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Advertiser Perception of Influencer Marketing

How do advertisers see the now and the future of influencer marketing in Finland?

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<p>The thesis is built around a research study on the advertiser perception of influencer marketing in Finland today and in the future. The aim of the research was to discover brand marketers' perception of the current and future state of influencer marketing as a marketing method and as an industry as a whole.</p> <p>Academic sources on marketing, consumers, marketing promotions, targeting and finally influencers and influencer marketing were used to collect information and to further deepen the researcher's knowledge on the topic.</p> <p>The research was conducted using a quantitative survey research approach to the descriptive marketing research method. The researcher conducted a survey questionnaire that was sent out to numerous brand marketers operating in the Finnish market to collect a wide and general overview of the industry and the advertisers' attitude towards influencer marketing.</p> <p>Based on the research results, influencer marketing seems to be perceived as an interesting and important tool for conveying a brand's marketing message to their consumer-customers. Most marketers in Finland plan on working with influencers within the next three years. Whereas social media influencers were perceived to only consist of bloggers before, the future holds more doors open to other types of influencers as well.</p> <p>The main challenge advertisers currently face with influencer marketing is the difficulty of measuring its results in a quantitative matter and determining the true return on investment. Advertisers identify the potential that influencer marketing holds, but also would need more data to prove its efficiency to the organizations top-level management.</p>	
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Influencer marketing is not a new method in practice, albeit it has just recently become the trendy word on marketers' lips. The core essence of influencer marketing has been around for ages starting from political influencers impacting their supporters, moving on to pop star idols with a loyal fandom and finally to the modern day influencers, where a next door neighbour can reach and influence millions of people through their social media accounts.

New influencers are popping up every day, and there are more and more specialized companies in the marketing industry offering influencer marketing solutions to brands. Influencer marketing is sparking a lot of extensive publicity all over the industry's most relevant publications both worldwide and on a national-level here in Finland. Numerous studies have focused on the power of influence and how it all works, but there are not a lot of studies published on the brand marketers' perception of the new trend in the Finnish market.

With the researcher's current employment in an influencer marketing agency, they were interested to discover how do the ones in the paying end feel about it now and how do they see the future; is influencer marketing actually trending among the marketers, or is it just a fad?

1.2 Research Question

The research aims to gain an industry-wide overview on how brand advertisers view influencer marketing as a whole in Finland. It is important to understand whether advertisers themselves see influencer marketing as a growing industry – disregarding the media hype – as they are the ones making the final purchase decisions and thus in a key role in determining the rise and the possible fall of the new megatrend.

By using a combination of best-suited research methods and research strategies, the thesis aims to answer the question 'How do advertisers see the now and the future of influencer marketing in Finland?'. The purpose of the study is to gain insight to how advertisers have been operating in the field of influencer marketing and whether they are currently implementing it as a part of their overall marketing strategy as well as finding out how this might develop in the future.

1.3 Structure Scope

The thesis will begin with a theoretical overlook on the topic of influencer marketing, beginning from the basic theories of marketing and moving on to more specific developmental steps that have eventually led up to the rise of influencer marketing in its current form.

The methodology section will cover all methods and research designs used in order to conduct the research. The section will include discussion and comparison of different methods and why those chosen were used in this research.

After the research method have been detailed, the thesis will explain the overall research and the research sample as well as look into the data and results obtained through the research. Finally, the thesis will cover discussion based on the research results and conclude the topic.

References on all academic resources as well as secondary data have been listed at the end of the thesis.

2 Literature Review

The literature review will cover some selected academic references that have been published and written related to the thesis topic; influencer marketing.

The power of influencer marketing is based on the influencers and their relationship with their audience. It is important to understand how an influencer influences their audience and why they have such an influence. As a marketing promotion method, it is also important to understand how this relationship can be used in a company's marketing efforts.

The literature review will look at the topic from three different developmental marketing perspectives; the development of the marketing communication channels, the development of the way companies target their marketing promotion and finally, the development from mass-affecting pop-culture idols to the modern day niche-influencers. The thesis will look into how all these aspects relate to one another and how they together have enabled the rise of influencer marketing to its current form.

The focus of the literature review is to help cover the theories that apply to influencer marketing and to understand what it is, and how it works.

2.1 Marketing

With the thesis focused on a specific marketing method, the literature review research is began by first looking into the more general topic; marketing itself.

Marketing is defined as "the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return" (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 5). When people think of the term marketing, they tend to relate this to the aspects we see on a day-to-day basis; advertising. We are continuously exposed to brands and their marketing messages, so it's not surprising that the average person would see marketing as simply as that. However, while advertising is an important

component in the marketing process, it only is a part of the complicated mix that is marketing.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 12) discuss marketing consisting of the four P's, which are known as product, price, place and promotion. In short, the Product consists of the overall products or services the organization offers to the targeted audience. The Price comprises of the cost that affects the consumer of the product or service for obtaining it. The Place is a more complicated mixture of logistics, location and channels used to get the product or service to the reach of the target market. Influencer marketing is a heavily communications and relationship-based marketing promotions method, which has more to do with the promotion aspect of the marketing mix.

2.1.1 The Promotion Mix

Promotion can be defined as “the activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade target customers to buy it” (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 52). The key is finding the right method and defining the right message to use to educate and influence the desired customers.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 408) further move on to divide promotion into its own mix; the promotion mix, also known as marketing communications mix:

Promotion mix consists of the specific blend of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct-marketing tools that the company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships.

The five major promotional tools included in the Promotion Mix include advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing. Each of these tools consist of more specific promotional activities such as broadcasts, print advertising, press releases, sponsorships and more. All of the tools ideally share a common goal; conveying the customer to buy more in a more frequent pace and for more money.

2.1.2 Consumer-oriented Marketing

Influencer marketing is most commonly used in efforts to try and impact a consumer. Consumer-oriented marketing differs from marketing, which is directed towards business clients. Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 599) define consumer-oriented marketing as “the philosophy of enlightened marketing that holds that the company should view and organize its marketing activities from the consumer’s point of view”.

A company, with a consumer as their end-customer, should focus their marketing messages and choose the best suited marketing promotion channels based on the consumer of the products. Who is the individual who buys the product or service? Why would they buy the product or service?

In order for an organization to conduct efficient consumer-oriented marketing, it is vital for them to understand who is their target consumer.

2.2 Consumer

Kotler and Armstrong introduce the consumer as “the individual who buys or acquires goods and services for personal consumption” (2012: G2). Simply put, a consumer is an individual person who makes a purchase based on his or her own personal preferences and usually for their own benefit.

2.2.1 Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumers make buying decisions each and every day. Why does one buy specific toothpaste instead of the other option? Why do they buy it right now? There are companies whose sole purpose of existence is figuring out the answers to these questions regarding the process of selection in the progress of how a specific product or service ends up being chosen by the end user – the consumer.

The actions of the consumer and the science behind it is called consumer buying behaviour. Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 135) explain the behaviour through a simple model, which can be seen in Figure 1.

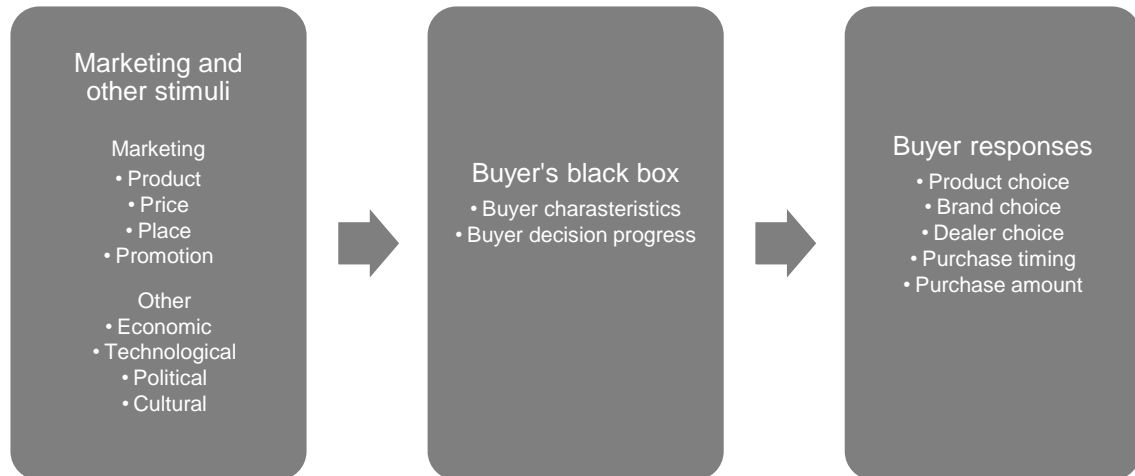


Figure 1. Model of buying behaviour

Figure 1 is a visual representation of Kotler and Armstrong's (2012: 135) stimulus response model of buyer behaviour. In this model, the consumer observes their environment and is faced with a company's marketing efforts as well as the surrounding socio-economical factors, such as the economical and technological atmosphere. This information will then be interpreted by the consumer in what Kotler and Armstrong call the 'buyer's black box'. This determines how the consumer sees and reacts to the stimuli. The response they have on the information will finally determine their buyer response.

To understand how a consumer gets to their buyer response, one needs to understand what goes on in the consumer decision-making process.

2.2.2 Consumer Decision-making Process

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 152) divide the decision making process of a consumer to five stages; need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase behaviour. However, the consumer might not always follow this path until they reach a decision on purchasing. When purchasing something simple

and familiar, such as a roll of toilet paper, the consumer will most likely recognize the need to repurchase toilet paper as soon as they run out. This way they will skip the in-between phases of the decision-making process onto deciding on purchasing more right away. The buyer decision process laid out by Kotler and Armstrong applies more directly in situations where the consumer is purchasing something completely new or something more complex, such as a computer or a car.

The four P's of marketing introduced earlier each have their role in all of the five stages of the process. Promotion, which is the focus of the thesis, can have an influence on all of the stages. Promotional activities, such as advertising can initiate the need recognition; one sees an ad and realizes that they need the advertised product. Promotion can also be the source from which the buyer seeks for their information during the information search phase. Promotion also has an affect on what information the possible buyer receives of the alternatives during the evaluation of alternatives phase. This will eventually sum up to the buyer's purchase decision. Finally, promotion has a lot to do with the post purchase behaviour. Did the purchase live up to the standards set out by the promotion?

Marketing promotion messages can be conveyed through numerous channels of communication, which are prone to developing and changing throughout the surrounding changes. The next chapter will look more closely at the changes those channels have gone through in the past century.

2.3 The E-shift in Marketing Promotion

As detailed in the Marketing section of the literature review, promotion consists of its own mix comprising on the different channels that can be used to communicate a company's marketing efforts to the consumer. A lot of the most used channels through time have focused around media, such as print or television. With the technological advancements and changing trends, also the communication channels have gone through a transformation.

2.3.1 Evolution of Marketing Promotion

Marketing promotion tools are used to communicate brands' marketing messages to the customer. A good way to get the message to reach its audience is through using advertising media. Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 444) define it as "the vehicles through which advertising messages are delivered to their intended audiences". Traditionally, the most used advertising media types have included print publications, radio, television, billboards, telephones, etc. These methods are still widely used, but since the internet revolution in the 1990s, they have started to lose their market share to newer online-based media types, such as social media, online video, mobile and blogs.

With how much Internet has shaped culture and lifestyles in general, we can say a new age has been created. This is often referred to as the digital age or Web 1.0. According to Kotler and Armstrong, "the digital age has provided marketers with exciting new ways to learn about and track customers and create products and services tailored to individual customer needs" (2012: 26).

The beginning of the digital age was the beginning for connecting people with more up-to-date information on a faster pace than ever before. Internet quickly became a necessity for most, and innovators realized the potential it had to change the way the whole world receives and transmits information. Whereas traditional media types were one-way, static broadcast technologies, the Internet is something completely different; it's a conversational and dynamic tool used to engage people with one another.

It's clear the Internet is a fast-evolving institution of its own, and with the new-rising marketing methods evolving a lot around it, it's important to understand the development steps it has taken in relation to marketing in the past, and what the steps might be for the future.

2.3.2 Web 2.0

Web 2.0, also known as the Social Web, is a concept that can't be defined in a simple way. It entails a lot of theories and development ideas that occurred around the same time

in the early 2000s. A publication by Tiede Tietoyhteiskunnan kehittämiskeskus ry (Hintikka 2007: 8) discusses Web 2.0 as follows;

Web 2.0 is not however some unanimously explainable model or technique which could be explained by its birth-history. Mainly it is a concept, which brings together a group of new, well-perceived policies in the planning of www-services, programming, marketing, productions as well as strategy.

In relation to marketing, one of the biggest and most important inventions to come from Web 2.0 was the idea of user-generated content. The idea that the people using the Internet and the www-services could create their own content and make the Internet interactive was very different from how other media outlets have operated in the past, and was a game-changer for the world of online communities and, eventually, marketing.

Sites such as Tumblr (<https://www.tumblr.com/>) or Wikipedia (<https://www.wikipedia.org/>) operate on the ideology of user-driven content creation. This type of community-driven action later also marked the birth of social media networks, such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>) or Instagram (<http://instagram.com/>).

2.3.3 Online Marketing

In the book Internet Marketing (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Johnston & Mayer 2006: 8), Internet marketing is defined as;

The application of the Internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives. - - These digital technologies include Internet media such as web sites and e-mail as well as other digital media such as wireless or mobile and media for delivering digital television such as cable and satellite.

Oftentimes, a modern-day marketing campaign will include numerous communication channels and media types. There might be a television ad that is launched together with outdoor advertising. For a better reach and to support the other campaign elements, online media is included.

Nowadays, traditional medias are more often used in advertising in the role of supporting media for the digital marketing efforts, such as online advertising (Karjaluoto 2010: 108). The new digital communication resources are not directly replacing the established standing of television, radio or print media, but digital medias have become a very key element in today's marketing communications (Karjaluoto 2010: 127).

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 513) present a simple model by which companies conduct online marketing, involving four stages represented in Figure 2.

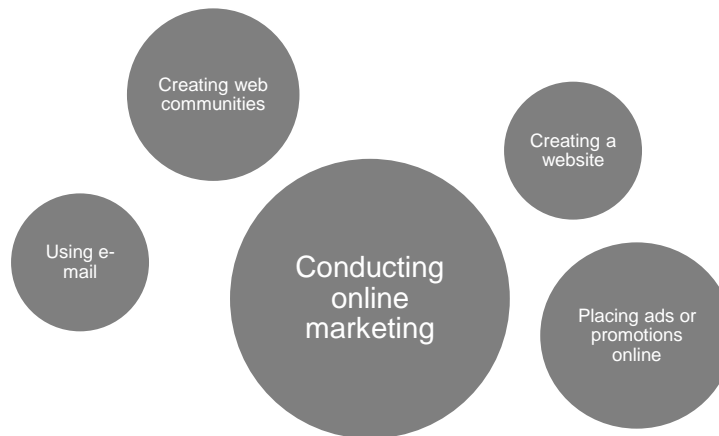


Figure 2. Setting up for online marketing

Influencer marketing today can be seen as the action of placing ads or promotions online. The major forms of online advertising include display ads, search-related ads and online classifieds. Other forms of online promotion include content sponsorships, alliances and affiliate programs, and viral advertising (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 514-515). The latter forms have later on morphed into more specific forms of online promotions such as online-based content marketing and social media marketing.

2.3.4 Content Marketing

Web 2.0 was the starting point to a lieu of user-generated websites being launched. Anyone with access to the Internet could be a generator of content, whether it was in the form of blog posts, audio, videos or imagery. Other people with similar interests could

share the content via social networks and interact with the content by commenting and liking. With Internet being accessible for the most part of the world, this content is also not geographically restricted, whereas traditional media content typically is. This started a new age of virality; a single video could get millions of views worldwide and a blog post could be shared on social channels thousands of times.

In the 2000s, marketers started realizing the potential this type of online content had as a marketing tool. Companies started creating their own content and social media presence in the hopes of their promotional content becoming the next viral thing. This phenomenon became known and practiced as content marketing.

The Content Marketing Institute (Content Marketing Institute: What Is Content Marketing?) defines content marketing as follows:

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

Companies create blogs, videos, podcasts and other content to reach their desired audience in hopes of attracting attention and building brand presence online. Whereas many other marketing forms focus on creating the need for the consumer, content marketing is based on the assumption that the need already exists, and the content's purpose is to help in fulfilling that need. A food brand might create recipes to showcase the different uses for their food products and a make up brand might create tutorials to guide the consumer on using their make up products. The assumption is, that the need for buying food or make up already exists, and the content's purpose is to showcase how these can be used and bring added value to the customer. By offering the consumer some concrete examples on how to use their specific product, the consumer can also be persuaded into choosing that specific brand's product.

With more and more specific marketing methods coming up at an increasing speed, it's important for brands to realize how they can utilize those methods to reach their target audiences. While marketing methods have morphed into trendy tools of reaching each and

every customer on a more personal and need-based level, there also exists a more than ever needed skill of defining the correct audience for each method and channel.

2.4 Targeting the Right Audience

As much as marketing promotion is all about getting the marketing message out into the public, it's important to reach the right people – the prospective buyers. By shooting messages untargeted, the marketer will just be wasting their valuable marketing budgets with possibly a big portion of the messages reaching the wrong people. A target group can differentiate between different products within a company, but the evaluation of the correct target group can follow the process of determining a target market as a whole.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 201) define a target market as “a set of buyers sharing common needs or characteristics that the company decides to share”. They also introduces different strategies to market targeting, pictured in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Market targeting strategies

Undifferentiated (mass) marketing is a strategy with the broadest targeting; there is virtually none. All clients are approached in the same manner, with the goal of reaching as many people as possible. From a marketing promotion standpoint, this would technically indicate no strategy for choosing the media other than to go with the biggest reach possible.

In segmented marketing, the target audience is still big, but it's divided into smaller segments and each segment is communicated a different offer. On a broader marketing perspective, this could entail a large product portfolio, each of which is intended for a more specific market segment at different price points, for example. From a promotional stance,

this could mean that the same product is marketed to a wide audience, but with different messages that appeal to the specific characteristics of each segment.

Concentrated (niche) marketing is a strategy that aims to target a large share of one or more smaller segments. In comparison to the afore mentioned, this strategy doesn't try to reach the big masses, but the majorities of specific segments. In advertising, this could entail creating messages that directly speak to mothers or young men, for example.

Local marketing and individual marketing are both means of micromarketing. In micromarketing, a company targets an individual based on their location or individual characteristics in a customized manner.

Based on the surrounding trend currents, companies have altered their targeting strategies through time.

2.4.1 From Vast Masses to Niche Audiences

While we are moving from utilizing only big mass-reaching medias, such as print and television onto incorporating more personal communication tools such as social media, we are also seeing a big change in the way companies target their promotional activities. Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 409) discuss that;

As mass markets have fragmented, marketers are shifting away from mass marketing. More and more, they are developing focused marketing programs designed to build closer relationships with customers in more narrowly defined micro markets.

Karjaluoto (2010: 127) argues that the biggest benefit of online media compared to traditional media is the way the message can be targeted so precisely to the desired audiences. As before with traditional media channels the hype used to be all about broadcasting to the big masses, now the focus is shifting towards something Kotler and Armstrong title as narrowcasting (2012: 409).

While in the 1950s one might have seen a lipstick commercial in the middle of watching a football game on television, nowadays advertising is a lot more focused on reaching niche-audiences in the best-suited channels and using the most relevant methods in doing so. In 2017, one might be struck with ads featuring the specific products they recently viewed in an online store, while browsing on other websites due to modern tools of tracking a single individual's behaviour and interests.

In later chapters of this thesis, the development in the targeting of marketing promotion and its relevance to the evolution of the influencer personalities will be discussed more thoroughly.

2.5 Influencers

Brown and Fiorella (2013: E-book: ch. 1) define influence as “a force created by one person or entity that causes a reaction in or by another”. Influence relationships exist in many shapes and forms; a parent influences their child, an employee influences their colleagues and a spouse influences their partner. Anyone that can cause a reaction in others around them can be considered an influencer of sorts.

Influencing the purchase decisions of the customers is the core essence of marketing. As discussed earlier in the thesis, there are five major steps to a consumer's decision-making process, all of which can be impacted by marketing promotion. Using influencers to convey the promotional message can be an effective persuasion method.

This chapter of the thesis will look at influencers more specifically, and how the status of being an influencer has developed with the surrounding changes and trends.

2.5.1 Identifying Influencers

An influencer, in the word's literal meaning, is anyone who can cause a reaction – and thus have an influence – in someone. Different types of people adapt to new innovations at different speeds (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 158). People can be divided into five different

groups according to their innovation adoption speeds; innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and finally, laggards.

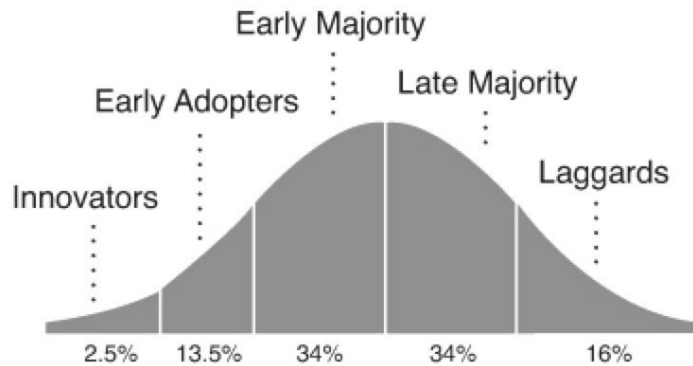


Figure 4. Innovation adoption lifecycle

Figure 4 presents that the innovators (2.5% of the overall population) and the early adopters (13.5%) will be the first ones to embrace a new innovation before the majority of people. The first two groups can also be seen as influencers; those who are the first ones to try out an innovation and possibly promote it to others in their social graph. This will begin a ripple effect during which the innovation will – ideally – be embraced through all adoption groups, finally ending with the laggards of the innovation adoption lifecycle.

From a marketing standpoint, influencers can be separated into two groups; micro and macro influencers (Brown & Fiorella 2013: E-book: ch. 7). Micro influencers are a part of the individuals close social circle; family, friends and colleagues, for example. Micro-influencers are defined as “individuals within a consumer’s social graph, whose commentary, based on the personal nature of their relationship and communications, has a direct impact on the behaviour of the consumer” (Brown & Fiorella 2013: E-book: ch. 7). A micro influencer’s influence is based on the personal nature of the relationship the influencer and their follower share. This is the strongest kind of influence one can have, as a close person’s recommendation is often considered the most powerful influence on buying decisions of individuals.

Macro influencers are “individuals, businesses, or media, with a large, active social following comprised of people with whom they have a loosely defined or unknown

relationship” (Brown & Fiorella 2013: E-book: ch. 7). A macro influencer is typically someone that is looked up to and possibly even idolized by his or her followers. This can be a public figure, a celebrity or a social media personality with a large following. There is a relationship between the influencer and the follower, which can be conveying, but not necessarily something that would make the follower react on an impulsive level. A micro influencer can have a more direct impact on impulsive actions of the follower.

The status of being a macro influencer has gone through a major change at the turn of the millennium.

2.5.2 The Rise of Macro Influencers

Originally, those who held most power also had the most influence and could hold an influencer status. Politicians and religious leaders held enormous power over all aspects of life. The rise of popular culture in the mid 1900s and the creation of mass media changed this, as it launched an epidemic of new kind of idols that started rising; pop stars. These could be famous artists, actors, athletes or other public figures. These mass-celebrities are heavily idolized macro influencers, whose behaviour and style are mimicked by their fans.

Actress Marilyn Monroe is still today considered the beauty icon of her time, and singer Elvis Presley is known as the pioneer and king of rock music. The uniting factor between these two public figures is the influence and impact they've had on the culture and trends during their time.

With the effects of Web 2.0 and social media, anyone can be a content creator and establish a large and active social following. These social media influencers don't always have an equally large following as a celebrity, for example, but their connection with their followers is much stronger and more engaged; a social media influencer can be seen as a peer and a friend, as they are typically more relatable than a highly famous person.

Brown and Fiorella discuss that “the Internet and social media channels have created a world where everyone can be a news source, a thought leader, and a potential influencer” (2013: E-book: ch. 1). Schaefer comments the modern development as follows; “this is the

era of the Citizen Influencer. Everybody has the opportunity to create a niche and establish a voice in his or her marketplace” (2012:47)

As discussed earlier, the targeting attitudes of advertisers have drastically changed from attempting to reach as wide of an audience as possible onto creating specified audience segments from those that are the most prospective buyers. The sort of influencer-following-culture that exists today has undergone the same change; whereas the idolized people used to be the mass-celebrities with millions of followers and fans all over the world, people – especially younger people – now look up to influencers that are more niche in terms of their following. Typically these influencers have become famous through social media, for example.

With the continuously rising numbers in online and social media consumption, some social media influencers even have a larger following than A-list celebrities. These new digital age macro influencers are also known as social media influencers.

2.5.3 Social Media Influencers

The emergence of social media popularity changed the perception of influencers. Anyone with inspiring content could become an influential figure with a large following in the hundreds of social media platforms that exist today.

This section of the thesis will look into three examples of the most popular social media channels and the influencers of the said channel.

Blogs

Kotler and Armstrong introduce blogs as “online journals where people post their thoughts, usually on a narrowly defined topic” (2012: 511). Blogs are hosted by people and read by their followers. In the beginning, blogs were mainly focused on opinionated posts and column-type textual declarations of free speech. Soon after Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com/>), an online-based free blogging platform, was launched in 1999, blog usage grew exponentially. More distinctly themed blogs became the new trend, and

lifestyle blogs focusing on food, fashion, interior, fitness and beauty, to name a few, were introduced.

Kotler and Armstrong describe the impact of blogs as "... 77 percent of online consumers actively read them [blogs]. Such numbers give blogs — especially those with large and devoted followings — substantial influence" (2012: 511).

Blogs and bloggers behind them have truly gained a very notable following, and some blogs have grown so big in reach, that they have a wider following than some newspapers and magazines or even television channels.

Instagram

Instagram (<http://instagram.com/>) is an instant photo-sharing app, which was launched in 2010. In December of 2016, Instagram celebrated 600 million monthly active users (Instagram 2016). They stated that in the past six months alone, they had gained 100 million new users.

The basic concept of Instagram is that anyone can share their photos instantly with the world. If a user's profile is public, they can be followed by anyone. With 600 million users, it's no wonder that some Instagrammers' profiles have millions of followers.

Currently, the most followed Instagram personal profiles are those of the 'traditional' macro influencers – celebrities, such as singer Selena Gomez with over 117 million followers (Instagram @Selenagomez), and singer Ariana Grande (Instagram @Arianagrande) with more than 103 million followers. A great example of a modern day, social media based beauty influencer is Huda Kattan with more than 19.1 million followers (Instagram @Hudabeauty) worldwide.

It goes without saying that Instagram has created a platform for strong influence, and with a continuously growing user count, will continue leading the path to many new influencers to come.

YouTube

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/>) is an online video-sharing platform that was launched in 2005. On their website, they state that “YouTube has over a billion users — almost one-third of all people on the Internet — and every day people watch hundreds of millions of hours on YouTube and generate billions of views” (YouTube).

Harrison Jacobs and Maya Kosoff stated in an article published by Business Insider, that “YouTube has exploded since it first launched in 2005, becoming the de facto launchpad for the next generation of celebrities” (2015).

Unlike in Instagram, YouTube’s most subscribed channels are those of social media based influencers instead of celebrities. YouTube’s biggest single channel belongs to Swedish Felix Kjellberg, who has over 56 million subscribers on his gaming-related YouTube channel PewDiePie. His videos have over 15 billion views (YouTube PewDiePie) in total.

YouTube is a platform for some of the most engaging content on the Internet. Unlike with blogs or Instagram, the followers gain a more personal connection to the video blogger, also known as vlogger or YouTuber, by following their life in a more inclusive manner.

2.6 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing, also referred to as influence marketing or buzz marketing, is a form of marketing which “focuses on using key leaders to drive brand’s message to the larger market” (TapInfluence: What is Influencer Marketing). Buzz marketing is defined as “cultivating opinion leaders and getting them to spread information about a product or service to others in their communities” (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 419).

In influencer marketing, the preliminary target group of the company’s marketing promotion activities is not the consumer itself, but the medium used to get the message to the consumers; the influencers. Instead of marketing directly to the buyers of the products and services, the company works together with an influencer who will convey the message to their followers – the consumers.

The power of influencer marketing is based on the relationship the influencer has with their followers. A loyal follower might experience the influencer as a close friend or idol, whose actions they relate to, mimic or idolize to some extent; whether it being the influencer's demographics and lifestyle, consumption-preferences or a deeper aspect, such as values in life.

2.6.1 Word-of-Mouth Marketing and Brand Advocacy

Influencer marketing is often mixed with two very similar marketing types, which are very close or even embedded to one another, but yet different. These two are known as word-of-mouth marketing and brand advocacy.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: G8) explain word-of-mouth influence as “personal communications about a product between target buyers and neighbors, friends, family members, and associates”. Brown and Fiorella (2013: E-book: ch. 1) introduce word-of-mouth as the marketing tactic that solidified influence marketing, in which “the orientation of marketing tactics around people identified as having influence over others”. They also explain word-of-mouth marketing as a marketing tactic, which “encourages customers to recommend the products and businesses they love to their family and friends” (Brown & Fiorella 2013: E-book: ch. 1).

Whereas influencer marketing focuses on harnessing the key individuals and opinion leaders to spread the marketing message, word-of-mouth is “the actual avenue in which this communication takes place” (TapInfluence: What is Influencer Marketing). Influencer marketing is based around word-of-mouth (WOM), and generally includes a WOM-element, but WOM doesn't always include incorporating influencers.

Brand advocacy can be considered as something that is word-of-mouth at its finest. It is also based on the same presumption that a micro-influencer can have the strongest influence on their follower. Brown and Fiorella introduce brand advocates as “existing customers who, based on a superior customer experience, voluntarily recommend the business brand or product” (2013: E-book: ch. 11). An advocate is an already-loyal

customer, who decides to share their voice out of pure loyalty for a brand. The difference between an influencer and an advocate is “the non-customer and incentivized versus voluntary nature of the relationships” (Brown & Fiorella 2013: E-book: ch. 11).

When Malcolm Gladwell released his book titled *The Tipping Point* in 2000, marketers started to grasp the power of using influencers – or connectors, as Malcolm refers to them in his book (Chaffey et al. 2006: 222). Gladwell’s theory on the law of the few suggests, that “the spread of any new product or service is dependent on the initial adoption by ‘connectors’ who are socially connected and who encourage adoption through word-of-mouth and copycat behaviour” (Chaffey et al. 2006: 222).

2.6.2 Conducting Influencer Marketing

TapInfluence discusses that “many influencer campaigns also carry a content element” (TapInfluence: What is Influencer Marketing), in which either the company creates content for the influencers or the influencers are the content creators. This content is typically shared on the social media channels of the influencer. Influencer marketing can be produced in various different ways, similarly to almost all types of marketing promotion.

In the simplest form, the different methods of approaching influencer marketing can be separated into two main methods; earned media and paid media. Brown and Fiorella (2013: E-book: ch. 5) defines both as follows:

Earned media is free, favourable publicity gained through promotional efforts as opposed to paid media, which is publicity gained through paid promotion and advertising.

A company can choose to use influencer ambassadors in an on-going manner or select various influencers that are the most suitable for a specific campaign. Typically in both cases, the influencer will receive a monetary compensation as well as the promotable products. These are both examples of influencer marketing using the paid media method.

Brown and Fiorella (2013: E-book: ch. 10) state that paid media gives the advertiser more control over the message and content as well as “...increases the return on investment for ad campaigns based on relevance to audience and the likelihood of clickthroughs...”.

Examples of paid media publications can be seen in Picture 1 and Picture 2.



Picture 1. Influencer marketing on Instagram: Bioré & Shay Mitchell

Shay Mitchell, whose acting role on the television series *Pretty Little Liars* launched a very successful social media career is a brand ambassador for the cosmetics brand Bioré.



Picture 2. Influencer marketing on Instagram: CLUSE & Mariannan

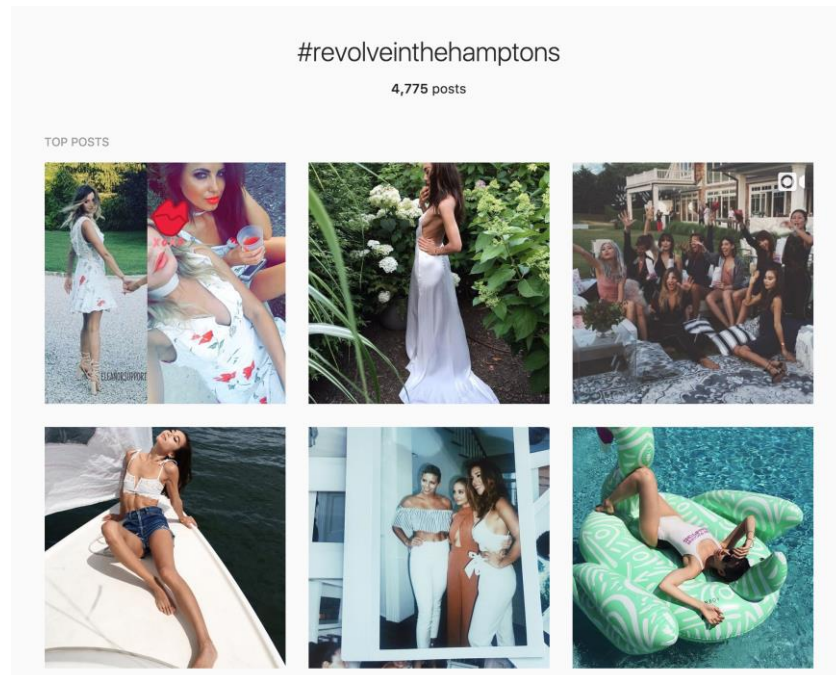
A Finnish blogger turned multichannel social media influencer Mariannan is a brand ambassador for the watch brand CLUSE. The brand uses a lot of social media influencers in their marketing efforts.

Companies also organize PR events to which influencers are invited to in hopes of them sharing some of the material on their social media channels. Sometimes a company might just send out a lot of products to different influencers and wish for earned media visibility. Most often, in these cases the influencer will not be monetarily compensated, but they will receive free products or services. The company doesn't have as much control over the messaging as with choosing to use paid media, but it is also more cost-effective, as product or service gifts are generally cheaper than using paid media. Examples of earned media can be seen in Picture 3 and Picture 4.



Picture 3. Influencer marketing on Instagram: Urban Decay & Desi Perkins

Desi Perkins is a widely followed beauty YouTuber with a large social media following on all her channels. Urban Decay Cosmetics sent her among with other influencers to Coachella festival as a part of their PR, like many other brands such as Levis.



Picture 4. Influencer marketing on Instagram: REVOLVE

Fashion brand REVOLVE organizes a lot of over-the-top PR events all over the US. In the past, the brand sent numerous influencers of all sorts to celebrate the summer in the Hamptons, which gained a lot of earned visibility for them on social media. On Instagram alone, 4 775 publications can be found under their campaign hashtag, #revolveinthehamptons (Instagram #revolveinthehamptons 2017).

Brown and Fiorella (2013: E-book: ch. 10) discuss that whereas before brands could expect a certain amount of visibility in the more traditional media through paid advertising, "...earned media offers no guarantees; your story truly has to resonate with the publication, blogger, or influencer".

2.6.3 Measuring the Return on Influence

As many as there are ways of executing an influencer marketing campaign, there are ways to measure the impact and results of those efforts.

When marketers first started campaigning with influencers, the key metrics used to measure the success of the campaign were the influencer's reach and the possible buzz that followed the campaigning; "historically, influence campaigns have been used to engender a quick hit or build a level of short-term buzz for a brand..." (Brown & Fiorella 2013: E-book: ch. 9).

With influencer marketing becoming a more common phenomenon and requiring a bigger chunk of the overall marketing budgets (eMarketer 2017), business executives want to see a more concrete and direct correlation between the budgets spent and investment returned. Brown and Fiorella (2013: E-book: ch. 11) state that businesses are no longer solely satisfied with the reliance on amplification as the only measurement for success, but are now growingly interested in more defined metrics that tie the actions to bottom-line results.

The right metrics to use depend a lot on the communication and business goal of the marketing activity (Westwood: Convince & Convert 2017). If the key goal for the campaign

is to gain awareness for a new product launch, for example, measuring the overall reach and impressions is a good way to go. On the other hand, if a brand wishes to drive sales through their campaigning, more specific measurements are needed, such as increase in traffic to the brand's online stores or other websites, etc.

Westwood (Convince & Convert 2017) introduces four end-goal-driven measurements, which apply to most influencer marketing campaigning. These four measurements and their key metrics are depicted in Figure 5.

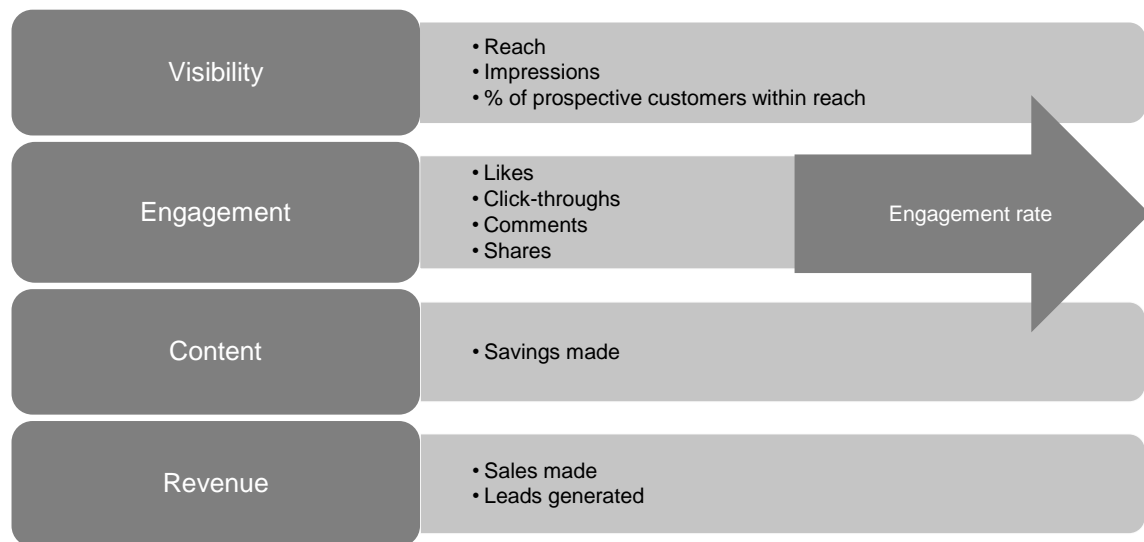


Figure 5. Goal-driven measurements and metrics to influencer marketing

With a goal focusing on gained visibility for a new product launch, for example, the brand should measure the prospective new customers reached through the campaigning. Key metrics for this would be follower count, unique impressions and the share of potential customers within the reach (Westwood: Convince & Convert 2017).

In a campaign that drives engagement, typically to build positive brand image, the key measurement for ROI should be the follower engagement on the content shared by the influencer. Metrics such as likes, click-throughs, shares, comments and the ratio of follower count to those that engaged – also known as engagement rate – can be used to measure the return on investment (Westwood: Convince & Convert 2017).

Especially social media influencers gain their following partially due to their inspiring content. The content produced by influencers can be a lot more cost-effective than to set up photo shoots or filming professionally produced videos. The savings that can be made using influencer content can directly be measured in monetary terms (Westwood: Convince & Convert 2017).

It is becoming increasingly common, that senior executives want to see direct sales thriving from influencer marketing campaigns. Not long time ago, influencer marketing worked best during the first four stages of the consumer decision-making process. However, with the increasing number of online stores, influencers can now directly drive their followers to making the final purchase decision. Easy ways to track the sales that drive directly from influencer marketing is the use of affiliate links or discount codes that are personalized for the influencer and their followers (Westwood: Convince & Convert 2017).

3 Methodology

The methodology section of the thesis will be looking at the different methods that can be used to discover the answer to the research question ‘How do advertisers see the now and the future of influencer marketing?’.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 103) define marketing research as “the systematic design, collection, analysis, and reporting of data relevant to a specific marketing situation facing an organization”. A research aims to gain significant input to the topic at hand.

The researcher approached the research question by conducting a quantitative survey research with the respondents composing of marketers operating in the Finnish markets. How do they perceive influencer marketing in their on-going marketing efforts? How do they see the further development of influencer marketing as a required marketing force for their company? Better yet, will it even be one?

3.1 Research Methods

There are three different research methods a researcher can use as the basis for their research methodology; explorative, descriptive and causal (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 103). The nature of this research is descriptive. Descriptive research is defined as “marketing research to better describe marketing problems, situations or markets, such as the market potential for a product or the demographics and attitudes of consumers” (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 103).

As the objective of the research is to collect data and information on the marketers’ perspective on influencer marketing, the research can be considered as a study to describe a market phenomenon, such as influencer marketing, or a study on the attitudes of the consumers, which in this case, are the advertisers.

Causal research is also a type of conclusive research, but the major objective is to obtain evidence on causes and effect rather than discovering the attitudes of customers or the nature of a new marketing method. Exploratory research is more flexible in comparison to

the two conclusive methods, and is typically used when the researcher doesn't possess a wide knowledge on the research topic (Malhotra 2007: 64-75).

3.1.1 Research Design

To gain noteworthy insight on the advertiser perception of influencer marketing, the research should aim at gaining as much information as possible on the research topic. Qualitative research can give more in-depth information, as the researcher and the data source can have a more personal connection through which the researcher can naturally direct the conversation or interview. However, it is a timely process and generally the results of qualitative studies can't be considered to be a representation of a more general perspective, as the sample is too small.

Quantitative research allows for a fast way to collect a lot of data, which can be easily comparable to other field studies. It is also a good method for researches that require a level of anonymity. Anonymity can be important when gathering descriptive data from marketers, as some of the data, such as marketing budget predictions might be too sensitive to share without anonymity.

The research was conducted using a survey research approach. Kotler and Armstrong explain survey research as "gathering primary data by asking people questions about their knowledge, attitudes, preferences and buying behaviour" (2012: 109).

Survey research is a quantitative research method, which is the best-suited approach for gathering descriptive information. It is also a very quick and easy method to collect a relatively large amount of data, which is needed to get an overall view of the Finnish market of influencer marketing.

A survey research can be conducted using various different contact methods, such as telephone or online, as indicated by Table 1 (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 106).

Table 1. Planning of primary data collection

Research approaches	Contact methods	Sampling plan	Research instruments
Observation	Mail	Sampling unit	Questionnaire
Survey	Telephone	Sample size	Mechanical instruments
Experiment	Personal	Sampling procedure	
	Online		

Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 112) state that "the Internet is especially well suited to quantitative research — conducting marketing surveys and collecting data". The biggest advantages of conducting online surveys are the speed and low cost of implementation. The response rate on online surveys is typically also higher than that of another contact method, such as telephone or mail, as an online questionnaire can be filled out when it's the most convenient for the respondent and it is typically faster than completing a telephone, mail or personal interview.

Kotler and Armstrong also state that "the internet is an excellent medium for reaching the hard-to-reach...", such as marketing executives of companies and other advertisers (2012: 112-113). Kotler and Armstrong list numerous strengths and weaknesses of different contact methods, which can be seen in Table 2 (2012: 110).

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of contact methods

	Mail	Telephone	Personal	Online
Flexibility	Poor	Good	Excellent	Good
Quantity of data that can be collected	Good	Fair	Excellent	Good
Control of interviewer effects	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Fair
Control of sample	Fair	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Speed of data collection	Poor	Excellent	Good	Excellent

Response rate	Poor	Poor	Good	Good
Cost	Good	Fair	Poor	Excellent

The research instrument used to collect data for the research is a questionnaire, which can be easily formulated online, and lowers the bar for the respondent to answer, as it is easy and quick.

3.1.2 Research Sample

As the objective of the research is to discover how the advertisers view the now and the future of influencer marketing, the key research sample consists of advertisers.

Through the researcher's employment in an influencer marketing agency, they were allowed access to a wide client database consisting of brands, media agencies, marketing and advertising agencies and other potential or already-existing clients. The sample of the research can be considered a sample of convenience (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 116).

Instead of sending the survey to all client leads, the research sample was narrowed down to only advertisers themselves, as this would provide with the most unbiased and accurate data on the advertiser perception of the industry. Media agencies and other middleman organizations surely would have an opinion on influencer marketing and its future development, but with the research aiming to discover the attitudes of brands that control the marketing budgets allocated to influencer marketing activities, the perception of media agencies etc. would be somewhat irrelevant.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The data for the survey was collected using an online survey-service provider Survey Monkey (<https://fi.surveymonkey.net/>). The research consisted of a total of 34 questions, of which three will not be covered in this thesis, as they have no relevance to the research

topic, and were added in the research simply to gain data for the employer of the researcher.

The researcher followed the questionnaire design process introduced by Malhotra (2010: E-book: ch. 10) depicted in Figure 6.

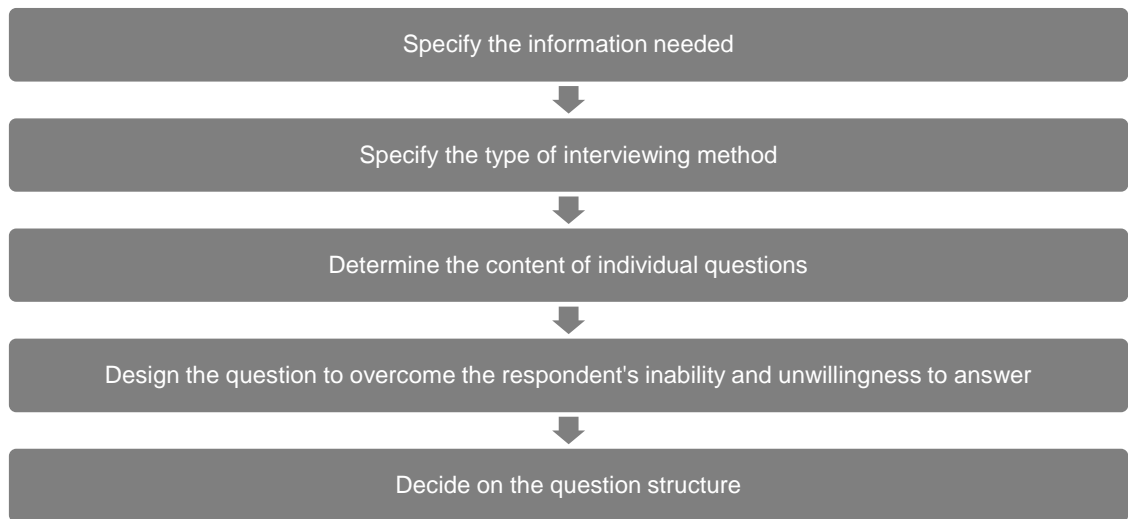


Figure 6. Questionnaire design process

Questions in the survey consisted of both structured and unstructured questions, with an emphasis on structured, as is the nature of a quantitative research. The structured questions consisted of a mixture of multiple-choice, dichotomous and scaled questions. Primary scales used were ordinal scales to determine preferences of the advertisers' and ratio scales to determine marketing budgets. Unstructured questions were used to possibly gain data from the respondents that the researcher could not anticipate.

3.3 Limitations

The two main limitations of this research are time and the possibility of having slightly bias results due to using a sample of convenience.

In order to gain a fast start on the research, the researcher chose to use a convenience sample, which was the fastest and most convenient to attain. Convenience sample is

defined as a sample in which “the researcher selects the easiest population members from which to obtain information” (Kotler & Armstrong 2012: 116). The advantages of using such a sample are the obvious simplicity of sampling and the ease it provides for the research. However, using a convenience sample is vulnerable to selection bias and thus can also influence the results of the research in the sense that they might not be completely objective. The researcher aimed at minimizing the risk of having bias results by using all available candidates for the sample instead of using a more narrowing sampling method on the convenience sample consisting of 1 359 candidates.

Another limitation for the research was time. The study was conducted under a tight schedule, which means that the research was not able to collect data for a longer interval of time, causing the results to be subject to conditions occurring during the timeframe.

4 Research

The research was conducted in April of 2017 and it was sent out to 1 359 advertisers within the Finnish market. A total of 105 respondents began answering the survey. 77 of those completed the entire survey, and 28 left some of the questions unanswered. The research can be found appended as Appendix 2.

The following sections of the thesis will cover all research results, which have been separated into segments that describe the nature of the questions within that segment.

4.1.1 Demographics of the Respondents

To gain some demographic data on the respondents, the first research questions aimed at getting to know the respondents to some extent, albeit the research was conducted with anonymity, to ensure the validity of the research and the research sample.

Most of the respondents (65%) hold a position in marketing. Of the overall respondents, 68 respondents work within their organization's marketing team, 18 hold a title within the product or service organization, 10 operate communications and five possess a high-level managerial position within the organization. Four respondents stated their titles as something else.

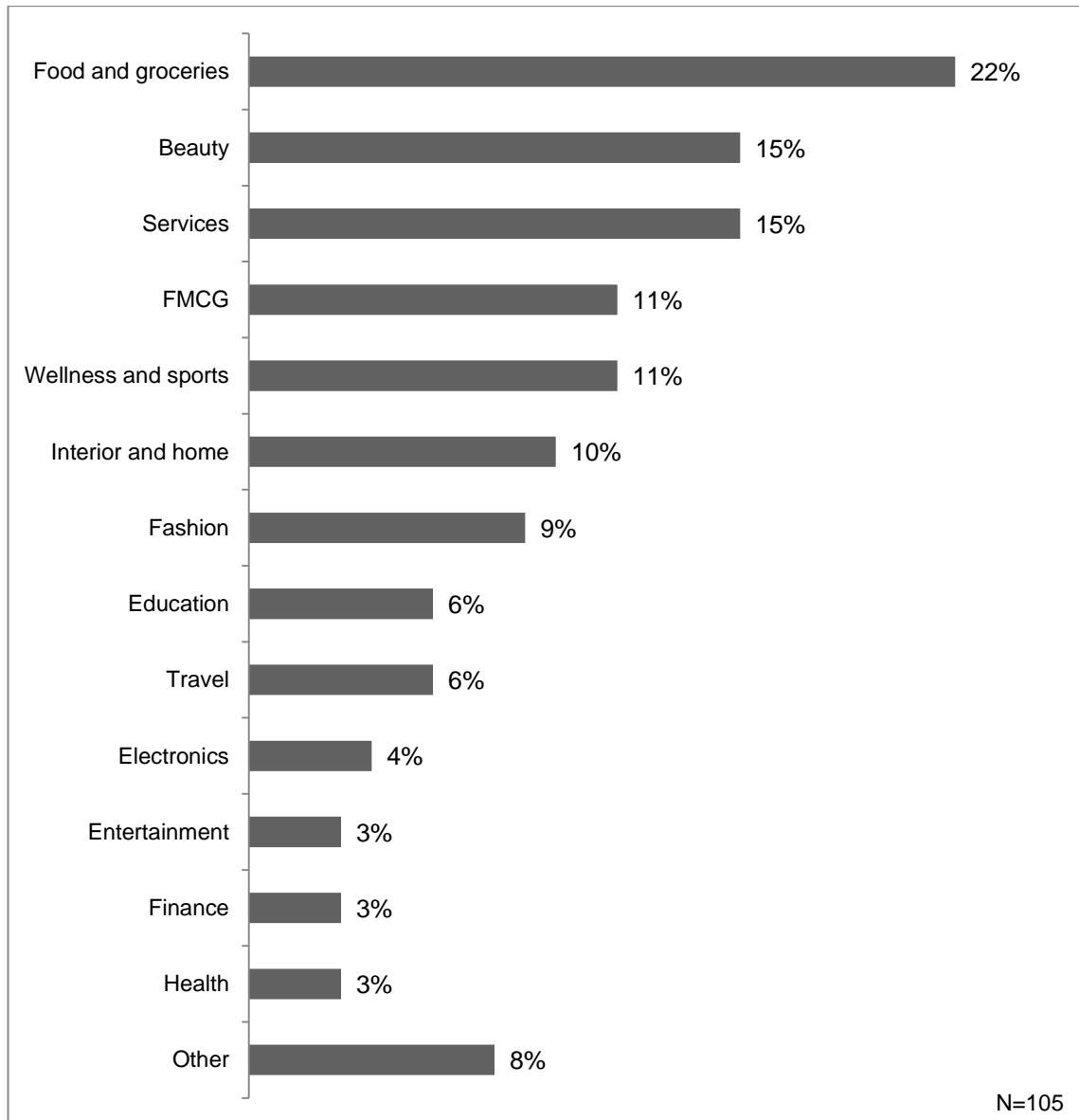


Figure 7. Operating fields of respondents' organizations

As seen in Figure 7, the respondents represent a wide sample of advertisers from various fields, as no field was represented much stronger than the others. The biggest singular field with respondents is food and groceries, but this only forms 22% of the overall sample. This is very good for the research, as it aims to gain a general overview of the advertiser perception of influencer marketing in Finland, instead of a sporadic field of operations within the Finnish market.

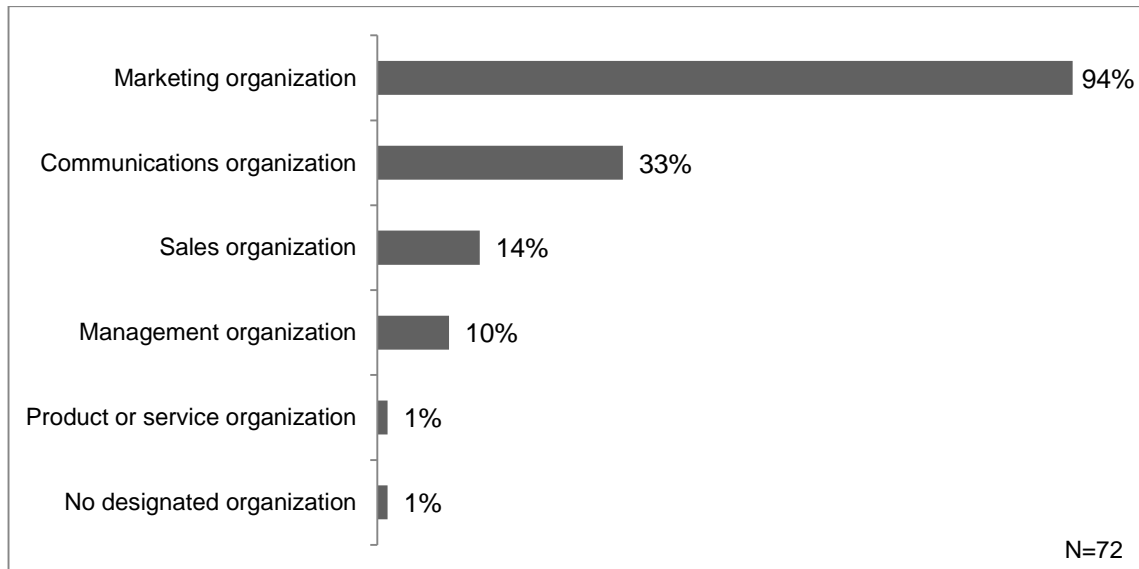


Figure 8. Responsibility over influencer marketing within organizational structure

The research also questioned the respondents on which function in the organization is in charge of their influencer marketing as seen in Figure 8. 94% said that the marketing organization is in charge of their influencer marketing efforts, and 33% answered the communications organization is in charge.

4.1.2 Attractiveness and Importance of Influencer Marketing

The research next moved on to gather information on how important and interesting the respondents view influencer marketing as a method, and what are the biggest motives for it being important and interesting.

Of the 89 respondents, 97% said answered they view influencer marketing as important and interesting. None of respondents said it is not an interesting or important marketing method, which would indicate that albeit not all of the respondents had executed influencer marketing in the past, they still see potential in it. This is also indicated with the following results depicted in Figure 9.

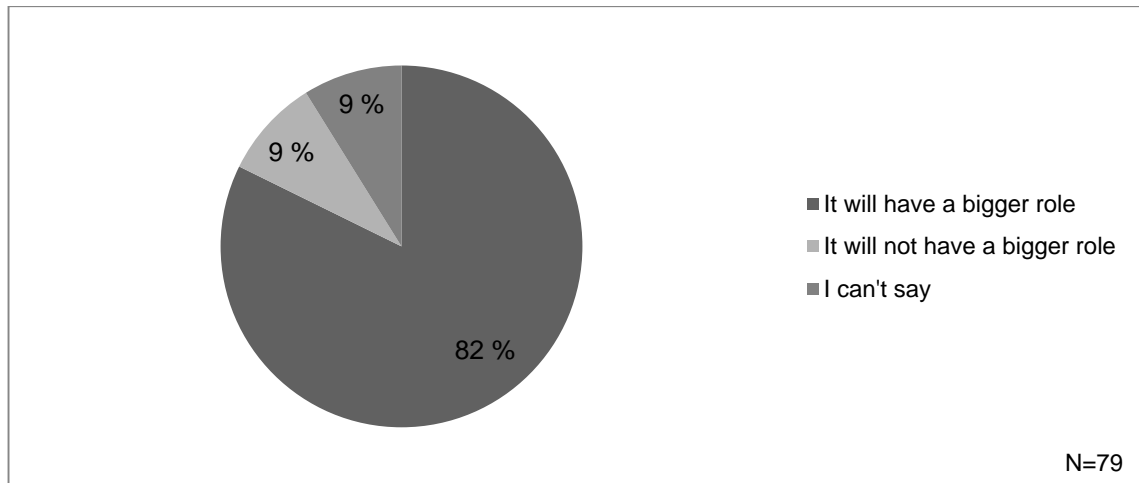


Figure 9. Development of influencer marketing as a part of marketing activities in the future

82% of the respondents believe influencer marketing will have a bigger role in their organization's marketing efforts in the next three years. Only 9% of the responding advertisers don't see the role of influencer marketing growing as a marketing method for their organization.

Table 3. Advertiser perception on why influencer marketing is important and interesting

Why is influencer marketing an important and interesting marketing method? Rank the following from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important motive.						
	1	2	3	4	5	Result
Better reach in the right target group	36	19	9	9	6	1.
Authentic storytelling of the brand	27	21	10	11	10	2.
A good alternative to more traditional advertising and marketing mediums	10	15	23	13	18	3.
Makes the brand appear more in touch with today	4	18	22	18	17	4.
Offers a better ROI than other advertising and marketing mediums	2	6	15	28	28	5.

The respondents were asked to rank five given motives in order of importance for why they think influencer marketing is important and interesting. Better reach in the right target

group was ranked the most important motive with 36 respondents ranking it as the most important. The second most important reason is authentic storytelling of the brand; an influencer has a credible way of telling their personal story with the brand in an authentic and credible way. The credibility factor was also emphasized in the comments when the respondents were asked to mention any other reason than those mentioned in the ranking options.

The weakest ranking option was 'Offers a better ROI than other advertising and marketing mediums' with 28 respondents ranking it as the least important motive.

4.1.3 Current and Future State of Influencer Marketing

Following the demographic questions, the research aimed at finding out about the respondent's current standing with influencer marketing; how familiar are they with it currently and have they possibly utilized it in their company's marketing efforts in the past.

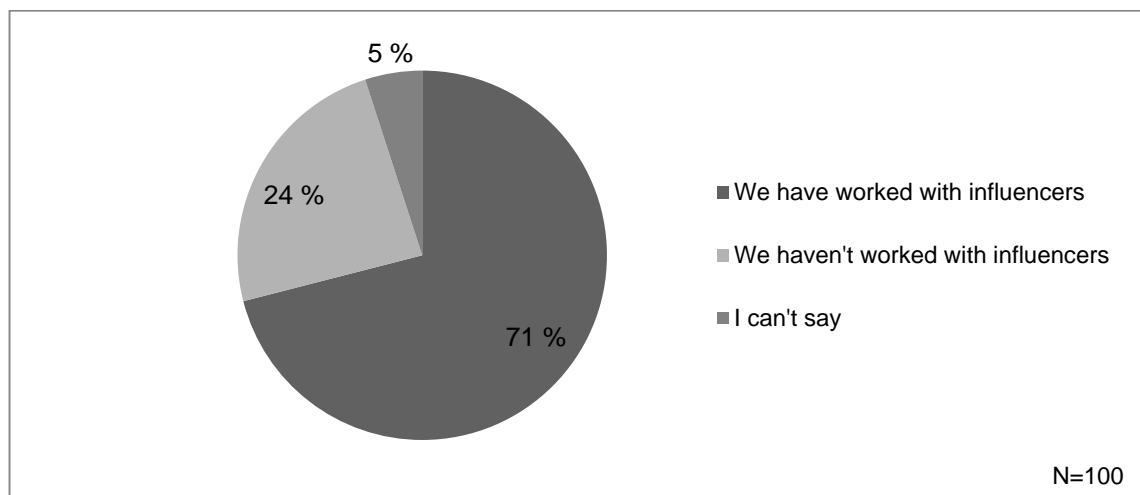


Figure 10. Current state of influencer marketing as a part of overall marketing strategy

71% of the respondents stated that they are currently or have used influencer marketing as a part of their overall marketing strategy in the past. 24% stated that they are not currently using it or haven't used it in the past. 86% of the advertiser respondents plan on

using influencers in their marketing efforts within the next three years. Only 4% of the respondents said that they plan to not use influencers in their marketing.

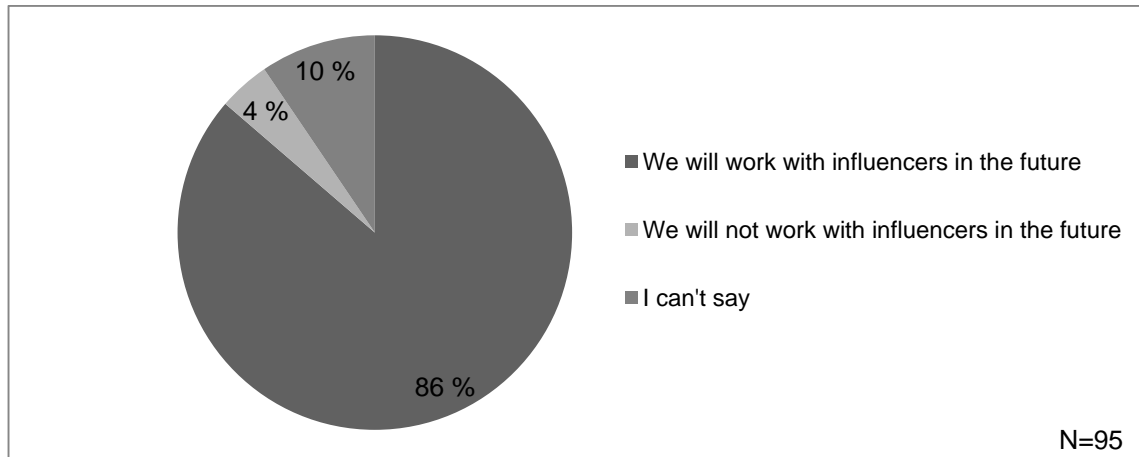


Figure 11. Advertisers' future projections on using influencers in marketing

To see whether there has been a development in what type of influencers companies have worked with in the past and what type of influencers they plan on working with in the future, the respondents were asked to select influencer types. The results of this are depicted in Figure 12.

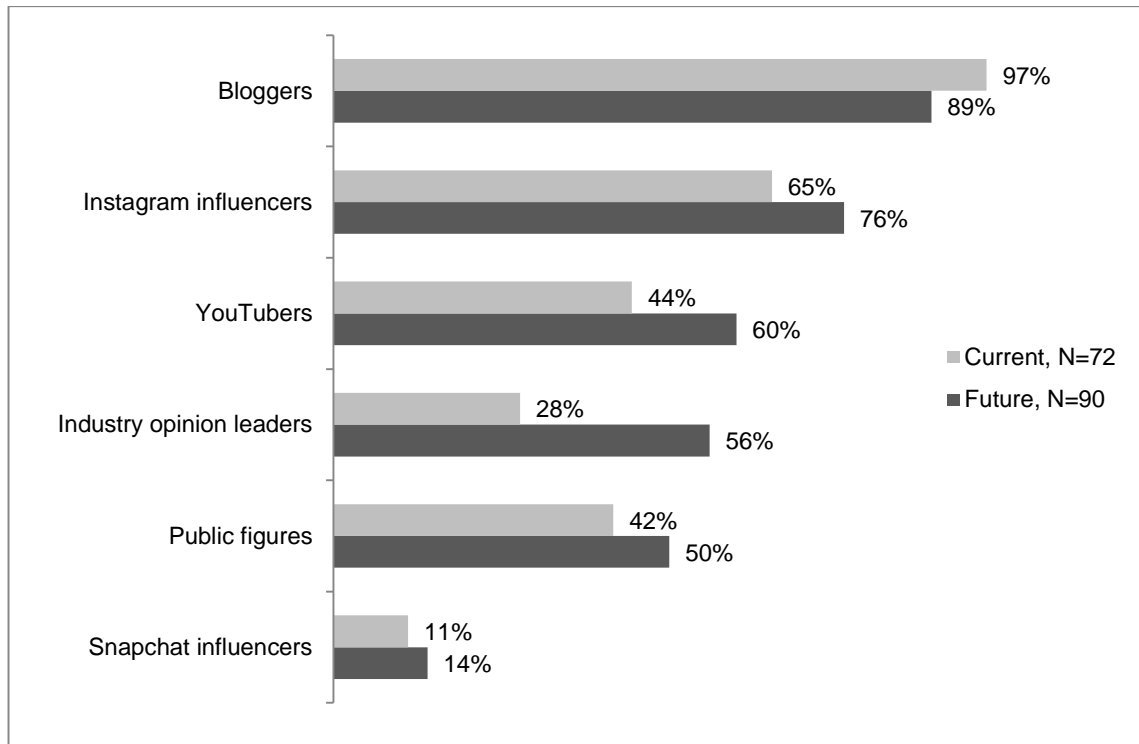


Figure 12. Types of influencers organizations collaborate with now and in the future

Out of the respondents that had previously or are currently executing influencer marketing, most had worked with bloggers (97%). 65% of the respondents had worked with Instagram influencers. Only 44% had previously worked with YouTubers, which can be explained with the very recent rise and realization of YouTubers as influencers in Finland.

Advertisers plan on using more versatile types of influencers, as the division between the different influencer types seems to be smaller in the future projections. The share of bloggers is the only type of influencer that seems to be decreasing in terms of usage in influencer marketing collaborations in the future with 89% of the respondents planning on using bloggers in their influencer marketing efforts in the future compared to the 97% of respondents that have collaborated with bloggers in the past.

The biggest growth regarding the future predictions is with the plans on working with industry opinion leaders with a growth of 28 percentile.

Table 4. Key factors in choosing an influencer to work with

What are the most important factors in choosing an influencer to work with? Rank the following from 1 to 6, with 1 being the most important factor.							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Result
Influencer's audiences fit with our target group	38	19	12	1	1	2	1.
Influencer's reach and follower count	13	20	20	8	5	7	2.
Influencer's personal brand and likeability	10	16	19	17	8	3	3.
Commitment of influencer's audience to the influencer	3	8	16	31	12	3	4.
Influencer's understanding and knowledge of our industry	7	6	4	12	26	18	5.
Influencer's already existing advocacy and loyalty to our brand	2	4	2	4	21	40	6.

The advertisers were asked to rank the most important factors when choosing which influencer they want to work with, and the results can be viewed from Table 5. Influencer's audiences fit with the company's target group was ranked the most important factor with 38 advertisers ranking it as the first factor to take into consideration in the choosing process. The influencer's overall reach and follower count on different social media platforms came as a close second.

The least important factor of the options given was the influencer's already existing advocacy and loyalty to the advertiser's brand with 40 advertisers ranking it as the least important factor.

4.1.4 Influencer Marketing Budgets

An important aspect on determining the future of the influencer marketing industry is to see the potential developments of the budgets advertisers allocate towards it from their annual marketing investments.

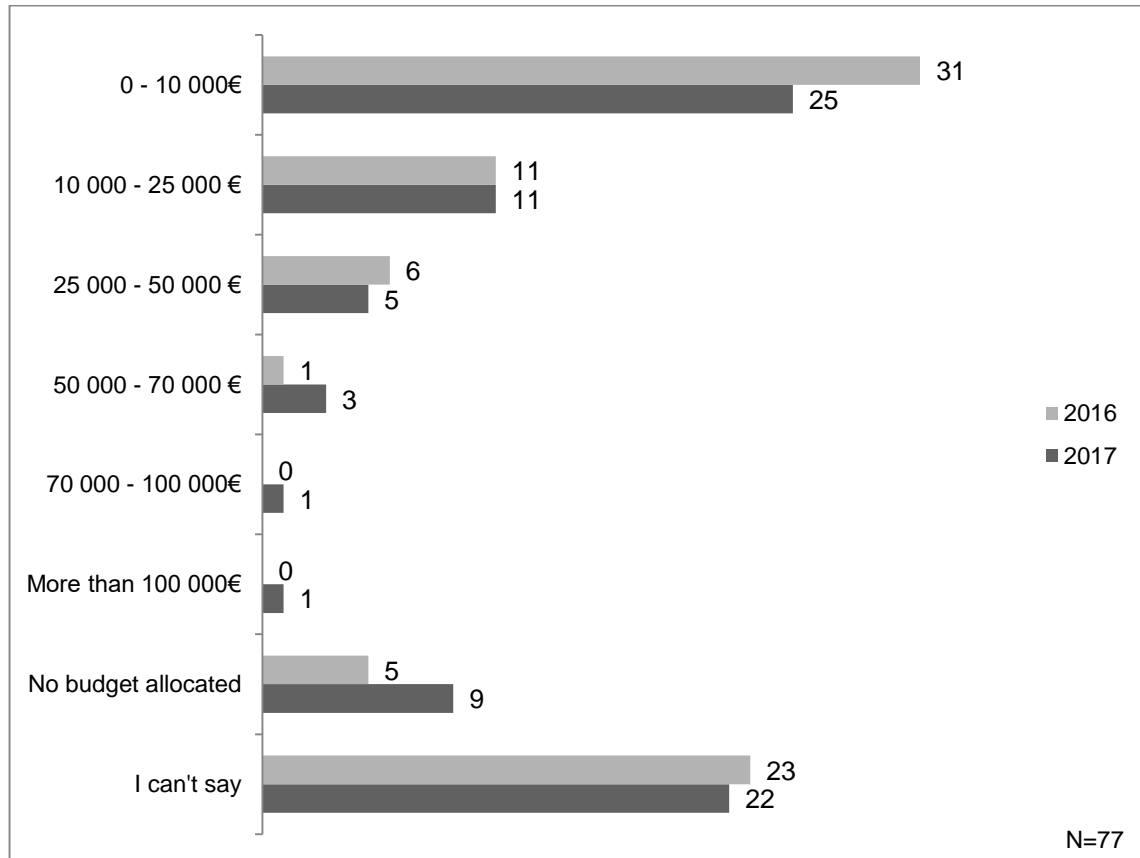


Figure 13. Annual marketing budgets allocated in influencer marketing

As can be seen in Figure 13, most of the respondents (57%) that indicated a budget allocated less than 10 000€ towards influencer marketing in 2016. 18 of the respondents had spent between 10 000€ and 70 000€ on influencer marketing in 2016. None of the respondents had spent more than 70 000€ in 2016. Five of the respondents stated that they did not do any influencer marketing in 2016.

There can't be seen a drastic change when looking at the corresponding numbers for 2017. A total of 44 respondents plan on using less than 70 000€ on influencer marketing this year. Unlike the budgets spent in 2016, two of the marketers plan to spend more than

70 000€ on influencer marketing in 2017. Nine of the respondents say they will not be allocating budgets towards influencer marketing this year.

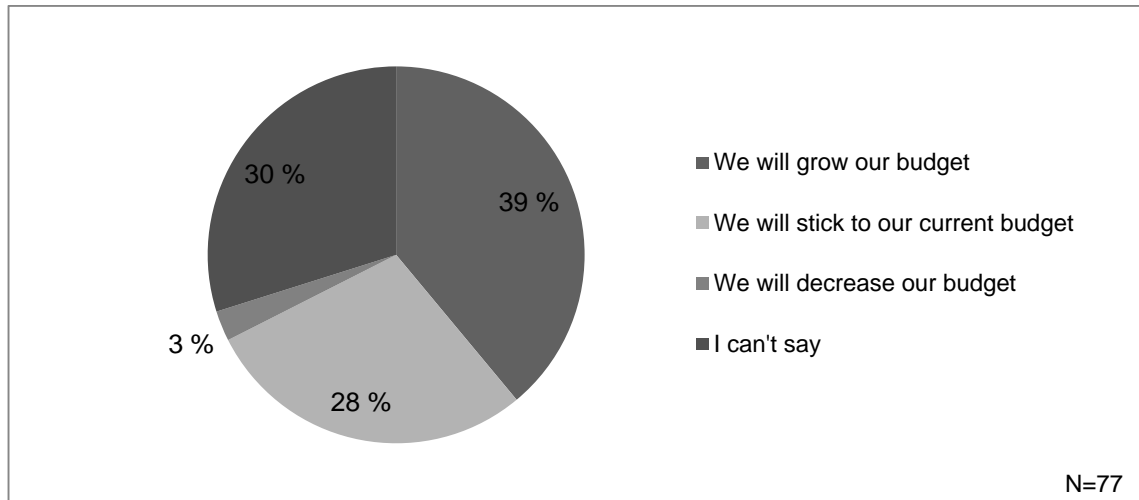


Figure 14. Future development of influencer marketing budgets

The future development projections for the marketing budgets allocated in influencer marketing are divided as can be seen from Figure 14. 39% of the respondents plan on growing their budgets within the next three years of operations, 28% estimate to maintain their current budgets and 3% project to decrease their current budgets.

The respondents were also asked motives for increasing their spending on influencer marketing in the future, and the results can be viewed from Figure 15. Clearly measurable results indicate to be the biggest motivator for advertisers to increase their influencer marketing budgets with 70% of the respondents choosing it as a motivator. The next biggest motivators would be finding the right partners to work with, such as influencers, agencies, etc. (48%) as well as witnessing and hearing of success stories (48%). 47% of the respondents ticked 'reduced costs of implementation' as a motivator for them to increase their budgets.

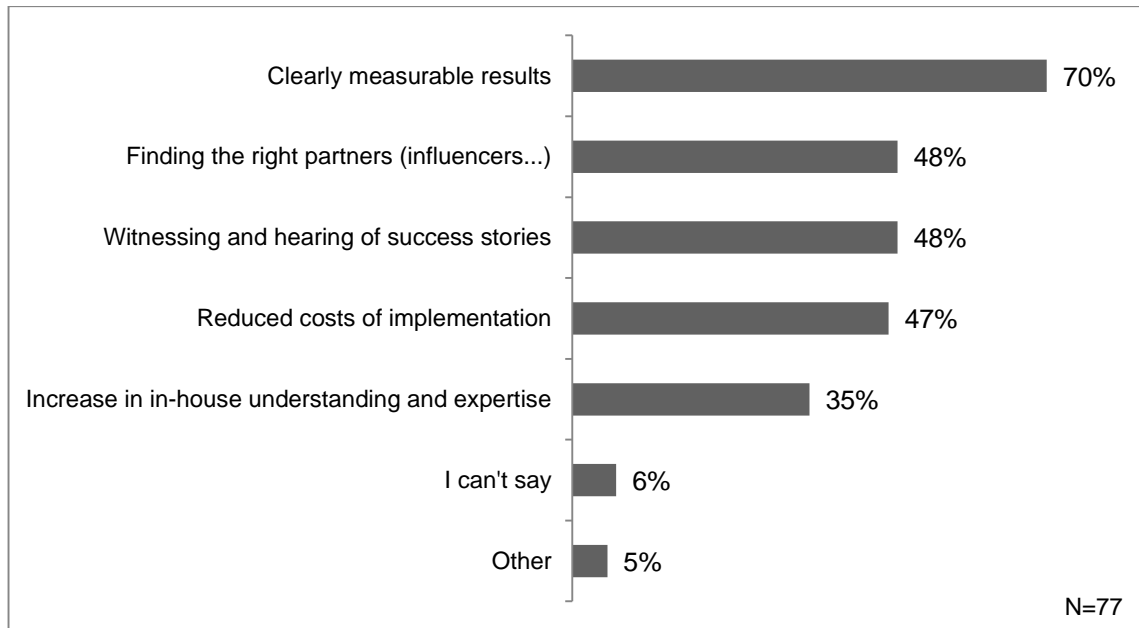


Figure 15. Motives for increasing influencer marketing budgets in the future

4.1.5 Influencer Marketing Strategies and Measurement

To further gain knowledge on how the advertisers plan their future regarding strategizing their activities with influencer marketing, the advertisers were asked on their current stand and future projections on strategizing their activities with influencers.

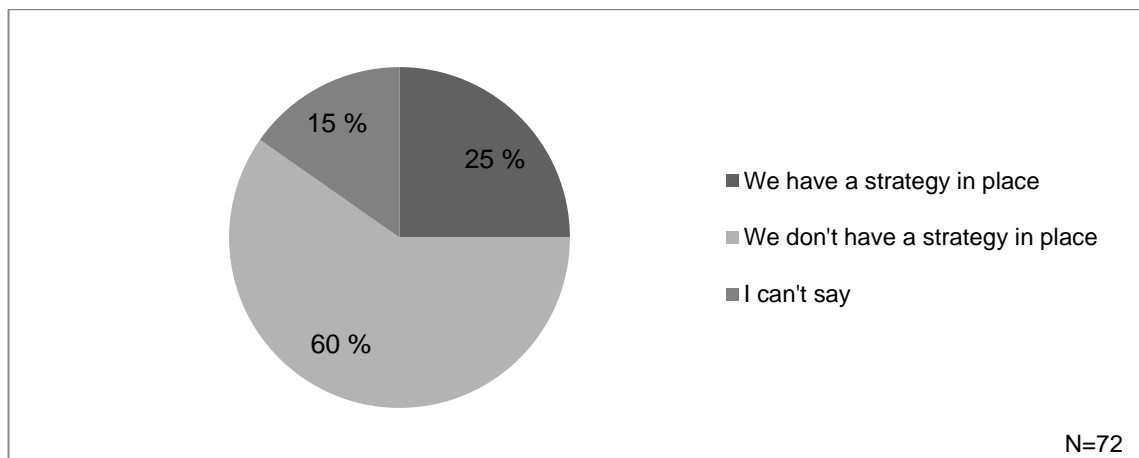


Figure 16. Current strategies in place for implementing influencer marketing

Most of the respondents (60%) do not currently have a strategy in place for implementing influencer marketing. However, 63% of the respondents state that they will be implementing a strategy in the next three years or later. Only one respondent stated they would not be implementing an influencer marketing strategy in the future, either.

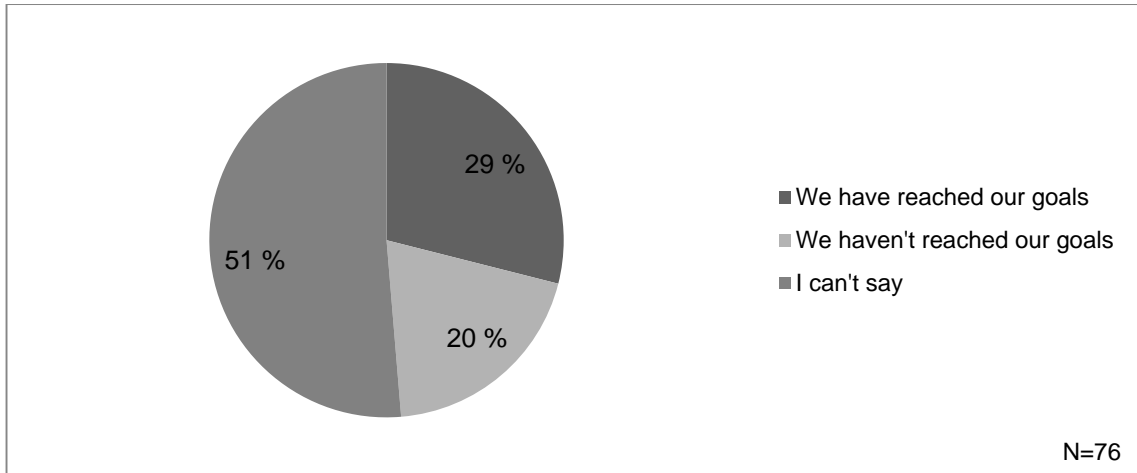


Figure 17. Fulfilment of goals set out for influencer marketing

Only 29% of the respondents report having fulfilled goals set out through influencer marketing and 20% report they haven't met their goals. Surprisingly, the majority of respondents (51%) report they can't say whether they have met their goals or not. This can be an indication of the difficulty of measuring the results of influencer marketing directly in regards to business goals, such as sales and generated leads.

The respondents were asked to also list some of the goals they have previously set out for their influencer marketing activities as seen in Figure 17. Most respondents had set a sales-driven goal (51%) or a goal of increasing the conspicuousness of the brand or marketable product (50%). 45% of the respondents had set their goal on the positive development of the brand image.

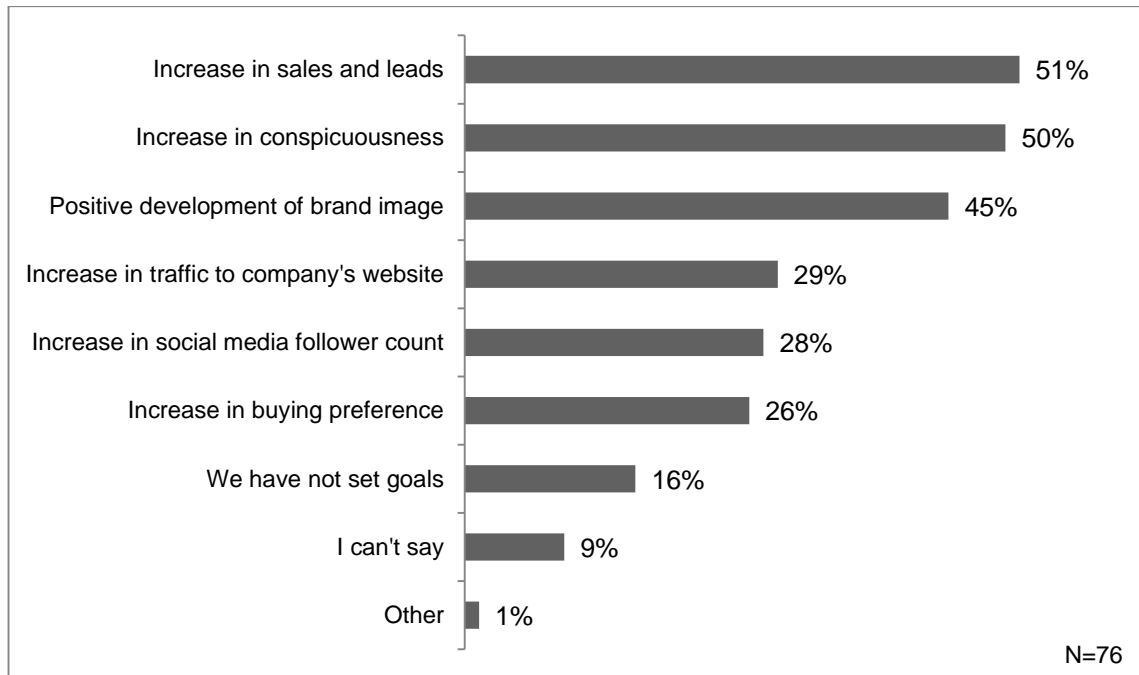


Figure 18. Goals set out for influencer marketing within the organization

16% of the respondents said they hadn't set out any goals for their influencer marketing implementation, which can also explain the high percentage of respondents claiming that they couldn't say whether they had met the goals set out or not.

Table 5. Key metrics for measuring the success of influencer marketing

What are the most important metrics used by your organization when measuring the success of influencer marketing? Rank the following from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important metric.						
	1	2	3	4	5	Result
Sales and generated leads	31	16	9	11	9	1.
Audience's engagement with the influencer's content (likes, clicks...)	20	24	16	13	3	2.
Reach and impressions	11	16	21	16	12	3.
Conspicuousness of the brand	9	11	17	16	23	4.
Follower counts of the organization	5	9	13	20	29	5.

As can be seen in Table 5, the most important metric for organizations in measuring the success of influencer marketing are sales and generated leads, albeit the relation between influencer marketing and the generated sales through it is also one of the most difficult to measure. The second most important metric is the audience's engagement with the influencer's sponsored content; likes, click-throughs, shares, comments, etc.

The respondents considered the follower count development of the organization's own social media channels, for example, the least important metric out of the five options presented.

Figure 18 is a presentation of the most effective forms of influencer marketing according to the respondents. Most of the respondents (67%) claimed that campaign-based content collaborations, such as more traditional blog collaborations have been the most effective in their experience.

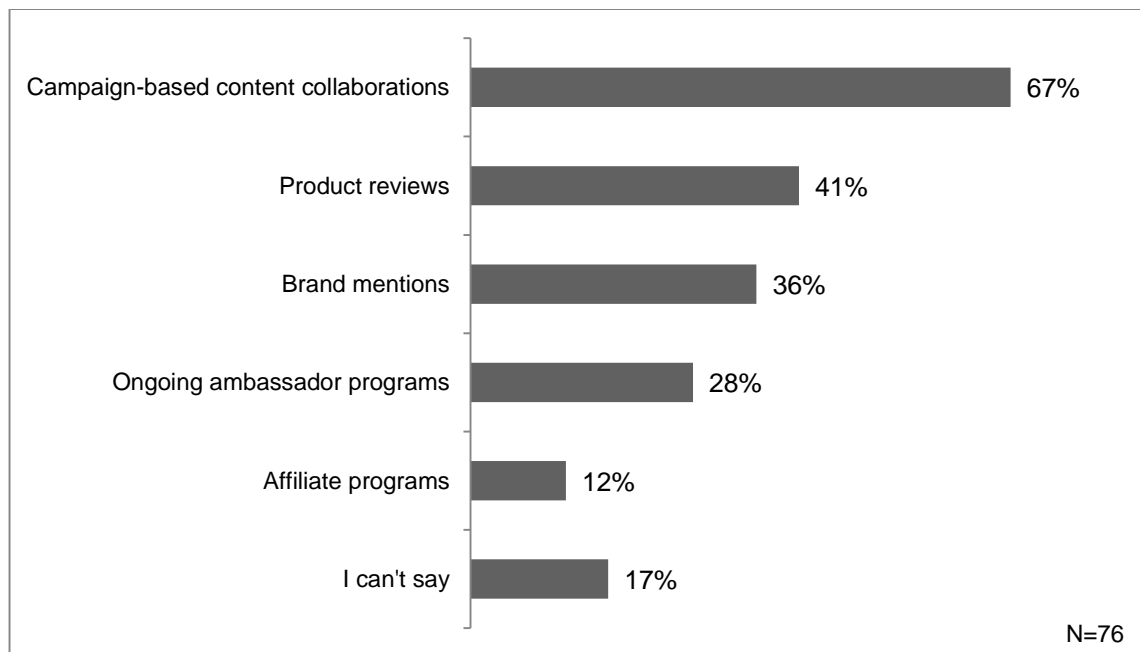


Figure 19. Most effective forms of influencer marketing

4.1.6 Challenges of Influencer Marketing

To gain a better perspective on how challenging the advertisers view the implementation of influencer marketing, they were asked to list some of the greatest challenges influencer marketing faces within the organization as well as in working with influencers. The results can be seen in Figure 19.

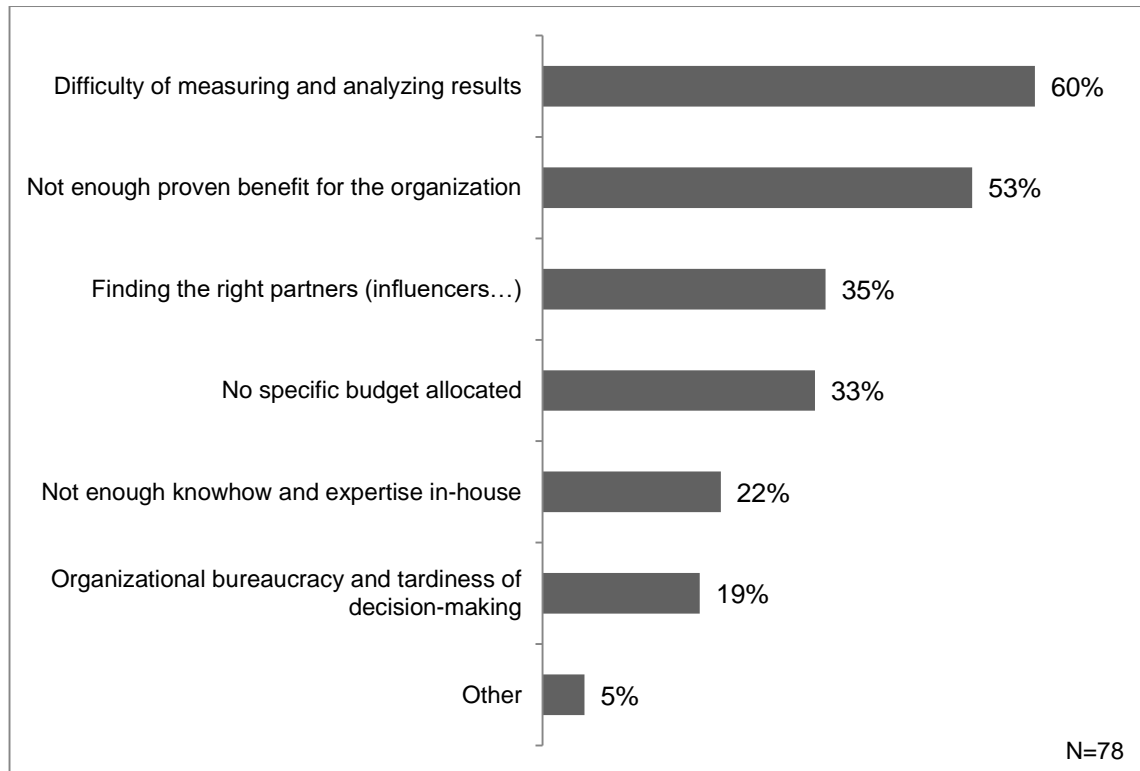


Figure 20. Challenges for implementing influencer marketing within the organization

10% of the respondents said that influencer marketing doesn't face challenges within the organization. The difficulty of measuring and analysing the results of influencer marketing is seen as the greatest challenge within the organizations with 60% of the respondents choosing it as a challenge. 53% of the respondents said there is not enough proven benefit for the organization, which complicates the implementation of influencer marketing within the organization. 35% of the respondents say that finding the right partners, such as the influencers or agencies to work with is a challenge.

The results for the challenges organizations face in working with influencers are very similar to the challenges influencer marketing face within the organization. 58% of the respondents picked measurement and analysis of the collaboration as the biggest

challenge. The second biggest challenge (41%) is finding suitable influencers to work with. 17% of the respondents say that working with influencers is not challenging for their organization.

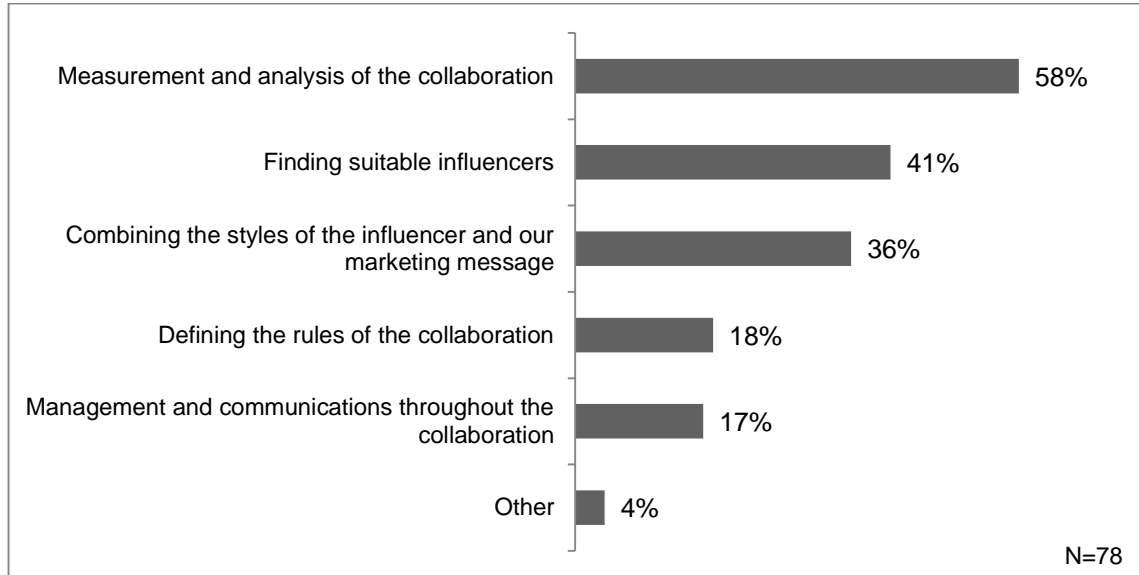


Figure 21. Challenges of working with influencers

4.1.7 In-house Expertise and Partnerships

Most respondents (59%) believe there exists sufficient expertise in-house for implementing influencer marketing without external partners, such as influencer marketing agencies. Only 20% believe they do not possess the knowhow in-house.

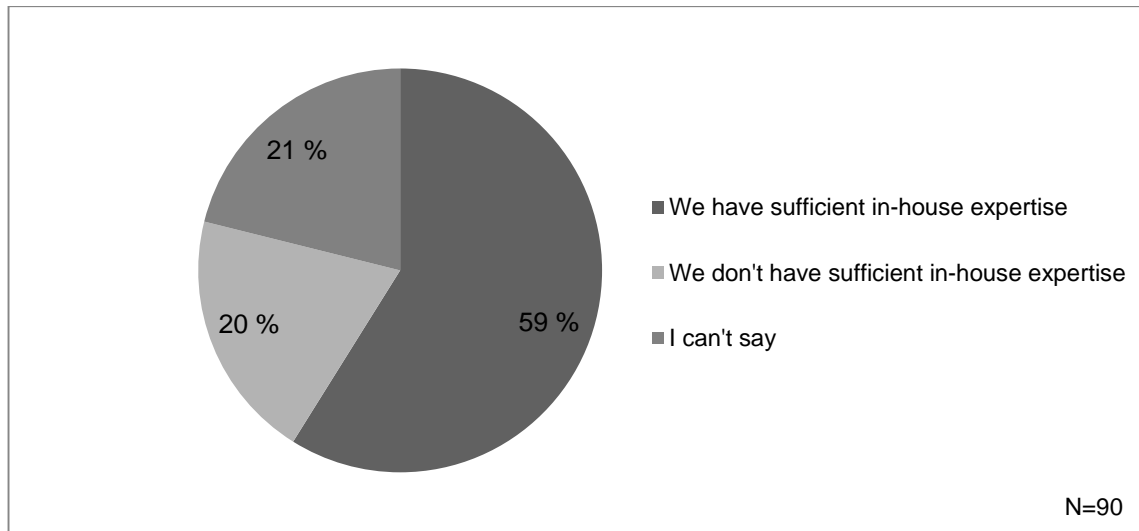


Figure 22. Resources and knowhow for implementing influencer marketing in-house

When asked whether the respondents believed they would be recruiting specialised personnel to handle their influencer marketing, 60% believe they will not be hiring new talent. Six respondents expected to hire specialized personnel.

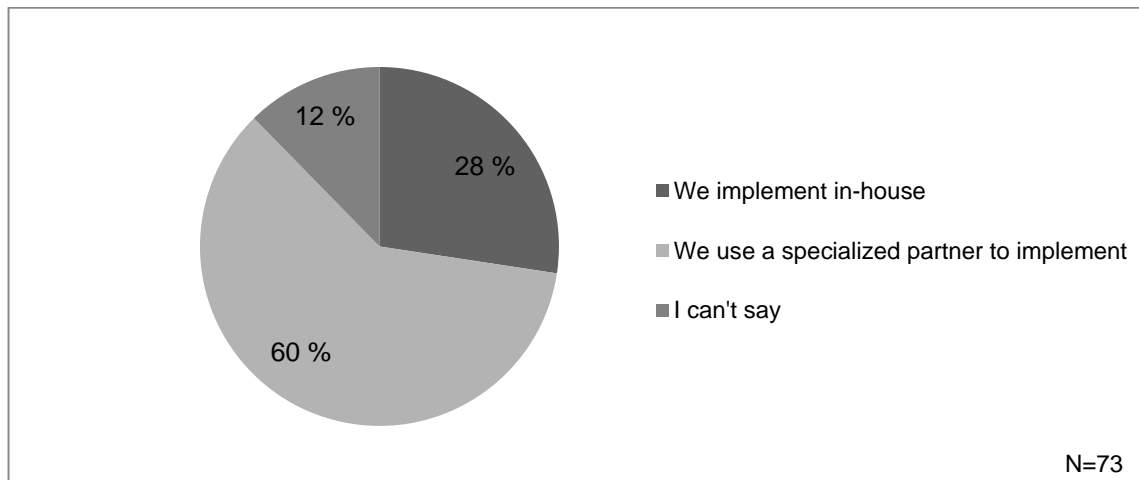


Figure 23. Division of in-house implementation and the use of specialized partners

As depicted in Figure 23, 60% of the respondents use a specialized partner in implementing influencer marketing, while 28% of the respondents implement influencer marketing in-house. Most of the respondents that use a specialized partner work together with either an influencer network or influencer marketing agency (59%) or a media agency (55%). 27% of the respondents use an advertising or marketing agency and 25% work

with a PR agency. 16% said they work together with another type of partner, such as a media house or work directly with the influencers in addition to working with the partners.

With 59% of the respondents believing they have enough in-house expertise to implement influencer marketing without the assistance of specialized partners, why do so many still use one? The results can be seen in Figure 24.

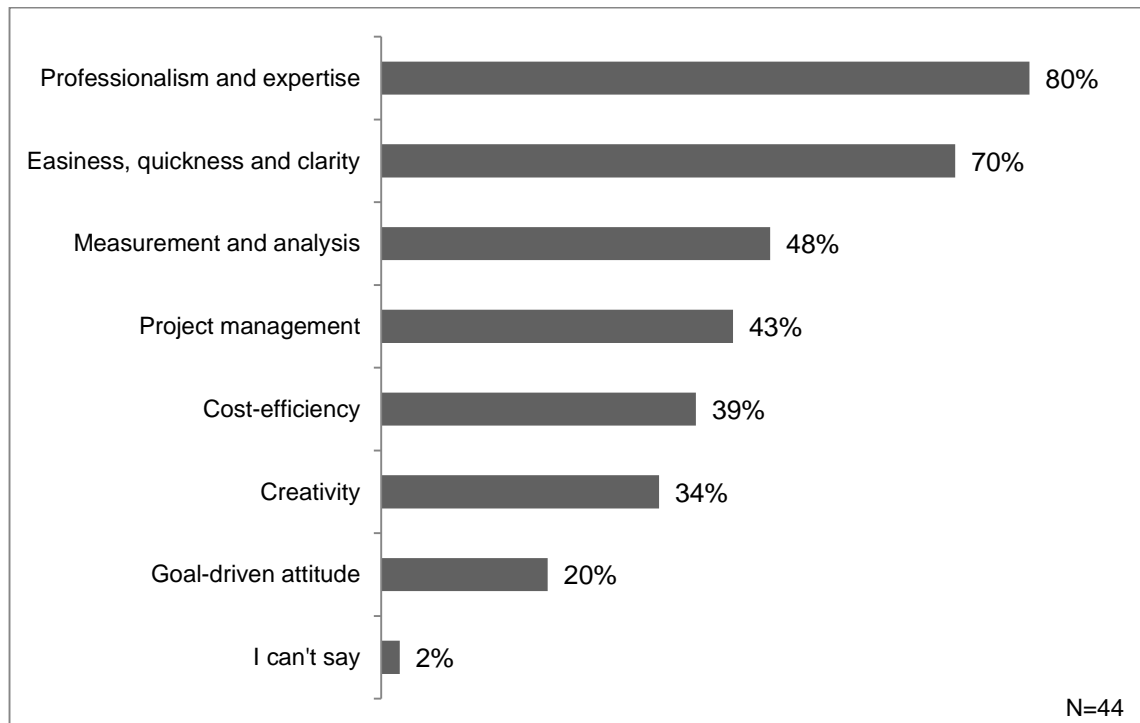


Figure 24. Motives for using a partner on implementation of influencer marketing

Most of the respondents (80%) that work with a partner in implementing their influencer marketing picked the professionalism and expertise of the partner as the number one motivator for working with them. The second biggest motivator with 70% of the respondents choosing it as an important motivator is the easiness, quickness and clarity of using a specialized partner. It seems that although the respondents believe they would possess the knowhow to implement influencer marketing in-house, they still choose to work with partners to save up their time resources.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the primary data collected through the survey research, we can assume that the future of influencer marketing looks bright. With 86% of advertisers planning on working with influencers within the next three years of operations and 68% projecting to either increase or keep their current influencer marketing budgets, there seems to be no major difficulties ahead for the influencer marketing industry in Finland. 82% of the marketers believe influence marketing will have a greater role in their overall marketing efforts in the future.

Numerous media outlets have published articles highlighting the growing popularity of influencer marketing. In an article published in 2016, eMarketer states that the continuous rise of the usage of online ad blockers has made alternative native marketing methods more important to brands; “YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat have become popular channels, and new tools are making it easier to work with influencers...” (eMarketer, 2016).

The research results indicate that the most important reason Finnish advertisers find influencer marketing interesting and relevant is that it provides a better reach in the right target group. As discussed in the literature review section of the thesis, marketers have been shifting their targeting from mass audiences towards more and more niche groups of interest, and the use of influencers provides a good tool for just that. This is also indicated by the fact that the most important factor for marketers when choosing an influencer to collaborate with is the influencer’s audience’s compatibility with the brand’s target audience.

The division between different influencer types that marketers’ see as potential collaboration partners shows to be narrower in the future with the more traditionally used bloggers giving some room to other types of influencers, such as Instagram influencers. Bloggers will still have a strong stance, however, with still 76% of the respondents predicting to work with bloggers in the future.

68% of the respondents will either grow or maintain their current marketing budget allocations towards influencer marketing. The biggest motivator for increasing the marketing budgets would be finding better metrics and ways of analysing the results of the influencer marketing efforts. This was also the biggest challenge influencer marketing in general faces within the organizations, with very little means to convey the top-level deciders on the effects of influencer marketing.

The key metrics in use today are sales and generated leads as well as engagement and reach for the influencer's content. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, measuring the sales generation through influencer marketing can be difficult, as very rarely influencer marketing is the only marketing activity in place at once. Thus it's extremely difficult to measure what part of the possibly increased sales would be due to the exact influencer collaborations.

The Finnish marketers believe in the power of campaign-based content collaborations with influencers, with 67% of the respondents naming it as the most effective form of influencer marketing for their organization.

The current state of influencer marketing within the advertisers' marketing efforts seems to be lacking a strategy, with only 25% of the respondents reporting to have an influencer marketing strategy in place. However, 63% of those that don't currently have a strategy in place plan on implementing one in the future. This could also be reflecting on the fact that 51% of the respondents couldn't say whether they had met goals set out for their influencer marketing efforts. This would indicate that possibly marketers are currently still testing out the different influencer marketing methods and plan on strategizing their actions after the 'trial-period' has ended.

Most marketers (59%) claim to possess sufficient in-house expertise to conduct influencer marketing with in-house resources, but 60% of them claim to use a partner, such as an influencer network or an influencer marketing agency in the implementation of influencer marketing. The biggest motivators for using a partner are the professionalism and expertise of the partner, as well as the easiness of using one.

Influencer marketing seems to be a marketing method a lot of marketers in Finland find intriguing. Most marketers will increase their influencer marketing efforts in the next three years in terms of both quantity and monetary investments. In order to get an even greater part of the overall marketing budgets, the measurement metrics and analysis possibilities still have room for improvement, with most marketers facing issues with assuring the top-level management on the benefits of conducting influencer marketing.

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Newsletter Introducing the Survey



Hei!

Toteutamme tänä keväänä vaikuttajamarkkinointia käsittelevän kyselytutkimuksen, johon toivomme sinun osallistuvan. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kerätä dataa vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista mainostajien näkökulmasta. Pyrimme kartoittamaan alan nykytilaa, tulevaisuuden näkymiä sekä löytämään yleisiä haasteita, joihin mainostajat törmäävät vaikuttajamarkkinoinnissa.

Voit osallistua kyselyyn, vaikka et olisi koskaan itse tehnyt vaikuttajamarkkinointia.

Osallistumalla tutkimukseen olet oikeutettu saamaan tutkimuksen pohjalta laadittavan white paperin sähköpostiisi, mikäli täytät kyselyn viimeisellä sivulla olevan sähköpostiosoite-lomakkeen.

Kyselyn vastausaika päättyy perjantaina 14.4.2017 klo 14. Jokainen vastaus on meille erittäin tärkeä, sillä näin saamme arvokasta tietoa vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista ja sen tulevaisuudesta mainostajien näkökulmasta. Vastaamiseen menee noin 10 minuuttia. Voit osallistua klikkaamalla alla olevaa Osallistu kyselyyn -nappia tai tämän [linkin](#) kautta.

OSALLISTU KYSELYYN

Voit halutessasi välittää tämän kyselytutkimuksen myös markkinoinnin parissa työskenteleville kollegoillesi.

Kiitos!

View in full here: <http://createsend.com/t/r-3A94C07FD17752BD2540EF23F30FEDED>

Research Survey

VAIKUTTAJAMARKKINOINNIN TUTKIMUS 2017 Indieplace Oy


Tämä on Indieplace Oy:n toteuttama tutkimus vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista. Jokainen vastaus on meille erittäin tärkeää, sillä näin saamme arvokasta tietoa vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista mainostajien näkökulmasta.

Vastaamiseen menee noin 10 minuuttia. Osallistumalla tutkimukseen olet oikeutettu saamaan tutkimuksen pohjalta laadittavan white paperin sähköpostiisi, mikäli täytät kyselyn viimeisellä sivulla olevan sähköpostiosoite-lomakkeen.

Vastajien henkilötietoja ei yhdistetä vastauksiin.


Kiitos!

Yritystieto

* Mikä seuraavista kuvaa rooliasi yrityksessänne? 

- Markkinointipäällikkö / markkinointijohtaja
- Markkinoinnin spesialisti
- Viestintäpäällikkö / viestintäjohtaja
- Viestinnän spesialisti
- Brändipäällikkö / brändijohtaja
- Tuotepäällikkö / tuotejohtaja
- Muu (täsmennä)

* **Mi(t)kä seuraavista kuvastaa yrityksenne toimialaa parhaiten?**

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 


- Kauneus
- Muoti
- Koti ja sisustus
- Ruoka- ja elintarvike
- FMCG
- Hyvinvointi ja urheilu
- Elektronikka
- Palvelut
- Muu (täsmennä)

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin nykytila

* **Hyödyntääkö yrityksenne tällä hetkellä vaikuttajamarkkinointia osana markkinointistrategiaa?** 


- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

* **Minkä tyyppisiä vaikuttajia yrityksenne on käyttänyt markkinoinnissaan?**

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- Bloggaajat
- Tubettajat
- Instagram-vaikuttajat
- Snapchat-vaikuttajat
- Julkisuuden henkilöt
- Toimialan mielipidevaikuttajat
- Muu (täsmennä)

* Minkä osaston vastuualueena vaikuttajamarkkinointi on yrityksessänne?


Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- Markkinointi
- Viestintä
- Myynti
- Yritysjohdo
- Tuote- tai palveluorganisaatio
- Ei määrättyä osastoa
- Muu (täsmennä)

* Onko yrityksellänne voimassa oleva vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin strategia, joka ohjaa sen tekemistä? 

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin strategisointi

* Valitse alta sopivin vaihtoehto, joka kuvaa yrityksenne tulevaisuuden suunnitelmia vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin strategisoinnin suhteen. 

- Emme aio implementoida vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin strategiaa
- Aiomme implementoida vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin strategian seuraavan kolmen vuoden aikana
- Aiomme implementoida vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin strategian myöhemmin
- En osaa sanoa

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin tulevaisuus

* Suunnitteleeko yrityksenne käyttävänsä vaikuttajia markkinoinnissaan seuraavan kolmen vuoden aikana? 

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin tulevaisuus

* Minkä tyyppisiä vaikuttajia yrityksenne suunnittelee käyttävänsä tulevaisuudessa markkinoinnissa?

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.

- Bloggaajat
- Tubettajat
- Instagram-vaikuttajat
- Snapchat-vaikuttajat
- Julkisuuden henkilöt
- Toimialan mielipidevaikuttajat
- Muu (täsmennä)

* Uskotko, että yrityksenne henkilöstöstä löytyy tarvittavaa osaamista toteuttamaan vaikuttajamarkkinointia?

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa


* Suunnitteleeko yrityksenne vaikuttajamarkkinointiin erikoistuneen henkilöstön palkkaamista seuraavan kolmen vuoden aikana?

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa


Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin kiinnostavuus

* Onko vaikuttajamarkkinointi mielestäsi tärkeä ja kiinnostava markkinointikanava?

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

* Miksi vaikuttajamarkkinointi on mielestäsi tärkeä ja kiinnostava markkinointikanava? Järjestä alla olevat kohdat mieleiseesi tärkeysjärjestykseen raahaamalla palkkeja siten, että ylin (1) on kaikista tärkein motiivi ja alin (5) vähiten tärkeä motiivi. 

⋮	<input type="text" value="Autenttista tarinankerrontaa brändistä"/>
⋮	<input type="text" value="Parempi tavoitavuus oikeassa kohderyhmässä"/>
⋮	<input type="text" value="Tarjoaa paremman ROI:n kuin muut markkinointikanavat"/>
⋮	<input type="text" value="Antaa brändistämme nykyaikaisemman kuvan"/>
⋮	<input type="text" value="Hyvä vaihtoehto perinteisemmille mainos- ja markkinointikanaville"/>

Jos aiemmassa kysymyksessä ei ollut mieleistäsi vaihtoehtoa, voit kertoa tähän kommenttikenttään mielestäsi tärkeimmät motiivit vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin implementointiin. 

* Uskotko, että vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin rooli kasvaa yrityksenne markkinointistrategiassa seuraavan kolmen vuoden aikana? 

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin haasteet

*** Mitkä koet suurimmiksi haasteiksi yrityksessänne vaikuttajamarkkinointia suunnitellessa?**

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.

- Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista ei ole vielä tarpeeksi todennettua hyötyä yrityksellemme
- Ei erikseen allokoitua budjettia
- Tiedon ja osaamisen puute organisaation sisällä
- Tulosten mittaamisen ja analysoinnin vaikeus
- Yrityksen sisäinen byrokratia ja päätöksenteon hitaus
- Oikeiden yhteistyökumppanien (vaikuttajat, suunnittelutoimistot yms.) löytäminen
- En koe, että vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin implementointi olisi haastavaa yrityksellemme
- Muu (täsmennä)

*** Mitkä koet suurimmiksi haasteiksi yrityksellenne vaikuttajien kanssa työskentelyssä?**


Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.

- Yhteistyöhön sopivien vaikuttajien löytäminen
- Vaikuttajan tyylin ja yrityksen markkinointiviestin yhdistäminen toimivalla tavalla
- Vaikuttajan kanssa tehdyn yhteistyön sääntöjen määrittely
- Vaikuttajan kanssa tehdyn yhteistyön hallinta ja viestintä
- Vaikuttajan kanssa tehdyn yhteistyön tulosten mittaaminen ja analysointi
- En koe, että vaikuttajien kanssa työskentely olisi haastavaa yrityksellemme
- Muu (täsmennä)


Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin budjetointi

*** Kuinka paljon oli keskimäärin vaikuttajamarkkinointiin allokoitu kokonaisvuosibudjetti yrityksessänne vuonna 2016?**

- 0 - 10 000 €
- 10 000 € - 25 000 €
- 25 000 € - 50 000 €
- 50 000 € - 70 000 €
- 70 000 € - 100 000 €
- Enemmän kuin 100 000 €
- Emme tehneet vaikuttajamarkkinointia vuonna 2016 lainkaan
- En osaa sanoa


* **Kuinka paljon on keskimäärin vaikuttajamarkkinoinnille allokoitu kokonaisvuosibudjetti yrityksessänne vuonna 2017?** 

- 0 - 10 000 €
- 10 000 - 25 000 €
- 25 000 - 50 000 €
- 50 000 - 70 000 €
- 70 000 - 100 000 €
- Enemmän kuin 100 000 €
- Emme allokoit budgettia vaikuttajamarkkinointiin
- En osaa sanoa

* **Miten näet yrityksenne vaikuttajamarkkinointiin allokoitavan kokonaisvuosibudjetin kehittyvän seuraavan kolmen vuoden aikana?** 


- Kasvatamme budjettia
- Pysymme nykyisessä budjetissa
- Alennamme budjettia
- En osaa sanoa

* **Mikä saisi yrityksenne nostamaan vaikuttajamarkkinointiin allokoitavaa kokonaisvuosibudjettia tulevaisuudessa?**

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- Selkeästi mitattavat tulokset
- Menestystarinoiden todistaminen ja niistä kuuleminen
- Yrityksemme sisäisen tiedon ja ymmärryksen kehittyminen vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin saralla
- Kustannusten aleneminen
- Oikeiden kumppanien löytäminen (vaikuttajat, suunnittelutoimistot yms.)
- En osaa sanoa
- Muu (täsmennä)


Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin mittaaminen ja analysointi

*** Mitkä ovat yrityksellenne tehokkaimpia vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin toimintamalleja?**Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- Jatkuvat ambassador-ohjelmat
- Tuotearvostelut
- Brändimaininnat
- Kampanjakohtaiset sisältöyhteistyöt
- Affiliate-yhteistyöt
- En osaa sanoa
- Muu (täsmennä)

*** Mitkä ovat yrityksellenne tärkeimmät mittarit vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin onnistumista mitatessa? Järjestä alla olevat kohdat mieleiseesi tärkeysjärjestykseen raahaamalla palkkeja siten, että ylin (1) on kaikista tärkein motiivi ja alin (5) vähiten tärkeä motiivi.** 

⋮	▼	Vaikuttajan seuraajien sitoutuneisuus sisältöön (kommentit, tykkäykset, jaot, klikit, yms.)
⋮	▼	Yritysbrändin tunnettuus
⋮	▼	Myynti ja generoidut liidit
⋮	▼	Tavoittavuus ja impressiot
⋮	▼	Yrityksen kanavien (sosiaalinen media, verkkosivut yms.) seuraajamäärät

Jos aiemmassa kysymyksessä ei ollut mieleistäsi vaihtoehtoa, voit kertoa tähän kommenttikenttään mielestäsi tärkeimmät mittarit vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin onnistumisen mittaamiseen. 

* Mitä tavoitteita yrityksenne on asettanut toteutetulle tai toteutettavalle vaikuttajamarkkinoinnille?


Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- Myynnin ja generoitujen liidien kasvu
- Yritysbrändin ja brändi-imagon kehittyminen
- Tunnettuuden kasvu
- Yrityksen sosiaalisen median kanavien seuraajamäärien kasvu
- Yrityksen verkkosivujen liikenteen kasvu
- Ostopreferenssin kasvu
- Emme ole asettaneet tavoitteita vaikuttajamarkkinoinnille
- En osaa sanoa
- Muu (täsmennä)


* Onko yrityksenne päässyt toivottuihin tavoitteisiin vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin avulla? 


- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin yhteistyökumppanit

* Mitkä ovat tärkeimpiä tekijöitä yrityksellenne valitessa vaikuttajaa yhteistyöhön? Järjestä alla olevat kohdat mieleiseesi tärkeysjärjestykseen raahaamalla palkkeja siten, että ylin (1) on kaikista tärkein motiivi ja alin (6) vähiten tärkeä motiivi. 

⋮	<input type="text"/>	Vaikuttajan yleisön sopivuus kohderyhmäämme
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Vaikuttajan yleisön sitoutuneisuus
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Vaikuttajan ymmärrys ja tietämys yrityksen toiminta-alasta
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Vaikuttajan olemassaoleva suhde yritykseen (ts. vaikuttaja on jo ennen yhteistyötä brändin puolestapuhuja)
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Vaikuttajan tavoitavuus ja seuraajamäärä
⋮	<input type="text"/>	Vaikuttajan henkilökohtainen brändi ja pidettävyys


Jos aiemmassa kysymyksessä ei ollut mieleistäsi vaihtoehtoa, voit kertoa tähän kommenttikenttään mielestäsi tärkeimmät tekijät yhteistyöhön valittavan vaikuttajan valintaan. 

* **Toteuttaako yrityksenne vaikuttajamarkkinointia itsenäisesti vai hyödynnättekö toteutuksissa kumppania, kuten PR-toimistoa tai vaikuttajamarkkinointiin erikoistunutta toimistoa?** 

- Toteutamme vaikuttajamarkkinointia itsenäisesti
- Toteutamme vaikuttajamarkkinointia yhteistyökumppani(e)n kanssa
- En osaa sanoa


Vaikuttajamarkkinoinnin yhteistyökumppanit

* **Mitä seuraavista kumppaneista yrityksenne hyödyntää vaikuttajamarkkinoinnissa?**

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- PR-toimisto
- Vaikuttajaverkosto tai vaikuttajamarkkinointitoimisto (kuten Indieplace Oy)
- Mainos- tai markkinointitoimisto
- Mediatoimisto
- Muu (täsmennä)

* **Valitse alta parhaiten kuvaavat motiivit yhteistyökumppanin kanssa tekemiseen itsenäisesti toteuttamisen sijaan.**

Voit valita useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon. 

- Ammattitaito ja erityisosaaminen
- Kustannustehokkuus
- Tuloseskeinen asenne
- Helppous, nopeus ja selkeys
- Projektijohto
- Mittaaminen ja analyysi
- Luovuus
- En osaa sanoa
- Muu (täsmennä)

Kiitos, että käytit aikaasi kyselyyn vastaamiseen!

Laadimme tutkimustuloksista sen valmistuttua vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista kertovan white paperin, jonka myös sinä voit saada sähköpostiisi jättämällä alle sähköpostiosoitteesi.

Emme yhdistä sähköpostiosoitetta vastaustietoihisi. Tutkimme kaikkia kyselytutkimuksen vastauksia yhteisesti.

Sähköpostiosoite 