THE ROLE OF ORIGIN OF FAME IN INFLUENCER BRANDING:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GERMAN AND RUSSIAN CONSUMERS

Dissertation
zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde
durch den
Promotionsausschuss Dr. rer. pol.
der Universität Bremen

vorgelegt von
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Bremen, 11.02.2019

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<tr>
<td>ANCOVA</td>
<td>analysis of covariances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>analysis of variance</td>
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<td>BCG</td>
<td>brand generated content</td>
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<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>confer</td>
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<tr>
<td>ed.</td>
<td>Edition/Editor</td>
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<td>eds.</td>
<td>Editors</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. g.</td>
<td>exempli gratia (for example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et al.</td>
<td>et alii (and others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et seq.</td>
<td>et sequens (and the following one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>electronic word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. e.</td>
<td>id est (that is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p./pp.</td>
<td>page/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>parasocial interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>standard deviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMI</td>
<td>social media influencer</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCG</td>
<td>user generated content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vol.</td>
<td>volume</td>
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<tr>
<td>vs.</td>
<td>versus</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOM</td>
<td>word of mouth</td>
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A Relevance of Influencers for Brand Management

1 How Influencers Have Emerged in the Social Media Landscape

The emergence of social media\(^1\) had a permanent and irreversible impact on consumer behavior.\(^2\) For many consumers, social media are essential tools for seeking information and guidance to navigate their everyday lives. Especially for younger generations, social media have surpassed classical media outlets such as TV or radio as preferred source for media and news consumption (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Preferred media outlets for news consumption](source)

Source: Own illustration based on KANTAR (2017).

The communication between brand and consumers, and among consumers has also undergone substantial changes: the development of the Web 2.0\(^3\) allows consumers not only to interact with brands directly but also to exchange opinions about and ex-

---

1 The term social media can be defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the modified user behavior of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of brand-generated and user-generated content. Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 222.


3 The term web 2.0 describes a new behavior of internet users. Previous one-way communication has dissolved in favor of users who generate content autonomously and establish a direct dialog with their surroundings and with brands. Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 221.
periences with brands among each other.\textsuperscript{4} The ever-growing importance of social media is reflected in the increasing number of users of social networks. In 2017, 2.46 billion users accessed a social network at least once a month. This comprises 71 percent of internet users and approximately one-third of the global population. Based on recent estimates, this number will surpass 3 billion users in the year 2021.\textsuperscript{5}

Social media can serve as an umbrella term for various platforms.\textsuperscript{6} Among the most popular social platforms are Facebook (2.1 billion monthly active users), YouTube (1.5 billion monthly active users), Instagram (900 million monthly active users) and Twitter (330 million monthly active users).\textsuperscript{7}

While the majority of users on either of these platforms could be described as “ordinary” users interacting mostly with their friends and families, others distinguish themselves by accumulating a larger than average audience of users who follow them and like, share or comment on their activities. To represent users that are widely recognized as peers to others\textsuperscript{8} the term “social media influencer” has evolved. Such social media influencers (SMIs) can be regarded as a distinctive type of opinion leader, who exert their influence on consumer’s opinions, attitudes, and behavior through their use and presence online and especially within social media.\textsuperscript{9}

For many consumers, social media influencers provide orientation in a highly fragmented media landscape, where countless information channels and media outlets compete for the attention of consumers.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{5} Cf. eMARKETER (2017). In regards to methodology, eMARKETER notes that “estimates are based on the analysis of survey and traffic data from research firms and regulatory agencies; the growth trajectory of major social networks; historical trends; internet and mobile adoption trends; and country-specific demographic and socioeconomic factors.” eMARKETER (2017).
\textsuperscript{6} TUTEN/SOLOMON (2015) organize social media platforms into four different zones: social communities, social publishing, social commerce and social entertainment. While each zone includes platforms with a certain key characteristic it is not always possible to clearly assign a specific platform into one zone only. Instagram, for example, can be categorized as a social publishing platform, due to the predominant focus on users publishing and sharing pictures and videos. However, since users can also “follow” each other and comment, like and share each other’s content, Instagram also has common traits of a social community platform. Cf. TUTEN/SOLOMON (2015), p. 137 et seq.
\textsuperscript{7} Cf. WE ARE SOCIAL (2018a). All figures are stated as of January 2018.
\textsuperscript{8} Cf. LUI/HANG/HANG (2014), p. 258.
\textsuperscript{10} Cf. WEBSTER/KSIAZEK (2012), p. 40.
SMIs share experiences and advice in various categories and can therefore be classified according to the respective thematic categories their content is aimed at. For their annual listing of top performing SMIs, FORBES for example, uses categories such as fashion, beauty, gaming, parenting, food, or fitness for classification (see Figure 2).

Another approach to categorize SMIs is based on how they communicate their content. Market research institute concept m and communication agency OSK, for instance, distinguish between SMIs types like opulent style inspirers, who focus on elaborate and sophisticated image composition and experts, who often operate in niche topics and display in-depth knowledge in their fields. Other categories include SMIs who concentrate on explaining certain aspects of their field in so-called how-to videos.\textsuperscript{11} For instance, SMIs like Laura Vitale and Simeon Panda show viewers on their YouTube Channels how to prepare a certain meal or how to perform certain physical exercises, respectively (see Figure 3). SMIs who fall into the category of self-exposers engage in deeply personal self-portrayal of their daily lives on social media.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
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Figure 2: Categorization of SMIs based on their thematic fields
Figure 3: Laura Vitale and Simeon Panda in two exemplary YouTube videos.

The number of followers a SMI has accumulated is another commonly used criterion for categorization. So-called micro SMIs typically range from 500 or 1,000 to 10,000 followers, macro SMIs from over 10,000 to 1 million followers and any number of followers up from 1 million typically constitutes a mega SMI.\(^{13}\) Especially SMIs, who fall into the macro- or mega-category can gather millions of clicks and hundreds of comments for their published content.\(^{14}\)

In academia SMIs are studied from two perspectives. The first perspective has its roots in self-branding, which is simultaneously referred to as either personal branding or human branding in academic literature.\(^{15}\) Self-branding is considered with scientific issues of how individuals develop a unique selling point\(^{16}\) and consequently a public image for commercial gain.\(^{17}\) These issues commonly arise from the realms of sociology or communication studies and address questions like how an “ordinary” indi-

\(^{13}\) Cf. Dhanik (2016); van der NolK van Gogh (2017); Influicity (2017), p. 4.

\(^{14}\) German SMI Bianca Heinicke, for instance, regularly receives over one million clicks and more than thousand comments on her YouTube videos, where she portrays her everyday life. Cf. YOUTUBE/HEINICKE (2018).

\(^{15}\) Cf. Khamis/Ang/Welling (2017); Karaduman (2013), p. 466; Schmidt/Spall (2019).

\(^{16}\) Cf. Rampersad (2008), p. 34 et seq.

An individual can garner fame and become a celebrity or how individuals cultivate their celebrity status. Regarding SMIs, academic literature is concerned with topics such as how social media affects or even facilitates self-branding, how self-branding via social media differs from prior existing self-branding tactics, or how the self-presentation of SMIs online affects viewers perception of e.g. beauty standards.

The second perspective, on the other hand, considers how marketers can use SMIs to promote their brands (e.g. products/services or companies) and ultimately affect economic and/or behavioral brand objectives. Scientific issues in the related marketing and branding literature deal with questions such as how brand endorsements through SMIs affect brand perceptions, brand liking or brand purchase intention. Within this work SMIs will be studied from the second perspective.

Marketers have started to recognize the potential of SMIs to reach large audiences and are therefore seeking opportunities to take advantage of influencers in order to deliver their brand messages to potential consumers. When singer Selena Gomez posted a photo of herself drinking out of a bottle of Coca Cola in June 2016, it became the most liked photo on the platform for almost an entire year. At that point Selena Gomez’ Instagram account had almost 90 million followers, who potentially saw the picture and the brand Coca Cola in it (see Figure 4). Videos on YouTube from SMIs like Zoe Sugg, presenting her latest purchases from Asos, Primark or Zara in so-called “haul videos”, serve as inspiration for her viewers on what and where to shop.

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18 As Seifert (2013) notes, the term “celebrity” describes a contemporary form of personalized prominence of an individual, which results as a consequence of a certain representation in mass media. This understanding of the celebrity term is similar to McCracken (1989), who defines a celebrity as “(…) any individual who enjoys public recognition (…)”. Cf. Seifert (2013), p. 25 and 30 et seq.; McCracken (1989), p. 310. For further information on the term „celebrity“, see chapter B 3.4.


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Figure 4: Selena Gomez endorses Coca Cola via Instagram
Source: INSTAGRAM/GOMEZ (2016)

Such cooperations between brands and SMIs have emerged as a rather recent phenomenon in the branding discipline. SMIs are able to reach target groups who are described as being largely unimpressed by classical advertising and offer another opportunity for marketers to positively affect psychographic (e.g. brand awareness) and behavioral (e.g. brand purchase) brand objectives.

Therefore, the term “Influencer Branding” has been coined. Influencer branding is generally concerned with the integration of SMIs in brand management in order to support the achievement of the brand’s psychographic and/or economic objectives,

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26 Searches for the term “influencer marketing”, which is often used for these types of cooperations, on the search engine Google have risen by 400 per cent from 2015 to 2017. Cf. TODISCO (2017); GOOGLE TRENDS (2018).

27 In a study conducted in October 2014 with 1,300 consumers aged 19 to 30 years only 3% of respondents ranked TV news, magazines and books as influential in their purchase decisions. Cf. MilleNNIAL BRANDING (2015); see also MANAGER MAGAZIN (2017); DE VEIRMANN/CAUBERGHE/HUDDERS (2017), p. 801.

whereby an important step in the overall integrational process is the identification of suitable SMIs for the brand.\footnote{Cf. de Veirman/Caubergh/Hudders (2017), p. 801; Evans et al. (2017), p. 1 et seq.; Jaakonmäki/Müller/vom Brocke (2017), p. 1153; Burmann et al. (2018), p. 253. For an extensive derivation of the definition of influencer branding, see chapter B 1.2.}

Within the scope of influencer branding, SMIs can serve many functions. For example, SMIs can assist brands to gain or expand awareness, to reach new audiences, personalizing the communication from brands to consumers, manage a brand’s reputation or facilitate product launches to markets brands are not as experienced in and even drive processes of digital transformation. By strategically using SMIs brands are able to improve their overall efficiency and effectiveness.\footnote{Cf. Solis/Altimeter (2017), p. 11 et seq.}

Several studies suggest that influencer branding indeed has become a viable branding technique: according to a study by Influencer Marketing Hub with 272 marketing managers from the USA surveyed in the first quarter of 2017, 28 per cent of respondents ranked influencer branding as the fastest-growing method to influence purchase decisions of customers online, compared to 5 per cent of respondents who ranked display advertising in the first place. In the same study, 67 per cent of the managers stated that they would increase their budget for influencer branding in 2018.\footnote{Cf. Influencer Marketing Hub (2017).} This result is similar to a study carried out by marketing agency Launchmetrics, where 64 per cent of the surveyed 600 PR, marketing and communication professionals stated that they had plans to increase their budget for influencer branding in the year following the study.\footnote{Cf. Launchmetrics (2017), p. 10. The majority of the polled professionals were located in Europe (49 %), North America (43 %), South America (5 %), and Asia (3 %). Three quarter of the respondents were from the fashion and retail industry, the remaining quarter had backgrounds in the luxury industry, followed by cosmetics, jewellery and watches. Cf. Launchmetrics (2017), p. 15 et seq.} Correspondingly, in a study with 104 German marketing managers in 2017, 63 per cent of managers find influencer branding to already be of high importance and almost the same number of respondents (64 per cent) noted that influencer branding will further increase in relevance in 2018.\footnote{Cf. Puls Marktforshung GmbH (2017) p. 3. The online survey was conducted from August to September 2017. Cf. Puls Marktforshung GmbH (2017) p. 2.}

Results from further studies give indications that the increasing relevance and attention given to influencer branding might be justified. An online survey of 1,604 German consumers shows that every sixth consumer between 14 and 29 years has already bought a product that was previously presented by an SMI. Nearly one third of re-
spondents ranked SMIs as the most credible source for product recommendations.\textsuperscript{34} Another study carried out in 2016 with 3,500 German internet users even shows that 50 per cent of internet users between 14 and 19 years have bought a product in the last 12 months prior to the study because it was presented to them by an SMI.\textsuperscript{35} Additionally, in a nationwide study carried out in the USA with almost 14,000 consumers, 30 per cent indicated that they were more likely to purchase a product if it was endorsed by an SMI.\textsuperscript{36} Nevertheless, influencer branding also confronts marketers with new challenges. One of the most central and prevalent challenges concerns the identification of a suitable SMI.\textsuperscript{37} To confront this issue, practitioners often base their choice of a SMI on his or her number of followers.\textsuperscript{38} The number of followers of a SMI provides indications about the quantity of consumers reached. This is reflected in the cost per post of an SMI (the costs marketers have to pay for a SMI to endorse their brand in the SMI’s channels), which are increasing with incremental follower growth (see for exemplary reference Figure 5).\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} Cf. BVDW/INFLURY (2017), p. 13.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Cf. FAKTKONTOR (2017).
\item \textsuperscript{36} Cf. COLLECTIVE BIAS (2016), p. 8. The study was carried out in March 2016 with consumers above the age of 18 years. According to the authors of the study, consumers “(...) references U.S. consumers who have purchased a product in-store as a result of reading a blog review or social media post about it online in the past.” COLLECTIVE BIAS (2016), p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{37} In a survey conducted between February and April 2016 with more than 100 marketers from the USA, identifying a relevant SMI proved to be the most frequently mentioned (67 %) challenge marketers faced in working with influencers. Cf. SOLIS (2016), p. 10. See also DE VEIRMAN/CAUBERGHE/HUDDERS (2017), p. 799. See also GROSS/VON WANGENHEIM (2018), p. 31.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Cf. DHANIK (2016); VAN DER NOLK VAN GOGH (2017); INFLUICITY (2017), p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Cf. INFLUENCER MARKETING HUB (2018a). The calculator provided by Influencer Marketing Hub gives estimates of costs per Instagram posts of a wide variety of SMIs.
\end{itemize}
Hence, the number of follower-criterion can be compared to the key performance indicator cost per thousand, which is known in evaluating traditional advertising campaigns.\textsuperscript{41} A decision based on the number of follower-criterion allows marketers to decide whether to choose a relatively small number of SMIs with a large following or rather to prefer numerous SMIs with less followers each, in order to reach a previously defined number of consumers.\textsuperscript{42} However, the number of follower-criterion alone does not allow for conclusions on more nuanced measurements of influencer branding, for example engagement.\textsuperscript{43} Media agency Mediakix, for example, analyzed more

\textsuperscript{40} The comparison was made on March 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2018.

\textsuperscript{41} Cf. MEFFERT ET AL. (2018), p. 124.

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. INFLUICITY (2017), p. 7 et seq.

\textsuperscript{43} Engagement is defined as “the connectedness of a social media user with online content published by a social media influencer. It is conceptualized in terms of such behavioral manifestations as likes, comments, shares or retweets – depending on the possibilities offered by the social media platform – associated with the published influencer content.” FINK (2019); see also VAN DOORN...
than 700 Instagram posts from SMIs with either less than 10,000 followers or more than 100,000 followers, who endorsed a variety of 16 brands. As by the authors anticipated, SMIs with a large following had a higher reach than those with a small following. Both types of SMIs, however, showed similar rates of engagement, which means that the levels of interaction quality do not differ between SMIs with large and lesser following.\footnote{Cf. Nanji (2017).} Therefore, evaluating SMIs based on their number of followers alone is inconclusive, as this criterion only refers to quantitative measurements, not to the quality of the interaction.

This dilemma highlights the need for a criterion which addresses the characteristic of SMIs themselves. A small albeit slowly growing number of studies examine the different effects of SMIs based on their origin of fame. The origin of fame criterion refers to the way SMIs became known to a large audience. The first category includes SMIs who became famous in the analog world by being singers, actors, athletes, TV-personas or any other kind of celebrity. “Traditional” celebrities like Beyoncé or Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson can be categorized as SMIs with an analog fame-origin. The second category includes SMIs who became solely known through their online activities.\footnote{Cf. Djalarova/Rushworth (2017), p. 2; Keel/Nataraj (2012), p. 697.} SMIs such as Chiara Ferragni, who became known through her blog The Blonde Salad, or Mark Fischbach, whose YouTube channel has more than 20 million followers\footnote{Cf. Youtube/Channelling (2018).} would therefore be assigned to the category of SMIs with online fame-origin.

The importance of this categorization is emphasized by the various strategies regarding the use of SMIs with different origins of fame. Hospitality service brand Airbnb, for example, collaborates exclusively with SMIs with analog fame-origin since initiating their influencer branding with a partnership with singer Mariah Carey in 2015.\footnote{Cf. Mediapix (2017).} Since then, Airbnb partnered with singer Lady Gaga,\footnote{Cf. Instagram/instagram/lady_gaga (2017).} TV-persona Kim Kardashian,\footnote{Cf. Instagram/natasha_kardashian (2016).} or actor Channing Tatum.\footnote{Cf. Instagram/channing_tatum (2017).} Watch manufacturer TagHeuer takes a similar approach by cooperating with model Bella Hadid, among other SMIs with analog fame-origin. Contrary to TagHeuer, Cluse – also a watch manufacturer – solely works with SMIs with

online fame-origin. These SMIs include fashion bloggers like Kiara King or Aida Domenech to name but a few (see Figure 6).

However, there are also brands which do not choose one type of SMI over the other but rather employ both. Puma, for example works with a wide range of SMIs with analog fame-origin as well as with ones who became famous through social media. Among those SMIs with analog fame-origin are singers like Selena Gomez, Rihanna, and the Weeknd as well as athletes like Mario Reus and Usain Bolt. Fashion bloggers like Daniel Fuchs and fitness bloggers such as Pamela Reif represent the category of SMIs with online fame-origin (see Figure 7).

51 Cf. CLUSE (2018).
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Figure 6: Bella Hadid and Kiara King endorse TagHeuer and Cluse via Instagram
Source: Instagram/Hadid (2017); Instagram/King (2017)
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Since SMIs can be clearly distinguished in the way they built their fame, the question arises if consumers perceive SMIs with distinct origins of fame differently and if dif-

Figure 7: Selena Gomez and Pamela Reif endorse Puma via Instagram
Source: Instagram/Gomez (2017); Instagram/Reif (2017)
Different perceptions of SMIs further lead to distinct perceptions of the endorsed brands and hence affect brand objectives differently. Understanding these effects could support managers in finding a solution for one of the most pressing issues in influencer branding, namely, selecting a suitable SMI to endorse their brand via social media.

The selection of a suitable SMI is a substantial prerequisite for the success of influencer branding, as it precedes every other step in the process of influencer branding, e.g., design and controlling of the influencer campaign.\textsuperscript{52}

In celebrity endorsement literature, a research area very similar to influencer branding, substantial amount of research has been directed to selection processes of celebrities in advertising.\textsuperscript{53} The importance of the selection of the “right” celebrity in an advertising campaign can be transferred to influencer branding.

Consequently, marketers face the following challenge: Based on the origin of fame – analog versus online fame-origin – the selection of which type of SMI does lead to more positive effects on psychographic and behavioral brand objectives?

Following the presentation of the practical relevance of the selection of appropriate SMIs, the next section will focus on the current state of research in this field.

\section*{2 Current State of Research and Research Gaps}

Scientific empirical insights into the different effects of SMIs with analog fame-origin versus SMIs with online fame-origin are limited. However, differences in the origin of fame of SMIs and their potential effects on consumer behavior and brand objectives have received attention in three studies from practitioners – namely GOOGLE and data analytics company COLLECTIVE BIAS – published in 2015 and 2016. The current state of academic research, however, is almost non-existent. To the best of the author’s knowledge, only one academic study (conducted by DJAFAROVA/RUSHWORTH, 2017) exists that focuses on the origin of fame of SMIs and the different effects on brand outcomes. The aforementioned studies are outlined in Table 1.

\textsuperscript{52} Cf. HERRMANN (2018), p. 24.
\textsuperscript{53} See ERDOGAN (1999); ERDOGAN/BAKER/TAGG (2001) and BERKVIST/ZHOU (2016) for literature reviews on selection processes of celebrities in advertising.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ipsos Connect commissioned by Google (2015)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Understand the impact of YouTube on consumer behavior (purchase intention)</td>
<td>Consumers are more likely to follow advice on future purchases from SMI with online fame-origin rather than SMI with analog-fame-origin</td>
<td>U.S. consumers, who are active subscribers of at least one YouTube channel</td>
<td>N = 654 U.S. consumers, aged 13 to 64 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective Bias (2016)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Understand how online behaviors impact in-store purchase behavior (via purchase intention)</td>
<td>Consumers are more likely to purchase a product in-store if it was previously presented by a SMI with online fame-origin rather than a SMI with analog fame-origin</td>
<td>U.S. consumers, who have bought a product in the past after previously reading a blog/social media post online</td>
<td>N = 13,927 U.S. consumers, minimum age of 18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google/Visible Measures (2016)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Videos on YouTube created by SMI with online fame-origin generated more views, and comments as videos created by SMI with analog fame-origin</td>
<td>U.S. consumers</td>
<td>No research design available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djarfarova/Rushworth (2017)</td>
<td>Qualitative Interviews</td>
<td>Investigate the impact of different types of SMI (depending on their origin of fame) on purchase intention</td>
<td>SMI with online fame-origin have a stronger effect on respondents' purchase intention than SMI with analog fame-origin</td>
<td>U.K. consumers; female Instagram users</td>
<td>N = 18 female Instagram users aged 18 to 30 years</td>
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In 2015, Google published results from a study commissioned to market research company Ipsos Connect. To understand how user behavior on YouTube later influences purchase intentions, 654 consumers aged 13 to 64 were questioned. In the study, 6 out of 10 respondents indicated that they would rather follow advice on brand purchases if those were presented from SMIs with online fame-origin rather than SMIs with analog fame-origin.\(^54\) The result of this study thus indicates that the effect on purchase intention of SMIs who became famous via social media is stronger than of SMIs with analog fame-origin. However, it is not specified how the survey was conducted in detail, the published results only suggest that the respondents had to be active subscribers of YouTube channels.\(^55\) The results are unsatisfactory because it remains unclear how many YouTube channels respondents must have followed to be considered in the study. Furthermore, the authors did not disclose whether respondents followed the YouTube channels from SMIs with online fame-origin to the same degree as those of SMIs with analog fame-origin, a factor that would be important to generate unbiased results.

Influencer branding company Collective Bias (2016) provides a similar result. In March 2016, they fielded a national online-survey to U.S. consumers with 13,927 qualified responses. The sample is representative of the U.S. population for age and gender.\(^56\) Although this leads to a restriction of not considering online purchases, only respondents who affirmed that they have ever bought a product in-store as a direct result of reading a blog or social media post online were considered in the study. When respondents were asked if they would be more likely to make an in-store purchase if a product is endorsed by either a SMI with analog or online fame-origin, 30 per cent of respondents preferred a SMI with online fame-origin compared to 2.8 per cent who preferred SMIs with analog fame-origin.\(^57\)

Concerning YouTube videos, a study by Google and market research company Visible Measures conducted in February 2016 showed stronger effects of SMIs with online fame-origin on engagement measures. When compared, YouTube videos created by SMIs with online fame-origin generated three times as many views and 12 times as many comments as those videos created by SMIs with analog fame-origin. Albeit the study discloses that respondents were from the U.S. it is not documented

\(^54\) Cf. O’NEIL-HART/BLUMENSTEIN (2016).

\(^55\) Cf. O’NEIL-HART/BLUMENSTEIN (2016).


\(^57\) Cf. COLLECTIVE BIAS (2016), p. 2.
to how many respondents the study was fielded to. Furthermore, a specific research design for the study has not been published so far.\footnote{Cf. O’NEIL-HART/BLUMENSTEIN (2016).}

DJAFAROVA/RUSHWORTH (2017) provide the only academic study to consider SMIs with different origins of fame. DJAFAROVA/RUSHWORTH also examined whether SMIs with different origins of fame affect the purchase intention of young female Instagram users differently. They conducted 18 face-to-face interviews with female Instagram users aged 18 to 30 from the United Kingdom. Their results also indicate that SMIs with online fame-origin stronger affect the purchase intention of their respondents.\footnote{Cf. DJAFAROVA/RUSHWORTH (2017), p. 3 et seq.}

However, the authors do not provide a clear overview of how many respondents preferred SMIs with online fame-origin over the other type of SMI in regards to their purchase decision. Neither do they state the exact question which is linked to this result. Additionally, 18 interviews are too small a number of respondents to make their results transferable to the general population.

One reason to be doubtful regarding the results is the often very fragmented documentation of research designs, if there is any documentation published at all. For example, it is often not comprehensible which stimuli were used in the studies, how the questions were worded exactly or what brands (or products) were included. Furthermore, the studies do not explain in detail how they distinguish between different types of SMIs and why they (might) exert different influences on consumers. The fragmented research designs also do not disclose which additional moderating variables were used to control for the effects SMIs have on consumer behavior, which raises doubts if such variables were used at all.

Additionally, if study designs are available, the used methods do not comply to academic standards, as respondents were asked directly for their preference for either type of SMI (analog versus online fame-origin). This is problematic because respondents are often unaware of their underlying motivations and attitudes. This problem is widely acknowledged in academic literature and is therefore dealt with methods such as indirect questions, which often lead to differing results.\footnote{Cf. KOPIETZ/ECHTERHOFF (2016), p. 590 et seq.} \footnote{This situation could be illustrated in a study conducted by the Chair of Innovative Brand Management in 2011 in cooperation with a fast-food restaurant chain. When respondents were asked directly, clean toilets and washrooms were the most important drivers for respondents to visit one of the restaurants of the fast-food chain. When compared to indirect measures, however, clean toilets and washrooms were least important to respondents, with the most important driver being the taste and quality of the food. Cf. KEYLENS/CHAIR OF INNOVATIVE BRAND MANAGEMENT (2011).}
These shortcomings are further accompanied by an overall lack of a profound conceptual basis. However, a conceptual basis and respective hypotheses are imperative to assess consumers’ underlying attitudes and motivations that lead to potentially differing effects of SMIs with either analog or online fame-origin on brand objectives.

Although it seems like the presented studies provide consistent findings about the superiority of SMIs with online fame-origin over SMIs with analog fame-origin, such generalized results should be noted with skepticism, as it is highly unlikely that SMIs with online fame-origin lead to higher purchase intentions or more favorable overall brand outcomes at any time and under any condition. Generalized results ignore the complexity of human behavior and imply that respondents will always favor SMIs with online fame-origin, regardless of their age, gender, social media usage or other preferences they might have.

Practical evidence raises doubts about the general superiority of SMIs with online fame-origin, as marketers still rely heavily on SMIs with analog fame-origin to endorse their brands on their own social media channels. Kaia Gerber, for instance, a model and therefore SMI with analog fame-origin, endorses high-end fashion-brands such as Chanel and Miumiu via her Instagram account. Based on recent estimates, she charges between $5,000 and $8,000 per post. Fashion blogger Aimee Song, an SMI with online fame-origin, also cooperates with designer brands – among them Dior and Armani. It is estimated that brands pay between $7,000 and $12,000 per post on her Instagram account. Taking the numbers of followers of both Gerber and Song into account, brands pay roughly between $1,500 and $2,500 to reach one million of their respective followers. The decision for one type of SMI over the other is thus not tied to budgetary constraints but rather suggests that for certain groups of consumers or for a specific type of product, SMIs with analog fame-origin are at least used with equal frequency if not more frequently than their counterparts with online fame-origin. Kaia Gerber certainly is not an individual case of a SMI with analog fame-origin to endorse brands on social media. Athletes like Cristiano Ronaldo or aforementioned singer Selena Gomez – all of them have promoted brands via their

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social media channels. If – according to the results of the aforementioned studies – SMIs with online fame-origin are always more favorable for marketers to employ, the question arises why marketers still cooperate with SMIs with analog fame-origin. Therefore, introducing moderating variables is an important step to understand the process by which two variables (e.g. SMIs and buying behavior) are related and whether two variables have the same relation across different groups (e.g. respondents from different cultures). Neither study provides any insight of that kind.

Another critical shortcoming in the presented empirical studies is the exclusive concentration on U.S. consumers. The results are unsatisfactory because they only apply to a certain cultural area (in this case mostly the U.S., United Kingdom and Western cultures) and may not be generalizable to other cultural areas (e.g. Asian cultures). Yet it is worth considering other cultures for two reasons. First, many Asian and South American countries, for instance, exhibit a more intense social media use than Western countries. This is reflected in the higher number of active social media users in Asian regions as well as in higher penetration rates of social media and more time spent on social media each day.

Second, as academic literature shows, some countries display a higher frequency of traditional celebrities (singers, actors, or athletes) in advertising. PAEK (2005) compared print advertisements to account for differences in the frequency of celebrities in advertising. Advertisements were collected throughout the year 2000 in U.S. newspaper *The New York Times* and in South Korean newspaper *Chosun-ilbo*. Out of the 642 advertisements collected from the U.S. newspaper 10 per cent featured a celebrity. This proportion was higher in South Korea, where 24 per cent out of the 694 collected advertisements featured a celebrity. In a similar approach albeit focused on the financial service industry, SONG/AHN/SUNG (2014) collected advertisements from U.S. and South Korean business and news magazines. They also found a significant difference in the use of celebrity endorsements. While 6 per cent of the 1,486 U.S. print advertisements contained celebrities, the share of celebrities in print advertisements rose to 33 per cent of the 403 collected South Korean print advertisements.

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69 Cristiano Ronaldo endorsed Nike in 2016 through 347 posts on his own social media channels that featured either the brand name or the brand logo. Selena Gomez endorses multiple brands on her Instagram account, among them Puma and Coach. Cf. BADENHAUSEN (2016); INSTAGRAM/GOMEZ (2018).


71 Cf. WE ARE SOCIAL (2018b), p. 53 et seq.


The higher celebrity prevalence in South Korean newspaper and magazine advertisements also applies to TV advertisements. CHOI/LEE/KIM (2005) collected TV advertisements which aired during the prime-time period (between 8pm to 11pm) in the last week of July 2002 in major networks in South Korea and the U.S. Out of 841 of the collected South Korean advertisements, 57 per cent contained celebrities, compared to roughly 9 per cent of the 975 collected advertisements in the U.S.

UM (2013) provides similar results by also collecting TV advertisements for three major networks in South Korea and in the U.S., respectively. The advertisements were collected in February 2010 between 7pm to 10pm. A total of 1,695 and 1,663 advertisements were collected in the South Korean and in the U.S. networks. Again, the South Korean advertisements contained a higher share of celebrity endorsements (50 per cent) than those advertisements aired in the U.S. (10 per cent).

However, this phenomenon is not limited to South Korea alone. PRAET (2002) included Japan in his six country-sample. During the prime-time hours between April 1998 and December 1998 TV commercials were recorded from national television stations in France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, and the U.S. The collected advertisements were narrowed down to only advertisements that featured a main (human) character. The results show that Japan exhibited the highest proportion of celebrities in advertising (48 per cent), compared to 21 per cent in the U.S., 16 per cent in France, 10 per cent in Germany, 7 per cent in Spain, and 4 per cent in the Netherlands.

PRAET (2009) later expanded this study to 25 countries, among them additional Asian countries such as China and Malaysia, but also other European countries such as Poland and Sweden. The sample also expanded to Brazil, New Zealand and Australia. Between February 2001 and December 2003, a total number of 6359 TV advertisements featuring a main (human) character were collected and analyzed. Re-
Regarding the percentage of celebrities in TV advertisements, Praet (2009) distinguishes three groups. The first group contains countries in which roughly half or more TV advertisements feature celebrities. The second group consists of countries in which the percentage of celebrities in TV advertisements is significantly lower than in the first group, but with 25 per cent celebrities in advertising are still a lot more common than in the remaining countries in the sample which display lower rates of celebrities in TV advertisements (less than 15 per cent). Interestingly, the first and second group in this study almost entirely consist of Asian countries. It is also noteworthy that all countries in the first and second group can be distinguished from those in the third group by their high culture-based acceptance levels for authorities (see Figure 8).

The higher percentage of celebrities in advertising in such cultures indicate a higher affinity of consumers for traditional celebrities. Such an affinity may also translate to distinct perceptions of different types SMI (analog versus online fame-origin) as well as different results than those presented earlier, which only apply to U.S. consumers.

The higher frequency of traditional celebrities in advertising could also indicate a different evaluation of SMI with analog fame-origin in cultures which appreciate authorities compared to cultures in which consumers do not adhere to authorities to the same degree. SMI with analog fame-origin rose to fame due to special achievements or extraordinary talents. CHAE (2017) states that in South Korea, for example, SMI with analog fame-origin are perceived as “otherworldly” and are therefore immune to criticism, whereas the portrayed lifestyles of SMI with online fame-origin are more critically scrutinized. Since many Asian cultures are more tolerant of hierarchies than Western cultures, consumers might be more impressionable by SMI who already have a prominent role in society due to their achievements and thus serve as more powerful authority figures than SMI with online fame-origin.83

80 Cf. Praet (2009), p. 5 et seq.; High acceptance levels of authorities and tolerance of hierarchies, correspondent with the Power Distance factor by Hofstede, which describes “the extent to which people accept unequal distributions of power in society.” Hofstede (2011), p. 9.


82 Cf. Hofstede/Hofstede/Minkov (2010), p. 53 et seq.

Figure 8: Percentages of celebrities in TV advertisements by country
Some Western cultures such as the United States value independence over authorities. The difference in accepting authorities might lead to different perceptions of SMIs and further lead to differing psychographic and behavioral brand outcomes.

In sum, the current state of research reveals two salient research gaps. The first one addresses the failure of existing research to identify consumers’ attitudes behind the suggested stronger effects of SMIs with online fame-origin on purchase intention, thus limiting the explanatory power of their results. Consequently, the first research aim addresses this lack of research and is proposed as follows:

1. To analyze the effects of different types of SMIs (analog fame-origin versus online fame-origin) on brand objectives (e.g., purchase intention) by using a suitable conceptual and empirical basis.

Second, research should also take notice of the exclusive concentration on U.S. consumers in existing empirical studies regarding different types of SMIs (analog fame origin vs. online fame-origin). Taking into account potential differences regarding the assessment of different types of SMIs in other cultures will lead to a broader understanding of the effects of different types of SMIs on brand outcomes. To address this research gap, the second research aim of this work is proposed:

2. To analyze the effects of different types of SMIs (analog fame-origin vs. online fame-origin) on brand objectives (e.g., purchase intention) in different cultures.

3 Scientific Classification and Outline of the Study

Within previous chapters, a central challenge for marketers regarding influencer branding has been identified. The presented challenge was followed by the identification of two research gaps and the verbalization of two corresponding research aims.

The presented lacks of research will be approached with both identification theory, especially by considering the distinction between similarity identification and wishful identification, and Sirgy’s (1982) Self-congruity theory. Both theories are espe-
cially relevant because they focus on the self-concept of the consumer in an endorsement or advertising situation, respectively, rather than focusing on characteristics of endorsers and products alone.\textsuperscript{88}

Research proposes that individuals emulate behaviors of others due to a process of social influence, which is called identification.\textsuperscript{89} Such identification can either stem from a perceived similarity between an individual and an object of identification, which is referred to as similarity identification, or it can be based on the desire to be like the object of identification, which is then understood as wishful identification.\textsuperscript{90} The effects of similarity identification and wishful identification have been studied extensively within media and communication research,\textsuperscript{91} while the roots of conceptualizations of identification are mostly based in psychology research.\textsuperscript{92} Such studies on identification are concerned with the question of whom individuals identify with within media consumption and what the outcomes of identification processes are.\textsuperscript{93} Research on identification generally concerns different types of media characters, which can be either real existing figures (e.g. athletes, TV-presenters), real existing figures who portray a fictional character (e.g. actors in movies or TV-shows), or fictional characters (e.g. cartoon figures).\textsuperscript{94} A research area that especially focuses on effects of identification with real existing characters is celebrity research. Since this work is also concerned with real existing figures the theoretical basis does largely depend on findings from related research areas. One research area that is of particular importance because of its focus on real existing famous individuals is the area of celebrity research. Within celebrity literature, consumers’ identification with a celebrity is an important factor that contributes to adopting the behavior promoted by the celebrity,\textsuperscript{95} (e.g. the purchase of a promoted brand or product). Research regarding the effects of celebrities on consumers often are of interest within marketing and ad-

\textsuperscript{87} Cf. \textsc{Sirgy} (1982), p. 288 et seq. The Self-congruity theory will be discussed in further detail in Chapter B 4.

\textsuperscript{88} Cf. \textsc{Choi/Rifon} (2012), p. 639. Popular models that investigate the effectiveness of (celebrity) endorsers but widely leave out an individual’s thoughts and feelings are for example the so-called source effect models or the match-up hypothesis. Cf. \textsc{Ohanian} (1991); \textsc{Kahle/Homer} (1985); \textsc{Kamins} (1990).

\textsuperscript{89} See chapter B 3.1 for further detail.

\textsuperscript{90} Cf. \textsc{Von Feilitzen/Linne} (1975).

\textsuperscript{91} See for example \textsc{Liebes/Katz} (1990); \textsc{Press} (1989); \textsc{Radway} (1983); \textsc{Huesmann/Lagerspetz/Erion} (1984); \textsc{Maccoby/Wilson} (1957); \textsc{Sheehan} (1983).

\textsuperscript{92} See for example \textsc{Freud} (1922); \textsc{Mead} (1934); \textsc{Burke} (1969); \textsc{Bandura} (1977, 1986). For further details regarding identification theories see Chapter B 3.1 and B 3.2.

\textsuperscript{93} Cf. \textsc{Cohen} (2001), p. 249.

\textsuperscript{94} Cf. \textsc{Cohen} (2001), p. 250.

\textsuperscript{95} Cf. \textsc{Kelman} (1961), p. 58 et seq.
vertising contexts. Consumers who perceive themselves as similar to the image of a celebrity tend to conform to the behavior endorsed by the celebrity. It has also been observed that consumers, who desire to be like the celebrity, show a tendency to imitate the behaviors of the respective celebrity. Similar behavioral patterns can be observed for consumers who closely monitor the publications of SMIs on social media and imitate the behavior of SMIs by purchasing products and brands endorsed by the SMI. Equivalent to findings from celebrity literature, it is reasonable to assume that SMIs also exert their influence through processes of identification, either similarity or wishful identification.

When studying the effects of SMIs on brand objectives, it is also important to consider the possible impact of the image of a given brand that is promoted by the SMI. SIRGY’s Self-congruity theory postulates that a high congruence between the self-concept of a consumer and the image of a given brand leads to consumers’ preferences for the brand. The importance of the brand/self-congruity of consumers has been confirmed through numerous studies in academic literature and will thus be considered within this work.

To address the challenge marketers face in influencer branding, the question of whether the choice of an SMI with analog fame-origin or online fame-origin leads to more positive brand outcomes can be answered by examining the underlying effects of similarity and wishful identification and self-congruity, respectively.

This thesis follows a pragmatic research objective. For that reason, the main objective is the derivation of concrete implications for marketers with regards to the selection of SMIs. Marketers concerned with influencer branding can base their decision for or against a certain type of SMI on the within this work generated results. This work can also advice marketers on how to allocate their budget for SMIs. Due to

96 See for example MARTIN/BUSH (2000); SILVERA/AUSTAD (2004); CHOI/LEE/KIM (2005); CHOI/RIFON (2012); FLECK/KORCHIA/LE ROY (2012); JIN/PHUA (2014).
97 See for example CHOI/RIFON (2012). For further information see chapter B 3.2.
98 See for example BROWN/BASIL (1995); KOSENKO/BINDER/HURLEY (2016). For further information see chapter B 3.2.
100 According to MALÄR ET AL. (2011), the self-concept is defined as the cognitive and affective understanding of who and what a person is. Cf. MALÄR ET AL. (2011), p. 36.
101 Cf. SIRGY (1986), p. 31 et seq.
103 A pragmatic research objective is characterized by the undertaken efforts to generate management implications for practitioners. Cf. FRANKE (2000), p. 415.
the extended focus on other cultures in this work, the results will be also of use for marketers, who operate in culturally distinct markets. In addition to developing management implications, this thesis follows a cognitive research objective.\textsuperscript{104} Prior to the deduction of management implications, the conceptualization and operationalization of constructs is mandatory.\textsuperscript{105}

In order to accomplish the aforementioned research aims, this thesis follows the theoretical orientation of scientific realism. HOMBURG (1995) and HUNT (1990), among others, recommend scientific realism especially for research areas that are still lacking theoretical foundations.\textsuperscript{106} Influencer branding is still a relatively new strand in academic research and can therefore be classified as such a weakly founded research area. Also accepted within scientific realism is the verification principle, which means that hypotheses can be supported. Instead of assuming to find the absolute truth, scientific realism rather encourages the accumulation of supported hypotheses as an approximation to truth.\textsuperscript{107}

Consequently, this thesis is outlined as follows:

In the following chapter B, the conceptual basis underlying this thesis is established, hypotheses generated and a research model developed. The chapter provides an in-depth analysis of identification processes, the consequences of identification and its implications regarding the impact of SMIs as well as conceptual foundations of SIRGY’S Self-Congruity Theory. Chapter B also contains an in-depth analysis of how different cultural patterns lead to different consumer responses.

Chapter C introduces the relevant statistical methodology. Prior developed hypotheses are validated with the aid of an empirical study. A web-based experiment is conducted to analyze relevant effects. Prior to this step, a pretest with a group of undergraduate students from a German university is conducted. An introduction of the theoretical background of the research method and the operationalization of relevant constructs is given before the detailed presentation of the results.

This thesis closes with a summary of the results in chapter D as well as with management implications and implications for further research. The structure of the thesis is illustrated in Figure 9.

\textsuperscript{105} For definitions of both conceptualization and operationalization see HOMBURG/GIERING (1996), p. 5.
Figure 9: Structure of thesis
Source: Own illustration
B Theoretical Foundations and Development of Research Model

1 Conceptual Foundations of Influencer Branding

1.1. Definition of Social Media Influencers

Social Media Influencers are not an entirely novel phenomenon, but rather build upon the concept of Opinion Leadership, introduced in the theory of two-step flow of communication by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1957.\(^{108}\) Katz (1957) argued that information from mass media are not disseminated to a large audience directly. They first reach “opinion leaders and from these (...) the less active sections of the population.”\(^{109}\) According to Katz (1957), opinion leaders are characterized by their influence on family, friends and acquaintances.\(^{110}\)

Opinion leaders are commonly defined as:

Those members of a group who – in the framework of communication processes – exert a stronger personal influence than other members of the given group and therefore shape the opinions of others.\(^{111}\)

Due to the rise of social media the dynamics under which opinion leaders used to operate changed. Traditionally, opinion leaders exerted their influence through word of mouth (WOM), which was restricted to a limited number of people.\(^{112}\) Within social media, informal communication such as WOM is no longer restricted to geographic constraints\(^{113}\) thus opinion leaders can reach a significantly larger audience.\(^{114}\) Consumers are able to use social media to exchange opinions about brands and products, which are accessible worldwide and therefore influence a large number of other potential consumers.\(^{115}\) The exchange of opinions manifests in content consumers create. In general, content that is created by social media users and does not serve

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\(^{111}\) Cf. Meffert et al. (2018), p. 120.


any commercial purpose is referred to as User Generated Content (UGC). If consumers create content that refers to brands in any way, then this content is referred to as brand-related UGC, which can be seen as a subset of UGC. UGC, that is disseminated in computer-mediated contexts in the same manner as classical word of mouth is also referred to as electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

Opinion leaders who have a large following on social media, amassed their audience due to their heavy use of eWOM. This can happen for example through the creation of videos and the subsequent publication on YouTube or Instagram, where they are potentially accessible for every other individual who visits the social media network.

Content created and shared by SMIs can have significant advantages over information that has been generated by marketers, as eWOM is considered as trustworthy, unbiased, independent, and therefore more credible than promotional communication. SMIs who engage in eWOM are said to be capable of effectively influencing attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers. They become a trusted source of information, who manage to capture the attention of consumers among a steadily increasing number of media outlets, which is mandatory for reaching economic objectives.

A growing body of research aims to redefine opinion leadership phenomenon in a social media setting. Within the social media context, opinion leaders are interchangeably referred to as Digital Influencers and Social Media Influencers (SMIs) with the latter term being the most established one so far.

FREBERG ET AL. (2011) define SMIs as “a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audiences’ attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social

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118 E-WOM is defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet” HENNIG-THURAU ET AL. (2004), p. 39. Cf. NEE (2016), p. 3; GODES/MAYZLIN (2004), p. 545; MARTIN/LUEG (2013), p. 801.
124 See for example KAPITAN/SILVERA (2016) and U ZUNOGLU/KIP (2014).
The use of social media is also emphasized in the definition of Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014). The authors also incorporate characteristics of eWOM in their definition by noting that messages in the digital environment can be disseminated “rapidly and easily.” Audrezet/de Kerviler/Moulard (2017) additionally indicate that not only the mere use of social networks constitutes an influencer, but also the size of the audience a SMIs accumulates: “SMIs are defined as people who possess greater than average potential to influence others due to such attributes as frequency of communication, personal persuasiveness or size of – and centrality to – a social network.” De Veirman/Caubergh/Hudders (2017) use a similar approach by pointing out the need of a sizeable social network in order for an individual to be referred to as a SMI. However, they do not specify how many followers exactly constitute a sizeable network.

All authors agree on the potential of SMIs to shape opinions and behaviors of consumers, which refers to opinion leaders as underlying concept of SMIs. Burmann et al. (2018) even define SMIs as opinion leaders, who exert their influence in social media.

However, it is important to highlight that opinion leaders are not automatically SMIs. Opinion leaders can exert their influence online, but also offline. SMIs, however, mainly exert their influence online and thus can be seen as a subset of the opinion leadership concept.

To consider all aspects that constitute a SMI it is necessary to develop a holistic definition of the SMI concept. Such a holistic definition should take into account the potential to influence attitudes and behaviors of SMIs’ audiences, SMIs’ use of social media, SMIs’ large audience as well as their autonomy and independence from brands and/or companies.

The following definition functions as a summary of the aforementioned definitions. In the context of this work, SMIs are defined as follows:

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Social media influencers represent a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience opinions, attitudes and behavior through the use of blogs, tweets or other social media platforms. Social media influencers can therefore be seen as online opinion leaders.\(^{131}\)

Marketers are already recognizing the importance of SMIs in their communication strategies. The following section integrates SMIs within the management process of identity-based brand management. The identity-based brand management model represents the current state of the art of research and practice in brand management and will therefore serve as central framework for brand management within this work.

1.2. Definition of Influencer Branding

1.2.1. The Identity-Based Brand Management Model

A variety of definitions for the term “brand” exists in academic research and among practitioners.\(^{132}\) From the perspective of identity-based brand management, the term “brand” is defined as

“a bundle of functional and non-functional benefits which, from the target groups’ point of view, differentiate the brand from competing offers in a sustainable way.”\(^{133}\)

The identity-based brand management model considers internal competences and resources of a company. It broadens the understanding of brand management by merging to opponent perspectives of the external and internal view of a brand into one holistic model of brand management.\(^{134}\) The inside-out perspective of internal stakeholders complements the former exclusive outside-in perspective of external stakeholders.\(^{135}\)

The inside-out perspective reflects the self-perception of the brand and is built by the internal stakeholders, such as management and employees of the brand. This self-


\(^{132}\) Cf. Burmann/Meffert/Koers (2005), p. 5 et seq.


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perception is referred to as brand identity. The brand identity articulates the core values and attributes of a brand, which are translated into a brand promise. The brand promise leads to the formation of an external perspective of a brand in the minds of external stakeholders (e.g. consumers) and should be aimed at the needs consumers want to fulfill with the brand. This external perspective of a brand is referred to as brand image.

The brand image sharpens over time, as it is constituted based on the brand experiences consumers make on the various brand touch points. The experiences consumers make with a brand are a result of the brand behavior, which is determined by the types of products and services the brand offers, by the behavior of the brands’ employees as well as by any other type of contact between the brand and the consumer. A positive brand image is the result of a consistent brand behavior across all brand touch points.

Brand objectives within the identity-based brand management model are divided into psychographic and behavioral brand objectives. Psychographic brand objectives include brand image, brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and purchase intention. Psychographic brand objectives determine behavioral brand objectives, i.e. the actual brand purchase, the re-purchase of a brand (brand loyalty) as well as the recommendation of a brand.

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136 The brand identity is defined as „all [spatio-temporal] homogeneous characteristics which, from the viewpoint of internal target groups determine the character of that brand.“ (Burmann et al. (2017), p. 27). The brand identity consists of six dimensions, namely brand origin, brand vision, brand competences, brand values, brand personality and brand offer. For further details see Burmann et al. (2017), p. 44 et seq., Burmann et al. (2018), p. 30 et seq.

137 The brand image is defined as „a multidimensional construct (cf. Foscht/Swoboda 2011; Trommsdorff 2011) which represents the perceptions of the brand in the mind of external stakeholders.“ (Burmann et al. (2017), p. 56). Brand awareness is essential for brand image to be established. The brand image consists of two main components: brand attitudes that are subjectively perceived by the external target groups, and brand benefits, which can be further broken down to functional and non-functional brand benefits. For further details see Burmann et al. (2017), p. 57 et seq., Burmann et al. (2018), p. 48 et seq.


To increase the explanatory power of how psychographic objectives determine behavioral objectives, psychographic objectives can be further broken down into cognitive, affective and conative components. The cognitive component is also referred to as knowledge-based component and is a result of rational processes. Brand awareness, for example, can be seen as a cognitive component. The affective component refers to feelings and emotions (e.g. customer satisfaction). The conative component addresses the behavioral intention, i.e. the purchase intention of a brand.

According to three-component theory, cognitive, affective and conative components form a consistent system of attitudes that determines actual behavior. More recent academic literature, however, excludes the conative component and therefore behavioral intention from this system to more clearly discriminate attitudes from actual behaviour (two-component theory). This leads to behavioral intention (and simultaneously purchase intention) neither being categorized as psychographic brand objective nor as behavioral brand objective, but rather having a hybrid role in between those two categories. Nonetheless, the causal relation between behavioral intention and actual behaviour remains the same (see Figure 11).

The determination of behavioral objectives through behavioral intention can be further explained by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein/Ajzen (1975), who state that actual behavior is positively related to the behavioral intention.\textsuperscript{147} However, TRA has been criticized because it does not include habituated or impulsive purchase decisions.\textsuperscript{148} Ajzen (1985) therefore broadened the initial findings and included them into the Theory of Planned Behavior, which considers those effects on actual behavior.\textsuperscript{149}

Based on theoretical knowledge it is assumed that behavioral intentions determine actual behaviour.\textsuperscript{150} Studying behavioral intentions, and more specifically purchase intention, is a widely acknowledged and commonly used practice in branding research.\textsuperscript{151}

Another reason to study behavioral intentions is that actual behavior is also subject to external factors, which can discourage consumers from a brand purchase, although their purchase intention is positive. Schade (2012) for example notes in his study that


\textsuperscript{150} Cf. Knoll/Matthes (2017), p. 57.

\textsuperscript{151} See for exemplary reference Amos/Holmes/Strutton (2008); Lin et al. (2011); Becker (2012); Schade (2012); Kanitz (2013); Stolle (2012); Lee/Watkins (2016); Lim et al. (2017).
even though some individuals intent to visit a certain sport event, they may not follow their intention due to weather conditions or timing of the event. It is also possible that financial restrictions of the consumer lead to the delay of a brand purchase, to the purchase of an alternative at a lower price or to the prevention of the purchase altogether.

Such external factors are beyond the control of management and hardly illustratable and can be only partially retrieved through research. Since this work follows a pragmatic research objective it is therefore reasonable to consider purchase intention as the final brand objective within this work.

1.2.2. Influencer Branding in the Management Process of Identity-Based Brand Management

The management process of identity-based brand management serves the planning, coordination and control of all measures that are taken to build strong brands. The management process includes three sub-processes, namely strategic and operative brand management, and brand controlling. The management process is not understood as a one-time process, but rather as a constant feedback-loop where results from brand controlling provide feedback for strategic management (see Figure 12).

As already discussed in chapter A 1 within this work, influencer branding will be studied from the perspective of how brands can cooperate with SMI. Such cooperations can take many forms. SMI can be used by brands by e. g. appearing on special events or in more classical advertising campaigns. SMI can also be useful regarding the development of new products. Very frequently, SMI cooperate with brands by posting brand-related content on their own social media channels. This latter form of cooperation can be seen as a part of operational brand management and – more accurately – a form of brand communication. Within the identity-based brand management model, brand communication can be exerted internally and externally. Since the research aims of this work focus on an external brand objective, namely purchase intention, influencer branding within this work will be studied with a focus on influencer branding as a part of external brand communication.

155 Burmann et al. (2018), p. 63 et seq.
Figure 12: Management Process of Identity-based Brand Management
External brand communication media channels can be classified into three distinct categories. Academic literature distinguishes among paid media, owned media and earned media.\textsuperscript{157}

Paid media constitutes all external communication efforts that are paid for by the brand and appear on media outlets which are not owned by the brand itself. TV-, print-, and radio advertising are typical examples of paid media. Selected digital media outlets can also be classified as paid media, for example advertisements in social networks (sponsored posts), or banner advertisements.\textsuperscript{158} Owned media refer to external communication messages that are distributed via channels owned by the brand itself, e.g. the brands’ homepage, corporate blogs or brand-owned presences on social media platforms such as Facebook.\textsuperscript{159} Earned media describes brand messages on media channels that are neither paid for by the brand, nor owned by the brand. Earned media messages therefore can hardly be controlled by the brand as the messages are created independently by e.g. journalists or SMIs.\textsuperscript{160} Non-digital examples for earned media are news reports in magazines and radio or TV programs, as well as any form of word of mouth.\textsuperscript{161} Earned media in digital communication channels can take the form of product reviews on websites, posts on social media platforms or any other type of e-WOM.\textsuperscript{162}

Earned media messages, that are created independently by SMIs, are important for brands as they appear to be more credible as owned or paid media messages.\textsuperscript{163} Within influencer branding, marketers seek to gain control over the sentiment of earned media messages regarding their brand while simultaneously benefitting from the higher perceived credibility of earned media. If SMIs post about a brand because they have received a monetary compensation or free samples of the brands’ products, the original understanding of earned media is contradicted. Thus, influencer branding can be seen as a form of paid media. However, despite being paid SMIs mostly create their own content and are at least to a certain degree independent in their creativity.\textsuperscript{164} Therefore, influencer branding cannot be categorized clearly as

\textsuperscript{163} Cf. MEFFERT ET AL. (2018); NIELSEN (2015), p. 11.
\textsuperscript{164} Cf. MATHEW (2018).
either paid or earned media, but rather builds a hybrid between these two categories.\footnote{165}{Cf. MEFFERT ET AL. (2018), p. 723.}

By paying SMIs, marketers risk to undermine the credibility and authenticity of their messages.\footnote{166}{Some SMIs and brands tried to avoid this dilemma by not disclosing the commercial nature of the content. This practice has sparked a wide debate especially in regards to consumer protection and ultimately lead to legal obligations to clearly disclose paid partnerships between brands and SMIs in a variety of countries. Guidelines for disclosing promotional content in influencer branding exist for example in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, and Singapore, among other countries. Cf. FTC (2017); AD STANDARDS (2018); AANA (2016); WETTBEWERBSZENTRALE (2017), ASAS (2017).} However, ABIDIN (2016) argues that embedding paid posts in a SMIs social media channels is still appealing for marketers, as it is often “seamlessly woven into the daily narratives of influencers posts” and therefore perceived as earned media.\footnote{167}{Cf. ABIDIN (2016), p. 90 et seq.} This subtle tactic is thought to lead to a lower resistance to the promotional message than traditional advertising, as it is still widely believed to be perceived as more authentic and credible.\footnote{168}{Cf. DE FRIES/GENSLER/LEEFLANG (2012), p. 88 et seq; MEFFERT ET AL. (2018), p. 738; WEINSWIG (2016); CONICK (2018).} Accordingly, results from a study from media agency Nielsen show that consumer’s trust earned media (e. g. consumer opinions posted online) is still higher than trust in varying formats of owned media (e. g. brand’s websites).\footnote{169}{Cf. NIELSEN (2015), p. 4. The study was conducted between in the first quarter of 2015. More than 30,000 consumers aged 15 and onwards from 60 countries worldwide participated in the study. Cf. NIELSEN (2015), p. 21.}

In order to understand the operating modes of influencer branding, different definitions of the term have emerged. According to JAAKONMÄKI/MÜLLER/VOM BROCKE (2017) influencer branding “can be seen as the practice of identifying key decision makers in a target audience and encouraging them to use their influence to spread WOM”\footnote{170}{Cf. JAAKONMÄKI/MÜLLER/VOM BROCKE (2017), p. 1153.} EVANS ET AL. (2017) also focus on the dissemination of eWOM in their definition of influencer branding.\footnote{171}{Cf. EVANS ET AL. (2017), p. 1 et seq.}

While the identification of brand touch points is of high importance in the operational external brand management\footnote{172}{Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 201.}, both definitions do not incorporate brand objectives that are affected with influencer branding. Only DE VEIRMAN/CAUBERGHE/HUDDERS (2017) emphasize that brands use influencer branding to “build up their image among
influencers’ often huge base of followers.” Although the authors consider a psychographic brand outcome, they neglect behavioral brand outcomes that can be positively affected with influencer branding.

While taking the existing definitions of influencer branding into account, a holistic definition of influencer branding is developed to be used within this work. This definition addresses the importance influencer branding has in the overall management process of identity-based branding, as well as psychographic and behavioral outcomes. Simultaneously the identification of suitable SMIs is considered as mandatory requirement for successful influencer branding.

Consequently, based on Jaakonmäki/Müller/vom Brocke (2017), Evans et al. (2017), and de Veirman/Cauberghe/Hudders (2017) the following definition of influencer branding is applied in the context of this work:

Influencer branding describes the process of identifying, incorporating and controlling social media influencers in brand management. This integration supports the achievement of the brand’s psychographic and/or economic objectives.

As oftentimes SMIs are integrated into a brands communication strategy a distinction from classical brand endorsement can be made. While it is possible to include SMIs in traditional advertising formats such as billboards or TV advertisements, the integration of brands on the SMIs own social media channels is one distinct element of influencer branding.

The general impact of endorsers on consumers purchase intentions depends on the consumers purchase motives. These purchase motives closely align to the benefits a brand offers. Brand benefits can either be functional or non-functional. Functional brand benefits refer to the utilitarian and economic benefits of a brand. These benefits refer to the physical and technical characteristics and to the cost-benefit ratio of a brand, respectively. For example, the utilitarian benefit of a car translates to its

174 See also Meffert et al. (2018), p. 739.
176 Functional brand benefits derive mainly from consumers’ knowledge about the brands’ products, services and competences and can be further distinguished into utilitarian and economic benefits, which are based on the brands physical and technical characteristics as well as a brands cost-benefit ratio. Cf. Burmann et al. (2017), p. 58 et seq.
offering for transportation, whereas the cost-benefit ratio refers to e. g. the costs for fuel and maintenance.\textsuperscript{178}

Non-functional brand benefits, however, refer to benefits that are unrelated to functional-benefits and add further emotional value to the brand offering. These brand benefits consist of social brand benefits, which are sought to satisfy consumers’ needs for maintaining or raising their self-esteem or their self-expression. For example, the prestige a given brand offers to consumers.\textsuperscript{179} Non-functional brand benefits also consist of individual brand benefits, which refer to sensual-aesthetic and hedonic brand benefits, which fulfill consumers’ needs for beauty and personal fulfillment as well as cognitive and emotional stimulation.\textsuperscript{180}

Research has shown that brands where the functional benefits are dominant should be endorsed by testimonials who display expertise as a character trait to more effectively impact the purchase decisions of consumers.\textsuperscript{181} Yet the impact of expertise diminishes the more dominant the non-functional brand benefits become.\textsuperscript{182} Brand categories with dominating functional brand benefits are for instance microwaves or washing machines, whereas brand categories with more dominating non-functional brand benefits are clothing or make-up.\textsuperscript{183}

With influencer branding, brands with predominantly non-functional benefits are perceived as the most interesting and important.\textsuperscript{184} This is especially the case for young target groups who grew up with the possibilities the internet has to offer. This generation – which is also referred to as Digital Natives\textsuperscript{185} – displays the most intense use of social media (see Figure 13).\textsuperscript{186} In a study fielded to 1,600 German consumers from the age of 14 in April 2017, especially consumers aged 14 to 29 who reported to be

\textsuperscript{181} Cf. EISEND/LANGNER (2010), p. 530. 
\textsuperscript{183} Cf. EISEND/LANGNER (2010), p. 530; For further examples regarding products with dominating non-functional brand benefits see GOULD (1996), p. 4. 
\textsuperscript{184} Cf. BVDW/INFLURY (2017) p. 20. 
\textsuperscript{185} Cf. PRENSKY (2001), p. 1 et seq. 
\textsuperscript{186} A study fielded to more than 2,017 German consumers in 2017 by German television networks ARD & ZDF showed that the time spent daily on the internet of especially young consumers exceeds the time spent of their older counterparts. Consumers aged 14 to 29 spent more than 274 minutes online per day, whereas 30 to 49 year old consumers were online 183 minutes a day, 50 to 69 year olds 98 minutes a day and consumers over 70 merely spent half-an-hour of their days online. Cf. ARD/ZDF (2017).
Theoretical Foundations and Development of Research Model

consciously aware of SMIs (n = 422), most frequently search for advice in the topics of food, beauty, fashion and sports.\textsuperscript{187}

For these reasons, this work will not focus on SMIs who take the role of experts in their field. SMIs considered in this work are rather equivalent to celebrity endorsers who endorse brands with dominant non-functional benefits and rarely take on the role of experts.

\textbf{Figure 13: Daily internet usage in Germany 2018}
\textsuperscript{Source: ARD/ZDF (2018).}

The following sections focus on the development of the conceptual basis to accomplish the research aims formulated in chapter A. For this reason, relevant relationships in influencer branding are presented. In the next steps, identification theory, self-congruity theory and balance theory are explained in detail and research hypotheses will be formulated accordingly.

\section{2 Effects of Influencer Branding on Brand Objectives}

Within influencer branding and its effects on brand objectives, three entities and their relationships among each other have to be considered. These entities consist of the consumer, the SMI, and the brand which is endorsed by the SMI (see Figure 14). Consumers purchase intentions can be affected by either the relationship between the SMI and the endorsed brand, the relationship between the consumer and

\textsuperscript{187} Cf. BVDW/INFLURY (2017) p. 20.
SMI, or the relationship between the consumer and the endorsed brand, respectively.\textsuperscript{188}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure14.png}
\caption{Relevant relationships between consumers, SMI, and brands in influencer branding}
\end{figure}

Effects of the relationship between SMI and brands on brand objectives can be explained by the fit-construct, which is synonymously referred to as match-up hypothesis in advertising, especially regarding the effects of celebrity endorsers. A fit is described as the subjective evaluation of a relationship between a brand and another image object.\textsuperscript{189} However, in context of advertising research the term fit is also generally used to describe the degree of similarity between the endorser and the advertised brand or product.\textsuperscript{190} Therefore, within the fit-construct, the evaluation of the relationship between these two entities refers to the congruence which is perceived subjectively by the consumer.\textsuperscript{191} The fit-construct has been applied by various authors in the event-marketing and sponsorship literature, where a positive impact of the fit-construct on brand objectives has been empirically proven.\textsuperscript{192}

In the celebrity endorsement literature, the match-up hypothesis has been repeatedly used to study the effects of celebrity endorsers on brand objectives, such as brand attitude or purchase intention.\textsuperscript{193} Research conducted in the 1970’s by FRIEDMAN and FRIEDMAN (1979) as well as by KANUNGO and PANG (1973) found that the effect of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{188} Cf. PRADHAN/DURAI/PANDIAN/SETHI (2016), p. 457.
\textsuperscript{190} Cf. BERGKVIST/ZHOU (2016), p. 650.
\textsuperscript{191} Cf. NITSCHKE (2006), p. 29.
\textsuperscript{192} For further details regarding the importance of the fit-construct in event-marketing and sponsorship literature see NITSCHKE (2006), p. 29 et seq.
\end{footnotesize}
endorsers in advertising on brand outcomes depended on the pairings of models and products.\footnote{194} KANUNGO and PANG (1973) found that the “fittingness” of the endorser for the product determined the success of the advertising campaign. The term “fittingness” was later replaced by the synonymously used term “match-up” in follow-up studies in the field.\footnote{195} According to the match-up hypothesis, the image of the endorser and the brand should be congruent in order to enhance the effectiveness of the advertisement and positively affect brand objectives, respectively.\footnote{196}

Support for the argument that a higher fit between endorser and brand leads to positive brand evaluations has been found by KAHLE and HOMER (1985),\footnote{197} MISRA and BEATTY (1990),\footnote{198} KAMINS (1990),\footnote{199} KAMINS and GUPTA (1994),\footnote{200} KIRMANI and SHIV (1998),\footnote{201} as well as TILL, STANLEY, and PRILUCK (2008),\footnote{202} and CHOI and RIFON (2012).\footnote{203}

The match-up hypothesis also postulates that the extent of the fit between the endorser and the brand should be as high as possible.\footnote{204} However, the effect of a fit or match-up on brand objectives can also be conceptualized as a reverse-shaped U-function, where a maximum effect is yielded when at least a certain amount of incongruencies between two entities exist.\footnote{205} This insight is based on a general model regarding the effects of communication by VON WEIZSÄCKER (1974). According to VON WEIZSÄCKER (1974), information can only then affect predefined communication outcomes if they contain neither too many new elements nor too many already familiar elements for an individual.\footnote{206} If information contains too many already familiar elements, the individual does not engage in a cognitive learning process and thus will not process the presented stimuli,\footnote{207} which would be the case in a situation where a

\footnote{196} Cf. KAHLE (1990), p. 5.
\footnote{197} Cf. KAHLE/HOMER (1985), p. 957 et seq.
\footnote{198} Cf. MISRA/BEATTY (1990), p. 159.
\footnote{199} Cf. KAMINS (1990), p. 4.
\footnote{201} Cf. KIRMANI/SHIV (1998), p. 25.
\footnote{202} Cf. TILL/STANLEY/PRILUCK (2008), p. 179.
\footnote{203} Cf. CHOI/RIFON (2012), p. 639.
\footnote{207} Cf. VON WEIZSÄCKER (1974), p. 82 et seq.
SMI and a brand provide an absolute fit. A very low or a non-existent fit between a SMI and a brand, on the other hand, would lead to a high degree of inconsistencies which in turn can cause reactance of the individual and a refusal to cognitively process the information.\(^{208}\)

Therefore, in the context of influencer branding, a moderate fit between SMI and brand is a minimum requirement for the achievement of brand objectives.\(^{209}\) A moderate fit between a SMI and a brand does provide a certain amount of already familiar elements and does yet not contain an overwhelming number of new elements.

Influencer branding shares the core characteristics of an advertising situation. It focuses on a human endorser – the SMI – presenting a brand to an audience. It is therefore reasonable to assume that at a minimum a moderate fit between the SMI and the endorsed brand, affects brand objectives in the same way as a moderate fit between celebrity endorser and brand does in traditional advertising. Given the fact that the positive effect of a celebrity-brand fit – or match-up – has been empirically proven, it is expected that a fit of SMI and endorsed brand is a prerequisite for yielding positive effects on brand objectives within influencer branding. Therefore, an at least moderate fit between SMI and the endorsed brand is generally implied and will not be part of further examination or empirical testing within this work.

The following chapters therefore focus on the consumer-SMI relationships and consumer-brand relationships and their effects on brand objectives. The consumer-SMI relationship is the central topic of chapter B 3. A hypothesis for effects of different types of SMIs on brand objectives will be derived based on findings from identification theory. Chapter B 4 then investigates the consumer-brand relationship and derives a hypothesis by using Sirgy’s (1982, 1985) self-congruity theory.\(^{210}\) The next chapter then is concerned with the interaction of both the consumer-SMI and the consumer-brand relationship for which the balance theory by Heider (1958)\(^ {211}\) is applied (see Figure 15).

3 The Social Media Influencer-Consumer Relationship: Conceptual Foundations of the Effects of Social Media Influencers

3.1. Conceptual Foundations of Identification Theory

Various researchers have attempted to conceptualize identification in the past. In 1922, FREUD defined identification as the “earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person.” According to further works of FREUD (1940/1989), identification is an imaginative process. FREUD further theorizes that identification is the process that leads to incorporation of parents’ identities and their values into the selves of their children. MEAD (1934) also understands identification as being central to the socialization of children but also for the development of individuals' identity throughout their entire life.

The conceptualization of KELMAN (1958, 1961) also includes the internalization and subsequent adoption of attitudes, beliefs and values. While his understanding is

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212 FREUD (1922), p. 29. This definition also implies one distinct difference to the brand attachment construct, which is defined as "the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self." (PARK ET AL. (2010), p. 2). While the identification construct is concerned with the emotional connections one individual has with another (human) individual, the brand attachment construct refers to emotional bonds individuals form with brands. See also KLEINE-KALMER (2015), p. 80 et seq. and p. 90 et seq.


214 Cf. MEAD (1934), p. 136 et seq.

consistent with the concept of FREUD (1922), the object of identification is not exclusively limited to an individuals’ parents.\textsuperscript{216} KELMAN further distinguishes between two forms of identification: “classical identification” and “reciprocal role identification”.\textsuperscript{217} The first form describes “attempts to be like or actually be the other person”,\textsuperscript{218} while the latter form is defined as an empathetic reaction to an individuals’ “expectations, feelings or needs”.\textsuperscript{219}

Albeit COHEN’s (2001) understanding is based on the earlier works of KELMAN (1961), his definition goes further on what has been previously postulated. COHEN defines identification with a character as “… an audience member [imagining] him- or herself being that character and [replacing] his or her identity and role as audience member with the identity and role of the character (…)”.\textsuperscript{220}

Immanent to this definition is the notion that audience members forget their own identities in order to become the object of identification during media consumption.\textsuperscript{221} According to COHEN’s interpretation identification consists of a loss of self-awareness and the merging of one’s self with that of the character.\textsuperscript{222} This definition of identification is certainly based on KELMAN’s definition of “classical identification”, but it ignores the possibility that audience members may identify with a character without completely forgetting their own identities. This option, however, has been considered by KELMAN’s “reciprocal role identification” in which audience members understand their role as a spectator.\textsuperscript{223} A further restriction of COHEN’s definition of identification lies in its sole applicability to fictional characters.\textsuperscript{224} Additionally, COHEN’s understanding of identification as a temporarily phenomenon and fleeting process that only occurs during media consumption\textsuperscript{225} is controversial: ROSENGREN ET AL. already noted in 1976 that the identification process is not as volatile as COHEN postulates but rather extends beyond the moment of media consumption.\textsuperscript{226}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{216} Cf. BROWN (2015), p. 264.
\bibitem{217} Cf. KELMAN (1961), p. 63 et seq.
\bibitem{218} KELMAN (1961), p. 63.
\bibitem{219} KELMAN (1961), p. 64.
\bibitem{220} COHEN (2001), p. 250.
\bibitem{221} Cf. COHEN (2001), p. 247.
\bibitem{222} Cf. COHEN (2001), p. 251.
\bibitem{223} Cf. KELMAN (1961), p. 64.
\bibitem{224} Cf. COHEN (2001), p. 250.
\bibitem{225} Cf. COHEN (2001), p. 249.
\bibitem{226} Cf. ROSENGREN ET AL. (1976), p. 349.
\end{thebibliography}
Not limiting his definition to fictional characters, BURKE (1969) stated that “identification occurs when one individual shares the interests of another individual or believes that he or she shares the interests of another”\textsuperscript{227}, thus focusing somewhat stronger on the sharing of perspective. Building on both the thinking of KELMAN (1961) and BURKE (1969), LIVINGSTONE (1998) and IGARTUA (2010) understand identification as empathy for a media persona and also as taking the other person’s perspective.\textsuperscript{228} This view is also shared by HOFFNER (1996).\textsuperscript{229}

FRASER and BROWN (2002), on the other hand, define identification as “the process of social influence by which individuals adopt the values and behaviors of media personae (...)”\textsuperscript{230}, thus referencing BANDURA’s (1977, 1986) social learning theory\textsuperscript{231}, while also building on FREUD (1922) and KELMAN (1961).\textsuperscript{232}

According to KELMAN (1961), identification occurs when individuals judge their levels of similarity with the object of identification.\textsuperscript{233} This understanding can be traced back to an earlier definition by BURKE (1925), for whom identification is the “margin of overlap” between two individuals.\textsuperscript{234} Therefore, KOSENKO, BINDER and HURLEY (2016) note that identification “operates according to the homophily principle”.\textsuperscript{235}

Therefore, identification that is based on homophily and similarity judgments\textsuperscript{236} can also be referred to as similarity identification.\textsuperscript{237} A definition of similarity identification mainly builds up on the existing conceptualisations by the aforementioned authors. However, the understanding of identification of COHEN (2001) is not applied within this work. This is largely due to COHEN’s concentration of fictional characters in literature, which does not comply to the context of this work (non-fictional characters in social media). Instead a definition of similarity identification for this work builds on the

\textsuperscript{229} Cf. HOFFNER (1996), p. 390 et seq.
\textsuperscript{231} According to BANDURA (1977, 1986), identification can lead to the adjustment of an individual’s behaviors to match those of the object of identification and thus, imitation of the model, in order for an individual to learn how to navigate of fulfill specific social situations or tasks. Cf. BANDURA (1977); BANDURA (1986); HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005), p. 326; COHEN (2001), p. 260.
\textsuperscript{233} Cf. KELMAN (1961), p. 65.
\textsuperscript{234} BURKE (1925), p. 168.
\textsuperscript{235} KOSENKO/BINDER/HURLEY (2016), p. 319.
\textsuperscript{236} Further information on the nature of homophily and similarity are outlined in Chapter B 3.4.
\textsuperscript{237} Cf. VON FEILITZEN/LINNÉ (1975), p. 53.
thinking of KELMAN (1961), whose work is best known in mass communication and advertising research,\textsuperscript{238} BURKE (1969), and BANDURA (1977) and incorporates the main aspects of internalization of attitudes, behaviors, and values as well as the sharing of perspective, that arises from prior similarity judgments between an individual and the object of identification. These aspects are already united in the definition of identification from FRASER and BROWN (2002). Still, in order to gain an understanding of similarity identification within this work, their definition needs to be complemented by the principle of homophily which has been considered before by BURKE (1925) and also by KOSENKO, BINDER and HURLEY (2016).

Therefore, in the context of this work, similarity identification is defined as:

\textit{the process of social influence by which an individual internalizes and subsequently adopts the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the object of identification as a consequence of an individual’s similarity judgments between him- or herself and the object of identification.}\textsuperscript{239}

Since this work is considered with influencer branding and the central role of SMIs, the objects of identification within this work are considered to be SMIs.

However, as VON FEILITZEN and LINNÉ (1975) noted, to base identification solely on the degree of homophily between an individual and the object of identification would be too short-sighted, as it would overlook the concept of wishful identification.\textsuperscript{240} They describe wishful identification as “based on the desire to be (or be like) the ‘hero’ or ‘heroine’”.\textsuperscript{241}

The distinction between similarity identification and wishful identification has also been made by LIEBES and KATZ (1990), who distinguished between feelings of being like and wanting to be like as reactions towards media characters,\textsuperscript{242} as well as by HOFFNER and BUCHANAN (2005).\textsuperscript{243}

GILES (2002) defines wishful identification as a “desire to emulate the figure with which we identify, either in general terms (e. g., as a role model for future action) or

\textsuperscript{238} Cf. BASIL (1996), p. 2.
\textsuperscript{240} Cf. VON FEILITZEN/LINNÉ (1975), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{241} VON FEILITZEN/LINNÉ (1975), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{242} Cf. LIEBES/KATZ (1990), p. 55 et seq.
\textsuperscript{243} Cf. HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005), p. 327.
in specific terms (e. g., imitating a particular behaviour).” A similar definition is offered by COHEN and PERSE (2003).

A more detailed definition that not only conceptualizes wishful identification as a mere hope but rather as an identification process is presented by HOFFNER and BUCHANAN (2005), who understand wishful identification as “a psychological process through which an individual desires or attempts to become like another person.”

However, as wishful identification is a component of identification, a useful definition of the term should also incorporate the groundwork of FREUD (1922) and KELMAN (1961) while additionally acknowledging the desire to become like the object of identification as a motivating force for wishful identification as has been noted by the aforementioned authors.

Hence, within this work wishful identification is defined as:

the process of social influence by which an individual internalizes and subsequently adopts the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the object of identification as a consequence of an individual’s desire to be like or become like the object of identification.

Both similarity and wishful identification affect consumers’ attitudes and behavior. The next section deals with the outcomes of similarity and wishful identification.

### 3.2. Consequences of Wishful and Similarity Identification

The importance of wishful identification has been extensively researched regarding the effects of celebrities on the behavioral intentions and behaviour of their audiences.

Celebrities are, for instance, effective in promoting certain health-related behaviors. In their study, BROWN and BASIL (1995) showed that respondents, who reported basketball player Earvin “Magic” Johnson to be their personal role-model and thus engaged in wishful identification with him, to be more likely to be personally concerned

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with AIDS. They also showed higher intentions to reduce risky sexual behaviors.\(^{248}\) Shortly before conducting the study, Johnson, who was famous for his achievements for the LA Laker’s basketball team at the time, revealed his HIV infection to the public and subsequently announced that he would engage in promoting HIV and AIDS prevention methods.\(^{249}\) BROWN and BASIL (1996) found that for those who knew about Johnson’s HIV infection and his promotion of safe sex behaviour but did not report wishful identification with Johnson, no measurable impact was determined.\(^{250}\) They thus concluded that Johnson’s position as a role model leads to the effectiveness of his messages and more specifically the influence on the behavioral intentions of respondents.\(^{251}\)

Similar results were yielded in a study by KOSENKO, BINDER, and HURLEY (2016). The authors found a significant effect of wishful identification with actress Angelina Jolie and the intention to undergo genetic testing to prevent breast and ovarian cancer. Jolie publicly announced in May 2013 that she carried a gene that eventually causes breast and ovarian cancer and that she had undergone preventive surgery to avoid developing this specific kind of cancer.\(^{252}\)

In another study regarding baseball player Marc McGwire, who received extensive media attention in 1998 for breaking the home-run record existing at the time, BROWN, BASIL, and BOCARNEA (2003) examined the impact wishful identification had on the perception of McGwire’s engagement to prevent child abuse, but also regarding his outspoken confession of taking a muscle-building dietary supplement called Androstenedione.\(^{253}\) They found that wishful identification with McGwire had a significant impact on the concern and the need to openly oppose child abuse. The desire to

\(^{248}\) Cf. BROWN/BASIL (1995), p. 360. The study was conducted in 1991 ten days after Johnson’s announcement – which took place on November 14th – via distributed questionnaires in 17 communication classes. The respondents were college students aged 17 to 50 (median age 22 years) with 58 % of them being female. Cf. BROWN/BASIL (1995), p. 355 et seq.


\(^{252}\) Cf. KOSENKO/BINDER/HURLEY (2016), p. 318. The authors conducted their study online by posting their questionnaire to different social networking sites. 356 respondents aged 18 to 71 participated in the study. Due to the nature of the topic, female respondents were overrepresented (280 participants were female). Cf. KOSENKO/BINDER/HURLEY (2016), p. 321.

be like McGwire also positively influenced the knowledge about the muscle-building supplement as well as the intention to try Androstenedione.\textsuperscript{254}

Wishful identification with stars is also associated with the acceptance of cosmetic surgery, as well as the intention to undergo cosmetic surgery, as \textsc{Wen} (2017) finds in a study with college students.\textsuperscript{255} This type of identification also leads to higher body surveillance\textsuperscript{256} and body shame\textsuperscript{257} as \textsc{Greenwood} (2009) shows in her study with female students. Interestingly, no such effects were found for similar identification.\textsuperscript{258}

Another study by \textsc{Click}, \textsc{Lee}, and \textsc{Holladay} (2013) with fans of singer Lady Gaga indicate that wishful identification with admired stars can lead to the subsequent adoption of values and attitudes. In this specific case, fans reported to internalize values such as acceptance, generosity, and tolerance as a result of their idealization of Lady Gaga.\textsuperscript{259} A similar behavioral pattern has been observed by \textsc{Fraser} and \textsc{Brown} (2002), who interviewed 35 Elvis Presley fans, including 24 Elvis impersonators. Interviewees reported to incorporate values such as generosity, respect, and helpfulness into their behavior in order to emulate Elvis.\textsuperscript{260} They conclude that wishful identification is a process “by which individuals reconstruct their own attitudes, values, or behaviors in response to the images of people they admire (...)”.\textsuperscript{261}

Wishful identification was also found to be positively related to materialism. \textsc{Chan} and \textsc{Prendergast} (2008) could show that respondents who exhibited higher tendencies to engage in wishful identification with stars, more strongly believed that material

\textsuperscript{254} Cf. \textsc{Brown/Basil/Bocarnea} (2003), p. 52. 356 respondents were recruited for the study via an online questionnaire (192 participants) and via a sample of 164 students from four universities during a three-week period after McGwire broke the home-run record. Respondents aged from 18 to 60 years, with the majority (58%) aged 18 to 40 years. 55% of respondents were male.

\textsuperscript{255} 555 college students aged between 20 and 35 years, with 58% being female, participated in the study. Cf. \textsc{Wen} (2017), p. 1240 et seq.

\textsuperscript{256} Body surveillance is “the tendency to chronically monitor one’s appearance”. \textsc{Greenwood} (2009), p. 98.

\textsuperscript{257} Body shame is defined as „the tendency to feel a global sense of failure when one’s body does not conform to an idealized standard.” \textsc{Greenwood} (2009), p. 98.

\textsuperscript{258} 143 female students (mean age 19 years) participated in the study, which was conducted online. The sample consisted mainly of undergraduate students. Cf. \textsc{Greenwood} (2009), p. 99.

\textsuperscript{259} Cf. \textsc{Click/Lee/Holladay} (2013), p. 362 et seq. For their study, the authors conducted interviews with 45 participants who self-identified as “Little Monsters”, a high-invested group of fans of Lady Gaga. The interviews were conducted either personal, or via telephone or messaging software such as Skype from January until March 2012. Participants were between 14 and 53 years old. Cf. \textsc{Click/Lee/Holladay} (2013), p. 367.

\textsuperscript{260} Cf. \textsc{Fraser/Brown} (2002), p. 199.

\textsuperscript{261} \textsc{Fraser/Brown} (2002), p. 189.
possessions are a sign of success in life and lead to happiness.\textsuperscript{262} In a more marketing-related study, CHOI and RIFON (2012) found that consumers whose ideal self-image\textsuperscript{263} is more closely aligned to the image of a star in an advertisement, are more likely to perceive the advertisement positively and report greater purchase intentions.\textsuperscript{264}

Additionally, the desire to be like or become the object of identification was found to be the most common reaction towards media figures in a study conducted by ADAMS-PRICE and GREENE (1990).\textsuperscript{265}

Possibly acknowledging the importance of wishful identification with stars, Gatorade, a manufacturer of sports nutrition and sports drinks, aired a TV advertisement in 1991 that featured famous basketball player Michael Jordan. The commercial was underscored with a jingle that features lyrics such as “Sometimes I dream that he is me, you’ve got to see that’s how I dream to be (...) if I could be like Mike (...).”\textsuperscript{266} The advertisement shows alternating sequences of Jordan during basketball games, children imitating Jordan during their own plays, and Jordan drinking Gatorade repeatedly (see Figure 16).

\textsuperscript{262} Cf. CHAN/PRENDERGAST (2008), p. 815; RICHINS/DAWSON (1992), p. 304 et seq. The study was conducted from July until August 2005 in Hong Kong, China. In total, 631 questionnaires were collected in various shopping areas. Respondents were between 15 and 24 years old, with 78% being students. The remainder of respondents were either working (18%) or unemployed (4%). Cf. CHAN/PRENDERGAST (2008), p. 809.

\textsuperscript{263} The ideal self-image, or self-concept, has been established in academic literature by SIRGY (1982, 1985). It is closely aligned to the concept of wishful identification and will further be discussed in chapter B 4.

\textsuperscript{264} Cf. CHOI/RIFON (2012), p. 645. The authors recruited 212 undergraduate students for their study. 78 male and 134 female students participated in the study. Participants had to evaluate advertisements either showing Julia Roberts or Drew Barrymore. Those who did not recognize the endorser correctly were excluded from the sample. Cf. CHOI/RIFON (2012), p. 643.

\textsuperscript{265} Cf. ADAMS-PRICE/GREENE (1990), p. 192. For further details regarding the design of the study, see chapter B 2.

\textsuperscript{266} YOUTUBE/CABRALES (2015).
Figure 16: Gatorade’s TV advertisement featuring Michael Jordan

The advertisement proved to be so successful that Gatorade re-issued it 25 years later and used it again in cooperation with Nike to promote basketball shoes in colors that reference the various Gatorade flavours, as well as other sports clothing and accessories.\textsuperscript{267}

Based on the presented findings, wishful identification with endorsers can be seen as an important factor in influencing consumer behavior. It can therefore be assumed that wishful identification also positively affects brand objectives, i.e. purchase intentions and purchase behaviors of consumers.

Academic research is not only concerned with the effects of wishful identification, but also with the impact similar identification has on consumer behavior. In 1974, \textsc{Woodside} and \textsc{Davenport}, found that consumers showed a higher tendency to buy a product if it was presented to them by an employee similar to them.\textsuperscript{268} In their field experiment, the authors focused on the effects of perceived similarity, rather than objective similarity which stems from a similarity in age, gender, or looks.\textsuperscript{269} Similarity was manipulated by the salesperson presenting an overall attitude similar to those of

\textsuperscript{267} Cf. \textsc{Stearns} (2017); \textsc{Lund} (2015); \textsc{Nudd} (2015).

\textsuperscript{268} Cf. \textsc{Woodside/Davenport} (1974), p. 201.

\textsuperscript{269} See chapter B 3.4 for further information on the concept of similarity.
the customers, whereas in the dissimilarity condition, the salesperson presented herself as different regarding her attitudes.\textsuperscript{270}

MOYER-GUSÉ, CHUNG, and JAIN (2011) found that similar identification based on a similarity in background and values with fictional characters from the TV show “Sex and the City” facilitated the motivation of respondents to have discussions about their sexual behaviors with their respective partners, if such a behavior was modeled by the character with whom respondents identified, based on perceived similarity in values, attitudes, and regarding previous experiences. After viewing a 20-minute long episode of the TV show, respondents who reported similarity identification with the main character exhibited similar behavioral patterns presented by the main character in the episode.\textsuperscript{271}

Furthermore, in a longitudinal research design spanning over 15 years, HUESMANN ET AL. (2003) could show that similar identification with aggressive TV characters impacts aggressive behavior of young adults later in life.\textsuperscript{272}

The results of the presented studies and examples show that consumers’ behavioral intentions and subsequently consumer behavior are affected by both wishful and similarity identification and thus support the theoretical thinking by various authors outlined in chapter B 3.1. However, in order to determine which type of identification is a better predictor of consumer behavior and behavioral intentions, one has to take the self-esteem of consumers into consideration. The importance of self-esteem and its implications for the effects of wishful and similar identification are outlined in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{270} Cf. The authors conducted a field experiment with 60 participants. Participants were consumers, who have bought music tapes in a store and were thus contacted by a salesperson to make an additional purchase of a special cleaning kit for cassette players. In the similar condition, the salesperson made also known that she owns the cleaning kit herself, whereas in the dissimilar condition, the salesperson stated to not own the cleaning kit. Cf. WOODSIDE/DAVENPORT (1974), p. 199 et seq.

\textsuperscript{271} Cf. MOYER-GUSÉ/CHUNG/JAIN (2011), p. 397 et seq. 243 undergraduate students aged 18 to 42 years (mean age 20 years) participated in the study. 62% were female. Respondents were shown 20-minute-long episodes of the TV show “Sex and the City”. To test whether participants would imitate the modeled behavior due to similar identification with the main character, the first group saw an episode during which the main characters discuss their sexual history and testing for sexually transmitted infections with multiple characters in the story. The second group saw an episode with a similar plotline that also involved sexually transmitted infections, albeit without characters discussing this topic in any way. The control group was shown an episode that did not involve the topic of sexual health. Cf. MOYER-GUSÉ/CHUNG/JAIN (2011), p. 393.

\textsuperscript{272} Cf. HUESMANN ET AL. (2003), p. 39. The data were collected during two times of respondents lives. At first, 557 first-, second-, third-, and fourth-graders, respectively, were interviewed for the study in 1977 and 1978. 15 years later, 450 of the 557 original respondents, who then were in their early 20’s, completed a follow-up questionnaire and 329 respondents were also re-interviewed.
3.3. Importance of Self-Esteem for Identification Processes

In his Social Comparison Theory, Festinger (1954) posited that “there exists, in the human organism, a drive to evaluate his opinions and abilities.” This drive for evaluation and comparison serves two functions. First, individuals determine whether they are “correct” and “normal”. Second, from such comparisons they conclude their relative standing in relation to others, i.e. whether they are more or less intelligent, or wealthy than the object of comparison.

Such comparisons are possible for any visible criteria and are mostly directed upwards, to individuals who are better off regarding the criterion for comparison. Upward comparisons can either provide motivation or lead to negative self-feelings of the individual. Negative self-feelings are then sought to eliminate. Both motivation and negative self-feelings can result in increased efforts to narrow the gap between the individual and the comparison target.

As material possessions are of particular importance to the self, judgments and comparisons are often made based on consumptions. Consumption lifestyles are therefore one of the most important comparison domains. Ogden and Venkat (2001) found upward comparisons to be related with higher consumption intentions and a greater desire for material possessions.

For individuals, in an effort to reduce the discrepancy between them and the object of comparison, purchasing certain goods is a common way of dealing with the either motivating or negative feelings resulting from upward comparisons.

The desire of individuals to approximate objects of upward-comparisons is also recognized by Festinger (1954) as a “unidirectional drive upward” which describes a

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280 Cf. Ogden/Venkct (2001), p. 80 et seq. For their study, Ogden and Venkat (2001) conducted an experiment where respondents were asked to read a text about a high-school reunion. Manipulations included the direction of comparison (i.e. the target of comparison was described as either having a wealthy or poorer lifestyle). 285 students participated in the study, their average age was 20 years. 61 per cent of respondents were male. Ogden/Venkat (2001), p. 75 et seq.
motivation for continuous improvement.\textsuperscript{283} Thus, in addition to the basic desire of self-evaluation, comparisons to others also serve self-enhancement and self-improvement motives.\textsuperscript{284} Self-enhancement describes attempts of individuals to maintain positive views about themselves to either protect or enhance their selves, whereas self-improvement motives are characterized by attempts to learn to improve and progress regarding a particular criterion motivated by the superior object of comparison.\textsuperscript{285}

Empirical evidence for the existence of Festinger's (1954) postulated drive upwards has been found by Thornton and Arrowood (1966)\textsuperscript{286} and Wheeler (1966).\textsuperscript{287} The existence of the unidirectional drive upwards and an overall tendency for self-enhancement is closely aligned with wishful identification which leads to the adoption of attitudes and behaviors of the object of identification based on the desire to become like the aspired individual\textsuperscript{288} and thus also implies an underlying motivation of self-enhancement or self-improvement.\textsuperscript{289} This in turn, would mean that wishful identification is an overall more reliable predictor of consumer behavior and behavioral intentions.

However, it is also possible that individuals prevent motivational or negative feelings from upward comparisons because the criterion of comparison is not important for their self-worth.\textsuperscript{290} In this case, individuals either do not engage in upward comparisons or outright reject them\textsuperscript{291} and therefore do not change their behavior, i. e. do not rise their levels of consumption.\textsuperscript{292}

\textsuperscript{286} In an experimental setting with 106 male students, Thornton and Arrowood found that students more frequently engaged in upward comparisons and thus expressed self-enhancement motives. Cf. Thornton/Arrowood (1966), p. 40 et seq. and 46.
\textsuperscript{287} 127 male students were included in the study, which was an empirical setting in which participants were given a fake personality test. A greater frequency of upward comparison was observed, especially under the experimental condition that facilitated self-enhancement. Cf. Wheeler (1966), p. 28 et seq.
\textsuperscript{289} Cf. Chan/Prendergast (2008), p. 805.
Whether individuals tend to compare themselves to superior others or not largely depends on their levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the opinion and respect individuals have for themselves and the evaluation of an individual’s own value.

Mussweiler, Gabriel, and Bodenhausen (2000), for instance, could confirm that individuals with high self-esteem, after performing worse than a comparable other, withdraw from upward comparisons by strategically highlighting other aspects of their identity. This effect was consistent in three studies. Additionally, Chae (2017) found that individuals with low self-esteem constantly evaluate themselves and more frequently engage in upward comparison.

These results are also consistent with research from Derrick, Gabriel, and Tippin (2008). They found that individuals with low self-esteem expressed greater liking for stars who represent ideal versions of individuals’ selves, as opposed to individuals with high self-esteem, who expressed greater liking for stars whom they perceive as similar to themselves.

The results show that the probability to engage in upward comparisons depends on the level of self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem are less likely to compare themselves to superior others than individuals with low self-esteem. It is therefore reasonable to assume that lower levels of self-esteem foster the tendency to engage in wishful identification, as individuals then express a stronger self-enhancement motive. Individuals with high self-esteem, however, might express a more positive view

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295 Cf. Mussweiler/Gabriel/Bodenhausen (2000), p. 398. In all studies, participants were asked to perform either certain social perception or estimation tasks. After performing the tasks, they learned that other participants outperformed them. In the first study, 46 female students participated. The second study was conducted with 31 female students and the third study with 84 female students. All studies were conducted as laboratory experiments. Cf. Mussweiler/Gabriel/Bodenhausen (2000), p. 400 et seq.
296 Cf. Chae (2017), p. 12. The study was a two-wave longitudinal panel survey, conducted by an online survey company located on South Korea. Online questionnaires were send out in March 2016. In the first wave, 1,064 respondents participated, the second wave consisted of 782 participants. Respondents were women aged between 20 and 39 (mean age 29).
297 Cf. Derrick/Gabriel/Tippin (2008), p. 267. 100 (53 male and 47 female) students with an average age of 19 years participated in the study. All participants stated that they there was a star that they admired, respected, and were interested in during a mass testing session earlier in the semester. During the study, respondents were asked to identify and describe their favorite star. The students were then asked to describe how they perceived themselves (actual self) and how they would like to be (ideal self) before evaluating the similarity between the star and their actual and ideal selves. Cf. Derrick/Gabriel/Tippin (2008), p. 265.
about themselves and might report higher self-confidence\textsuperscript{298} and therefore engage in similarity identification in order to confirm their positive self-evaluations.

Consequently, it is assumed that the tendency to engage in wishful or similarity identification is moderated by self-esteem. It is therefore assumed that consumers with low self-esteem exhibit a higher tendency to report wishful identification than similarity identification and consumers with high self-esteem exhibit a higher tendency to report similarity identification than wishful identification.

In the following chapter, findings from the previous chapters B 3.1, B 3.2 and B 3.3 are applied to the context of influencer branding in order to conceptually understand how different types of SMI (analog vs. online fame-origin) impact consumer’s purchase intentions.

\textbf{3.4. Conceptual Foundations of Social Media Influencers with Analog and Online Fame-Origin}

Although the term "celebrity" is often used in a generic way to describe any form of fame attributed to an individual,\textsuperscript{299} famous individuals can still be discriminated from another. Albeit used somewhat interchangeably, the concepts of "stardom" and "celebrity" are still suitable to describe different characteristics of famous individuals.

The concept of stardom relates to individuals who gained fame through special achievements,\textsuperscript{300} for instance actors who have played roles in critically acclaimed or high grossing movies, athletes who have won championships or competed in important tournaments, or musicians who have ranked high in the charts. However, to be considered a star, a continuity in performance and appreciation by the audience is necessary.\textsuperscript{301} The term star is attributed to outstanding personalities. Despite living in the same world as “ordinary” individuals, stars are expected to not live by the mundane standards everyone else does. Their lifestyles are thought of as glamorous as their performances are represented in the media.\textsuperscript{302} Stardom is a desirable status for

\textsuperscript{298} Cf. \textsc{Greenwood} (2009), p. 102.
\textsuperscript{299} Cf. \textsc{Seifert} (2013), p. 30.
\textsuperscript{300} Cf. \textsc{Faulstich et al.} (1997), p. 12 et seq.
\textsuperscript{301} Cf. \textsc{Faulstich et al.} (1997), p. 12 et seq.
\textsuperscript{302} Cf. \textsc{Seifert} (2013), p. 29; \textsc{Ellis} (1982), p. 91 et seq.; \textsc{Alexander} (2010), p. 330.
individuals and due to their exceptional nature stars are the targets of idealizations of their audience.\textsuperscript{303}

In addition to being an umbrella term, the term celebrity is also used to describe a less exclusive form of fame, which differs profoundly from the heroic status a star has. BOORSTIN (1992) described celebrities somewhat cynically as “well-known for their well-knownness”\textsuperscript{304} and argued that celebrities are not famous because of their achievements but because they know how to monetarise their personalities through the media.\textsuperscript{305} ROJEK (2001) notes that the fame of celebrities is constituted entirely by the impact an individual has in the public consciousness.\textsuperscript{306} Individuals gain a celebrity status as a consequence of a specific representation in the media. Outstanding achievements, which are a prerequisite for the stardom concept are not necessary to become a celebrity. Consequently, the focus of the audience’s interest lies solely on the personality and private lifestyle of the celebrity him- or herself;\textsuperscript{307} as GERAGHTY (2000) phrased it: “The term celebrity indicates someone (…) who is famous for having a lifestyle.”\textsuperscript{308} In contrast to the concept of a star, a celebrity is more trivial and thus more attainable for the audience.\textsuperscript{309}

In summary, stars and celebrities can be distinguished by their achievements in their given fields.\textsuperscript{310} This criterion references to the concept of celebrity performance, which is already known in academic literature.\textsuperscript{311} A star status requires an enduring performance whereas a celebrity is only famous due to his or her notorious representation in the media and their mediated visibility in the mass media.\textsuperscript{312}

The mechanics of how celebrities rise to fame are similar of those SMIs with online fame-origin. SMIs who became famous via social media did not gain their status because of outstanding achievements, like stars did. They are, as CHAE (2017) notes, “(…) unknown actresses, models, fitness trainers, friends of celebrities, and wealthy

\textsuperscript{304} BOORSTIN (1992), p. 57.
\textsuperscript{305} Cf. BOORSTIN (1992), p. 57 et seq.
\textsuperscript{306} Cf. ROJEK (2001), p. 10.
\textsuperscript{307} Cf. SEIFERT (2013), p. 31.
\textsuperscript{309} Cf. SEIFERT (2013), p. 32.
\textsuperscript{310} Cf. ROJEK (2001), p. 18.
\textsuperscript{311} Cf. AMOS/HOLMES/STRUTTON (2008), p. 213.
\textsuperscript{312} Cf. SEIFERT (2013), p. 31.
people who love luxury brands [or] pretty high school girls\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{313} and attracted their audience, i. e. followers, because they displayed their lifestyles on social media, equivalent to the aforementioned notion of GERAGHTY (2000).

Zoe Sugg, for example, gained over 12 million followers on YouTube\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{314} and nearly 11 million followers on Instagram\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{315} by displaying daily outfits, meals and recent purchases – often recording her videos in her bedroom (see Figure 17). Suggs rise to fame cannot be explained by extraordinary achievements she made and which would qualify her to be a star. Before she started posting videos on YouTube she worked as an apprentice for an interior design firm.\textsuperscript{316} Her fame lies solely in the display of her personality and lifestyle.

\textsuperscript{314} Cf. YOUTUBE/SUGG (2018).
\textsuperscript{315} Cf. INSTAGRAM/SUGG (2018a).
\textsuperscript{316} Cf. FORD (2014).
This is a feature that almost all other SMIIs with online fame-origin share. Among them are Gabi Gregg, who accumulated more than 600,000 followers on Instagram by displaying her outfit choices, despite not meeting the required body measures of an actual model. Another example is Amber Fillerup, who gained her 1.3 million

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followers on Instagram by portraying her life as a mother of two children\textsuperscript{318} (see Figure 18).

![Figure 18: Selected Instagram posts of Gabi Gregg and Amber Fillerup](image)

Source: Instagram/Fillerup (2018b); Instagram/Gregg (2018b)

SMIs with analog fame-origin, on the other hand, first and foremost became famous due to their achievements in the analog world. In their case, social media is yet another channel to cultivate their fame. Models like Gigi Hadid, singers like Rihanna and actors like Emma Watson all have profiles on various social media outlets,\textsuperscript{319} but they became famous because of walking designers’ runways and their appearances on the cover of influential fashion magazines (Hadid), by selling millions of records (Rihanna) and by appearing in the Harry Potter movie franchise (Watson).\textsuperscript{320}

To summarize, SMIs with analog fame-origin use social media as an additional channel to cultivate their fame, whereas for SMIs with online fame-origin social media is mandatory to even gain fame and to cultivate their celebrity status. SMIs with online fame-origin would not be famous if social media did not exist. Consequently,

\textsuperscript{318} See for reference Instagram/Fillerup (2018a).

\textsuperscript{319} See for exemplary reference: Instagram/Hadid (2018); Instagram/Rihanna (2018); Instagram/Watson (2018).

\textsuperscript{320} Cf. Elle (2017); Duboff (2016); Rocnation (2017); IMDb (2017).
due to their distinct characteristics, it is supposed that SMIs with analog fame-origin and SMIs with online fame-origin lead to different consumer evaluations.

Because of the extraordinary achievements and status of SMIs with analog fame-origin, consumers who follow their activities on social media engage in wishful identification, which stems from the wish to be like the star him- or herself. SMIs with online fame-origin, however, evoke a greater sense of similarity, as their backgrounds and lifestyles are often similar to those of their followers. This similarity leads to similarity identification.

SMIs with analog fame-origin are stars who elicit fandom, which roots in the perception of an individual being “larger than life” due to their possession of a rare skill or talent that is highly valued by their audience. Positive attitudes toward the star figure result from the admiration of their achievements. They function as role models and idols consumers look up to and get inspired by. This reaction to stars is also known as worship in academic literature.

Worship is described as an intense form of fandom, whereby consumers idolize the star and ascribe them a god-like status. MALTBY et al. (2005) define worship as a behaviour whereby individuals become “obsessed” with stars. Although it is argued that the religious association to worship might be an exaggeration, BROWN (2015) notes that “(...) worship begins when a persona becomes the primary focus of a (...) consumer’s time and attention (...).”

The understanding of worship as an obsession with a star indicates that worship can take a pathological level, which is abnormal and eventually harmful to the consumer. However, worship can also include emotions which are not pathological but still

321 See chapter B 3.1 for further information.
325 Cf. MALTBY/HOURAN/MCCUTCHEON (2003); MALTBY et al. (2005); NORTH et al. (2007); SHERIDAN et al. (2007); SWAMI et al. (2011); BROWN (2015), p. 265.
328 Cf. MALTBY et al. (2005), p. 309.
331 Cf. MALTBY et al. (2005), p. 2 et seq.
felt intensively by the consumer. Such emotions can translate to behaviors such as talking with friends about the star one admires or closely follow details of the stars’ life through media exposure, respectively. Only a small percentage of consumers are affected by pathological intensities of worship, whereas worship that is non-pathological is not uncommon among consumers: MALTBY/HOURAN/MCCUTCHEON (2003), for example, conducted two studies in Great Britain in 2003. The first sample consisted of 317 student participants aged 18 to 27 years and the second sample consisted of 290 participants from 22 to 60 years. About one-third of the combined sample expressed an intense level of worship.

In a similar vein, BOON and LOMORE (2001) reported in their study with 213 Canadian students (mean age 23 years) that 90 per cent of the respondents had admired a star at some point in their lives, and 70 per cent of respondents stated that they were admiring a star at the time the study was conducted.

Worship and admiration is directed at stars who are seen as perfect and flawless and are thus idealized. Therefore, stars become an object of emulation for consumers and create a desire for consumers to be like them. Through numerous interviews, CAUGHEY (1978, 1984, 1985, 1994) found that stars serve as idealized versions of the consumers’ self-images. Additionally, in a study with 79 students aged 10 to 19 years conducted in 1990, GREENE and ADAMS-PRICE found that 30 per cent of the sample expressed the desire to be like the star they worshipped. Additionally, a study conducted online in October 2015 in Germany with more than 700 participants aged 13 to 19, showed that participants admired SMIs with analog fame-origin more than their counterparts with online fame-origin.

To summarize, through worship a star becomes a role model for striving and creates the wish to be like him/her. This desire to be like a certain star is referred to as

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335 Cf. MALTBY/HOURAN/MCCUTCHEON (2003), p. 27.
339 Cf. CAUGHEY (1978); CAUGHEY (1984); CAUGHEY (1985); CAUGHEY (1994).
wishful identification.\textsuperscript{343} This desire translates into attempts to become like the figure\textsuperscript{344} with consumers making changes in their appearance, attitudes and other characteristics in order to become like the star they admire.\textsuperscript{345}

Due to their outstanding achievements which primarily made them famous, SMIs with analog fame-origin have the potential to evoke feelings of admiration and worship of their followers. This, in turn, creates the desire of followers to become like the SMIs with analog fame-origin, which is referred to as wishful identification. Thus, it can be argued that consumers will report stronger wishful identification with SMIs with analog fame-origin than with social media influencers with online fame-origin. SMIs with online fame-origin present a lifestyle on social media that often is similar to those of their followers.\textsuperscript{346} \textsc{Rogers} and \textsc{Bhowmik} (1970) understand similarity as fundamental for communication: “exchange of messages most frequently occurs between a source and a receiver who are alike, similar and homophilous.”\textsuperscript{347} \textsc{Hoffner} and \textsc{Cantor} (1991) argue that “…viewers identify with characters who are similar to themselves (…)”.\textsuperscript{348} The understanding that homophily would increase identification is also supported by \textsc{Slater} and \textsc{Rouner} (2002).\textsuperscript{349}

Homophily – a term that is synonym to similarity – refers to “…the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar with respect to attributes, such as beliefs, values, education, social status etc.”\textsuperscript{350} Besides these factors, homophily also comprises factors such as age, gender, race or ethnic identity, as well as social status, education, and occupational status.\textsuperscript{351} Homophily can either be determined objectively or perceived subjectively.\textsuperscript{352} Objective homophily refers to factors that can be observed, such as gender or race.\textsuperscript{353}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{343} Cf. \textsc{von Feilitzen/Linne} (1975), p. 53.
\item \textsuperscript{344} Cf. \textsc{von Feilitzen/Linne} (1975), p. 53.
\item \textsuperscript{345} Cf. \textsc{Hoffner/Buchanan} (2005), p. 327.
\item \textsuperscript{346} Cf. \textsc{Schwab} (2016).
\item \textsuperscript{347} \textsc{Rogers/Bhowmik} (1970), p. 526.
\item \textsuperscript{348} \textsc{Hoffner/Cantor} (1991), p. 88.
\item \textsuperscript{349} Cf. \textsc{Slater/Rouner} (2002), p. 178.
\item \textsuperscript{350} \textsc{Rogers/Bhowmik} (1970), p. 526.
\item \textsuperscript{351} Cf. \textsc{Simpson et al.} (2000), p. 879; \textsc{Mcpherson/Smith-Lovin} (1987), p. 374; \textsc{McCroskey/McCroskey/Richmond} (2006), p. 2; \textsc{Bandura} (1986), p. 93 et seq.
\item \textsuperscript{352} Cf. \textsc{Rogers/Bhowmik} (1970), p. 527; \textsc{Rokeach} (1968), p. 63.
\item \textsuperscript{353} Cf. \textsc{Rogers/Bhowmik} (1970), p. 527; \textsc{Eyal/Rubin} (2003), p. 80.
\end{itemize}
For instance, Schlenger and Plummer (1972) found that black consumers reacted more positively towards an advertised brand if it was endorsed by black rather than white testimonials. They also expressed stronger identification with the portrayed black characters and stated that the black characters were more similar to their own families.\textsuperscript{354} Simpson et al. (2000) come to a similar conclusion. The results of their study indicate that racial congruence between testimonials and consumers lead to a higher level of perceived similarity.\textsuperscript{355}

Although research indicates that objective homophily has an impact on identification with a character, it is argued that the effects of perceived subjective homophily are stronger.\textsuperscript{356} It is assumed that the effects of objective homophily (i.e. the effects arising from similarities in age, gender, or race) are a mandatory prerequisite for identification to occur, but that the effects of subjective homophily offer further explanations of how and why consumers identify with media characters.\textsuperscript{357}

For instance, Eyal and Rubin (2003) reported that similar character traits between viewers and TV characters lead to identification of the viewer with the character, beyond a variance explained by gender similarity.\textsuperscript{358} Accordingly, Cohen and Perse (2003) also indicate that a similarity in attitudes, feelings and background impacts identification with a media character.\textsuperscript{359} These results also support early findings from Maccoby and Wilson (1957), who found that adolescent boys tended to identify more with TV characters that were in a similar social class as themselves.\textsuperscript{360} Burs-

\textsuperscript{354} In their study, the authors showed either all-black or all-white testimonial versions of a 50-second long TV advertisement for a cigarette brand to 192 white and 94 black women. Cf. Schlenger/Plummer (1972), p. 150 et seq.

\textsuperscript{355} In their analysis, 98 black students aged 18 to 37 were shown fictitious print advertisements for an also fictitious frozen meal brand. The advertisement either showed a white or black couple. Cf. Simpson et al. (2000), p. 881 et seq.


\textsuperscript{358} Cf. Eyal/Rubin (2003), p. 90 et seq. Eyal and Rubin focused on the character trait “aggressiveness” consisting of verbal and physical aggression. Their stimuli included characters like “Al Bundy” from “Married with Children” (verbal aggression) or Hulk Hogan of WWF Wrestling (physical aggression). The sample consisted of 219 undergraduate students aged 18 to 43. The results show that greater perceived homophily with regard to the character trait aggressiveness predicts identification. Cf. Eyal/Rubin (2003), p. 84 et seq.

\textsuperscript{359} Cf. Cohen/Perse (2003), p. 8. The authors conducted their study with 266 US consumers aged 18 to 61, with the average age being 29 years. Instead of using specific stimuli, the study was conducted by using the “favorite character paradigm” which means that respondents “choose a favorite television character and respond to questions regarding that character.” Cohen/Perse (2003), p. 3; also p. 6 et seq.

\textsuperscript{360} Cf. Maccoby/Wilson (1957), p. 79. In their study, the authors showed two episodes of the then popular TV show „Junior G-Men“ to 139 male and 130 female seventh-grade students. The TV
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STEIN, STOTLAND and ZANDER (1961) yielded similar results. They found that children more easily accepted preferences from an adult, if his background was presented as similar to the children’s background.\(^{361}\)

Other authors who have found support for the relevance of subjective homophily, especially regarding attitudes and behaviour in the past, are BYRNE (1961), and PRISBELL and ANDERSON (1980).\(^{362}\)

KATZ (1957) as well as ROGERS and SHOEMAKER (1970) also noted the importance of homophily in their studies on opinion leadership. They stated that opinion leaders are similar to their followers by possessing the same characteristics and beliefs. Therefore, they are representative of their group of followers. As the authors note, opinion leaders also tend to be more competent in their respective field. However, their competence does not exceed those of their followers to a large extent.\(^{363}\) The basis for such argumentation lies in the theory of social comparison by FESTINGER (1954). FESTINGER argued that individuals who perceive themselves as similar to a media figure regarding an opinion see the media as suitable referents for that particular opinion.\(^{364}\)

Since SMIs also embrace the opinion leadership concept, these findings can be transferred. As explained, SMIs with online fame-origin have gathered their audience due to the presentation of their lifestyles and – from the perspective of their followers – the accompanying notion “to be one of them”. SMIs with online fame-origin are essentially ordinary consumers, it is thus reasonable to assume that their followers are

show featured two main male characters with one character having an “upper class” background and the other having a “lower class” background. 75% of the male respondents whose background was classified as “upper/middle class” reported to identify with the main character with the similar social background. For the male respondents with a “lower class” social background 56% reported to identify with the main character whose also was from a “lower class background”. The results weren’t as clear for female respondents. The authors attributed this to the differences of the portrayed gender and lack of control of women over their social status, which for women at that time was most often dependent on the social status of their husbands. Cf. MACCOBY/WILSON (1957), p. 78 et seq.

\(^{361}\) Cf. BURNSTEIN/STOTLAND/ZANDER (1961), 260 et seq.; BERSCHEID (1966), p. 671. The study was conducted with primary school children. In the study, an adult was presented as being a deep-sea diver. To half of the group of the children he described himself as highly similar to the children respecting his background and upbringing. He told the children that he has been raised in the same town and had been gone swimming and fishing in the same lake as the children and generally described his lifestyle as similar to those of the children. The other half of the group were told that the adult grew up in a different town and lead a lifestyle very unfamiliar to those of the children’s. Cf. BURNSTEIN/STOTLAND/ZANDER (1961), 260 et seq.; BERSCHEID (1966), p. 671.

\(^{362}\) Cf. BYRNE (1961); PRISBELL/ANDERSON (1980).

\(^{363}\) Cf. KATZ (1957); ROGERS/SHOEMAKER (1970); both as cited in ROGERS/BHOWMIK (1970), p. 531.

familiar with their socio-economic background.\textsuperscript{365} Additionally, as SMI report about topics that are of interest to those following them in social media, it is also likely that SMI with online fame-origin and their followers share a magnitude of beliefs and attitudes. According to the aforementioned findings from communication and advertising research, this perceived subjective homophily, which is potentially complemented by objective homophily such as age or gender, leads to identification.\textsuperscript{366} Identification which is rooted in homophily between an individual and a media character is specifically referred to as similarity identification.\textsuperscript{367}

For SMI with online fame-origin, it can therefore be assumed that consumers will report stronger similarity identification with them than with social media influencers with analog fame-origin.

Research has shown that both wishful and similarity identification with other individuals (i.e. stars and other media characters) effect consumer’s behavioral intentions and actual behavior.\textsuperscript{368} It is therefore reasonable to assume that wishful identification as well as similarity identification with SMI are also able to impact consumers behavioral intentions. The behavioral intention to be considered within this work is the consumer’s purchase intention of the brand endorsed by the SMI, which simultaneously is treated as the final brand objective on which the impact of SMI will be examined within this work.\textsuperscript{369}

However, it is not possible to determine which type of identification has a stronger influence on consumers’ purchase intention without taking self-esteem – a central aspect of consumers’ personalities – into account. It is expected that consumers with higher levels of self-esteem are more self-confident and therefore will engage more in similarity identification in order to confirm their already positive self-evaluations.\textsuperscript{370} Lower levels of self-esteem, on the other hand, are expected to lead to a stronger

\textsuperscript{365} Cf. CHAE (2017), p. 3.


\textsuperscript{369} Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 89; BECKER (2012); SCHADE (2012); KANITZ (2013); STOLLE (2012).

tendency to engage in wishful identification as consumers then express a stronger self-enhancement motive, in order to rise their levels of self-esteem.\textsuperscript{371}

It is therefore necessary to also consider consumers’ levels of self-esteem when the impact of SMI on purchase intentions is examined. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|p{14cm}|}
\hline
\textbf{H 1} & At low self-esteem, SMI with analog fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger than SMI with online fame-origin, while at high self-esteem SMI with online fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to SMI with analog fame-origin. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

While this hypothesis is concerned with the impact of different types of SMI on consumers’ purchase intentions, and therefore – in a broader sense – with the relationship between consumers and SMI, it is also important to examine the impact of the endorsed brands on consumers’ purchase intentions. The impact of brands that are presented by SMI and thus the consumer-brand relationship will be examined in the following chapter (see Figure 19) by applying the Self-congruity theory by SIRGY (1982, 1985).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure19.png}
\caption{Visualized structure of chapters B 3, B 4, and B 5}
\source{Own illustration.}
\end{figure}

4 The Brand-Consumer Relationship: Conceptual Foundations of Self-Congruity Theory

Self-congruity theory by Sirgy (1982, 1985) offers an explanation of how consumers express their selves through the purchase and use of a given brand. According to the self-congruity theory, a high similarity between a consumer’s self-concept and a brand’s image leads to more favorable brand attitudes and higher purchase intentions.

The self-concept of a consumer is defined as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” and represents the individual perspective of one’s own personality. The self-concept of an individual is not considered to be a unidimensional construct but rather consists of two core components, namely the “actual self-concept” and the “ideal self-concept”. The actual self-concept describes how an individual perceives his or her own self in a current state whereas the ideal self-concept refers to a desired self an individual aspires to become. While similarities between the two dimensions of the self-concept and both similarity and wishful identification are clearly recognizable, the self-congruity theory is mostly directed at the consumer/brand-relationship. Through corresponding brand personalities, consumers are able to express either their actual selves or ideal selves. Underlying these expressions are both the self-consistency motive and the self-esteem motive.

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375 Cf. Schade (2012), p. 77; Aseendorpf (2004), p. 252 et seq.; Jamal/Goode (2001), p. 482; Izard (1999), p. 49. The terms “personality” and “identity” are often used synonymously. However, identity refers to a broader conception which refers to a holistic understanding of the sum of an individual’s personality. This understanding allows for a recognition of a certain individual over time despite changes in one or two specific personality traits. Cf. Burmann et al. (2018), p. 19; Conzen (1990), p. 69 et seq.
The self-consistency motive describes consumers' tendencies to behave accordingly to their actual self-concept in order to confirm their view of themselves. According to the self-consistency motive, consumers prefer brands with ascribed personalities which are consistent with their actual self-concepts. A match between a consumer's actual self-concept and a given brand image is referred to as "self-congruity".

Through the self-esteem motive consumers seek experiences that enhance their self-concepts. If the actual self-concept of a consumer varies strongly from their ideal self-concept, consumers will seek to diminish this gap in order enhance their self-concept. Consumers who behave according to the self-esteem motive prefer brands which match their ideal self-concepts instead of their actual self-concepts. A congruity between a consumer's ideal self-concept and a brand image is therefore described as "ideal congruity".

Empirical support for the self-congruity theory has been found by numerous academic researchers. In the context of choice of houses, Malhotra (1988) found that the self-consistency and self-esteem motives were strong predictors of whether respondents preferred houses that were congruent with their actual or ideal self-concepts. By using automobiles and soft drinks as stimuli, Branaghan and Hildebrand (2011) could also confirm the importance of self-congruity regarding brand preference. Further support comes from Ericksen (1996), who studied the rela-

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390 Cf. Malhotra (1988), p. 21. For the study, the author conducted 155 personal interviews with male and female heads of households. The participants were presented with descriptions of houses that were intended to either match their actual or ideal self-concepts (e.g. the house was described as having a separate dining room or swimming pool vs. not having a separate dining room or swimming pool).

391 Cf. Branaghan/Hildebrand (2011), p. 310. The authors conducted two studies. The first study used automobile brands as stimuli. Respondents were asked to rate their brand personality facets of automobile brands and then to their self-image on the same personality facets. In the next step they were asked to state which car they would consider purchasing. 67 respondents participated (49% male) in the study. The majority of respondents were between 18 and 25 years old (85%), the remaining sample was aged between 26 and 55. The second study followed the same procedure, albeit using soft drink brands as stimuli. 49 students (46% male) participated in the second study. Again, the majority of the sample was between 18 and 25 years old (73%), while the re-
The relationship between consumers’ self-concepts and purchase intention,\textsuperscript{392} and from JAMAL and AL-MARRI (2007), who investigated the impact of self-congruity on brand satisfaction.\textsuperscript{393} Both studies used automobile brands as stimuli.\textsuperscript{394}

Additionally, MALÄR ET AL. (2011) found that a strong positive relationship between self-congruity and emotional brand attachment exists.\textsuperscript{395} They could further show that the effect of ideal congruity on emotional brand attachment depends on the level of self-esteem of a consumer.\textsuperscript{396} Among consumers with low self-esteem the self-esteem motive becomes more dominant and thus, the effect of ideal congruity becomes more important.\textsuperscript{397} This finding is similar to results from academic research regarding the moderating role of self-esteem in social comparison processes.\textsuperscript{398}

The aforementioned results show that both self-congruity and ideal congruity satisfy consumer’s needs for self-consistency and self-enhancement\textsuperscript{399} (an overview of the core dimensions of the self-concept and the related motives offers Figure 20). It is therefore reasonable to assume that consumers strive to satisfy their needs for either confirming or enhancing their self-concepts through brands that are presented by SMIs. Consequently, it is also plausible to expect that both self-congruity and ideal congruity impact the purchase intentions of consumers in influencer branding.

\textsuperscript{392} Cf. ERICKSEN (1996), p. 49 et seq. 162 students from Belgium, France, Great Britain and the Netherlands participated in the study. Participants were asked to rate their actual and ideal self-concepts as well as the personality of a typical Ford Escort driver on a scale that used 11 key words or phrases (e.g. calm, respectful, or up-to-date). Cf. ERICKSEN (1996), p. 47 et seq.

\textsuperscript{393} Cf. JAMAL/AL-MARRI (2007), p. 623. 190 car owners from Doha, Qatar participated in the study. 83% of respondents were between 20 and 39 years old. As Qatar is a Muslim society the sample consisted of male respondents only. Respondents were asked to describe a typical diver of a Toyota Land Cruiser and subsequently were asked to respond to measures of self-image congruence. Cf. JAMAL/AL-MARRI (2007), p. 619 et seq.

\textsuperscript{394} Cf. ERICKSEN (1996); JAMAL/AL-MARRI (2007).

\textsuperscript{395} Cf. MALÄR ET AL. (2011), p. 42. Two large-scale studies were conducted by the authors. In the first study, university and high-school students, employees as well as members of consumer protection associations in Switzerland were asked to complete an online-questionnaire. Brands in the questionnaire were taken from various Interbrand rankings (e.g. best global brands 2007) and randomly assigned. In sum, more than 160 brands were included in the study. 1329 respondents participated in the first study. The average age of respondents was 25 years. In the second study, 890 respondents with an average age of 27 years participated. Cf. MALÄR ET AL. (2011), p. 41.

\textsuperscript{396} Cf. MALÄR ET AL. (2011), p. 42 et seq.

\textsuperscript{397} Cf. MALÄR ET AL. (2011), p. 44.

\textsuperscript{398} See chapter B 3.3 for further details.

\textsuperscript{399} For an overview of further studies regarding the relevance of self-congruity and ideal congruity see SCHADE (2012), p. 84 et seq.
However, it is uncertain whether self-congruity or ideal congruity exert a greater effect on brand objectives. According to a meta-analysis by BAUER, MÄDER, and WAGNER (2006), both self-congruity and ideal congruity impact brand outcomes to the same degree.\footnote{Cf. BAUER/MÄDER/WAGNER (2006), p. 851 et seq.} The authors used 32 studies from the consumer goods industry which have included brand objectives that are suitable to explain consumer behavior, such as brand attitude or liking, brand satisfaction, and purchase intention.\footnote{Cf. BAUER/MÄDER/WAGNER (2006), p. 843 et seq.}

As the findings of MALÄR ET AL. (2011) have shown, it is possible that consumers’ levels of self-esteem moderate the relationship between self-congruity and ideal congruity and purchase intention within influencer branding, based on the same reasoning that was presented in chapter B 3.3 and B 3.4 regarding the effects of SMI with analog fame-origin and online fame-origin, respectively. It is therefore hypothesized that:

\[
\text{H} \ 2 \quad \text{At low self-esteem, ideal congruity affects purchase intentions of consumers stronger than self-congruity, while at high self-esteem self-congruity affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to ideal congruity.}
\]

Within influencer branding, it is also important to consider the interplay of the consumer-SMI relationship, and the consumer-brand relationship and their corresponding behavioral motives. For this purpose, the balance theory by HEIDER (1958) is explained in greater detail in the following chapter.
5 Conceptual Foundations of Balance Theory and its Significance for Influencer Branding

Although research has shown that both the images of endorsers and brands in advertising affect consumer behavior, only little research exists that considers the joint effects of all three entities (endorser, brand, and consumer). To the best of the authors knowledge, PRADHAN, DURAIPANDIAN and SETHI (2014) are the only authors to consider the effects of endorser image, brand image and consumer self-concept in a single investigation. They found that the fit between the consumer and the brand had the strongest impact on brand attitude and purchase intention, the fit between brand and endorser was also significant, albeit not as strong. No significant effect was found for the image fit between endorser and consumer image.

However, due to several concerns their results should be noted with caution. First, respondents were asked to choose one of four sports clothing brands for evaluation. This procedure may have led to an overvaluation of the importance of the brand image, as it preceded the evaluation of the fit between brand and endorser and the as-

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402 See chapter B 3.2 as well as chapter B 5.1 for further reference.
405 Cf. PRADHAN/DURAIPANDIAN/SETHI (2014), p. 465. In their study, 447 adult full-time students participated. The sample consisted of mainly male participants (n=369), approximately half of the sample was between 20 and 29 years old, whereas for the whole sample the age ranged from 20 to 59 years. Four brands of sport shoes were chosen as stimuli, namely Adidas, Nike, Puma and Reebok. Cf. PRADHAN/DURAIPANDIAN/SETHI (2014), p. 461 et seq.
essment of image congruence between participant and endorser. It is possible that alternating the sections of the questionnaire may have yielded different results.

Second, although the endorsers in the questionnaire were stars, either known for their athletic accomplishments or artistic performances, who exert their influence due to wishful identification, the authors expected that similarity identification of participants with the endorsers would lead to more favourable brand attitudes and heightened purchase intentions. It is possible that insignificant effects of the fit between endorser and consumer images can be attributed to the fact that the influence of wishful identification has been ignored.

However, the authors also acknowledge their shortcomings and encourage researchers to further study the effects of the endorser/consumer image congruence regardless of the insignificant effect in their own study. They recommend the application of Heider’s (1958) balance theory for this purpose.

The balance theory can be subsumed to more generic congruency theories which postulate that an individual seeks equilibrium within the own cognitive system. Any imbalance within the cognitive system of an individual is experienced as unpleasant and uncomfortable. Imbalanced states are therefore either sought to avoid or – if they occur – reduced.

Central to Heider’s (1958) balance theory is the notion that cognitive systems consist of three cognitive elements: the self-concept of the individual, another person and a non-personal element which can be either “a situation, an event or a thing”. These three elements and their relations among one another and to the self-concept are perceived subjectively from the individual’s point of view. According to Heider (1958), a balanced state is “a situation in which the relations among the entities fit

406 See chapter B 3.2 for further reference.
together harmoniously (…).

Balanced states are experienced as pleasant and are considered as stable. An imbalanced state, however, evokes tension.

Balance theory has already been used to explain the relationships among franchise holder, employees and customer satisfaction, as well as regarding the impact of sponsoring partnerships on brand choice. The theory can also be used to explain relationships between three entities in a broader sense. Mathematics, for example is stereotypically considered a “male” subject. If an individual is also male, the shared gender can strengthen the identification with the subject of mathematics of the individual, whereas the identification of females with mathematics may be weak, due to a difference in gender. Implications from balanced and unbalanced states can also be made regarding the processing of information. CORNWELL, WEEKS, and ROY (2005) argue that information storage in memory and the subsequent retrieval of information are affected by the similarity of cognitive elements, meaning that a higher similarity leads to better brand awareness and recognition.

According to balance theory, three cognitive elements have to be considered within influencer branding. The first one is the self-concept of the consumer. The other personal element is the SMI and the brand takes the role of the non-personal element. These elements form a triadic relationship, which can be either balanced or unbalanced. Two types of balanced and two types of imbalanced states can result when the two possible types of identification, namely wishful and similarity identification, and the two core components of self-brand congruity, namely ideal congruity and self-congruity, are taken into account.

The first type of balanced state occurs when consumers engage in wishful identification with SMIs because of their low self-esteem and the image of the endorsed brand matches with the ideal self-concepts (ideal congruity) of the consumers. In this case, both the SMI and the endorsed brand relate to the ideal selves the consumers aspire to become. Thus, the identification with the endorser as well as the type of congruity
with the brand serve the enhancement of the self-concept and support the self-esteem motive.

Similarity identification, stemming from higher levels of self-esteem, as well as self-congruity with the endorsed brand lead to the second type of balanced state. Through similarity identification with SMI’s, consumers can confirm their own self-concepts, while at the same time self-congruity with the brand image serves the self-consistency motive.

However, when consumers engage in wishful identification with a SMI who endorses a brand that is congruent with the consumers actual self-concept, the motive for self-enhancement contradicts the self-consistency motive, which leads to an imbalanced state. This is also the case when a SMI evokes similarity identification while promoting a brand that addresses the ideal self of the consumer, where the tendency for self-confirmation is opposed to the self-esteem motive. Figure 22 offers an overview of balanced and imbalanced states in influencer branding.

As balanced states are perceived as pleasant, it is expected that a fit between consumers’ identification with an SMI and the corresponding self-concept motive affects brand objectives positively. In contrast, if the type of consumers’ identification contradicts the self-concept motive, it is expected that consumers will avoid such unbalanced states as they are experienced as uncomfortable. Such avoidance will manifest in lower purchase intentions of consumers.

It has been hypothesized that consumers engage in wishful identification with a SMI with analog fame-origin because of their lower levels of self-esteem. If this type of SMI endorses a brand that matches their actual self-concept, consumers’ motivation to purchase the given brand will be lower because the brand will not be perceived as useful to reduce the discrepancy between them and the SMI. In this condition, the purchase of the brand would not serve the self-esteem motive and thus would not serve their need for self-enhancement, which is important for consumers with lower levels of self-esteem.

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Consumers with higher levels of self-esteem, however, are expected to engage in similar identification with SMI with online fame-origin, because they are motivated to confirm their positive views about themselves. If this type of SMI endorses a brand that addresses the ideal selves of consumers, their positive view about themselves would be challenged, because the brand would be interpreted as a signal of not being “on the same level” as the SMI. This circumstance then undermines consumers’ self-confidence. Prior research has shown that when their self-confidence is challenged, individuals withdraw from the challenging situation. The withdrawal then also leads to a lower, or even non-existing, purchase intention.

It is therefore hypothesized that:

| H 3a | At low self-esteem, SMI with analog fame-origin who endorse brands with ideal congruity to consumer’s self-concepts (balanced state), affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to SMI with online fame-origin who endorse brands with self-congruity to consumer’s self-concepts and other imbalanced SMI/brand pairings. |
Theoretical Foundations and Development of Research Model

At high self-esteem, SMIs with online fame-origin who endorse brands with self-congruity to consumers’ self-concepts (balanced state) affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to SMIs with analog fame-origin who endorse brands with ideal congruity to consumer’s self-concepts and other imbalanced SMI/brand pairings.

The previous chapters provided in-depth insights into the SMI/consumer relationships and the expected effects of SMIs with analog and online fame-origin on purchase intentions of consumers. Effects of the brand/consumer relationships on consumers’ purchase intentions were also hypothesized. The following chapter provides theoretical foundations regarding the impact of culture and cultural differences. The moderating influence of culture on the identification processes with SMIs and the impact of SMIs on brand’s purchase intentions will be hypothesized accordingly.

6 The Moderating Role of Culture

A definition of the term culture has already been proposed as early as in 1871 by Tylor who described culture as “the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society.”

Since then numerous other definitions have been offered by various researchers, who often develop discipline-specific definitions and interpretations of the culture-construct. Their efforts have thus only aggravated efforts to clearly define the concept of culture. In 1952 Kroeben and Kluckhohn gathered definitions of culture from the existing academic literature at the time, which resulted in 164 different definitions. In a similar study, Allison (1995) identified 241 different definitions of the term culture, whereas Herbig (1998) even found 450 definitions. Despite the large

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number of definitions, most of them share the similar notion that culture consists of a "common stock of knowledge" which is shared by a group of people and which distinguishes this group from other cultural groups.\textsuperscript{427} They also share the understanding that culture impacts the behavior of individuals and offers a shared identity and cohesion by construing a joint social reality.\textsuperscript{428}

Culture thus reflects the shared standards regarding beliefs, perceptions, evaluations, and consequential behavior of individuals.\textsuperscript{429} Culture-related marketing research focuses on an understanding of culture that comprises the values, norms, and attitudes shared by the members of a society.\textsuperscript{430} This understanding also implies that the behavior of the members of a society is caused by these constitutional elements of culture.\textsuperscript{431} In line with this reasoning is SCHUH (1997), who describes culture as a system of shared ideas which allows members of a culture orientation in their social and physical environment and is shaped by often subconscious thought patterns.\textsuperscript{432}

After reviewing more than 100 articles in the academic cross-cultural consumer research literature published between 1970 to 1990, SOJKA and TANSUHAJ (1995) found that three approaches exist to operationalize culture: through language, through material artefacts, and through value systems.\textsuperscript{433}

HOFSTEDE (1993) follows the latter approach and uses his model of the pyramid of mental programming to define culture (see Figure 23).\textsuperscript{434} For HOFSTEDE, culture is a learned collective phenomenon, shared by people who live (or used to live) in the same social environment. Culture is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguished the members of one group or category of people from others."\textsuperscript{435} HOFSTEDE argues that in between individuals’ personalities, which are partly learned and partly inherited, and the human nature in general, lies a group-specific learned cultural level. He concludes that "culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side and from an individual's personality on the other."\textsuperscript{436} Culture is the manifes-

Furthermore, HOFSTEDE identifies four levels through which cultural differences manifest themselves: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. These four levels closely resemble two of SOJKA and TANUSUHJ’s (1995) identified approaches to operationalize culture, namely value systems and material artefacts. These levels are depicted in an onion-like shape, according to their levels of depth (see Figure 24). Words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a specific meaning and are only recognized by the members of a certain culture are referred to as symbols. As it is relatively easy to replace old symbols for new ones or for other cultural groups to copy them, symbols represent the most superficial level of cultural manifestations and are thus pictured as the outer layer. Heroes are persons who display character traits that are highly valued in a culture and serve as role models. They can be alive or dead as well as real or imaginary. Rituals are represented by socially essential collective activities, e. g. religious ceremonies or specific ways of greeting. The first three levels are sub-

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure23}
\caption{Pyramid of Mental Programming}
\textit{Source: Own illustration closely based on HOFSTED/HOFSTED/MINKOV (2010), p. 6; HOFSTED/HOFSTED (2005), p. 4.}
\end{figure}
sumed under the term practices. Through practices they become visible to individuals outside of the cultural group. However, their cultural meaning may not be entirely understood.\textsuperscript{439} Values are described by HOFSTEDE as “the core of culture (…). Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others”.\textsuperscript{440} In contrast to practices, values are not observable, but remain stable over time.\textsuperscript{441} Values are also defined as an integrated part of the individual’s self.\textsuperscript{442}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{onion_model.png}
\caption{The "Onion" Model: Manifestations of Culture}
\textit{Source: Own illustration closely based on HOFSTEDE/HOFSTEDE/MINKOV (2010), p. 8; HOFSTEDE (1993), p. 22.}
\end{figure}

The main contribution of Hofstede’s work, however, lies in his analysis of cultural dimensions, which aim to distinguish cultures from one another. HOFSTEDE’s cultural dimensions allow for a comparison of cultures. Scales on each dimension are avail-

\textsuperscript{439} Cf. HOFSTEDE/HOFSTEDE/MINKOV (2010), p. 8 et seq.; HOFSTEDE/HOFSTEDE (2005), p. 6 et seq.
\textsuperscript{440} Cf. HOFSTEDE/HOFSTEDE/MINKOV (2010), p. 9.
\textsuperscript{442} Cf. DE MOOIJ/HOFSTEDE (2010), p. 86.
ble for currently 76 countries.\textsuperscript{443} Four core dimensions derive from extensive studies with 116,000 employees of IBM, conducted from 1968 until 1973 in more than 70 countries.\textsuperscript{444}

- **Power distance** refers to the extent to which members of a culture, especially the less powerful, expect and accept that power is not distributed equally. Members in large power distance cultures know of their rightful place in a social hierarchy and show respect to those above them. High values for this dimension mean that power is perceived as distributed unequally.\textsuperscript{445}

- **Individualism/collectivism** describes whether individuals are expected to only look after themselves and their immediate family (individualism) or whether they are integrated in strong in-groups that continue throughout their lifetime in exchange of loyalty (collectivism). Individualistic cultures are “I”-conscious with a strong focus on self-actualization and very explicit communications styles. They emphasize the uniqueness of every individual and to be different from others is seen as an important goal.\textsuperscript{446} Members from collectivistic cultures derive their identities from their memberships to the social groups they belong to and appreciate conformity. Such cultures emphasize the “we”, along with a strong need for harmony and trust. High values for this dimension represent individualistic cultures, low values represent collectivistic cultures.\textsuperscript{447}

- **Masculinity/femininity** refers to the dominant values in a society. Masculine societies value performance, success, and achievement, whether in feminine societies dominant values refer to the quality of life or caring for others. This dimension also reflects the degree to how male and female roles are differentiated or overlap. High levels on the masculinity scale indicate that typically male values dominate, whereas low levels refer to more dominating female values.\textsuperscript{448}

\textsuperscript{443} Cf. de Mooij/Hofstede (2010), p. 88; Hofstede Insights (2018a).
\textsuperscript{448} Cf. de Mooij/Hofstede (2011), p. 182; de Mooij/Hofstede (2010), p. 89.
• **Uncertainty avoidance** defines the extent of cultures’ needs for rules, regulations, formalities, and safety measures to structure life. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, individuals feel threatened by ambiguity and try to avoid new situations with uncertain outcomes. They also are less open to change and innovations. Members of low uncertainty avoidance cultures, however, display a more active attitude towards life.\(^449\)

Two additional dimensions have been added due to further studies. In 1991, Hofstede added **long- vs. short-term orientation** as fifth dimension of national cultures.\(^450\) This dimension describes how cultures face future challenges. Long-term oriented cultures exhibit a pragmatic perspective and encourage perseverance and efforts to prepare for the future. Short-term oriented cultures, however, approach change with suspicion and rather rely on their respect for tradition.\(^451\) The sixth dimension – **indulgence vs. restraint** – was added in 2010 to explain why some poorer nations exhibited relatively high percentages of individuals who considered themselves “happy” – a phenomenon which could not be explained by the then existing five dimensions.\(^452\) This dimension describes a continuum where indulgence refers to a tendency to allow for gratification of desires which are related to enjoyment and fun, whereas restraint is described as the belief that gratification needs to be strictly regulated.\(^453\)

In sum, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions impact all aspects of individuals lives, ranging from their work and family environments to politics, economy and purchase behavior.\(^454\)

Despite Hofstede’s persistent and extensive research, his work is not without criticism. The most prevalent points of criticism address the data-driven approach along with the weak theoretical basis\(^455\) and the aging data from which the four core dimen-
sions have emerged.\footnote{Cf. Hansen (2003), p. 281 et seq.} Furthermore criticized is the impaired external validity, since only employees from one firm were considered within the initial study.\footnote{Cf. Kauffman (1985), p. 244; Rose (1986), p. 250; Smith/Bond (1998), p. 49.} Researchers also point out that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions only apply to a work context and hence specific work values and may not be transferrable to marketing research in general.\footnote{Cf. Baack/Singh (2007), p. 182.}

An alternative framework to describe and compare cultures is offered by Schwartz (1994). In his model, Schwartz (1994) proposes seven dimensions to operationalize and measure culture: \footnote{Cf. Schwartz (1994), p. 87 et seq. The study was fielded to 87 samples in 38 countries. Respondents were teachers and university students. Cf. Schwartz (1994), p. 87 et seq.}

- **Conservatism**, which refers to the importance of group-relations in a society,
- **Intellectual autonomy**, which addresses how much curiosity, self-direction, and creativity are valued in a society,
- **Affective autonomy**, which expresses to what degree individual goals are valued over group goals,
- **Egalitarian commitment**, which refers to the voluntary commitment to promote societal welfare, equality, and social justice,
- **Harmony**, which places value in protection of the environment, beauty, and peace,
- **Mastery**, which is concerned with self-assertion, ambition, and independence as well as

Schwartz’s dimensions address certain limitations of Hofstede’s work, e. g. external validity by extending the sample to other population groups and refers to more recent data. However, the value added to Hofstede’s framework is questionable, as some dimensions can be seen as equivalent to Hofstede’s dimensions, for instance hierarchy and power distance, conservatism and collectivism.\footnote{Cf. Baack/Singh (2007), p. 183.} Moreover, Magnusson et al. (2008) found that the framework provided by Schwartz as well as other
alternative cultural frameworks\textsuperscript{462} do not provide significant advancements compared to the initial model developed by \textsc{Hofstede}.\textsuperscript{463} \textsc{Droge}ndi\textsc{j}k and \textsc{Slangen} (2006) come to a similar conclusion and caution an abrupt dismissal of \textsc{Hofstede}'s framework.\textsuperscript{464}

Regarding marketing and management studies, as well as in psychology and sociology, the cultural framework developed by \textsc{Hofstede} remains the most widely used model to date.\textsuperscript{465} It is also the standard model used in international marketing studies.\textsuperscript{466}

Although \textsc{Hofstede}'s framework was initially aimed at a work-related context, it has been extensively applied in marketing studies to further understand consumer behavior.\textsuperscript{467} \textsc{Stolle} (2012), for example, found that culture determines which brand benefits (e. g. hedonic brand benefits, utilitarian brand benefits) are of importance for consumers in different countries.\textsuperscript{468}

More specifically, it has been found that collectivism impacts innovativeness,\textsuperscript{469} service performance,\textsuperscript{470} and advertising appeals.\textsuperscript{471} Uncertainty avoidance as well as

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{462} Other cultural frameworks have been developed by \textsc{Trompenaars} (1994) and by the GLOBE research program. \textsc{Tromp}enaars developed seven dimensions. Five dimensions – universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, neutral vs. emotional, specific vs. diffuse, and achievement vs. ascription – stem from \textsc{Parson} (1951). \textsc{Tromp}enaars added attitude toward the environment and attitude toward time to his framework. His survey included more than 8,000 managers and employees from 43 countries. Cf. \textsc{Tromp}enaars (1994), p. 30 et seq. The GLOBE program studied the relationships between culture and leadership effectiveness. After conducting a study with 17,000 mid-level employees from 62 countries, nine dimensions were developed: performance orientation, institutional collectivism, gender egalitarianism, uncertainty avoidance, in-group collectivism, future orientation, humane orientation, assertiveness, power distance. Cf. \textsc{House} \textit{et al.} (2004), p. 29 et seq.

\textsuperscript{463} Cf. \textsc{Magn}usson \textit{et al.} (2008), p. 195 et seq.

\textsuperscript{464} Cf. \textsc{Drog}endi\textsc{j}k/\textsc{Slangen} (2006), p. 376.


\textsuperscript{467} Cf. \textsc{Soares/Farhangmehr/Shoham} (2007), p. 281.

\textsuperscript{468} Cf. \textsc{Stolle} (2012), p. 369 et seq.

\textsuperscript{469} Cf. \textsc{Lynn/Gelb} (1996), p. 51; \textsc{Steenkamp/Hofstede/WeDEL} (1999), p. 64; \textsc{Van Everd}ingen/Waarts (2003), p. 229.

\textsuperscript{470} Cf. \textsc{Birge}len \textit{et al.} (2002), p. 56 et seq.

\textsuperscript{471} Cf. \textsc{Albers-Miller/Gelb} (1996), p. 67 et seq.
\end{footnotesize}
power distance are related to information exchange behavior, innovativeness, and also advertising appeals. Power distance also influences service performance, as does masculinity. Innovativeness is also impacted by long-term orientation.

However, in the context of influencer branding, the individualism/collectivism dimension and the power distance dimension are more relevant than the remaining dimensions of Hofstede’s framework, because they are the most frequently and prominently used dimensions within the research regarding the effects of famous individuals on consumer behavior. The individualism/collectivism dimension and the power distance dimension are the most suitable dimension to explain differences in the perceptions of famous individuals by consumers in differing cultures.

In collectivistic cultures, famous individuals are expected to be more influential because they represent the shared values of a society in which harmony and respect for a social hierarchy are crucial. In individualistic cultures, individuals’ identities should ensure them to function independently in a society. Their sense of self-esteem thus arises from a feeling of personal “uniqueness”, rather than a shared group-identity. For individuals in individualistic societies, life-satisfaction is closely tied to self-esteem that arises from the motivation to be special and to some degree different from others as well as from a motivation to “feel good about themselves.”

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For individuals in collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, self-esteem arises from one’s group membership. Therefore, life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures depends on relationship maintenance with friends, family, or colleagues. The primary task for individuals in these societies is to fit into their social groups, rather to stand out. In collectivistic cultures individuals are more inclined to conform to others and a specific group ideal than individuals in individualistic cultures, as has been found by Bond and Smith (1996), who conducted a meta-analysis of 133 studies from more than 17 countries.

In the context of influencer branding, SMIs take the role of opinion leaders, whose behaviors are imitated by consumers through either wishful or similarity identification, depending on their origin of fame. Since individuals in collectivistic cultures exhibit a higher tendency to conform their behavior to others, it is assumed that SMIs will have an overall stronger effect on consumers’ purchase intentions than in individualistic societies.

It is thus hypothesized that:

| H4a | The cultural dimension collectivism increases the overall effects of SMIs on consumers' purchase intentions. |

The power distance dimension is important to understand information seeking behavior in different cultures. Dawar, Parker, and Price (1996) found that power distance is positively correlated with opinion-seeking tendencies. This correlation is

highly significant in their study. Individuals in high power distance cultures tend to seek information from personal sources and less from impersonal sources, for example magazines. In contrast to individuals in low power distance cultures, individuals in high power-distant cultures tend to adhere to advice from those who function as authority figures. Authority figures are those members of a society who hold a high status. This group also includes stars. In such cultures, judgments and opinions of those powerful individuals are considered as truthful and credible due to their higher status in society. The powerful members of a society thus exert influence to those less powerful members of a society. As famous individuals are seen as representations of power in high power distant cultures, the respective dimension has great relevance in studying the effects of famous individuals on consumer behavior.

In a cross-national study with students from India and the United States, Winterich, Gangwar, and Grewal (2018a) found that in the high power distant country (India) advertising and brand evaluations were more favorable if a star was used to endorse the brand (chocolates) compared to a non-famous testimonial.

488 Cf. Dawar/Parker/Price (1996), p. 507 et seq. For the study, 619 students (average age: 28 years) completed a questionnaire regarding consumer electronic products. Students came from a variety of European (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United Kingdom) and North American (Canada, United States) countries. Cf. Dawar/Parker/Price (1996), p. 504.


495 Cf. Winterich/Gangwar/Grewal (2018), p. 73. 90 students from the United States and 87 students from India participated in the study. In the American sample, 56 per cent of respondents were female, in the Indian sample 60 per cent of respondents were female. Respondents were asked to evaluate advertisements for chocolates which used either a local star or a non-famous testimonial. To increase the internal validity of their study, the authors conducted a follow-up study in which they used an unknown testimonial and manipulated the celebrity status by telling half of the respondents that the celebrity was a famous actor or actress. This lead to similar results as in the first study. Among respondents in high power distance countries, the manipulation lead to more favorable attitudes toward the ad if respondents were told that the testimonial was famous. 133 respondents from 15 countries participated in the study, with the majority (83 per cent) being from the United States and India. Cf. Winterich/Gangwar/Grewal (2018a), p. 74 et seq; Winterich/Gangwar/Grewal (2018b), p. 19 et seq.
Considering the context of influencer branding, SMIs with analog fame-origin already serve as powerful authority figures due to their achievements through which they gained their high societal status. SMIs with online fame-origin, however, may not serve as authority figures to the same degree, because their fame is not rooted in any noteworthy talents.

While individuals in cultures with high power distance accept and expect that not all members of a society are equally powerful, they are still encouraged to acknowledge their weaknesses and strive for the ideal through continuous self-improvement. HEINE, TAKATA, and LEHMANN (2000) note, that individuals from high power distance cultures are highly sensitive to their imperfections and therefore adjust their behaviors in order to “become the best that [they] can.”

This cultural imprint on consumers’ identities may also lead to a higher acceptance and thus stronger influence of SMIs with analog fame-origin, as they function as role models and reference group for the less powerful. It is questionable whether consumers in high power distance cultures accept SMIs with online fame-origin as role models and adjust their behavior according to the modeled behavior of SMIs with online fame-origin, as they usually do not function as high-status figures.

It is thus reasonable to assume that SMIs with analog fame-origin exert a stronger influence on consumer behavior than their counterparts with online fame-origin in high power distance cultures.

Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

| H 4b | The cultural dimension power distance leads to different effects of SMIs with analog fame-origin and SMIs with online fame-origin on consumers’ purchase intentions. |

---

7 Summary of Hypotheses

This chapter provides a summarized overview of the derived hypotheses (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H 1</strong></td>
<td>At low self-esteem, SMIs with analog fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger than SMIs with online fame-origin, while at high self-esteem SMIs with online fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to SMIs with analog fame-origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H 2</strong></td>
<td>At low self-esteem, ideal congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images affects purchase intentions of consumers stronger than self-congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images, while at high self-esteem self-congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared ideal congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H 3a</strong></td>
<td>At low self-esteem, SMIs with analog fame-origin who endorse brands with ideal congruity to consumer’s self-concepts (balanced state), affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to other (balanced and imbalanced) SMI/brand pairings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H 3b</strong></td>
<td>At high self-esteem, SMIs with online fame-origin who endorse brands with self-congruity to consumers’ self-concepts (balanced state) affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to other (balanced and imbalanced) SMI/brand pairings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H 4a</strong></td>
<td>The cultural dimension collectivism increases the overall effects of SMIs on consumers’ purchase intentions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Overview of hypotheses
Source: Own Illustration

| H 4b | The cultural dimension power distance leads to different effects of SMIs with analog fame-origin and SMIs with online fame-origin on consumers’ purchase intentions. |
C Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

In chapter B, the research model was proposed and will be empirically validated in this chapter. An experimental analysis was chosen as a research method. As experimental designs are complex procedures and require extensive attention and consideration both before and during the actual survey phase,\textsuperscript{500} the following chapters C 1 and C 2 provide detailed insights regarding the conceptualization of experimental designs in general and the specific experiment in regards to the research model within this work, respectively. In chapter C 3 the results of the experimental study of this work are presented.

The upcoming chapter outlines the fundamental basics of experiments and their relevant statistics. However, the chapter does not provide a complete analysis of experimental research design in general, but rather on those aspects that are necessary and important for the understanding of following chapters.

1 General Requirements for the Conceptualization of Experimental Research

Experimental research is a common method to “test the effect of carefully designed manipulations (...) and to explain why certain effects occur.”\textsuperscript{501} Experiments are also referred to as causal research\textsuperscript{502} because through the application of experiments one can determine whether the change in one variable is caused by changing a specific other variable.\textsuperscript{503} Such causal relationships can only be predicted by experimental designs.\textsuperscript{504}

Experimental designs have to fulfil three conditions in order to predict causality:

1. Concomitant variation
2. Time order of conditions
3. Elimination of other possible causal factors

\textsuperscript{500} Cf. AAKER ET AL. (2013), p. 296.
The first condition refers to the relationship between two variables, which must correlate in order to predict causality. The second condition indicates that the change in one variable should occur before the change in the other variable is observed. The last condition addresses the challenge to reliably predict that the change of the studied variable is the only factor that leads to the change in the dependent variable in the experiment. It needs to be ensured that no other factor, which is not part of the experiment, had any influence in the change of the variable.505

Furthermore, an experiment generally contains three types of variables:

- **Independent variables**: these variables are manipulated (i.e. changed or altered) because they are hypothesized to present the causal influence.

- **Dependent variables**: these variables are the outcome of the experiment and their values are dependent on the manipulation(s) of the independent variable(s).

- **Extraneous variables**: these variables might also affect the changes in the dependent variable.506

The process of the conceptualization of experiments generally consists of three main steps:507

1. **Operationalization of variables**: focuses on the operationalization of the independent and dependent variables, based on the derived hypotheses. To test the hypothesized causal effects of the independent variable, it has to be manipulated accordingly.508 The term manipulation therefore refers to the variation of the variable.509 Dependent variables can be measured via indicators, which are better observable than constructs. Extraneous variables have to be controlled, in order to prevent falsification of the results.510

2. **Choosing an experimental design**: This step generally refers to the definitions of the group and statistical designs. Regarding the group, one can distinguish whether treatment conditions vary between or within groups. Within ex-

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Experimental research, one can choose between a within-subjects design, between-subjects design or a mixed-model design.\textsuperscript{511}

3. **Choosing an experimental setting**: Experimental settings are typically divided into laboratory experiment, which are artificial in nature and field experiments, which take place under realistic and more natural market conditions. Web experiments can be seen as a subset of laboratory experiments, where participants can use their own devices without having to be at the same place geographically.\textsuperscript{512}

Another important aspect of experimental research is the assessment of the quality of the experiment, which is done by assessing the internal and external validity and the construct validity of the experiment.\textsuperscript{513} Internal validity refers to the degree to which the manipulation of the independent variable in fact impacts the change of the dependent variable. Extraneous variables can lower the internal validity of an experiment and should therefore be controlled. While internal validity is of high importance it is not the only criteria which accounts for the overall quality of an experiment.\textsuperscript{514} External validity concerns the generalizability of the results that have been generated with the experimental study. If the results can be generalized and transferred to situations in the real world and to populations outside the experiment, a high degree of external validity is reached.\textsuperscript{515} Construct validity deals with the question whether one actually varies the construct that one aims to vary by manipulating the independent variable.\textsuperscript{516}

## 2 Experimental Study Design

While the previous chapter laid out the requirements for conducting experiments, this chapter presents the specific experimental study design and setting of this work. Additionally, the manipulation of the independent variables as well as the operationali-
zation of the dependent and extraneous variables are presented. Further information will be provided regarding the design of the questionnaire as well as the results of pretests.

To test the within Chapter B derived hypotheses, a full-factorial design with two independent variables was chosen. These first variable is “Origin of Fame of SMI”, which contains two characteristics termed “SMI with online fame-origin” and “SMI with analog fame-origin”. The second variable addresses the type of reported self-congruency with the endorsed brand which is either aimed at ideal congruency or self-congruency with the respondent. As a research design, a between-subjects design was chosen for the purpose of the study. Between-subject designs are characterized by increased internal validity because the causal relationships between independent and dependent variables can be measured independently. However, controlling for extraneous variables is mandatory to ensure that no other manipulations impact the dependent variable.\(^{517}\)

By choosing this type of research design, participants are only exposed to one experimental condition. Considering the control group, the experimental design contains 5 cells (see Figure 25).

![Experimental Design Diagram](image)

**Figure 25: Experimental Design**
Source: Own illustration

2.1. Selection and Manipulation of Independent Variables (Stimuli)

The development of the stimuli and hence the manipulation of the independent variables is one of the most important aspects of experimental research. The challenge within is this work is to develop stimuli that balance both the demands for realism and control. This applies for both independent variables of this work.

As realism is an important requirement in advertising and celebrity research, especially when testing the effects of human endorsers, real persons are chosen to test the hypothesized effects of the different types of the fame-origin of SMIs as well.

In order to select suitable SMI stimuli for this study, a pretest was conducted. The purpose of the pretest was to select a suitable pair of SMIs with either analog or online fame-origin.

Prior to the pretest, with the help of 38 students from the University of Bremen a list of possible SMIs was generated. In the first step, the students were instructed to name all female SMIs they could remember in three minutes. In order to avoid any bias, the differentiation of SMIs according to their fame-origin was explained to them after this task was completed. In the next step, all named female SMIs were categorized as either having gained their fame online or offline. These efforts resulted in a list of 27 possible SMIs and the list was subsequently used for the pretest.

Participants of the pretest were asked to select those SMIs familiar to them and then answered questions regarding their perceived homophily to those SMIs, as well as rating the professional achievements of each selected SMI. These questions were in line with the hypothesized effects of different fame-origins of SMIs derived in chapter B and the pretest should allow for first indications whether these hypothesized effects are already recognizable. Based on the results of this pretest, Angelique Ker-

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520 The pretest was programmed by the author and distributed online. 36 respondents (mean age 26) participated in the pretest. The respondents were German consumers recruited online. The pretest was conducted in the first week of August 2018.
521 The students attended a post-graduate marketing course at the University of Bremen and were asked support the dissertational project in exchange for course credit. The meeting took place on May 30th, 2018.
522 This procedure was done in accordance to OHANIAN (1990), p. 43.
523 Homophily, achievement and attractiveness of SMIs were retrieved by using items from established scales that were also used in the main questionnaire. For further information on the operationalization of constructs see chapter B 2.3.
ber was chosen as a SMI with analog fame-origin and Sophia Thiel was chosen as a SMI with online fame-origin.

Angelique Kerber is a German professional tennis player who has won three Grand Slam titles and 12 WTA titles as well as a silver medal at the summer Olympics in 2016 representing Germany. After having ranked world No. 1 by the Women’s Tennis Association in 2016, Kerber currently ranks as world No. 3. Kerber is also present on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Since she became known to her audience because of her achievements as a professional tennis player, she is a suitable example of a SMI with analog fame-origin.

Sophia Thiel is a German fitness blogger who has been portraying her fitness routines and physical exercises on her social media channels. She is present on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Since she became known through her presence in these channels, she qualifies as an example of a SMI with online fame-origin.

The requirement for realism has also been taken into account regarding the second independent variable of this work. Hence, real brands have been chosen as brand stimuli. To choose a suitable set of brands, another pretest has been conducted.

As with the selection of SMIs before, the same students helped to develop a list of brands for the pretest. The process was the same. Students were asked to name all brands they could think of within three minutes. In the end, a list of 44 brands was derived for the pretest.

Participants of the pretest were first presented with this list of 44 brands and were asked to select those brands that were familiar to them. In the next step, participants were asked to indicate whether the selected brands matched either their actual or ideal selves, respectively.

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527 Cf. OFFICIAL WEBSITE SOPHIA THIEL (2018).
528 FACEBOOK/THIEL (2018); INSTAGRAM/THIEL (2018a); YOUTUBE/THIEL (2018).
529 The pretest was programmed by the author and distributed online. 17 respondents (mean age 26) participated in the pretest. The respondents were German consumers recruited online. The pretest was conducted in the first week of August 2018.
530 Self-congruency and ideal congruency were assessed by using items from established scales also used in the main questionnaire. For further information on the operationalization of constructs see chapter B 2.2 and 2.3.
Based on the results of this pretest, the brands Esprit and Hugo Boss were selected to be used for the main study, as the majority respondents indicated that Esprit was congruent with their actual selves and Hugo Boss matched their ideal selves. Both brands sell clothing, footwear, accessories, and jewelry\(^{531}\) and are therefore an appropriate brand pairing.

Since fashion and beauty brands are commonly endorsed within influencer branding,\(^{532}\) the choice of the brands Esprit and Hugo Boss is suitable for this study. The brands are presented to the participants of the main study in form of white shirts with respective logo prints (see Figure 26). This form of stimuli addresses the realism criterion, as both Esprit and Hugo Boss sell such shirts.\(^{533}\) It is also acceptable to use brand identifiers such as logos in experiments.\(^{534}\)

![Figure 26: Examples of shirts with logo prints by Esprit and Hugo Boss](image)

Source: ESPRIT (2018); HUGO BOSS (2018).

To simulate a real-life endorsement of Esprit and Hugo Boss, respectively, fictitious Instagram posts are created of both Angelique Kerber and Sophia Thiel each wearing a white shirt with a logo print of either of the brands (see Figure 27 and Figure 28). As Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in general\(^{535}\) and

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\(^{531}\) Cf. HUGO BOSS GROUP (2018); ESPRIT GLOBAL IMAGE (2018).


\(^{533}\) Cf. ESPRIT (2018); HUGO BOSS (2018).


\(^{535}\) Cf. WE ARE SOCIAL (2018a).
one of the most important platforms for influencer branding,\textsuperscript{536} the choice of this social media channel is justified.

To prevent eventual impacts of accompanying texts that are usually displayed when viewing Instagram posts on a desktop computer, the manipulation used the presentation of the posts as if they were displayed on a mobile phone. In this case, accompanying texts are not placed as prominently and can therefore be excluded in the manipulation without undermining its realistic appearance. The background of the manipulation was kept neutral as to avoid any influences on the dependent variable due to the attractiveness of the background.\textsuperscript{537} Additionally, the number of likes of the post was manipulated to be the same across all conditions of the experiment. To further increase the realism of the manipulation, the posts used the official Instagram user names of Kerber and Thiel\textsuperscript{538} and also disclosed the commercial nature of the content in line with respective guidelines mandatory in Germany.\textsuperscript{539}

\textsuperscript{536} Cf. HASHOFF (2017), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{537} Cf. JAAKONMÄKI/MÜLLER/VOM BROCKE (2017), p. 1153 et seq.
\textsuperscript{538} Cf. INSTAGRAM/KERBER (2018); INSTAGRAM/THIEL (2018a).
\textsuperscript{539} Cf. WETTBEWERBSZENTRALE (2017).
Figure 27: Manipulation of Independent Variables (Stimuli) with Brand Esprit
Source: Own illustration based on OBS/BARE ESCENTUALS DEUTSCHLAND GMBH/BECKERT (2016) and INSTAGRAM/THIEL (2018b).
As independent variables are manipulated and not directly measured, manipulations checks are used to ensure that the manipulation was perceived by respondents as
intended by the researcher. Construct validity is achieved when the manipulation has a significant main effect on the respective manipulation check variable.

The manipulation check variable for the manipulation of the origin of fame of SMIs was measured on a 1 to 5 semantic differential scale with endpoints being stated as “[SMI] has gained her fame through social media”, and “[SMI] has gained her fame outside of social media”.

Regarding the self-congruency with brands, manipulation check variables were based on SIRGY (1985) and taken from MALÄR ET AL. (2011). The manipulation check variables for self-congruency were formulated as follows: “The personality of [brand] is consistent with how I see myself” and “The personality of [brand] is a mirror image of me”. Manipulation check variables for ideal congruency were formulated as follows: “The personality of [brand] is consistent with how I would like to be” and “The personality of [brand] is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.” Respondents could indicate their agreement or disagreement based on a 5-point Likert scale.

2.2. Operationalization of Moderators and Dependent Variables

The moderator self-esteem is measured by using the well-established self-esteem scale by ROSENBERG (1965). Items are coded so that higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the following 10 items:

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544 Note that items Esteem_02, 05, 06, 08, and 09 are reverse coded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Esteem_01</td>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rosenberg (1965), p. 16 et seq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_02</td>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_03</td>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_04</td>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_05</td>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_06</td>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_07</td>
<td>I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td>Likert-type 5-point format 1 = totally agree 5 = totally disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_08</td>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_09</td>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esteem_10</td>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Measurements of self-esteem based on ROSENBERG (1965), p. 16 et seq.
Source: Own illustration.

The dependent variable purchase intention is measured by using three items based on GREWAL, MONROE and KRISHNAN (1998). The scale was used repeatedly in empirical research and has proven to be a valid and reliable measurement. The items were slightly modified to match the context. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the three items, which are as follows:

## Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

### Table 4: Measurements of Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>PI_1</td>
<td>If I were going to buy a shirt, the probability of buying [brand] is...</td>
<td>Likert-type 5-point format 1 = totally agree 5 = totally disagree</td>
<td>GREWAL/MONROE/KRISHNAN (1998), p. 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PI_2</td>
<td>The probability that I would consider buying a shirt from [brand] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PI_3</td>
<td>The likelihood that I would purchase a shirt of [brand] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own illustration.

Although the constructs homophily and achievement as well as similarity and wishful identification are not directly used in the hypotheses, they were valuable in deriving central hypotheses within this work and therefore included in the questionnaire.

Achievement of SMIs is operationalized by using a slightly altered 5-item scale established by NETEMEYER, BURTON, and LICHTENSTEIN (1995). Respondents were asked to state their agreement or disagreement concerning the following items:

### Table 5: Measurements of Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Ach_1</td>
<td>In a professional sense, [SMI] is a very successful person.</td>
<td>Likert-type 5-point format 1 = totally agree 5 = totally disagree</td>
<td>NETEMEYER/BURTON/LICHTENSTEIN (1995), p. 64.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ach_2</td>
<td>[SMI]'s achievements are highly regarded by others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ach_3</td>
<td>[SMI] is an accomplished person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ach_4</td>
<td>[SMI] is a good example of professional success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ach_5</td>
<td>Others wish they were as successful as [SMI].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own illustration.

Homophily is measured by applying the homophily scale by MCCROSKEY, MCCROSKEY, and RICHMOND (2006). As this scale is empirically validated and has been used...
in academic research before it is a reliable measurement.\textsuperscript{546} Items are coded so that higher scores indicate higher perceived homophily to the respective SMI.\textsuperscript{547} Respondents had to indicate their agreement or disagreement with regard to the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>H_01</td>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t behave like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_02</td>
<td>[SMI] is different from me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_03</td>
<td>[SMI] shares my values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_04</td>
<td>[SMI] treats people like I do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_05</td>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t think like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_06</td>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t share my values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_07</td>
<td>[SMI] is unlike me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_08</td>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t treat people like I do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_09</td>
<td>[SMI] has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_10</td>
<td>[SMI] expresses attitudes different from mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H_11</td>
<td>[SMI] has a lot in common with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Measurements of homophily based on McCroskey/McCroskey/Richmond (2006), p. 23 et seq.
Source: Own illustration.

The desire to be like a certain SMI was measured by using the wishful identification scale established by Hoffner and Buchanan (2005). Respondents had to indicate their agreement or disagreement concerning the following five statements,\textsuperscript{548} whereby higher scores indicate higher wishful identification.\textsuperscript{549}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


\textsuperscript{547} Note that items H_01, 02, 05, 06, 07, 08, and 10 are reverse coded.

\textsuperscript{548} Items WI_4 and WI_5 have been slightly altered to match the context of this work.

\textsuperscript{549} Note that item WI_5 is reverse coded.
Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

Table 7: Measurements of wishful identification based on HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005), p. 347.
Source: Own illustration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wishful Identification</th>
<th>WI_1</th>
<th>[SMI] is the sort of person I want to be like myself.</th>
<th>Likert-type 5-point format 1 = totally agree 5 = totally disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WI_2</td>
<td>Sometimes I wish I could be more like [SMI].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WI_3</td>
<td>[SMI] is someone I would like to emulate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WI_4</td>
<td>I’d like to do the kinds of things [SMI] does.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WI_5</td>
<td>I would never want to act the way [SMI] does.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarity identification is measured by applying a 4-item scale which was also used by HOFFNER and BUCHANAN (2005). Equivalent to the measurements for wishful identification, respondents had to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the following items. Again, higher scores indicate higher similarity identification with the respective SMI.

Table 8: Measurements of similarity identification based on HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005), p. 347.
Source: Own illustration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td>SI_1</td>
<td>[SMI] thinks like me.</td>
<td>Likert-type 5-point format 1 = totally agree 5 = totally disagree</td>
<td>HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005), p. 347.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI_2</td>
<td>[SMI] behaves like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI_3</td>
<td>[SMI] is like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI_4</td>
<td>[SMI] is similar to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3. Operationalization of Extraneous Variables (Control Variables)

To ensure that the effects of the dependent variable can be attributed to the manipulation of the independent variables and are not caused by factors outside of the intended manipulation, control variables are included in the questionnaire.

The control variables are derived from established research models regarding the effects of celebrities within advertising. At first, the source credibility model by HOVLAND and WEISS (1951) and the source attractiveness model by McGUIRE (1985) were taken into consideration for this section. These models have been used repeatedly concerning the effects of (famous) human endorsers on differing dependent variables such as purchase intention, brand recognition and recall, as well as attitude toward the brand or advertisement, respectively, and other brand-related outcomes.

Within this work, scales for the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model are based on OHANIAN (1990), whose scale development showed that the effects of both models can be attributed to the (physical) attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of an endorser. The dimensions are operationalized by 5 items each (see tables 9, 10, and 11). Respondents were asked to indicate how they perceived the SMI on a 5-point semantic differential scale for each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>Att_1</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is attractive / unattractive.</td>
<td>5-point semantic differential scale</td>
<td>OHANIAN (1990), p. 50.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att_2</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is classy / not classy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att_3</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is beautiful / ugly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att_4</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is elegant / plain.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Att_5</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is sexy / not sexy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Measurements of attractiveness based on OHANIAN (1991), p. 50.
Source: Own illustration.

550 Cf. KAHLE/HOMER (1985); OHANIAN (1991); LAFFERTY/GOLDSMITH (1999); ROSSITER/SMIDTS (2012).
551 Cf. KAHLE/HOMER (1985); LAFFERTY/GOLDSMITH (1999); SPRY/PAPPU/CORNWELL (2011); ELSSEND/LANGNER (2010);
552 Cf. OHANIAN (1990), p. 47. Expertise can be defined as „the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be the source of valid assertions.“ (ERDOGAN (1999), p. 298). Trustworthiness is defined as „the degree of confidence consumers place in a communicator’s intent to convey the assertions s/he considers most valid.“ (OHANIAN (1990), p. 41).
Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

### Construct | Label | Items | Scale | Source
---|---|---|---|---
Trustworthiness | Trust_1 | I think [SMI] is dependable / undependable. | 5-point semantic differential scale | OHANIAN (1990), p. 50.  
| Trust_2 | I think [SMI] is honest / dishonest. |  
| Trust_3 | I think [SMI] is reliable / unreliable. |  
| Trust_4 | I think [SMI] is sincere / insincere. |  
| Trust_5 | I think [SMI] is trustworthy / untrustworthy. |  

Table 10: Measurements of trustworthiness based on OHANIAN (1991), p. 50.  
Source: Own illustration.

### Construct | Label | Items | Scale | Source
---|---|---|---|---
Expertise | Expert_1 | I think [SMI] is an expert / not an expert. | 5-point semantic differential scale | OHANIAN (1990), p. 50.  
| Expert_2 | I think [SMI] is experienced / inexperienced. |  
| Expert_3 | I think [SMI] is knowledgeable / unknowledgeable. |  
| Expert_4 | I think [SMI] is qualified / unqualified. |  
| Expert_5 | I think [SMI] is skilled / unskilled. |  

Table 11: Measurements of expertise based on OHANIAN (1991), p. 50.  
Source: Own illustration.

Another potential factor that could impact the dependent variable is the likeability of the endorser. In their meta-analysis, AMOS, HOLMES, and STRUTTON (2008) found the likeability of an endorser to be a highly influential source effect. Therefore, potential effects from this factor are controlled for in this study.

---


For the questionnaire, likeability was operationalized by using a 3-item 5-point semantic differential scale based on UM (2008) and TRIPP, JENSEN, and CARLSON (1994; see table 12). As with previous scales before, respondents should indicate how they perceived the SMI regarding the following three statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like_2</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is very pleasant / very unpleasant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like_3</td>
<td>I think [SMI] is very agreeable / very disagreeable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own illustration.

As has been described earlier within this work, the match-up hypothesis is concerned with the “fittingness” between the endorser and the brand or product, respectively. Research has shown, that a fit between endorser and the endorsed brand and/or product can impact brand objectives, i.e. attitudes toward the brand, brand evaluations and purchase intentions of consumers. To ensure that the results regarding the dependent variable are not impacted by an insufficient fit between the SMI and the brand and between the SMI and the product (shirt with logo print), respondents had to evaluate three statements regarding the SMI/brand-fit and the SMI/product fit, respectively (see tables 13 and 14). The operationalization of this construct was based on TILL and BUSLER (2000) and reads as follows:

---

To control for any already existing attitudes respondents had regarding the brand presented in the questionnaire, 4-items measured their attitudes toward the brand. The measures were taken from MITCHELL and OLSON (1981). Respondents were asked to evaluate the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BFit_2</td>
<td>I think [SMI] and [Brand] go together / do not go together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BFit_3</td>
<td>I think [SMI] and [Brand] fit together / do not fit together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMI/Product Fit</td>
<td>ProdFit_1</td>
<td>I think [SMI] and the shirt belong together / do not belong together.</td>
<td>5-point semantic differential scale</td>
<td>TILL/BUSLER (2000), p. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ProdFit_2</td>
<td>I think [SMI] and the shirt go together / do not go together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ProdFit_3</td>
<td>I think [SMI] and the shirt fit together / do not fit together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Measurements of SMI/Product fit based on TILL/BUSLER (2008), p. 5. Source: Own illustration.
Additionally, two single items were developed to control for the liking of the product stimulus (shirt with logo print) and the overall liking of the presented manipulated Instagram post based on the second item of the scale by MITCHELL and OLSON (1981).

Also, to account for both SMI and brand familiarity, two single items were implemented based on CHOI and RIFON (2012).\textsuperscript{556}

The items are presented in the following table:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Construct} & \textbf{Label} & \textbf{Items} & \textbf{Scale} & \textbf{Source} \\
\hline
Liking of Product/Post & ProdLike_1 & I like the shirt very much / dislike the shirt very much. & 5-point semantic differential scale & MITCHELL/OLSON (1981), p. 323; CHOI/RIFON (2012), p. 644 \\
\hline
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Measurements of attitude toward the brand based on MITCHELL/OLSON (1981), p. 323}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{556} Cf. CHOI/RIFON (2012), p. 644.
2.4. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire\textsuperscript{557} was distributed to an online panel with the help of a market research agency. The design of the questionnaire followed recommendations of relevant literature.\textsuperscript{558}

The recommendations included:\textsuperscript{559}

- Providing a welcome screen
- Providing a progress indicator
- Allowing for a break and later return to the questionnaire
- Offering detailed instructions
- Placing only a few questions on one screen to avoid the need for scrolling
- Offering an option to not answer a question
- Ensuring anonymity throughout the questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire also allowed respondents to reply to the questions via smartphones or other mobile devices.

The sequence of measures in the questionnaire also followed academic recommendations and standards.\textsuperscript{560} The questionnaire began with a short introduction and briefing. Respondents were informed that the goal of the study was gather information about how customers generally perceive SMI. The purpose of the study was kept very vague in order to avoid so-called demand effects. Such effects occur if respondents are aware of the objectives of the study and subsequently decide to either counteract or act as a “good subject” and behave in line with the research objectives.\textsuperscript{561}

After the introduction, respondents were asked to indicate their gender, age and how often they generally use social media. These questions served as screen-out questions and excluded respondents who do not represent the target group of this exper-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{557} Cf. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. It should be noted that due to conducting the study with German respondents, all items were translated into German.
\item \textsuperscript{560} Cf. GEUENS/DE PELSMAACKER (2017), p. 88.
\item \textsuperscript{561} Cf. ORNE (1962), p. 779 et seq.; ROSNOW/ROSENTHAL (1997), p. 41 et seq.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
iment and who could threaten the generalizability or the results. The target group consisted of female respondents between the age of 18 to 35 years, who use social media at least once a month. Male respondents were excluded from this study because the stimuli used were female and previous research showed that identification processes are mostly directed at persons of the same gender as objects for identification. Also, as the use of social media is generally higher for younger generations, respondents above the age of 35 have been excluded from the experiment. A minimum use of social media at least once a month was required because SMIs mostly act on these platforms and respondents should be at least somewhat familiar with these type of media platforms.

The presentation of the manipulation followed the screen-out questions. Respondents were exposed to either of the four scenarios. After that, respondents were asked to answer questions regarding the dependent variable. This sequence of measures is recommended to avoid any bias regarding the dependent variable that can be caused by placing other stimulus-relevant measures first. Based on the same reasoning, the measurements for the mediator self-esteem directly followed the measurements for the dependent variable. Subsequently, respondents were instructed to answer questions regarding the manipulation check variables as well as control variables. A realism check was placed before the sociodemographic questions. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were thanked for their participation and then debriefed.

2.5. Pre-Test

To ensure that that all manipulations work as intended, a pre-test was conducted. Furthermore, the purpose of the pre-test was to check for comprehensibility of the questionnaire and necessary time to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was tested by 43 female students from the University of Bremen, who are similar in demographic characteristics to the target participants. The students completed the questionnaire within 6 to 8 minutes. This length was expected

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562 See for example MACCOBY/WILSON (1957); HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005); STEINKE ET AL. (2012).
564 The sequence of measurements in the questionnaire for the control group was essentially the same. However, all measurements regarding the SMI were excluded. The questionnaire for the control group and the stimuli used in this questionnaire can be found in Appendix B and C, respectively.
and was substantially lower than the recommended maximum length of questionnaires of 30 minutes. From the subsequent sample, 8 cases had to be eliminated due to missing values, resulting in a final sample of 35 respondents in the pre-test.

To assess the origin of fame, respondents were asked to indicate whether the SMI gained her fame through social media or outside of social media by using a 5-point semantic differential scale where the lowest value indicated that the SMI gained her fame entirely through social media and the highest value indicated the opposite. A T-test was performed to test whether respondents perceived the origin of fame of the selected SMIs correctly. The mean value for Kerber was \( M_{FO_Kerber} = 4.2 \) and for Thiel \( M_{FO_Thiel} = 1.1 \), the differences were highly significant (\( p<.000 \)). Therefore, the manipulation of the different types of fame-origin represented by the SMI has worked as intended.

Respecting the ideal congruity with the selected brands, respondents indicated a higher ideal congruency with Hugo Boss (\( M_{ID_Boss} = 1.8 \)) than with Esprit (\( M_{ID_Esprit} = 1.5 \)). Due to the small sample size these differences were not significant. However, it is expected that with a higher sample size the differences in the mean values will become significant and the differences in the mean values will also become more pronounced. It is therefore concluded that the manipulations worked as intended.

A realism check was included in the questionnaire to ensure that respondents perceived the experimental scenarios as realistic. The realism check was adapted from KARANDE/MAGNINI/TAM (2007). Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all realistic; 5 = very realistic) how realistic they thought the manipulated post was. According to the mean value (\( M_{real} = 2.85, \ SD = 1.22 \)), the overall realism was not satisfactory, as the measure was below the scale midpoint of 3.

A more detailed analysis of the mean values of the realism measure revealed that the most realistic scenario was Thiel endorsing Hugo Boss (\( M_{real} = 3.20, \ SD = 1.03 \)), followed by Kerber endorsing Esprit (\( M_{real} = 3.00, \ SD = 1.22 \)). Below the scale midpoint fell the scenarios of Kerber endorsing Hugo Boss (\( M_{real} = 2.89, \ SD = 1.27 \)) and Thiel endorsing Esprit (\( M_{real} = 2.14, \ SD = 1.35 \)).

Therefore, necessary steps were taken to enhance the realistic appearance of the experimental scenarios. First, a short description was included in the Instagram

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posts, which read: “Outfit of the day”. The description was followed by a matching emoticon and accompanied by the hashtags “#esprit” and “#ad” to further disclose the commercial nature of the post. Such descriptions, which consist of a mixture of text elements, emoticons and hashtags are common for posts on Instagram and should increase the realistic appearance of the post.

In the next step, the background was changed. The initial motive for a neutral background was to not add any influences on the dependent variable caused by the attractiveness of the background. However, such a complete neutrality may have lowered the realistic appearance of the background and the post in general. To keep the background as neutral as possible, while at the same time allow for a more natural and realistic scenario, a stone wall was chosen as a background. The background also appeared in a post from Thiel on Instagram\(^{567}\) and thus seemed suitable for the main study. The revised scenarios are presented in Figure 29 and Figure 30.

The heightened realism of the revised scenarios was confirmed in qualitative interviews with eight research assistants employed at the Chair of Innovative Brand Management of the University of Bremen. The interviews took place during the last week of October 2018.

\(^{567}\) Cf. Instagram/Thiel (2018c).
Figure 29: Revised Manipulation of Independent Variables (Stimuli) with Brand Esprit
Source: Own illustration based on OBS/BARE ESSENTIALS DEUTSCHLAND GMBH/BECKERT (2016) and INSTAGRAM/THIEL (2018b).
Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

Figure 30: Revised Manipulation of Independent Variables (Stimuli) with Brand Hugo Boss

Source: Own illustration based on OBS/BARE ESSENTUALS DEUTSCHLAND GMBH/BECKERT (2016) and INSTAGRAM/THIEL (2018b).
2.6. Selection of the Country for Cultural Comparison

Hypotheses 4a and 4b are concerned with the impact the cultural dimensions collectivism and power distance have regarding the overall effects of SMI s on consumers’ purchase intentions. To compare the results of the study of German consumers within this work and test these hypotheses, Russia has been selected as a country of comparison.

The decision to compare German consumers to Russian consumers has been made due to two main reasons. First, Germany and Russia differ greatly regarding the extents to which the collectivism and power distance dimensions are manifested (see Figure 31). Regarding the collectivism dimension, Germany can be categorized as an Individualist culture (score 67), where the uniqueness of the own self and the self-actualization motive are important drivers for an individual’s behavior. Russia, on the other hand, is characterised as a more collectivistic culture (score 39), in which not only those relationships with immediate family members are considered as very important, but also with extended family members, as well as friends and other social groups, such as neighbours or colleagues.

With respect to the power distance dimension, Germany is characterized as a lower power distant country (score 35), whereas the Russian culture displays a high discrepancy between lesser and more powerful members of their society (score 93). In Russia, status roles are of utmost importance and behaviour reflects and represents them at all times, while in Germany, communication is generally based on participation of every member of the society. Based on these cultural differences, Germany and Russia provide an excellent example to test hypothesized effects of the cultural dimensions collectivism and power distance.

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568 Cf. HOFSTEDE INSIGHTS (2018b).
569 Cf. HOFSTEDE INSIGHTS (2018b).
570 Cf. HOFSTEDE INSIGHTS (2018b).
571 Cf. HOFSTEDE INSIGHTS (2018b).
The second factor that contributed to the selection of Russia is the intense use of social media of Russian consumers. Nearly 68 million consumers are active users of social media in Russia.\textsuperscript{572} The most prominent platforms are YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, which are also popular in Germany. However, country-specific platforms such as Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki are also prevalent in the Russian social media landscape.\textsuperscript{573}

Additionally, brand endorsements by SMI\textsuperscript{s} are also of importance for Russian consumers: according to a study conducted by PRT Edelman Affiliate in cooperation with MEDIASCOPE, 66 per cent of respondents stated that they would learn about trends from SMI\textsuperscript{s}. Half of the respondents also believed that the recommendations of SMI\textsuperscript{s} helps them to determine which brands to purchase.\textsuperscript{574} Consequently, Russia provides ideal conditions with respect to the intercultural orientation of this work.

The selection of stimuli for the Russian study was based on the selection of stimuli for the study in Germany. Maria Sharapova was chosen as stimuli representing a SMI with analog origin of fame. Equivalent to Angelique Kerber, Sharapova is a pro-

\textsuperscript{572} Cf. WE ARE SOCIAL (2018c), p. 131.
\textsuperscript{573} Cf. WE ARE SOCIAL (2018c), p. 132.
\textsuperscript{574} Cf. MEDIASCOPE (2017). The study was conducted in 2017. 702 participants of cities with a population of at least 100 thousand inhabitants participated in the study. Participants were aged between 14 to 45 years. Cf. MEDIASCOPE (2017).
fessional tennis player, who has won five Grand Slam and 36 WTA titles throughout her career. Sharapova also represented Russia in the 2012 summer Olympics, where she won a silver medal. Time magazine named Sharapova one of the “30 Legends of Women’s Tennis: Past, Present and Future”. Sharapova has profiles on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and is therefore a suitable stimulus for the study in Russia.

The Russian SMI with online fame-origin is represented by Maria Khlopnikova, who portrays her fitness routines and exercises on Instagram. Equivalent to Sophia Thiel in Germany, Khlopnikova became known to her audience due to her presence on social media and thus qualifies as an SMI with online fame-origin.

To enhance the comparability of the results, the brand stimuli were kept equal to the German sample as were the general parameter of the manipulation of stimuli. For the Russian study, similar types of white shirts with logo imprints were used as brand/product stimuli, the background was kept neutral and the stimuli were manipulated to appear in a fictitious Instagram post. To enhance the realism of the posts as much as possible, the official Instagram user names of Sharapova and Khlopnikova were used. Equivalent to the German study, the presentation of the posts was manipulated to appear as if it were displayed on a mobile phone. The number of likes were kept equal to the German manipulation as were the mandatory statements regarding the advertisement disclosures.

The final manipulations of the stimuli are presented in Figure 32 and Figure 33 below.

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575 Cf. OFFICIAL WEBSITE MARIA SHARAPOVA (2018); WTA TENNIS (2018).
576 Cf. OFFICIAL WEBSITE MARIA SHARAPOVA (2018); WTA TENNIS (2018).
577 Cf. TIME (2014).
Figure 32: Manipulation of Independent Variables (Stimuli) with Brand Esprit for Russian Respondents
Source: Own illustration based on SHARAPOVA (2012) and INSTAGRAM/KHLOPNIKOVA (2016).
Figure 33: Manipulation of Independent Variables (Stimuli) with Brand Hugo Boss for Russian Respondents

Source: Own illustration based on SHARAPOVA (2012) and INSTAGRAM/KHLOPNIKOVA (2016).
3 Results of the German Sample

3.1. Sample Selection, Data Check and Data Cleansing of the German Sample

In order to achieve enough statistical power for analysis in general, a target minimum of 30 participants per cell should be reached, which are sufficient for statistical analysis, according to Van Voorhis/Morgan (2007).\(^{580}\)

The online survey was distributed to a German online-panel with the help of a market research agency. The data collection took place from November 7\(^{th}\) to November 15\(^{th}\), 2018. In order to have a sufficiently large buffer before data cleansing, the market research agency was commissioned to fulfil certain quota for each cell. Therefore, it was aimed to reach 110 completed questionnaires per cell, including the control group. All participants were randomly assigned to one of the test groups. Screening questions ensured that only female respondents between 18 and 35 years of age who use social media at least once a month were included in the study. The analysis of demographic data reveals that respondents have been targeted as intended. Respondents were between the age of 18 and 35, with the mean age being 26 years. 73 per cent of respondents indicated that they use social media several times per day and 20 per cent of respondents stated that they use social media on a daily basis, indicating an overall heavy use of social media of the respondents.

To further secure the quality and validity of the data set, cases in which more than 30 per cent of answers were missing, were excluded from further analyses.\(^{581}\) As no questionnaire showed a variance of zero, no cases had to be eliminated based on this criterion. In total, 392 cases were used for the analysis. Data cleansing and response rates are shown in table 16.


Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

3.2. Hypotheses Testing (German Sample)

In the first step of the analysis of the data from the German sample, the mean scores of the realism check measures were compared by performing an ANOVA. For each experimental group, the mean values of the realism measure were greater than the scale mid-point of 3. This ensured that the overall realism of the experiment could be heightened in comparison to the pre-test (see table 18).

It was described in earlier chapters within this work that the fit between the brand and the endorser had to be ensured for traditional advertisements in order to be effective. Therefore, control variables which measured the brand/SMI-fit were added to the questionnaire. The mean scores for the aggregated brand fit variable were greater than the scale mid-point of 3. Conclusively, the pre-requisite of the fit between brands and SMIs can be expected as given (see table 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Main Experimental Groups</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMI/Brand Fit</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Mean values of realism and SMI/brand fit measures (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

In the next step, manipulation checks were conducted. A manipulation check variable tested whether respondents perceived the origin of fame of Kerber and Thiel correctly. Respondents were asked to indicate whether the SMI shown to them in the exper-
iment gained their fame through their presence on social media or outside of social media, respectively, on a 5-point semantic differential scale. A low value indicated that the SMI gained their fame through social media, whereas a high value implies that the SMI reached their fame outside of social media. The manipulation check variable showed a mean value of 4.28 for Angelique Kerber and a mean value of 2.01 for Sophia Thiel, which significantly differed from one another (p<.000), indicating that respondents perceived the fame-origin of the SMIs as intended.

The following manipulation check tested whether the selected brands were congruent with respondent’s ideal selves as intended. Based on the results of the pre-test, it was expected that Esprit is more congruent to respondent’s ideal self-concepts. However, and very much contrary compared to the results of the pre-test, Esprit was more congruent to respondent’s ideal self-concepts than Hugo Boss across all experimental groups. T-Tests were conducted to test whether the mean values differed significantly (see table 19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Self-Congruity</td>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3.706</td>
<td>p&lt;.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td>Esprit</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Descriptive statistics and T-test results for manipulation check of ideal self-congruity with brands (German sample)

Source: Own illustration.

Albeit the differences in the means were not highly significant, they were significant on a 5 per cent level. This indicates that the manipulation of variables regarding the self-congruity of brands for the selected brands has not been perceived by the respondents as initially intended. However, the experiment has been successful in showing a clear distinction of the brands regarding the respondents’ reported ideal self-congruity. Therefore, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test for the interaction effects between the type of SMI, type of brand, and the level of self-esteem of respondents regarding the dependent variable purchase intention, as formulated in the derived hypotheses.

The results of this analysis are presented in table 20. While the impacts of the type of SMI and level of self-esteem of respondents were statistically insignificant, the type

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The level of self-esteem was determined by using the median split of the respective variable. Cases with values beyond the respective median were classified as “low” and cases above the respective median were classified as “high”. The median for self-esteem was 3.8.
of brand was statistically significant (p<.001). Therefore, differences in the assessment of ideal congruity with a given brand can be an important influencing factor of consumers’ purchase intentions. However, given that the manipulation of brands was perceived by respondents diametrically opposed as predicted, this result should be taken with some considerable caution regarding the following interpretation of results within this work.

Nevertheless, given the fact that no interaction term did yield statistically significant results, hypotheses H 1, H 2, as well as H 3a and H3b have to be rejected. This means that no moderating effects of respondents’ self-esteem on purchase intentions exist in this sample. Regardless whether the level of self-esteem is considered jointly with the type of SMI, type of brand, or both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Interaction Effects</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Experimental Groups</td>
<td>Type of SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of Brand</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.094</td>
<td>p&gt;.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of SMI x Level of Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of Brand x Level of Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.144</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of SMI x Type of Brand x Level of Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.343</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Anova results: Significance interaction effects between type of SMI, type of brand, and level of self-esteem (German sample)

Source: Own illustration.

To understand what led to the rejection of the hypotheses, further analyses have been performed. At first, a T-Test was conducted in order to understand whether different levels of brand images between Hugo Boss and Esprit have led to self-congruity assessments of respondents that were opposite compared to the prior expectations. In the experimental groups, the mean value for the brand image of Hugo Boss was $M_{BrandImage_Boss} = 3.46$ and for Esprit $M_{BrandImage_Esprit} = 3.55$. This difference
was not significant. Hence, a difference in perceived brand images can be excluded as the reason for the opposing self-congruity assessments.

However, both brands are positioned differently. Hugo Boss is categorized as being designer fashion, with an emphasis on progressiveness, individualism, and unconventionality. Esprit, on the other hand, highlights their Californian brand origin and focuses on creativity and an effortless style. It is possible that the brand positioning of Esprit, which implied a certain “American Way of Life”, was more appealing to the respondents and thus led to the observed effects regarding the self-congruity.

Nevertheless, it may also be the case that pre-existing assumptions respecting the brands’ overall price ranges may have impacted respondents’ brand perceptions. In general, the costs for the shirts that have been used as product stimuli vary depending on the brand. Esprit charges about 13 Euros, while a similar shirt from Hugo Boss costs approximately 50 Euros. Although the manipulation was carefully designed and did not contain any information in regards to prices of the depicted product stimuli and the logo on the Hugo Boss product stimuli was chosen to reflect a product line of Hugo Boss that contains generally lower-priced products, there is a possibility that respondent’s knowledge about the general price levels of the chosen brands has impacted their self-congruity assessments. Perhaps respondents considered Hugo Boss as generally impossible to afford and therefore the brand was not in their evoked set, which may have led to lower levels of self-congruity. Due to the lower prices, clothing by the brand Esprit is generally easier to afford. It is therefore possible that respondents were more likely to consider the brand as matching to their self-concepts, because an expression of their ideal self-concepts through the brand Esprit seemed more feasible.

To summarize, while the experiment is not regarded as failed per se, the not-predicted perceptions of the brand stimuli are nonetheless taken seriously. Therefore, and also in order to gain as much insight into the data as possible, all following analyses are conducted for each brand separately.

To further ensure that the type of SMI (analog vs. online fame-origin) and respondents self-esteem do have no effect on purchase intention, two additional ANOVAs

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583 Cf. HUGO BOSS (2019a).
584 Cf. ESPRIT (2019a).
585 Cf. ESPRIT (2019b).
586 Cf. HUGO BOSS (2019b).
were performed for each brand. For these analyses, the type of SMI and the level of self-esteem$^{587}$ of respondents were added as independent variables.

For those respondents of the main experimental groups who have seen a scenario with the brand Hugo Boss, no significant effects for the type of SMI nor for the level of self-esteem could be detected (see table 21). The interaction effect between the two independent variables was also not statistically significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Experimental Groups (Hugo Boss)</td>
<td>Type of SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of SMI x Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Anova results: Significance of type of SMI and self-esteem (Hugo Boss, German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

The results are similar for respondents who have seen the brand Esprit in the main experimental groups. Again, no significant effects could be observed for the type of SMI, level of self-esteem, as well as the interaction effect (see table 22).

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$^{587}$ The level of self-esteem was determined by using the median split of the respective variable. Cases with values beyond the respective median were classified as “low” and cases above the respective median were classified as “high”. The median for self-esteem was 3.8.
As both ANOVAS failed to provide significant effects for the type of SMI on respondents' purchase intentions, it can be concluded that the type of SMI, i.e., whether the SMI became known through social media or because of certain achievements outside of social media, does not impact the purchase intention of respondents. Correspondingly, the results give no indication that a moderating effect of the respondents' levels of self-esteem exists. This is insofar plausible, as the data indicate that respondents do not engage in self-comparison with the SMIs based on their origin of fame. Consequently, non-existent self-comparisons cannot be impacted by the self-esteem of the respondents.

As noted earlier within this chapter, the first hypothesis had to be rejected because no effect of the type of SMI based on their origin of fame could be observed. It is thus extremely bewildering that all four in chapter A2 presented studies unanimously come to the conclusion that SMIs with online fame-origin have a more favorable effect on brand outcomes than those SMIs with analog fame-origin. While these studies have already been classified as doubtful due to their fragmented research designs and lacking theoretical foundations, their results become even more questionable given the background of the unverifiable effect SMIs with differing fame-origins have in this study. Therefore, researchers and practitioners alike should exercise caution when being presented with studies that proclaim an overall superiority of SMIs with online fame-origin.

To deeper understand what led to a rejection of H1 and to generate further conclusions regarding the effects (or lack thereof) of SMIs on consumers' purchase intentions, it was investigated whether the degree of purchase intentions' in the main
groups generally differed from those in the control group. Hence, it was aimed to understand whether seeing a brand presented by a SMI in general has a different effect than seeing a brand that is not presented by a SMI.

On the first glance, according to the mean values of the dependent variable purchase intention (see table 23), it seems that the levels of purchase intention of the control groups outperform those of the experimental groups. From the comparison of these means alone one might conclude that SMIs who present a certain brand even lower the purchase intention of consumers. Yet when ANOVA analyses and post-hoc tests are performed, one can observe that the differences in the mean values of the control groups compared to the respective control groups are not significant (see again table 23). Based on this analysis, it now seems that while cooperating with SMIs does not lead to a damaging effect for the brand, brands also do not gain any noticeable advantage from such cooperations, regardless of whether they gained their fame through social media or by certain achievements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss x Kerber</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss x Thiel</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit x Kerber</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit x Thiel</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Esprit</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Mean values of purchase intention for main groups and control groups (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

However, such a conclusion would be premature. When the concepts of similar and wishful identification – which were essential in generating H 1 – with SMIs are taken into account, a more nuanced picture emerges (see table 24).
As can be seen for respondents who have seen an experimental scenario involving the brand Hugo Boss and who have reported a high wishful or similarity identification, the means of the purchase intentions for these cases exceed those of the control group. Low levels of wishful identification and similarity identification lead to lower levels of purchase intentions in general and compared to the control group. The same holds true for respondents who have seen an experimental scenario with the brand Esprit. ANOVAs and post-hoc tests revealed that the differences in the mean values regarding high and low wishful identification and high and low similarity identification are significant (p<.000) in both experimental groups regarding Esprit and Hugo Boss.

Yet this is not always the case regarding the mean values of purchase intention of the different levels of both wishful identification and similarity identification compared to the control group. While means of purchase intention of low levels of both types of identification are always statistically different compared to the control group, no significant differences could be observed for high levels of both identification types compared to the control group (see table 24).

Two first conclusions can be drawn from these results. First, as the p-values show, it seems that low levels of wishful and similarity identification lead to lowered purchase intentions of respondents, compared to the control group. Thus, selecting SMIIs with whom consumers do not identify with could harm brand objectives. Second, high levels of both identification types do not necessarily lead to any significant positive effects of respondents’ purchase intentions.

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588 Levels of identification were determined by using the median split of the respective variables. Cases with values beyond the respective median were classified as “low” and cases above the respective median were classified as “high”. The median for wishful identification was 2.4 and the median for similarity identification was 2.0, respectively.

589 It is pointed out that there exists a possibility that given a higher sample size, effects that are currently not significant may become significant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Type of Identification with SMI</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance (main group compared to control group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Group Hugo Boss</strong></td>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>p&lt;.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>p&lt;.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group Hugo Boss</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Group Esprit</strong></td>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>p&lt;.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>p&lt;.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group Esprit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Mean values of purchase intention for main groups divided by levels of wishful identification and similarity identification (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.
However, given that in the overall German sample, i.e., when it is not divided by brand, the mean values of wishful identification ($M_{WI} = 2.48$) and similarity identification ($M_{SI} = 2.07$) are generally low, these first conclusions have to be somewhat relativized. Given that identification in general is a long-term process, it was not expected that respondents in the experiment would report exceptionally high levels of identification from being shown one single post. Therefore, the assumption that high levels of both types of identification also lead to heightened purchase intentions should not be hastily dismissed, as the differences in the mean values of the dependent variable provide first indications that indeed high levels of identification can lead to more favorable brand objectives, despite not being statistically significant.

Nonetheless, insignificant effects could have also occurred due to a relatively small sample size, despite having laid particular importance to ensure that the number of cases in each cell exceeded the required minimum of 30 cases. However, this figure is only a rule of thumb and does not guarantee for enough statistical power to detect small or medium-sized effects.\footnote{Cf. COHEN (1990), p. 1304. Some researchers even go so far as to call out this figure as “shamanism”, as there is a lack of evidence for the support of this – or any other – number regarding the minimum requirements of sample/cell sizes. Cf. CHAKRAPANI (2011), p. 16.} Yet, while a larger sample size is always more desirable, each research is subject to practical considerations and investing more resources is not always feasible.

Nevertheless, given the results of this study, there seems to be a certain risk for brand managers to damage their brand outcomes if they chose to cooperate with SMIs with whom their target group does not identify with.

To further examine the effects of respondents’ wishful and similarity identification with SMIs and to gain deeper insights as to how these types of identification affect the dependent variable, further analyses which also included control variables had to be performed. Especially relevant were variables that corresponded to the (physical) attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of a SMI,\footnote{Note that for analyses, the items regarding attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and likeability of SMIs were aggregate into a single variable.} since these variables correspond to the source credibility and source attractiveness models which are established in the classic celebrity research literature, as explained before. As previously noted, the purchase intentions of both brands Hugo Boss and Esprit are examined separately due to the unsuspected perceptions of the manipulated brand stimuli.

The sample size did not allow for analyses of covariates (ANCOVAs) which would have included both high and low levels of wishful and similarity identification as inde-
Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

pendent variables together in a single examination, as half of the sell sizes were below the recommended minimum of 30 participants and the other half of the cells did only marginally exceed this recommended figure (see table 25). If further independent variables or covariates are taken into account, the cell sizes are reduced even further.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Experimental Groups</th>
<th>Cell Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: Cell sizes for main groups divided by levels of wishful identification and similarity identification (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

However, this obstacle could be overcome with linear regression analysis. Another benefit of linear regression analysis is the possibility to measure the collective impact of more than one independent variable on the outcome variable. It therefore allows for a prediction of the outcome variable, which is not possible with simple ANOVAs. In addition, in order to conduct ANOVAs, categorized independent variables are necessary. Therefore, within this work, all independent variables were categorized artificially. As explained earlier, for example, the independent variable wishful identification was categorized into low and high levels of wishful identification by using the median split. This artificial categorization is not necessary for a linear regression analysis, which allows to include the variable in its continuous state. Another central reason to also include linear regression analysis within this work is the possibility to reduce the omitted variable bias. ANOVA only allows for a pairwise comparison of only one independent variable (e.g. in the context of this work, low and high levels of similarity identification). However, in such cases the impact of other possible factors is neglected. This may lead to biased results and ultimately false conclusions based on the generated results. KING, KEOHANE and VERBA (1994) state: “(...) if relevant

variables are omitted, our ability to estimate causal inferences correctly is limited. The authors therefore suggest to include control variables into one’s analyses.

As linear regression analyses allowed for the inclusion of more than one independent variable and therefore restrictions due to the sample size could be avoided with this type of analyses, these analyses were performed instead of ANCOVAs.

Since multiple studies have shown that the image of a brand impacts purchase intentions of consumers, the brand image variable was added as another independent variable. This was done to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of wishful and similarity identification while at the same time accounting for the effect the brand image has on respondents’ purchase intentions. The key results are presented in table 26 for the experimental groups whose participants saw the brand Hugo Boss. The model is highly significant (p<.000) and explains 41 per cent of variety of purchase intentions of this group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>R² corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.21</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.95</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>-3.09</td>
<td>p&lt;.003</td>
<td>-.400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Linear regression results: significance of independent variables for Hugo Boss (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

As expected, the brand image is highly significant and positively affects respondents’ purchase intentions. Interestingly, no significant effect for wishful identification could

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be observed. Also surprising is the result regarding the perceived expertise of the SMI, which has a significant negative effect on consumers purchase intentions for the Hugo Boss brand. This regression also fails to support findings from existing celebrity research in regards to the importance of endorsers’ attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise or likeability. Not only are the impacts of these factors not significant, but for some brands like Hugo Boss even negative effects on purchase intentions emerge. In this case it even seems that for higher-priced brands, the expertise of a SMI is harmful for the purchase intention.

The result on expertise confirms previous theoretical and empirical findings that for products and brands with dominating non-functional brand benefits the impact of expertise of an endorser diminishes.\(^{596}\) In this case, the effect is even negative.

It may be that if brands which offer a certain prestige, like Hugo Boss, to their consumers, are presented by endorsers with high expertise leads consumers to perceive the endorser as too superior in comparison to themselves. Such social comparisons, in which the gap between the consumer and the endorser is perceived as too wide by the consumer, can lead to feelings of inferiority, jealousy, or envy.\(^{597}\) It is possible that the expertise of the chosen SMIs reminded the respondents of their own (subjectively perceived) inferiority and that they tried to emotionally distance themselves from them. This feeling of inferiority may be then further strengthened by the fact that the SMI was presenting a higher-priced brand that is positioned in the luxury sector, which even made the possibility to eventually close the “social gap” between the SMI and the respondents even more unlikely. Ultimately in this case, the expertise of the SMI may have been perceived as arrogance, which ultimately led to reactance regarding this characteristic.

Another possible factor that explains the negative effect of expertise may be that within influencer branding and social media, women are mostly concerned with female stereotyped topics such as beauty and fashion. Their content is mainly characterized as being a hobby and as something that exists as a passion in their private life. Male SMIs, however, deal with a greater variety of topics and base their content on their competence and expertise. Moreover, they present their social media activities as their profession.\(^{598}\) Therefore, male and female gender-stereotypes exist.\(^{599}\)

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\(^{598}\) Cf. MALISA STIFTUNG (2019); KIESLER (2019).

\(^{599}\) Cf. MALISA STIFTUNG (2019); KIESLER (2019).
within social media in which females’ expertise is of subordinate relevance. Therefore, it may be that the expertise of the selected SMIs was not accepted by the respondents because this characteristic was not in line with their stereotype-like expectations of how a female SMI should present herself.

The results of the regression analysis for the brand Esprit are presented in table 27. This model is also highly significant and even accounts for almost 52 per cent of the variance in purchase intentions for Esprit. For this brand, no significant impact could be found for the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model. Moreover, only significant effects for the brand image – as expected – and the similarity identification with a given SMI could be observed. This further substantiates previous findings that the origin of fame of SMIs is not relevant regarding consumer’s purchase intentions, but that these intentions are rather driven by similarity identification.

Hence, the results show that respondents’ wishful identification with SMIs has no significant effect on the purchase intentions of consumers, regardless which brand was presented to the respondents in the experiment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>R² Corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.67</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.279</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: Linear regression results: significance of independent variables for Esprit (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Conclusively, it could be verified that respondents’ similarity identification with SMIs is an important factor which influences the dependent variable. However, respondents' wishful identification with SMIs does not lead to heightened purchase intentions.
Therefore, in Germany, the desire to be like the object of identification does not translate into a behavioral change regarding the purchase of a given brand.

For SMI-related characteristics such as the perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, or likeability no significant positive effects could be detected and the observed effect of expertise of SMIs is even negative for higher-priced premium brands. This is plausible for the following reasons. While attractiveness or trustworthiness, for example, can increase consumers’ acceptance of a promotional message, they do not necessarily lead to an immediate internalization of attitudes and values\textsuperscript{600}. Such an internalization of values and attitudes, however, lead to behavioral change, which is the core principle of identification in general. An individual subsequently adopts the behavior of the object of identification after having internalized the attitudes and values of the object of identification. The final consequence of identification is the imitation of the behavior of the object of identification. Imitation, however, is not the final consequence of judgments made regarding the attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise or likeability of an endorser. It is thus likely possible that a consumer regards a SMI as attractive or likeable, but that these perceptions do not ultimately result in a behavioral consequence like imitation of a portrayed behavior.

Furthermore, the results regarding wishful and similarity identification also help to understand why the origin of fame of the selected SMIs in the experiment does not impact the purchase intentions of respondents. In earlier sections of this work, it was argued that the source of analog fame-origin lies in certain achievements, e. g. the titles Kerber has won in important tournaments, which in turn lead to wishful identification. It was also argued that a mere presentation of one’s own lifestyle on social media does not suffice for wishful identification to develop. Contrarily, it was reasoned that online fame-origin evokes similarity identification, as SMIs with online fame-origin are often more similar to their followers in regards to their social background and overall attitudes.

However, while the analyses of mean values show that Kerber is seen as somewhat more successful than Thiel in terms of achievement, no significant differences are observable regarding the perceived homophily. Concerning the levels of wishful identification, no significant differences could be detected for Kerber and Thiel. Regarding the levels of similarity identification, respondents indicate a significantly higher similarity identification with Kerber than with Thiel, albeit the differences are noticeably small (see table 28).

\textsuperscript{600} Cf. \textsc{Ohanian} (1990), p. 41
One the first glance, it is somewhat irritating, that no significant differences regarding respondents perceived homophily with either Kerber or Thiel emerge, while at the same time both SMIs significantly differ regarding respondents perceived similarity identification. While it is the case that those two concepts are conceptualized very similarly, different measurements for each concept exist.\(^{601}\)

While the assessment of similarity identification\(^{602}\) is based on intuitive judgments of the respondents regarding the SMI, the scale of homophily\(^{603}\) consists of items that require a high level of knowledge of the selected SMIs. Even with a substantial amount of knowledge regarding a certain SMI, some of these items may be difficult to answer, e.g. “The SMI treats people like I do”. It is possible that differing cognitive requirements regarding the answers to the items may have led to different assessments of the constructs, despite their similar conceptualization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Kerber</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Thiel</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophily Kerber</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophily Thiel</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishful Identification Kerber</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishful Identification Thiel</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity Identification Kerber</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>p&lt;.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity Identification Thiel</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: Mean values of characteristics for Kerber and Thiel (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

These values also present a plausible explanation as to why the origin of fame of SMIs does not significantly impact respondents’ purchase intentions. While differences in similarity identification certainly can explain differing levels of respondents’


purchase intentions, these differences are not reflected in the SMI chosen for this study.

This could imply a certain shift in the overall value that is attributed to fame in the age of social media. For previous generations, some kind of achievement or rare talent was necessary to become well respected and subsequently famous. However, with social media, anyone can become famous who is able to present their personality effectively in channels such as Instagram or YouTube. Idealizations are no longer exclusive to stars and their outstanding personalities, but also occur with SMI whose form of fame was originally attributed to celebrities and who simply became “well-known for their well-knownness.” Stars, however, were thought of as god-like creatures, who do not abide to the standards of the mundane world. Yet with their use of social media, they are now able to present their lifestyle and attitudes to some degree as ordinary and normal. With the emergence of social media, stars are now able to step down from the super-elevated status ascribed to them and create a sense of similarity with their audience, which was not possible prior to social media. As a consequence, both SMI with analog and online fame-origin are able to evoke both forms of identification and the lines between stardom and celebrity-status become increasingly blurred. Hence, while only one form of identification impacts purchase intentions of consumers, a clear allocation of similarity identification (and wishful identification) to the different forms of fame-origin is difficult and will become even more difficult in the future.

3.3. Further Results regarding the Impact of SMI on Brand Images (German Sample)

As with the dependent variable purchase intention before, it was investigated whether the mean values of the brands’ images differed between the main experimental groups and the control group. This was analysed in order to understand whether the SMI who endorsed the given brands in the experimental settings impacted the brand images of respondents as opposed to respondents who saw the brand without the respective SMI.

The mean values for the brand images are presented in table 29. Two facts are observable regarding the mean values of the brands’ images in the main groups and in the control groups, respectively. First, and as has been observed earlier, the means

---

of the brand images for Hugo Boss and Esprit do not differ significantly within the main groups. Hence, they can be seen as being equally high. This also applies for the brand images within the control group. Again, the brand images do not differ significantly. Second, the brand images do not differ across the main and control groups. This gives the impression that SMIs do not contribute to an enhancement of the brand image, while they also do not impact the brand image negatively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss x Kerber</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss x Thiel</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit x Kerber</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit x Thiel</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Esprit</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29: Anova and post-hoc test results for dependent variable brand image divided by main groups and control group (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Based on these results, brand managers can draw an important conclusion. It seems that SMIs do not contribute to a long-term brand enhancement. Rather, SMIs seem to only affect short-term sale-related measures, as the results regarding the purchase intention of respondents show. These results provide first indication of the existence of a so-called overshadowing effect. This effect, which is also known in advertising literature as vampire effect, describes a situation when a consumer only remembers the endorser in a given advertisement, not the brand that is advertised.\(^{605}\) Vampire effects especially occur when the endorser’s fame draws the attention of consumers away from the brand.\(^{606}\) This further substantiates the power of identification which is tied to the SMI herself, not the brand endorsed by the SMI. Drastically speaking, identification can lead to a blind imitation of the SMIs behaviour regardless which brand is presented, because the brand itself is forced into the background and loses importance.


In order to understand whether the inclusion of SMI-related characteristics such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, or likeability as well as similarity or wishful identification with the SMI lead to more detailed results, ANOVAs and post-hoc tests were performed. However, regarding Hugo Boss, no significant differences concerning the mean values of the brand image could be observed for high and low levels of each variable compared to the control group (see table 30). This gives the impression that no aspect related to SMIs is likely to positively influence the brand image of Hugo Boss. However, given that identification processes in particular are tied to the SMIs, it is not surprising for these aspects to not impact the brand image.

For Esprit, only in the group of high and low likeability, respectively, the mean value of the brand image differed significantly from the control group (see table 31). Hence, as the additional analyses regarding Esprit show, the impact of SMIs on brand images seem to be very limited.

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607 Levels of attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and likeability of SMIs were determined by using the median split of the respective variables. Cases with values beyond the respective median were classified as “low” and cases above the respective median were classified as “high”. The median for attractiveness was 3.4, the median for trustworthiness was 3.6, the median for expertise was 3.8, and the median for likeability was 3.67.

608 Note that insignificant effects may also occur due to the low sample size and therefore low cell sizes. It is possible that with increasing sample size, some effects may become significant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristic of SMI</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance (compared to Control Group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Low Attractiveness</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Similarity Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Hugo Boss Anova and Post-hoc Results for Dependent Variable Brand Image (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.
The sample size does not allow for a combined analysis of all these SMI-related independent variables in a single ANCOVA. However, such an analysis is necessary in order to understand if the brand image is indeed not impacted by any of these variables. As with the analyses regarding respondents purchase intentions before, linear regression allows for a combined analysis of the independent variables in a single analysis. Therefore, linear regression analyses were performed. In accordance with the previous chapter, these analyses were conducted for each brand separately. This

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristic of SMI</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance (compared to Control Group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Group Esprit</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Low Trustworthiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Trustworthiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Low Expertise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Expertise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Low Likeability</strong></td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>p&lt;.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Likeability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>p&lt;.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Low Similarity Identification with the SMI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Similarity Identification with the SMI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Low Wishful Identification with the SMI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Wishful Identification with the SMI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group Esprit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Esprit Anova and post-hoc results for dependent variable brand image (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.
was done firstly to acknowledge for the unsuspected perceptions of the brand stimuli in the experiment and secondly, to gain better insights into the data.

The brand image of Hugo Boss is only affected by wishful identification and the attractiveness of the SMI (see table 32). The model is highly significant ($p<.000$) and accounts for 14 per cent of the variance in the brand image of Hugo Boss. It seems fitting that for higher-priced brands the brand image is impacted by factors that correspond with the self-enhancement motive. For many consumers, higher priced brands are associated with the possibility to enhance their self-esteem. Attractiveness is – especially for women – a factor that elevates their self. The importance of wishful identification for the brand image of higher priced brands is also unsurprising, as the self-enhancement motive is often satisfied by the consumption of such brands. However, wishful identification with SMI is not a sufficient factor to enhance consumers’ behavioral intentions, as the previous analyses have shown. This contrast is rather interesting, as it suggests that wishful identification with the SMI may have a spillover for the brand image, but this effect is not “strong” enough to manifest in consumer’s behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>R$^2$ corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td>Similarity Identification with the SMI</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>$p&lt;.039$</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>$p&lt;.012$</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32: Linear Regression Results: Significance of Independent Variables for the brand image of Hugo Boss (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Regarding the brand Esprit, factors influencing the brand image are the likeability of the SMI and similarity identification (see table 33). Again, the model is highly significant ($p<.000$). This can be explained by applying theoretical findings of the self-consistency motive: it seems that brands that lie within the budget of consumers,
may not be suitable to enhance consumers’ self-concepts but rather confirm it. As a consequence, a sense of similarity with the SMI increases in importance. Simultaneously, other factors that are usually used for personal comparisons, such as attractiveness or expertise, become less prominent. Moreover, the overall likeability of a SMI comes to the forefront. Understandably, the likeability of a SMI does not allow for consumer-SMI comparisons to the same degree as e.g. attractiveness. It is therefore plausible that for the brand Esprit, the likeability of the SMI is an important factor affecting the brand image.

Another possible explanation for the significance of the SMIs likeability lies in the brand positioning, which emphasizes a “sunny Californian attitude” and a specific closeness to their consumers. This strategy leads to a sense of intimacy with the brand for which an overall liking and sympathy of the SMI is necessary, but no specific level of e.g. attractiveness is required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>R² corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>p&lt;.030</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit</td>
<td>with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.99</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.94</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.730</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33: Linear regression results: significance of independent variables for the brand image of Esprit (German sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Furthermore, the corrected R²’s and therefore statistical power of the models may seem relatively low. However, one needs to keep in mind that the experiment only represents a very small part of all branding activities of Hugo Boss and Esprit that have been enforced in the past and contributed to forming a certain brand image in

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609 ESPRIT (2019a).
610 Cf. ESPRIT (2019a).
the minds of respondents. Given this perspective, values of corr. $R^2_{\text{BrandImage_Boss}} = .143$ and corr. $R^2_{\text{BrandImage_Esprit}} = .223$ seem somewhat astounding.

The results concerning brand image as a dependent variable and the factors influencing it further support the observation that established constructs which have been used to explain changes in consumer behavior within celebrity research are less relevant for influencer branding. Instead, brand outcomes are likely to be more dependent similarity identification and – under certain circumstances – wishful identification with SMI. Yet, one should be cautious not to overestimate the impact of both types of identification on the brand images.

4 Results of the Russian Sample

4.1. Sample Selection, Data Check, and Data Cleansing of the Russian Sample

Analog to the German sample, it was aimed to achieve enough statistical power for the analysis of the study in Russia. Therefore, a target minimum of 30 participants was aimed at. The online survey was distributed to a Russian online-panel with the help of the same research agency that carried out the study in Germany. The data collection took place from November 20th to November 26th, 2018. As with the German study, it was arranged with the market research agency to reach a sufficient buffer before data cleansing. It was aimed to reach at least 75 completed questionnaires per cell and 50 per control group.

The same screening questions were used as in the German sample, thus ensuring that the targeted respondents were similar in age, gender, and social media use. The analysis of the demographic data revealed that the Russian respondents have been targeted as intended. The mean age of respondents was 27 years. 54 per cent of respondents stated that they use social media several times per day, while another 30 per cent of respondents indicated that they use social media at least daily. As with the German sample, an overall heavy use of social media could be observed.

To secure the quality and validity of the Russian data set, cases in which more than 30 per cent of answers were missing were excluded from the following analyses. No cases had to be eliminated due to a lack of variance. As a result, 309 cases were suitable for analyses. Table 34 shows the data cleansing and response rates.
4.2. Hypotheses Testing (Russian Sample)

In the first step, analyses regarding the realism of the experiment and the brand-fit of the selected SMIs were performed in order to ensure that the required prerequisites of the experiment were met.

The mean value for the aggregated brand-fit variable was $M_{\text{BrandFit}} = 3.97$, ensuring a sufficient fit between the SMIs and the selected brands. Additionally, the mean value of the realism check variable was $M_{\text{Real}} = 3.53$, which proves to be a satisfying level of realism in the experiment (see table 35).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Main Experimental Groups</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMI/Brand Fit</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35: Mean values of realism and SMI/brand fit measures (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Manipulation checks were conducted in the following step. Concerning the origin of fame, the mean value for the manipulation check variable was $M_{\text{FO_Sharapova}} = 4.19$ (SD = 1.09) for Maria Sharapova and $M_{\text{FO_Khlopnikova}} = 3.03$ (SD = 1.37), respectively.
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The differences in the mean values were statistically significant (p<.000), confirming that the respondents perceived the fame-origin of the SMIs as initially intended.

For both the experimental main groups and the control group no significant differences regarding the ideal self-congruity with either brand could be observed (see table 36). Therefore, in contrast to the German sample before, it has to be noticed that the manipulation of the brands and their respective congruity with respondents’ self-concepts has not worked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Self-Congruity</td>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main Group</td>
<td>Esprit</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>3.119</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Esprit</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 36: Descriptive statistics and T-Test results for manipulation check of ideal self-congruity with brands (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

To allow for comparability of results, the experiment for the study in Russia was designed as carefully as for the German respondents. It did not contain any information on prices of the products and brands used in the experiment. However, it cannot be ruled out that pre-existing assumptions respecting the brands’ general price levels may have impacted respondents’ answers regarding the self-congruity items, as it is the case with the German sample as well. Furthermore, Russian respondents evaluated the brand images of Esprit and Hugo Boss differently. The mean value for brand image of Hugo Boss was $M_{\text{BrandImage_Boss}} = 4.00$ and for Esprit $M_{\text{BrandImage_Esprit}} = 3.69$. The difference was significant (p<.024). These differences may be rooted in the different brand positioning of either brand, which have been described in the previous chapters. It is possible that for Russian consumers, the brand positioning was more appealing to the respondents. Such differences in the perceptions of overall brand images may have further weakened the manipulation of the brand congruity types.

As with the German sample before, an ANOVA analysis was used to test whether the hypothesized main effects significantly impacted the purchase intentions of respondents (see table 36). The first main effect concerned the effect of different types of SMIs. This effect was not statistically significant. The second main effect considered the type of brands. It was tested whether the type of brand impacted the purchase intentions of consumers differently. The results of the ANOVA also show that the type
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of brand does not impact the purchase intentions of respondents significantly. Given the failed manipulation, this result is not surprising. Conclusively, all following analyses are performed for each brand separately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Experimental Groups</td>
<td>Type of SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Brand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.387</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SMI x Type of Brand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37: Anova results: significance of type of SMI and type of brand (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

In order to test H1 for the Russian sample again and to examine whether the type of SMI does not impact purchase intentions in the second sample as well, two additional ANOVAs were performed for each brand. Again, the type of SMI and the level of self-esteem⁶¹¹ of respondents were added as independent variables.

No significant effects could be observed regarding the main effect of the type of SMI and the main effect concerning the level of self-esteem. However, a significant effect could be observed for the interaction of both variables for respondents who have seen an experimental scenario including Hugo Boss (see table 38).

⁶¹¹ The level of self-esteem was determined by using the median split of the respective variable. Cases with values beyond the respective median were classified as “low” and cases above the respective median were classified as “high”. The median for self-esteem in the Russian sample was 3.7.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Experimental Groups (Hugo Boss)</td>
<td>Type of SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>1.019</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of SMI x Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.364</td>
<td>p&lt;.023</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 38: Anova results: Significance of type of SMI and self-esteem (Hugo Boss, Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

A visualization of the interaction effect provides insights into the nature of the interaction (see Figure 34). It shows that for low self-esteem, the purchase intentions of consumers are generally higher if they have seen an experimental scenario with Maria Sharapova, who is of analog fame-origin, compared to the purchase intentions of those respondents who were given an experimental scenario with Maria Khlopnikova. The opposite is true for respondents with high levels of self-esteem.

It was predicted that self-esteem moderates the impact of both types of SMIs on consumers’ purchase intention. The moderating influence of self-esteem in this case is in line with the predictions made in hypothesis 1.
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Figure 34: Visualized interaction effect between type of SMI and level of self-esteem (Hugo Boss, Russian Sample)
Source: Own illustration.

However, for the main experimental groups involving the brand Esprit neither the type of SMI, the level of self-esteem, nor the respective interaction effect had any significant impact on the dependent variable purchase intention (see table 39).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Experimental Groups (Esprit)</td>
<td>Type of SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>3.596</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of SMI x Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39: Anova results: Significance of type of SMI and self-esteem (Esprit, German sample)
Source: Own illustration.
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Both ANOVAS could not provide any support for the hypothesized effects of the types of SMIs on respondents’ purchase intentions or the significance of self-esteem. However, for those respondents who have seen the brand Hugo Boss in the main experimental groups, a significant interaction effect was found for the type of SMI and the self-esteem of respondents. Therefore, it can be concluded that at least for higher-priced premium brands a moderating effect of self-esteem exists in Russia.

To explain why the moderating effect of self-esteem was only found for the premium brand in the experiment, one has to take the cultural dimension power distance into account. As explained in previous sections of this work, Russia is a high power distant culture. Among other things, such cultures are characterized by the consumers appreciation for status symbols, which also include brands. However, as premium and luxury brands are more suitable status symbols, they are more qualified to enhance consumers’ self-esteem. This could be the reason why the moderating effect of self-esteem is only relevant for the premium brand, namely Hugo Boss, in the sample and does not come into play for the lower priced brand Esprit. Therefore, one can conclude that such an interaction effect is not relevant for lower-priced brands but is important for brands that are positioned in the premium or luxury sector. This leads to a partial support of the hypotheses 1 for the Russian sample.

| H 1 | At low self-esteem, SMIs with analog fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger than SMIs with online fame-origin, while at high self-esteem SMIs with online fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to SMIs with analog fame-origin. | Partially supported (Russian sample) |

Unfortunately, testing hypotheses 2, 3a, and 3b requires a functioning manipulation of the brand stimuli. As the manipulation did not work in the Russian sample, testing these hypotheses is not possible.

The analysis concerning hypothesis 1 have already shown that the type of SMI as manipulated does not affect the dependent variable. This is the case in the German sample as well as in the Russian sample. Because of the non-existent effect of SMIs (as manipulated in the experiment) in both samples, no differences according to the

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612 Cf. HOFSTEDE INSIGHTS (2018b).
cultural dimension collectivism as derived in hypothesis 4a was observable. Hypothesis 4a is therefore rejected.

| H 4a | The cultural dimension collectivism increases the overall effects of SMIs on consumers’ purchase intentions. | Rejected |

The same applies to hypothesis 4b, which stated that the fame-origin of SMIs affects consumers’ purchase intentions differently based on differences in the power distance dimension. As the type of SMIs has no significant effect on the dependent variable in the Russian sample as well as in the German sample, it cannot be concluded that differences in the power distance dimension lead to differing effects of SMIs on purchase intentions of consumers. Hence, hypotheses 4b is rejected.

| H 4b | The cultural dimension power distance leads to different effects of SMIs with analog fame-origin and SMIs with online fame-origin on consumers’ purchase intentions. | Rejected |

Further analyses were performed in order to understand what led to only the partial support of H 1, and to the rejection of H 4a, and H 4b for the Russian sample. Another aim was to understand if other characteristics of SMIs, such as their attractiveness or trustworthiness, impact the respondents’ purchase intentions.

In the first step and analogous to the tests performed for the German sample, it was analysed whether the mean values of the dependent variable differed between main experimental groups and the control groups. While the mean values for each group may differ slightly (see table 40), none of these differences are significant, according to ANOVAs and post-hoc tests.

From this data, one might conclude that seeing a brand promoted by a SMI does not affect the purchase intentions of consumers, as the differences in the mean values are not significantly different to those of the control groups.
Nevertheless, the question arises whether identification in general is of equal importance in the Russian sample as has been observable in the German sample. Therefore, the mean values of the dependent variable for high and low levels of each identification type were compared to the means of the control variable. Again, these analyses were performed for each brand separately.

The results of the related ANOVAS and post-hoc tests are presented in table 41. Concerning Hugo Boss, the differences in the mean values were only significant for both high identification groups, indicating that high wishful and similarity identification lead to heightened purchase intentions whereas low identification in general not significantly lowers respondents’ purchase intentions. Also, the mean value for purchase intention is higher in the high wishful identification group than in the high similarity identification group, which gives the impression that respondents wishful identification with a SMI more strongly impacts their purchase intentions than similarity identification with a SMI.

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614 Levels of respondents wishful and similarity identification with SMIs were determined by using the median split of the respective variables. Cases with values beyond the respective median were classified as “low” and cases above the respective median were classified as “high”. The median for wishful identification was 2.8, the median for similarity identification was 2.0.
For Esprit, contrasting results are observable: in high identification groups, regardless it is wishful or similarity identification, no significant differences in the mean values of the dependent variable are observable in comparison to the control group. However, for both low identification groups, significant differences emerge regarding the mean value of purchase intention compared to the control group. This means that for respondents, who report low general identification with the SMI, the purchase intentions are significantly lower than for respondents in the control group. The mean value of purchase intention is the lowest for respondents who report low wishful identification with the SMI, again indicating that wishful identification may be of particular importance in the Russian sample.

Furthermore, the different results between the two brands imply that an impact of the power distance dimension exists. From the results, it can be concluded that higher levels of identification in general are only relevant if the imitation (i.e. the planned purchase of the brand) of the object of identification is beneficial for the consumer. Yet such benefits only exist if the brand qualifies as status symbol.

As described earlier, a significantly higher brand image for Hugo Boss in comparison to Esprit has been observed ($M_{\text{BrandImage\_Boss}} = 4.00$, $M_{\text{BrandImage\_Esprit}} = 3.69$, $p<.024$), which indicates that Hugo Boss is seen somewhat more as a status symbol than Esprit. Given that Hugo Boss is also positioned in the luxury sector, it is even more reasonable to assume that Hugo Boss can be characterized as such a status symbol.

Contrarily, it can be assumed that brands such as Esprit, which are characterized as lower-priced brands, do not qualify as status symbols. Therefore, emulating the SMI’s behavior due to the effects of wishful or similarity identification is not beneficial for consumers. In such cases, low identification, be it wishful or similarity identification, even has a contrasting effect on respondents’ purchase intentions. If one does not identify with the SMI and the brand is in addition not suitable to raise ones’ status in society, the intention to purchase is lowered significantly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Type of Identification</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance (compared to control group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>p&lt;.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Esprit</td>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>p&lt;.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>p&lt;.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Esprit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41: Mean values of purchase intention for main groups divided by levels of wishful identification and similarity identification (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.
As with the German sample before, the size of the Russian sample did not allow for a joint examination of the effects of both similarity and wishful identification in a single ANCOVA, as half of the cell sizes were below the recommended number of 30 (see table 42).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Experimental Groups</th>
<th>Cell Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Similarity Identification with SMI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Wishful Identification with SMI</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 42: Cell sizes for main groups divided by levels of wishful identification and similarity identification (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

However, such a joint analysis is helpful to gain further insights to understand which type of identification more strongly impacts the purchase intentions of consumers. Therefore, and in accordance with the German sample, linear regression analyses were performed. These analyses also allowed for an additional inclusion of covariates, such as brand image as well as SMIs perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and likeability, which were necessary to compare the results to those of the German sample.

As expected, the brand image affects the purchase intention of Hugo Boss significantly. Contrary to the German sample, however, the results show that the purchase intention of Hugo Boss is not affected by similarity identification, but rather by wishful identification and trustworthiness of the SMI, which both have positive effects on the dependent variable. As was observed in the German sample before, the expertise of an SMI also negatively impacts the purchase intention of respondents (see table 43).

It is interesting to observe that the negative impact of an SMI’s expertise could be repeatedly detected in the Russian sample as well. As has been presumed regarding the results of the German sample before, a SMI’s expertise might prompt a feeling of inferiority with the respondents to which they react with rejection. Another possible explanation is in connection with the power distance dimension. While in high power
distant cultures – such as Russia – individuals accept their position in the social hierarchy, it may be the case that the expertise of the two selected SMIs in the Russian experiment may not be “enough” to justify their elevated standing in society. Their expertise is therefore not appreciated and in turn is met with reactance, which can be demonstrated by the negative impact of the respective variable in the regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>$R^2$ corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>p&lt;.016</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarity Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>p&lt;.008</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.99</td>
<td>p&lt;.050</td>
<td>-.406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43: Linear regression results: significance of independent variables for Hugo Boss (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Similar results could be observed for the brand Esprit, albeit the values differ slightly (see table 44). Again, the expertise negatively impacts the dependent variable, while positive effects are exerted by the brand image, wishful identification, and the trustworthiness of the SMI. The results regarding Esprit also differ compared to the German sample, where only the brand image and similarity identification had a significant effect on purchase intentions of respondents.

It is also interesting to observe that the independent variables which have a significant effect on the dependent variable do not differ across brands in the Russian sample, whereas such differences were noticeable for the German sample. The most apparent difference to the German results, however, is the unverifiable effect of similarity identification on the purchase intentions of Russian respondents and the in turn comparably stronger effect of wishful identification. Moreover, the significant effect of trustworthiness of the SMI has not been observable in the German sample.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>R^2 corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Esprit</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.407</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the SMI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.202</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.738</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>p&lt;.002</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>-3.62</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>-.629</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.939</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 44: Linear regression results: Significance of independent variables for Esprit (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

These differences may again be attributed to cultural differences between Germany and Russia, especially to differing manifestations regarding the power distance dimension. As has been explained in previous chapters within this work, individuals in high power distant cultures, such as Russia, more strongly adhere to authority figures than individuals in lower power distant cultures.\(^{615}\) Wishful identification can be interpreted as a form of adherence to authority figures. Thus, the stronger desire to become like the object of identification that is reflected in the Russian sample may be a way of how this cultural impact finds an expression in the behavior of respondents.

Furthermore, individuals in high power distant cultures express greater trust in the judgments and opinions of authority figures, than individuals in lower power distant countries.\(^{616}\) It seems therefore less surprising that the trustworthiness of SMIs exerts a significant positive influence on the purchase intentions of Russian respondents, whereas such an effect has not been observed with the German respondents.


It has also been found in previous studies that using authority figures in advertising in high power distant cultures leads to more favourable brand outcomes, which can be further supported in this study. When the mean values of purchase intentions of Hugo Boss and Esprit are compared on the country-level, the purchase intentions of the Russian respondents in the main experimental groups are significantly higher than those of the German respondents in main experimental groups (see table 45).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss (Main Group)</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RU</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit (Main Group)</td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>p&lt;.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RU</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 45: T-Test results for differences in mean values of purchase intentions between German and Russian sample
Source: Own illustration.

These differences can also be explained by distinctions regarding the collectivism dimension. Individuals in collectivistic cultures show a higher tendency to conform to group ideals than in individualistic cultures, because group ideals are seen as more important than individual goals. In the context of this study, group ideals are represented by the SMIs, which can additionally explain why the purchase intentions are generally higher than in the German sample.

To conclude, the country comparison shows differences that can be attributed to the different manifestations of the power distance dimension in Germany and Russia. Contrary to the German sample, a different composition of independent variables related to SMIs impacts the purchase intentions of Russian respondents: wishful identification and trustworthiness influence the dependent variable positively, while the expertise of SMIs affects it negatively.

Those characteristics are reflected in the SMIs used in the Russian experiment as follows: concerning wishful identification with SMIs, the mean value for Sharapova is not significantly higher than for Khlopnikova. However, significant differences emerge

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617 Cf. WINTERICH/GANGWAR/GREWAL (2018), p. 73.
respecting the trustworthiness of Sharapova and Khlopnikova, where Sharapova is perceived as slightly more trustworthy than Khlopnikova. Moreover, respondents perceive Sharapova has significantly more expertise than Khlopnikova (see table 46).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wishful Identification Sharapova</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishful Identification Khlopnikova</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness Sharapova</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>p&lt;.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness Khlopnikova</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise Sharapova</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise Khlopnikova</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 46: T-Test Results: Mean values of characteristics for Sharapova and Khlopnikova (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Hence, while Sharapova might affect the purchase intentions of respondents more strongly based on her slightly higher trustworthiness, this effect is annulled because her higher level of expertise negatively affects the dependent variable.

The comparisons of mean values also explain why the type of SMI based on their respective fame-origin does not impact the dependent variable: the results of the regressions show that wishful identification indeed significantly influences the purchase intention. However, as the differences concerning wishful identification are not significant, respondents do not indicate higher tendencies to report wishful identification with either SMI.

As it was already the case with the German sample, a general shift of the nature of fame in social media is observable. While respondents indicate that Sharapova has significantly higher achievements than Khlopnikova (\(M_{ach\_Shara} = 4.01\), SD = 0.76; \(M_{ach\_Khlop} = 3.39;\) SD = 92; p<.000), such achievements are not reflected in the wishful identification with the SMIs, as has been assumed theoretically earlier in this work. The results of the Russian sample provide further support for the argument that achievements are no longer necessary to become famous and evoke wishful identification. It seems that the ability of an ordinary person to present their lifestyle as
somewhat glamourous and desirable is seen as enough of a talent to create a desire for imitation among their audience.

As can be seen from the results of the Russian study, both forms of SMIs are able to evoke wishful identification. Therefore, the origin of fame and the differences in achievements that come with this criterion, are not relevant for the purchase intentions of consumers. Contrary to the German sample, however, is the lack of relevance of similarity identification and the importance of trustworthiness of SMIs, which can be attributed to cultural differences. For consumers in high power distant cultures, a sense of similarity to SMIs is not relevant. SMIs should rather be selected based on their ability to evoke wishful identification and based on their trustworthiness.

4.3. Further Results regarding the Impact of SMIs on Brand Images (Russian Sample)

To further understand if SMIs affect the images of brands, the mean values of the brand images of the experimental groups involving Hugo Boss and Esprit, respectively, were compared to those of the control group. Only one significant difference could be observed, which concerns the experimental group of Khlopnikova and Hugo Boss compared with the control group regarding Hugo Boss. Here, the mean value of the brand image is significantly higher if respondents have seen the respective experimental scenario. All other differences of the mean values of the brand images are not significant (see table 47).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss x Sharapova</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Boss x Khlopnikova</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>p&lt;.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit x Sharapova</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit x Khlopnikova</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group Esprit</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 47: Anova and post-hoc test results for dependent variable brand image divided by main groups and control group (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.
This gives the impression that at least for the brand image of Hugo Boss some characteristics of the SMIs seem to impact the brand image, as for the scenario involving Maria Khlopnikova the differences in the mean value were significantly different.

In order to find an explanation for this, linear regression analyses were performed in order to combine all SMI-related characteristics as well as both identification types in one analysis for each brand.

Regarding Hugo Boss, only for the attractiveness of a SMI a significant impact on the brand image is observable (see table 48). The regression model itself is highly significant (p<.000) and explains 13 per cent of variance of the brand image. This result is to some degree similar to the German sample. The attractiveness of an individual serves as an important cue for judgments of other individuals. The results show that for Hugo Boss a “spill-over” effect exists that leads to a more favorable attitude toward the brand if the SMI is perceived as attractive. Given that the purchase intention is driven by wishful identification (among other factors) one needs to keep in mind that self-enhancement is often realized via increasing attractiveness. This is especially the case for female consumers, as for women especially a “culturally mandated standard of attractiveness” exists. Oftentimes, physical attractiveness is the most important criterion of whether a woman is given the status of a role model, which is even more important in high power distant cultures. It is therefore not surprising that for Russian (female) consumers, the attractiveness of a (female) SMI is of particular importance.

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Empirical Model Validation and Hypotheses Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>R² corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Hugo Boss</td>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.517</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.67</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 48: Linear regression results: Significance of independent variables for the brand image of Hugo Boss (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

For the brand image of Esprit, a slightly different picture emerges (see table 49). Even though only the attractiveness of a SMI has a significant influence on the brand image, the corrected R² is remarkably higher and accounts for almost one-third of variance of the brand image. The model is highly significant (p<.000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>regression coefficient</th>
<th>R² corrected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Group Esprit</td>
<td>Similarity Identification</td>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wishful Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>p&lt;.000</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likeability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>n. s.</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 49: Linear regression results: Significance of independent variables for the brand image of Esprit (Russian sample)
Source: Own illustration.

Granted that price evaluations may exist in the minds of consumers and that Esprit is the more budget-friendly and thus affordable brand in the experiment, it seems that
for brands that are more likely available to consumers, the “spill-over” effect of attractiveness of an endorser has a greater effect than for higher-priced brands like Hugo Boss.

5 Summary of Hypotheses Validation and Results

To conclude the empirical analysis chapter, an overview of the results is presented. In total, hypothesis 1 could only be partially supported, while the remaining hypotheses could not be supported (see table 50).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Validation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H 1</td>
<td>At low self-esteem, SMIs with analog fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger than SMIs with online fame-origin, while at high self-esteem SMIs with online fame-origin affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to SMIs with analog fame-origin.</td>
<td>Partially supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 2</td>
<td>At low self-esteem, ideal congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images affects purchase intentions of consumers stronger than self-congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images, while at high self-esteem self-congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared ideal congruity between consumers’ self-concepts and brand images.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 3a</td>
<td>At low self-esteem, SMIs with analog fame-origin who endorse brands with ideal congruity to consumer’s self-concepts (balanced state), affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to other (balanced and imbalanced) SMI/brand pairings.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b</td>
<td>At high self-esteem, SMIs with online fame-origin who endorse brands with self-congruity to consumers’ self-concepts (balanced state) affect purchase intentions of consumers stronger compared to other (balanced and imbalanced) SMI/brand pairings.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 4a</td>
<td>The cultural dimension collectivism increases the overall effects of SMIs on consumers’ purchase intentions.</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H 4b | The cultural dimension power distance leads to different effects of SMIs with analog fame-origin and SMIs with online fame-origin on consumers’ purchase intentions. | Rejected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 50: Overview of results of hypotheses validation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source: Own illustration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, further testing of the data sets revealed deeper and more detailed insights regarding the impact of SMIs on brand purchase intentions and brand images:

1. In the German sample, the purchase intention of Hugo Boss is positively impacted by the brand image (coeff = .530, p<.000) and respondents’ similarity identification with the SMI (coeff = .389, p<.001). The expertise of a SMI (coeff = -.400, p<.003) has a significant negative influence on the purchase intention.

2. In the German sample, the brand image (coeff = .658, p<.000) and respondents’ similarity identification (coeff = .422, p<.000) have a significant positive impact on the purchase intention of Esprit.

3. In the German sample, the brand image of Hugo Boss is positively influenced by respondents’ wishful identification with the SMI (coeff = .263, p<.039) and the attractiveness of the SMI (coeff = .191, p<.012), while the brand image of Esprit is positively impacted by respondents’ similarity identification with the SMI (coeff = .164, p<.030) and likeability of the SMI (coeff = .384, p<.000).

4. In the Russian sample, the purchase intentions of both Hugo Boss and Esprit are positively influenced by the respective brand images (coeff_{Boss} = .242, p<.016; coeff_{Esprit} = .433, p<.000), respondents’ wishful identification with the SMI (coeff_{Boss} = .377, p<.001; coeff_{Esprit} = .479, p<.000), and the trustworthiness of the SMI (coeff_{Boss} = .485, p<.008; coeff_{Esprit} = .520, p<.002). Again, the expertise of the SMI (coeff_{Boss} = -.406, p<.050; coeff_{Esprit} = -.629, p<.000) negatively impacts the purchase intentions of both brands.

5. In the Russian sample, the brand images of both Hugo Boss and Esprit are influenced by the attractiveness of the SMI (coeff_{Boss} = .517, p<.000; coeff_{Esprit} = .740, p<.000) only.

6. In both samples, the type of SMI (based on their respective fame-origins) does not significantly impact the purchase intentions of respondents. However, that
does not equate to an overall failed impact of SMIs. The results have shown that other aspects or characteristics of SMIs impact purchase intentions of respondents, e.g. wishful identification. Yet these differences are not clearly attributable to either SMIs with analog fame-origin or with online fame-origin, respectively.
D Conclusion, Reflection and Outlook

1 Summary of Theoretical Basis and Empirical Results

Not long after the emergence of social media and their manifestation in individuals’ daily lives, a small portion of its users were able to generate a larger than average number of others following them and thereby establish themselves as opinion leaders online. For the subset of opinion leaders who exert their influence via social media and other online channels, the term “Social Media Influencer” (SMI) has been coined.623 In a more and more fragmented media landscape624 consumers increasingly turn to SMIs to learn about fashion trends and where to shop for them, about fitness routines and the equipment needed to perform them, about cooking and where to buy the ingredients, as well as about hairstyling, crafting, videogames, or parenting and other countless topics.625

Soon enough marketers recognized the potential SMIs have to reach and influence their followers. Marketers thus started using them to deliver their brand messages to the SMIs audiences in the hopes to positively affect psychographic and behavioral brand objectives. This practice has subsequently become known as “influencer branding”.

Despite offering brands new opportunities to target their (potential) consumers, influencer branding also confronts marketers with new challenges. One substantial challenge of influencer branding is the identification of a suitable SMI. Within this work, special attention was devoted to the origin of fame-criterion which refers to the way SMIs became known to their audience. SMIs with analog fame-origin include those SMIs who became known due to special achievements of outstanding talents, e.g. singers like Taylor Swift or athletes Serena Williams. SMIs with online fame-origin, on the other hand, solely became famous through their self-presentation on their social media channels.

The importance of the origin of fame-criterion is substantiated by the different strategies brands use regarding their collaborations with SMIs. While some brands work exclusively with SMIs with analog fame-origin, others rely on SMIs with analog fame-

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625 FORBES (2018)
origin entirely, and a third group of brands employ both types of SMIs to the same degree.\textsuperscript{626}

Given the fact that the budgets for influencer branding are increasing steadily\textsuperscript{627} and a mixture of strategies regarding the use of SMIs with either analog or online fame-origin exists, the question was formulated whether consumers perceive these types of SMIs differently and if such different perceptions then lead to differing brand outcomes.

Only a very small number of studies have attempted to answer this question. Three of these studies, among them Google with the collaboration of market research company Ipsos connect and Visible measures, as well as the influencer branding company Collective Bias, have applied quantitative study designs. Another study, and to date the only academic study focusing on the different fame-origins of SMIs, had a qualitative approach. All these studies came to the conclusion that SMIs with online fame-origin affect brand objectives more favourably than SMIs with analog fame-origin.\textsuperscript{628}

However, these results should be treated with considerable caution, due to the following reasons. First, research designs for the studies often lack transparency, if they are documented at all. Second, if parts of the research designs are available, they reveal that the methods used in the study do not comply to academic standards. The most pressing issue, however, is the overall lack of a profound conceptual basis, which is needed to assess underlying motivations or perceptions of consumers. Furthermore, if a conceptual basis is missing, generalized results are yielded which may ignore the complexity of consumer’s behavioral intentions and actual behavior. Hence, the first research aim addressed the failure of existing research to explain consumers’ attitudes that lead to the supposedly stronger effects of SMIs with online fame-origin on brand objectives. Consequently, the first research aim was proposed:

1. To analyze the effects of different types of SMIs (analog fame-origin versus online fame-origin) on brand objectives (e. g. purchase intention) by using a suitable conceptual and empirical basis.

\textsuperscript{626} See for example Cf. MEDIAKIX (2017); CLUSE (2018).
\textsuperscript{627} Cf. INFLUENCER MARKETING HUB (2017); LAUNCHMETRICS (2017), p. 10
\textsuperscript{628} Cf. O’NEIL-HART/BLUMENSTEIN (2016); COLLECTIVE BIAS (2016), p. 2; DJAFAROVA/RUSHWORTH (2017), p. 3 et seq.
The second research aim was directed at the exclusive concentration of the empirical studies on U.S. consumers. The results thereby ignore cultural differences that may arise regarding the perception of SMIs and their impact on brand objectives. Previous research has shown that Asian cultures display a higher frequency of celebrities in advertising than Western cultures.\(^{629}\) It has been presumed that a noticeably higher use of celebrities in advertising may translates into a greater affection for SMIs with analog fame-origin and thus in turn distinct perceptions of the types of SMIs than in Western cultures. Yet the influence of culture has been ignored by the existing studies.

This problem has been the focus of the second research aim of this work:

2. To analyze the effects of different types of SMIs (analog fame-origin vs. online fame-origin) on brand objectives (e.g. purchase intention) in different cultures.

The first research aim has been addressed by building a sound conceptual foundation that relied primarily on the identification theory, namely similarity identification\(^ {630}\) and wishful identification,\(^ {631}\) through which possible effects of SMIs on consumers’ purchase intentions could be explained on a theoretical basis. It has been postulated that both similarity identification and wishful identification with a SMI can impact the behavioral intentions of consumers positively.\(^ {632}\) However, based on theoretical findings, it was predicted that the self-esteem of consumers mediates the effects of both wishful and similarity identification.

Furthermore, the self-congruity theory\(^ {633}\) has been applied to account for the impact of brand images on consumers’ purchase intentions. According to the self-congruity theory, a high congruence between consumers’ self-concepts and the image of a brand lead to preferences for the given brand.


\(^{632}\) Cf. Sirgy (1986), p. 31 et seq.

Possible effects due to interdependencies have been explained by applying Heider’s (1958) balance theory, through which it has been made possible to consider the three entities SMI, brand, and consumer jointly in a single study.

The second research aim was addressed by incorporating the moderating role of culture into the study. The basis for the theoretical considerations of the effect of cultural differences has been an extensive body of research based on Hofstede (1993), especially his development of cultural dimensions by which cultures can be differentiated.

Hypotheses were derived from the theoretical findings. For the empirical testing of the hypotheses, a 2x2 experimental design was applied. To account for cultural differences, the study was conducted in two countries, namely Germany and Russia. Surprisingly, the manipulation of the brand stimuli was perceived reversely by the German consumers and did not work in the Russian study as intended. The reasons for the unexpected perceptions of the brand stimuli manipulations have been discussed and subsequent analyses have been performed for each brand separately.

The empirical analyses revealed that the origin of fame of SMIs does not have any significant impact on purchase intentions of consumers. Yet this does not implicate that SMIs do not impact the brand objectives at all. In the German sample, consumers’ similarity identification with SMIs is one of the most important drivers of consumer’s purchase intention, whereas wishful identification with SMIs impacts the brand image under certain circumstances. However, the forms of identification are not clearly attributable to either SMIs with analog or online fame-origin, respectively, as both types of SMIs are able to evoke either form of identification with consumers. Therein lies the explanation as to why the effect of the origin of fame of SMIs was insignificant.

Nevertheless, the results of both the German and the Russian sample indicate that influencer branding in general can be a tricky business, where the promising effects of SMIs are accompanied with considerable risks for brands.

Although positive effects for high similarity identification with SMIs have been found for both brands in the German sample, comparisons of the mean values of the purchase intentions regarding both brands show that higher levels of respondents’ similarity identification not necessarily lead to more favourable brand outcomes com-

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635 Cf. Hofstede (1993); Hofstede (2001); Hofstede/Hofstede/Minkov (2010); Hofstede (2011).
pared to ordinary brand posts that do not feature a SMI, which have been manipulated for the control group in the study. At the same time, lower levels of similarity identification with a given SMI can lead to damaging effects on brand outcomes.

Concerning the Russian sample, higher levels of respondents’ wishful identification lead to more favorable brand outcomes if the brand is positioned toward the premium/luxury end or the market. Yet for brands that are situated in the lower price range, not much is gained from high wishful identification with SMIs, while low wishful identification definitely leads to lower purchase intentions of respondents compared to the control group.

The analyses of both the German and Russian samples provided further interesting results regarding the effects of the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model. Both models are well-established in the celebrity literature and attribute positive effects on brand objectives to the attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and likeability of famous endorsers. While the positive effects of these factors are considered to be assured in celebrity research, their general positive effects could not be supported in this study. Only in the Russian sample, the trustworthiness of SMIs had a positive influence on respondents’ purchase intentions. The attractiveness and likeability of a SMI only partially impacted the brand images positively, while the expertise of an endorser partly decreased the purchase intentions of German and Russian consumers. Hence, while the source credibility model and source attractiveness model may be sufficient in the classic celebrity literature in the past, they are not enough to explain the effects of SMIs in the context of social media.

Furthermore, the comparison of the results of the German sample and the Russian sample revealed three interesting insights. First, the wishful identification of Russian consumers is the only form of identification that significantly impacts their purchase intentions positively. Similarity identification is not relevant in the Russian sample. This remarkable difference to the German sample has confirmed the assumption that cultural differences in both countries, which are rooted in differences regarding the power distance-dimension and collectivism-dimension, lead to different perceptions of SMIs. Second, and distinctive to the German sample, Russian consumers’ purchase intentions of brands are heightened by the trustworthiness of the SMI. Again, this difference can be attributed to different attitudes regarding the acceptance of unequal power distribution between authority figures and ordinary consumers in both cultures. Moreover, the attractiveness of a SMI is the only characteristic to positively influence the brand image in the Russian sample. Third, the negative impact of SMIs perceived expertise could be further supported in the Russian sample.
In conclusion, this thesis provides important contributions to the branding literature, especially in the still under-researched area of influencer branding. The results show that the fame-origin of SMIs is not of importance for consumers. Consumers’ purchase intentions are rather impacted mainly by both similarity and wishful identification which can be evoked by SMIs with analog fame-origin or online fame-origin equally and to the same degree. To the best of the authors knowledge, this result has been empirically proven for the first time in the context of influencer branding. Likewise, the results confirm the critical attitude towards the external validity of existing studies that have unanimously verified the superiority of SMIs with online fame-origin regarding the influence on brand objectives. Such a general statement regarding the overall supremacy of SMIs with online fame-origin is not possible on the basis of this study.

2 Managerial Implications

Important implications for brand managers can be drawn from the results of this work.

As the results have shown, higher levels of identification in general do not necessarily lead to heightened purchase intentions of consumers, whereas purchase intentions are lowered when consumers do report only low levels of identification with the SMI. The only exception from this observation relates to higher priced premium brands in high-power distant cultures, for which heightened purchase intentions were observable when consumers reported higher levels of identification with the SMI.

Particular caution is required when brand managers plan to integrate the SMI on other paid or brand-owned channels, such as billboards or TV advertisements, and thus take the SMI out of their “natural habitat”, which are their own social media channels. As long as SMIs act on their own channels, one can reasonably assume that the identification of the audience with the SMI is given, because by becoming a “follower” individuals deliberately chose to subscribe to their content. Also, identification processes and the development of trust require a certain amount of time, which SMIs usually invest while building their audience. However, these conditions are not necessarily met when the SMI is taken outside of their own social media channels. In such cases, brands need to be very careful to identify SMIs that are likely to instantly evoke identification and – if needed – trustworthiness, because the SMI may not be known to every member of the audience, who is now reached by the out of home or television advertisement.
Therefore, brand managers first and foremost need to decide if the risk influencer branding in general poses for brand objectives is worth the potential benefit and if the particular influencer branding strategy planned has the potential to reach the defined brand objectives.

Nevertheless, if brand managers decide to engage in influencer branding, the results of the studies in Germany and Russia show that there is no need for managers to choose SMIs based on their fame-origin. This does not mean that brand managers should be inconsiderate and randomly choose SMIs for cooperation that may be suitable at first glance.

Brand managers have to ensure that SMIs are able to evoke the “right” form of identification and thus trigger a behavioural response with their followers that ultimately results in the purchase of the promoted brand. Therefore, brand managers have to define in which national markets their brands should be endorsed by influencers. The previously presented results revealed that based on cultural differences manifested in the power dimension and collectivism dimensions, different types of identification are relevant. Hence, implications will be made in relation to these cultural distinctions.

For countries that are characterized by high power distance and high collectivism (e.g. Russia, South Korea, China), wishful identification with SMIs and trustworthiness of SMIs need to be guaranteed. Selected SMIs should present a lifestyle that is dissimilar to those of their audience, but nonetheless is regarded as appealing and desirable. It is therefore unsurprising, that consumers in such cultures are especially impressed by SMIs which are “known for attracting their fans with exotic pictures of faraway lands – and the luxury brands that exist in them.”⁶³⁶ Sports brand Puma, for example, cooperates with Chinese model Liu Wen, who documents her life as an international model and has gained a massive following of Chinese followers (see Figure 35).⁶³⁷

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As already explained in previous chapters within this work, the trustworthiness of individuals in such cultures is often tied to their power and social status. The number of followers of SMIs manifest their status as authority figures. Also, individualism is subordinate to a group ideal.

Such characteristics are better reflected in SMIs with a large number of followers than SMIs who have lesser followers. Therefore, for cultures which rank high in power distance and collectivism, brand managers should concentrate their influencer branding activities on a selected number of macro- or mega-SMIs.

One example is Chinese SMI Becky Li who counts more than 4.5 million followers on the Chinese social media platforms WeChat and roughly 3 million followers on Weibo, respectively. Her large number of followers attracted brands like Chanel or Dior. When the automobile brand Mini approached her for a cooperation to promote a special edition of the Mini Cooper Countryman in July 2017, it took only 4 minutes for 100 cars to be sold through her blog on WeChat.\textsuperscript{638}

\textsuperscript{638} Cf. PAN (2017); CHEN (2018).
Albeit the purchase intentions of consumers are not influenced by the attractiveness of endorsers, brand managers should nevertheless consider the positive effect of an SMIs attractiveness on the image of the endorsed brand. However, this criterion might be the least difficult to achieve when seeking SMIs for brand collaborations.

Interestingly, the factors influencing consumer’s purchase intentions and brand images do not differ for premium or volume brands in collectivistic and high power distant cultures. Brand managers thus should focus on the trustworthiness of SMIs, their potential to evoke wishful identification as well as the attractiveness of SMIs when seeking cooperation possibilities in these cultures.

However, a different strategy is advised for individualistic and low power distant cultures (e.g. Germany, U.S.A.), where results have shown that similarity identification with the SMI is an important driver for consumers purchase intentions for both higher priced premium brands and lower priced budget brands. Therefore, a prioritization on SMIs who are similar to their audience is advisable. Brand managers are therefore strongly urged to identify SMIs that their audience feels similar to in order to achieve successful brand outcomes.
German SMI Bianca Heinicke is an example of a SMI that is suitable for evoking similarity identification, because her audience perceives her as a “normal girl” and describe consuming her content as “watching a friend live her life”. Heinicke’s image as “the girl next door” has led to the accumulation of more than 6 million followers on Instagram and 5.5 million followers on YouTube, which makes her one of the most well-known SMIs in Germany. She regularly promotes luxury brands like Michael Kors as well as more lower priced brands like Daniel Wellington (see Figure 37).

The example of Heinicke illustrates the greater importance of similarity identification over wishful identification. Although wishful identification is relevant to enhance the brand image of premium brands in low power distant cultures, such positive effects may not translate into heightened purchase intentions to the same degree. Thus, the expectations regarding the effects of wishful identification should be adjusted accordingly and the definition of the targets that are aimed to reach with influencer branding should reflect that.

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639 Cf. KAISER (2014).
640 Cf. HEIDBÖHMER (2017).
SMI Bianca Heinicke endorses brands Daniel Wellington and Michael Kors

Source: Instagram/Heinicke (2017); YouTube/Heinicke (2015)
Oftentimes SMIs are used who create idyllic dream worlds to endorse certain brands. While such picture-perfect images may be very pleasant to look at, the success of such campaigns is questionable as they may not necessarily lead to heightened purchases.

German SMI Leonie Hanne is one example who uses picturesque scenarios for her paid brand advertisements, which are suitable to evoke wishful identification with her followers, as her extravagant lifestyle may be very desirable for her audience. Unlike Heinicke, Hanne does present herself as some kind of luxury-girl, who travels the world and stays in expensive hotels.

However, based on the results of the German sample, a definite impact of wishful identification could only be observed for the brand image of the premium brand. Therefore, cooperations with Hanne may be effective in positively impacting the brand images of luxurious brands like Dior or Louis Vuitton. But it is questionable if lower-priced brands like Zara benefit from such a cooperation (see Figure 38). Hanne herself recently confirmed this assumption in an interview where she shared her impression that her beautifully staged images may not be as successful as a simpler snapshot.643

Figure 38: SMI Leonie Hanne endorses Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Zara (from left to right)
Source: INSTAGRAM/HANNE (2018a, 2018b, 2018c)

Influencer branding can also help brand managers to address the desire for individual self-expression in individualistic societies by employing several SMIs in one campaign and thus scattering their SMI activities rather than focusing on a small number of SMIs with larger audiences, as would be appropriate for collectivistic cultures. Ideally, brand managers can identify several SMIs who are able to evoke similarity identification with members of the brands target group.

Online retailer About You, for example, follows this approach. Several SMIs are included in their influencer branding strategy. SMIs employed by About You differ from one another in terms of overall appearance and fashion style, age, communication styles, and profession and therefore maximize the potential for similarity identification among their (potential) consumers. Figure 39 exemplarily shows three SMIs who regularly cooperate with About You. Among them, for example, is Farina Opoku (pictured left), a German fashion and beauty blogger who has 930 thousand Followers on Instagram. She regularly posts pictures of her outfits and shows her followers how she dresses her fuller figure.\textsuperscript{644} Opoku’s body sizes reflects the average female consumer in Germany better than a very slim super model.\textsuperscript{645} Therefore, Opoku herself thinks that her body size is the main reason why her followers feel similar to her and therefore identify with her.\textsuperscript{646} Another online retailer following this approach is Asos. In addition to their own accounts, SMIs cooperating with Asos create exclusive secondary accounts that feature the brand name in it. However, while About You employs a series of macro- and mega-SMIs when it comes to their follower sizes,\textsuperscript{647} Asos relies on a wide range of micro-SMIs,\textsuperscript{648} which makes their approach to evoke similarity identification with their SMIs even more rigid. Like SMIs employed by About You, SMIs cooperating with Asos also differ from another regarding their fashion styles, sizes, and approaches to fashion in general.\textsuperscript{649} Three of their SMIs are shown in Figure 40. SMI Sophia Tassew (pictured on the right), for instance, shows fashion and beauty tips for plus-sized figures,\textsuperscript{650} while SMI Kat Atkinson (pictured on the left) focuses on a more an-

\textsuperscript{644} Cf. Instagram/Opoku (2018).
\textsuperscript{645} Cf. Heuschkel (2017).
\textsuperscript{646} Cf. Opoku (2016).
\textsuperscript{647} Cf. About You (2018b).
\textsuperscript{648} Cf. Asos (2018b).
\textsuperscript{649} Cf. Asos (2018b).
\textsuperscript{650} Cf. Instagram/Tassew (2019).
drogynous look. By employing such a wide range of different characters, Asos provides multiple opportunities for their consumers to engage in similarity identification with their SMIs.

Figure 39: Selected SMIs Cooperating with Online Retailer About You
Source: About You (2018a)

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In the U. S., hair care brand Amika even managed to successfully relaunch their brand through their thoughtful use of SMIs. The brand selected ten SMIs in order “speak to a range of potential customer personas, including different ages, hair types and creative styles.” This strategy allowed for a greater individuality and thereby fostered similarity identification of consumers with the selected SMIs (see Figure 41). Amikas efforts resulted in a noticeable incline of in-store sales.

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652 TRAACKR (2018).

Another important factor besides identification with SMIs that has been revealed in the empirical study is the damaging effect of the SMIs expertise. While this effect is not of importance for lower priced brands in low power distant and individualistic cultures, it’s negative effect is especially relevant for premium brands in these cultures as well as for both higher and lower priced brands in high power distant and collectivistic cultures. When promoting brands with dominating non-functional benefits through SMIs, brand managers are therefore advised to ensure that expertise is not a central aspect of the SMIs personality.

Upon reversion, one might also conclude from these results that the use of non-expert SMIs to endorse brands and/or products with dominating functional benefits may not be the most beneficial strategy. Such promotional messages can lead to a loss of authenticity and credibility, because the SMI is not able to present the brand in a realistic way. This has been the case with SMI Cathy Hummels, who infamously tied a hair straightener around her hips. Canon made a similar mistake by allowing SMI Kerina Wang to present their printer in front of a fireplace (see Figure 42). Both scenarios failed to provide useful information to consumers, e. g. regarding the various functions of the products. Moreover, they were perceived as unnatural and unre-

654 KUPFER ET AL. (2018) also conclude that the influence of certain SMIs cannot be attributed to their expertise but rather to their follower’s identification with them. Cf. KUPFER ET AL. (2018), p. 27.
alistic by their audiences and were repeatedly used as negative examples for influencer branding campaigns that failed to positively impact the desired brand objectives.\footnote{Cf. Stegmaier (2018).}

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, brand managers should exercise particular caution regarding their influencer branding strategy if SMIs are integrated in media channels that are not owned by the SMIs themselves, because in these cases, SMIs are presented to an audience that is not automatically familiar with the SMI and therefore the potential to evoke the needed type for identification is limited. The consequences of generally lower levels of identification were even observable in the experiment (e.g. lower purchase intentions), where respondents generally knew the presented SMIs but not necessarily followed them on social media.

Since the results of the study show that particularly in low power-distant cultures lower levels of similarity identification can lead to detrimental effects on brand objectives, managers need to decide whether using SMIs outside of their own channels is a beneficial strategy for their brand communication.

In 2016 fashion brand Levi’s used SMIs Caro Daur, MarinaTheMoss and Toni Mahfud for a special campaign showcased in Berlin, Germany, only. The out-of-home advertisements consisted of simulated Snapchat posts from each SMI. This way consumers were given the impression to see a social media post of the SMI instead...
of a classical billboard advertisement. Yet it remains questionable if the campaign was suited to reach the desired effects for two reasons. First, the selected SMIIs usually cooperate with luxury brands. Daur, for example, regularly cooperates with brands such as Fendi, Prada, or Versace, to name but a few. Her online presence is comparable to Leonie Hanne, who has been mentioned earlier in this chapter. One can therefore rightfully question the ability of Daur (and her colleagues for this campaign) to evoke similarity identification, as her lifestyle is hardly comparable to those of her follower’s. Yet, creating a sense of similarity with the audience would have been a more appropriate way to promote Levi’s, especially given that in the German culture similarity identification is a more suitable approach for influencer branding activities. However, SMIIs who positioned themselves as luxury endorsers might not be the best cooperating partners for Levi’s.

Second, the design of the campaign itself did not facilitate similarity endorsement. The scenario involving Caro Daur, for example, included a description of herself informing the viewer that she was in the midst of getting ready for an exclusive photoshoot (see Figure 43). Such a scenario is not suited to create a sense of similarity with the viewer, as this is not a situation that consumers face in their everyday lives.

Even though Levi’s praised their campaign as innovative and progressive, they released no information as to whether their efforts indeed helped to reach positive brand outcomes.

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656 Cf. INTERMATE/MÜLLER (2016).
658 Cf. INTERMATE/MÜLLER (2016).
Furthermore, the neglect of the importance of similarity identification and overly focus on the desired effects caused by wishful identification in low power distant cultures have led to astonishing missteps of established brands in influencer branding.

Oftentimes brand managers have tried to position their low-involvement products by trying to add an emotional value to the brand. In such cases, products that are typically of low concern to consumers, e.g. toothpaste or detergent, were placed in beautiful and idealized settings by cooperating with SMI s who were expected to increase sales by wishful identification. Yet as the results have already shown, wishful identification only affects brand outcomes for premium brands and when non-functional brand benefits are dominating. It is therefore not surprising that regarding the following examples such strategies did not work for low-involvement products for which consumers’ purchase decisions are made with minimal mental cost.

Unilever’s detergent brand Coral, for example, gained negative attention with their influencer campaign in 2017. Each of their employed SMI s incorporated the product in their Instagram posts, which usually showcased their glamorous and fashion-forward lifestyle (see Figure 44). The campaign was described as “the most embarrassing campaign of the year” and media representatives were questioning the ab-
surd and even physically impossible (i.e. position in the bike basket, see again Figure 44) situations the detergent was pictured in by the SMIs.\footnote{Cf. GONDORF (2017); APP (2017a).}

**Figure 44**: SMIs Ursula Reiter, Francesca Lesch, and Mandy Grace Capristo (clockwise) endorse detergent by the brand Coral

Source: INSTAGRAM/REITER (2017); INSTAGRAM/LESCH (2017); INSTAGRAM/CAPRISTO (2017)
Moreover, followers could not identify themselves with the SMIs given the idealized situations Coral was placed in because doing laundry is typically one of the most mundane household tasks one can think of. In sum, not only did coral address an inappropriate type of identification by selecting SMIs that were not suitable for the campaign, many consumers criticized the pictured idealized situations as inauthentic and not credible.\footnote{Cf. GONDORF (2017); APP (2017b).}

Although a spokeswoman of the Unilever Group praised the attention and discussion users engaged in,\footnote{Cf. APP (2017b).} doubts remain as to whether Coral benefitted from these discussions, as some Instagram users even used the attention to mock the campaign (see Figure 45).\footnote{Cf. SCHWÄR (2017).}

![Figure 45: Users on Instagram who parody Coral’s influencer branding campaign](image)

Source: INSTAGRAM/DONSBACK (2017); INSTAGRAM/BULLWINKEL (2017).

Oral-B made a similar mistake when they tried to market one of their electric toothbrushes to German consumers via SMIs on Instagram. Whether intentionally or coin-
cidentally, both of the selected SMIs decided to present the toothbrush in an idyllic vacation-like atmosphere (see Figure 46). Both scenarios again were designed to evoke wishful identification which, on one hand, does not drive sales in the German culture and on the other hand is not suited to present a product that used for such a banal task like daily dental hygiene.

Figure 46: SMIs Natalie Sötz and Caroline Einhoff endorse an electric toothbrush by Oral-B on their Instagram channels
Source: INSTAGRAM/EINHOFF (2017); INSTAGRAM/SÖTZ (2017).
Again, and for mainly the same reasons as explained in the previous example with Coral, these attempts to market a toothbrush were criticized heavily.\footnote{Cf. NAGELS (2018); N2D (2018).} Moreover the idealized sceneries distracted from the endorsed brand itself, as followers often complimented the SMIs for their attractiveness and looks as well as the appealing photo itself.

However, other campaigns demonstrate that more beneficial strategies regarding the use of SMIs exist for those low-involvement brands, which focus on similarity identification rather than wishful identification.

In the UK, a region also characterized by low power distance and high individualism,\footnote{Cf. HOFSTEDE INSIGHTS (2018c).} Reckitt Benckisner promoted their brand Vanish, which comprises detergent and stain removing products, through SMIs. Yet in contrast to Coral in Germany, SMIs showed the brand in their daily household routines and refrained from any glamorous staging of the brand and the product. SMI Hannah Michalak, for example, shows vanish in a picture where she is seen doing the laundry and holding her son (see Figure 47). In her post, it appears that Michalak actually uses the product in that very moment and thus displays her normal life to her followers. In addition to the picture, Michalak describes a scenario in her post in which the brand message is intertwined with a personal story about her children. Thus, she is able to evoke similarity identification, as consumers are able to recognize themselves in her situation. Followers also started a discussion regarding their post. However, in this case, the product and the brand Vanish were talked about in a positive manner, as consumers were exchanging helpful advice concerning the product and with regards to general household duties.\footnote{Cf. INSTAGRAM/MICHALAK (2018).}
Another positive example is Oral-B in the U. S., where electric toothbrushes were also marketed via SMIAs on Instagram. This time, the toothbrush was pictured in non-idealized scenarios, contrary to the strategy in Germany.

SMI Alexa Jean Brown, who portrays her lifestyle as a mother and housewife on Instagram, created a post where the toothbrush was being used to brush her daughter’s teeth (see Figure 48). The picture showed a daily routine many of her followers could relate to. Therefore, she was able to create a sense of similarity with her audience, while also creating content for the brand that is credible and realistic.
In Germany, SMI Mayra Joann Lobato also portrays her life as a stay-at-home mother on Instagram and YouTube. She regularly posts about her children, as well as challenges that arise in her parenting and household. This way, Lobato presents herself as a typical mother to whom her followers can relate to.\footnote{Cf. \textsc{youtube/lobato} (2018); \textsc{instagram/lobato} (2018).}

In 2017, Lobato cooperated with the Brand Frosch. The brand belongs to the portfolio of the German company Werner & Mertz and comprises various cleaning products.\footnote{Cf. \textsc{frosch} (2018).} In the video, Lobato is seen cleaning her house and using a product by the brand repeatedly (see Figure 49).
Figure 49: SMI Mayra Joann Lobato endorses a cleaning product by Frosch

As the audience could relate to the scenario, the video was received well. Users commented with questions about the product, offered advice regarding household cleaning and generally discussed about the brand and about cleaning in general.\textsuperscript{668}

\textsuperscript{668} Cf. YOUTUBE/LOBATO (2017).
As has been the case with the two previous presented examples, Frosch chose an influencer branding strategy that focused on the similarity between the selected SMI and their target group and the brand clearly benefitted from this approach.

The outlined practical implications for brand managers concerned with influencer branding illustrate that the identification and selection of SMIs is largely dependent on cultural influences. Cultural characteristics determine which type of identification and what characteristics of SMIs (i.e. trustworthiness, attractiveness), affect consumers purchase intentions. Brand managers thus should be aware of the cultural characteristics of the specific countries they plan to market their brand in when engaging in cooperations with SMIs. Therefore, brand managers need to be very cautious in their selection of SMIs, as evoking the “right” type of identification is crucial to the success of their SMI-related activities.

However, such planning should be preceded with a very considerate evaluation of whether the potential benefits are worth the risks brands face if the campaign fails to be successful. Brand managers are even more urged to engage in these considerations if they plan to incorporate SMIs outside of their own social media channels, where identification with their followers can to some extent be expected as given, and plan to present SMIs to consumers who not necessarily know them and/or do not identify the presented SMIs.

3 Implications for Further Research

Within this work it was examined whether the origin of fame of SMIs impacts brand outcomes. Unlike prior studies which also focused on the origin of fame, the model within this work was based on a sound conceptual basis, which allowed for a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the influence SMIs have on consumer’s behavioural intentions and subsequently brand objectives. Furthermore, important key contributions are made as this is the first work to incorporate cultural influences in the analyses of the effects of SMIs.

However, this study is not without limitations. These limitations in turn serve as valuable points of reference for further research. These implications for further research can be categorized as either additional verifications of the results of this work or as further extensions of the model.
With regard to additional verifications of the results, the following implications for further research are suggested:

Within this work, only two brands, namely Hugo Boss and Esprit, were used as brand stimuli. Thus, the study in general was concentrated on the fashion sector. To avoid results that have only a case-study value, the study should be replicated. Researchers are presented with various options for replication. First, while it is possible to maintain the focus on the fashion sector, more brands should be integrated in further studies besides Hugo Boss and Esprit. Second, the selected product stimulus only represents a small part of all clothing options available to consumers. It is therefore advised to replicate the study using different clothing items. Third, it is possible and strongly advised to broaden the scope of the study to other areas in which brands are often endorsed by SMIs. For example, further studies could include brands from sectors such as gaming, fitness, food, or travel. Third, while the brands used in this study are characterized by dominating non-functional brand benefits, more studies are needed to support the findings from the experiment. Also, further insights are needed with regard to brands with dominating functional brand benefits. Herein, an especially interesting aspect would be the role of the expertise of the SMI, as in this study, this characteristic has been found to negatively impact the brand objectives.

As this study was concerned with female SMIs and respondents only, further studies should include male SMI stimuli as well as male respondents. Such studies would provide valuable insights, as it is likely possible that the importance of certain SMI characteristics as well as the significance of the types of identification vary between male and female respondents. Further insights are needed regarding the impact of female SMIs on male consumers and vice versa, as well as the impact of male SMIs on male consumers.

Furthermore, this study focused on rather young consumers (aged 18 to 35 years). Given the increasing use of social media by more senior generations, it would be interesting to learn how the results might change when the study is fielded to respondents older than the age limit of this study. Simultaneously, further research could test the effects of SMI stimuli which are significantly older than those used in this work.

Concerning the age of respondents, it would also be of use to learn if and how the values attributed to SMIs and their impact on consumer behaviour shifts as consum-

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669 Cf. MACCODY/WILSON (1957); HOFFNER/BUCHANAN (2005); STEINKE ET AL. (2012).
ers grow older. Time-series analyses are a possible way to deeper understand the long-term impacts of SMIs on brand objectives.

Moreover, this study was concerned with the moderating impact of culture, especially with regard to the power distance dimension and collectivism dimension. While interesting differences could be observed by comparing the results of a German and Russian study, those results could be further verified by allowing for an addition of other countries.

Concerning further extensions to the study, the following research topics are suggested:

Based on their importance for consumer behavior, this work focused to a great extent on the effects of both similarity and wishful identification. Despite the fact that this work has made suggestions as to what leads to similarity and wishful identification (i.e. homophily, achievement), it could not be conclusively clarified which factors determine these types of identification with SMIs. For example, previous research found that factors such as humor, intelligence, and violence impact wishful identification. However, those character traits have not been included in this study. The within this work developed model could and should be extended by those factors to gain a deeper understanding of the development of both types of identification. Such results could be helpful for managers regarding the selection of suitable SMIs.

Since the results have shown that low levels of identification can lead to damaging effects on brand outcomes, a deeper understanding is needed regarding consumers attitudes toward SMIs and their subsequent behavioral consequences if they report low levels of identification. In general, it is possible that lower levels of identification imply a sense of indifference towards the endorser and the impact of such low identification is neither beneficial nor damaging for brands. Nevertheless, low levels of identification can also imply that consumers feel hostile toward the endorser. The results of this study suggest that the latter is the case, as purchase intentions significantly dropped if respondents reported lower identification levels with the SMIs. Sporadic research from sponsorship research also found support for this assumption. However, the question of what happens when consumers only report low identification with endorsers has yet to be answered regarding the effects of celebrities and SMIs on brand outcomes.

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Further research is also needed regarding the moderating effect of consumers’ self-esteem. While for one part of the Russian sample a moderating influence of self-esteem could be observed, more insights are needed to assess under which circumstances the self-esteem of consumers is relevant for brand objectives.

Another construct that has been studied extensively regarding the impact of media characters on consumer behavior is the concept of parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction is a type of engagement with a media character and refers to imaginary interactions that audience members experience when viewing media characters on television or other media outlets. A more increased version of this imaginary interaction is described as parasocial relationship, where consumers perceive these interactions as long-term friendships or even love relationships. However, such interactions are always unidirectional and the experience remains an illusion as the media character does not know the audience member personally.

Although the concepts of identification and parasocial interaction are often studied together, scientific researchers have yet to conclusively determine whether parasocial interaction determines identification or vice versa, as contradictory evidence exists. Therefore, by adding the concept of parasocial interaction to the model could provide further insights into the development of either wishful or similarity identification.

Moreover, previous studies have also linked parasocial interaction to consumer behavior. For example, a positive relationship was found between parasocial interaction and impulse buying behavior, as well as with purchase satisfaction. Therefore, it would also be of use to understand if and to what extent parasocial interaction impacts consumers’ purchase behavior within influencer branding.

Another important area of interest could also be the interplay of personal branding goals of SMI’s themselves and the brand outcome a specific brand wants to achieve when cooperating with SMLs. Possible research questions could address e. g.

674 Cf. HORTON/WOHL (1956), p. 69 et seq.
676 Cf. HARTMANN (2016), p. 79.
678 Cf. PARK/LENNON (2004); XIANG (2016) et al.
680 Regarding the topic „personal branding“, see exemplarily THOMSON (2006).
whether and when the pursuit of personal branding goals of an SMI lead to a suppression of the brand’s goals or a general overshadowing of the brand. Such research could explain why certain SMIs benefit from the positioning of their personal brand in the luxury sector (e.g. Leonie Hanne, Caro Daur), whereas the results of this work indicate that such a positioning may not be positively influencing the brand objectives of the endorsed brand.

Furthermore, the development of identification processes with SMIs could be further understood by applying the concept of archetypes. Archetypes – basic prototypes of human characters – have been used to sharpen brand positionings and define target groups in the past. Mark and Pearson (2001), for example, differentiate 12 archetypes from another, for example roles such as Creator, Caregiver, Lover, Hero, and Outlaw, among others. As each archetype is defined through a certain set of characteristics, it would be interesting to learn if and to what extent identification processes are dependent on archetypes. Moreover, the question arises whether brand outcomes can be positively influenced when the selection of SMIs is based on the concept of archetypes.

Besides the impact of SMIs and the type of identification they evoke with their followers, research should take the specific design of the influencer branding campaign and more specifically the composition of the respective posts of the SMIs into account. Previous research regarding the impact of influencer branding has found that consumers are more engaged when the content posted by the SMI expresses positive emotions via the use of emojis and pleasant sceneries.

Further research that additionally considers the specific design of a post and its impact on consumer behavior, could present brand managers with useful information that goes beyond the selection of SMIs and also provides specific advice and guidance as to how SMIs should stage their brands in the best possible manner to positively affect their brand objectives.

A new trend in social media are computer-generated SMIs, who have gathered massive follower numbers in the past few months. Shudu Gram and Miquela, for example, are virtual SMIs that have been created by a London-based photographer and a start-up from Los Angeles, respectively. In the months since their creation they

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have accumulated between 150 thousand and 1.5 million followers on Instagram, with their followers oftentimes not realizing that they are not human beings.\textsuperscript{685} Both SMIs are not just a gimmick of their creators or a pure demonstration of their craft, but are rather successful in attracting high-end fashion and beauty brands for cooperations, among them Balmain, Prada, Chanel and Fenty Beauty.\textsuperscript{686}

Virtual SMIs confront academic research with a variety of questions. Based on this work, the most obvious question would be concerned with understanding if identification is possible and how identification processes work with such artificial SMIs which are at the same time characterized by a hyper-realistic appearance. Moreover, it would be valuable to understand whether consumer’s reactions to these virtual SMIs vary based on cultural differences, as it was the case with human SMIs in this work.

\textsuperscript{685} Cf. UNCKRICH (2018); JACKSON (2018).

\textsuperscript{686} Cf. UNCKRICH (2018).
Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire (Main Group)

The original questionnaire in German or Russian language is available upon request.

Dear respondent,

Thank you for taking part in this survey. This survey part of a research project conducted by the Chair of Innovative Brand Management of the University of Bremen and is concerned with how social media influencers are perceived by users. In total, the questionnaire lasts about 7 minutes. There are no “correct” or “false” answers to the questions. It is all about your individual judgment.

Your information and personal data will only be used anonymously and will not be passed to third parties. Of course, your information is kept strictly confidential.

Please start by responding to the following questions:

1. Screening Questions

Please indicate your gender

☐ male
☐ female
☐ other

Please indicate your age: ___ Age in years

How often do you generally use social media?

☐ Several times during the day
☐ Daily
☐ Several times during the week
☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month
2. Manipulation

Now please imagine that you are using the App Instagram and while browsing through your news-feed you see the following post:

-- *Stimulus is shown to respondent* --

3. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

You will now see a few statements regarding [brand].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate on a scale from 1 (highly uncertain) to 5 (highly certain), how you would judge the following statements:</th>
<th>highly uncertain</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I were going to buy a shirt, the probability of buying [brand] is...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probability that I would consider buying a shirt from [brand] is...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that I would purchase a shirt of [brand] is...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Mediator: Self-Esteem

We would like to ask you some personal questions. Please note, that your information is kept strictly confidential.

On a scale of 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), whether you agree or disagree to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Totally Disagree</th>
<th>Totally Agree</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Manipulation Check

Take a moment to think about [brand]. Describe this person using personality characteristics such as reliable, smooth, etc. Now think about how you see yourself (your actual self). What kind of person are you? How would you describe your personality? Now think about how you would like to see yourself (your ideal self). What kind of person would you like to be? Once you’ve done this, indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>totally disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand] is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand] is a mirror image of me (my actual self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand] is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand] is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now please indicate what you think of [SMI] regarding the following statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[SMI] gained her fame...</th>
<th>...through social media</th>
<th>...not through social media/aside from social media</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. Achievement, Homophily, Wishful and Similarity Identification

You will now see further statements regarding [SMI]. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please remember, there are no correct or false answers. It is all about your individual judgment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>totally disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a professional sense, [SMI] is a very successful person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI]'s achievements are highly regarded by others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is an accomplished person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is a good example of professional success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others wish they were as successful as [SMI].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is successful in her field.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>totally disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t behave like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is different from me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] shares my values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] treats people like I do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t think like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t share my values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is unlike me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] doesn’t treat people like I do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] expresses attitudes different from mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] has a lot in common with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] thinks like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] behaves like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is similar to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is the sort of person I want to be like myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I wish I could be more like [SMI].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] is someone I would like to emulate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d like to do the kinds of things [SMI] does.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would never want to act the way [SMI] does.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise & Likeability
Appendix

Please indicate how you perceive [SMI] regarding the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think [SMI] is...</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>attractive</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unattractive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>attractive</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not classy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>classy</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ugly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>elegant</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sexy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>sexy</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undependable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>dependable</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dishonest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>honest</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unreliable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>reliable</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insincere</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>sincere</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>untrustworthy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>trustworthy</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not an expert</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>an expert</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inexperienced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>experienced</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknowledgeable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>knowledgeable</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unqualified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>qualified</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unskilled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>skilled</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very unlikeable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>likeable</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very unpleasant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>very pleasant</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very disagreeable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>very agreeable</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Fit
Please indicate how you perceive [SMI] and [brand] regarding the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think [SMI]...</th>
<th>...does not belong with [brand]</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>...belongs with [brand]</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think [SMI] and [brand]...</td>
<td>...do not go together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>...go together</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...do not fit together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>...fit together</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [SMI] and the shirt...</td>
<td>...do not belong together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>...belong together</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...do not go together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>...go together</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...do not fit together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>...fit together</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Liking of Post, Product; Attitude toward the Brand; Brand Familiarity

You will now see further statements regarding the Instagram post shown to you at the beginning of the questionnaire and [brand].

| I dislike the Instagram post very much | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I like the Instagram post very much | n/a |
| I dislike the shirt very much | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I like the shirt very much | n/a |
| I dislike [brand] very much | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I like [brand] very much | n/a |
| I think [brand] is bad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I think [brand] is good | n/a |
| I think [brand] is very unpleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I think [brand] is very pleasant | n/a |
| I think [brand] is of poor quality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | I think [brand] is of high quality | n/a |

Please indicate how well you know [SMI] and [brand].
I do not know [SMI]/[brand] at all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[SMI] ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[brand]...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How realistic was the Instagram post presented to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>not at all realistic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>very realistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Instagram post was...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Personal Questions

Finally, we would like to ask some questions regarding your person. Your information is exclusively used for statistical analysis and will be treated strictly confidential. The anonymity will not be restricted.

Do you use Instagram?

☐ Yes
☐ No

What is the highest educational degree you hold?
Appendix

- Lower secondary education degree without vocational training
- Lower secondary education degree with vocational training
- Secondary school leaving certificate
- A-Levels/higher educational entrance qualification
- University degree
- No degree
- n/a

What is your monthly net household income?

- Less than 5,00 Euro
- 5,01 – 1,000 Euro
- 1,001 – 1,500 Euro
- 1,501 – 2,000 Euro
- 2,001 – 2,500 Euro
- 2,501 – 3,000 Euro
- 3,001 – 3,500 Euro
- 3,501 – 4,000 Euro
- more than 4,001 Euro
- n/a

Thank you very much for participating in this study!
Appendix B: Questionnaire (Control Group)

The original questionnaire in German or Russian language is available upon request.

Dear respondent,

Thank you for taking part in this survey. This survey part of a research project conducted by the Chair of Innovative Brand Management of the University of Bremen and is concerned with how social media posts are perceived by users. In total, the questionnaire lasts about 5 minutes. There are no “correct” or “false” answers to the questions. It is all about your individual judgment.

Your information and personal data will only be used anonymously and will not be passed to third parties. Of course, your information is kept strictly confidential.

Please start by responding to the following questions:

1. Screening Questions

Please indicate your gender

☐ male
☐ female
☐ other

Please indicate your age: ___ Age in years

How often do you generally use social media?

☐ Several times during the day
☐ Daily
☐ Several times during the week
☐ Once a month
☐ Less than once a month
2. Manipulation

Now please imagine that you are using the App Instagram and while browsing through your news-feed you see the following post:

-- Stimulus I is shown to respondent --

3. Purchase intention, (ideal) self-congruity I

You will now see a few statements regarding [brand x].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate on a scale from 1 (highly uncertain) to 5 (highly certain), how you would judge the following statements:</th>
<th>highly uncertain</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I were going to buy a shirt, the probability of buying [brand x] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probability that I would consider buying a shirt from [brand x] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that I would purchase a shirt of [brand x] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take a moment to think about [brand x]. Describe this person using personality characteristics such as reliable, smooth, etc. Now think about how you see yourself (your actual self). What kind of person are you? How would you describe your personality? Now think about how you would like to see yourself (your ideal self). What kind of person would you like to be? Once you've done this, indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements:
### 4. Liking of Post, Product; Attitude toward the Brand; Brand Familiarity I

You will now see further statements regarding the Instagram post shown to you at the beginning of the questionnaire and [brand].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>I like the Instagram post very much</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I dislike the Instagram post very much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike the shirt very much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike [brand x] very much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [brand x] is bad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [brand x] is very unpleasant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [brand x] is of poor quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate how well you know [brand x].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do not know [brand X] at all</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>I do know [brand x] very well</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How realistic was the Instagram post presented to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>not at all realistic</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>very realistic</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Instagram post was...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Manipulation II

Now please imagine that you are still browsing through your newsfeed when you see the following post:

-- Stimulus II is shown to respondent --
6. Purchase intention, (ideal) self-congruity II

You will now see a few statements regarding [brand y].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate on a scale from 1 (highly uncertain) to 5 (highly certain), how you would judge the following statements:</th>
<th>highly uncertain</th>
<th>highly certain</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I were going to buy a shirt, the probability of buying [brand y] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probability that I would consider buying a shirt from [brand y] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that I would purchase a shirt of [brand y] is...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take a moment to think about [brand y]. Describe this person using personality characteristics such as reliable, smooth, etc. Now think about how you see yourself (your actual self). What kind of person are you? How would you describe your personality? Now think about how you would like to see yourself (your ideal self). What kind of person would you like to be? Once you’ve done this, indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>totally disagree</th>
<th>totally agree</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand y] is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand y] is a mirror image of me (my actual self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand y] is consistent with how I would like to be (my ideal self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personality of [brand y] is a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 7. Liking of Post, Product; Attitude Toward the Brand; Brand Familiarity II

You will now see further statements regarding the Instagram post shown to you at the beginning of the questionnaire and [brand].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I dislike the Instagram post very much</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>I like the Instagram post very much</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I dislike the shirt very much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like the shirt very much</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike [brand y] very much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like [brand y] very much</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [brand y] is bad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think [brand y] is good</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [brand y] is very unpleasant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think [brand y] is very pleasant</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think [brand y] is of poor quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think [brand y] is of high quality</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate how well you know [brand y].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do not know [brand y] at all</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do know [brand y] very well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How realistic was the Instagram post presented to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Instagram post was...</th>
<th>not at all realistic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>very realistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Mediator: Self-Esteem

We would like to ask you some personal questions. Please note, that your information is kept strictly confidential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On a scale of 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), whether you agree or disagree to the following statements.</th>
<th>totally disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Personal Questions

Finally, we would like to ask some questions regarding your person. Your information is exclusively used for statistical analysis and will be treated strictly confidential. The anonymity will not be restricted.

Do you use Instagram?
What is the highest educational degree you hold?

- □ Lower secondary education degree without vocational training
- □ Lower secondary education degree with vocational training
- □ Secondary school leaving certificate
- □ A-Levels/higher educational entrance qualification
- □ University degree
- □ No degree
- □ n/a

What is your monthly net household income?

- □ Less than 5,00 Euro
- □ 5,01 – 1,000 Euro
- □ 1,001 – 1,500 Euro
- □ 1,501 – 2,000 Euro
- □ 2,001 – 2,500 Euro
- □ 2,501 – 3,000 Euro
- □ 3,001 – 3,500 Euro
- □ 3,501 – 4,000 Euro
- □ more than 4,001 Euro
- □ n/a

Thank you very much for participating in this study!
Appendix C: Stimuli (Control Group)

Figure 50: Brand stimuli used for the control group
Source: ESPRIT (2018); HUGO Boss (2018).
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journal/Source</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sivakumar, K./Nakata, C.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The stampede toward’s Hofstede’s framework: avoiding the sample design pit in cross-cultural research</td>
<td>Journal of International Business Studies, vol. 32(3), pp. 555-574.</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, P. B./Bond, M. H.</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Social psychology across cultures, 2(^{nd}) ed.</td>
<td>London: Prentice Hall.</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, P. B./Schwartz, S. H.</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Handbook of cross-cultural psychology: social and behavior application, Boston: Allyn &amp; Bacon, pp. 77-118.</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Bremen, 11. Februar 2019

_____________________
Julia Sinnig