



#INFLUENCER MARKETING ON INSTAGRAM

*CONSUMER RESPONSES TOWARDS PROMOTIONAL POSTS:
THE EFFECTS OF MESSAGE SIDEDNESS AND PRODUCT
DEPICTION.*

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

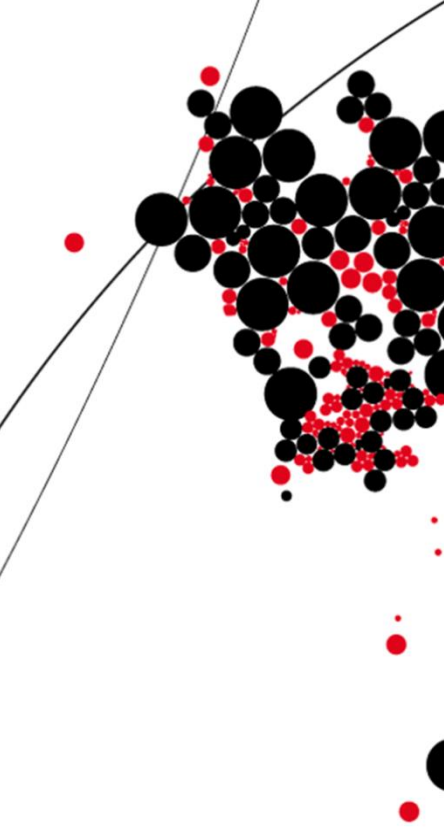
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Abstract

The communication environment for businesses has significantly changed due to the Web 2.0 and popularity of Social Networking Sites (SNS). The disruptive force of SNS had great impact on consumers' decision making processes. Consumers rely more than ever on recommendations from their peers. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), the sharing of views, experiences and opinions by online users on SNS have become a trusted source of information for consumers. New marketing practices like influencer marketing emerged. Influencer marketing utilizes influential online opinion leaders - active users of Social Networking Sites with large amounts of followers to drive messages through promotional posts. These promotional posts can be seen as a form of paid for eWOM, effective due to the large user numbers of SNS and the trust consumers place in eWOM. There is need for scientific knowledge on influencer marketing but only limited research so far. This study aims to increase the scientific understanding of this yet tentatively researched marketing practice.

This study investigates the effects of message sidedness and product depiction in promotional posts on Instagram on consumer responses. Two pretests were conducted to select reliable visual and verbal stimuli for the main study. In the main study 266 university students participated in a 2 (message sidedness: One-sided vs. two-sided) x 2 (product depiction: Abstract vs. context-based) online survey. Participants were presented with a fake Instagram post by an invented influencer and reported their purchase intentions, perceived source credibility and trustworthiness and product liking.

The results showed that message sidedness has a significant influence on source trustworthiness whilst product depiction significantly affects product liking. Two-sided messages led to higher ratings of source trustworthiness by participants. However, the increased trust in the source of a two-sided message did not lead to heightened purchase intentions. Consumers responded with higher purchase intentions to a one-sided message albeit they put less trust in the source of it. Context-based product depictions lead to higher product liking ratings compared to abstract depictions. There was no significant effect of product depiction on purchase intentions.

This study provides a better understanding of a yet tentatively researched marketing practice. The results have practical implications for influencers and companies engaging in influencer marketing and provide direction for future research into this field. The findings of this study regarding message sidedness can help companies and influencers to design messages for influencer marketing, albeit the effects may not be in the interest of both parties. Influencers can use two-sided messages to maintain their trustworthiness whilst companies have an interest in the use of one-sided messages to increase purchase intentions. Complex visual stimuli can increase product liking and are desirable by both parties. Consumers seem to look for the perfect product and respond favorable towards messages describing a product as such. Even though one-sided messages make them distrustful, they respond with higher purchase intentions to it.

Keywords: *influencer marketing, product depiction, message sidedness, Instagram, mental imagery*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The communication environment for businesses has significantly changed with the emergence of Web 2.0 and the growing popularity of Social Networking Sites (SNS). Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are some of the most popular and prominent SNS of today. Approximately two billion internet users are currently using social networks, a number which is expected to grow with the increase of mobile device usage (Woods, 2016). Worldwide, 2.307 billion people are active social media users and the generation with the most purchasing power, millennials, is heavily active with 90% of U.S. 18- to 29- year olds being on social media (Statista, 2017). With respect to these figures, it becomes apparent that visibility on SNS is important for the economic success of modern businesses. However, these platforms significantly impacted the communication landscape that organizations have to face and affected their level of control over brands messages (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Gensler et al., 2013; Kuksov, Shachar, & Wang, 2013).

The growing popularity and large user numbers of SNS also had a great impact on consumers purchasing decisions. Today, consumers rely more than ever on recommendations from their peers (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), the sharing of views, experiences and opinions by online users on SNS have become a trusted source of information for consumers, 74% of consumers rely on social media to influence their purchasing decisions (Bennett, 2014). Studies show that consumers trust eWOM more than corporate messages (Wu & Wang, 2011), meaning that the effectiveness of traditional advertising and marketing messages decreases. These developments forced the advertising industry to adapt and rethink traditional marketing strategies in order to effectively reach consumers. One of these adapted and modernized strategies is influencer marketing. Influencer marketing utilizes influential opinion leaders to create, deliver and spread advertising messages to consumers. The practice of influencer marketing has been around for long, traditionally targeting offline opinion leaders, like journalists (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Today, the focus of influencer marketing shifted to online opinion leaders - active users of Social Networking Sites with large amounts of followers. Because of the large user numbers, and the trust consumers place in eWOM, companies now partner up with influencers to drive their marketing messages to a large audience. Some influencers receive free products by companies hoping that they will like them and upload a picture of the product together with a recommendation, other influencers are getting paid by companies to promote a product or even sign deals to act as testimonials for a product or model in an advertising campaign. The advantage of promotional posts on Instagram (IPP) is the influence on consumers through eWOM, fandom and the trust consumers place in influencers. These factors often obstruct consumers from recognizing the persuasive attempts of IPP messages.

Advertising industry interest in influencer marketing is high; a 2015 study by Schlesinger Associates found that 84% of marketing and communications professionals worldwide to expect launching at least one campaign involving an influencer within the next 12 months ("Marketers Pair Up...", 2015). The budgets allocated to influencer campaigns are growing as well, the study also found that 61% of US marketers planned to increase influencer marketing budgets in 2015 ("Influencer Marketing...", 2016). The modern Influencer is a blogger, a YouTuber who uploads daily vlogs documenting his life or an Instagrammer who shares his life through pictures.

Sometimes these influencers are focused on one specific SNS but often multiple platforms are used to increase reach. Amongst the multitude of platforms on which influencer marketing takes place, Instagram plays an important role. The visually engaging nature of the platform and the 700 million active users make it a relevant channel for influencer marketing. A 2016 exploratory study on influencer marketing, using in-depth interviews with 13 advertisers, found Instagram as one of the first social media channels to come to mind when the topic was mentioned (Woods, 2016).

How influencers deliver advertising messages and what kind of visual and verbal information is contained are important variables affecting consumer responses. With the recent resurgence of influencer marketing, more research has been conducted, for example on the relationship between number of followers, likeability and opinion leadership (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2016) or the effects of disclosing promotional posts on consumers' attitudes towards them (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). However, influencer marketing is yet tentatively researched despite the demand for scientific knowledge. This study aims to satisfy this demand and add to the existing body of research. In this study, influencer marketing on Instagram is perceived as a form of advertising and thus connected and examined with regard to established advertising concepts. In advertising, the influence of visual and verbal information on consumer responses has been researched extensively. Influencer marketing messages on Instagram are similar to advertising messages in that they are comprised of a picture and an image caption. This study is concerned with the effects of these visual and verbal elements on consumer responses, and how they interact with each other. Especially the findings for message sidedness and product depiction in advertising suggest interesting questions when applied to influencer marketing.

Message sidedness relates to how and which verbal information is presented in a message. By consciously selecting to emphasize or omit certain information, consumer's responses to the message can be influenced. A form of message sidedness is two-sided persuasion, the voluntary inclusion of negative information about a brand, product or service into a message. Two-sided messages are believed to offer favourable persuasive effects, research suggests that they appear novel to the receiver and increase attention and motivation to process the message (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994). Promotional posts on Instagram are not purely picture based and often include a caption describing the promoted product and the experience with it. These captions can be seen as a form of sponsored review. If the inclusion of negative information into a message can have positive effects, for example on source credibility (Golden & Alpert, 1987; Kamins & Marks, 1987; Smith & Hunt, 1978), then a question is whether this could be a valuable practice when designing sponsored reviews for Instagram.

With regard to the effects of visual information in advertising messages, this study draws on research into product depiction and mental imagery to find out how different product presentations in advertising messages spread by influencers facilitate mental imagery and affect consumer responses. Research into mental imagery in traditional and online advertising found profound influences on cognitive and affective responses to the advertising message like ad recall, attitude toward the ad (Babin & Burns, 1997; Bone & Ellen, 1992; Burns, Biswas, & Babin, 1993; Unnava, Agarwal, & Haugtvedt, 1996) and intentions (Argyriou, 2012). Promotional posts on Instagram have the goal to influence buying decisions and the visual depiction of the product is central. Thus, promotional posts on Instagram can be seen as a form of online advertising. As

this new form of advertising has never been examined from a mental imagery perspective, this study aims to fill this gap.

This study examines the effects of message sidedness and product depiction on consumers purchase intentions, source credibility and trustworthiness and product liking. An experimental 2 x 2 between-subjects design was used to answer the research questions:

- RQ.** To what extent do message sidedness and product depiction on Instagram influence consumer's purchase intentions, perceptions of trustworthiness and credibility of the influencer, product liking and attitudes towards the ad?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the theoretical framework of this study is presented and discussed. To understand the foundation of this research the current body of research on influencer marketing, message sidedness, mental imagery and need for cognitive closure is presented. We begin with an introduction of influencer marketing and a discussion about the importance of Instagram for it. Advertising research on product depiction and mental imagery is recapped and connected to the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. The topic of message sidedness is discussed and the framework for two-sided persuasion by Crowley and Hoyer (1994), which was used in this study, is presented. Lastly, the mediator variable need for cognitive closure is introduced.

2.1. Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a marketing practice based on influence theory, which advocates the idea that a small percentage of key individuals can be effective at persuading a great amount of others. Rather than marketing towards a large group of consumers, influencer marketing uses influential individuals to drive a brand's message to the larger market and influence buying decisions (Woods, 2016). In its early days, influencer marketing focused on offline opinion leaders, like journalists or industry analysts, to gain positive coverage (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Companies would target selected journalist influencers and give them special access to information, their spokespeople and company events with the goal of building a long lasting relationship and facilitate positive coverage. Influencer marketing was a cost-efficient tool for companies with small marketing budgets to gain wide reach (Brown & Hayes, 2008). With the digitalization of businesses, the web 2.0 and the success of SNS, the focus of influencer marketing shifted from offline to online opinion leaders. Compared to traditional face-to-face opinion leaders, digital influencers offer a wider reach via their social networks (Lyons & Henderson, 2005) and are powerful stimulators of word-of-mouth discussion (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966). Digital influencers can be bloggers, celebrities or other individuals which are followed by a large amount of people online (Ehrlich, 2013). Influencer marketing takes place on personal blogs, commercial websites and SNS like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat.

A modern influencer marketing practice is to send free products to an online influencer, hoping that they will use and like it and decide to recommend it to their followers. Other times, companies pay online influencers to promote their product and post about it on their SNS profiles. These promotional posts are essentially paid eWOM and similar to celebrity endorsements. Suggestions made by online opinion leader's lead to the search for, purchase and use of products by their connected network (Flynn, Goldsmith, & Eastman, 1996). The immense trust consumers hold in opinions posted by others online (eWOM) make online influencers so valuable to companies, the "Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey" from 2015 indicated that 66% of consumers trust opinions posted online by others, making it the third-most-trusted advertising format.

With the increase of online influencer marketing and the professionalization of it, some companies started to predesign promotional posts for their influencers. In an attempt to control messages, marketing departments provided detailed instructions to their influencers about hashtags to use, timing of the post and even exact wording for the promotional post (Abidin & Ots, 2015). Indeed, some cases in which influencers thoughtlessly copied whole texts with embedded instructions, confirm this practice ("Influencer Marketing: The Good...", 2016). Thus, in some cases the influencer has not even tested the recommended product, essentially abusing the followers trust. The uncovering of such practices has lead companies and influencers to more transparency, nowadays it is common and in some countries even legally required to disclose promotional posts through the use of hashtags like "#ad" or "#sponsored" (Woods, 2016). Research however suggests that many users don't notice these hashtags (Wnent, 2016) and that the disclosure of promotional posts has little effects on consumers' perceptions (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014).

The social networking site Instagram is an important platform on which influencer marketing takes place. With 700 million monthly active users and more than 95 million photos/videos posted daily (Instagram, 2016), it is one of the most used SNS. The photo-based platform was the first social media site especially created for mobile devices (Miles, 2014). It allows consumers quick content consumption on-the-go and is especially suitable for influencer marketing due to its visually engaging nature. Although content can be accessed through a web-browser, users can only post using the mobile app. Instagram users can follow others to see their posts in the newsfeed. Through the use of hashtags, users can categorize their own posts and increase their visibility to others. A search tab lets allows the search for people, hashtags or places and an algorithm displays recommended uploads. Through these mechanics, users can continuously explore Instagram and find new profiles to follow. Over time, some users accumulate high numbers of followers making them popular influencers, commonly referred to as "Instagrammers" (Latiff & Safiee, 2015). Through regular uploads, a unique visual aesthetic of their pictures/videos and a close connection to their followers, these Instagrammers become micro-celebrities and serve as idols for their followers. By allowing their followers to participate in their daily life, Instagrammers appear approachable (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016) and are sometimes even perceived as friends or peers by their followers (Isosuo, 2016; Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016). These perceptions increase trust and an Instagrammers influence on his followers buying decisions. Instagrammers, perceived as peers, can motivate their followers to buy a certain brand or avoid other brands in order to be like them (Lueg & Finney, 2007). Due to these factors, Instagrammers offer great potential for marketers.

2.2. Product depiction and mental imagery

Product information plays an important role in consumer purchase decisions (Mitchell & Boustani, 1994; Kim & Lennon, 2000) and can be given in visual or verbal form. This chapter focuses on the visual form, the product depiction, and how it can facilitate mental imagery to increase positive consumer responses. Chapter 2.3 covers the verbal form of product information. As previously noted, Instagram is a visual centered platform. Pictures are at the core of this social network and although promotional posts on Instagram almost always include a caption, the uploaded picture is the central element. Therefore, the product depiction is important for the effectiveness of promotional posts. Similar to an advertisement, the promoted product should be depicted visually appealing and the promotional post should elicit positive consumer responses. This study examines promotional posts on Instagram from a mental imagery perspective.

Mental imagery is the mental visualization of a concept or relationship (Lutz & Lutz, 1978), a perceptual information process representing sensory or perceptual experience within an individual's working memory as ideas, feelings and memories (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Ideally, mental imagery allows consumers to imagine and simulate product use. In an advertising context, this process has been researched lately by Elder and Krishna (2012) who manipulated the orientation of a product depicted in an advertisement. When a product was oriented towards a participant's dominant hand purchase intentions were increased. Elder and Krishna claim, that this is a result of mental simulation of product interaction. Mental imagery can occur as a multi-sensory event or when exposed to a single sensory dimension such as visual (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Visual imagery has been found to be the most dominant (White, Sheehan, & Ashton, 1977) and research confirms that visual and verbal advertising messages can evoke mental imagery (Babin & Burns, 1997; Bone & Ellen, 1992; Fennis, Das, & Fransen, 2012). Product depictions in traditional media which facilitate mental imagery have been found to influence consumer responses to the advertising message like ad recall, attitude toward the brand and ad (Babin & Burns, 1997; Bone & Ellen, 1992; Burns, Biswas, & Babin, 1993; Unnava, Agarwal, & Haugtvedt, 1996), brand beliefs and brand recall (Mikhailitchenko, Rajshekhar, Mikhailitchenko, & Laroche, 2009) and purchase intentions (Elder & Krishna, 2012).

A recent stream of research has examined if online product presentations can facilitate mental imagery and affect consumer responses (Yoo & Kim, 2014; Jeong, 2007). Yoo & Kim (2014) found that product presentations in an online shop with a relevant consumption background were more effective in evoking mental imagery than those with a solid white background. They propose that mental imagery increases consumers' behavioral intentions by eliciting a positive emotional response to product presentations. Similar results were previously found by Jeong (2007), who examined the extent of experiential values facilitated by product presentations in an online shop. Experiential values refer to "sensory, emotional, and cognitive stimulation, satisfying curiosity" (Jeong, Fiore, Niehm, and Lorenz 2009, p. 106). Simple product presentations only conveying basic product information elicit low levels of experiential value, whereas more complex presentations (e.g. zoomed images or products featured on a model situated in an elaborate setting) result in higher levels of experiential value. The study found

online product presentations which elicit high experiential value to positively affect pleasure and arousal and lead to increased willingness to buy.

In conclusion, mental imagery has significant effects on consumer responses and can be facilitated by product presentations in offline and online media. Since the form of product presentation in promotional posts on Instagram is similar to that of online shops, mental imagery should be evoked by it. The extent to which mental imagery is facilitated appears to be related to the concreteness and the degree of interaction depicted (Babin, Burns & Biwas, 1992; Yoo & Kim, 2014). If a promotional post depicts the promoted product information rich and context-based, consumers may more readily engage in consumption imagery, compared to a more abstract depiction. The extent to which users can simulate using a product affects their intention to purchase it. Additionally, a concrete product depiction showing the product in interaction is expected to increase product liking. This research aims to examine how different product depictions in promotional posts on Instagram affect purchase intentions through mental imagery. In the context of influencer marketing, further knowledge of these effects can help organizations and influencers to design more effective promotional posts. Based on the above discussion this study hypothesizes:

- H1a:** A context-based product depiction positively influences purchase intentions in comparison to an abstract product depiction.
- H1b:** A context-based product depiction positively influences attitude towards the ad in comparison to an abstract product depiction.
- H1c:** A context-based product depiction positively influences product liking in comparison to an abstract product depiction.

2.3. Message sidedness

Although the image is a central element of any post on Instagram, the caption is part of it as well and should not be neglected. Image captions on Instagram add context, additional information and can categorize a post if hashtags are added. Promotional posts by influencers on Instagram can be seen as a form of paid eWOM. Companies expect influencers to write a short review about the promoted product and their experience with it and sometimes even provide them with complete texts. Essentially, the caption of a promotional post is a persuasive message aimed to motivate consumers to buy a certain product or brand.

Message sidedness refers to the format in which a persuasive message is presented. Traditional marketing communication only includes positive information in persuasive messages to influence consumer's brand preferences. This approach to communication is called one-sided persuasion. Negative information is not included in one-sided communication. Two-sided communication includes positive and negative information about a brand, product or service into a message. Negative information in a two-sided message is such information that conveys negative attributes about a brand, product or situation. A two-sided message could, for example

mention points of criticism towards a product like the possibility of product failure. Research found positive effects of two-sided persuasion messages on credibility (Golden & Alpert, 1987; Kamins & Marks, 1987; Smith & Hunt, 1978) and motivation to process (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Eisend, 2007).

Messages factors like the presentation and amount of negative information determine the persuasive impact of a two-sided message. The amount of negative information in a two-sided message is related to credibility gains, with moderate amounts delivering optimal results (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994). The negative information in the two-sided message should be placed early (but not first) in the message to increase the perceived novelty which leads to a higher motivation to process the message (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Eisend, 2007). With an early placement of unfavourable information the communicator is judged to be more honest, which further increases the perceived credibility of subsequent claims (Bohner et al., 2003). Two-sided messages should start with a favourable attribute of high importance followed by a secondary unfavourable attribute of moderate importance (Bohner et al., 2003; Pechmann, 1992). If the negative attributes used in a two-sided messages are evaluated as too important by the recipients, attribution effects towards the product or brand diminish positive effects of two-sidedness. Unimportant evaluated negative attributes lead recipients to negative inferences about the source (Jones & Davis, 1965). Recipients of two-sided messages have been found to judge sources as more honest if the primary (favourable) and secondary (unfavourable) attributes included in the message are related (Bohner et al., 2003; Pechmann, 1992).

Two-sided messages have never been studied in the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. The positive effects of two-sidedness on source credibility, perceptions of trustworthiness and motivation to process could be useful for this marketing practice in two ways. First, source credibility has been suggested as an important factor determining the influence of eWOM on consumers purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016), and the likelihood of information adoption (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Erkan & Evans, 2016). According to the information adoption model (IAM), source credibility influences the adoption of information on computer-mediated communication platforms. If source credibility is high, the information provided by the source is rated more useful and likelihood for information adoption is increased. Instagram is a computer-mediated communication platform, therefore the IAM is applicable to it. Following this, source credibility is a desirable variable in influencer marketing and if two-sided captions increase it they may be used to increase the influence of promotional posts.

Second, the caption is an important persuasive factor of promotional posts and should be read by consumers. Two-sided captions may increase the likelihood of information processing because they appear novel and unexpected. This would enhance the persuasive effect of promotional posts and increase positive consumer responses. This study aims to examine the effects of two-sided captions on Instagram on source credibility and trustworthiness. If the effects of two-sided messages found in previous research can be replicated to influencer marketing on Instagram, this knowledge would help to write more effective captions. Based on the above discussion, this study hypothesizes:

H2a: A two-sided message appeal positively influences source credibility.

H2b: A two-sided message appeal positively influences source trustworthiness.

2.4. Need for cognitive closure

Two-sided messages are more complex than one-sided messages because they provide ambiguous information. Thus individuals need to put more effort into processing and weighing arguments against each other. This may be disliked by some people and could lead to negative responses towards the source. To examine this relationship, need for cognitive closure is implemented as a mediator variable in this study.

Need for cognitive closure (NFCC) is an individual's motivational tendency to form clear judgements and an aversion towards ambiguity. Individuals with a high need for cognitive closure have a motivated desire for definitive answers and are characterised as decisive and closed-minded, preferring order and predictability and disliking ambiguity. Need for cognitive closure has been found subject to several situational moderators. Situational factors like time pressure (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Sanbonmatsu & Fazio, 1990) or fatigue (Kruglanski, 1989, Webster, Richter, & Kruglanski, 1996) have been found to increase the need for closure whilst accountability has been found to lower it (Kruglanski, 1989; Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Tetlock, 1985; Webster et al., 1996). The perceived benefits of obtaining closure, like a better basis for judgement and action, and the perceived costs of lacking closure further influence the need for cognitive closure.

Participants with a high need for cognitive closure are less tolerant of ambiguity, thus ignoring multiple perspectives to an issue. To reach quick closure, they tend to stick to an initial conclusion and discount or ignore negative information, as this would frustrate closure (Kruglanski, 1989). Additionally, under high need for cognitive closure individual's judgmental confidence is increased (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). In the context of this study, high need for cognitive closure participants should dislike two-sided messages as they are ambiguous. This may lead to negative responses towards the source of information. Because high NFCC individuals show a higher reliance on early or incomplete information, the researchers expect high NFCC participants to form stronger opinions in the one-sided condition than those with low NFCC. In contrast, low NFCC participants are expected to react more positively to the ambiguous information given in the two-sided messages and rate the source as more credible and trustworthy. Based on the above discussion, this study hypothesizes that:

- H3a:** A high need for cognitive closure positively influences source credibility and trustworthiness in the one-sided condition.
- H3b:** A low need for cognitive closure positively influences source credibility and trustworthiness in the two-sided condition.

2.5. Interaction effect of product depiction and message sidedness

Research has shown that in an advertising context, the visual and verbal elements of messages sometimes interact with each other. Rossiter and Percy (1978) found interaction

effects between visual and verbal elements of advertisements. In their study, advertisements with a visual emphasis and concrete copy elicited strongest attitudes, compared to other pairings. Rossiter and Percy argued that the congruency of initial responses, the visual imagery and verbal comprehension response, reinforce subsequent responses. Congruence is the degree to which stimuli are matching to each other (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004). Stimulus congruence can facilitate the formation of impressions and positively affect consumers' responses (Van Rompay, Pruyn & Tieke, 2009).

Similar effects could be expected in the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. Reinforcing combinations of product depiction type and message sidedness could lead to higher purchase intention, product liking and attitude towards the ad. For example, a one-sided caption in combination with a context-based product depiction may yield significantly higher purchase intentions than a two-sided caption in combination with an abstract product depiction. Since research on influencer marketing on Instagram is very limited, arguable conclusions about congruent combinations are hard to draw. Therefore the following exploratory research question is formulated:

ERQ: To what extent do product depiction type and message sidedness interact with each other influencing purchase intention, product liking and attitude towards the ad?

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1. Design

This study used an experimental 2 (message sidedness: One-sided vs. two-sided) x 2 (product depiction: Abstract vs. context-based) between-subjects design. It examined five dependent variables: *Trustworthiness*, *source credibility*, *purchase intention*, *attitude towards the ad* and *product liking*. Further information on the used scales is given in chapter 3.3. The study manipulated two independent variables, first the message sidedness (one-sided vs. two-sided), second the product depiction (abstract vs. context-based). Additionally, the *need for cognitive closure* of participants was measured (high vs. low) to understand its moderating influence on perceptions of *source credibility* and *source trustworthiness*. Figure 1 shows the research design.

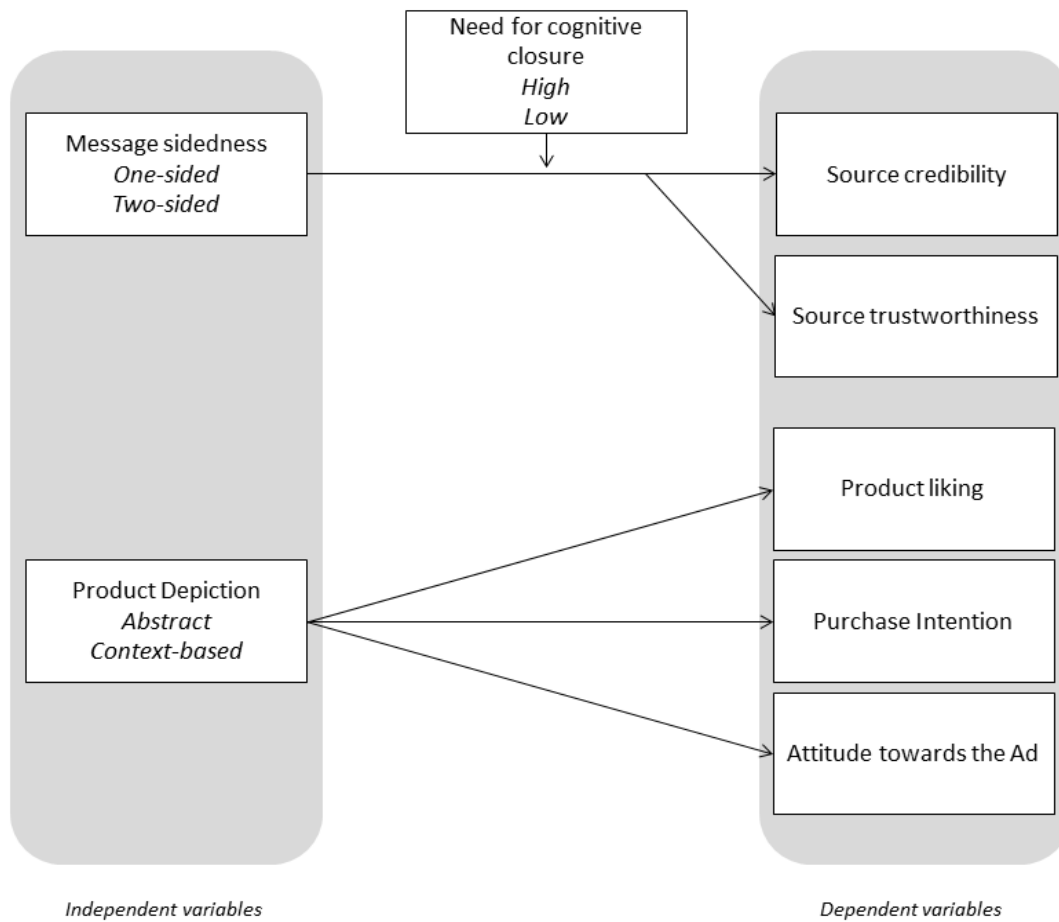


Figure 1. Research design

3.2. Procedure

The experimental 2 x 2 between-subjects design results in four conditions: (1) one-sided image caption with abstract product depiction, (2) two-sided image caption with abstract product depiction, (3) one-sided image caption with context-based product depiction and (4) two-sided image caption with context-based product depiction. Table 1 shows the experimental conditions. Upon start of the survey participants were randomly assigned to a condition. In the first part of the questionnaire participants were asked if they are current or former users of Instagram. Participants who never used Instagram were sent to the end of the survey and filtered out. Following this, participants were asked for how long they have been using Instagram and which kind of profiles they follow. On the next page of the survey, participants were asked for full attention and to carefully consider all elements of the following message. Participants were then exposed to the stimulus material based on their condition and the dependent variables (*Source credibility, source trustworthiness, purchase intention, product liking and attitude towards the ad*) were measured. Afterwards, the mediator variable *need for cognitive closure* was measured. The last part of the questionnaire consisted of socio-demographic questions (age, gender, nationality and level of education).

Table 1
Experimental conditions

Condition	Message sidedness	Product depiction
1	One-sided	Abstract
2	Two-sided	Abstract
3	One-sided	Context-based
4	Two-sided	Context-based

3.3. Participants

For the main study, a total of 266 students of the University of Twente were recruited using the Universities participant tool SONA. As adults between the ages of 18 – 30 make up the majority of social media users and influencer marketing is specifically targeted at this age group, a sample of university students was deemed appropriate. Respondents received course credits in exchange for their participation. Only students who are current or former users of Instagram were allowed to participate in the study in order to have a sample that is familiar with Instagram and may be target to influencer marketing in everyday life. From the initial 266 responses, 22 were removed (not users of Instagram $N = 10$, abandoned questionnaires $N = 12$). Of the remaining 244 responses, 67.2% were female participants. The ages ranged from 18-30 years, the mean age was 20.56 years. The majority of the sample was German (70.9%), 25% were Dutch. Because of the relatively young mean age, most participants had a high school diploma (80.3%) as their highest educational degree, only 12.7% had a university degree. Sample characteristics are presented in Table 2. A one-way ANOVA and chi-squares confirmed equal distributions of mean age, genders and within conditions (See Appendix D).

Table 2
Distribution of sample within experimental conditions

Stimulus Group	Participants n	Gender		Age M	Level of education				Nationality		
		Male	Female		1*	2*	3*	4*	German	Dutch	Other
(1) Context-based Two-Sided	60	19	41	20.4	51	4	4	1	41	16	3
(2) Context-based One-sided	60	21	39	20.7	44	7	8	1	41	15	4
(3) Abstract Two-Sided	63	20	43	20.1	52	1	10	0	43	19	1
(4) Abstract One-sided	61	20	41	20.6	49	5	6	1	48	11	2
Total	244	80	164	20.6	196	17	28	3	173	61	10

1* = High school diploma, 2* = Intermediate/Higher vocational education, 3* = Bachelor's degree, 4* = Master's degree

3.4. Prestudies

The aim of the prestudies was to select relevant visual and verbal stimuli for the main study. Prestudy 1 was conducted to select which visual stimuli (product depiction) should be used in the main study, while prestudy 2 was conducted to select which verbal stimuli (message sidedness) should be used in the main study.

3.4.1. Prestudy 1

Aim

The first pretest was conducted to select relevant visual stimuli for the manipulation of product depiction in the main study. The goal was to find one picture of a French press to be used for the abstract condition and one for the context-based condition in the main study.

Stimuli

Using Google search, eight pictures of French presses were downloaded for the pretest. Four pictures, depicting the French press alone on a table or white background, were selected for the abstract condition and four pictures, depicting the product with a relevant consumption background were selected for the context-based condition. Using Adobe Photoshop all pictures were cropped to the same size of 600x400 pixels to avoid differences in effects due to picture size.

Participants

A convenience sample of international students (N = 20) participated in the pretest and viewed the eight images in random order. Their ages ranged from 23-27, the mean age was 24.

Procedure

Participants were exposed to the eight different pictures in random order and reported the degree of mental imagery experienced by each image using a modified scale adopted from Walters et al.'s (2007) and Babin and Burns (1998). A total of six items measured the two dimensions of elaboration and quality on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Results

The stimuli with the highest mental imagery score (elaboration: M = 5.11; quality: M = 4.46 out of 7) was selected for the context-based condition of the main study, the stimuli with the lowest mental imagery score (elaboration: M = 3.51; quality: M = 2.93 out of 7) was selected for the abstract condition of the main study. Table 3 gives an overview about the means and standard deviations of all tested visual stimuli. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to see if the stimuli are statistically significantly different. The result showed that the visual stimuli abstract 2 and context-based 4 differed significantly on elaboration ratings ($p = .001$) and on quality ratings ($p = .004$).

Table 3

Means and Standard deviations of the visual stimuli

Stimulus	Elaboration of mental imagery	Quality of mental imagery
Abstract #1	4.58 (1.31)	4.48 (1.28)
Abstract #2	3.51 (1.40)	2.93 (1.34)
Abstract #3	3.96 (1.40)	3.38 (1.64)
Abstract #4	3.46 (1.41)	3.41 (1.81)
Context-based #1	4.36 (1.40)	3.96 (1.62)
Context-based #2	4.18 (1.46)	3.95 (1.74)
Context-based #3	3.95 (1.42)	3.83 (1.60)
Context-based #4	5.11 (1.19)	4.46 (1.70)

Stimuli selected for the main study are shown in **bold**.

3.4.2. Prestudy 2

Aim

The second pretest was administered to choose which verbal stimuli should be used for the manipulation of message sidedness in the main study.

Stimuli

Six reviews of a French press were written for the prestudy, three framed one-sided and three framed two-sided. All two-sided framed reviews were written based on the framework of Crowley & Hoyer (1994) and findings from studies by Eisend (2007), Smith and Hunt (1978), Bohner et al. (2003) and Pechmann (1992). Each review featured a total of five arguments; in the two-sided reviews two of the five arguments were unfavourable. Before writing the reviews, a content-analysis of amazon.com reviews of French presses was conducted to compile a list of arguments and rank their importance. The first five results when searching for “French press” on amazon.com were used as a sample, from each result, the three “Top Customer Reviews” were taken and analysed giving a total sample size of 15 reviews. Statements were grouped together in themes, a total of 95 statements were grouped into 19 themes. The content analysis provided a comprehensive list of real customer statements and the importance of product attributes and arguments which was used to write the reviews. According to the framework of Crowley & Hoyer (1994), the two unfavourable statements appeared at second and third position in the two-sided reviews. The first favourable statement was of high importance and followed by a related second unfavourable statement of moderate importance. Each review was closed with a favourable statement of high importance.

Participants

A sample of University of Twente students (N = 20) participated in the pretest. Participants were sampled using the participant tool of the University of Twente and received course credits for their participation. Participants were mainly German (N = 18) and female (N = 17) and aged between 18 to 24 years, the mean age was 20.

Procedure

The participants viewed the six different reviews in random order. The reviews were measured on trustworthiness and source expertise using 7-point Likert-type scales. Trustworthiness was measured using three items from Ohanian's (1990) source credibility scale (trustworthy, honest, reliable). An additional three items measuring expertise (expert, knowledgeable, experienced) from Ohanian (1990) completed the measurements.

Results

The stimuli scoring highest in trustworthiness and expertise (trustworthiness: $M = 5.21$; expertise: $M = 4.58$ out of 7) was selected for the two-sided condition of the main study, the stimuli with the lowest scores in trustworthiness and expertise (trustworthiness: $M = 4.25$; expertise: $M = 3.9$ out of 7) was selected for the one-sided condition of the main study. Table 4 gives an overview about the means and standard deviations of all tested visual stimuli.

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to see if the stimuli are statistically significantly different. The result showed that review One-sided 3 and Two-sided 3 differed significantly on trustworthiness ratings ($p = .009$) and on expertise ratings ($p = .038$).

Table 4

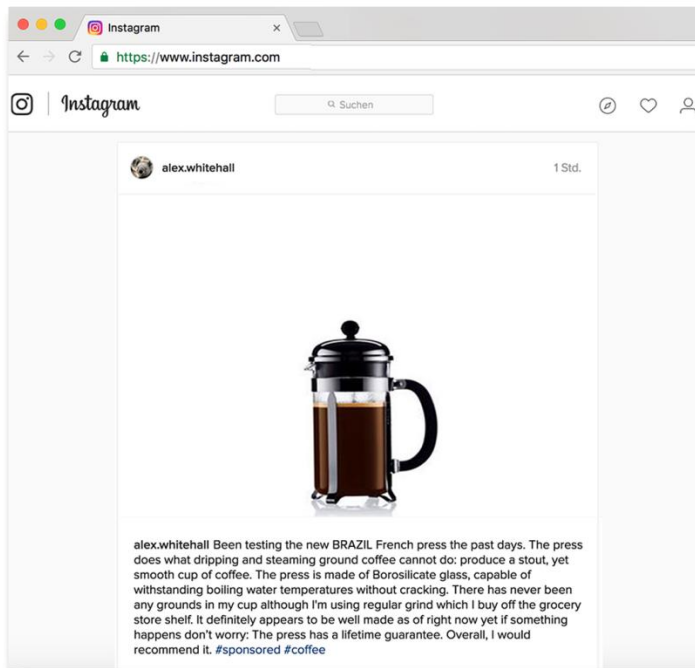
Means and Standard deviations of the verbal stimuli

Stimulus	Trustworthiness	Expertise
One-sided #1	4.68 (1.16)	4.15 (.99)
Two-sided #1	5.13 (1.20)	4.24 (.91)
One-sided #2	4.68 (1.37)	4.65 (.96)
Two-sided #2	4.65 (1.45)	3.85 (1.03)
One-sided #3	4.25 (1.25)	3.90 (.96)
Two-sided #3	5.21 (1.28)	4.58 (1.22)

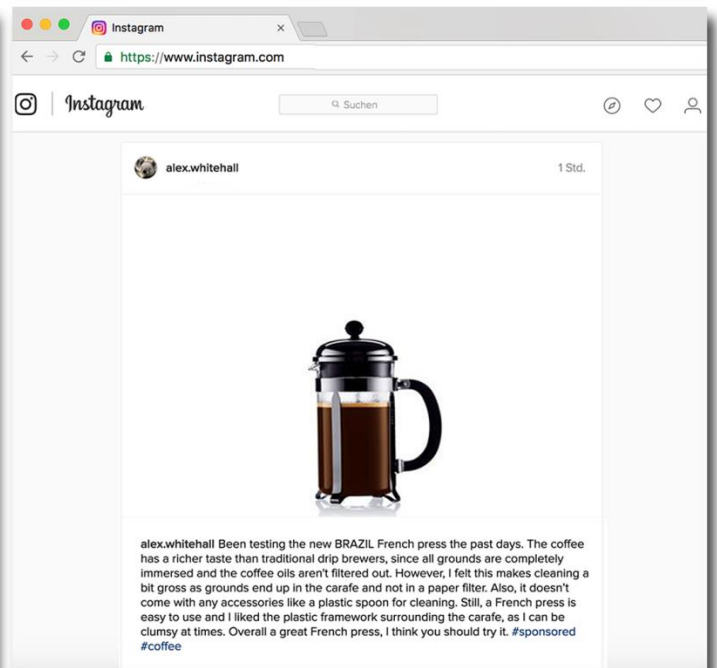
Stimuli selected for the main study are shown in **bold**.

3.5. Stimulus Material

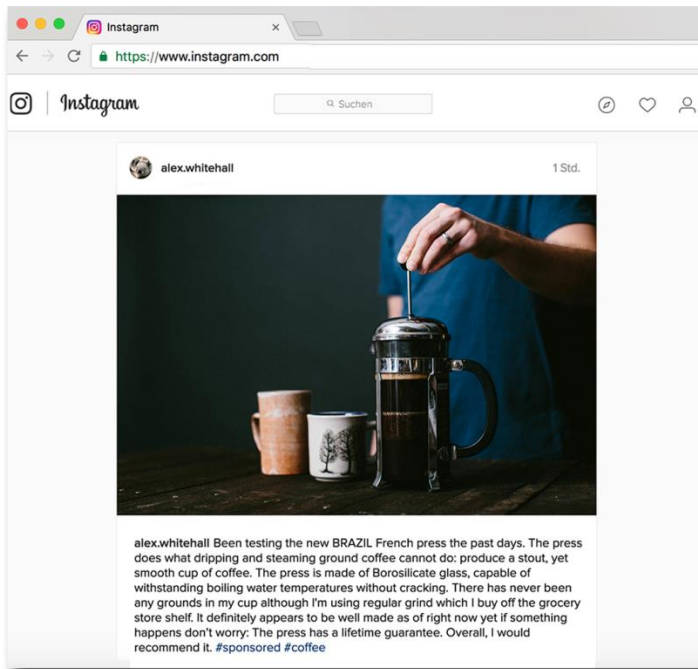
Stimulus material for each condition was designed using Instagram and Adobe Photoshop. For this study, a promotional post of an invented influencer was developed, including a one- or two-sided message as the caption and depicting the promoted product abstract or context-based. The depicted product should be of interest to the student population used as a sample in this study to enhance likelihood that they would process the target ad (Babin & Burns, 1997; MacInnis & Price, 1987; Unnava & Burnkrant, 1991). Accordingly, a French press, a coffee brewing device for coarse grind coffee, was chosen as the promoted product. A coffee related product was expected to be of relevance and interest for the sample and for women and men in equal measure. A fictitious brand name was used to avoid any effects of a known brand name on consumer responses and purchase intentions. An abstract product depiction was defined as a neutral image showing the French press by itself, in a simple setting, without additional visual information about the use and handling. A context-based depiction was defined as a more information rich depiction of the French press, in operation, with a relevant consumption background which conveys additional product information on how to use the product and facilitates mental simulation. The message appeal of the stimulus material was manipulated by the amount and placement of positive and negative information in the messages. Two prestudies were conducted to choose reliable visual and verbal stimuli. Figure 2 shows the stimulus material used in the main study



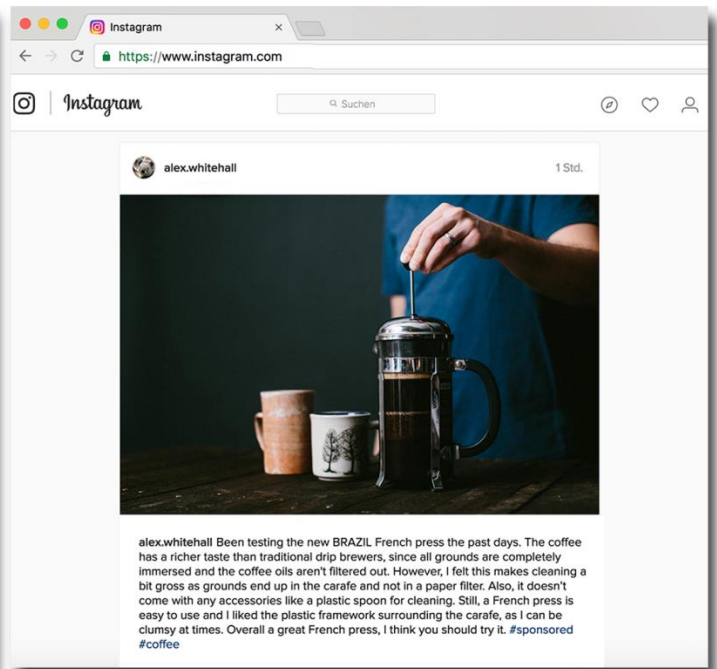
condition 1: Abstract one-sided



condition 2: Abstract two-sided



condition 3: Context-based one-sided



condition 4: Context-based two-sided

Figure 2- Stimulus material used in main study

3.6. Measures

Dependent measures

Source credibility. Source credibility was measured with 5 items on a 5-point scale anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”. Four items were taken from Ohanian (1990), one item was taken from Min & Mentzer (2004). The scale proved reliable with an alpha of .77.

Source trustworthiness. Five items measured source trustworthiness on a 5-point Likert scale with end-points labelled “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Three items were taken from Ohanian (1990), two items were taken from Walsh & Beatty (2007). The scale reached an alpha of .92.

Purchase intention. Six self-developed items measured purchase intention on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale reached an alpha of .84.

Product liking. Four items measured product liking on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale was developed by Fenko, Backhaus and van Hoof (2015) and reached an alpha of .82.

Attitude towards the ad. Four items from Henthorne, LaTour & Nataraajan (1993) and one self-developed item measured attitude towards the ad on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale proved unreliable with an alpha of .55 and was not included in the analysis.

Moderating measures

Need for cognitive closure. Need for cognitive closure was measured by the abridged Need for Closure scale developed and validated by Roets and van Hiel (2010). The scale measures need for

closure with 15-items on five factors on a 5-point scale. The scale was anchored by “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. In the main study, the scale reached an alpha of .79.

Webster and Kruglanski (1994) developed the original 42-item Need for Closure Scale (NFCS), which measures the NFC on five factors. The original 42-item scale has been frequently discussed and used as a basis for refined and shorter NFCC scales. Criticism regarding inter-item homogeneity (Neuberg, Judice, & West, 1997; Neuberg, West, Judice, & Thompson, 1997), the length and the validity of items measuring decisiveness (Roets, Van Hiel, and Cornelis, 2006; Roets and Van Hiel, 2007) lead some researchers to develop shorter versions of the NFCS. The usage of the abridged 15-item NFC scale by Roets and van Heil (2010) is based on practical considerations, as NFC is only one of many variables in this study and the original 42-item scale would significantly increase tiredness of participants and potentially drop-out rates.

In this studies the sample was split at the mean of the sample ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .52$) which was equal to the median (3.06). The split resulted in a group of 96 low ($M = 2.56$, $SD = .31$) and 148 high ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .35$) need for closure participants. An independent samples t-test confirmed significant difference in means; $t(242) = -18.5$, $p < .05$. Table 6 gives an overview of the items and reliability of the scales used in the main study.

Table 6
Items and reliability of the scales used in the main study

Construct	No. of items	Items	Alpha (a)
Need for closure	15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I don't like situations that are uncertain 2. I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways 3. I find that a well ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament 4. I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand the reason why an event occurred in my life 5. I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes 6. I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it. 7. When I have made a decision, I feel relieved 8. When I am confronted with a problem, I'm dying to reach a solution very quickly 9. I would quickly become impatient and irritated if I would not find a solution to a problem immediately 10. I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions 11. I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things 12. I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more 13. I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life 14. I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view 15. I dislike unpredictable situations 	.79

Purchase Intention	6	1. I would be willing to buy this French press 2. I would be willing to pay a little more for this French press 3. The next time I need a French press, I would buy this one 4. I would consider buying this French press the next time I see it 5. I would probably not buy this French press (R) 6. I would prefer the BRAZIL French press over other French presses	.84
Attitude towards the Ad	5	1. This post is informative 2. This post is interesting 3. This post is easy to understand 4. This post is objective 5. This post is pleasant	.55
Source Credibility	5	1. I believe this source is an expert 2. I believe this source is experienced 3. I believe this source has personal experience with the product 4. This source does not make false claims to me 5. This source is knowledgeable	.77
Source Trustworthiness	5	1. This source is honest 2. This source is reliable 3. This source is trustworthy 4. I have great confidence in this source 5. I trust this source	.92
Product Liking	4	1. My first impression of the product is that I extremely like it 2. The product looks nice 3. The product draws attention 4. In general, the product seems attractive to me	.82

The scale for *attitude towards the ad* proved unreliable and was not included in the statistical analysis.

3.7. Manipulation checks

To ensure that participants understood the manipulations in the survey, manipulation checks for the message sidedness and product depiction were implemented. The manipulation check questions were implemented after exposure to the stimulus material and measurement of the dependent variables (*Source credibility*, *source trustworthiness*, *purchase intention*, *product liking*, *attitude towards the ad*). The first manipulation check question asked participants for their perception of product depiction. A 5-point semantic differential scale asked respondent's whether they perceived the shown image of a French press as "1 = more abstract" or "5 = more detailed". The second manipulation check measured the perceptions of message sidedness on a 5-point semantic differential scale. Respondents could indicate whether they perceived the review as more "1 = well balanced" or more "5 = one sided".

4. RESULTS

This chapter is dedicated to the results of the statistical analysis of the main study. First the manipulation check will be discussed. Afterwards the ANOVA results testing the main effects of product depiction and message sidedness are presented. Lastly, the results of the statistical analysis for interaction effects are accounted. Table 7 gives an overview of the results of the ANOVA's run during the statistical analysis.

4.1. Manipulation check

For the manipulations of product depiction and message sidedness an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to see if they were successful. The results show that the manipulation of message sidedness was successful whilst the manipulation of product depiction failed.

The ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences in means between the context-based ($M = 3.23$; $SD = 1.03$) and abstract product depiction ($M = 3.02$; $SD = 1.09$), $F(1,242) = 2.528$, $p = .113$. The ANOVA checking the manipulation of message sidedness showed that there were significant difference between the one-sided ($M = 3.86$; $SD = .98$) and two-sided condition ($M = 2.98$; $SD = 1.20$), $F(1,242) = 38.432$, $p = .000$. The review in the one-sided condition was rated as very one-sided whilst the two-sided review was rated as well balanced.

4.2. Main effects

Main effect of product depiction

Multiple ANOVA's were conducted to test the effects of product depiction and message sidedness on the four dependent variables *purchase intention*, *product liking*, *source credibility* and *source trustworthiness*. The ANOVA testing the effects of product depiction showed a significant main effect of product depiction on *product liking* ($F(1,242) = 6.101$, $p = .014$), the product was liked more in the context-based condition ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .91$) than in the abstract condition ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .82$). There was no significant main effect on *purchase intention* ($F(1,242) = .125$, $p = .724$). The means of the context-based ($M = 2.46$, $SD = .86$) and the abstract product depiction condition ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .82$) did not differ significantly. Thus, hypotheses H1c is supported whilst hypotheses H1 and H1b are rejected.

Main effect of message sidedness

An ANOVA testing the main effects of message sidedness on the dependent variables found a significant effect on source trustworthiness ($F(1,242) = 11.11$, $p = .001$), participants rated the source more trustworthy in the two-sided condition ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .91$) than in the one-sided condition ($M = 2.24$, $SD = .77$) supporting hypothesis H2a. An additional ANOVA revealed a main effect of message sidedness on *purchase intention* ($F(1,242) = 9.41$, $p = .002$), *purchase intention* was higher in the one-sided condition ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .87$) compared to the two-sided condition ($M = 2.28$, $SD = .78$). There was no significant main effect of message sidedness on *source credibility* ($F(1,242) = 1.94$, $p = .165$). In both the one-sided ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .69$) and two-sided

condition ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .75$) participants rated source credibility relatively low. Thus, hypothesis H2 was rejected.

4.3. Interaction effects

Interaction effects of message sidedness and need for closure

The analysis showed no significant interaction effect of the message sidedness and need for closure for the variable *source trustworthiness* ($F (1,240) = .125$, $p = .724$). There was also no interaction effect of message sidedness and need for closure on *source credibility* ($F (1,240) = .324$, $p = .569$). Thus, hypotheses H3 and H3b are not supported and rejected.

Interaction effects of product depiction and message sidedness

The analysis showed no significant interaction effects of the message sidedness and product depiction for the variables *purchase intention* ($F (1,240) = .820$, $p = .366$) and *product liking* ($F (1,240) = .742$, $p = .390$).

Table 7
Results of ANOVA analysis

Dependent variable		F	sig
Purchase intention	Independent variables		
	Product depiction	.125	.724
	Message sidedness	9.41	.002
	Depiction x sidedness	.820	.366
Source credibility	Independent variables		
	Message sidedness	1.94	.165
	Product depiction	1.244	.266
	Need for closure	1.028	.312
	NFC x sidedness	.324	.569
	NFC x sidedness x product depiction	.050	.823
Source trustworthiness	Independent variables		
	Message sidedness	11.11	.001
	Product depiction	.003	.958
	Need for closure	.159	.691
	NFC x sidedness	.125	.724
	NFC x sidedness x product depiction	2.116	.147
Product liking	Independent variables		
	Product depiction	6.101	.014
	Message sidedness	.866	.353
	Depiction x sidedness	.742	.390

5. DISCUSSION

This research aimed at investigating the effects of product depiction and message sidedness of promotional posts on Instagram on consumer responses. Need for cognitive closure was included as an additional variable in the research to understand its moderating influence on consumer responses towards different sided messages.

In line with the formulated hypothesis, the data showed significant effects of product depiction on product liking. Consumers had higher liking of the promoted product when the uploaded picture was context-based and the product was shown with a relevant consumption background (H1c confirmed). The message sidedness had a significant effect on source trustworthiness, a two-sided message as image caption lead to higher trustworthiness ratings by the consumers (H2a confirmed). Additionally, message sidedness had a significant effect on purchase intention, a one-sided message lead to higher purchase intentions compared to two-sided messages.

Contrary to the expectations, product depiction did not influence purchase intentions (H1 & H1b rejected) and message sidedness had no significant influence on source credibility (H2 rejected) in this study. The data did also not show any interaction effects between message sidedness and need for closure either on source trustworthiness or source credibility (H3 & H3b rejected), and of message sidedness and product depiction on product liking or purchase intentions. Table 8 provides an overview of the formulated hypotheses and outcome.

Table 8
Overview and outcome of hypotheses

	Hypotheses	Outcome
H1a/H1b	A context-based product depiction positively influences purchase intentions / attitude towards the ad in comparison to an abstract product depiction	rejected
H1c	A context-based product depiction positively influences product liking	Confirmed
H2a/H2b	A two-sided message appeal positively influences source credibility / source trustworthiness	Rejected / Confirmed
H3a	A high need for cognitive closure positively influences source credibility and trustworthiness in the one-sided condition	Rejected
H3b	A low need for cognitive closure positively influences source credibility and trustworthiness in the two-sided condition	Rejected

Product depiction and product liking, purchase intention

This study could confirm that product depiction influences product liking in the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. A context-based product depiction, showing the promoted product with a relevant consumption background led to higher ratings of product liking compared to an abstract product depiction. It is not surprising that an elaborate and visually more appealing depiction increases product liking.

This result is in line with previous research on mental imagery. A study on the effects of online product presentation on consumer responses by Yoo & Kim (2014) found that mental imagery positively associates with positive emotion. More complex product presentations increase positive emotion, which is likely to lead to positive responses towards the product. In their study, Yoo & Kim related the elaboration and quality of mental imagery to positive emotion and behavioral intentions. Several dimensions have been proposed by scholars such as the quantity of images, the quality of images, the ease with which the images were evoked, vividness, clarity and the elaboration (Yoo & Kim, 2014; Babin & Burns, 1998). There is research that related individual dimensions of mental imagery to specific consumer responses. An advertising study related the quantity and vividness of imagery elicited by radio commercials to the recall of message content (Miller and Marks, 1992) and the concreteness of a print advertisement copy has been positively related to vividness of imagery, attitude towards the brand and behavioural intentions (Burns et al., 1993). In conclusion, it is possible that the visual stimuli used in this study satisfied a dimension of mental imagery related to product liking.

The positive effects of mental imagery on purchase intentions implied by previous studies (Elder & Krishna, 2012) could not be proven in the main study. This could be due to several factors. First, the dimensions of mental imagery may offer an explanation for this result, for instance it could be possible that images on Instagram are not able to elicit all dimensions of mental imagery. The experimental setting of this study may have also played a role in this as participants were only exposed to a screenshot of a promotional post embedded in the survey. It is possible that the size of the visual stimuli used in the main study was too small and unable to elicit all mental imagery dimensions. The visual stimuli were not full screen and research suggests that picture size may be a critical factor determining the amount of mental imagery elicited (MacInnis & Price, 1987, Rossiter & Percy, 1978; Smith et al., 1984). Lastly, the failed manipulation check must be noted. Although the visual stimuli were pretested participants did not notice the manipulation which suggests that it was too subtle. This might be reason for the limited effect of product depiction in this study.

Message sidedness and source trustworthiness, source credibility

Message sidedness had a significant effect on source trustworthiness in this study. As suggested by previous studies (Bohner et al., 2003; Pechmann, 1992), the unfavorable information in a two-sided message lead the source to be rated more trustworthy. The verbal stimuli used in this study were developed based on frameworks by Bohner et al. (2003) and Pechmann (1992). The early placement of unfavorable information and the relation between primary (favourable) and secondary (unfavourable) attributes in the message increased perceptions of trustworthiness as suggested by these frameworks.

The results showed no significant effect on source credibility in this study. This may be due to the way source credibility was conceptualized and measured in this study. Definitions and conceptualizations of source credibility are manifold. Throughout the years, scholars have proposed many different factors determining a sources' credibility and developed scales to measure it. The scientific consensus is that credibility is a multi-dimensional concept. According to Ohanian (1990), source credibility should be measured along the dimensions of expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness. In this study, only the expertise dimension was measured, trustworthiness was included as an independent variable and attractiveness was left out of the study for practical reasons. Thus, the items measuring source credibility were solely related to the expertise dimension of source credibility. The results show, that message sidedness had a significant effect on source trustworthiness which is one dimension of credibility. An analysis showed that if the items for trustworthiness and credibility were treated as one scale measuring two dimensions of credibility, message sidedness did in fact have a significant effect on credibility. An influence of message sidedness on perceptions of attractiveness of a source is unlikely, thus measurements on this dimensions can be neglected.

Expertise, as it was measured in this study appears to be independent from message sidedness. It is to be assumed that ratings of expertise are more related to the fit between influencer and the promoted product. In consideration of this, source credibility can be indirectly influenced through the effect of message sidedness on source trustworthiness and a conscious selection process considering the fit between influencer and product.

Message sidedness and purchase intention

Message sidedness had a significant effect on purchase intentions. One-sided messages lead to heightened purchase intentions even though they also lowered source trustworthiness. This is a surprising outcome as trustworthiness is considered to play an important role in persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Several studies have demonstrated the influence of trustworthiness on the level of acceptance of a message and source (Ohanian, 1990). In fact, trustworthiness has been found to be more important to persuasiveness than expertise (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). However, purchase intention is a complex construct and trustworthiness is only one factor influencing it. A multitude of other variables influence an individual's intention to purchase a product, and the source trustworthiness is merely one variable mainly determining whether a message is accepted and processed.

The results of this study demonstrate to a certain degree that what works in advertising works in influencer marketing. Consumers seem to look for the perfect product and appear eager to accept a one-sided message even though they have less trust in the source of it. A possible explanation for this may lie in the relative stronger weight of negative information over positive information in eWOM. Research has found that negative information is more influential than positive (favorable) information in eWOM messages (Fiske 1980; Skowronski & Carlston 1987; Chiou & Cheng 2003). Consumers related negative information to low-quality products and weigh it more heavily than positive information in their decision making (Skowronski & Carlston, 1987, 1989; Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991; Bone, 1995). Additionally, positive information is not necessarily used to categorize a product as high-quality, because even low-quality products can have some positive attributes (Herr et al. 1991; Bone 1995). It may be possible that the negative

effects of unfavorable information in a two-sided message on purchase intentions are stronger than the positive effects of the increased trustworthiness.

Another possible explanation for the findings could be that the ambiguous information from the two-sided message lowered its persuasiveness. The direction of eWOM messages has been found to be an important antecedent of eWOM effects. If a number of eWOM messages are available, consumers are more likely to rely on them if they follow the same direction, e.g. if they are either all positive or all negative. The consensus between different eWOM messages enhances the collective persuasiveness (Doh & Hwang, 2009). Although this study did not compare different eWOM messages it may be thinkable that the direction of arguments within one single eWOM message affects its persuasiveness in a similar way.

Need for closure

This study could not confirm any moderating influence of need for cognitive closure on consumer responses towards different sided messages. There was no significant difference in perceptions of source trustworthiness and credibility between high and low need for closure participants in the one- and two-sided message condition.

It is possible that the abridged scale used in this study to measure need for closure scale was partially responsible for this result. Need for closure is commonly regarded and studied as a situational variable and thus far all proposed scales were developed to measure individual differences in need for closure. The use of the abridged 15-item scale by Roets and van Hiel (2010) was chosen for practical reasons, to limit the scale of the questionnaire and reduce dropout rates. It may be, that the scale was unable to meaningfully divide the sample into high and low need for closure participants. It may further be possible that situational moderators of NFCC influenced individual responses in this study. Research has found that time pressure (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Sanbonmatsu & Fazio, 1990) and fatigue (Kruglanski, 1989, 1990b; Webster, Richter, & Kruglanski, 1996) can increase need for closure. Maybe, some participants were exhausted or filled out the survey under time pressure and their need for closure was influenced by situational moderators. As the scale only measured individual differences, it cannot be ruled out that situational moderators may have influenced responses.

Interaction effects of product depiction and message sidedness

No interaction effects between product depiction and message sidedness appeared in this study. This may likely be due to the failed manipulation of product depiction. As the manipulation check revealed, participants did not notice the manipulation. This leads to the conclusion that interaction effects were unlikely if not impossible to occur in this study.

5.1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The theoretical implications of this study emphasize the need for further research into influencer marketing on Instagram. Especially the contradictory implications concerning product depiction should propose further research from a mental imagery perspective.

The requirements for mental imagery to occur by images on Instagram appear complex. The insignificant effect of product depiction on purchase intentions could be interpreted as an inability of images of Instagram to elicit mental imagery. However, the effects on product liking contradict such a conclusion. A more likely assumption is that mental imagery is a complex construct and only some dimensions of mental imagery were elicited by the visual stimuli used in this study. There is ample research dedicated to the influence of single dimensions of mental imagery on consumer responses (Miller and Marks, 1992; Burns *et al.*, 1993; Miller and Marks, 1997). It is thinkable that the visual stimuli of this study only satisfied a dimension of mental imagery related to product liking but not one related to purchase intentions. Further research could take a closer look at the preconditions for and effects of individual mental imagery dimensions on Instagram.

Two sided captions function to some extent as expected and suggested by previous literature. Although there was no direct effect on source credibility, or rather expertise, credibility is indirectly influenced through trustworthiness. Research into two-sided messages found positive effects on resistance to attacks (Bither, Dolich, and Nell 1971; Kamins and Assael 1987; Szybillo and Heslin 1973). Future research could examine if two-sided image captions of promotional posts on Instagram have significant effects of resistance to attacks. If positive effects were to be found, influencer marketing could not only be used as a means to increase purchase intentions but possibly as a practice in crisis communication. The increased trustworthiness of two-sided messages does not appear to increase persuasion in terms of purchase intentions. An explanation may be that consumers weigh the negative information in it more heavily than positive information which diminishes any positive effects from increased trustworthiness. This implies that even when exposed to influencer marketing messages on Instagram consumers want to avoid risk and accept less trustworthy messages which may prevent them from bad purchase decisions.

Need for closure appears to have no moderating influence on consumer responses towards different sided influencer marketing messages. It was expected that because high need for closure is connected to an aversion to ambiguity, a two sided message containing ambiguous information would be disliked and this unpleasantness would lead to negative inferences about the source of a two sided message. This relationship could not be proven. Theoretically this implies that people do not make negative inferences about the source of a message due to unpleasant feelings they may have when encountering a message because of need for closure.

5.2. PRACTICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have several practical implications for companies and influencers. Companies should prefer one-sided messages and can disregard need for closure when designing them whilst influencers have an interest to write two-sided messages to maintain credibility. Complex product depictions appear to have no direct effect on purchase intentions but increase product liking.

First, the results indicate that companies do not gain advantages from the use of two-sided messages in influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram. The data of this study shows that

although two-sided messages increase trustworthiness ratings, they lower purchase intentions. The increased trust in the source of a two-sided message does not seem to positively influence purchase intentions. Although trust is considered an antecedent of persuasiveness, the negative influence on purchase intentions of unfavorable information in a two-sided message appears larger than the positive influence of the increased trust. The traditional paradigm of marketing communication, to influence consumer's brand preferences by solely communicating positive features of a brand or product should be preferred in the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. Further, need for closure appears to be a variable of no relevance in the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. The results of this study imply that the effects of it on consumer responses are marginal and that companies can disregard it when planning influencer campaigns on Instagram.

Secondly, for influencers, the use of two-sided messages may result in desirable consumer responses. Although purchase intentions are lower compared to one-sided messages, two-sided messages increase the perceived trustworthiness and presumably credibility of the influencer. Perceptions of credibility are desirable for influencers as their influential power and commercial value is strongly based on this. This leads to conflicting interests of companies and influencers. In order to maintain their commercial value to companies, influencers somewhat depend on their credibility and continuously promoting products with one-sided messages might hurt it. Companies on the other side want to influence purchase intentions when engaging in influencer marketing. They are interested in an influencer who promotes the product in a way which influences purchase intentions, and one-sided messages appear to be most effective in doing so.

5.3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several limitations to this study that may decrease the significance and generalizability of the findings.

Failed manipulation of product depiction

The unsuccessful manipulation of product depiction in the main study likely plays a big role in the limited effect sizes of product depiction. Either, the visual stimuli selected for the main study were too small or different monitor sizes and resolutions interfered. The findings could indicate that not all dimensions of mental imagery were elicited by the visual stimuli used in this study. This study relied on criterion-based responses (MacInnis & Price, 1987), instead of assessing imagery processing. Specifically, this study manipulated an imagery-evoking strategy, in this case pictures, and inferred imagery processing from the results. Thus, it was not directly measured whether imagery processing actually took place. Further research should be dedicated to explore how and under which conditions mental imagery can occur from images on Instagram.

Setting

The unrealistic Instagram situation due to the experimental design of this study is another limitation of this study. Participants were exposed to a screenshot of an Instagram post embedded into the questionnaire rather than being able to view it on Instagram itself. A more realistic setup could allow participants to view the post in the Instagram App, allow them to

browse through the profile and enable additional research behavior. In fact, most Instagram users tend to engage in further information research online before considering buying a product promoted by a micro-celebrity on Instagram (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016). The experimental setting of this study prohibited any additional persuasive effects stemming from such consumer behaviour and did not represent a real influencer marketing on Instagram situation.

Further, any influence of the influencers' attractiveness and consumers' fandom for the influencer was not part of this study. In real life influencer marketing situations, the attractiveness of the influencer and the relationship between consumer and influencer play an important role in consumer responses. For practical reasons, any such influence was excluded from this study but future research could design a more realistic setting in which a real influencer is used and the sample is aligned.

Operationalization of source credibility

As previously noted, the operationalization of source credibility in this study may limit generalizability of the findings. As is consensus amongst researchers, source credibility is a multi-dimensional construct and the scale used in this study measured but one of these dimensions. Even with the inclusion of the trustworthiness scale items, the attractiveness dimension would be neglected. Source attractiveness was deliberately not a part of this study, mainly for practical reasons and to keep complexity and scope of the research at a manageable level. Nevertheless it must be noted that this trade off results in a lower validity. Further, the persuasive power of Influencers is to some degree moderated by the relationship between influencer and followers and fandom effects.

Sample

The sample of this study limits the generalizability of findings especially towards younger age groups or other cultural backgrounds. In accordance with ethical standards, only adult participants above the age of 18 were allowed. In real life, influencer marketing is often targeted at younger age groups since minors are less critical and easier to influence. Thus effect sizes for a younger age group could be significantly stronger. The majority of this studies sample was German, with a small amount of Dutch and international students. The generalizability towards other nations and cultural backgrounds is therefore limited. Future research could implement a younger sample or examine cultural differences in consumer responses towards promotional posts on Instagram.

5.4. CONCLUSION

This study provides a better understanding of a yet tentatively researched marketing practice. Influencer marketing has been around for long and is here to stay, thus scientific knowledge of it is needed and valuable. The results of this study offer an interesting perspective into this marketing practice and raise questions to be answered with further research.

Influencer marketing appears to be defined by a battle of interest between companies and influencers. Whilst companies engaging in influencer marketing are interested in persuasive

posts, the results of this study suggest that influencers may suffer from practices which enhance purchase intentions. The present study showed that on Instagram, the message sidedness of captions can be manipulated to either satisfy the interest of companies or influencers. Influencers can use two-sided messages to profit from favorable responses towards them and maintain their trustworthiness. This is in their long-term interest, since their credibility and trustworthiness are important factors to their economic value. Consumers seem to look for the perfect product and respond with high purchase intentions towards messages describing a product as such, even though one-sided messages make them distrustful. Therefore, companies have an interest in the use of one-sided messages.

Considering purchase intentions, the results of this study imply superiority of verbal stimuli. Product depiction did not significantly influence purchase intentions. Nevertheless, complex product depiction increase product liking and are desirable by both companies and influencers'.

The present study is bound by limitations and provides direction for future research of influencer marketing. Especially the experimental setup and sample of this study limit the generalizability of findings. Future research should also be dedicated to influencer marketing on Instagram from a mental imagery perspective. Nevertheless the results offer practical advice for companies engaging in influencer marketing and influencers. With the added knowledge from this study, influencer marketing messages can be designed more effectively.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Pretest 1

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the pretest for my master thesis "Influencer Marketing on Instagram"

In the following, you will see a series of **pictures of a French press**. A French press is a coffee brewing device. After each picture, you are asked to answer 6 questions about these pictures. You will see a total of **8 pictures** which equals a **total of 48 questions**. The questions are intended to offer valuable insight and guide the selection process on which pictures will be used in the main study.

In total, you should need **5 minutes** to complete this survey

Please be aware that all recorded data will be kept anonymously and only used as a guideline to design the main study. You are free to withdraw from this pretest at any time in which case your data will not be used. If you have any questions regarding this pretest or the main study you can contact the researcher at:

Lennart Braatz
l.a.braatz@student.utwente.nl

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Survey Powered By Qualtrics

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Whilst viewing the picture many images came to mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could actually see myself using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Whilst viewing the picture many images came to mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could actually see myself using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
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It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
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The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0% ☐ 100%

>>

Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Whilst viewing the picture many images came to mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could actually see myself using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0% ☐ 100%

>>

Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Whilst viewing the picture many images came to mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could actually see myself using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0% 100%

>>

Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Whilst viewing the picture many images came to mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could actually see myself using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0% 100%

>>

Please view the following image:



Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Whilst viewing the picture many images came to mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could actually see myself using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easy for me to imagine using this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The images that came to my mind were clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were detailed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The images that came to my mind were well-defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0% ☐ 100%

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APPENDIX B: Pretest 2

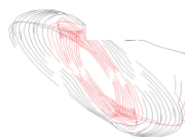
Thank you for agreeing to participate in the pretest for my master thesis "Influencer Marketing on Instagram"

In the following, you will see a series of **reviews of a French press**. A French press is a coffee brewing device. After each review, you are asked to answer 6 questions about these. You will see **6 reviews** which equals a **total of 36 questions**. Please read each review carefully before answering the questions. The results are intended to offer valuable insight and guide the selection process on which reviews will be used in the main study.

In total, you should need **no more than 10 minutes** to complete this survey

Please be aware that all recorded data will be kept anonymously and only used as a guideline to design the main study. You are free to withdraw from this pretest at any time in which case your data will not be used. If you have any questions regarding this pretest or the main study you can contact the researcher at:

Lennart Braatz
l.a.braatz@student.utwente.nl



Survey Powered By Qualtrics

>>

Please read the following review carefully:

Been testing the new BRAZIL French press the past days. It comes with four finely-meshed filters, which fit snugly in the glass cylinder. However if the coffee is too fine, it will clog up the filters and it will be difficult to press down. Also I didn't like that the "cover" doesn't fasten to the glass, at least not well. The press has substantial weight to it so it definitely appears durable. The coffee it produces is excellent and I think coffee lovers should try it!

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think this review is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source has personal experience with the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>

Please read the following review carefully:

Been testing the new BRAZIL French press the past days. The coffee has a richer taste than traditional drip brewers, since all grounds are completely immersed and the coffee oils aren't filtered out. However, I felt this makes cleaning a bit gross as grounds end up in the carafe and not in a paper filter. Also, it doesn't come with any accessories like a plastic spoon for cleaning. Still, a French press is easy to use and I liked the plastic framework surrounding the carafe, as I can be clumsy at times. Overall a great French press, I think you should try it.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think this review is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source has personal experience with the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>

Please read the following review carefully:

Been testing the new BRAZIL French Press the past days. The coffee tasted so smooth, it was tastier than my drip coffee, granted though, it is not the biggest size which might be a downside for heavy coffee drinkers. It's recommended to use coarse ground coffee however it is not available everywhere, I couldn't find any in my local stores. The French press is very easy to use and a snap to clean. I loved the design and stainless steel interior fittings. I recommend it.

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think this review is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source has personal experience with the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>

Please read the following review carefully:

Been testing the new BRAZIL French press the past days. My first impression was good, I like the elegant look to it and stainless steel interior fittings. I have heard how much better coffee tastes when using a French Press, and indeed it makes a delicious, rich coffee. The press comes with four finely-meshed filters and overall has a well-made sturdy feel. The press is made of Borosilicate glass which is more resistant to thermal shock, so it doesn't break. Definitely recommend it!

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think this review is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source has personal experience with the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>

Please read the following review carefully:

Been testing the new BRAZIL French press the past days. The press does what dripping and steaming ground coffee cannot do: produce a stout, yet smooth cup of coffee. The press is made of Borosilicate glass, capable of withstanding boiling water temperatures without cracking. There has never been any grounds in my cup although I'm using regular grind which I buy off the grocery store shelf. It definitely appears to be well made as of right now yet if something happens don't worry: The press has a lifetime guarantee. Overall, I would recommend it.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think this review is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source has personal experience with the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>

Please read the following review carefully:

Been testing the new BRAZIL French press the past days. The press uses a double filter which no grounds get through. They also send 2 replacement screens though I don't foresee needing these any time soon. I was able to produce an excellent cup of coffee with this press, the coffee itself tasted delicious. This press is designed so that no plastic touches the hot water when you're brewing the coffee, that's always a plus. Don't be afraid if you never used one, instructions are included, teaching you how to use it. You should try it out.

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think this review is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think this review is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe the source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the source has personal experience with the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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APPENDIX C: Main Study

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my master thesis research project on **product reviews on Instagram**.

You are eligible to participate in this survey if you are between **18 - 30 years old**, and **are currently or have been in the past using Instagram**.

In the following, you will see an Instagram post **reviewing a French press**. A French press is a coffee brewing device. You are asked to answer a series of questions about this post. Please read and view the post carefully before answering the questions. The results are intended to offer valuable insight and help decision makers in the future.

In total, you should need **about 15 minutes** to complete this survey

Please be aware that all recorded data will be kept anonymously and not be disclosed to third parties. You are free to withdraw from this survey at any time in which case your data will not be used. If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact the researcher at:

Lennart Braatz
l.a.braatz@student.utwente.nl

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby declare that I have been informed in a manner which is clear to me about the nature and method of the research. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree of my own free will to participate in this research. I reserve the right to withdraw this consent without the need to give any reason and I am aware that I may withdraw from the experiment at any time. If my research results are to be used in scientific publications or made public in any other manner, then they will be made completely anonymous. My personal data will not be disclosed to third parties without my express permission.

>>

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Are you currently or have you in the past been using Instagram?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

>>

Survey Powered By [Qualtrics](#)

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For how long are you or have you been using Instagram?

- ☐ Less than 3 months
☐ 3 - 6 months
☐ 7 - 12 months
☐ 13 - 18 months
☐ 19 - 24 months
☐ More than 2 years

Which kind of profiles are you following on Instagram? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Friends / People I know
☐ Celebrities (Actors, Musicians, TV celebrities)
☐ Bloggers
☐ Companies
☐ YouTubers
☐ Fitness Instagrammers
☐ Beauty Instagrammers
☐ Food Instagrammers

>>

Please read carefully!

The goal of this research is to measure the **attention towards different elements of an review on Instagram.**

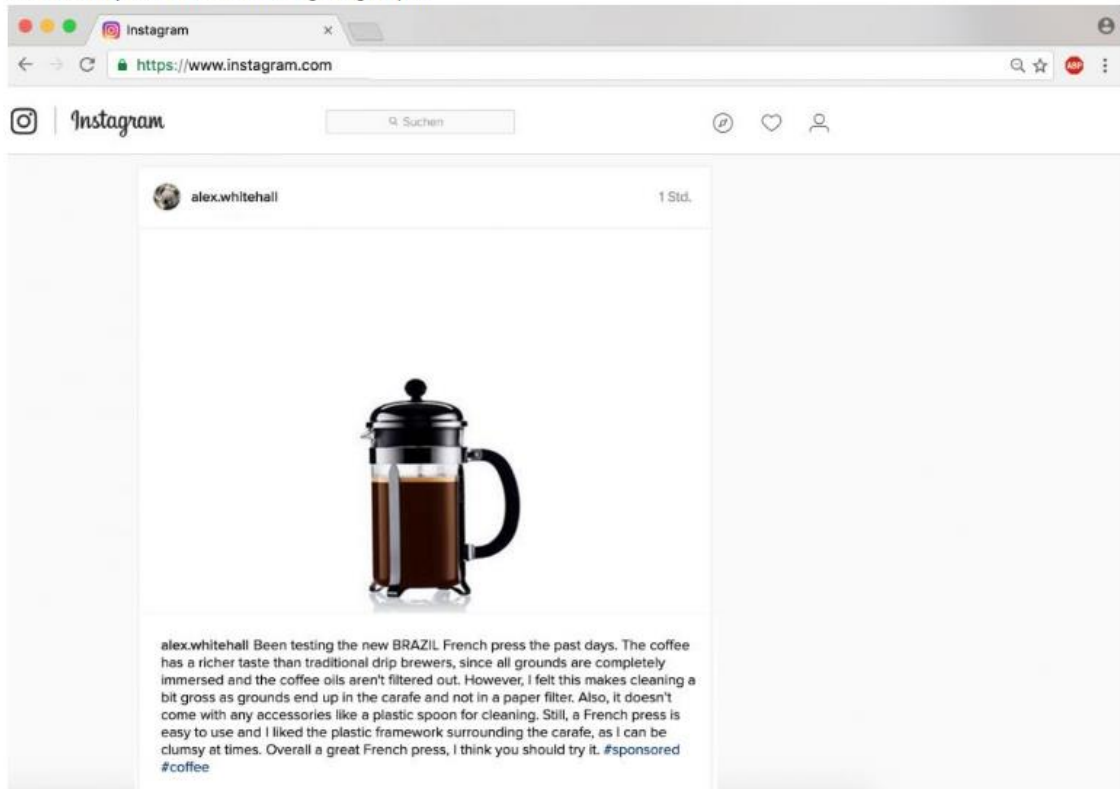
In the following, you will see an review of an French press on Instagram.

Please carefully consider all the different elements of this message and try to pay close attention.

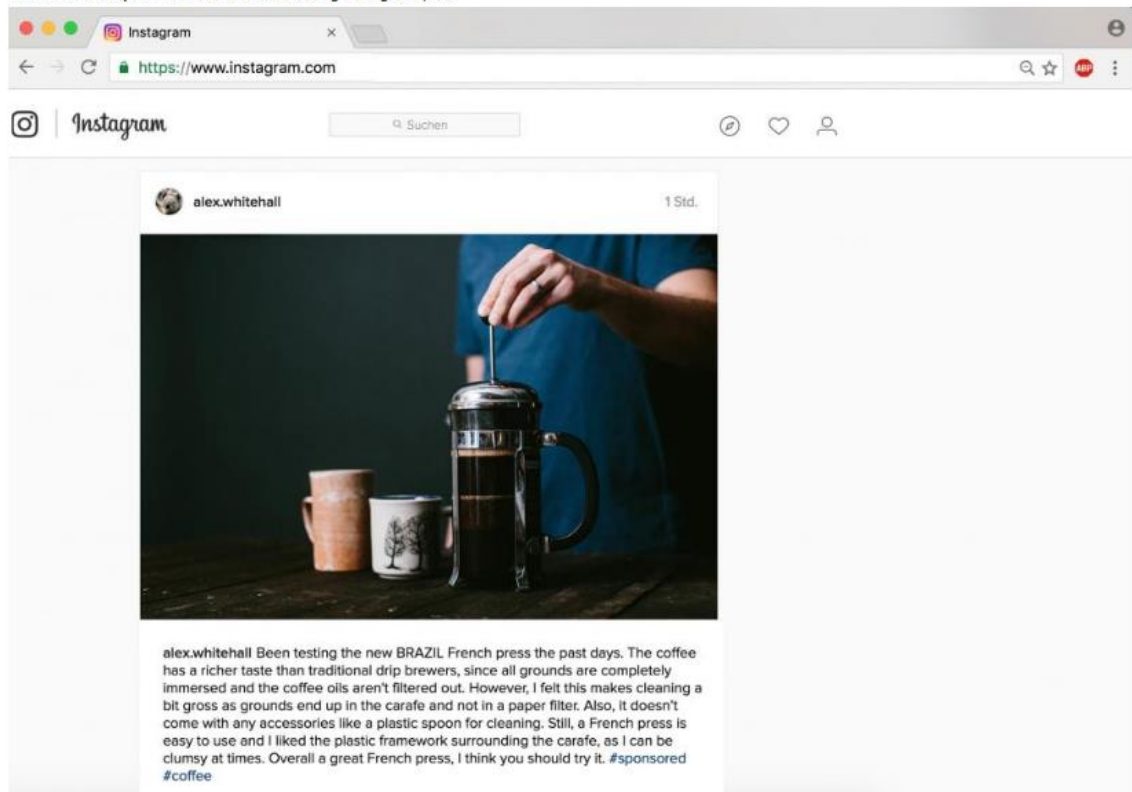
>>

Survey Powered By [Qualtrics](#)

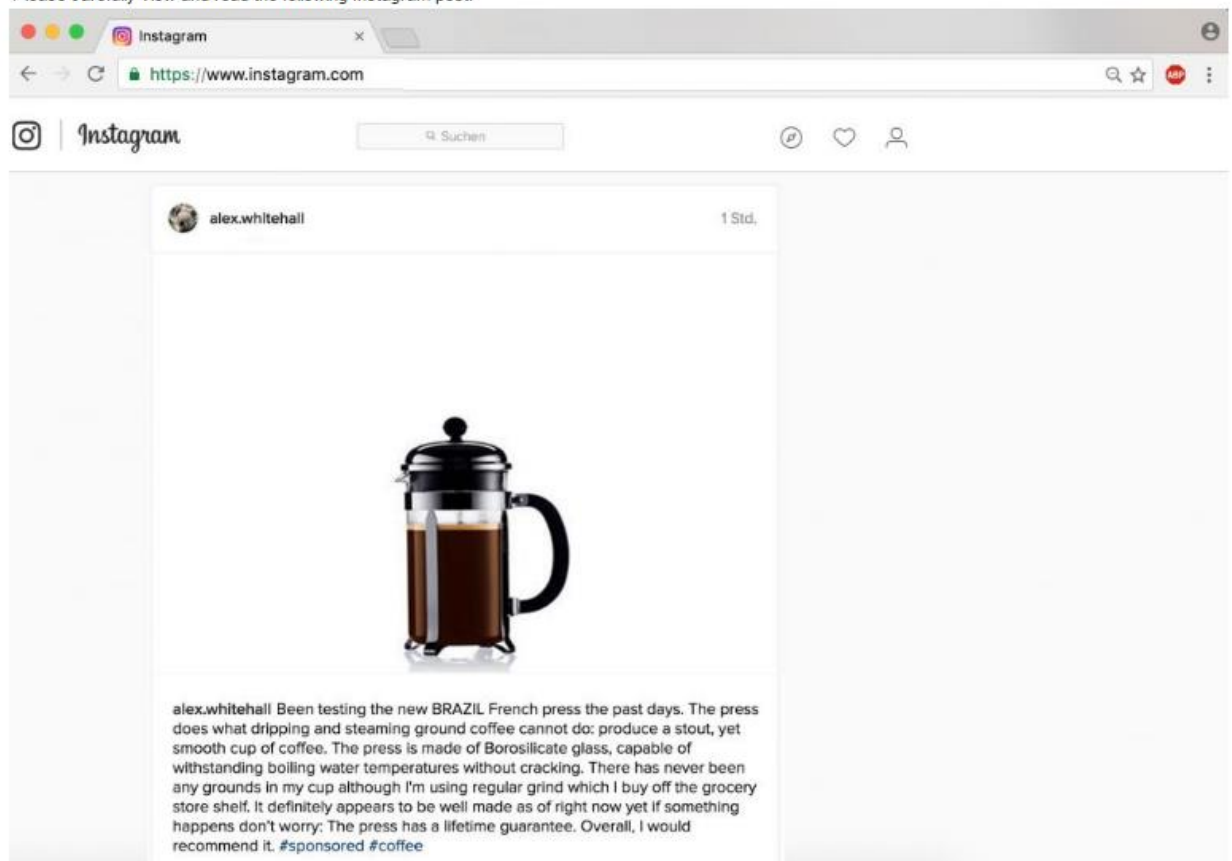
Please carefully view and read the following Instagram post:



Please carefully view and read the following Instagram post:

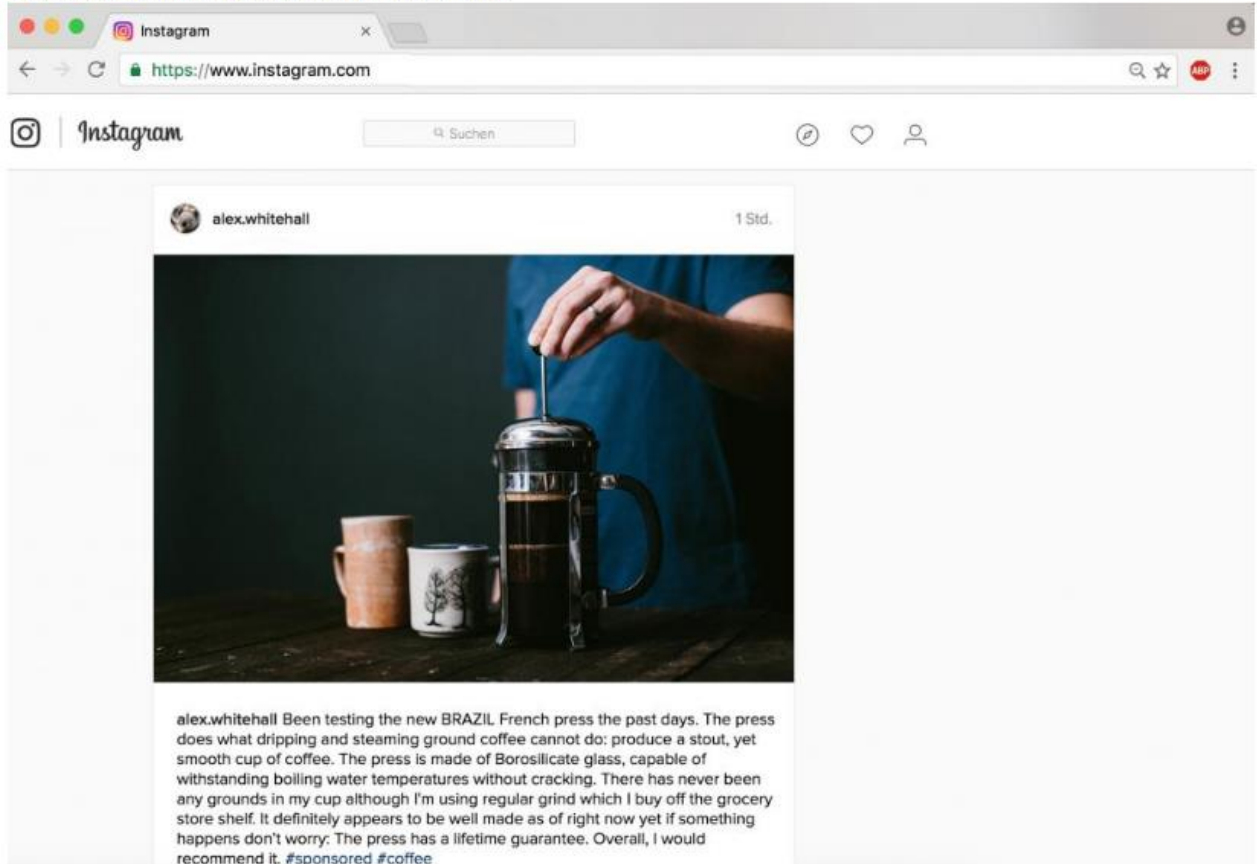


Please carefully view and read the following Instagram post:





Please carefully view and read the following Instagram post:



Please indicate your approval to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I would be willing to buy this French press	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be willing to pay a little more for this French press	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The next time I need a French press, I would buy this one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would consider buying this French press the next time I see it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I probably would not buy this French press	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would prefer the BRAZIL French press over other French presses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your approval to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This post is informative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post is interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post is easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post is objective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This post is pleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your approval to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I believe this source is an expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe this source is experienced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe this source has personal experience with this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This source does not make false claims to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This source is knowledgeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your approval to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This source is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This source is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This source is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have great confidence in this source	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust this source	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your approval to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My first impression of the product is that I extremely like it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The product looks nice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The product draws attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, the product seems attractive to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Please indicate in the following how you perceived the post you just saw. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your personal perception.

I have perceived the shown image of the French press as

More abstract ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ More detailed

I have perceived the review of the French press as

well balanced ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ one sided

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Please indicate your approval to the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I don't like situations that are uncertain.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find that a well ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand the reason why an event occurred in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I have made a decision, I feel relieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I am confronted with a problem, I'm dying to reach a solution very quickly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would quickly become impatient and irritated if I would not find a solution to a problem immediately.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike unpredictable situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>

To complete the survey please answer a few questions about you.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

What is your age?

What is your nationality?

What is your highest educational degree?

- ☐ No high school diploma
☐ High school diploma
☐ Intermediate vocational education
☐ Higher vocational education
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's degree

APPENDIX D: Additional tables

Table Appendix 1

Mean scores (with *SD*) of consumer reactions to context-based and abstract product depictions

	Context-based	Abstract
Purchase intention	2.46 (.86)	2.42 (.82)
Product liking	3.02 (.91)	2.75 (.82)

Table Appendix 2

Mean scores (with *SD*) of consumer reactions to one-sided and two-sided messages

	One-sided	Two-sided
Source credibility	2.71 (.69)	2.84 (.75)
Source trustworthiness	2.24 (.77)	2.60 (.91)
Purchase intention	2.60 (.87)	2.28 (.78)

Table Appendix 3

Mean scores (with *SD*) of reactions to one- and two-sided messages by high and low need for closure

	One-sided		Two-sided	
	Low NFC	High NFC	Low NFC	High NFC
Source credibility	2.68 (.73)	2.72 (.67)	2.74 (.86)	2.89 (.69)
Source trustworthiness	2.29 (.75)	2.21 (.78)	2.60 (.69)	2.60 (.89)

Table Appendix 4

Condition * What is your gender? Crosstabulation

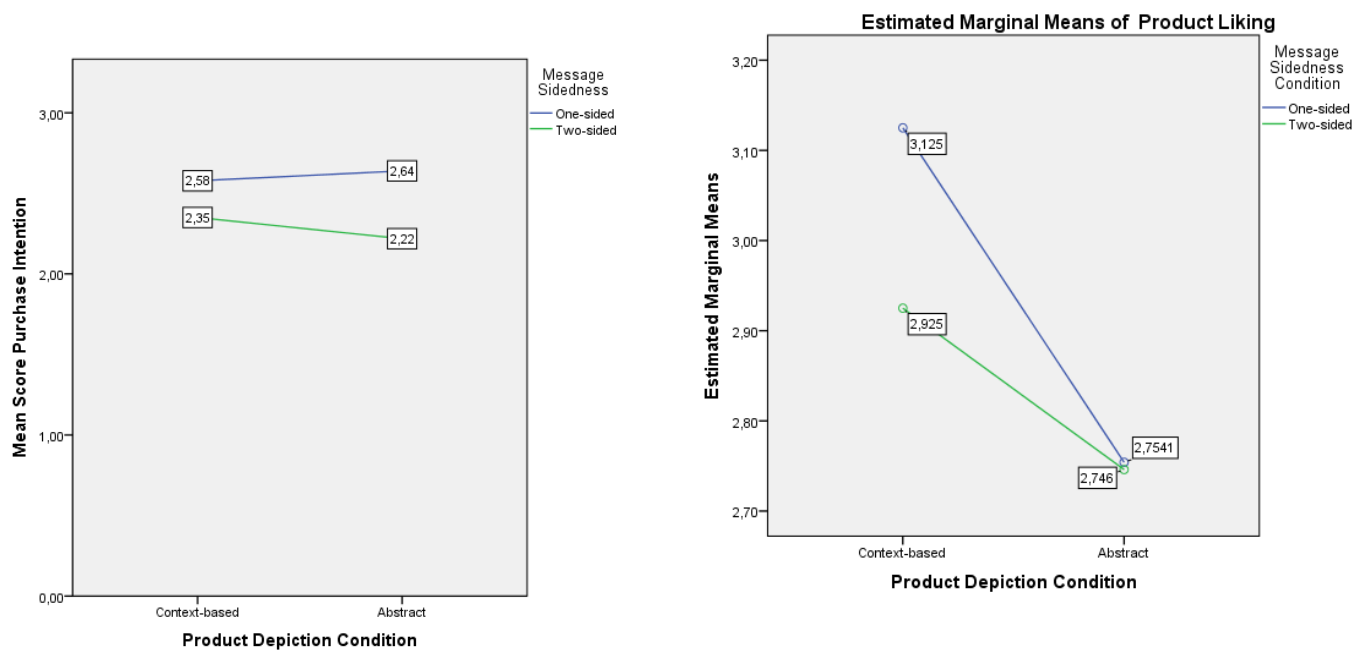
		What is your gender?		Total
		Male	Female	
Condition	Context Two-sided	19	41	60
	Context One-sided	21	39	60
	Abstract One-sided	20	41	61
	Abstract Two-sided	20	43	63
Total		80	164	244

Table Appendix 5

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,198 ^a	3	,978
Likelihood Ratio	,197	3	,978
Linear-by-Linear Association	,006	1	,938
N of Valid Cases	244		

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19,67.

**Figure Appendix 1 - Interaction analysis of product depiction and message sidedness**