

**FINNISH LIFESTYLE INFLUENCERS ROLES AND
COMMUNICATION IN INSTAGRAM
ADVERTISEMENTS**

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ABSTRACT

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Title Finnish lifestyle influencers roles and communication in Instagram advertisements	
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<p>Influencer marketing is a prevalent marketing strategy (Vrontis et al., 2021) that has been studied in various perspectives. Despite studies researchers have noted limitations on social media commercial posts, message strategies and roles. To fill research gaps, study focused on Finnish lifestyle influencers roles and communication in Instagram advertisements. This study aimed to examine what roles influencers took and what communication strategies they used in advertisements.</p> <p>The theory demonstrates influencers and their main stakeholders, advertising, advertising messages and appeals, influencer roles on strategic communication and brand collaboration, and influencer types and categories.</p> <p>Research used inductive and deductive approaches and mixed methods. To understand five young Finnish lifestyle influencers study examined 50 Instagram ads. The research method gathered data on pictures, companies, influencer roles and communication strategies from years 2021-2023.</p> <p>Results differed from studies that found opinion leaders as a common role (n=11) Most strategic communication roles were content creators (n=50), multipliers (n=50) and protagonists (n=38) the commonest brand collaboration role was spokesperson (n=43).</p> <p>As rational (n=88) and emotional appeals (n=88) were commonly used the study concludes that customers can use both logic and feelings in purchase decisions. Selective messages (n=42) were clearly the most common ad message style, as companies preferred to promote one brand at a time.</p>	
Key words influencer marketing, social media influencer, influencer, strategic communication, brand collaboration, advertising, social media advertising, commercial collaboration, commercial content, sponsored content, Instagram, lifestyle, macro influencer	
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<p>Vaikuttajamarkkinointi on yleinen markkinointistrategia (Vrontis et al., 2021), jota on tutkittu useista eri näkökulmista. Tutkimuksista huolimatta tutkijat ovat havainneet rajoitteita sosiaalisen median kaupallisten viestien, viestintä strategioiden ja roolien tutkinnassa. Tutkimusaukkojen täydentämiseksi tutkimuksessa keskityttiin suomalaisten elämäntapavaikuttajien rooleihin ja viestintään Instagram mainoksissa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli ymmärtää mitä rooleja vaikuttajat ottivat ja millaisia viestintästrategioita he käyttivät mainoksissa.</p> <p>Teoriaosuus käsittelee vaikuttajia ja heidän tärkeimpiä sidosryhmiänsä, mainontaa, mainosviestejä ja houkuttimia, vaikuttajien rooleja strategisessa viestinnässä ja brändiyhteistyössä sekä vaikuttaja tyyppisiä ja -kategorioita.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa käytettiin induktiivista ja deduktiivista lähestymistapaa sekä laadullisia ja määrällisiä metodeja. Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin viittä nuorta suomalaista elämäntapavaikuttajaa tutkimalla 50 Instagram mainosta. Tutkimusmenetelmällä kerättiin tietoa kuvista, yrityksistä, vaikuttajien rooleista ja viestintästrategioista vuosina 2021–2023.</p> <p>Tulokset poikkesivat tutkimuksista, joiden perusteella mielipidejohtaja olisi yleinen rooli (n=11). Useimmat strategisen viestinnän roolit kuuluivat sisällöntuottajiin (n=50), kertojiin (n=50) ja päähenkilöihin (n=38) ja yleisin brändiyhteistyö rooli oli tiedottaja (n=43).</p> <p>Koska rationaalisia (n=88) ja emotionaalisia houkuttumia (n=88) käytettiin yhtä paljon, todettiin että asiakkaat käyttävät sekä logiikkaa että tunteita ostopäätöksissään. Kohdistetut viestit (n=42) olivat selvästi yleisin mainosviestinnän tyyli, sillä yritykset mainostivat mieluiten yhtä brändiä kerrallaan.</p>	
Asiasanat vaikuttajamarkkinointi, sosiaalisen median vaikuttaja, vaikuttaja, strateginen viestintä, brändiyhteistyö, mainonta, mainonta sosiaalisessa mediassa, kaupallinen yhteistyö, kaupallinen sisältö, sponsoroitu sisältö, Instagram, elämäntapa, makrovaikuttaja	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research justification

Influencer marketing has become a prevalent marketing strategy (Vrontis et al., 2021) that impacts companies' goals (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Influencers are used for brand awareness, communication, promotion, purchases, advertising, and engagement (Brown and Hayes, 2008; Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014; Scott, 2015; Abidin, 2015; Bhattacharya, 2023; Rundin & Colliander, 2021; Cheung et al., 2022). As numerous companies have noticed the benefits of influencer collaborations (Martínez-López et al., 2020) the global influencer market value has reached 21.1 billion dollars (Statista, 2023a). While the industry keeps growing international brands intend to allocate more financial resources to influencers (Hughes et al., 2019; Kiet al., 2020) in hopes to benefit from influencer recommendations, engaging content, wider reach, enhanced brand perceptions and increased returns of investments (Lee and Watkins, 2016; Cheung et al., 2022, Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Hwang and Zhang, 2018; Ahmad, 2018)

As influencer marketing has grown, scholars have gained interest on the topic. Numerous studies have investigated commercial marketing, influencer characteristics, platforms, industries, sponsorships, intermediaries, appeal, and efficiency (Hudders et al., 2020). In addition, few studies have delved into strategic or creative communication, product development, advertising, sponsored posts, and commercial messages (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Rundin & Colliander, 2021, Zarei et al., 2020; Vanninen et al., 2022). For now, most studies have focused on Instagram (32%), YouTube (19%) and blogs (13%) (Vrontis et al., 2021) and industry focus has been on apparel, food, vaping, luxury, travel, and city marketing (Hudders, 2020). As multiple platforms and industries are yet uncovered a lot can be studied.

Despite major interest on commercial marketing (Hudders et al., 2020) and broad investigations on Instagram (Vrontis et al., 2021; Hudders et al., 2020) research has a limited focus on influencers commercial posts and their message strategies on social media (Hudders, De Jans, and De Veirman 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Currently scholars are especially interested on how different influencer categories display commercial content (Hogsnes et al., 2024) and as these categories include influencers interested in fashion, beauty, lifestyle, photography, entertainment, travel, tech, gaming, motivation, environment, fitness, health, and food (Tanwar et al., 2023) a lot can be discovered.

Besides categories, research on influencer roles is limited. Currently scholars see influencers role as solely promoters (Rundin & Colliander, 2021) or content creators (Lou & Yuan, 2019), even though influencer roles have developed (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). As various researchers have noted, longer and more complex collaborations, activity in product and communications

development, and rise of influencers own brands and product lines (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Rundin & Colliander, 2021; Fernandez 2020) are further studies on influencer roles needed.

As previous studies have focused mostly on the United States (Vrontis et al., 2021), current research is limited in Nordic countries such as Finland. To fill research gaps this study focused on commercial content of lifestyle influencers in Finland. This approach was selected since previous studies highlighted limited data on influencer roles, sponsored posts message strategies and influencer categories.

This study aims to understand commercial influencer marketing on Instagram based on influencer roles and communication strategies. To limit the focus, influencer roles are based on Enke and Borchers' strategic communication roles (2019) and Rundin and Collianders advertising roles (2021), whereas communication strategies are based on De Pelsmackers ad messages and message appeals (2017).

As the study's focus is on commercial content, influencer roles and communication strategies the research questions will answer

1. What roles influencers take in commercial content?
2. What communication strategies influencers use in commercial content?

1.2 Research structure and use of AI

This paper will follow a simple structure. First the research is introduced based on topic introduction, research justifications, questions, and objectives. Then theories on influencer marketing, influencer roles and marketing communication etc. are introduced on literature review. Next comes data and methodology presenting research approach, data collection and study group, and results presenting findings on influencer roles and communication strategies etc. Finally, the last chapter will conclude theoretical contributions, managerial implications and suggest a direction for future studies. A simplified version of the structure is presented below in figure 1.

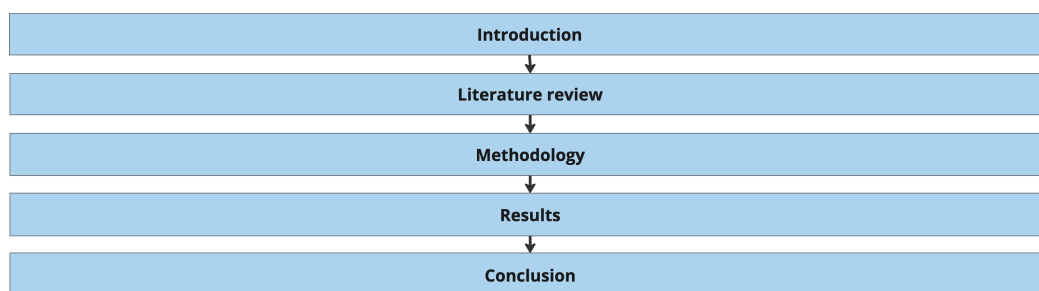


FIGURE 1 Research structure

During this study ChatGPT was used for topic ideas and Google Docs for text editing. Data collection and analysis was done with Excel and translations with Google Translator, DeepL and Sanakirja.org. AI based channels included ChatGPT and DeepL. DeepL's translations are used as direct and modified citations in results.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Influencers and stakeholders

Influencer marketing refers to the strategic use of influencers that can be executed in advertising, sponsored vlogging and blogging etc. (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). Leung (2022, p.3) defines online influencer marketing as *“a strategy in which a firm selects and incentivizes online influencers to engage their followers on social media in an attempt to leverage these influencers' unique resources to promote the firm's offerings, with the ultimate goal of enhancing firm performance.”* In influencer marketing influencers endorse products, brands, ideas, services, or opinions. This endorsement is financially or materially compensated by companies (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). The compensation can include experiences, trips, services, or free products (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). As compensation, influencers can in addition get support, promotion, monetary values, fixed or flexible monetary compensations, and access to experiences, events, and places (Borchers & Enke, 2021).

Influencer marketing can benefit companies targeting, positioning, trust, and creativity. Targeting benefits include segment homogeneity and increased market acceptance. Trust benefits can include forming communal relationships and increased authenticity. Lastly, creativity benefits can increase content originality and relevance. (Leung, et al., 2022). Other benefits include increased purchase intentions, brand attitudes, brand trust and eWOM (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020, De Veirman et al., 2017; Munnukka et al., 2019, Hwang & Zhang, 2018). The effectiveness of influencer marketing can be due to parasocial relationships, perceived credibility authenticity, attractiveness, and reliability (Munnukka et al., 2019, Reinikainen et al., 2020, Pöyry et al, 2019, Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020, Cialdini, 1984).

2.1.1 Influencer definitions

Influencers can be defined in multiple ways. Freberg (2011, p. 90) states that influencers *“represent a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media.”* This definition highlights influencers' role as new independent third-party endorsers that shape attitudes in social media. Similarly, to Freberg, Enke and Borchers see influencers as third parties. According to them (2019, p. 267) influencers are *“third-party actors that have established a significant number of relevant relationships with a specific quality to and influence on organisational stakeholders through content*

production, content distribution, interaction, and personal appearance on the social web." This definition puts emphasis on the number of relevant stakeholder relationships and influencing. In addition, it highlights competences rather than channels.

Abidin's definition similarly stresses competences. He states (2015, para 1) that influencers are *"everyday, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating' advertorials' into their blog or social media posts."* This definition emphasises competences on visual and textual narration, engagement, and monetizing. Whereas other definitions have highlighted using digital spaces, this definition implies that influencers can in addition affect the physical world and advertisements. This definition in addition implies that influencers are everyday ordinary Internet users with a large following.

In Lou and Yuan's definition, influencers have a clear role. According to them (2019, p. 59) an influencer is *"first and foremost a content generator: one who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers – who are of marketing value to brands – by regularly producing valuable content via social media."* This definition gives influencers credit for their expertise, sizable number of followers, creating market value and valuable content.

TABLE 1 Influencer definitions (Freberg, 2011; Abidin, 2015; Enke & Borchers, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Leung et al., 2022)

Author	Role	Activity	Channel	Followers
Freberg, 2011, p. 90	Independent third-party endorsers	Shape audience attitudes	Blogs, tweets, and social media	Audience
Abidin, 2015, para 1	Everyday ordinary internet users	Engage and monetize following	Blogs and social media	A relatively large following
Enke & Borchers, 2019, p. 267	Third party actor	Influence organisational stakeholders	Social web	A significant number of relevant relationships
Lou & Yuan, 2019, p. 59	Content creator and expertise on specific area	Market value to brands and produce valuable content	Social media	A sizable following
Leung et al., 2022, p. 3	Individuals or virtual avatars, opinion leaders	Significant social influence	Social media	Network of followers

Newest definition highlights influencers as individuals or virtual avatars. In the definition Leung et al., (2022, p.3) state that *"influencers are individuals or even virtual avatars who have built a network of followers on social media and are regarded as digital opinion leaders with significant social influence on their network of followers."* Similarly, Lou and Yuan this definition highlights expertise and states that influencers are digital opinion leaders that influence a network of followers. Table 1 highlights the differences between each definition.

2.1.2 Influencers and followers

Followers are people who select and follow influencers whose brand resonate with them (Leung, et al., 2022). Thus, influencers can produce content that the followers like most (Hudders, et. al., 2020) and deliver sponsored messages that resonate with their audience (Davies & Hobbs, 2020). Marwick and Boyd (2010) emphasise influencers' strategic control. According to them, influencers can strategically maintain their followers with continuous communication and interaction. Studies have in fact proven that influencers can impact their followers' opinions, actions (Castells, 2011) and decisions (De Veirman et al., 2017)

Social media users can create a sense of equality with influencers (Jerslev, 2016). Since the user's relationship between influencers can be like friends (García-Rapp, 2017) or siblings (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). Influencers can in addition form an asymmetrical parasocial relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956) with their followers. This refers to the illusion of having a face-to-face relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956) that may lead to interest and identification (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000) or feeling like a friend (Rubin et al., 1985). In addition, audiences might feel that they know the performer well (Brown, 2015) and know a lot about them. The influencer does not share this knowledge with the audience, which makes the relationship unbalanced (Munnukka et al., 2019). The term originally described relationships with audiences and performers from films, television, and radio, but nowadays it can in addition be used with influencers (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Lueck, 2012; Lee & Watkins, 2016; Yuan & Lou, 2020).

2.1.3 Influencers and companies

Influencer marketing has been a key success factor behind the fastest growing brands, as Revolve, NA-KD and Daniel Wellington. The trend of using influencers can be seen in increased budgets (Rundin & Colliander 2021). Companies approach influencers to endorse their brands, products, and ideas on social media (De Veirman et al., 2017). While selecting influencers, companies should consider various aspects. These include brand and product fit, cost, location, social media platform, influencers ascetics, narrative style, biography, personality, professionalism, reach, engagement, content production and platform competences. Reasons to not select an influencer include fake followers, cooperation with competitors and high number of collaborations (Borchers & Enke, 2021).

As companies are used to having full control on marketing communications, influencer marketing changes the dynamics by gaining a part of this control. Influencers communication can be divided into managed strategic, unmanaged strategic and strategically insignificant communication. In managed strategic communication influencers perform strategically significant activities that are managed by organisations. These activities are related to organisational objectives and communication. The actions can be completed on paid, owned, shared, and earned media. Unmanaged strategic communication is as managed strategic communication but lacks the organisational management. These activities can be done on shared and earned media, but not on paid or owned media. Lastly, in strategically insignificant communication influencers perform activities that are not strategically relevant. This action can include vlogs, self-help guides or everyday communication with followers (Enke & Borchers, 2019).

Influencers tasks can in addition include content production, content distribution, moderation, follow-ups, setting links, hashtags, mentions, campaign consultation, co-creation, protagonist activities, innovation, reporting, and evaluation (Borchers & Enke, 2021). Companies can guide influencer marketing by briefing or content approvals. Briefings include information on the organisation, its offerings and campaign. (Borchers & Enke, 2021). As strict management can reduce influencers' creative freedom and produce too similar content with other influencers (Haenlein et al., 2020) companies should allow them to create content that matches their follower expectations and personal brands (Leung, et al., 2022).

2.1.4 Influencers and celebrities

Nowadays influencers influence worldwide (Rundin & Colliander, 2021) and can be as well-known as mainstream celebrities (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Therefore, influencers can be referred to as social media stars, micro-celebrities (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2020) and even celebrities (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). Whereas influencers have become famous by building appealing and attractive social media profiles (Hudders et al., 2020), celebrities have gained their fame from traditional mass media (Enke & Borchers, 2019).

Whereas influencers have competences in contribution, content creation, audience interaction and developing high quality relationships, celebrities lack these skills as their channels are often managed by social media consultants. As celebrities can utilise their fame to start a career in social media and mega influencers can grow into celebrities, a grey zone exists between the definitions (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Similar features include prominence, standing out from ordinary social media users, (Enke & Borchers, 2019) and interest from audience. The main difference is related openness. Whereas influencers are open with their feelings (Marôpo et al., 2019), celebrities intentionally keep a distance from the audience (Jerslev, 2016).

2.2 Influencer advertisements

2.2.1 Advertising

Advertising is used to persuade and inform people on products, services, and ideas (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Kotler and Amstrong (2010) define advertising as *"any paid, non-personal communication through various media by an identified company, non-profit organization or a individual"* Advertising uses message strategies and creative platforms. Message strategies can either be informal, transformational, institutional, selective, generic, theme or action based, whereas creative platforms include campaign problems, objectives, customer benefits, target groups and advertising appeals (Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Divisions can additionally be based on senders, receivers, and media. The senders can either be manufacturers, retailers, collectives or a co-operative, and receivers either consumers or business clients, whereas media can consist of direct, print, audio-visual channels (Pelsmacker et al., 2017).

Online advertising benefits include direct and indirect responses, enhanced brand interactions, brand awareness, reach, targeting, dynamic updates and lowered costs. Possible disadvantages are linked brand reputation, low click-through rates, low efficiency, and relatively high costs (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012). Social media ads are a form of online advertising. These ads display brands, products, ideas, and organisations (De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders 2017) on various social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest (Tanwar et al., 2023). The ad type is used to influence hard-to-reach stakeholders, such as niches, teenagers, and young adults (Enke & Borchers, 2019).

2.2.2 Advertising messages

Marketers pay influencers to convey commercial messages (De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders 2017) in online advertising. These messages aim to sell, advertise, and promote different products, services, and businesses (Hogsnes, Grønli, and Hansen 2023). Commercial content can be categorised in sponsored, hidden sponsored and non-sponsored commercial posts (Zarei et al. 2020). Whereas sponsored posts have clear advertising messages (Caldeira, Van Bauwel, and De Ridder 2021) and ad declarations, hidden sponsored posts use specific messages, without ad declarations. As declarations can be done with company tags or hashtags, this type of information is absent in hidden sponsored posts (Zarei et al. 2020). Lastly, non-sponsored commercial posts include product recommendations and tags (Hogsnes et al., 2024) without gaining monetary benefits (Jorge, Marôpo, and Nunes 2018) Both sponsored and non-sponsored posts can be indirect or direct (Zarei et al. 2020).

Ad messages can either be informal, transformational, institutional, selective, generic, theme or action based. Informal messages reduce negative emotions, solve, or avoid problems and depletion, whereas transformational messages increase positive motivations, social approval, intellectual stimulation, and

sensory gratification. Institutional ads are used in governmental campaigns, selective ads in promoting specific brands and generic ads in promoting product categories. Theme ads attempt to build goodwill for brands or products, and action ads try to stimulate fast purchases (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). To convince consumers marketers can use selling propositions. Whereas unique selling propositions (USP) refer to functional superiority, as superior service, and emotional selling propositions (ESP) to psychological associations, as happiness.

Lastly, to generate good commercial messages marketers must understand customers' decision making. In the Foote-Cone-Belding grid decision making is based on high or low involvement and think or feel dimension. Involvement is related to the importance of buying a product and think-feel dimension is related to cognitive or affective decision making. High involvement-think products include cars, high-feel products fashion, low-think products toilet paper, and low-feel products sweets (Vaughn, 1980). Figure 2 demonstrates products positions on the grid.

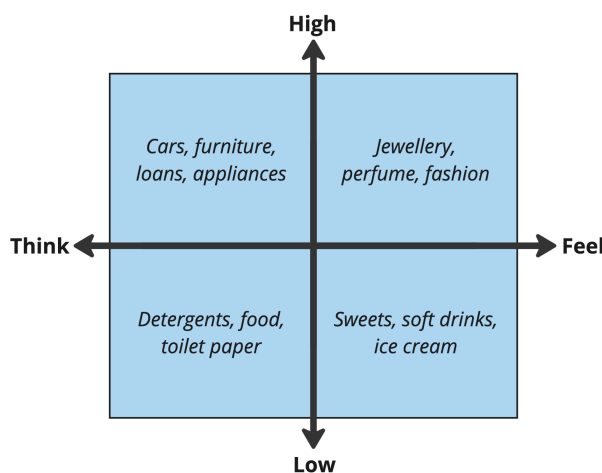


FIGURE 2 Foote-Cone-Belding grid (Vaughn, 1980)

2.2.3 Advertising appeals

Advertising can have rational or emotional appeals. Rational appeals include for example demonstrations, talking heads, testimonials, dramatizations, problem solution, slice-of-life, and comparative ads. Emotional ads can appeal to humour, fear, eroticism, warmth, shock, or music. Whereas emotional appeals create images and raise affective responses, rational appeals are based on evaluative criteria. This criterion is based on Resnik and Stern information classification, that includes evaluative information on performance, availability, quality, components, special offers, price etc. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017).

Talking heads are ads where characters tell stories with their own words, using monologues, dialogues, or interviews. Demonstrative ads show how the product works and what benefits it has, whereas problem solution formats show how to avoid or fix problems. Testimonials are used to show how good

the products are. As testimonials rely on group effects, they target ordinary people. Similarly, to problem solution ads, slice-of-life -ads solve problems. These ads are shown in a real-life setting, which makes them relatable. Dramatizations are more intense versions of slice-of-life-ads. These ads are highly dramatized and in addition focus on problem solving. Lastly, comparative ads differentiate brands from its competitors. These ads can be direct and name a competitor or indirect and focus brand attributes (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017)

As humorous ads try to make people laugh, the attempt can either be successful or unsuccessful. Erotic ads include nudity, suggestive words, physical content, sexual music, seductive facial expressions, and people dressed sexy. As warm ads evoke positive feelings, such as affection, cosiness, empathy, friendship and love, fear ads do the opposite by displaying risks that consumers can be exposed to. These risks can be either physical, financial, social, opportunity loss, time, and product performance related and are presented without purchasing. Lastly, music ads can set emotional tones, gain attention, create a mood or sense of relaxation (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017).

2.2.4 Advertising in Instagram

Instagram is one of the most popular social networks (Statista, 2023) that can be used to create personal profiles, invite friends, and send instant messages. The channels in functions allow the users to add, edit, tag, share and collaborate content that is in the form of images, text, sound, or videos (Pelsmacker et al., 2017). The main reason for its use is to see what family and friends are up to, kill time, and to keep touch with family and friends (Statista, 2020). Other reasons include information, entertainment, socialisation, and inspiration (Voorveld et al. 2018).

The time spent online exposes customers to influencer ads (Hudders, et. al., 2020). In Instagram advertisers can use visually appealing ads that blend in the content (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). These ads can either be native, covert, or embedded. As native ads have a similar feel and look like the rest of the platform, covert ads can hide the persuasive nature of ads and embedded ads can be integrated to editorial content (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). These ads are effective on the channel's posts, stories, and videos (Statista, 2023b) and the platform claims that Instagram ads are 2.8 times more effective than on other online advertising formats (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017).

Besides advertising, Instagram can be used in marketing. The activities include strategic ad placements, business profiles (Instagram, 2023), and influencer marketing (Martínez-López et al. 2020). In platform marketers can in addition create inspirational and engaging content, have direct customer interactions, and target certain customer groups (Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020). The targeting possibilities allow the companies to access and influence hard-to-reach stakeholders, such as niches, teenagers, and young adults (Enke &

Borchers, 2019) and the use of influencer categories, as lifestyle, can limit the targeting further (Brown, 2024).

As Instagram's current user base includes over 2000 million active users (Statista, 2023c), and 2.3 users in Finland, (Statista, 2023d) it offers a high reach. The potential is especially in people on their 20s and 30s (Statista, 2023e; Haenlein et al., 2020) as most of the users are aged 18 to 34 (Statista, 2023e). Lastly, as both genders use the platform equally (Statista, 2023f), it offers possibilities to reach both female and male audiences.

2.3 Influencer roles

2.3.1 Role definitions

Roles can be defined in various ways. The term can be used in relation to social hierarchies and to position or location within the social system (Scott, 2015). According to Parsons (1940) "*roles tell what we should do and what we expect others to do.*" Similarly, to Parsons, Dahrendorf (1958) highlights that roles define what people are expected to do in certain situations. Dahrendorf (1958) adds that roles have obligations and rights according to the social position. Aarnio's definition is similarly linked to social position. Aarnio et al., (2013) states that "*role is an assumption of how to act in a certain social position.*" These definitions highlight that roles are related to expectations, social positions, locations, and hierarchies. The expectations can come from other people or be situational. Table 2 displays the definitions.

TABLE 2 Role definitions (Parsons, 1940; Dahrendorf, 1958; Aarnio et. al, 2013; Scott, 2015).

Parsons, 1940	Dahrendorf, 1958	Aarnio, et al., 2013	Scott, 2015
Roles tell what we should do and what we expect others to do.	Roles define what people are expected to do in certain situations. Roles have obligations and rights according to the social position.	Role is an assumption of how to act in a certain social position.	Term role is used in two different ways. First one is related to social hierarchies and second to position or location within the social system.

According to Merton (1957) every social position is associated with a range of behaviours that make up their role set. For example, a medical student must act as a student in front of teachers, nurses, doctors, patients etc. During these relations the student will encounter different behavioural expectations. Turner (1962) emphasises the act of role making. According to him role takers don't have behavioural instructions to all situations and must from time to time improvise aka make a role. Furthermore, people act according to different roles in their everyday lives, for example a can teacher acts as a teacher in school and as a mother in home (Aarnio, et. al., 2013).

2.3.2 Strategic communication roles and opinion leaders

Enke and Borchers (2019) have developed a theory for strategic social media influencer communication. They (2019) define strategic social media communication as *"the purposeful use of communication by organisations or social media influencers in which social media influencers are addressed or perform activities with strategic significance to organisational goal"* This definition highlights communication and the relationship between influencers and companies. In the framework Enke and Borchers (2019) have used Macmara's strategic communication model (2018) that consists of inputs, activities or roles, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Strategic communication roles include content creators, multipliers, moderators and protagonists. Content creators produce or co-create content, multipliers distribute organisational messages, moderators interact with online and offline audiences, moderators engage interactions and protagonists communicate as public personas. To take strategic communication roles influencers need competencies. Content creators need competencies in content production, multipliers on content distribution, moderators on interaction and protagonists on public personas. As output content creators develop content, multipliers reach, moderators interaction and protagonists personalization. These outputs benefit companies in multiple ways, for example influencers personalization impacts company's authenticity and brand images (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Figure 3 highlights competences (inputs), roles and outputs.

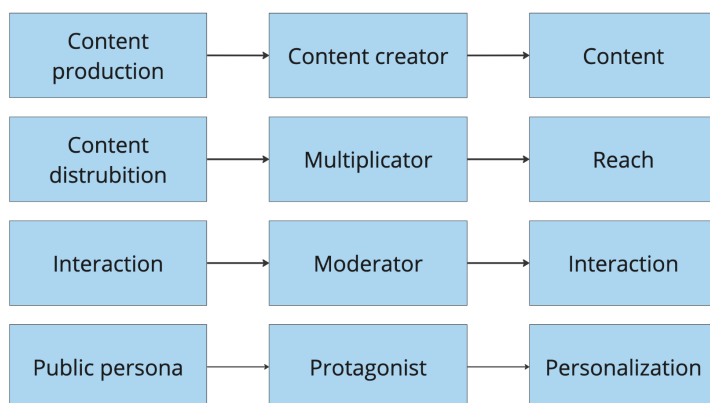


FIGURE 3 Strategic Communication Model (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Macmara, 2018)

As influencers are often described as opinion leaders (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018; Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014) this part focuses on describing the role. In Katz and Lazarsfeld words (1955, p.3) opinion leaders are *"likely to influence other persons in their immediate environment."* Their main competence lies in impacting people's decision making (Enke & Borchers, 2019) and this impact is based on expertise in certain areas and a high number of connections (Goldenberg et al., 2006). Opinion leader synonyms include trusted

tastemakers (De Veirman et al., 2017) and as market mavens (Feick & Price, 1987).

2.3.3 Brand collaboration roles

Brand collaboration roles include spokesperson, co-creator, and co-owner. Spokesperson subroles consist of billboards, stylists, and ambassadors, cocreators subroles of consultants and co-designers and co-owner subroles of sole proprietors, facilitators, and partners (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). This chapter will introduce each role and its subroles.

Spokespeople's task is to give examples of how to use the product. First subrole, billboards, have limited control in product creation and communication, and are used as faces and in advertising films. In the second subrole, stylist, influencers have more creative control in communication, but no control on product creation. In stylist role, influencers use their aesthetic skills and style products in their personal ways. Lastly, in ambassador role influencers have long collaborations and more creative freedom in communication (Rundin & Colliander, 2021).

Cocreators have more creative control in product creation. The control can be equal to brands or exceed them, but ultimate control is on companies. First subrole, co-designers, design products or product lines with or for companies. Co-designers typically have high creative control on product creation and varying control for communication. Second subrole, consultants offer brand ideas or consultation for product creation, but do not take part in product creation. Creative control on communication and product creation varies. Lastly, in consultant's role, influencers use their own expertise (Rundin & Colliander, 2021) to guide companies.

Co-owners promote products and services they or close relations have an ownership on. They have high control in product creation, and creative control in product creation is defined by co-owners. In sole proprietors subrole, influencers have almost all control in both communication and product creation. Sole proprietors' own brands that are in line with their digital image and credibility. In the second subrole, facilitator, influencers boost products, brands or communities that belong to people close to them. Some control in communication and product creation. Lastly, in the subrole partners, have high creative control in communication and product creation. Partners establish brands and create products with somebody, for example another entrepreneur or influencer (Rundin & Colliander, 2021).

2.4 Influencer characteristics

Enke and Borchers see that all social media influencers, celebrities, ordinary social media users and corporate influencers can be influencers (2019). To understand influencers different characteristics this chapter describes influencer types and categories. Despite the limitation this study notes that influencers

could be categorised in various ways including age (Drenten, Gurrieri & Tyler 2020), sexual orientation (Duguay, 2019) and religion (Beta, 2019).

2.4.1 Influencer types

Campbell and Farell (2020) have divided influencer types to celebrity, mega, macro, micro, and nano influencers. Table 3 highlights the differences between celebrity, mega, macro, micro and nano influencers. It provides information on each influencer type's follower base, payments, and characteristics. As the study focuses on Finland it presents Finnish counterparts for each celebrity, mega, (Harjumaa, 2023) macro (Hypeauditor, 2023) and micro influencers (Modash, n.d.) As the payments of Finnish influencers are not available this table 3 does not feature the details on payments.

TABLE 3 Influencer types (Campbell & Farell, 2020; Harjumaa, 2023; Hypeauditor, 2023; Modash, n.d.)

Influencer type	Examples from United States	Examples from Finland	Followers	Characteristics
Celebrity	Selena Gomez, Kim Kardashian, and Paris Hilton	Valtteri Bottas, Kimi Räikkönen and Joalin Loukamaa	over 1 million followers	High expertise and cultural capital Low engagement and weak brand connections
Mega	Zoe Sugg (@zoesugg) and Josh Ostrovsky (@thefatjewish)	Auri Kananen and Pasha Pozdniakova	over 1 million followers	High expertise
Macro	The Sister Studio (@thesisterstudio) and Alyssa Rimmer (@simplyquinoa)	Miisa Grekov, Janni Hussi and Veronica Verho	100 000 to 1 million followers	High engagement and selective partnership
Micro	-	Ville Vuorinen and Minttu Mustakallio	10 000 to 100 000 followers	Genuinity, high authenticity and trust
Nano	Alexis Baker (@alexisbakerrr)	-	less than 10 000 followers	High engagement and authenticity

Celebrity influencers such as Selena Gomez, Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton have high expertise and cultural capital. They typically have over one million followers (Campbell & Farell, 2020) and can get 250 000 US dollars per post (Chen, 2017). As weaknesses Campbell and Farell list low engagement and weak brand connections (2020). Mega Influencers, such as Zoe Sugg and Josh Otrsky, similarly have a high expertise and large one million following base.

Compared to celebrities, mega influencers' cultural capital is lower. This can be seen in lower monetary requirements, as mega influencers are approximately paid 50 000 dollars per post (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Macro influencers are selective in their partnerships. They typically have a high engagement and 100 000 to one million followers. A macro influencer such as The Sister Studio or Alyssa Rimmer can get 5 000 dollars for a post. Micro influencers are known as genuine. They have high authenticity and trust, and a follower base between 10 000 and 100 000. Nano influencers have the smallest following base. A nano influencer such as Alexic Baker typically has less than 10 000 followers. Nano influencers are known for high engagement and authenticity. They can work with no post pay or accept free samples as payment (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

2.4.2 Influencers category

Influencers categories include fashion, beauty, lifestyle, photography, entertainment, travel, tech, gaming, motivation, environment, fitness, health, and food influencers (Tanwar et al., 2023). As this study will focus on lifestyle and fashion influencers the characteristics of those influencers are introduced next. As current research has not conceptualised the terms the definitions are based on online articles.

Lifestyle influencers are online personalities that promote lifestyle topics, such as home decor, fashion, beauty, travel, fitness, food, and personal development (Influency, 2024). The content of lifestyle influencers highlights their choices, values (Influency, 2024), opinions, and interests (Brown, 2024). The key factor to differentiate lifestyle influencers is related to the broad range of topics and content that highlights their everyday life and routines. The benefits of working with lifestyle influencers include specific targeting, high engagement, enhanced marketing insights, follower loyalty and authentic content (Brown, 2024).

Fashion influencers (formerly known as fashion bloggers) influence the fashion field (Pedroni, 2022) on social media channels. In social media fashion influencers main action include promoting brands and their clothes, and other actions attending fashion events and launching fashion and accessory collections (Alexander, 2018). In the marketing industry fashion influencers collaborate with fashion brands to promote brands, products, and campaigns. This way marketers can build trust and authenticity, target niches and enhance engagement, brand awareness and reach. (Shandrokha, 2024). As fashion is one of the main interests of lifestyle influencers this study will use the term lifestyle influencer to imply to both categories.

2.5 Theory summary

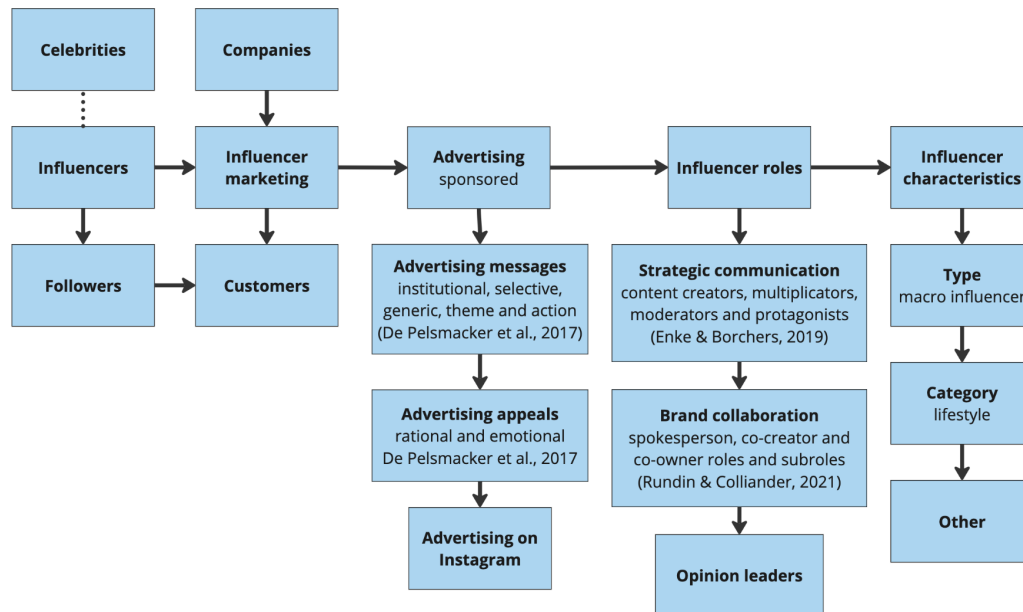


FIGURE 4 Theory summary (Developed based on De Pelsmacker et al., 2017; Enke & Borchers, 2019; Rundin & Colliander, 2021)

This chapter summarises the theories to one, as presented on figure 4. In the theories influencers produce influencer marketing together with stakeholders. The main stakeholders include companies and customers that are likely influencers followers. Celebrities' relation to influencers is complicated, as influencers and celebrities share both similar and differing features. Advertising persuades and informs people on products, services, and ideas (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017) Influencers can be used in sponsored advertising to deliver advertising messages and advertising appeals. Advertising messages include institutional, selective, generic, theme and action, and advertising appeals are either rational or emotional (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Instagram is an effective channel for influencer ad use. Influencer roles consist of strategic communication and brand collaboration roles. Strategic communication roles include content creators, multipliers, moderators and protagonists (Enke & Borchers, 2019), whereas brand collaboration roles consist of spokesperson, co-creator, and co-owner roles and their subroles (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). As the opinion leader role was in addition presented it is added to strategic communication roles. Lastly, influencer characteristics consist of types, categories and other.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach

To describe the research approach Saunders et al. (2009) have developed a research onion that describes the layers of research. During this chapter each layer and its methods will be discussed. The discussed layers will include approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, techniques, and procedures.

Research approaches can be either deductive or inductive. In deductive research academic literature is used to find theories and test the data according to a developed conceptual or theoretical framework. Inductive approach does the opposite. This approach starts with the data and develops the theories based on that. After, an inductive researcher connects the theory to previous literature (Saunders et al., 2009). This study used both deductive and inductive approaches. First the theories were formed into a framework and then data was compared to it. Second the data outside of the framework was categorised and used to add on to the theories.

Saunders et al. (2009) have listed experiments, case studies, ethnographies, surveys, action research and grounded theories as research strategies. With this term they mean a plan on how the researcher will answer the research questions. Research strategies can in addition be determined based on primary and secondary, or quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, Adams et al. (2014) list observation, case studies, experimentation, diary methods, surveys and interviews as primary and data collection from books, websites, and libraries as secondary. For qualitative methods Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) have included case studies, grounded theories, ethnography focus groups, action, critical, discourse, narrative, and feminist research. This study selected content analysis as a research strategy.

Content analysis is an analysis on text and documents that aim to quantify the content based on predetermined categories (Bryman, 2016). Bryman (2016) describes content analysis as a systematic and replicable strategy that can be used in qualitative or quantitative studies. This study uses predetermined categories to detect information on influencer roles, communication, and ad message. Findings outside predetermined categories are in addition used, when necessary, for example describing a communication strategy outside the categories.

With choices Saunders et al. (2009) mean mono method, mixed method and multi method studies. In this case mono method refers to one data collection and analysis method and multi to more than one data collection and analysis method. Lastly, mixed methods refer to using both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. With qualitative data Saunders et al. (2009) refer to non-numeric and with quantitative to numeric data. This study

used a mixed method since the gathered data included both numeric and non-numeric aspects.

Time horizons can be either longitudinal or cross-sectional. Cross-sectional studies study a chosen phenomenon at a chosen time and longitudinal studies focus on chosen phenomenon over an extended period (Saunders et al., 2009). This study focused on chosen phenomenon, influencer roles and communication strategies, on a chosen time, years 2021 to 2023, which makes it cross-sectional. A review of chosen research onion layers and research questions is presented below. More information on techniques and procedures is presented in the following chapter.

Chosen research onion layers

1. Approaches: inductive and deductive
2. Strategies: content analysis
3. Choice: mixed method
4. Time horizon: cross-sectional
5. Techniques and procedures: Excel and Google Docs

Research questions

1. What roles influencers take in commercial content?
2. What communication strategies influencers use in commercial content?

3.2 Influencer selection

The data collection began with influencer selection. First as the study environment was Finland this study focused on Finnish influencers. As a platform the study selected Instagram and as a category lifestyle. Macro influencers were chosen for the influencer type as influencers since this category was already known for the researcher. To limit the characteristics further solely young women were suitable for the study. Thereby five influencers including were chosen for the study. Influencer selection process is presented in figure 5.



FIGURE 5 Influencer selection process

3.2.1 Influencer introductions

To select as similar influencers as possible, location was limited to Finland, gender to female and age range to young adults. To figure out information on influencers all their names were entered to HypeAuditor. This service gave information on influencer categories and ages. According to the site all influencers were either on shows (2), lifestyle (2) or fashion (1) categories and

the age ranged from 21 to 32. As supervisor and researcher determined that influencers fit lifestyle and young adult categories the process was carried on.

Next, Instagram biographies were read to understand influencers' descriptions. In the biographies influencers had information on their occupational and demographic roles, contact information and links to recent projects. As this study is focused on influencer roles the introduction is limited to occupations and demographics. Most common occupational roles included content creator (3), influencer (2) and host (2). Other occupational roles included digital content creator (1), "media gal" (1), celebrity (1) and DJ (1). As content creator was a common role based on theories and influencers it is expected to occur often in the data.

As demographic descriptions influencers listed age (1), location (1), gender (1), personal characteristics (2) and preferences (2). The information presented in this chapter can be reviewed on table 4. To gather this information three Instagram biographies were translated to English*. Biography screenshots were taken on 24.10.2023, whereas information on age and categories was gathered on 14.10.2023 from HypeAuditor.

TABLE 4 Influencer introductions (Hypeauditor, 2023; Instagram, 2023)

	Influencer 1*	Influencer 2*	Influencer 3*	Influencer 4	Influencer 5
Age	28	21	27	32	25
Category	Lifestyle	Shows	Shows	Lifestyle	Fashion
Occupation	"Digital content creator" "Influencer, host & content creator"	"Celebrity"	"Host, content creator, influencer"	"All around media gal"	"Content creator & DJ"
Demographics	"Gentle life and seeking for everyday balance."	"21"	"she/her" "I love dachshunds."	"Walking disaster. Running on sarcasm. And coffee."	"based in Helsinki."

3.2.2 Influencer key metrics

All selected influencers had between 220 000 to 440 000 followers, which corresponds to the following rates of macro influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Number of publications ranged from 1500 to 3700, and follower growth was between -0,0% and +0,7%. Lastly, engagement rates varied between 0,01% to 2,99%. To understand which rates could be improved, and are low, average,

or good, HypeAuditor has categorised them. Based on this categorisation follower growth -0,0% is low, +0,1% could be improved, +0,4% is average and +0,7% is good. Similarly, engagement rates with over 2,00% were classified as good and 0,01% as low.

As seen in the table 5, Influencer 1 had the highest numbers of followers and Influencer 5 the lowest. Whereas Influencer 4 had the highest number of publications, Influencer 1 had the lowest. Based on follower growth Influencer 4 performed the best and Influencers 1, 3 and 5 the worst. Engagement rates of all influencers except Influencer 3 were good. As Influencers 1 and 4 had the highest rates of 2 categories they performed the best according to these metrics. The information on followers and publications was retrieved on 24.10.2023 from Instagram and the information on follower growth and engagement retrieved 14.10.2023 from HypeAuditor. HypeAuditors metrics measured the data from 14.9 to 14.10.2023.

TABLE 5 Influencer key metrics 1 (Instagram, 2023; Hypeauditor, 2023)

	Followers	Publications	Follower growth	Engagement rate
Influencer 1	436 000	1497	+0,1%	2,99%
Influencer 2	293 000	1958	+0,4%	2,24%
Influencer 3	268 000	1859	-0,0%	0,01%
Influencer 4	308 000	3668	+0,7%	2,02%
Influencer 5	221 000	2068	-0,0%	2,19%

As seen on the following table, likes in the posts varied from minimum 3202 to maximum 20 287, and comments from 6 to 129. Influencer 1 had the highest average on likes, and Influencer 5 the lowest. Similarly, Influencer 4 had the highest average on comments and Influencer 5 the lowest. In addition, Influencer 4 had notably the largest variation between both likes and comments and Influencer 5 the lowest variation on likes and comments. Based on the averages Influencer 1 and Influencer 4 performed the best, and Influencer 5 the worst. Whereas based on variation Influencer 5 performed the best and Influencer 4 the worst. The values varied based on availability of the data. As Influencers 3 and 5 hid some of their engagement data they performed the worst. Table 6 presents each influencer's maximum, minimum, average and variation on likes and comments. The data on likes and comments was collected during 12.2.2024-3.4.2024.

TABLE 6 Influencer key metrics 2 (Instagram, 2023)

	L min	L max	A	V	C min	C max	A	V
Influencer 1	11 251	20 287	15 224	9 036	10	109	32	99
Influencer 2	6049	10 443	7954	4 394	13	97	27	84
Influencer 3	5354	14 810	9369	9 456	9	70	28	61
Influencer 4	2413	16 206	6111	13 793	6	129	35	123
Influencer 5	3202	6589	4823	3387	8	39	15	31

*L min=like minimum, L max=like maximum, A=average, V=variation, C min=comment minimum and C max=comment maximum

3.3 Data collection and analysis

To analyse selected influencers 50 Instagram posts were gathered on Google Docs. Post selection was based on commercial content, chronological order, picture format and intention to include as many industries as possible. To gather as current data as possible the timeframe was limited to 2021-2023. During the analysis two Google Docs documents were open, one with screenshots and links to Instagram posts and one with a research instrument. The functionality of this instrument was tested with mini study, which was approved by the supervisor. Once the data on all 50 posts were gathered it was moved to Excel. On Excel the data was calculated to compare its frequencies. Data collection lasted from 12.2 to 3.4.2024. Data collection process is presented in figure 6.

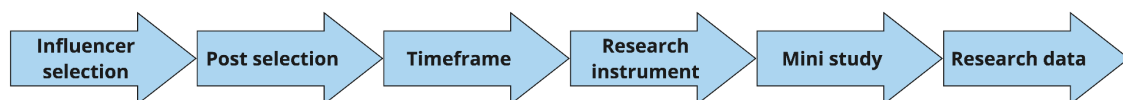


FIGURE 6 Data collection process

Research material was published between 23.9.2021-3.12.2023. Most of the posts were from the years 2023 (n=27) and 2022 (n=20) and a few from 2021 (n=3). The posts were published on all seasons. Most in fall (n=24), next in spring (n=13), winter (n=7) and lastly in summer (n=6). Overall, the posts included 150 images. As the image amount varied between 1 to 7 images, posts had 3 images on average. Lastly, post captions varied from 1599 to 34 characters.

The data collection categories included pictures, companies, influencer roles and communication strategies, as presented on figure 7. Picture category analysed picture's colours, elements, influencer, and product visibility, whereas company category consisted of company names, industries, and products. To understand what kind of products were marketed the study used Foote-Cone-Belding grid (Vaughn, 1980) and theory on transformational and informal

products (De Pelsmacker, 2017). To analyse roles the study used Enke and Borchers' strategic communication (2019) and Rundin and Colliander's brand collaboration roles (2021). Whereas the analysis on communication strategies was based on De Pelsmacker's ad messages and message appeals (2017).

Data collection categories			
Picture data	Company data	Influencer roles	Communication strategies
1. Colors (black, white, brown, grey, pink, blue, red, yellow, green, violet, orange, gold, silver) 2. Elements (people, homes, nature, cities and other) 3. Influencer visibility 4. Product visibility	1. Company name (Valio, Viaplay, Harmonia66, H&M, Autosalpa, Recuror, Bonaqua, Lovia etc.) 2. Industry (beverages, food, fashion, cosmetics etc.) 3. Product (Foote-Cone-Belding, transformal and informal) Vaughn, 1980. De Pelsmacker et al., 2017.	1. Strategic communication (content creator, multiplicator, moderator, protagonist and opinion leader) 2. Advertising (spokesperson, co-creator and co-owner roles) Enke & Borchers, 2019. Rundin & Colliander, 2021.	1. Rational appeals (talking head, demonstration, problem solution, testimonial, slice of life, dramatization and comparative) 2. Emotional appeals (humour, fear, warmth and erotism) 3. Ad messages (institutional, selective, generic, theme, action) De Pelsmacker et al., 2017.

FIGURE 7 Data collection categories (Vaughn, 1980; De Pelsmacker, 2017; Enke & Borchers, 2019; Rundin & Colliander, 2021)

3.4 Ethical contribution

The study material consisted of 50 commercial Instagram feed posts. As these posts are public their use in research purposes is allowed. This study will address the influencers based on coding, as Influencer 1, Influencer 2, Influencer 3, Influencer 4, and Influencer 5. This is done to anonymise the influencers identities. Similarly, the usernames and comments of other Instagram users will be hidden on posts. Next chapters will introduce the influencers based on their Instagram biographies and key metrics.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter will present the results for each data collection category. Picture data will focus on colours, elements, and company data on company names, industries, and products. Influencer roles focus on strategic communication and brand collaboration roles, and communication strategies on appeals and ad messages.

4.1 Picture data

Pictures were filled with different colours. White and black were used most, (both n=37) and silver (n=1) and gold (n=2) least. Commonly used colours included brown (n=21), blue (n=25), grey (n=17), green (n=25), and less common colours pink (n=14), orange (n=10), yellow (n=11), red (n=7) and violet (n=4). Most times all pictures in a post had similar colours, and few times the colours varied from post to post. Some posts used brighter and some neutral colours. This was dependent on the environment the post was shot in. Common

environments included homes, forest and company produced backgrounds, as backdrops.

Post images were shot indoors (n=32) and outdoors (n=18) or both (n=4). Elements in the pictures were linked to people (n=50), homes (n=15), nature (n=13), cities (n=5) and others (n=11). Elements linked to people included a woman or women, a man, a crowd, and body parts such as hands or bodies. Elements in homes consisted of different rooms, furniture, house parts and other. Rooms included kitchen, living room and bathroom or sauna, furniture chairs, mirrors, beds, tables etc. House parts included doors, walls, windows, lights, and floor. Nature elements consisted of forest, sky, trees, snow, flowers, ground, and lakes. City elements were linked to cars, streets, or buildings. Other elements included colourful backdrops and white walls. Products were visible in 101 out of 150 pictures, and 39 of 50 posts. Influencers were visible in all 106 out 150 images, and all 50 posts. Picture data's summary is presented on table 7.

TABLE 7 Picture data

Colours	Environment and elements	Influencer/product visibility
Black (n=37), white (n=37), blue (n=25), green (n=25), brown (n=21), grey (n=17), pink (n=14), yellow(n=11) orange (n=10), red (n=7), violet (n=4), gold (n=2) and silver (n=1).	Environment: indoors (n=32), outdoors (n=18) and both (n=4). Elements: people (n=50), homes (n=15), nature (n=13), cities (n=5) and others (n=11).	Influencers visible in 50 posts, and 106/150 images. Products visible in 39 posts, and 101/150 images.

4.2 Company data

Influencers collaborated with 49 companies. These companies operate in various industries including beverages and food (n=15), fashion (n=6), cosmetics (n=6), retail (n=1), unions (n=2), travelling (n=1), cars (n=3), entertainment (n=3), technology (n=1), furniture (n=1), education (n=1), banking (n=1), pets (n=2), security (n=1), health (n=3), perfumes (n=2) and logistics (n=1). Each influencer collaborated with companies from multiple industries. Influencer 1 collaborated most with beverage and food industries, Influencer 2 with cleaning industry, Influencer 3 with cosmetics, entertainment, food and health industries, Influencer 4 with pet, cosmetics and food industries, and Influencer 5 with fashion and beverage industries. Most posts included one collaboration with one company. Exceptions were Bonaqua, Valio and Viaplay Suomi had two collaborations, and EU komissio and EU nuoret, Ruohonjuuri

and Harmonia66, and K-ruoka and K-ryhmä that did collaborations together. Further data on industries, companies and products or services is presented on table 8. Companies with multiple collaborations are only counted once.

TABLE 8 Company data

Industries (n=17)	Companies (n=49)	Products or services (n=48)
Beverages and food (n=15), fashion (n=6), cosmetics (n=6), entertainment (n=3), cars (n=3), health (n=3), unions (n=2), pets (n=2), perfumes (n=2), security (n=1), transportation (n=1), travelling (n=1) technology (n=1), furniture (n=1), education (n=1), banking (n=1) and retail (n=1).	Bonaqua (n=2), Valio (n=2), Viaplay Suomi (n=2), K-market, Lovia, Paulig, Lapland Hotel, Peroni Nastro Azzurro, Mercedes Benz, Sini cleaning, Teemajuhlat, JDM Outlet, Casetify, Zalando, Ilme Helsinki, Onni Kotisiivous, BC Helsinki, EU komissio, EU nuoret, Nordea, Musti ja Mirri, Aco Finland, Dermosil, Airam Electric, Hau Hau Champion, Juustoportti, Clas Olson, Autosalpa Oy, YTK Palvelut, Nordic Buddies, Ruohonjuuri, Harmonia66, Lyko, Origins, Matsmart, K-ruoka, K-ryhmä, H&M, PostNord Suomi, Celcius Suomi, Recuror Clinic, Alko Oy, Gina Tricot, Vitamin Well Suomi, Ducray Suomi, Rabanne and Puma Nordic.	Water (n=3), coffee (n=2), energy drinks, alcoholic drinks, non-alcoholic beer, cheese, protein bars, ice cream, sweets, dog food, products for dogs, cleaning products, home cleaning service, furniture, organisers, water leak alarm, banking services, union membership, stress relief capsules (n=2), clinic services, hotels, cars (n=3), transportation service, cosmetics (n=4), perfumes (n=2), clothes (n=5), bags, wallets, YouTube-cooking series, streaming service, phone app, phone cases, party decoration, party decoration services, business college and sports for visually impaired.

Companies were mentioned in various ways. These included tagging in text (n=50) and in pictures (n=30), using hashtags (n=38), and paid promotion marks with (n=22) or without company mentions (n=6). As all 50 posts used tags companies were mentioned in all posts. Other tags, to tag other companies, unions, locations, or others, were used in seven posts. Hashtags were mostly used for slogans (n=23) and company mentions (n=20) and other hashtags (n=16) were linked to campaigns, collaborations, or products.

Informal and transformational products were linked to buying motives. Informal buying motives reduced negative emotions, solved, or avoided problems and depletion, while transformational motives deprived from positive motivations, such as social approval, intellectual stimulation, and sensory gratification (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Most times the products were both informal and transformational, for example energy drinks reduced negative feelings by refreshing and had positive motivations as social approval.

Overall, 40 out of 50 products had informal motives, and 45 out of 50 transformational motives.

To convince customers in their purchase decision companies used selling propositions. These propositions were either unique or emotional. Unique selling propositions tried to convey a functional superiority, while emotional selling propositions linked the product to psychological associations, such as happiness (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Unique selling propositions were used 46 times, and emotional propositions 45 times. In one post unique selling position was used to sell quality bags made in Italy, and in another post emotional selling position was used to promote wedding scents. To enhance purchase decisions 42 posts in addition used call to actions, for example “*Find out more about YTK in YTKJÄSENEKSI.FI*”

While buying products, customers either have high or low involvement. (Vaughn, 1980). In this study most of the ads featured low involvement products (n=32) and a good amount featured high involvement products (n=18). Lastly, as purchase decisions could be either cognitive or affective (Vaughn, 1980) this study featured affective products (n=29), and cognitive products (n=20). This meant that most purchase decisions would be made with feelings and some with logic. Product examples in high-involvement-think were cars and tables, high-involvement-feel perfumes and clothes, low-involvement-think detergents and food, and low-involvement-feel ice cream and sweets.

4.3 Influencer roles

4.3.1 Strategic communication roles

Content creator role is fulfilled when an influencer creates content together with a company (Enke & Borchers, 2019). All 50 posts fulfilled this role since all posts were advertisements and collaborations with one or two companies. 46 posts were made in collaboration with one company and four in collaboration with two companies. Influencers could in addition collaborate with another influencer or include other people on the posts, for example Influencer 1 included her husband on Peroni Nastro Azzurro ad.

Multiplicator role is fulfilled when an influencer distributes organisational messages (Enke & Borchers, 2019). These messages can include information on price, quality, performance, components, availability, special offers, taste, nutrition, packaging, warranties, new ideas, safety and independent or

company research (Resnik & Stern, information classification). In the study all 50 posts distributed organisational messages. The study included company tags and hashtags as organisational messages, and all posts were marked with company tag or a hashtag. Other organisational messages from the data included information on availability, slogans, product launches, attributes, demonstrations, collaborations, special offers, campaigns, discount codes, contact information, promotion, and prices.

Moderators engage in offline or online interactions (Enke & Borchers, 2019). This interaction can be a question or a prompt. Influencer 2 for example used the question “*Guess my favourite colour 🔥*” in collaboration with Teemajuhlat. Moderators can in addition take part in offline or online events. For example, Influencer 5 participated in the Vitamin Well POP-UP offline event as a DJ. Moderator role was not as common as anticipated, the role was solely fulfilled 14 times. Other ways to moderate included continuing previous conversation, asking a personal question on habits, memories, or experiences, requesting the audience to guess or rate something, seeking knowledge of a fact or a tradition and requesting the audience to choose between options.

Protagonist role is taken when an influencer communicates as a public persona (Enke & Borchers, 2019). In the data this could be seen in sharing something personal as stories, experiences, aspirations, dreams, memories, habits, feelings, or favourites. In addition, sharing information on a loved one, for example Influencer 4 sharing information on her dog was included. Despite low expectations, the protagonist role was common. Overall, it was fulfilled 38 times out of 50.

Opinion leaders try to impact consumers' decision making (Enke & Borchers, 2019) by encouraging, recommending, and emphasising. In the data encouragements were made to act a certain way, to try a product, to use a discount, to visit a shop, to contact a company, to find out information and to try a new sport. Recommendations were made based on good service or products, and emphasising was used while addressing the audience (“*YOU*”) or explaining how good the discounts are. Influencer 2 acted as opinion leader noticeably more than other influencers. She took the role on 8 out of 10 posts, which was noticeable since the role solely appeared in 11 posts. Examples of recommendation and encouragement are presented in the table 9.

TABLE 9 Opinion leader actions, recommendation, and encouragement

Recommendation	Encouragement
<p><i>"If you want to know how well you can handle money, go to Nordea's money skills page and take the money skill test, I was really stunned when my own skills surprised me. There is also a lot of important information there, so I highly recommend it. ❤️"</i></p>	<p><i>"Now that it's party season I have a wonderful offer for you! With the code PINJA20 you can get -20% on normal priced products and (for the first time ever) on products made as a service sets 🍷 -20% is already a substantial discount so you should definitely take advantage of it if you're planning e.g. Christmas party ❤️"</i></p>

4.3.2 Brand collaboration roles

Besides communicative roles, influencers can have collaborative roles in product development. In co-creator role, influencers have more creative control in product creation. One way to co-create is to design products or product lines with or for companies as co-designer (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). Co-creator roles were found in the data seven times. In this research co-creators created bags, wallets, dog products, YouTube-series, coffee packaging and online or offline events together with companies. Co-creator role with Influencer 4 and Musti ja Mirri is demonstrated in the example below.

"ATTENTION!ATTENTION! 📣 Big and happy news to coming! 🥰 One of my secret dreams has been to do something on my own on the pet side. Now it's happening! 🐾 A year ago I started a project where I got to design my own collection for dogs. (See the IG story for the full project progress.) 🍷 I got to choose the materials, shades, patterns and of course the products themselves! The collection is called Basic Premium X Harri, because Harri got to be part of the design project and act as a model. 🧑‍🎨 The collection can be found at Musti ja Mirri. 🐾🐾... Now this over a year long project has reached its grande finale and the collection can be found in Musti and Mirri's stores and online shop. 🥰 I think it turned out really cute, if I do say so myself! 🥰"

Other 43 collaborative roles were categorised to spokespersons, influencers who in Rundin and Colliander's words give examples on how to use the product (2021). In this role influencers spoke for various products and services by using billboard, stylist, and ambassador roles. As a billboard influencer acts as a face and participates in advertising films (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Role's appearance in Influencer 3's posts (4 out of 10) was significant compared to overall data (16 out of 50). In figure 8, Influencer 3 acts as a face for Origins campaign. The post showcases a violet background, flower decorations and Origins products. The surroundings give a commercial look that indicates that a

company oversaw filming. Other billboard posts were recognized from backgrounds and professional photography.

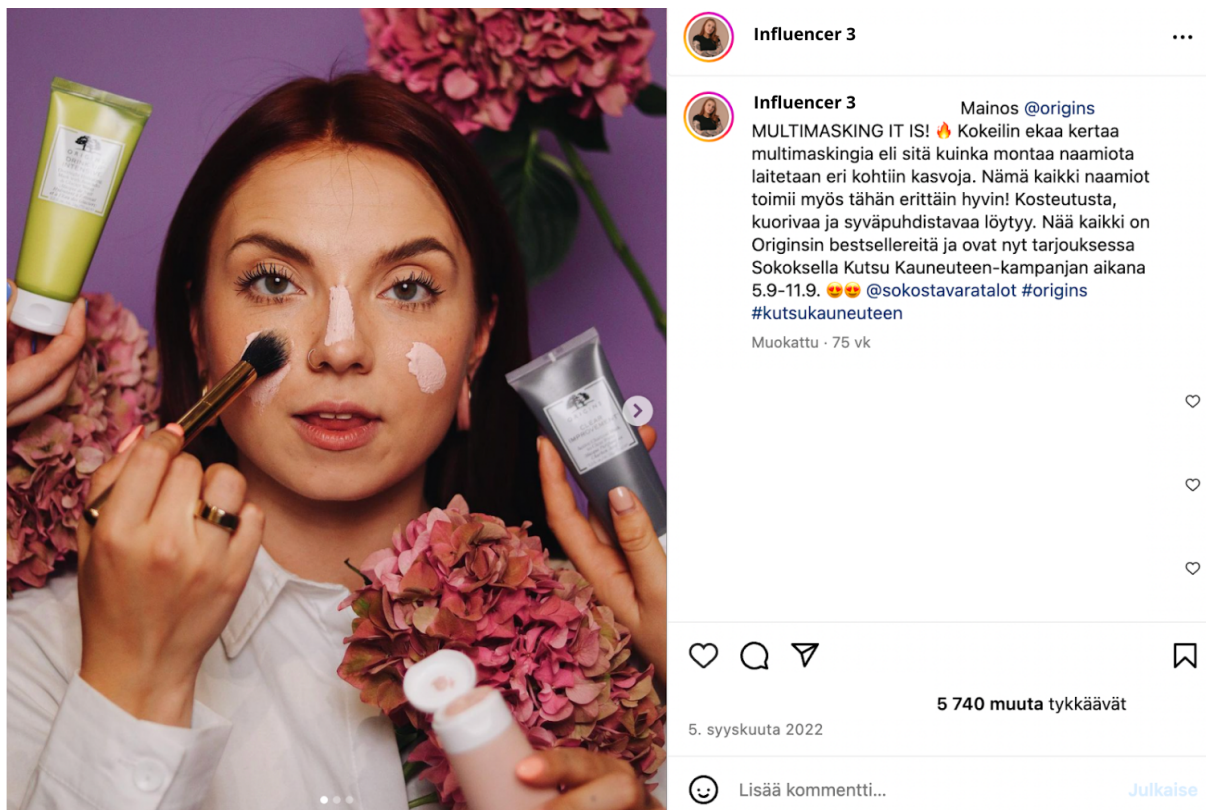


FIGURE 8 Influencer 3 as a face in Origins advertisement

In stylist role, influencers use their aesthetic skills and style the products in a personal way. (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Stylist roles were seen in fashion (n=5) and make-up (n=1) ads, and a few times in styling oneself or decorating the environment to fit the product visually. Influencer 5 demonstrates the stylist role in a collaboration with Puma. In the caption she states that she styled the products and gives tips for other looks. Figure 9 showcases how the styled products look on next page. As Influencer 5 collaborated most with fashion brands she was the best example for the stylist role. She used her aesthetic skills in 4 out of 10 posts, and the overall stylist role was used 10 times.

Last spokesperson role is an ambassador. In this role influencers and companies have longer collaborations that last over a year or more (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In the study none of the influencers stated to have this role, but many influencers had multiple posts with companies that might signify that the role was used. For example, Influencer 1 and Influencer 3 had multiple collaborations with four companies. These included collaborations with Valio, Bonaqua, Viaplay and Harmonia66.



FIGURE 9 Influencer 5 as a stylist in Puma advertisement

4.4 Communication strategies

4.4.1 Rational appeals

This chapter will demonstrate rational appeals. The demonstrations are examples taken from the data, and will showcase talking heads, demonstration, problem solution, testimonial, slice-of-life, and comparative ads.

Talking heads ads use characters that tell stories in their own words. This story can be in the form of a monologue, a dialogue, or an interview (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In this study stories were related to success, fandom, careers, entrepreneurship, nature, collaborations, product origins, memories, and experiences. In addition, influencers used talking heads to communicate about product and service stories, for example *“how my ADHD got diagnosed”*. The characters included influencers and their friends, relatives, or pets. Influencer 1’s nature story shares her experience canoeing with her mom. In the ad Influencer 1 describes her environment, actions, and thoughts by a monologue. Story was used in collaboration with Bonaqua beverage company, and it is presented under. Overall, 21 out of 50 posts used talking heads, it was used especially by Influencer 1 in 7 out of 10 posts.

“The lake surface was calm and the early summer evening serenely beautiful. My mother and I pushed the canoe into the water as the sun’s last orange-red rays flickered behind the trees. After a day at work, a moment in nature by the water felt important.

This is what I hope for the coming summer. Decisions made in the moment. The thrill of adventure. The most beautiful moments are usually seen and experienced by chance. ✨🌿💧🐾”

Demonstrative ads highlight how the product works and what benefit it has (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In a collaboration with dog food chain Hau Hau Champion Influencer 4 demonstrates what her dog eats, what products Hau Hau Champion offers and how the products can be used. The ad in addition lists nutritional facts and benefits that can be gained by using the products. The example is presented on figure 10. This style was the most common rational appeal, it was used overall 25 times. Other ways to use demonstration include demonstration via pictures, ingredient use, what flavours are offered, what ingredients are not included, how to style, how and when to use cosmetics, what movies streaming service offers, travelling possibilities, how to participate in an event, study opportunities, membership benefits, app use, how to legally prove your age, which tools can be used with the product and what products or services are currently offered.

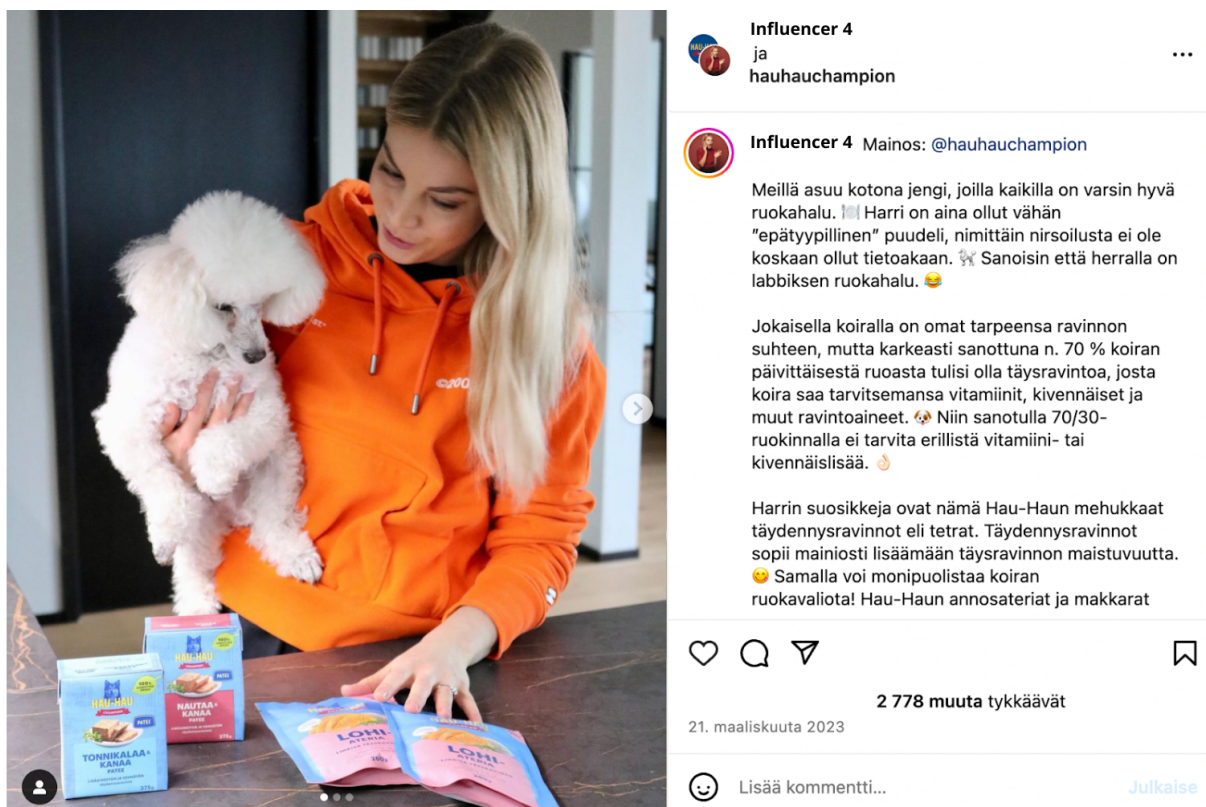


FIGURE 10 Demonstration, Influencer 4 in Hau Hau Champion advertisement

Problem solution ads show how to avoid or fix problems. These ads might use fear appeals, such as physical, financial, or social risks (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In an ad with Ruohonjuuri organic store and Harmonia66 ashwagandha

supplement Influencer 3 describes her feelings of tiredness, stress, irritation and how Harmonia66 can help. This ad uses physical risks as a fear appeal and promises that Harmonia66 is a solution for stress, example below. This ad type was used 16 times in the study. In the data social problems were linked to bullying and sports discrimination, physical risks to boredom, stress, recovering, relaxing, polar nights, cleaning, skin impurities, treats, and financial issues to water damages, food waste, warranties, financial support, and entrepreneurship.

“A month ago, waking up to the gym was much easier than it is now. Darkness comes and so does tiredness. You can't really bear it and you lose control of your stress management. I feel annoyed all the time and I can't even sleep. 😊 Thankfully, there is a solution to relieve stress: the Harmonia KSM66, recommended by thousands, is now on sale at Ruohonjuuri!”

Testimonials showcase ordinary people and their product experiences. Testimonials rely on group effects and highlight how good the products are (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In a collaboration with Lapland Hotels Influencer 1 highlights the activities she and her friends experienced while staying in the hotel. The text highlights services that the hotel offers and praises the whole experience, example under. This ad type was rare in the study, it was used solely six times. Other testimonials emphasised on great service and experiences, product quality, packaging and effectiveness, and personalization possibilities.

“🎨 We started our Christmas party with an acrylic painting lesson, where we got to paint our own paintings and experiment with different techniques. 🏠 We went to the hotel and settled in. 🛀 We relaxed in our room's private sauna and put on face masks. 🍷 We sipped sparkling wine, listened to music and got in the zone. 💄 We got dressed up and went out for dinner. 🍦 Back at the hotel we ate ice cream, stayed up and giggled. 🍳 The next morning, we had an amazing breakfast in the room. We had such a great time ✨ We see each other with our group of friends quite rarely nowadays, so this weekend was really memorable ❤️”

Slice of life -ads show how products can be used to solve relatable problems in real situations (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Influencer 1's collaboration with Mercedes Benz highlights different environments the car can take them. In figure 11 Influencer 1 and her husband are shown camping in the forest. The caption emphasises using a Mercedes Benz car and praises it for safe and emission free journey. Slice of life -ads appeared often in the study, in total 16 times. Other real-life environments were linked to homes, nature, sports halls, and event environments. Products were used as snacks, as travelling devices, to

protect from cold weather, to dress up, to clean up, to organise, to eat from, to share treats and to cherish pets. Services offered house cleaning, a place to play visually impaired sports, a chance to collaborate in a YouTube- cooking video, and entertaining streaming services.

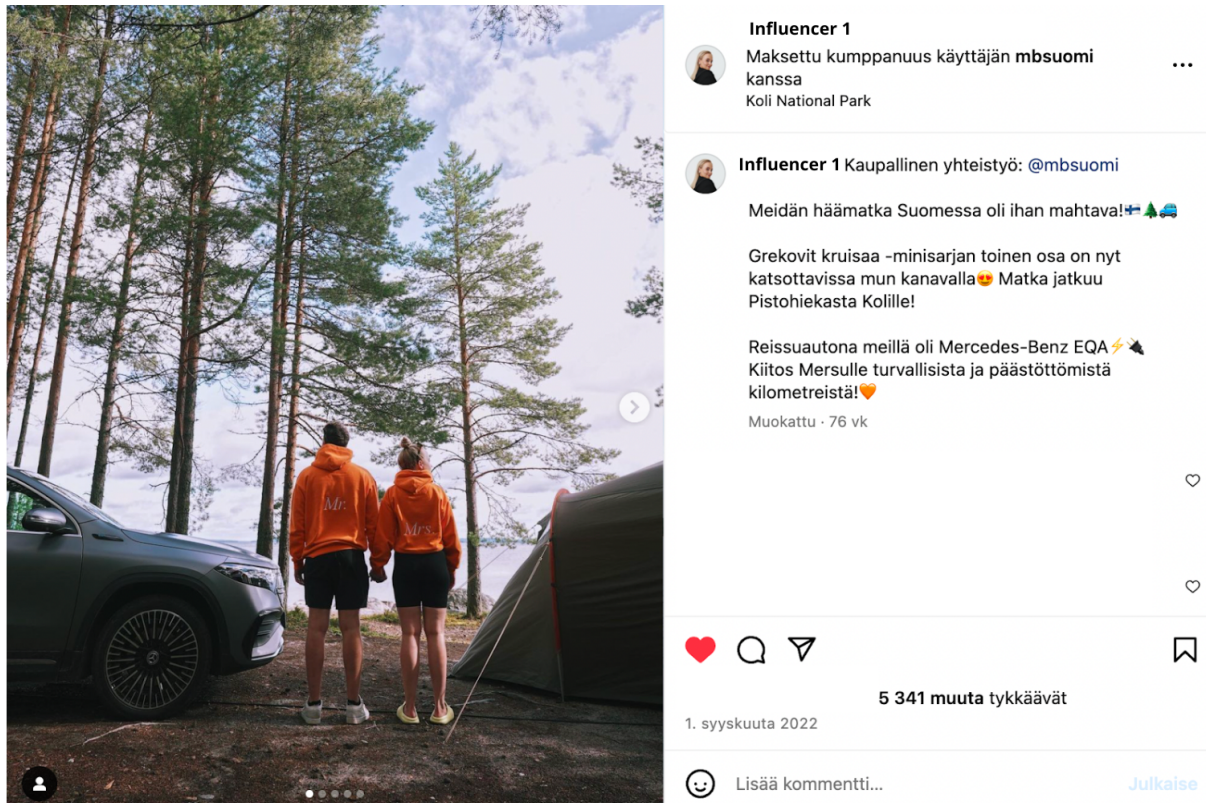


FIGURE 11 Slice of life, Influencer 1 in Mercedes Benz advertisement

Comparative ads differentiate the brand from its competitors. Differentiation can be made directly with a competitor's name, or indirectly by focusing on the brand attributes (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In an indirect comparative ad Influencer 2 compares Sini Siivous cleaning tablets to traditional detergents. The ad highlights the products convenience and eco-friendliness, presented below. These ads were the rarest rational ads. Solely two out of 50 ads used them. Second ad compared new cars availability to older cars availability. This ad was in addition indirect.

"Sometimes you have to clean your home. I use SINI cleaning tablets at home instead of the basic cleaning products since it's so much more convenient. I don't have to carry heavy bottles home from the store, just the tablets, since I can use the same bottle multiple times! Plus the bottles look really stylish 😎 I can leave them on the table and don't have to hide them in the closet... I want to encourage you to try these, they are really effective, eco-friendly and biodegradable ❤️"

4.4.2 Emotional appeals

This chapter will demonstrate emotional communication styles based on the study. Chapter will present humour, fear, warmth and eroticism as emotional appeals.

Humorous ads try to make people laugh. The ads can either be successful or unsuccessful (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Six ads used humour as a communication style. Ways to demonstrate humour included comparisons, quotes and acting funny. The comparisons used various strategies including point of view and expectations versus reality. While acting funny, influencers for example dressed up as childish characters and played with food. Influencer 4 demonstrated humour in a collaboration with Juustoportti. In figure 12, Influencer 4 and her dog are sitting in the living room and looking at a cheese platter. Both of their manners communicate a lust towards the treats and the message is further communicated with the caption *"This is cheese heaven Finland."* This quote is in addition a possible reference to the Temptation Island quote *"This is Temptation Island Finland"* and it is used in a humorous way.



FIGURE 12 Humour, Influencer 4 in Juustoportti advertisement

Fear based ads display risks that consumers can be exposed to. These risks can be physical, financial, social, or linked to opportunity loss, time, and product performance (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Fear was used as a communication style in 11 ads. Since fear was often used together with problem solution ads

and its examples can be found on chapter Rational appeals 5.4.1. In a fear-based ad Influencer 1 demonstrated a social problem of bullying. In the ad K-market tries to reduce bullying and make their supermarkets a bullying free zone. The ad uses contrast of shadows and light and a quote to intensify the message “ ✨ *We all need someone to pick us up if we fall. Someone who cares and stands up for you when you can't.* ✨” Overall the tone is serious, but hopeful.

Warm ads evoke positive feelings, such as affection, cosiness, empathy, friendship, and love (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). This was the most common emotional appeal, and it was used in 28 ads. Warm feelings were often linked to other people. In the ads influencers spent time with loved ones, as friends, family, and pets, which evoke various feelings from love to affection and friendship. In addition, empathy was used to support people in weaker positions who are for example lonely, bullied, visually impaired or mentally ill. Some ads made the receiver feel comfortable with physical warmth, cosy environments and cooking together.



FIGURE 13 Warmth, Influencer 3 in Paulig advertisement

Other ways to evoke warm feelings included weddings, success stories, spring season, family-owned companies, and celebrities. This style was best demonstrated in Influencer 3's collaboration with Paulig. In the text Influencer 3

describes the importance of mothers using various feelings and reminds that motherhood is not dependent on DNA. The message of the text is further enhanced with a picture of Influencer 3 and her mother hugging and smiling together, figure 13. This ad evokes strong feelings of love and affection and does not use any rational communication strategies, which enhances the emotional message.

"A mother is love, security, support, a friend, help, comfort and a million other important things. For these millions of reasons we celebrate mothers and it is immensely important to remember how motherhood does not always resemble DNA. Anyone you care for can be a mother, the most important is the feeling of love and security. I was honoured to be part of Paulig's Mother's Day campaign, where I got to write a poem for every wonderful mother and mother figure in the world."

Erotic ads can include nudity, suggestive words, physical content, sexual music, seductive facial expressions, and people dressed sexy (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In the research eroticism could be seen mostly in images. Some images included dressing in a way that can be considered sexy, for example tight clothing or showing cleavage. Other images had content related to sauna or showering. These images included people wearing bathrobes or towels. Influencer 4 demonstrates nudity by wearing a towel in an Aco cosmetics ad, and Influencer 5 dressing sexy and showing cleavage in a Rabanne perfume ad, as presented in figure 14. Erotic styles were used in five out of 50 ads.



FIGURE 14 Eroticism, Influencer 5 in Rabanne and Influencer 4 in Aco advertisement

This study collected data based on predetermined and undetermined categories. As undetermined rational appeals the study recognized facts and teaching, and as undetermined emotional appeals relatability, excitement, aspiration, jealousy, nostalgia, calmness, freedom, relief, admiration, curiosity, sadness, surprise, and seriousness. All the numerical data on rational and emotional appeals is presented in the table 10.

TABLE 10 Rational and emotional appeals

Rational appeals (n=88)	Emotional appeals (n=88)
Demonstrations* (n=25), talking head* (n=21), problem solution* (n=16), slice of life* (n=16), testimonial (n=6) and comparative (n=2). Facts (n=1) and teaching (n=1)	Warmth (n=29), fear (n=11), humour (n=6) and erotism (n=5). Admiration (n=13), nostalgia (n=5), excitement (n=4), relief (n=3), relatability (n=2), calmness (n=2), freedom (n=2), aspiration (n=1), jealousy (n=1), curiosity (n=1), sadness (n=1), surprise (n=1) and serious (n=1).

4.4.3 Advertising messages

This chapter will introduce institutional, selective, generic, theme and action ads.

Institutional ads are used in governmental campaigns (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). This means that the companies making the ad work for the government. Alcohol retailer Alko is an example of a government owned monopoly in Finland (Alko on suomalaisten omistama kauppa, n.d.) Alko's ad with Influencer 5 demonstrates the importance of identification with a serious voice and enhances the message with hashtag #*proveyourage*, example under. Institutional ads were the rarest ad message used, the ad with Alko was the only one to use it.

"My first phone had a flip and a worm game. Do you remember that? Whether you remember or not, it doesn't tell you anything about your age. The only way you can prove your age is with your ID. And it's not enough that you have your ID, because all of the group's young people's papers will be checked."

Selective ads promote brands and do not focus on all products (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). In the study selective ads were used to promote brands, collections, product lines and collaborations. These ads for example marketed Puma's 2023 spring collection, Ducray Kerancyl product line, Basic Premium x Harri collaboration. In addition, selective ads were often focused on one service or product type that was marketed in the ad, for example Onni cleaning services, Viaplay by Elisa Viihde and ADHD diagnosis by Recuror. Influencer 1's collaboration with Paulig focuses on City coffee's product line. In the ad

Influencer 1 describes the coffee in detail *“Café Singapore has become my favourite urban coffee. It is a dark roast coffee with a balanced and dark chocolatey taste. It tastes especially good with milk or oat drink 🍷”*. Selective ads were clearly the most used ad messages. Overall, 42 out of 50 ads focused on selective communication.

Selective ads opposite are generic ads. These ads focus on promoting all products (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017) within the company. Generic ads were used rarely and overall, 8 ads used the style. Examples of use included Teemajuhlat.fi promoting all services and party decorations, Juustoportti promoting all their cheese related products and Celsius promoting all energy drinks. In YTK’s ad Influencer 4 promotes all YTK memberships that can fund unemployed. In the ad Influencer 4 explains the differences between cash and full memberships by listing their benefits. This ad gives a generic view of what YTK can provide and encourages the audience to purchase a membership.

Theme ads are based on building goodwill for brands or products (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). This can be demonstrated with donations and communicating on an issue. Influencer 2 collaborated with EU-komissio and Euroopan nuoriso to raise awareness on sports discrimination that visually impaired face. According to her, a solidarity project tries to raise sports equality and reduce exclusion. To support the project Influencer 2 has made the ad and a video where she tests the sports. Themed ads were the one of the rarest ad message styles and solely three ads used the style. Other ads used goodwill to reduce loneliness, mental health issues and bullying. Two ads gathered money for the cause, and one communicated on the issue.

Last ad message style is action. Action ads try to stimulate fast purchases (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017), by using discount codes or special offers. In the study the offers were available on selected time periods, campaigns, locations, and memberships. Some codes were only valid for pre-order, new clients, and selected stores. Overall action ads were commonly used, in total 19 times. In the following example Influencer 3 gives a MatSMART discount code *“VERONICA15”* and conditions for its use, *“If you haven't tested MatSMART yet, you can NOW with code VERONICA15 get -15% off your first order when your purchase at checkout exceeds 40€. Code is valid for 48H. ☀️”*

4.5 Result summary

Table 11 presents all previously discussed results. As seen on the table the most common colours included black, white, blue, green, and brown. Generally, the pictures were shot indoors and included people. Both influencers and products were usually visible, and the most common industry was beverages and food. Company mentions consisted of text and picture tags, hashtags, and promotion marks, and almost all posts included a call to action. In general influencers collaborated with one company at a time and promoted products as water, coffee, stress relief capsules, cars, cosmetics, perfumes, and clothes. Most of these products had both informal and transformational buying motives, and unique and emotional selling propositions. In addition, the products were usually linked to high involvement and feeling based decision making. The promotion messages were usually selective or action messages, and both rational and emotional appeals were common. The most general rational appeals included demonstrations and talking heads, whereas the most general emotional message was warmth. Lastly, generic strategic communication roles included content creators, multipliers, protagonists, and the commonest brand collaboration role was spokesperson.

TABLE 11 Research data

Colours*	Environment and elements	Influencer/product visibility*
Black* (n=37), white* (n=37), blue *(n=25), green* (n=25), brown* (n=21), grey (n=17), pink (n=14), yellow(n=11) orange (n=10), red (n=7), violet (n=4), gold (n=2) and silver (n=1).	Environment: indoors* (n=32), outdoors (n=18) and both (n=4). Elements: people* (n=50), homes (n=15), nature (n=13), cities (n=5) and others (n=11).	Influencers visible in 50* posts, and 106/150 images. Products visible in 39* posts, and 101/150 images.
Industry and mentions*	Companies (n=49)	Products or services (n=48)
Industry (n=17) Beverages and food* (n=15), fashion (n=6), cosmetics (n=6), entertainment (n=3), cars (n=3), health (n=3), unions (n=2), pets (n=2), perfumes (n=2), security (n=1), transportation (n=1), travelling (n=1) technology (n=1), furniture (n=1), education (n=1), banking (n=1) and retail (n=1).	Bonaqua (n=2), Valio (n=2), Viaplay Suomi (n=2), K-market, Lovia, Paulig, Lapland Hotel, Peroni Nastro Azzurro, Mercedes Benz, Sini cleaning, Teemajuhlat, JDM Outlet, Casetify, Zalando, Ilme Helsinki, Onni Kotisiivous, BC Helsinki, EU komissio, EU nuoret, Nordea, Musti ja Mirri, Aco Finland, Dermosil, Airam Electric, Hau Hau Champion, Juustoportti, Clas Olson,	Water* (n=3), coffee* (n=2), energy drinks, alcoholic drinks, nonalcoholic beer, cheese, protein bars, ice cream, sweets, dog food, products for dogs, cleaning products, home cleaning service, furniture, organisers, water leak alarm, banking services, union membership, stress relief capsules* (n=2), clinic services, hotels, cars* (n=3), transportation service,

Company mention Text tag* (n=50), hashtag* (n=38) picture tag* (n=30), promotion marks with company mention* (n=22), promotion mark without company mention (n=6).	Autosalpa Oy, YTK Palvelut, Nordic Buddies, Ruohonjuuri, Harmonia66, Lyko, Origins, Matsmart, K-ruoka, K-ryhmä, H&M, PostNord Suomi, Celcius Suomi, Recuror Clinic, Alko Oy, Gina Tricot, Vitamin Well Suomi, Ducray Suomi, Rabanne and Puma Nordic.	cosmetics* (n=4), perfumes (n=2), clothes* (n=5), bags, wallets, YouTube cooking series, streaming service, phone app, phone cases, party decoration, party decoration services, business college and sports for visually impaired.
Buying motives	Selling propositions	Call to action
Informal* (n=40) and transformational* (n=45)	Unique* (n=46) and emotional* (n=45)	Was used* (n=42) and was not used (n=8).
Involvement	Decision making	Ad message*
Based on high (n=18) and low* (n=32) involvement.	Based on feelings* (n=29) and based on logic (n=20).	Selective* (n=42), action* (n=19), generic (n=8), theme (n=3) and institutional (n=1).
Influencer roles	Rational appeals (n=88)	Emotional appeals (n=88)
Content creator* (n=50), multiplier* (n=50), protagonist* (n=38), moderator (n=14) and opinion leader (n=11). Spokesperson* (n=43) and co-creator (n=7).	Demonstrations* (n=25), talking head* (n=21), problem solution (n=16), slice of life (n=16), testimonial (n=6) and comparative (n=2). Facts (n=1) and teaching (n=1)	Warmth* (n=29), fear (n=11), humour (n=6) and erotism (n=5). Admiration (n=13), nostalgia (n=5), excitement (n=4), relief (n=3), relatability (n=2), calmness (n=2), freedom (n=2), aspiration (n=1), jealousy (n=1), curiosity (n=1), sadness (n=1), surprise (n=1) and serious (n=1).

Common categories are marked with *.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This part will answer the first research question “*What roles influencers take in commercial content?*” Content creator and multiplier roles were taken in all 50 posts since all posts included creating content together with companies (content creator) and distribution organisational messages (multiplier). Protagonist role was taken 38 times, moderator 14 times and opinion leader 11 times. This meant that influencers rarely engaged in online communications (moderator) or tried to impact consumers' decision making (opinion leader), whereas using communication as a public persona was common. As former research has seen influencers as mostly content creators (Lou & Yuan, 2019) and opinion leaders (Leung et al., 2022) the results are partly in line with theories. While the study limited decision making to encouragements, recommendations and emphasizing, the definition on content creation was not as exclusive. As this

definition could be extended the results could be interpreted differently. Possible extensions could be taken from opinion leader synonyms tastemakers (De Veirman et al., 2017) and market mavens (Feick & Price, 1987).

Co-creator roles were taken seven times and spokesperson roles 43 times. One out of three co-creator roles and two out of three spokesperson roles occurred in the data. For co-creators this meant the role of co-designer and spokespeople roles of billboards and stylists. Co-owner or co-owner subroles (proprietors, facilitators, and partners) were not detected on the data. Even though influencer's role from a simple promoter (billboard) has developed (Rundin & Colliander, 2021) this was not as apparent in the data. Most collaborations still use influencers for promotional activities, and few use their potential as co-designers or stylists. Yet as mentioned in the results multiple posts with same companies may hint to longer collaborations and brand ambassador's role, which would be in line with theoretical findings (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Rundin & Colliander, 2021).

This part will answer the second research question "*What communication strategies (appeals and ad messages) influencers use in commercial content?*"

Influencers used rational communication appeals a lot. Mostly used appeals included talking heads (n=21) and demonstrations (n=25) and commonly used appeals problem solutions (n=16) and slice of life (n=16). Despite dramatizations all rational appeals were used. As Finnish people are neutral communicators lack of dramatizations can be linked to culture. Most used emotional communication appeal was noticeably warmth (n=29). Warmth favoured use can be linked generating positive brand images and perceptions. Other emotional appeals were used less, and music ads were not used at all.

Despite predetermined categories, undetermined categories were used to recognise appeals that did not fit predetermined categories. Noticeable undetermined appeals included admiration (n=13) and nostalgia (n=5). As explained in the theories, rational ads included practical details, features and facts that can be used to evaluate the products and emotional ads conveyed images with affective responses (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). As 48 out 50 posts used both appeals customers were able to use both cognitive and affective decision-making mechanisms in their purchase decisions. This approach was probably used as some products purchases are based on affection and some more on cognition, for example sweets are affective and cars cognitive products (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017).

All ad messages were used, and the commonest styles included selective (n=42) and action ads (n=19). As stated in the theory, selective ad messages were focused on specific brands and action ads on stimulating fast purchases (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). Whereas selective ads are popular can be based on targeting and action messages favourability is probably based on emotional urgency that generates higher sales. Rarely used ad messages included generic (n=8), institutional (n=1), and theme ads (n=3). (De Pelsmacker et al., 2017). This indicated that companies focused on promoting one brand, rather than the

whole product range. Whereas the action messages were commonly used to stimulate fast purchases, institutional and theme messages were rare. As multiple ad messages were used simultaneously ad message strategies could focus on various goals.

5.2 Managerial implications

As global influencer market value has reached 21.1 billion dollars (Statista, 2023a) and influencer marketing is a prevalent marketing strategy (Vrontis et al., 2021) marketing managers should already be interested in the topic. Marketers can gain various benefits from influencer marketing including recommendations, engaging content, wider reach, enhanced brand perceptions, increased returns of investments (Lee and Watkins, 2016; Cheung et al., 2022, Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Hwang and Zhang, 2018; Ahmad, 2018) and more. Commercial content marketing is a valid strategy to gain these benefits.

When it comes to this study managers can use it as a guideline on how influencer roles and communication strategies can be used. The guideline works especially well for Finnish companies that are interested to use macro sized influencers from the lifestyle category. The greatest insights can be gained by focusing on roles and communication strategies that are rarely used, for example opinion leader (look for examples of Influencer 2) moderator and co-creator, or emotional message appeals as humour, fear and erotism. As the industry examples focused mostly on the beverage and food industry the organisations under it could benefit most from the data.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This study analysed young Finnish women that produce lifestyle content for macro sized audiences in Instagram. Since the research group consisted of five influencers it gave a narrow view on Finnish macro influencers commercial content. Overall, the analysis included 50 posts, which meant 10 posts per influencer. As the posts were gathered during 2021-2023 the view presents influencers current communication strategies and roles. Besides influencer roles, most study group participants have other occupational roles that may affect the selection of cooperative companies.

This study analysed the data based on a mixed method approach. Most of the data was first gathered in a written format and then turned to numbers. These frequencies were calculated without outsourced calculators and have a small possibility for coding and calculation errors. Some data was in addition gathered as numbers and its calculations were done on reliable Excel functions. As all calculations were done multiple times the risks for errors are minimal. Similarly, all coding was closely reviewed to ensure minimal errors. As the risks for overall errors are low this study deemed reliable.

As most categories were predetermined, repetition of the study should generate comparable results. All predetermined categories were based on proven theoretical explanations. The categories for influencer roles examine roles based on strategic communication and brand collaboration, whereas communication strategies are assessed on appeals and ad messages. As influencer role theories are not highly developed, selected roles reflect current knowledge well. On the other hand, communication strategies have been studied on multiple perspectives and as this study is limited to the selected theories. Overall, the validity is competent as the theories are taken from highly reliable material and used accordingly. Lastly, as influencer roles and communication strategies were demonstrated with translated text and there is a slight possibility for translation error. This error is deemed low as the researcher is a highly experienced with both languages.

This study focused on analysing young Finnish lifestyle macro influencers commercial communication and roles on Instagram feed advertisements. The approach was selected since previous studies highlighted limited data on influencer roles, sponsored posts message strategies and influencer categories. As Vrontis et al. suggested, this study used various product (and service) categories and mixed methods. To formulate similar studies gender could be switched from female to male (Drenten, Gurrieri & Tyler 2020), category from lifestyle to sports, and Instagrams feature from feed to reels, stories, or channels (Hogsnes et al., 2024). In addition, further differences could be found in different age groups (Drenten, Gurrieri & Tyler 2020), sexual orientations (Duguay, 2019) and religions (Beta, 2019).

As this study focused on Finnish influencers other markets should be studied to understand the phenomenon further. In a similar study Rundin and Colliander encourage studying Asian markets, for example Chinese influencers (2021). Furthermore Hogsnes et al. suggest continuing studies on micro influencers on other countries (2024) and since the same is recommended for macro influencers. Lastly, as Rundin and Colliander have already studied commercial Instagram content in Norway and Denmark (2021) an interesting opportunity could lay in comparing the data of Nordic countries.

Moreover, it is recommended to continue the studies on various platforms (Hogsnes et al., 2024) These platforms should include Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest (Tanwar et al., 2023) and TikTok (Hogsnes et al., 2024). During platform studies it is suggested to focus on successful message strategies (Vrontis et al., 2021) strategic communication (Enke & Borchers, 2019), advertising types and appeals. Finally, as influencers growth from a promoter to an active part taker is noted (Rundin & Colliander, 2021) further research should focus on the development of influencers role and communication. Attention should be especially on longer collaborations (Rundin & Colliander, 2021; Enke & Borchers, 2019) co-creation, and co-ownership (Rundin & Colliander, 2021).

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