändin esittely

Vaikuttaja

Miisa Rotola-Pukkila (@mmiisas), 26 vuotta, on yksi Suomen seuratuimpia vaikuttajia/sisällöntuottajia YouTubessa ja Instagramissa. Hänellä on Instagramissa lähes 440 tuhatta ja Youtubessa lähes 380 tuhatta seuraajaa. Hän tuottaa kanaviinsa pääosin lifestyle-sisältöä (arki, työt, urheilu, vaatteet, leivonta/ruoanlaitto jne.). Sisällöntuotannon lisäksi Miisa on myös julkaissut oman kalenterin oheistuotteineen ja laukkumalliston, kilpaillut Tanssii Tähtien kanssa -ohjelmassa sekä ollut juontamassa Uuden Musiikin Kilpailua keväällä 2022 (manageme.fi)

Brändi ja mainostettu tuote

Paulig on suomalaislähtöinen, mutta kansainvälisesti toimiva elintarvikealan yritys, joka on perustettu vuonna 1876. Konserni tuottaa ruokakonsepteja, mausteita, kasvisperäisistä tuotteita sekä snacks-tuotteita, mutta parhaiten brändi tunnetaan erityisesti korkealaatuista kahvituotteistaan - ja palveluistaan (pauligroup.com). Tässä yhteydessä Miisan kanssa yhteistyössä mainostetaan syksyn 2021 uutuutta, Café Singaporea, joka kuvissa esiintyy kahvipapujen ja keittimiin sekä pressopannuihin sopivan jauheen muodossa.



mmissas Kaupallinen yhteistyö: @pauligfi |

En malta odottaa, että meidän toimiston remontti valmistuu ja pääsen lähtemään kotoa inspiroivaan ja luovaan tilaan työskentelemään. Haaveilen jo kirpsakoista aamuista ja kävelystä puiston halki kahvi kädessäni heräävää kaupunkia fiilistellen. 🍂💡

Pauligin uutuuskahvi Café Singapore on noussut mun lemppariksi kaupunkikahveista. Se on tummapaahoton kahvi ja maultaan tasapainoinen ja tummasuklainen. Maistuu erityisen hyvältä maidon tai kaurajuoman kanssa. ❤️


Käy kurkkaamassa mun storystä vinkki ihanaan makeaan kahviuomaan, joka sopii täydellisesti syksyfiilistelyyn!

Näytä kaikki 52 kommenttia
27. lokakuuta 2021

Edellinen

Seuraava

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Pohjustavat kysymykset/tiedot vastaajasta

1. Ikäsi? *

2. Sukupuolesi? *

- Nainen
- Mies
- Muu

3. Valitse, kumpi näistä kuvaa sinua parhaiten *

- Seuraan tätä vaikuttajaa (Miisaa) sosiaalisessa mediassa
- En seuraa tätä vaikuttajaa (Miisaa) sosiaalisessa mediassa

4. Valitse, kumpi näistä kuvaa sinua parhaiten *

- Tiedän kyseessä olevan brändin (Paulig)
- En tiedä kyseessä olevaa brändiä (Paulig)

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Seuraavassa osiossa sinua pyydetään vastaamaan väittämiin asteikolla yhdestä viiteen (1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä). Väittämiin ei ole olemassa oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia; vastaathan oman mielipiteesi mukaan.

Edellinen

Seuraava

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Vaikuttajan luotettavuus

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

5. Uskon että tämä vaikuttaja on kampanjassaan rehellinen *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

6. Uskon, että vaikuttaja pitää myös itse kyseessä olevasta tuotteesta *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

7. Uskon, että vaikuttaja haluaa muille hyvää *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Vaikuttajan asiantuntijuus

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

8. Uskon, että vaikuttajalla on merkittävästi tietoa Pauligista ja kahvista yleisesti *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

9. Uskon, että vaikuttajalla on kokemusta tästä brändistä ja kahvista *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

10. Uskon, että vaikuttajalla on hyvä ongelmanratkaisukyky näihin aiheisiin liittyvien haasteiden kanssa *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Vaikuttajan viehättävyys

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

11. Mielestäni vaikuttaja on ulkoisesti viehättävä *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

12. Mielestäni minun ja vaikuttajan välillä on jotain yhteistä *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

13. Mielestäni vaikuttaja näyttää uskottavalta *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Vaikuttajan samankaltaisuus

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

14. Mielestäni minussa ja vaikuttajassa on samoja piirteitä *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä


15. Minulla ja vaikuttajalla on samoja mielenkiinnon kohteita *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

16. Voin samaistua vaikuttajaan *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Vaikuttajan motiivi

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

17. Uskon, että vaikuttaja tulee mielellään liitetyksi kyseiseen brändiin *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

18. Uskon, että vaikuttaja ei tehnyt tätä kampanjaa vain rahan takia *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

19. Uskon, että vaikuttaja on luonteeltaan epätsekäs (ja tämä näkyy hänen brändiyhteistöissään) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimieliin

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Brändi-yhteensopivuus

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Erimielä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

20. Mielestäni mainostettu brändi ja vaikuttaja sopivat hyvin yhteen *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

21. Mielestäni brändi ja vaikuttaja edustavat samankaltaisia arvoja/samankaltaista tyyliä *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

22. Mielestäni vaikuttaja voisi käyttää brändin tuotetta/olla brändin kohderyhmää *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Vaikuttajan piirteet ja niiden vaikutus brändimielikuvaan

 Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Koettu brändimielikuva

(1: Vahvasti eri mieltä, 2: Eri mieltä, 3: Neutraali, 4: Samaa mieltä, 5: Vahvasti samaa mieltä)

23. Pidän kovasti tästä brändistä *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti erimieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

24. Mielestäni tällä brändillä on hyvä maine *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

25. Tunteeni/ajatukseni brändiä kohtaan ovat pääasiassa positiivisia *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Vahvasti eri mieltä *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vahvasti samaa mieltä

Kiitos vastauksestasi!



Kysely luotu Webropolilla
Klikkaa tästä ja lue lisää