UNDER THE INFLUENCE

A quantitative study about social media Influencers different attributes effect on online purchase intent.

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Abstract

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Research Questions: How does influencer marketing affect online purchase intent?

How do social media influencers’ trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness affect online purchase intent?

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between online purchase intent and social media influencers, as well as how their attributes affect this relationship.

Method: This empirical study consists of a quantitative online survey with 476 respondents.

Conclusion: The results of this study revealed that social media influencers have a positive impact on online purchase intent. Furthermore, the collected data could confirm that trustworthiness has a clear impact on online purchase intent, while expertise and attractiveness showed no significant impact.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The use of social media has increased significantly in recent years. This has resulted in companies having to adapt their marketing strategy in order to achieve their set goals. In line with the growth of social media, influencer marketing via social media channels has become an increasingly common communication tool for companies to use to endorse their brand. Given the large amount of similar marketing messages consumers are exposed to every day, the strategy of social media influencer marketing helps consumers navigate among all of this. (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017. Having a social media marketing strategy enable brands to stand out in a rapidly changing digital environment. This since it allows them to communicate with their consumers and easily reach out to many customers at the same time, and to engage them with the brand. (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Influencer marketing allude to a type of marketing where brands use social media influencers to promote a brand and its products by reaching out to the chosen influencers’ followers, and the target group of the brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers present themselves throughout self-made content on different social media channels, with sharing selected parts of their personal life to attract their followers, to get attention and to gain an increased number of followers (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). The use of social media influencers in marketing is a relatively a new concept (De Veirman, 2017), but the use of celebrities to endorse a brand is not (Erdogan, 1999). To use celebrities in marketing is not a new phenomenon. Celebrity endorsers have been a popular marketing strategy to promote brands and products for a long time. (Erdogan, 1999) The purpose of using celebrities in marketing is to transfer the positive qualities a celebrity has to the product to initiate consumer purchase intent (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020). The biggest switch is from the traditional marketing using celebrities to the digital marketing with a more focus on social media influencers to endorse a brand or a product. In recent years the use of traditional celebrities to endorse their brands have become used less frequently, in benefit for the social media influencers (Schouten, et al., 2020). Since both influencers and celebrities are endorsers, they possess similar attributes (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Erdogan (1999) utter that celebrity trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness are important attributes for an endorser to possess to influence the consumers into purchase intent. These attributes have been proposed
to play a notable role in influencer endorsers as well (Schouten, et al., 2020). During the past years, influencer marketing has increased substantially, especially among the younger generation and millennials, social media usage has become ingrained in the everyday life. This, in turn, means that people are constantly accessible on their social media and more easily affected by the content they are exposed to. (De Veirman, et al., 2017)

Primary to the social media influencers’ success, the relationship between them and their followers provides great potential for brands to reach out to the influencer’s followers, which in turn can entail positive outcomes such as followers purchase intent (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). This implies that organizations have identified the potential of using social media influencers as a marketing tool to communicate with their consumers to increase the positive outcomes (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Statistics show that influencer marketing is a rising marketing strategy for brands to invest in, this since it assures a relation with customers, which imply an increase in sales (Müller, Mattke & Maier, 2018). A survey conducted by Bloglovin', a digital platform for social media influencers, shows that 54 percent of the 22,000 women who answered the survey said they consumed a product after seeing the product being recommended by a social media influencer (Minsker, 2017). Influencers' potential to create sustainable and strong ties to their followers has made them one of the most persuasive sources consumers can take advantage of before their purchasing, but also for companies to create brand awareness among consumers for the brand itself (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017). Influencers on social media are viewed as online opinion leaders, mainly because of their influential power towards their audience, with knowledge and expertise, this means that various attributes related to social media influencers, such as credibility, expertise and attractiveness, can influence brand performance (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

To continue, using social media as a marketing channel, can to an increasing extent strengthen the brand. However, it also makes it easier for unsatisfied consumers to complain throughout social media which can damage the brand greatly. This means marketers need to keep that in mind while planning their marketing strategy, and to choose the most suited social media influencer to endorse their brand and products in a satisfying way. (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). In order to successfully use influencer marketing as a marketing strategy, companies must choose an influencer who has suitable attributes for the company. This can involve choosing an influencer, for example, who is considered an expert in a specific area or alternatively has a large number of followers (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey & Freberg, 2011). Finding a suitable influencer for a company has been proven to be something that companies often have very insufficient knowledge about (Roelens, Baecke & Benoit, 2016).
There are several attributes that can be identified. Previous studies suggest that the effectiveness of an advertising campaign is strongly linked to whether the social media influencer is related to a product (Schouten, et al., 2020). Three main attributes discussed in many older studies regarding celebrity endorsement are primarily credibility and attractiveness. These attributes have been shown to have an impact on how consumers perceive advertising (Ohanian, 1991).

1.2 Problem

The impact of digitalization on society is inevitable. Digitalization has especially had a major impact on different industries, and especially how companies today choose to endorse their brands. (Royle & Laing, 2014) This has contributed to an increasing number of companies choosing to abandon traditional marketing methods and choose to use digital marketing instead. Influencer marketing is one of the methods that is becoming increasingly popular (De Veirman, et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the use of famous people to endorse a brand is not a new concept, rather something that companies have used for many years (Erdogan, 1999). However, it has become progressively common for companies to use less-known individuals who are not necessarily celebrities to the general public but have followers that trust them and are influenced by these individuals who often are experts within their fields, hence, social media influencers (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Because of the rapid rise of influencer marketing, it has become a challenge for companies to single out an appropriate influencer that will have the best beneficial outcome for the company (Roelens, et al., 2016). It is important for a company to choose the right influencer and there are several influencer characteristics to take into consideration when selecting the most fitting influencer for the brand, since there are different types of people that have a significant influence on individuals’ opinions and actions. Social media influencers have a notable influence on people’s opinions, on account of that, influencers’ attributes are important to contemplate in order to select a matching influencer for the brand. Social media influencers have all varying attributes that will affect in various extent. (Vollenbroek, de Vries, Constantinides & Koomers, 2014) The main attributes to affect consumer purchase intents are trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990).

Previous research within the field of influencer marketing covers how influencer marketing influences the purchase behavior of consumers. Something that has been shown in previous research is that influencers have a noticeable impact on consumers' purchasing
behavior as well as their purchase intent (Lim, et al., 2017). The switching focus from traditional marketing to online marketing, greatly with focus on social media influencers, has generated that companies need to adapt their communication and marketing strategies. This has led to challenges for the companies to select the most fitting influencer to reach their marketing goals. This research will provide with the understanding of the effect of social media influencers and which attributes mostly affects purchase intent. Moreover, what attribute of a social media influencer affect us the most? Is it that we perceive them as attractive or feel that they are trustworthy, or do we consider them as experts in their field?

1.3 Purpose of study and Research question

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between online purchase intent and social media influencers, as well as how their attributes affect this relationship. This is to make the product match-up between the brand and the influencers as eligible as possible to increase the followers’ potential online purchase intent. Studies have shown that influencer marketing is a successful marketing method, but which attributes of a social media influencer are most important in affecting purchase intent? This leads to the developed research questions.

- How does influencer marketing affect online purchase intent?
- How do social media influencers’ trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness affect online purchase intent?

1.4 Research contribution

This study contributes to the research that is in the current emerging research area of social media influencer marketing. The existing literature that can be found about the phenomenon mainly concerns whether social media influencers influence online purchasing behavior and the main difference between celebrity endorsement and influencer marketing. However, we see a lack of information on whether influencers on social media affect online purchase intent differently based on what attributes and traits they possess. Therefore, this study aims to answer these concerns and to cover the information gap. The result of this study contributes to an increased understanding about how companies can use social media influencers with the right attributes that match the brand value, which in turn could contribute to increased purchase intent and higher revenues for the company.
2 Literature review

2.1 Online purchase intent

The constant expansion of e-commerce has resulted in the development of the use of digital marketing. Social media applications are internet-based and help individuals to exchange content among themselves. These content exchanges take place between friends and family but also with social media influencers. This development has resulted in a change in the organizations' approach to influence consumers' purchase intent. (Tan, Boon, Wee & Yeow, 2017) Consumers’ purchase intent are based on how an individual intend to act, and the social influence has a major impact on how individuals choose to behave. Hence, social influence is based on how the behavior of others affects an individual. By using social media influencers, one can, therefore, influence an individual to make a purchase decision. (Tan, et al., 2017)

Consumers’ purchasing behavior, as well as online purchase intent, differ markedly in comparison to traditional buying behavior. This has been shown to be due to the fact that consumers feel uncertainty about purchasing online, since there is a certain mistrust regarding the handling of private data etc. (Shareef, Kumar, Kuma & Dwivedi, 2015; Wu, Huang & Fu, 2011).

There are various factors that affect a consumers’ online purchase intent, previous studies have mainly mentioned perceived risk and trust. A consumer's online purchase intent is strongly based on whether a consumer feels that a purchase is unsafe, if a purchase feels fearsome, a consumer's purchase intent is typically reduced. This also infer that trust directly influences purchase intentions. These uncertainties mentioned can appear in various forms, such as financial risk or product risk. This can imply that you feel a risk of fraud and that your credit card details may be stolen, as well as the fear of receiving a product with defects. (Gross, 2014)

Previous research has shown that demographic profile has an impact on the perceived uncertainty affecting a consumer's online purchase intent. Above all, it shows that gender and age have a significant effect, studies suggest that older people feel a greater risk than younger consumers, and that women are also more risk averse. (Sharma & Kurien, 2017)

Despite this, the number of internet users as well as e-commerce has increased significantly (Meskaran, Ismail & Shanmugam, 2013). Social media influencers in particular,
seem to have a vast impact on consumers online purchase intent. (Lim, et al., 2017) Lou and Yuan (2019) argue that the use of social media influencers as brand endorsers is beneficial as it has a positive impact on online purchase intent. The fact that the influencer is both informative, as well as entertaining, is also an important aspect that has been proven to influence consumers' purchase intent (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

2.2 Social media influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a relatively new concept that allows companies to endorse their brand by using individuals who have a greater number of followers on social media channels to attract consumers to buy products (Guruge, 2018). In contrast to traditional marketing, influencer marketing is considered to be a more authentic and organic sort of marketing method to reach potential consumers. (Lou & Yuan, 2019) Moreover, the use of social media profiles is a relatively new concept, the use of celebrities in marketing is on the other hand not (Erdogan, 1999). The use of celebrities to endorse a brand is something that has been used for many years and is often referred to as celebrity endorsement (Erdogan, 1999). Using celebrities to market and endorse a product, the chosen celebrity’s developed value, qualities and attributes are hoped to be associated and transferred to the brand (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). Hence, when identification occurs with the celebrity, the product will be bought in aspiration to retain some of the meanings and attributes (McCracken, 1989). This identification takes place when someone is influenced by another person (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008). There are many studies examining how effective celebrity endorsement is for businesses. The studies indicate that the use of celebrities in marketing campaigns have a positive impact on sales and the company's financial profits, however, the financial aspect is not considered the most significant, but rather how celebrities increase the brand value. (Amos, et al., 2008)

The biggest difference between celebrities and influencers is that today you do not have to be a celebrity to be classified as a social media influencer. According to Lim, et al. (2017), social media influencers have taken over the role from celebrities of being potential endorsers by following today's trends. Studies have shown that the use of social media influencers in marketing are more advantageous than the use of celebrities, especially as consumers perceive influencers’ as more credible and they rely primarily on their judgment and their opinions. (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu, 2019) Even if traditional celebrities also use social media as a platform to share content, influencers started by being unknown to the general public and formed their careers online (Schouten, et al., 2020). Despite the differences between celebrity endorses and
social media influencers, studies have shown that they are connected since they are both considered endorsers and possess similar attributes (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017).

Marketers have switched progressively from celebrity endorsement to a more frequent use of social media influencers as advocates for their brands (Schouten, et al., 2020). De Veirman, et al. (2017) implies that influencers have the potential to directly affect the purchase intention of their followers, moreover, their followers also consider them to be a reliable source of information. Further, Fiorella and Brown (2013) continues by arguing that companies can benefit from social media influencers with large followership’s as they reach out with brand awareness in order to increase their trust and further encourage followers into purchase intent. With the requirement that the message marketed through the influencer is genuine and credible, companies can gain legitimacy (Fiorella & Brown, 2013).

Furthermore, social media influencers are described as individuals who have seemingly proceeded from just getting likes on their post to have monetizing content in their feed. Influencers on social media are individuals who can influence others, in particular, due to their anticipated credibility, expertise and/or attractiveness. (De Veirman, et al., 2017) Influencers engage their followers by frequently delivering updated social media content (Lim, et al., 2017). Social media influencers have invested much time-sharing parts of their life throughout their social media content, this contributes to establishing a loyal base of followers. For instance, Lee and Watkins (2016) implicate that vloggers (video-blogger) on social media positively influence consumer purchase intent for luxury brands advertised in their vlogs. In addition to this, according to Chapple and Cownie (2017), lifestyle vloggers are perceived as credible since they entail trust and similarity which leads to increased purchase intent.

The primary reason social media influencers are used to create value for brands are because of consumers’ willingness to identify themselves with these influencers who have created a persona that consumers perceive as attractive. By purchasing products that influencers market, it creates value for consumers as they want to identify themselves and their lives with these influencers. (Amos, et al., 2008) Moreover, 82 percent of consumers have the opinion that social media influencers’ content is perceived as reliable. This affects how the followers get influenced by recommendations and advice from the social media influencers. As a result of this, branded content communicated throughout influencers tend to be perceived as credible by consumers. (Lim, et al., 2017) Therefore, numerous organizations see the benefits of using social influencers as their product endorsers in their marketing, as a result of the notable popularity of social media influencers (Schouten, et al., 2020). A poll conducted by Forbes in
2017, 80 percent of online businesses announced that influencer marketing was the key factor in enhancing their business (DeMers, 2017).

Despite the potential benefits that exist, there are several potential risks when companies use influencers to endorse their brand (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) implicate that one of these risks may be that if the influencer receives criticism or the value differ between the brand and the influencer, the image of the company together with the image of the influencer may deteriorate. The company thus becomes associated with the influencer and vice versa. It has been found that negative publicity about an influencer not only affects consumers' perceptions of the profile but also affects the brand. This can result in both parties facing serious damage.

2.3 Attributes

The use of social media influencers to endorse a brand does not have an automatic impact on consumers' purchase intent, there are many factors that may affect the process. Previous studies indicate that the effectiveness of an advertisement is largely linked to whether an influencer is related to a product, this in the form of personality or expertise, or the area where the influencer is active. (Schouten, et al., 2020) There are large amounts of attributes that an influencer can possess, however, studies have clearly shown that there are mainly three types of attributes that seem to be relevant for affecting consumers, these are trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness (Amos, et al., 2008). That said, trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness are the attributes that will be explored in this study.

2.3.1 Trustworthiness

Ohanian (1990) indicates that influencer trustworthiness emphasizes if a person perceives the recommendations from an influencer as believable, accurate, true or unbiased. Trustworthiness incline to reduce consumers interpreted uncertainty and risks. In addition to this, Erdogan (1999) argue that for a source to be highly trustworthy, it needs to be corresponding to the personal attitude and value structure. A source that is perceived as trustworthy will have a positive result on the influence of the influencer regarding individuals’ attitudes and behavior towards the influencer and the brand. Influencers perceived trustworthiness tends to entail a higher received acceptance of the marketed content. Furthermore, research shows that trusting and accepting influencers recommendations affects consumers online purchase intention. (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016)
The literature on celebrity endorsement suggests that trustworthiness plays a major role in celebrity endorsers' effect on purchase intent. To continue, McGinnies & Ward (1980) suggest that perceived source trustworthiness results in a more substantial attitude change than perceived expertise. Trustworthiness refers to a source's integrity as well as individuals' perceived confidence in the source's ability to communicate honest facts and statements (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). Consumer brand attitudes are strongly based on whether or not marketing and advertising are perceived as trustworthy (Yoon, Kim & Kim, 1998). Based on this information, it can therefore be determined that an influencer's knowledge in a certain area is not sufficient to create trustworthiness. Rather, trustworthiness is based on a source's ability to communicate truthful information about a product (Gass & Seiter, 2008).

Previous studies state that in marketing, trustworthiness has a strong impact on consumer attitudes, which further indicates that it could have a positive impact on purchase intent as consumers increase their intentions to a greater extent if the source is considered to be honest (Yoon, et al., 1998). A study by Lui and Standing (1989) suggests that trustworthiness would even be a stronger driving factor affecting consumers than expertise.

2.3.2 Expertise

Erdogan (1999) defines celebrity endorsers’ expertise as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions”. Previous literature which examines source expertise in marketing communication generally suggest that a person's perception of the influencers’ expertise positively affect the source effectiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Individuals exposed to an influencer that is perceived as an expert proved to be more involved with the source and its recommendations than with an influencer perceived with low expertise (Ohanian, 1990). The level of perceived influencer expertise positively anticipates influencers influence on purchase intent (Amos, et al., 2008). When influencers’ have expertise in their areas, they are perceived as more credible (Erdogan, 1999). In addition to this, the followers consider the social media influencers as experts when they are perceived as well-informed, experienced, qualified or/and skilled (Ohanian, 1990). When a social media influencer is perceived as an expert in his/her field of content, it is a higher possibility that the consumer will embrace the information provided by the influencer (Valck, Hoffman, Hennig-Thurau, & Spann, 2013). The expertise and knowledge a social media influencer has will make him/her more credible, which in turn will lead to a positive effect on consumer purchase intent (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015). Previous research indicates that influencers that are perceived by consumers as experts in their field attain more positive behavior and attitudes towards them.
than influencers that are not perceived as experts (Shan, 2016).

Previous studies clearly state that companies should choose influencers’ who are experts within their fields, i.e. using influencers who have a clearer and narrower niche, to target a smaller audience in a more credible way. This, so they can contribute with the help of their high competence in their specific areas, as their followers seek for advice. (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018)

2.3.3 Attractiveness

Previous literature about celebrity endorsement indicates that source attractiveness is a significant indicator of effectiveness, yet, attractiveness is more than only aspects of physical attractiveness, it also contains other characteristics such as lifestyle and personality (Amos, et al., 2008; Erdogan, 1999). Till and Busler (2000) suggest that celebrities that are physically attractive are a forecaster of marketing effectiveness. A study by Joseph (1982) about endorsers’ attractiveness shows that attractive endorsers have a greater influence on opinion change and greater impact on the products than less attractive endorsers. Whereas, Baker and Churchill (1977) suggest that source attractiveness is not effective for gaining substantial purchase intentions but gains a positive view of the advertisement. Attractiveness plays a central role in influencer characteristics since attractiveness is important in the sorting of stereotypes (Guruge, 2018). Social media influencers can also be entertainers. This means they create entertaining content towards their followers. A social media influencer who is considered an entertainer has content containing different kinds of amusing and enjoyable content to please its followers. (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018) In this case, influencers can be trusted and share their honest opinion as well as having an entertainment value towards their followers, so consumers will receive and accept the influencers’ recommendations and opinions (De Veirman, et al., 2017)

Attractiveness seems to be a characteristic that is often referred to as a central attribute in a large number of studies, however, there are split opinions about whether attractiveness is actually a contributing factor to a positive impact on purchase intent. Ohanian (1991) argues that there is no distinct evidence that attractiveness would have a positive effect on purchase intent, while Pornpitakpan (2004) argues that attractiveness as an attribute actually increases a person's purchase intent. These contradictions make the actual perception of the impact of attractiveness inconsistent and vague.
3 Research hypotheses and conceptual model

Based on the theme influence of influencers, the two research questions are phrased: *How does influencer marketing affect online purchase intent?* and *what attributes of a social media influencer affect a person’s purchase intentions?* Hence, the questions link the online purchasing intent between social media influencers’ and consumers. Moreover, when consumers are making decisions about purchasing, they are affected by what influencers recommend and advertise, and it can be a brand the consumer never had any earlier interaction with (Fan, 2005). Sudha and Sheena (2017) explain that consumers need to perceive the social media influencer as both trustworthy and attractive to get affected by the social media influencer.

Social media influencers have a large number of followers that have the potential to be transformed into customers. The ability of the social media influencer to affect consumers online purchase intentions increases when both parts are active social media users. De Veirman, et al. (2017) define social media influencers as “people who built a large network of followers and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches”.

For social media influencers to promote a brand, they must provide and share their knowledge and feelings with their audience to build and ensure a connection throughout the communication between the influencer and the followers. A positive influencer reaction and recommendation about a product or a brand indicates a more successful effect on consumer online purchase intention, since consumers acknowledge that the product could act similarly in their life. (De Veirman, et al., 2016) Based on this, the first hypothesis was developed. Hypothesis one will act as a base-line hypothesis. In order for hypotheses two to four to be considered relevant to test, and see the signification against online purchase intentions, the first hypothesis has to positively affect online purchase intent. Hence this is considered a baseline hypothesis.

**H1: There is a positive relationship between social media influencer marketing and online purchase intent.**

Trustworthiness is based on an influencers’ honesty, believability and dignity (Erdogan, 1999). Social media influencers with higher levels of trustworthiness are perceived as having a bigger effect on the behavior of their audience. This is important since it reduces consumers perceived risk in online purchase intent (Ohanian, 1990). To continue, if a celebrity endorser is perceived as sincere and honest, it will positively affect the trustworthiness, which in turn
will positively affect consumers purchase intent (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). Parallel with this, social media influencer trustworthiness plays a crucial role in influencing purchase intent (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Hence, the second hypothesis was developed:

**H2: Social media influencers trustworthiness positively affect online purchase intent.**

Endorsers that are perceived as experts have a positive impact on how individuals' attitudes towards brands are affected. As mentioned, previous studies show that influencers who are seen as experts in their fields have a positive impact on brand attitude (Shan, 2016). In addition to this, influencers that are perceived as experts incline to have a more persuasive effect on its followers, and this will lead to a positive effect on consumer purchase intention (Ohanian, 1991). Till and Busler (2000) emphasize that expertise has a crucial effect on purchase intention and consumers brand attitude. Based on this, the following hypothesis has been developed:

**H3: Social media influencers expertise positively affect online purchase intent.**

As previous literature indicates, attractiveness is a significant factor of effectiveness (Amos, et al, 2008). An attractive media influencer increases the brand’s probability of marketing effectiveness (Till & Busler, 2000). Therefore, by using an attractive influencer to endorse the brand it will contribute to higher prospects of consumer purchase intentions. Physically attractive individuals are not only seen as good-looking individuals, people who are physically attractive are also associated with high social competence, but also intellectual competence. This is a contributing factor to why they are attractive to organizations, as organizations naturally want their brand to be associated with attractive people. (Till & Busler, 2000)

A social media influencer that is perceived as attractive is able to influence consumers that leads to positive outcomes. This indicates that an attractive influencer can apply a positive attitude on consumers, which could result in purchase intent. (Till & Busler, 2000) Attractive social media influencers, will therefore, on a higher level, seize its audience attention. Hence, the following hypothesis was formatted:

**H4: Social media influencers attractiveness positively affect online purchase intent.**

The conceptual model aims to describe the connection between the independent variables; social media influencer marketing, social media influencer trustworthiness, social
media influencer expertise and social media attractiveness, and the dependent variable; online purchase intention.

Figure 1 Conceptual model
4 Method

The purpose of this study is to find out which social media influencer attributes; trustworthiness, expertise and/or attractiveness affect consumers’ online purchase intent. To test the hypotheses and to answer the questions, a quantitative research method was adopted, with the help of an online survey.

4.1 Research approach

To investigate and answer the study's research questions, a quantitative approach is advantageous as the study's questions aim to provide a general understanding of the phenomenon, how social media influencer attributes affect online purchase intent (Straits & Singleton, 2017). Quantitative research is based on data with quantifiable results through for example, survey studies. The purpose is to develop questions that have evident and measurable results. The starting point for quantitative research is that there is an objective reality in which general truths are sought, which further explain the phenomenon of reality (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To continue, described by Bryman & Bell (2015) survey method is an advantageous approach to get a broader and more generalized answer as questionnaires often reach larger parts of a population. This is to our advantage as we can get a broader picture of how our variables affect each other.

This study is based on a hypothetically controlled deductive approach, which means that the hypotheses are developed from previous literature and are empirically investigated (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This study has been based on four hypotheses related to social media influencers and their impact on online purchase intent. The four hypotheses will then be tested either positively or negatively against online purchase intent, then logical and generalized conclusions will be drawn about what applies in the general case.

4.2 Data collection

To answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses, the primary data was collected through an online survey. The survey research technique was chosen to obtain a more extensive part of the population and aiming to generate a more general result for the population (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As the purpose of the study aims to increase knowledge about the effect that social media influencers have on the consumer's online purchase intent, a quantitative survey in the form of a web-based survey with online consumers as a target group
was used. This study is part of a research project with two other thesis groups, which together have developed separate survey questions and compiled a joint survey with the common theme of online purchase intent. The design and implementation of the survey in the study were done using the survey tool "Artologik Survey and Report". This web-based survey service gives the user the opportunity to design their own surveys and further compile the received responses in the form of diagrams and tables. Moreover, the digital survey was distributed throughout social media and private messages. This to reach people who uses social media platforms. The data collection was conducted using an online survey with 476 respondents.

The sample in this research was a non-probability sample (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016). The non-probability sample does not take the representative factor into account. One type of a non-probability sample is the convenience sample where the respondents selected are those that are readily available. (Etikan, Abubakar, & Alkassim, 2016) By this means that the individuals who are available at the time the survey is distributed are those who are asked. Convenience sampling is frequently used in quantitative studies (Etikan, et al., 2016). Using a convenience sample in this survey was best suited in this study due to the limited time to reach out to the respondents. We also used the snowball sampling method, meaning asking the participant to ask others to participate in the research (Noy, 2008). The survey was international, this gives a wider spread as it provides answers from different nations and nationalities (Straits & Singleton, 2017). The potential participants of the research were contacted on different social media channels and applications such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, Email and SMS.

Furthermore, the survey was time-bound and was accessible for the public between March 3rd, 2020 and April 15th, 2020. The survey contained several questions, which were developed to answer the research questions and the hypotheses. The response options were constructed using a 7-digit Likert-scale where 7 was “completely agree” and 1 was “totally disagree”. The respondents were also provided with an “I don't know” option.

4.2.2 Operationalization

We decided to use already established scales and measures when constructing this survey. All of the question items utilized in the survey have either been taken from articles that used them in previous research or the have been modified to fit our survey. Hence, all question items are based on existing literature.
These questions are designed to answer the hypotheses and the research questions. The questions were based on existing literature regarding the subject, some of the survey questions were modified to fit the study. Below is an overview of the constructs and the conceptual connection, and which questions are included in each construct as well as the references. Additionally, the survey included several control questions as age, gender, nationality and education. The constructs made from the survey questions has a connection with the concepts used in the study to answer the hypotheses and the research questions. The survey questions included in the constructs are mainly developed by examining previous literature. A full version of the operationalization with the survey questions can be found in the appendix.

The first construct, social media influencers intends to measure if the social media influencers affects consumers online purchase intent. The survey questions included in this construct were; I follow various celebrities, bloggers and/or influencers online, I find influencers such as celebrities that I can follow in different social media important, I buy online based on recommendations from online influencers, and if my favorite influencer recommends a brand I haven’t tried before, I am more likely to try it. These items were obtained from previous literature about social media influencers (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018).

The second construct is influencer trustworthiness. This construct aims to measure if the respondents finds trustworthiness to be an important attribute for social media influencer to possess. The survey questions are based on previous literature on source trustworthiness with question items developed from existing literature (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018; Müller, et al., 2018). This construct includes the survey questions; I often base buying decisions on the statements of influencers that I trust, I find them very trustworthy, and they are a role model for me. The first question in this construct were obtained from Johnstone & Lindh’s (2018) study about social media influencers and the second question was based on Müller, et al., (2018) study about the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention, and the third question in this construct were based the study about the role of identification, credibility, and product-endorser fit, written by Schouten, et al. (2020).

Moreover, the third construct is influencer expertise. That aims to determine if the respondents consider expertise to be an important factor and to discover if the respondents follows social media influencers based on their expertise. This includes survey questions based on existing literature about source expertise and social media influencers (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018; Müller, et al., 2018). This construct contains the questions; it is important that influencers market products within their expertise, and they are an expert in their field. The first question
in this construct were obtained from Johnstone & Lindh’s (2018) study about social media influencers and the second question was based on question items in Müller, et al., (2018) study about the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention.

The fourth construct, influencer attractiveness, intend to determine if the respondents finds influencer attractiveness to be an important attribute for a social media influencer to possess. This includes survey questions based on existing literature about source attractiveness (Lim, et al., 2017; Schouten, et al., 2020). This construct includes the survey questions; they are a great inspiration for me, they are attractive to me (including: looks, personality, and/or lifestyle), and I find them entertaining. The three questions in this construct were based on Lim, et al., (2017) article: The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude.

The last and fifth construct is the dependent variable, online purchase intent. This construct intends to determine if the respondents actually do purchase things online and if they intend to continue doing so. These survey questions are based on existing literature about online purchase intent (Anastasiadou, Lindh, & Vasse, 2018). This construct includes the survey questions; I intend to keep on buying from the Internet/web, I believe that I will buy more online in the future, I want to buy other things (that I have not bought previously) from the internet in the future, and I will continue buying from the websites I buy from today. These four questions in this construct were based on question items in Anastasiadou et al. (2018) article: A study of CSR, cross-border shopping, commitment and purchase intent among online consumers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs and Conceptual connection:</th>
<th>Survey Questions:</th>
<th>Reference:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media influencer (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Question 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 &amp; 1.4</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencer expertise (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Question 1.6 &amp; 2.1</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018), Questions developed from: Müller, et al. (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencer Attractiveness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Question 2.4, 2.5 &amp; 2.6</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Lim, et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online purchase intent (Dependent variable)</td>
<td>Question 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 &amp; 3.4</td>
<td>Anastasiadou, Lindh, &amp; Vasse (2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Operationalization

4.3 Data analysis

In the study, all the data collected through the survey were compiled and processed in the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The result of the survey is presented in the form of descriptive statistics in text and tables. In the survey, there are questions that are consistent with each other and that are expected to have a connection with the concepts studied. In order to test the study's previously mentioned hypotheses, the intended questions have been divided into different groups depending on their conformity. These groups are called constructs, and the different questions are meant to compile and measure the same concept. In order to determine how reliable our constructs of questions were, they were tested using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is described by Cortina (1993) as "one of the most important and pervasive statistics in research involving test construction and use". Cronbach's alpha is a way of measuring internal consistency, that is, how relevant a set of questions are when put together (Cortina, 1993). There is no definite value that is considered acceptable for it to be considered reliable, however, there are a number of sources that indicate which values are accepted. Studies found suggest that results above 0.5 may be perceived as acceptable, but that the higher the result, the better (Taber, 2018; Hinton, Brownlow, McMurray & Cozens, 2014). A low result may indicate different things, it can be based on the fact that the construct is based on a low number of questions, or that the questions are not relevant together (Taber, 2018).
Furthermore, in this study five constructs have been made, the constructs have been composed to either verify the existing hypotheses or to reject them. In order to determine this, a correlation analysis has been used to examine to which extent the different constructs of the study are related to each other, and further assure the validity of the study. To do this, Spearman's rho was chosen. The test is used to find the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable and to see if the variables are measured on an ordinal scale (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The Spearman’s rho correlation analysis is based on that SPSS, calculates a correlation coefficient that estimates how close the linear correlation is in a sample (Pallant, 2007). The coefficient assumes a value between -1 and +1 where the closer the value is to +/- 1 the stronger is the correlation (Pallant, 2007). The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level if two stars (**) are shown by the coefficient value.

The following step in the analysis was to test hypothesis one through simple linear regression, this to determine how the independent variable (social media influencer) affects the dependent variable (online purchase intent) (Nimon, 2010). For simple linear regression, it is assumed that a straight line can be adapted to the data and the regression equation is then $y = a + bx$ where $y$ (vertical) is the dependent and the variable that is affected and $x$ (horizontal) is the independent the variable that affects. The intercept with the $y$-axis $a$ and the slope $b$ is calculated so that the error compared to observed data becomes as small as possible.

Furthermore, we wanted to test how the influencer attributes (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness) affect online purchase intent ($H2, H3, H4$) when they are influenced by each other, this to get a more realistic image as influencers usually possess more than one attribute, this was done by using multiple linear regression. For the multiple linear regression, we first added the three control variables (age, gender, education) and tested them against the dependent variable to see how they interact. Afterwards, the three independent variables were added and tested together with the control variables against the dependent variable. Multiple linear regression is a technique by which one can examine whether there is a statistical relationship between a dependent variable ($Y$) and two or more independent variables ($X$). In the result of the regression test, the t-value should be over 2 and the p-value under 0.05, this to support the hypotheses. (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2012).
4.4 Validity and reliability

According to Mohajan (2017), validity and reliability are an important part of a study and should always be included. Mohajan (2017) points out that validity and reliability contribute to increased transparency and credibility of a study. According to Bryman and Bell (2015) validity and reliability aim to measure if a study is credible, but they should be measured individually since reliability does not indicate a high validity and vice versa.

4.4.1 Validity

The purpose of measuring validity is to see if the data collected is relevant to the purpose of the current study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). In order to establish that the survey questions used actually measure what we intend to measure, the questions that have been developed for this survey are based on questions used in previous studies. In this way, we can make sure that the questions asked in the questionnaire are actually relevant to our study (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Moreover, the articles used in this study have been of an academic nature, to ensure the credibility of the information used. The used literature was collected through various sources of information using databases such as ABI / INFORM Global, Taylor & Francis Online, Emerald Insight, Primo and Google / Google Scholar search engine. We used keywords and terms such as influencer marketing, social media influencers, influencer attributes, purchase intent, online purchase intent, and influencer characteristics, this in different combinations.

4.4.2 Reliability

Reliability is affected by whether data is handled and produced in a reliable manner and whether the result has been affected by us as investigators. Reliability is also based on whether the study is replicable, and whether the study would have had the same outcome if it had been conducted again. (Heale & Twycross, 2015) To ensure the reliability of the study the question items in the survey all used an ordinal scale. Reliability also refers to constancy of the measure. Moreover, it indicates that the measured data is free from random errors. To measure the consistency Cronbach’s alfa is a frequently used tool, it measures the internal consistency of the constructs (Pallant, 2013). To ensure that the results are considered reliable, comparisons with previous studies have been performed, these comparisons have shown consistency with previous studies and the results determined in this study.
4.5 Ethical aspects

Research ethical aspects should be kept in mind (Oliver, 2010), this to keep a good quality of the survey. There are certain requirements for how research should be conducted to meet these aspects. Before the respondents began the survey, we informed the participants that all data is handled with caution and confidentiality. A quantitative method involves that respondents answer personally based on their own opinions, it is important that the information shared is processed in a way that protects the respondent's integrity (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The information the authors receive through this survey should not be possible to link to an individual respondent in the study, and therefore the answers were anonymous. Before answering the survey, all respondents were informed regarding the purpose of the study as well as how their answers would be used. This was done by including an informational text regarding the purpose of the study in the beginning of the survey.

4.6 Limitations

All studies have limitations, this one as well. The most prominent limitation is that these studies cover only the three main attributes that have been included, that is; attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness. There are countless amounts of attributes whose impact is worth investigating, but this study only covers these three.

Consequently, to reach the respondents for this study a convenience sample was carried out, this means that only individuals in the researchers’ network and acquaintance was reached. This lowers the generalization of the results. This could be one reason for why the female respondents make up for 69.1 percent of the data sample, and the age group of 21-30 constitutes a majority, that is to say a demographic misrepresentation. Of course, this is something that limits the study since it does not have the even distribution of respondents in terms of gender and age required to be able to say that this is the true general view.

Another limitation of this study is that the survey was only distributed in the English language. Since the aim of the study was to get as many answers as possible, the possibility of only being able to answer in English, could indicate that a number of potential respondents choose not to answer due to lack of knowledge in the English language. Being able to offer the survey in several languages would have been an opportunity to reach more respondents, and in
turn get richer data. An additional limitation to this study was that the survey, after receiving some feedback from respondents, were in some cases perceived as quite long and that some of the respondents felt difficulties understanding the questions. One explanation of this could be that this study was part of a research project with two other thesis groups, which together developed a joint survey.
5 Results

The online survey used to collect data generated 476 respondents from 48 different countries worldwide. Despite the widespread of participants, a vast majority are from Germany (26.0%) Finland (23.9%) and Sweden (23.0%). Furthermore, the majority of respondents are between 21-30 years, these represented 68.9 percent of all participants, in terms of gender the female respondents represent the majority with 69.1 percent. The biggest group of participants in the survey held a bachelor’s degree with 43.6 percent. Second was high school or equivalent with 28.2 percent. The sample of the survey contains most female respondents, and the largest age group is 21-30 years, this is most likely due to that a convenience sampling method was applied. A more detailed presentation of respondents' demographic information can be found in appendix.

5.1 Reliability statistics

As presented in the table, four of five values for the Cronbach’s alfa are higher than .7 which shows that the construct used is highly reliable, the construct expertise shows a Cronbach’s alfa on .597 which is considered acceptable (Taber, 2018; Hinton, et al., 2014). The fourth construct has a lower score of reliability than the other constructs. However, this is most likely due to the low number of items used in the construct (Taber, 2018). To conclude, all five constructs are reliable, and the questions used in the constructs are relevant together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Cronbach's alfa</th>
<th>N of items</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online purchase intent</td>
<td>.829</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Highly reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencer marketing</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Highly reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Highly reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Highly reliable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Cronbach's alfa
5.2 Correlations

To determine the strength of the relationship between the constructs and the dependent variable, Spearman's correlation analysis was chosen. Since a correlation is considered significant at a minimum level of 0.01, the result of this coefficient analysis shows that all of our theoretical concepts have a strong and positive relationship with our dependent variable online purchase intent.

![Correlation Table]

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

Table 3 Spearman's rho

5.3 Regression

5.3.1 Simple linear regression

To test the base-line hypothesis of the study, a simple linear regression was used. The result presents a t-value of 5.199 which reveals a strong positive relationship between influencer marketing and online purchase intent. The p-value is on a .000 level which indicates a strong statistical significance. Further, the adjusted R2-value is .063. This result proves that the base-line hypothesis “There is a positive relationship between social media influencer marketing and online purchase intent” is highly supported.
5.3.2 Multiple linear regression

To be able to test the three hypotheses \((H2, H3, H4)\) of the study a multiple linear regression analysis was done. In model 1 we test the three control variables against online purchase intent and in model 2 we add the three independent variables to test the hypotheses. This is to see how a specific attribute affects online purchase intent when it is simultaneously affected by other attributes, by doing this we can get a deeper understanding of which attribute seems to affect online purchase intent more.

The result of the regression in model 1 reveals that age, gender and education do not have a statistical significance against online purchase intent since the \(p\)-value is over .056. This since a \(p\)-value is considered significant at the \(p < .05\) level (Charterjee & Hadi, 2012). Moreover, in model 2 all three controls have no statistical significance. The adjusted R2-value for model 1 is .007, which is considered low.

Model 2 reveals that trustworthiness has a positive effect on online purchase intent, with a \(p\)-value of .036 and a \(t\)-value of 2.106, which reveals that H2 is supported. Further when observing model 2, expertise has a \(t\)-value of 1.602 and a \(p\)-value of .110 this implies that expertise does not have a positive effect on online purchase intent, hence H3 is not supported. Attractiveness shows a \(t\)-value of .136 and a \(p\)-value of .892, this further rejects H4, i.e. attractiveness does not have a positive effect on online purchase intent. Model 2 unveils an adjusted R2-value of .070 which is an increase compared to model 1, however it is still considered low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Stand. beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>f-value</th>
<th>R2-value</th>
<th>Adj. R2-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>5.199</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>27.035</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Simple regression analysis of the base-line hypothesis. (Influencer marketing-online purchase intent)*
To continue, a multiple linear regression analysis was done with the genders divided into female respondents and male respondents to see if the result would change, and if the attributes would have a different value for each gender. The first regression table indicates that gender is not significant. Nevertheless, the collected data provided a sample that was considered big enough for both females and males (females 69.1% and males 29.7%), therefore a multiple regression analysis was made to compare the female respondents and the male respondents. This to find out if the importance of the attributes affecting online purchase intent would differ between those two genders. The sample with non-binary respondents was not substantial enough to use (1.2%) and is therefore not included in the regression analysis. The results indicate that the other control variables (age and education) are not relevant.

The biggest difference we can see between females and males is that females view on trustworthiness gets a t-value of 2.777 compared to males -.395. On the other hand, the females t-value for expertise is .111 compared to males 2.625. Attractiveness does not seem important for either females or males with a t-value of .053 versus .408. That indicates only a slightly difference in that males value attractiveness as an attribute a bit more than females. The females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>Stand. beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>Stand. beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>-1.915</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>-1.030</td>
<td>.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.146</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>-.012</td>
<td>-.224</td>
<td>.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>1.802</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Stand. beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.</th>
<th>Stand. beta</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>2.106</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>1.602</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.892</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model summary</th>
<th>f-value</th>
<th>R2-value</th>
<th>Adj. R2-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.966</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.090</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Multiple regression analysis.

To continue, a multiple linear regression analysis was done with the genders divided into female respondents and male respondents to see if the result would change, and if the attributes would have a different value for each gender. The first regression table indicates that gender is not significant. Nevertheless, the collected data provided a sample that was considered big enough for both females and males (females 69.1% and males 29.7%), therefore a multiple regression analysis was made to compare the female respondents and the male respondents. This to find out if the importance of the attributes affecting online purchase intent would differ between those two genders. The sample with non-binary respondents was not substantial enough to use (1.2%) and is therefore not included in the regression analysis. The results indicate that the other control variables (age and education) are not relevant.

The biggest difference we can see between females and males is that females view on trustworthiness gets a t-value of 2.777 compared to males -.395. On the other hand, the females t-value for expertise is .111 compared to males 2.625. Attractiveness does not seem important for either females or males with a t-value of .053 versus .408. That indicates only a slightly difference in that males value attractiveness as an attribute a bit more than females. The females
have an adjusted R2-value of .068 and males have an adjusted R2-value of .097. Both of these values are considered low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stand. beta</td>
<td>t-value</td>
<td>sig.</td>
<td>Stand. beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>-.292</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>-.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>-.962</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>-.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>2.777</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>-.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model summary</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f-value</td>
<td>4.306</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 -value</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R2-value</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dependent variable online purchase intent**

*Table 6 Multiple regression analysis with females and males.*
6 Discussion

In this study four hypotheses were proposed. According to previous literature social media influencers positively affect consumers online purchase intent. The results from the survey indicate that the first hypothesis, social media influencers’ positively affects online purchase intent. The result of the simple linear regression regarding H1 unveils a t-value of 5.199 which reveals a positive relationship between social media influencer marketing and online purchase intent, the result also reveals a p-value < .05 implying a strong statistical significance. This is consistent with previous research and emphasize the influence social media influencers’ have on consumers online purchase intent. This as De Veirman, et al. (2017) indicates, influencers have the potential to affect the purchase intent of their followers. Moreover, De Veirman, et al. (2017) phrase that social media influencers influence others, particular due to their anticipated attributes as trustworthiness, expertise, and/or attractiveness. To continue, by measuring the result of this study in a simple linear regression shows that social media influencers’ do affect online purchase intent. Since H1 was used as a baseline hypothesis, we can thus conclude that since influencer marketing positively influences purchase intent, it is relevant to carry out the remaining parts of the study.

In the multiple linear regression, the three attributes, trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness were included (H2, H3 and H4), together with the three control variables (age, gender and education). The multiple linear regression shows a more realistic result when the attributes are put together, this because social media influencers’ typically have more than just one characteristic. This provides a greater understanding regarding how the attributes affect online purchase intent unlike when only one is used towards the dependent variable, because then the other attributes are disregarded. The result shows that when a consumer turns to a social media influencer, consumers get mostly affected by influencers that the individual perceive as trustworthy. Trustworthiness reveals a t-value of 2.106 and a p-value < .05 subsequently proving that influencer trustworthiness has a positive impact on online purchase intent, the result also reveals a statistical significance. This supports H2 that trustworthiness positively affects online purchase intent. That is also consistent with previous literature which indicates that trusting and accepting social media influencers recommendations affects consumers online purchase intention. (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). Furthermore, according to the results, expertise and attractiveness are not relevant when a social media influencer is perceived as trustworthy. The multi linear regression reveals that expertise has a t-value of 1.602, which indicates that expertise does not have a positive effect on online purchase intent. Moreover,
attractiveness reveals a t-value of .136, proving that attractiveness does not have a positive effect on online purchase intent. Both expertise and attractiveness have a p-value > .05 hence revealing that they have no statistical significance. This means that H3 and H4 are not supported. That is not consistent with previous literature. Amos, et al. (2008) and Kapitan and Silvera (2015) phrase in their studies that the level of perceived influencer expertise positively anticipates influencers’ influence on purchase intent. To continue, Till and Busler (2000) propose that celebrities that are physically attractive are a forecaster of marketing effectiveness. Moreover, Joseph (1982) indicates that endorsers’ attractiveness has a greater influence on opinion change and greater impact on the products than less attractive endorsers. In previous research, as mentioned, there were differences of opinion as to whether attractiveness actually has an impact on purchase intent, Pornpitakpan (2004) stated that there is a proven effect, while Ohanian (1991) opposed this, saying that there is no proven effect on purchase intent. Furthermore, the results of this study confirm Ohanian’s (1991) assertion that attractiveness does not have a clear impact on online purchase intent. One explanation for that attractiveness does not affect online purchase intent can be as Baker & Churchill (1977) suggest in their study that attractiveness is not effective for gaining substantial purchase intent but gains a positive view on the advertisement and the brand.

There were some differences of opinion in previous research as to whether expertise affects purchase intent. Till and Busler (2000) argue that expertise has an impact on purchase intent, since experts are often perceived to have a persuasive effect on their followers. However, Lui and Standing (1989) argue that expertise does not have as strong an impact on purchase intent, but rather believes that trustworthiness is the attribute that has the clearest impact. The result of this study confirms when Lui and Standing's (1989) argument.

Furthermore, our results indicate that attributes have different effects based on the target audience's demographic information. The results state that individuals are more inclined to buy something based on tips from a social media influencer that are perceived as trustworthy, but not when the influencer is perceived as expert or attractive. Consequently, the findings of this study imply that the most important attribute for a social media influencer to possess in order to positively affect consumers online purchase intent is to be trustworthy. Previous literature indicates that age has an effect on online purchase intent, the result in this study contradicts that and shows t-value of -1.915 as well as a p-value > .05 hence, a non-statistical significance. Gender does not seem to have a statistical significance on online purchase intent either, interestingly, the attributes are proven to affect the genders online purchase intent differently. The female respondents prefer a social media influencer that is trustworthy, this is revealed in
the result that presents a t-value of 2.777 and a p-value < .05. However, the male respondents prefer a social media influencer that is perceived as an expert, the results reveal a t-value of 2.625 and a significance vale on the .010 level. This indicates that brands need to keep this in mind when choosing a social media influencer to endorse their brand and products.

The results show that, in contrast to males, who value expertise as the most important attribute, women's online purchase intent is most affected when they feel that the influencers are trustworthy. This could be explained by previous studies which state that women are more risk averse in terms of purchasing online, trusting an influencer reduces this sense of risk (Sharma & Kurien, 2017). Furthermore, we believe that this is important to have in mind when selecting an influencer to endorse the brand, so the influencer match the target group. That is, to reach a female target group it is important to choose an influencer whom the target group views to be trustworthy. While in order to reach a male target group, it is of the utmost importance to identify an influencer who is viewed as an expert within their area.

Something worth mentioning is that the attributes that were proven to have no statistical significance in relation to online purchase intent can still be important. The results of this study show that trustworthiness is the attribute that influences a consumer's online purchase intent. However, it can be that attractiveness and expertise still are important attributes, above all, to attract more followers, potential collaboration partners and brands. The main purpose of the study is to see whether the attributes affect a consumer's online purchase intent, which means that attractiveness and expertise can still be central attributes that are perceived as important for the audience, but that trustworthiness is the main attribute that ultimately makes us form a decision. This is mainly because a social media influencer, as previously mentioned, does not only represent one attribute, but possesses several.

Furthermore, a majority of the respondents in this study are between 21-30 years old, this contributes to the general conclusion being more applicable in that particular age range. That being said, there are some reasons to believe that other attributes may have a greater impact on other possible age groups, trustworthiness for example might not be the most affecting attribute on a younger audience, since they are proven to be less risk averse (Sharma & Kurien, 2017). For example, it may be that attractiveness is more important for younger age groups.
7 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between online purchase intent and social media influencers, as well as how their attributes affect this relationship. This study contributes to the existing literature on social media influencers’ attributes, as well as how that affects online purchase intent. Based on the main purpose of the study, the following research questions were formed:

- How does influencer marketing affect online purchase intent?
- How do social media influencers’ trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness affect online purchase intent?

To answer the research questions, four hypotheses were developed.

**H1**: There is a positive relationship between social media influencer marketing and online purchase intent.

**H2**: Social media influencers trustworthiness positively affect online purchase intent.

**H3**: Social media influencers expertise positively affect online purchase intent.

**H4**: Social media influencers attractiveness positively affect online purchase intent.

The result when a simple linear regression was made supports H1 that social media influencers positively affect online purchase intent. Furthermore, a multiple linear regression was applied to find out if the three attributes were affecting online purchase intent when influenced by each other, this was done to get a more true-to-life picture of the result as an influencer usually possesses several attributes. The results show that H2 is supported, which means that trustworthiness positively affects online purchase intent. On the other hand, H3 and H4 were not supported. This means that social media influencers’ expertise and attractiveness do not affect online purchase intent.

To answer the research question, we can clearly see that social media influencers have a positive impact on online purchase intent, which further supports the existing information that can be found in academic studies. Attributes are something that seems to have a significant impact on online purchase intent. However, only influencer trustworthiness appears to have a positive influence on online purchase intent. Although, the importance of attributes shifts when analyzing the female respondents and the male respondents separately. That indicates that
males prefer social media influencers’ who are considered experts, and females prefer social media influencers’ that are perceived as trustworthy.

The findings of this study contribute with knowledge regarding how the social media influencer attributes; trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness affect online purchase intent. The result of this study implies that it is important for organizations to know their consumers, as well as to choose a social media influencer that hold the most suiting attribute for their target audience. This to influence the consumers in to online purchase intent.

7.1 Managerial implications

This study provides an overview of how social media influencer attributes affect online purchase intent. The study contributes to an increased understanding of how the characteristics affect consumers, as well as which social media influencer attribute has the biggest impact on online purchase intent. The study's findings suggest that trustworthiness is the attribute that has the strongest impact on online purchase intent, which means companies should focus on finding influencers who are perceived as trustworthy by their followers. However, marketing managers should not turn a blind eye to other attributes not having an impact on the brand and the products.

This arises an important question about what makes a social media influencer influence their audience. It is a key factor for organizations to have a perception about the influencer phenomena to be able to choose the right influencer in their marketing strategy. Moreover, the understanding of which social media influencer is the most suitable may differ depending on the specific goals of the brand. To continue, the result of this study demonstrates the importance of product match-up, as the result indicates that trustworthiness is a major contributing factor affecting online purchase intent. This further means that companies should place great focus on matching their product with an influencer who is perceived as trustworthy by their followers. Moreover, as the result of this study declare, females and males view different social media influencers attributes variously important. This contributes even more to the fact that companies need to know their main target audience in order to adapt their influencer marketing strategy.
7.2 Suggestions for future research

Influencer marketing is an area of research that has become increasingly popular to investigate. The results of this study provide a general picture of how influencers' attributes affect online purchase intent. We believe that there is still a lot of room for further research in the subject. Especially, we think it would be interesting to carry out a study where you include more attributes, but also a study where you go into more depth on how these attributes affect product match-up.

Quantitative studies are known to use quantifiable data and then draw general conclusions along the collected data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Something that would have been interesting is to carry out a similar study like this but to instead apply a qualitative approach, in this way one could gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of how different individuals are affected by different attributes.

Moreover, it would be interesting for future research to investigate if the number of followers a social media influencer has affects the audience perception of the social media influencer. To see if the social media influencers trustworthiness, expertise or attractiveness is affected by the number of followers they have on their channels. For example, if a high number of followers positively or negatively affects the social media influencers trustworthiness, and in turn affect online purchase intent.

This study contributes to an increased understanding of how different genders are affected by social media influencers’ attributes. A potential approach for future studies is to investigate how an influencer's gender affects followers' purchase intent. This would be an interesting approach as studies have indicated that an influencer's gender has a proven effect of how consumers are influenced by influencers (Erdogan, 1999).
Reference list


Guruge, M. (2018). Comparison between Attributes related to Celebrity Endorsement and


and security perception. *Australian journal of basic and applied sciences*, 7(6), 307-315


Till, B.D. & Busler, M. (2000) The match-up hypothesis: physical attractiveness, expertise,


## Appendix

### Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question:</th>
<th>Conceptual connection:</th>
<th>Reference:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We want to know how you feel about Social Media influencers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I follow various celebrities, bloggers and/or influencers online.</td>
<td>Social media influencer (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find influencers such as celebrities that I can follow in different social media important.</td>
<td>Social media influencer (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I buy online based on recommendations from online influencers.</td>
<td>Social media influencer (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If my favorite influencer recommends a brand I haven’t tried before, I am more likely to try it.</td>
<td>Social media influencer (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often base buying decisions on the statements of influencers that I trust.</td>
<td>Trustworthiness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Johnstone Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that influencers market products within their expertise.</td>
<td>Expertise (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Johnstone &amp; Lindh (2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To what extent do you agree with the following statements being important about Social Media influencers that you follow?

---

40
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Variable Description</th>
<th>Questions Developed From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are an expert in their field.</td>
<td>Expertise (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Müller, et al. (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find them very trustworthy.</td>
<td>Trustworthiness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Müller, et al. (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are a role model for me.</td>
<td>Trustworthiness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Schouten, et al. (2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are a great inspiration for me.</td>
<td>Attractiveness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Lim, et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are attractive to me (including: looks, personality, and/or lifestyle).</td>
<td>Attractiveness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Lim, et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find them entertaining.</td>
<td>Attractiveness (Independent variable)</td>
<td>Questions developed from: Lim, et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finally, we have some questions about your experiences and intent for future online shopping.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to keep on buying from the Internet/web.</td>
<td>Online purchase intentions (Dependent variable)</td>
<td>Anastasiadou, Lindh, &amp; Vasse (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I will buy more online in the future</td>
<td>Online purchase intentions (Dependent variable)</td>
<td>Anastasiadou, Lindh, &amp; Vasse (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to buy other things (that I have not bought previously) from the Internet in the future.</td>
<td>Online purchase intentions (Dependent variable)</td>
<td>Anastasiadou, Lindh, &amp; Vasse (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>69.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>21-30</td>
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<td>31-40</td>
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<td>41-50</td>
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<td>51-60</td>
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<td>61&gt;</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
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<td>I don’t want to say</td>
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<td>0.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
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<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or equivalent</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to say</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>