INSTAGRAM AS A MIRROR
– A STUDY ON HOW IDENTIFICATION BASED ON HOMOPHILY IMPACTS FOLLOWER’S PURCHASE INTENTION ON INSTAGRAM

Thesis for Master, 30 ECTS
Textile Management

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2018.5.01
Title: Instagram as a mirror – A study on how identification based on homophily impacts followers’ purchase intention on Instagram.

Publication year: 2018

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Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to our supervisor Hanna Wittrock for her creative and constructive criticism which inspired the whole process of this study.

Thanks to our classmates Josefin Edman, Linnéa Wallén, and Julia Fritzell for giving us helpful suggestions for improving the structure of our paper.

And lastly, we would like to extend a big thank to our anonymous participants who showed great openness in sharing their personal stories and valuable opinions, allowing this study to reflect how modern Instagram users follow and interact fashion influencers, see them as a reliable source of information, and ultimately purchase the fashion products the influencers advertise.
Abstract

Purpose: This thesis aims to research how homophily affects followers/consumers’ attitudes towards Instagram fashion influencers. In particular, the purpose is to investigate if the perceived level of identification (evaluated according the homophily variables and types of identification) between followers/consumers and fashion influencers is one of the drivers behind followers/consumers’ engagement on Instagram. Additionally, consumption patterns on Instagram will be further investigated, paying special attention in determining if followers/consumers’ identification with fashion influencers have an impact on their purchase intention towards the fashion products the influencer endorses.

Methodology: This thesis uses an abductive research approach, together with qualitative methods to fulfil its aim and answer the research questions. The empirical data were gathered through an in-depth interview which eight participants, sampled by purposive sampling, answered. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed using thematic analysis. The main limitations of the research are the facts that the participants live in the same area and are approximately the same age. Thusly, the transferability of the results might be complicated.

Findings: The findings of the analysis point out that followers/consumers’ engage with fashion influencers at an interpersonal level, through realization of sharing similar interests and values. Participants have also shown a desire of becoming even more similar to their favourite influencers by altering the beliefs they have in common with them. From the perspective of the theory of Homophily-Heterophily, the engagement between followers and influencers is affected by both, value and status homophily. On the other hand, it has also been demonstrated that identification influences followers/consumers’ purchase intention towards the fashion products influencers endorse on Instagram.

Contributions: This paper contributes to the academia by investigating followers/consumers’ purchase intention through the theories of Identification and Homophily-Heterophily. Additionally, the context of Instagram, as well as, the qualitative nature of this investigation are novelties on this field of study. Fashion companies and influencers can also benefit from the results of this research, since they would be able of creating better collaborations.

Keywords: Instagram, Instagram influencer, Identification, Homophily, Purchase intention, Information adoption, Qualitative thematic analysis.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background & problem statement

I’m using Instagram a lot for inspiration, and more for keeping up because otherwise it’s difficult to know what’s going on.

Instagram, a mobile photo and video capturing and sharing service, has quickly emerged as a new medium in the spotlight in recent years. It provides users an instantaneous way to capture and share their life moments with friends through a series of filter manipulated pictures and videos (Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati, 2014). Image-oriented by their very nature, fashion companies are investing heavily on the platform as it gains in popularity (Pathak, 2015). An example of the app’s magnitude is that 96% of the fashion brands in the United States, have nowadays a profile on this social platform (Georgiou, 2016). The citation with which this paper begins is extracted from the empirical material, and perfectly reflects the importance of Instagram for the fashion industry: if you do not have a profile in this social platform, you will not be updated with the latest news and trends hitting the markets.

Fashion brands are often promoted in Instagram by so called “influencers”. Crystal Abidin (2015), anthropologist and ethnographer, describes this people as ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relative large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetise their following by integrating advertorials into their blogs or social media posts. Mark Evans, a renowned Marketing consultant, adds that influencers are the ones we follow, trust, and ultimately help decide what will succeed or fail. Central to the influencers’ success is the deep and intimate relationships between their personal brands and their followers; but beyond mere intimacy, the success of the bloggers hinges on their own taste and credibility. The credibility and perceived trustworthiness of influencers are also found to make them more effective promoters of brand messages (Abidin, 2015).

Instagram has in other words created a seemingly authentic, transparent way to spread the fashion brands’ messages without spam through Influencer Marketing (Cole, 2017). This technique consists on identifying key decisions makers in a target audience -influencers- and encouraging them to use their influence to spread the word-of-mouth (WOM) (Jaakonmäki, Müller and Brocke, 2017). This social platform actually has the highest average engagement rate of all the main social channels (Hughes, 2017).

Previous researches on Instagram show that trustworthiness, as well as, source credibility have an impact on followers’ (that could be potential consumers) purchase intention. For instance, Marta Rebelo (2017), business scholar and fashion micro-influencer, declares that the perceived attractiveness and trustworthiness of an influencer affect Instagram users’ purchase intention. Furthermore, Lisichkova and Othman’s (2017) study reveals that trustworthiness, authenticity, and legitimacy of Instagram influencers also have an impact on followers/consumers’ purchase intention. Another example is the research carried out by Jargalsaikhan and Korotina (2016) which proves that micro influencers’ trustworthiness is the most influential factor on followers/consumers’ attitude towards promotional Instagram posts.

But what motivates followers/consumers’ engagement with Instagram fashion influencers? The factor(s) which make followers/consumers follow and interact with fashion influencers in Instagram, see them as a reliable source of information, and ultimately purchase the fashion products the influencers advertises could be deeply analysed.
Earlier investigations about purchase intention on Instagram concentrate predominantly in the Source Credibility Theory. Rebelo (2017) and Djafarova and Rushworth’s (2017) suggest that consumers’ perceptions and attitudes towards Instagram influencers, as well as the motivations for following them could be further investigated under different perspectives. Identifying the determinants of this behaviour, and whether these factors have any impact on consumers’ purchase intention is of high value for fashion companies, as well as, for the own influencer him/herself since this information would allow for a more profitable relationship between the parts.

Trust, along with source credibility are solid pillars of the deep and intimate (as Crystal Abidin describes it) relationship between Instagram influencers and its followers. Furthermore, previous studies on the field suggest that these factors have a direct impact on followers/consumers’ purchase intention. As mentioned before, learning what encourages followers/consumers to follow certain influencers, and if these motivations have an impact on the purchase intention towards the fashion products the influencer advertises, could be useful for fashion brands and marketers since they will be able to make more accurate decisions when selecting the right influencer to collaborate with. On the contrary, this knowledge it is also profitable for the own fashion influencers because, they will be able to elaborate more adequate content to publish on their social profiles, as well as, endorse just the most appealing products and brands to their followers.

Influencers are often viewed as idols with a glamorous urban lifestyle. For many, this lifestyle may be utterly foreign. Still it is idealized. The result is an effort for achieving a similar way of life and a strong identification feeling with the romanticized influencer. One incentive for creating a relationship with an influencer may be based on the perceived identification level with him or her; this might also be another factor that affect followers/consumers’ purchase intention towards the fashion products and services the influencer endorses. This paper aim to shed light on how interpersonal and social identification with Instagram influencers affect consumers’ purchase intention.

According to Ahearne et al. (2013) interpersonal identification is the extent to which an individual’s beliefs about another person become self-referential or self-defining. Close to the concept of interpersonal identification is the notion of social identification defined by Johnson, Morgeson and Hekman (2012) as the sense of oneness that group members feel with certain groups and the degree to which they define themselves as members of those groups.

Along these lines, a pattern as powerful and pervasive as the relationship between association and similarity did not go unnoticed in classical Western thought. In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric and Nicomachean Ethics*, he noted that people “love those who are like themselves” (1934, p. 1371) quoted in McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, (2001). Plato observed in *Phaedrus* that “similarity begets friendships” (Plato 1968, p. 837 quoted in ibid.). Namely, *similarity breeds connection … the result is that people’s personal networks are homogeneous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioural and intrapersonal characteristics* (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001).

The scientific term for identification is homophily, which is based on the principle that governs that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. There are two types of homophily: status homophily, in which similarity is based on informal, formal or ascribed status, and value homophily, which is based on values, attitudes and beliefs.
Status homophily includes the major sociodemographic dimensions that stratify society: ascribed characteristics like race, ethnicity, sex or age, and acquired characteristics like religion, education, occupation, or behaviour patterns. Value homophily includes the wide variety of internal states presumed to shape our orientation toward future behaviour (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001).

Diverse scholars’ investigations concerning the impact of homophily in consumers’ purchase intention demonstrate that some homophily variables, such as ethnicity, can affect consumer’s purchase intention. Ethel M. Simpson et al., for example, affirm that consumers with higher levels of ethnic identification have a higher degree of perceived homophily than consumers with lower ethnic identification. Their research shows, however, that the impact of a higher degree of perceived homophily on purchase intention was small but significant. Saleem and Ellahi’s (2017) research shows that homophily (based on age, gender, educational background, and income) influences engagement in eWOM activities within Facebook, and further, consumers’ purchase intention of fashion products among Facebook users in Pakistan. Additionally, Lee and Watkins (2016) states that luxury products’ purchase intention of consumers who have watched a luxury product review from a YouTube vlogger, are higher than consumers who have not watched the vlog.

Each of these studies provides an important contribution to our understanding about the link between homophily and followers/consumers’ purchase intention. This is valuable since the knowledge with regard homophily and consumption is still limited. Besides, investigations of how homophily affect Instagram users’ purchase intention are virtually non-existent.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

This thesis aims to research how homophily affects followers/consumers’ attitudes towards Instagram fashion influencers.

In particular, the purpose is to investigate if the perceived level of identification (evaluated according the homophily variables and types of identification) between followers/consumers and fashion influencers is one of the drivers behind followers/consumers’ engagement on Instagram. Additionally, consumption patterns on Instagram will be further investigated, paying special attention in determining if followers/consumers’ identification with fashion influencers have an impact on their purchase intention towards the fashion products the influencer endorses.

In order to acknowledge the aim of this thesis, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: Which homophily variables drive engagement with fashion influencers in Instagram?

RQ2: How does identification affect followers’ purchase intention towards the fashion products the influencer endorses?

1.3 Delimitations

The most significant delimitation of this study is the particular focus on Instagram influencers. There are also influencers in other social network as Twitter (commonly named tweet stars), or YouTube (the so called youtubers); nevertheless, Instagram has been chosen due to its relevance for the fashion industry. On the other hand, the population of study is constituted by Instagram users who are highly interested in fashion, as well as, very active in this social platform.
The reason why we set the focus on this type of persons and not just ordinary Instagram users is due to the believe that these people have stronger bond with fashion influencers, in addition to being better acquainted with fashion-related knowledge and news. Moreover, the population members live in Sweden, specifically in the West-Coast area. Finally, other scholars, like Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) or Braatz (2017), have researched the relationship between the messages posted by Instagram influencers and consumers’ purchase intention. In spite of that, message content is leaving out of the scope of this research, mostly due to the short time available for carrying out the investigation.

2 Literature review and previous investigations

On the forthcoming paragraphs the most significant scientific papers to the purpose of this study will be bestowed.

2.1 Instagram as a Marketing platform for fashion brands

Instagram is, to a certain extent, a recent social network; hence, the majority of the investigations that have been carried about Instagram focus, in general terms, on its virtue as a Marketing platform.

Instagram is a popular photo (video) capturing and sharing mobile application, with more than 150 million of registered users since its launch in 2010. It offers its users a unique way to post pictures and videos using their smartphones, apply different manipulation tools - 16 filters - in order to transform the appearance of an image, and share them instantly on multiple platforms (e.g., Twitter) in addition to the user’s Instagram page. It also allows users to add captions, hashtags using the # symbol to describe the pictures and videos, and tag or mention other users by using the @ symbol (which effectively creates a link from their posts to the referenced user’s account) before posting them (Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati, 2014).

Nowadays this social platform counts with over 800 million monthly active users, and it is ranked as the seventh social networking platform in the world (Statista, 2018). Moreover, everyday 95 million pictures are uploaded to Instagram and these images receive up to 4.2 billion likes; the popular Instagram Stories (a feature that allow users to post photos and videos that vanish after 24 hours (Read, 1026)) have over 300 million daily active users (Aslam, 2018).

In 2015 the Council of Fashion Designers of America gave its annual Media Adward to Instagram due to the influential impact that this photo-sharing app has for the fashion industry (Wharton, 2015). Its key to success are the lack of language barriers, as well as, its viral nature which make Instagram a much more powerful tool for spreading commercial messages than the rest of social media sites. An example of the app’s magnitude is that 96% of the United States fashion brands have nowadays a profile on this social platform (Georgiou, 2016). Moreover, while the average number of uploaded posts per week across all industries is five, for fashion companies is seven (Schwartz, 2017). This fact is not surprising since for fashion brands engagement and interactions are higher on Instagram compared to any other platform (Pathak, 2015).

Instagram has definitely transformed the way fashion companies do business online; its visual nature allows brands to not just showcase their product, instead they are able to sell a lifestyle (Roderick, 2016). On the other hand, this social network is doing part of the job that fashion magazines used to do in the sense that nowadays when people want to know what the latest trends are they scroll up and down their feeds on Instagram.
Besides, this social platform has created an authentic, transparent way to spread the fashion brand’s messages without spam through influencer Marketing (Cole, 2017). This technique consists on identifying key decision makers in a target audience and encouraging them to use their influence to spread the word of mouth (WOM), hence, influencers need to be really popular and well connected on a large network (Jaakonmäki, Müller and Brocke, 2017). Furthermore, Instagram influencers offer far better return on investment (ROI) than paid search or paid social, especially if part of the brand’s target is using ad blockers (Cole, 2017).

2.2 Instagram as a social commerce platform for fashion brands

The popularity of online shopping along with the wide adoption of social networking sites have recently given rise to a new e-commerce paradigm called social commerce. Social commerce is considered a subset of e-commerce that uses social networking sites to facilitate social interactions between consumers and vendors and thus promotes the buying and selling of products and services (Che, Cheung and Thadani, 2017). Consumers benefit from social commerce in which the online interactions and contributions of other consumers assist in the acquisition of products and services supported by Web 2.0 media technologies. Companies also benefit from social commerce since they can develop closer relationships with consumers, and the high quality of relationships will increase sales and help consumers to form loyalty to the company (Xiang et al, 2016).

Image-sharing social commerce platforms focus on a specific segment of consumers, such as women, and on specific products, such as ‘soft goods’ (e.g. fashion and lifestyle). Examples of this social commerce platforms include Pinterest or Instagram. Image-sharing social commerce platforms have obtained great success (Xiang et al, 2016). According to a study by User Interface Engineering (2001), about 40% of the money spent online is attributed to impulse purchases. These evidences show that, compared to users of other social media, users of image-sharing social commerce platforms are prone to online impulsive buying. In other words, users consider consumption information received from image-sharing social commerce platforms valuable and their online impulse buying behaviour is crucially affected by this information (Xiang et al., 2016).

Essentially, the two important attributes of social commerce are commercial activities and social networks. The capability of social networks that allow for users’ content participation, such as reviews and recommendations, for example, represents the major advantages of social commerce. These social proof techniques increased consumers trust towards the online sellers and their products, and hence, increased online shopping engagement (Yakimin, Talib and Mat Saat, 2017).

In recent years, increasing numbers of people have opened virtual stores on Instagram. Doing so is simple: users open an account, post sample pictures of products and descriptions, and encourage their followers to shop online. Consumers usually show interest in the products they like by leaving messages on the posts or by contacting the store owner using messaging apps, such as WeChat, WhatsApp, or Line. Payment is made through PayPal or other traditional methods. Selling products in a virtual store on Instagram represent a new shopping mode for most consumers, and consumer trust is a critical issue in consumer purchase decision on Instagram (Che, Cheung and Thadani, 2017).
Instagram has newly launched ‘Instagram shopping’, this feature allows retailers to add product tags to their Instagram posts, so users can easily learn more about their products through the platform. All users have to do is tap on a button that reads, ‘Tap to View Products’. This action will display tags for all the products that have been tagged. This tag will display the product name and the price. Users can then select if they would like to get more information about the product without even leaving Instagram. If they want to buy the product, they just need to tap on ‘Shop Now’ link that will take them to the relevant product page to complete their purchase (Barker, 2018). The new shopping feature significantly shortens customer journeys. Furthermore, according to their own statements, American companies were able to achieve considerable sales increases as a result; for instance, Shari Lott, founder and CEO of SPEARMINT LOVE states that ‘after the introduction of this feature, traffic increased by 25% and sales by 8%. We owe that to shopping on Instagram’ (Berndl, 2018).

2.3 Followers’ purchase intention towards Instagram fashion influencers posts

Sponsored advertising on social media differs between firm-generated content and paid content. Paid content could be an Instagram post from a brand that appears in the feed of the targeted customers, without their “approval” (Mathisen and Fredrick, 2017). Kumar et al. (2016) argues that firm-generated content has a significant positive effect on customer spending, cross-buying, and customer profitability. On the other hand, Gauzente (2010) declared that the ability to recognize online advertising is rising among consumers. Campbell and Marks (2015) study results show a higher acceptance towards sponsored ads, which is a positive sign for companies using social media to promote their products and services (Mathisen and Fredrick, 2017).

Purchase intention can be classified as one of the components of consumer cognitive behaviour on how an individual intends to buy a product from specific brand (Ling, Chai and Piew, 2010). Based on the argument of Pavlou (2003), online purchase intention is the situation when a customer is willing and intends to become involved in an online can it be transaction. Online transactions can be considered as an activity in which the process of information retrieval, information transfer, and product purchase are taken place (Pavlou, 2003). The information retrieval and exchange steps are regarded as intentions to use a website; however, product purchase is more applicable to an intention to handle in a website (Pavlou, 2003). In accordance to Kim and Ko (2010) understanding consumers’ purchasing behavior is essential to a firm in order to attract and retain its customers.

Many early theories concerning consumer behavior were based on economy theory, which is the notion that individuals act rationally to maximise their benefits (satisfactions) in the purchase of goods and services. Later research discovered that consumers are just as likely to purchase impulsively and to be influenced not only by family, friends, advertisement or role models, but also by mood, situation and emotion. Mowen suggested that differences in heredity, childhood experiences, cultural exposure, and personal motivation in people are important factors that lead to different purchase behavior patterns (Smith and Rupp, 2003). With reference to Gunawan and Huarrng (2015) research results source credibility and social influence are critical in creating attitudes toward information usefulness and subjective norms that lead to consumers’ purchase intention. These authors add that consumers are likely to assess source credibility over argument quality because credible reviewers form positive attitudes toward purchase intention.
Likewise, influence from friends and relatives creates pressure by forming subjective norms that motivate consumers’ intention. Apparently social influence has a higher effect on subjective norms than on users of online reviews’ transparency (Gunawan and Huarng, 2015).

Mathisen and Fredrick (2017) suggest that frequent buyers on Instagram seem to favour native advertising, on the contrary, less frequent buyers prefer obvious advertisement. Furthermore, low-fit between brand and endorser has a negative effect on purchase intention for frequent buyers, while it has almost no effect for less frequent buyers. Also, when looking at purchase intention for the unknown brand, frequent buyers are positive while less frequent buyers are negative. This result may be explained by the fact that the more often a person shops online, the more willing is the person to try new and unknown brands (Mathisen and Fredrick, 2017).

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), studied by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), is a model to predict behavior. This theory is widely used to explain the consumer decision-making process, further, it has been highly recommended for the assessment of purchase intention for high-involvement products such as apparel (Mowen and Minor, 1998). TRA assumes that intentions capture the motivational factors influencing behavior: attitudes toward the behaviour (the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour) and subjective norms with respect to the behaviour (the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour). In social network media settings, consumers learn attitudes and purchase-intentions through written messages that peers send (Gunawan and Huarng, 2015). Yoh et al. (2003), who used the TRA and Theory of Innovation Adoption (TIA) for analysing the consumers’ adoption of the Internet to shop apparel products, conclude that people who had more positive beliefs about Internet apparel shopping had more positive attitudes toward Internet apparel shopping. People who had more positive attitudes toward Internet apparel shopping had greater intention to purchase apparel through the Internet. In addition, people who had more social support to adopt Internet apparel shopping perceived more social acceptance of Internet apparel shopping and, in turn, had greater intention to purchase apparel through the Internet. The results indicate that TRA explains a portion of the relationships of consumers’ beliefs-attitude-behavioral intention to purchase apparel through the internet (Yoh et al., 2003). Yoh et al. (2003)’s investigation results are relevant to this paper in the view of the fact that their conclusion could be currently useful if we exchange Internet by Instagram.

Finally, as reported by Hye-Shim (2005) consumer tendencies to attach more importance to specific products or engage in particular product acquisition activities vary based on involvement levels. Involvement influences consumer information search patterns and decision-making processes. In addition, different aspects of involvement may be more influential in decision making depending on the apparel product category, its planned utility, and advertisement message (Hye-Shim, 2005). This author found also some evidence that the importance one assign to apparel is related to values sense of belonging and security and uncertainty in the purchase decision making to warm relationships with others and self-respect.
2.4 The power of Instagram’s fashion influencers

Influencers are every day, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relative large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetise their following by integrating “advertorials” - a pastiche between “advertisement” and editorial - into their blogs or social media posts (Abidin, 2015). Furthermore, approximately 70% of influencers are young women between 13 and 40 years old whose commercial practices are most prominent on Instagram (Abidin, 2016). Moreover, brands typically collaborate with influencers in several ways, including sharing sponsored content, post and product placements; documenting an event or experience, hosting and event and making event appearances (Evans et al, 2017).

Influencers are also considered to be opinion leaders because, on the one hand, they are early adopters of determined fashion trends which they accommodate to their own style, while on the other hand, they are very good at propagating their opinions through social media and influencing others, who at the same time will influence other people and so on (Ramos-Serrano and Martínez-García, 2016). Furthermore, it has been proved that influencers are trusted as nearly as a friend, hence, the combination of this trusting relationship and a large following on one or more social networks make influencers’ post a great channel for promoting brands and products (Woods, 2016).

Along these lines, Amelina and Zhu (2016) who investigated the effects on endorsements on social media towards brand attitude and merchandise attractiveness, based on the source credibility theory elements (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) stated that endorser’s expertise did not have any impact on consumers’ brand attitude, however, merchandise attractiveness was affected by the endorser’s expertise and trustworthiness. Their results are very helpful for marketers at the time of selecting the right influencer for their next Marketing campaign.

Brands looking to use Instagram influencers to market their products can choose those whose niche interests align with their target audience, while the influencer in turn broadcast their brand related post to their many followers, leading to a mutually beneficial relationship. (Evans et al, 2017).

2.5 Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and consumers’ information adoption on Instagram

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined eWOM as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is available to a multitude of people and institutions via Internet. This phenomenon occurs on a wide range of online channels, such as blogs, emails, consumers’ review websites and forums, virtual consumers communities, and social networking sites (Chu and Kim, 2011) since all of them allow consumers to read others’ opinions and experiences with regard to consumption, as well as, share their own contributions (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004). Like this, the eWOM message can reach an infinite number of audiences who the sender might not personally know (King, Bush and Racherla, 2014).
Besides, despite the fact that the motivations of communicators and receivers in eWOM may not be commercial, those activities often contain names of brands and products; this is very useful for brands since they are using this information as a source of inspiration for future advertising campaigns and even new product development; this activity is also known as co-creation (Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

eWOM conversations consist of basic information transfer between people who send and receive the information. However, the influence of the information might change from person to person; the same content can evoke differing notions among receivers. In order to understand how people, internalise the information they receive, previous researchers have focused on the information adoption process. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) has four components: argument quality, source credibility, information usefulness and information adoption. The IAM offers to explain how people are affected by the information on computer mediated communication platforms (Erkan and Evans, 2016). According to Erkan and Evans (2016) investigation results both characteristics of eWOM information and behaviours of consumers towards eWOM information have a positive impact on consumers’ purchase intentions. Moreover, these authors conclude that information quality and credibility have a positive impact on information usefulness, and information usefulness is positively related with information adoption as suggested by IAM.

Centring the focus on the fashion industry, the fact that the flow of new trends and styling options are never-ending, along with the assortment of products is constantly changing means that there is always a potential element of surprise in user-generated fashion messages. Moreover, social media users often share fashion related information with their peers, with the expectations of receiving feedback on their stylistic choices. Correspondingly, surprise and newness are necessary message characteristics for maintaining the interest of a social audience (Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

The effectiveness of eWOM on consumers’ attitudes and behavioral intentions is determined, to some degree, by the perceived credibility of eWOM communicators, an example of a valid source of eWOM are celebrities’ endorsements. (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). By the same token, fashion and brand involvement are the key motivators for fashion brand-related eWOM engagement (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Fan and Miao (2012) research results also show that involvement, as well as, expertise lead to higher eWOM acceptance and intent to purchase.

From the beginning of this century, researchers have studied different aspects of eWOM. On the first place, Bickart and Schindler (2001) analysed the influence of eWOM communication towards consumers’ interest on the product and topic of discussion, which concluded with positive results. Subsequently, Spawton, Lockshin, and Romaniuk (2006) compared the influence between advertising and positive word of mouth on buying behavior among consumers of wine; their results show that positive word of mouth had about twice the effect of advertising at the individual level, although its reach was low. Furthermore, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) examined the effects of online product reviews on the relative sales of two online bookshops. The findings show that one-star reviews have greater impact than five-star reviews; on the other hand, they also stated that consumers paid more attention to review text than to the summary of rating scale.
Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) examined on consumer-based brand equity that affected by negative online product reviews of a high-involvement product computer (e.g., notebook and digital camera). The researchers designed the test that aimed to evaluate on brand value perceptions of the participants. Reza and Samiei (2012) examined the effect of eWOM among consumers, where consumer seek for other consumers’ opinion and review online before making a purchase decision, also examined on its influence on brand image perceived by consumers and their purchase intention. The study collected data from self-administered survey.

Xiaofen and Yiling’s (2009) study investigated the influence of eWOM on purchase intention of customer on Apparel. The study reveals that message impression and opinion leader’s comment has an impact on consumers’ brand and product orientation and willingness to buy. The data were collected through both online and offline survey. Fan and Miao’s (2012) study investigated the influence of eWOM on purchase intention of customer with focus on participant’s gender differences. The framework of the study focused on the interrelationship between following variables of both genders: (1) customer’s expertise, involvement and rapport. (2) customer’s perception towards eWOM credibility. (3) eWOM acceptance. (4) purchase intention. The results of the study have shown that male and female developed trust in a different way. Moreover, customer’s involvement has the most significant effect on customer’s perception towards eWOM credibility. Erkan and Evans (2016) examined the influence of eWOM conversation within social media website towards consumer purchase intention. They developed the new research model the Information Acceptance Model that aim to examines the relationships between following variables: information quality, information credibility, needs of information, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information adoption and purchase intention. The study collected data with the multi-item approach survey. Virvilaite, Tumasonyte and Sliburyte’s (2015) study examined the influence of word of mouth communication on brand equity of luxury brand (e.g., Gucci and Dolce and Gabbana). The result has shown that vividness and usefulness of the word of mouth message has a positive impact on brand equity. The study collected data through survey. interestingly Cheung and Thadani (2012) classified eWOM communication into two levels as follows: Firstly, at market-level analysis, where researchers investigated on objective panel data (e.g., the rate and the valence of consumer reviews) from online product review platforms (i.e., e-commerce websites, discussion forums or rating sites) to examine on product sales that affected by eWOM communication and opinion of consumers. Secondly, at individual-level analysis where researchers claimed that eWOM communication and opinion from a sender can influence on receiver’s personal level of influence and purchase decision. Cheung and Thadani (2012) also formulated integrative framework of the impact of individual-level eWOM communication towards consumer behavior and presented propositions of the interrelationship between different key elements of social communication.

2.6 Prior researches on the theory of Homophily-Heterophily

Prior researches have fostered the theory of homophily and tested its effect on consumers’ behavioral intention such as information adoption and buying purchase intention. The finding from Brown and Reingen (1987) study shows that high level of homophilous relationship between the source and the receiver has an impact in the information adoption process but not in decision-making, however, their suggestion for future research is to focus at measurement of attitudinal aspect of homophily. According to Gilly’s (1998) study, the researcher has divided homophily measurement into two ways: first, demographic similarity which refers to gender, age, and education. Second, perceptual similarity which refers to similarity in term of values, experiences, lifestyle and beliefs. The results suggested that perceptual homophily has
strongest and most consistent relationship with the influence of WOM on all product category (durable, nondurable and services), while demographic homophily particularly effect on durable good. However, that both types have an impact on WOM influence but varies depending on product category. Gilly’s (1998) guidance for future researcher is to focus on product category with a greater female expertise such as clothing. Barzily and Ackerman (2015) studied on homophilous network and its influence on purchase intention of college students in an international school. The researchers measured on the correlation of different variables of homophily such as, gender, ethnicity, income, education level, hometown, and current city. The results have shown that current city homophily has a negative correlation towards purchase intention; the participants less likely to be influenced by people who lives in the same city. In the study on influence of race of a model in an advertisement, Simpson et al (2000) focused on ethnicity homophily as the main variable. The researchers investigated on how racial congruity and ethnic identification level of black consumers effect on their perceived homophily level and purchase intention. The results shown that consumer with higher level of ethnic identification has higher level of perceived homophily than consumer with lower ethnic identification, however, impact of higher level of perceived homophily on purchase intention was small but significant.

Researches on social media platforms also focus on how homophily affects consumer’s purchase intention. Saleem and Ellahi’s (2017) study has shown that homophily variables such as age, gender, education background and income are the factors that has influence on engagement of eWOM activities within Facebook, and further, on purchase intention of fashion products among the users in Pakistan. On the contrary, the study in Macedonia has shown that homophily is not a factor that influence on engagement of eWOM among Facebook users, but social norm is (Petrovska et al 2017). Additionally, Lee and Watkins (2016) studied on consumer's perceived attitude homophily of Youtube vlogger and its influence on purchase intention. The results shown that, luxury brand perceptions and luxury product purchase intention of consumers in experimental group who have watched the luxury product review of Youtube vlogger, are higher than consumers in control group, who have not watched the vlog.

2.7 Prior researches on the theory of Identification

The theory of identification has widely fostered by researchers to conduct a study at both interpersonal and organizational levels of identification, but primarily in the context of workplace (Miscenko and Day 2016).

For example, Kark et al. (2003) and Ahearne et al. (2013) fostered the theory of identification and adapted its meaning to facilitate the purpose of their studies which is related to the interpersonal identification between leader and follower. Kark et al. (2003) incorporated the interpersonal identification into the study about the relationship between branch manager and bank employee, while Ahearne et al. (2013) examined the interpersonal identification between sales managers and salespersons and its effect on work performance and sales.

Other examples of prior studies at interpersonal level within the context of media have focused on the identification with celebrities. For example, Fraser and Brown (2002) study on Elvis Presley’s fans/impersonators that identified with Elvis Presley in an intimate level. The result shows that the participants of the study adopted Elvis Presley’s positive value and behavior into their way of living and transmitted the identification to their children. Similarly, Peckham (2006) studied on the interpersonal identification between the viewers and the characters of the television serie, Friends. The result from Peckham’s (2006) research shows that the viewers identified with a characteristic of a fictional character and perceived
themselves to be similar in some certain way and/or desired to live in the similar lifestyle. Kosenko et al. (2016) study suggests that identification can cause behavioral intention. The result shows that women who identified with Angelina Jolie expressed greater intentions to pursue BRCA testing, for a gene mutation that can cause breast and ovarian cancers, than those who did not identified themselves with the celebrity (Kosenko et al.’s 2016).

Many previous studies, at organizational level, have shed light on the identification between consumers and organization. For example, Lichtenstein et al. (2004) investigation on how organizational identification between consumer and company impact consumer’s donation toward company-supported nonprofit organizations. The results indicate that consumers who strongly identified with the company are more likely to make a donation through consumption of the product selling by the company. Along this line, the result from the study of Carlson et al. (2009) reveals that when fans/consumers identified with the brand personality of the sport team, their consumption on products selling by the sport team increased.

2.8 Research Gap

Previous studies with regard eWOM have centred on the phenomena in contexts such as product review platforms, surveys, e-commerce websites, discussion forums, or rating sites. Nevertheless, the authors of this paper have chosen Instagram as the context of study. Instagram, as a social media network, has a different character than traditional platforms, where most of the prior investigations have set their focus. Furthermore, earlier investigations on eWOM have concentrated in the Source’s Credibility model, in special when the study focused on the relationship between message sender and receiver. Having into consideration Cheung and Thadani’s (2012) classification of eWOM studies, together with their suggestion for future researches, this paper choose to shed light on personal level of engagement between message senders and receivers, or in other words, Instagram influencers and followers. Additionally, instead of adopting the conventional framework of Source’s Credibility, this investigation adopts the theories of Identification and Homophily-Heterophily as a guideline. Interestingly, prior researches regarding the Identification theory and its effect towards purchase intention are also limited. On the other hand, prior researches regarding to the theory of Homophily-Heterophily and its impact on purchase intention are executed following a quantitative approach. Besides, these studies are insufficient when consider Instagram as a context of study.

This paper aim to fulfil the identified gap with the purpose of exploring consumers’ attitudes towards Instagram fashion influencers; focusing on the theories of Identification and Homophily-Heterophily and their effect on the participants consumption patterns towards the fashion products their favourite influencer endorses.

3 Theory

Below an overview of the relevant theories to the research problem of this study is presented.

3.1 Homophily-Heterophily Theory

Everett Rogers, a communication theorist and sociologist, gave the definition of homophily as “the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in terms of certain attributes, such as age, sex, beliefs, education, social status, and the like” (p. 18), in the book, Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers 2003). Rogers’s (2003) suggested that communication between two individuals who share similar beliefs and mutual language requires less effort to
make the communication effective when compared to communication between two individuals who share opposite beliefs. The concept of two individuals who share opposite beliefs is the definition of heterophily (Rogers 2003). However, Rogers (2003) was also concerned that homophily can be an obstacle to the flow of innovations within a social system, because members with higher status usually get exposed to new ideas first, if the degree of homophily within the social system is high, that innovation does not trickle down to members with lower status, the idea spread horizontally instead of vertically. The solution when high degree of homophily acts as a barrier for innovation flow within a system is to implement different sets of opinion leaders throughout different levels of the social stratification. On the other hand, if the social system dominated by extreme level heterophily, the solution is to focus on a few opinion leaders with high social status. Noteworthy, Rogers (2003) specified six characteristics of an opinion leader that will be sought after by a follower, when a certain degree of heterophily occurs within the interpersonal communication and diffusion networks. Those generalizable competencies are (1) higher socioeconomic status (2) higher education level (3) greater mass media exposure (4) higher cosmopolitan level (5) greater change agent contact and (6) higher innovativeness level. Homophily can be distinguished into two types, as suggested by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, a psychologist and sociologist, in the article Friendship as a Social Process: A Substantive and Methodological Analysis, in 1954 (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). Status homophily includes ascribed sociodemographic characteristics such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, and acquired sociodemographic characteristics: education, religion, occupation or behaviours. Value homophily includes psychological characteristics such as intelligence, attitudes, and aspirations that influence on individual internal state which can shape an individual orientation toward future behavior (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001).

3.2 Identification

The theory of identification was first introduced in the book, A Rhetoric of Motives, in 1950, by the literacy theorist and philosopher, Kenneth Burke. The theory was first concern with the persuasion of a rhetorician toward their audiences, as Burke (1969) suggested in his book, in order for rhetorician to be able to effectively change an audience’s opinion, the identification must be genuine. Burke (1969) stated that "you persuade a man insofar as you talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (p.55). Herbert Kelman, the professor of social ethics, at Harvard University (1961) defined identification as an individual’s adoption of behavior that derived from another person or a group. Kelman (1961) informed that an Individual may attempt to partly or totally imitate all behaviours and characteristics that the influencing agent possessed but he/she lacks. The behavior that an individual incline to adopt is relate to the formation of individual’s self—image and carry a satisfying self-defining relationship to the person or a group (Kelman 1961). Stephen Littlejohn, the program director of department of Communication and Journalism at the University of Utah (1996) categorized identification that exists among human, in his book, Theories of Human Communication, into four types as following: (1) material identification refers to similarity in possession of goods, for example having similar car or tastes in clothes. (2) idealistic identification results from ideas, attitudes or feelings, for example having similar point of view in political. (3) formal identification refers to an arrangement, organization or event which both parties participate, for example working in the same company. (4) identification through mystification refers to when an individual in lower social strata identified his/herself with a person who has higher social strata or positioned in higher hierarchy.
However, another type of identification that is relevant to the purpose of this study, the identification between Instagram users and their favourite fashion influencers, is interpersonal identification. Ahearne et al. (2013) defined interpersonal identification as the extent to which an individual’s beliefs about another person become self-referential or self-defining. Ahearne et al. (2013) developed the definition of interpersonal identification from Kark et al.’s (2003) definition of personal identification. Kark et al. (2003) on the other hand, gave the definition of personal identification based on his alteration of Michael Pratt’s (1998) definition of organizational identification. Michael Pratt, the Director in Organization Studies, Boston College. (1998) stated in his article from the book, Identity in Organizations: Building Theory through Conversations, that “The organizational identification occurs when an individual’s beliefs about his or her organization become self-referential or self-defining” (p. 172). Furthermore, Pratt (1998) suggested two ways that an individual behave as the acts of self-referential or self-defining, or other word, the acts of identification, which is also been cited and adopted by Kark et al. (2003). The two acts of becoming identified involves: (1) evoking one’ self-concept in the recognition that they share similar values with the leader (interpersonal level) or organization (organizational level). (2) Giving rise to one’s desire to change their self-concept so that their values and beliefs become more similar to those of the leader (interpersonal level) or organization (organizational level) (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003).

4 Methodology

In this section a detailed description of the methodology used in this investigation is given. By following these methods, the aim of this thesis has been accomplished, as well as, the research questions answered.

4.1 Research approach

An exploratory design is used as a guideline for this research. This approach suits this investigation well with regard to its main purpose: to explore if followers’ identification with fashion influencers affect their purchase intention towards the fashion products and services the influencer endorses, as well as, to get a clearer insight of the reasons why people decide to engage with certain fashion influencers in Instagram. The exploratory approach is then suitable since this topic has not been previously studied in deep. Moreover, exploratory research design can generate suggestions and questions for future research (Cooper 2016). Furthermore, a qualitative method with an abductive approach has been adopted for this study.

Conventionally, qualitative research strategy is attached to an inductive approach which is concern with the generation of theories. However, abduction reasoning is applicable for qualitative study (Lipscomb 2012). Bryman (2012) suggested that abductive approach is crucial for understanding and describing the phenomena from participant’s language, meanings, and perspectives with respect to the participants’ worldviews. Also, as described by Fischer, (2001) the abductive approach of inference includes two steps. Firstly, presenting a phenomenon to be explained or understood or other word, the result of a study. Secondly, introducing an available or newly constructed hypothesis (rule/law) or theories by means of which the case is abducted (p. 368-369). Abductive approach will allow this study to look for homophily variables and identifications between participants and their favourite influencers in the context of Instagram and generate the explanations that based on the participants’ experiences and opinions which will be supported by the theories (Fischer 2001; Bryman 2012). Since there are none similar existing studies in the context of Instagram, the researchers consider that qualitative research strategy and abductive approach are suitable and facilitative for the purpose of this investigation.
In previous studies about homophily and purchase intention, the scholars had employed mostly quantitative approaches (Gilly, 1998; Barzily and Ackerman, 2015; Simpson et al., 2000; Saleem and Ellahi, 2017; Petrovska et al., 2017; Lee and Watkins, 2016) and only a few employed qualitative approaches (e.g. Brown and Reingen, 1987), depending on the context and purpose of each study. The context of examination of homophily of this study is Instagram, a virtual platform, which has different characteristic from the contexts of previous studies. The researchers of this paper are aware that, the result of this study might emerge differently and/or is more representative with use of the quantitative research strategy that focuses on numerical data, (Bryman 2012). For example, in quantitative method and the use of self-completion questionnaire, by not facing with interviewer, the social desirability bias of participants when answering questions is more likely to be eliminated, so that participants may give a more authentic answer to a sensitive question (Bryman 2012). However, with the purpose of this paper, it can generate questions that are too open-ended, ambiguous and time consuming for a self-completion questionnaire, so there is a high risk that participants would get tired of answering questions that requires a lot of thought processing and writing that may lead them to discontinuation, which concerns the researchers on low response rates and insufficient data (Bryman 2012).

The qualitative approach can be considered as a more suitable for the purpose of this paper. With the nature that concern with words, and its epistemological position, Interpretivism, that allow researchers to gain understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman and Bell, 2015). As stated by Ochieng (2009), qualitative method is appropriate for a study with the purpose to learn from the experience of participants, the meanings they put in it, and how they interpret their own experience. Also suggested by Given (2008) that, qualitative method provides understanding of human behavior needs and desires. However, the researchers aware of the potential drawbacks of qualitative method such as generalizability of its outcomes that can not apply to wider range of population (Ochieng 2009; Bryman 2012). All in all, the qualitative research method will allow the researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding thought the interpretation of participant’s motivation, reason and attitudes behinds their engagement with Instagram influencers, their purchase intention, and actual purchase behavior (Kaae and Traulsen 2015; Rosenthal 2016). So that qualitative approach can be considered as a more effective method for answering the research questions of this paper.

4.2 Research method

As a mean to collect the data for this study a series of in-depth interviews have been executed. In-depth interviewing is a type of interview used to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s point of view or situation. This type of interview involves asking informants open-ended questions and probing wherever necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researcher (Rita and Berry, 1999). Furthermore, the interviews were semi-structured. Edwards and Holland (2013), distinguished British sociologists and social researchers, indicated that in a typical semi-structured interview the researcher has a list of questions or series of topics they want to cover in the interview, an interview guide, but there is flexibility in how and when the questions are put and how the interviewee can respond.

Getting a broad insight into the followers’ way of thinking is essential for discovering their motivations for engaging with fashion influencers in Instagram, as well as, determining if
identification affects consumers’ purchase intention towards the fashion products and services
the influencer endorses; which is actually the aim of this investigation. This kind of personal
data would have been difficult to obtain by carrying out a quantitative research, or through
other kind of qualitative methods, for instance, focus groups or observation. Moreover,
according to Bryman and Bell (2015) qualitative interviewing has the following advantages: it
is better to get a reconstruction of events, which is good to us in order to figure out e.g. the
reasons why a person started following a certain influencer, or why they bought (or not) some
of the products the influencer promoted; besides, it is less intrusive in people’s lives than
observation, it grants access to a wider variety of people and situations, and can be better
directed to the thesis focus and its associated research questions. Hence, this research method
seems the most appropriate in contemplation of achieving our research goal and provide the
research questions with a suitable answer.

On the other hand, the interviews were informal conversational. This type of interview
resembles a chat, during which the informants may sometimes forget that they are being
interviewed. Most of the questions asked will flow from the immediate context (Rita and
Berry, 1999). The reason why this approach was chosen was to make the interviewee feel
more comfortable with the situation, and then make this person more open to the interviewer.
With this purpose in mind all the interviews have been conducted in a calm and neutral place,
such as a cafeteria, where both the interviewer and the interviewee felt relaxed. Due to the
possibility of bringing out sensitive information the interviews were separately conducted by
two researchers (one male and one female).

4.2.1 Interview Procedure
The interviews began always by the interviewer giving a brief presentation about him or
herself, along with an introduction of the thesis topic and purpose. Thereafter, the respondent
was informed about the anonymity of his or her answers, as well as, how the interview would
be analysed. Additionally, all the participants were asked for their consent to record and
transcribe the interview. Subsequently, the interviewees answered questions with regard to
their background and personality, Instagram usage and relationship with fashion influencers,
and their purchase intention in Instagram. On the ground that both interviewers and
respondents did not have the same mother tongue, the interviews were held in English,
language that all the persons involved spoke fluently. The average interview duration was
around 40 minutes. The interview guide is available in the annexe.

4.2.2 Sampling
Having into account the qualitative nature of this study, as well as, its purpose, the most
suitable sampling method is a purposive sampling. According to Bryman and Bell (2015)
purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling which main goal is to sample
participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the aim of the paper. This
sampling method allow for a great deal of variety in the resulting sampling, hence the sample
members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research
question (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This approach is beneficial for this investigation since its
main goal is related to identification with fashion influencers in Instagram, a wide variety of
people, which share a common interest for fashion, Instagram, and influencers is needed to
see if their physical or psychical characteristics are analogous to those of their favourite
influencers. The emphasis of selecting participants who are into the fashion industry is
instigated by the assumption of this people are more likely than ordinary persons to follow
fashion influencers in Instagram, as well, as being more critical with the content the
influencers publish due to their deep knowledge about the fashion industry from both, a professional and academic perspectives. Besides, it is relevant for this study that the respondents are active users of Instagram because, then, they probably understand how this social network works in a better way.

In this research, eight (five female and three male) participants have been selected to answer the in-depth interview. As mentioned above, the common factor between this people is a great passion for fashion, as well as, that they all are active users of Instagram (e.g. share their outfits by uploading pictures frequently, follow fashion influencers, and interact with them and other users). Likewise, the sample members live in the Swedish West-Coast area, although only three of the participants are born in Sweden. The rest are immigrants from different European countries (France, Finland, Germany, and Spain), with the exception of Peter, who comes from El Salvador. Anyhow, these persons have been living in Sweden a minimum of six months. In addition, all the interviewees are on their twenties (aged 21 - 29). The closeness between the respondents ages is motivated by the idea that Instagram fashion influencers are, in their majority, young people on their twenties or early thirties; hence, interviewees could find in this fact a link between themselves and their favourite fashion influencers.

Apart from that, the sample is considered to be very diverse in terms of background, occupation, purchase power, or educational level. From the male participants, two of them are Swedish, while the other comes from South America. The two swedes have higher education. On the other hand, two of these men are heterosexual, while one of them is homosexual. From the females, only one is Swedish. Four of them are studying a fashion related education at the University of Borås, while the other does not have a higher education. All the females are also heterosexual. The variety of personal features that the interviewees present is necessary for this investigation in order to determine if these homophily variables influence followers to feel identified with Instagram fashion influencers, and eventually determine which characteristics affect the followers’ purchase intention.
Table 1 presents a short summary of each of the informants under a pseudonym.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Favourite fashion influencer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Salesperson at fast-fashion retailer</td>
<td>Chiara Ferragni @chiaraferragni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Fashion design student</td>
<td>Ivania Carpio @love_aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Fashion Management and Marketing student</td>
<td>Anine Bing @anninebing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pernille Teisbaek @pernilletetsybaek</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Babba C. Riviera @babba.c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>Fashion Management and Marketing student</td>
<td>Freja Wewer @frejawewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elin Kling @elinkling</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marlen Digranes Davidson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@marlendigranes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Fashion Management and Marketing student</td>
<td>Shiona Turini @shionat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eva Chen @evachen212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Salvadoran</td>
<td>Visual merchandiser on a fast-fashion retailer</td>
<td>Mariano Di Vaio @marianodivaio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Textile Product Development and Entrepreneurship student</td>
<td>Paul Cedric Erwan @hypeflaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Fashion design student</td>
<td>Paolo Roldan @juanpaoloroldan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Data analysis

Qualitative researchers are frequently interested not just in what people say but also in the way that they say it. If this aspect is to be fully woven into an analysis, it is necessary for a complete account of the series of exchanges in an interview to be available. The interviewer is also supposed to be highly alert to what is being said, then it is best if he or she is not distracted by having to concentrate on getting down notes on what is said (Bryman and Bell, 2015). For these reasons, the interviews have been recorded using a mobile app called “Philip voice recorder”, which has the advantage of saving the recordings and sending them to other devices by email.

Subsequently, the interview recordings have been transcribed by the own interviewers themselves. The process of transcription is an important analytical tool, providing the researcher with an understanding of, and insight into, the participants’ conduct. It provides the researcher with a way of noticing, even discovering particular events, and helps focus analytical attention on their socio-interactional organization. Furthermore, once made, transcripts provide the researcher with quick access to a wide range of interactional episodes that can be inspected for comparative purposes. Transcription, therefore, allow the analyst to build an accessible data archive (ten Have, 2007).

Thereafter the data has been read; according to Doctor Ian Dey (1993), a social policy professor, reading the data is a process of interpreting what the data may mean. Edmund Burke said, ‘to read without reflecting is like eating without digesting’ (quoted in Peter 1982). Reading and annotating are process which ‘aid’ the digestion of our data (Dey, 1993). In our case, the reading and annotating procedure has been inspired by the technique followed by Thompson and Haytko (1997), Marketing scholars at University of Wisconsin - Madison, on their article Speaking of Fashion: Consumers’ Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings. Therefore, the analysis of the interview transcripts involved an interactive, part-to-whole reading strategy by which researcher develop a holistic understanding of each interview transcript, while also noting similarities across the transcripts that have been analysed. In this process earlier readings of a text inform later readings, and, reciprocally, later readings allow the researcher to recognize and explore patterns not noted in the initial analysis (Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

The thematic analysis has been adopted as an analysis tool that facilitates the researchers to identify themes for this paper. For some researchers, a theme has the same meaning as a code, whereas others conceive it as a built up of groups of codes (Bryman 2012). Bryman (2012) described a theme as a built up of codes or a category that were identified through the analysis of data. The main benefit of choosing thematic analysis is that, it provides the researchers with theoretical understanding of data that relate to our research focus, and facilitative for answering the research questions (Bryman 2012). As explained above, the researchers executed a thoroughly reading and rereading of each interview transcription before the coding process. The themes and subthemes emerged within this study is mainly theory driven (value homophily, purchase intention, identification, etc…), and partly data driven (Braun and Clarke 2006). The researchers identified them according to the theoretical framework of the study and the theoretical commitment, however, the researchers also identified themes in an inductive approach, allowed them to arise without trying to fit them into the theoretical framework (Braun and Clarke 2006).
4.4 Ethical aspects and considerations

When conducting an academic research, it is vital for the researchers, as well as, the participants, and other persons or institutions related to the project (University, thesis coordinator, and tutor) to pay attention to the ethical aspects of the study. Bryman and Bell (2015) divided the ethical principles into four main areas: whether there is harm to participants; whether there is a lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy; and whether deception is involved.

Harms to participants makes reference not only to the physical harm (which due to the purpose and characteristics of this investigation is not taken into consideration); but also, harm to self-esteem; stress; harm to career prospects or future employment; and ‘inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts’ (Bryman and Bell, 2015). From this list only, harm to self-esteem and stress have been contemplated. Last year, the British Royal Society for Public Health performed a survey among 1500 young people (aged 14 - 24) which declared Instagram as the worst social media network for young people’s mental health. Some of the questions asked during the in-depth interviews required the respondent to compare him/herself to a fashion influencer. These comparisons could make the participants feel in a lower position than the influencer and could then have a repercussion on their self-esteem, and even make the participants stressed about achieving the same physical characteristics or material possessions as the influencer. In order to avoid situations of this kind, the researchers have made sure that all the interviewees are self-confident and do not have suffered depression or any mental sickness in the past.

The principle of informed consent means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to participate in a study (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In the case of this research, each of the participants was informed about the fact that the interview would be recorded, and subsequently transcribed and published in an annexe. Furthermore, they perfectly knew that a brief description of themselves and their favourite fashion influencer would be also public. The interview analysis procedure was also explained to the interviewees. Finally, all of them was ensured anonymity by means of a pseudonym.

Linked to the principle of informed consent is the notion of privacy, because, to the degree that informed consent is given on the basis of a detailed understanding of what the research participant’s involvement is likely to entail, he or she in a sense acknowledges that the right to privacy has been surrendered for that limited domain. Of course, the research participants do not entirely abrogate the right to privacy by providing informed consent (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Under the course of the interviews the participants could freely avoid answering questions that they considered sensitive, without the interviewers insisted them to give an answer.

Bryman and Bell (2015) describe deception as something that occurs when researchers represent their research as something other than what it is. However, this ethical principle was also taken into account, and a detailed description of the aim, along with the research questions; and a brief introduction to the theories used for this paper, was given to each of the interviewees.
4.5 Quality criteria

Traditionally, validity and reliability are criterion that use for assessing the procedure and results of social research (Bryman 2012). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed trustworthiness, which consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, as an alternative term that could be employed for assessing the quality of qualitative research (Morrow et al 2005; Bryman 2012).

Internal validity, as described by Bryman (2012), is the concern of whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables appears to be valid. In qualitative research, internal validity parallels with the term credibility, which can be refer to the believability of research findings (Bryman 2012). This paper use triangulation technique (Patton 2002; Bryman 2012) to establish the credibility of findings and to ensure that the research is carried out according to the canons of good practice. Triangulation can be explained as the usage of more than one method, source of data, investigator or theoretical perspectives in the study of social phenomena (Bryman 2012; Yeasmin and Rahman 2012).

In this paper, the interview sessions were carried out in the places that provide the comfort ability and naturalness for participants, for instance, a meeting room, cafe or house. Moreover, the questions for the interview are carefully designed to reduce confusion and complication according the topic as much as possible. Furthermore, the usages of interview questions were adapted according to each participant’s knowledge and characteristic in order to facilitate the efficiency of the interview session, without changing its meaning. Additionally, in order to verify the acceptability of this paper, the selection of participants with different characteristic will provide multiple accounts, ideas, and attitudes of humans that reflect different aspect of social reality, in this case different experiences, feelings and opinions towards influencers. The theory of triangulation will be used to analyse the data derived from the interviews, the data will be interpreted and analysed from multiple theoretical perspectives such as theory of identification and theory of homophily and heterophily.

External validity refers to the concern of whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context (Bryman 2012). In qualitative research, external validity parallels with the term transferability. The nature of intensive investigation of a small group of individuals of qualitative research, generate findings that are not generalizable to the wider population (De Vaus 2001), but intended to be generalizable in the respect of theory (Yin 2014). This paper collected data through in-depth interview of individuals who share different background, interests, characteristics and values that live in an area of Gothenburg (Sweden), so that the findings may not be applicable to the vast majority of population nor individual who has different attributes, cultures or upbringing. However, if selectively consider, the results of this study might be able to generalize to group or individual in some aspect of identification and homophily/ heterophily similarity. In order to assure the transferability of the findings of this paper, the technique called thick description will be used. The thick description concerns the rich description of findings from the participant’s worldview and its analytical interpretation of researcher (Cho and Trent 2006). This paper will descriptively present the findings with analytical generalization (Yin 2014), for readers to use as database for their own judgment towards the results and generalizability toward the society or individuals.

Reliability can be described as the concerns of weather the finding of a study are repeatable under similar method, accurate representation of the total population or applicable in other times (Morrow et al 2005; Bryman 2012).
In qualitative research reliability parallel to dependability (Bryman 2012). However, in qualitative research, if considered reliability as a criterion, the study would be estimated as insufficient (Stenbacka, 2001). In order to assure dependability of this paper, the auditing approach will be used (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The whole process of execution of this research will be explained and recorded, the information regarding to problem formulation of the topic of interest, selection of research participants, interview transcripts, data gathering, and analysis will be visible and accessible and to auditors such advisor and peers (Lincoln and guba 1985; Morrow et al., 2005). Since this research carried out by two researchers, the interviews’ records and transcriptions will be primarily audited by each other.

Confirmability refers to the degree that investigator allow his or her personal values to intrude in the conduct of the research (Bryman, 2012). As suggested by Gasson (2004) that “findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher”. The investigators of this paper have not expressed his/her personal point of view that might have led the interviewee’s perspective into a certain way of answering nor interrupted their answer formulating during the interview sessions. Moreover, the theory triangulation reduces the theoretical inclinations that may derive from the researchers during the data analysis and interpretation. Lastly, to ensure the confirmability of this study, the researchers employed the auditing approach in order to confirm the integrity and adequacy of the results (Morrow et al 2005).

5 Analysis and Results

This section includes both the findings of the thematic analysis, and the results of this investigation. The themes extracted and categorized from the empirical material are analysed according to the theories and prior researches illustrated in the literature review.

5.1 Instagram as a source of fashion inspiration

Although their different backgrounds, all the interview participants agree on their use of Instagram in their search for fashion inspiration. Hence, the importance of this theme emerges from exploring if the interviewees’ favourite influencers (those to whom they feel most identified with) are their main source of style inspiration, and ultimately comprehending if this inspiration triggers the purchase intention of the participants.

Predominantly, all the participants use this social platform as a source of inspiration, which refers essentially to style inspiration taken from the influencers’ posts. This attitude could clearly be appreciated in the interview transcriptions, for instance, Peter says the main purpose (about using Instagram) is to get inspiration from other persons that are posting something about fashion. Moreover, Sara, Max, and Jenny agree that they use Instagram to get ideas for outfits. The term ‘outfit’ becomes relevant in the sense that interviewees do not use Instagram with the purpose of finding specific fashionable garments or accessories, instead they look at the combination of clothes as a whole, which is what finally inspire them. For instance, Lisa mentions:

I get happy, inspired, I think it’s great to see them styling on different outfits... what they have for dinner, you know [...] I never bought exactly what they are wearing. No, I haven’t actually, so it is more like a gather inspiration and see like.

This quote is in agreement with Cole (2017) who states that Instagram is doing part of the job that fashion magazines used to do in the sense that nowadays when people want to know what the latest trends are they scroll up and down their feeds on Instagram.
In like manner, this social platform has created an authentic transparent way to spread the fashion brands’ messages without spam through influencer Marketing (Cole, 2017).

In addition, most of the participants admit that the majority of influencers display products that are out of their economic reach, nevertheless, they use these outfits as a source of inspiration for purchasing more affordable products in cheaper fashion retailers, such as Zara or H&M, similar to the expensive ones the influencers portray. For example, Jenny expresses:

Not exactly, because like I said I don’t have money for it, but if you go like, up a little bit, there is light grey sweater, I have, not exact the same but you can get the same style [...] And I have long skirt and, so I could say I have those same, not exactly the same but similar.

The inspiration serves for creating fashionable styles on a budget. On the other hand, some of the interviewees believe that is part of the influencers’ job to inspire others. For example, Sara’s opinion can be display as follows:

They try to inspire people and that’s probably their main goal. And that’s also my relationship with the influencer, they inspire me, and I don’t feel anything like personal with them. It’s just like really inspiration.

The fact that Instagram users search for fashion inspiration through the influencers’ posts could be easily related to Amelina and Zhu (2016) who affirm that merchandise attractiveness was affected by the endorser’s expertise and trustworthiness; thusly, followers perceive the clothes the influencer displays as more appealing due to the trust and expertise attributed to the influencer.

When asked if they feel like they are copying the influencer style when wearing similar outfits, all the respondents state that they do not feel like imitators and highlight that they only get inspired by their favourite fashion influencers. Only one person, Erik, recognized to find inspiration in other cultures (the Afro-American and black cultures), but always being careful of not offending anyone with his choices. As Erik states:

I made sure like I sometimes wear it like with white suit trousers and a loose shirt, so I try to wear it in a similar way but not identical, instead of wearing like a loose shirt, I would try a slim fit shirt with slim trousers in the same colour… it’s not like copying straight, it’s being inspired but not copy… [...] Right now I am really into rap music and so, I get a lot of inspiration from Afro-American and black culture.

Two of the male participants recognize that, after seeing the pictures of their favourite influencers, they felt motivated to workout, or travel more. As Peter mentions these people are doing something good, I feel I can do the same. Two of the participants, Erik and Sara, also use their own Instagram profiles with the aim of inspiring and motivate other Instagram users.

As can be understood from the above, inspiration is apparently mostly a fashion related term within the context of Instagram. When asking the participants their opinions about the physical appearance and attractiveness of their favourite fashion influencers, everyone find them as good-looking. However, this is not the main reason why they follow them.
Sara, who comments that appearance is not something she gives importance to, follows a plus-size influencer because her profile is filled with high-quality content. The rest of the interviewees agree with Sara. For example, Lisa and Max, confess that they follow some models because they are beautiful, and it is pleasant to look at their pictures. However, these models are not among their favourite influencers. Lisa and Max know little about their background and did not engage with them.

Instagram is allegedly a platform for brand managers to create brand awareness. Laura, Jenny, and Lisa comment that when they see a beautiful garment on an influencer’s picture, they always look at the fashion brand which is tagged on the post. Thereafter, they visit the brand’s profile and explore their product range; they also become followers of the brand. Laura describes this behaviour in the following quote:

> When you see them in a picture it’s like ‘oh she’s wearing a cute bracelet’ or something I would wear, and then you tap on the picture and the brand is tagged, and you go to the account, and then you start following them, and then you want to buy the things…

In like manner, Woods (2016) agrees that influencers constitute a great channel for promoting brands and products due to the combination of a large following, along with a trusting relationship with their followers. Likewise, Erik says that one of the reasons he follows Paul Cedric Erwan is because this influencer posts a lot of affordable content from brands such as H&M or Weekday. Laura, on the contrary, explains that she prefers to follow brands’ profiles in Instagram, instead for directly following influencers. The reason why is because brands usually post all their collaborations with different influencers, thusly the followers can get different combinations and styles from the brand’s products. Along these lines, it is also appropriate to bring into the discussion the fact that the plurality of the interview participants prefer not to engage with fashion influencers by virtue of commenting the influencer posts, for instance, Sara mentions I don’t really leave comments to be honest. I give likes of course, but I really never comment on anything.

In essence, none of the participants have mentioned identification as one of the motivations behind fashion style inspiration found via Instagram. The fact that Instagram users search for outfits instead of specific garments could be understood as a lack of interest for purchasing a fashion garment through the platform. Furthermore, they are ostensibly unaware of the new Instagram shopping feature. This result is inconsistent with Xiang et al. (2016) who affirm that users of image-sharing social commerce platforms are prone to online impulsive buying since they consider the information obtained through this type of networks highly valuable. On the other hand, the apparent lack of engagement by Instagram users is contradictory to Che, Cheung and Thadani (2017) who asserted that consumers usually show interest in the products they like by leaving messages on the posts.

### 5.2 Style Identification and Style Aspiration

Style identification and aspiration is the theme that emerged from the majority of the interviews. Six participants out of eight expressed an opinion regarding style similarity and idealization. Participants’ points of views show that they, to a different degree, identified themselves with their favourite influencers through a similar preference on specific style of fashion and/or products. And at the same time, it shows the participants’ tendency to improve their sense style in order to become closer to their favourite influencers’ style.
The information from the interviews of Martha and Jenny reveals that both of the participants perceived themselves as having the same fashion style as their favourite influencer. Moreover, the influencer portrayed an image of Martha’s and Jenny’s idealistic style; the participants mentioned that they want to be like their favourite influencers. For example, Martha’s statements can be display as follow:

I think my personal fashion style is quite diverse, […] I really want to be like colourful and fun, so it depends a bit on my mood. I would definitely descript my style more outgoing, I love involving like prints, patterns, I love things clash a bit, I love coordinating maybe colours where people would necessary think of would go together.”, “[…)and then I think it always good to always keep it more sport, so I’m wearing sneakers with it.

[…] Shionat is little more alive a little more fun with a little more sporty touch, which I really really like, which is more like, little more alive to be honest.

Well I think, she likes really bright colours and fun combinations, and I would at least have aspired to be like that, lots of looks that I feel like it is out of the box, she put lots of effort into this, I think it’s really fun, and she love wearing crop top, so I like to do that too.

Jenny, on the other hand, expresses:

Yes, like now I have similar stuff that she has, but maybe I’m not brave enough to do all the things that she does, […] but that is my target, that what I want to look like.

Like almost everything, I think those are the only one that I don’t like, I have the funny pack, I have like everything, so, yeah, I think that’s the only one, and maybe the hat, fisherman's hat, that’ not might be me […] And I have long skirt and, so I could say I have those same, not exactly the same but similar.

From the full interviews of Martha and Jenny, the interrelation between the explanations of their own personal fashion styles, and the descriptions of what they and their favourite influencers have in common regarding their styles and specific products they own, indicated that Martha and Jenny identified with and inspired by their favourite influencer’s sense of style. According to the theory of identification, the quotes of Martha and Jenny are in line with both ways of the acts of identification that were defined by Pratt (1998) and Kark et al. (2003). First, the participants’ favourite influencers evoking their self-concept in the recognition that they share similar style and products with the influencer (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003) Second, the participants favourite influencers influence on their desire to change their self-concept so that their values and beliefs, or in this case, sense of style, become more similar to the influencer (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003).

The interviews of Lisa and Erik shows that the participants identified with their favourite influencer through the silhouettes of garment that they perceived they have in common with the influencers. For example, Lisa mentions:

Maybe Anine Bing, but you know it’s not very like. Now this is very similar, I kind of like the silhouette with the heels and the dress, like that, it still kind of simple.
While Erik states:

Is mostly because we are wearing the same silhouettes, white trousers. I like him because of the way he dresses. […] It really his sense of style what captivates me.

The information received from the interview with Laura shows that participant partly identified with her favourite influencer’s sense of style. The participant possessed a lot black and grey garments, but she is not considered her personal style as minimalistic. However, the participant perceived and confirmed that her favourite influencer has a minimalistic style in a higher degree than herself. Laura's expression can be show as follow:

Yes, I think so. But she is way more minimalistic, I think that’s why because I can relate to that.

In the case of Max, the information that is given in the interview shows that the participant feels connected to and identified with his favourite influencer through the ambience of the style that the influencer projects. The participant does not identify with most of the products that his favourite influencer portrayed, instead the participants identified with accessories and specific outfits. Max expressions can be display as follow:

And I think he is really like, he is really cool, and tough... Yeah, he’s kind of like, rough edge and really like stylish in a way. Both polish and rough in a way, so yeah I would say him.

[…] That’s being said, dressing myself, I just like... I just, try to look like, a bit tougher than I am. So, I think I try to build like a really strong, and a bit like, ‘don’t talk to me’ persona when people see me [...].

I wouldn’t say I get inspired by the actual products, I would say the actual items are just a part of an outfit and style. I’m more interested in looks and the feel of it and not the actual garments.

The quotes of Lisa, Erik and Laura are also in line with the first way of self-referential acts, where the participants’ favourite influencers evoking their self-concept in the recognition that they share similar style with the influencer (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003), while the quotes of Max represent the second way of self-referential acts, the participant’s favourite influencer has an influence on his sense of style (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003). All participants identified with their favourite influencer at an interpersonal level (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003). According to LittleJohn’s (1996) four types of identification, participants identified with their favourite influencers through two types of identification; material identification, by possessing similar fashion products, and idealistic identification, by identifying that they share the similar ideas in terms of sense of style.

5.3 Lifestyle aspiration

The interviews of three of the participants, Jenny, Lisa and Martha exhibited that the participants identified with and inspired by the influencer’s lifestyle, background and beliefs. At the same time the participant counts on their favourite influencers as their life’s goal. While the interviews of Max, Peter, and Laura somewhat showed a small extent of the identification and aspirations between the participants and the influencer.
The data derived from the interview with Jenny shows that, the participant perceived herself as partly having the same lifestyle to her favourite influencer, and she aspired to have the same lifestyle in the future. The participant expressed that she loves Danish style and shows appreciation on how positive it is to see her favourite influencer portraying the way of living in Copenhagen. The participant mentioned that she could see herself living in a similar habitat. For instance, Jenny’s points of view can be show as follows:

[…] she has the style, she has the lifestyle. […] Want to have as well or partly I already think I have”.

Yeah, because I could see myself living like she is, […] so then it feels like, my life basically.

[…] I look up to her, that’s like where I want to be, […] but that’s is the life I hope I have in 10 years, so I think that’s what it is. […] she like, show me what I hopefully will have someday. […] because I want to have it all as well, like she has.

The information that Martha gave in the interview indicates that the participant related to her favourite influencers through her background and future goal in life. Moreover, the information indicates that the participant count on both of her favourite influencers as a lifestyle aspiration. The participant expressed that her childhood allowed her to grow up in an internationally, racially, and culturally diverse environment, which is in line with the participant’s attitude about the importance of integrating and supporting diversity in the fashion industry. The participant admires one of her favourite influencer, Shionat, because of the diversity that the influencer represents. As Martha mentions:

I think like I said through this I had like a great opportunity to see like a lot of diversity in the world, […] so through this I think I was able to like, grow quite diverse and saw a lot of things and like, kind of matured a lot.

I really like that she brings some diversity into the fashion game, I think it’s really important that girls like her or just, from different background are more represented, I think that it often can be pretty much like Prada show where everybody are skinny white girls, I think it’s important that some diversity is brought in.

The participant informed that both of her parents are doctors and they expected her to attend medical school, instead of studying fashion related subjects. The participant mentioned that Eva Chen, one of her favourite influencers, left medical school for working with a fashion magazine. However, it could be interpreted that the participant feels identified with Eva Chen through the similar backstory related to attending medical school. Furthermore, the participant admires the long-term relationship that Eva Chen represents, the participants thinks that it is inspirational. The participant stated that the cool mom style that Eva Chen portrays is the style that she sees herself transform into in the future. It could be interpreted that Eva Chen’s lifestyle is in line with the participant’s future plan of having family and becoming mother so that the participant feels relatable to her favourite influencer. Martha’s statements can be display as follow:
Both of my parents are doctor, and they still waiting for me to turn around.

[...] Also, she quit medical school to work in fashion, she was doing some medical school, and then Harper bazaar offered her, and internship and she did that, and ever since she never look back, so.

[...]so, I think what she does really great is, have to be that cool mom style, which is something that I would see myself doing in a few years, you know, that’s how I relate to her, [...] and I would like to have a family at some point.

The interview with Lisa indicates that the participant might be aspired by and identified with her favourite influencers in terms of lifestyle. The participant’s background shows a slight connection about counting on the influencers as lifestyle aspiration. The participant expressed that she used to live in New York and is interested in traveling and culture. The participants mentioned that all three of her favourite influencers have one common trait which is not living in Sweden. The participants inform that she is inspired by the influencers’ lifestyle and international spirit which could be interpreted that the influencers portray the lifestyle and mindset that the participant strives to have in the future. As Lisa expresses:

And I also like that they are not living in Sweden that they are international in that sense, like Baba she is living in New York, Anina she is living in L.A. and Pernilla, she is living in Copenhagen; but they are all traveling so it feels like they are gaining international spirit, and that I mean that is one of the dreams that I have, maybe that’s why I’m so inspired by them and that’s why I admire them so much because they are doing what I hope I will do someday.

The quotes of Jenny, Martha and Lisa are in line with the results from previous studies of Fraser and Brown (2002) and Peckham (2006). As provided in the theoretical framework, the results from the studies show that when participants strongly identified with their role model, they tend to adopt a positive value and behavior into their way of living, and at the same time express a desire to achieve the similar way of living (Fraser and Brown 2002; Peckham 2006).

Max’s favourite influencer inspired him to workout. Max’s quote is also in line with the study of Fraser and Brown (2002) since the participant exhibited that he wants to adopt the positive behavior, which is working out, from his favourite influencers. Max’s expression can be shown as follow:

Max: “Oh yeah, like I really need to, I felt like damn I would like to be that. [...] He does inspire me to work out.”

Peter might feel related to his favourite influencer due to his marital status. When asked Peter if he feel related because of marital status, Peter answered as follow:

Yes maybe.

In the case of Laura, the participant identified with and related to her favourite influencer through her educational background and experience of living in Amsterdam. The participants partly identified with the lifestyle that her influencer represents. Laura tells:
I think I also started to follow her because she was doing a lot of DIY as well on her outfits, and the accessories she was wearing, she was making them herself. I think she also studied design, and then she became more like a blogger, she was cool. I think she is also from Amsterdam, so I can relate to her even more because I used to live there.

When theoretically connect the following themes, style identification and style aspiration, as well as, lifestyle aspiration to the theory of homophily and types of the homophily, these themes are in line with the value homophily. Value homophily includes the similarity in terms of intelligence, attitudes, abilities, beliefs and aspirations. It can be interpreted that the participants have the belief that they have similar attitude on fashion or sense of style to their favourite influencer. Furthermore, the participants who identified themselves with the influencers have a similar way of living, so that they idealize the lifestyle of their favourite influencer as an aspiration (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001).

5.4 Career aspiration

Career aspiration is another theme that emerged from the interview transcriptions of Lisa Martha and Jenny. The participants engaged with their favourite influencers through career path and aspired by the influencers’ career achievements. From the information that Lisa provided in the interview, it can be understood the participant is ambitious about her future career as she explained that it is important for her. The participant expressions and attitude towards the influencers who she admires is connected to her goal in life. The participants mentioned three influencers as her favourite. The influencers that the participant mentioned share one common trait which is being an entrepreneur. The participant mentioned that she admires an influencer who has another career apart from being an influencer. The participant aspired by the influencers’ career. For example, Lisa expressions can be display as follows:

[…] I want to be ambitious and I'm striving to have a career which is very important for me, so that is something very inspiring, that to have a career.”

[…]So this one girl called Anine Bing, I really like her because she is having her own brand, so she is having a career that is not based on you know just showing off clothes from different brands, […] And then there is another girl, this is another girl, she called Babba, […] but I really enjoy what she is doing and her career, she is working on her own agency that she started herself in New York. […] This is also my favourite, she is also Danish, her name is Pernilla and she also started her own agency and also working with different brands. So, it’s a lot about herself but also her family. I really like to follow mainly women who are having like strong career and doing their things and not only showcasing a lot of brands.

The information from interview with Jenny indicates that the participant is ambitious about her future career and may also engage with her influencers through this aspect. The participant expressed that she aims to become a leader in her future career and two of the influencers that she follows represent an image of women who is working in the business field. As Jenny stated:

[…] I like her as a woman, a business woman and that’s why I follow her, […] but I follow her more as a woman working in business and fashion. […] This is like my newest found from Instagram, she a co-founder of like agency in Oslo, so that’s why I found her.
The information derived from the conversation with Martha indicates that the participant’s engagement to her favourite influencer is relate to the participant’s work experience and future career goal. It could be interpreted that the participant is identified with the influencers through her work experience within a fashion magazine and aspired by the influencers’ successful career within the fashion industry. Both of Martha’s favourite influencers share the same career path to the participant, the influencers had worked within fashion publications which is in the similar area to the participant’s work experience. Moreover, the participant expresses that she attempted to find information on how to apply for a job at the company where both of the influencers are recently situated. Martha expression can be shown as follows:

I googled, how do you work in fashion team at Instagram, they doesn’t even say anywhere, I don’t even know to how to get in, I feel like it’s more like an organic thing, you have to work for a while and work hard and hope that somebody at Instagram will call you and say hey, how do you feel, but totally I’d love to, I think it’s very fun job, I think that, this is something that I could definitely see myself doing.

The quotes of Lisa, Jenny and Martha can be analysed with the definition of the identification through mystification defined by Littlejohn (1996). As stated by Littlejohn (1996) that individual in lower social strata identified his/herself with a person who has higher social strata or positioned in higher hierarchy. It can be interpreted that the participants identified with their favourite influencers through the similar area of profession, where their favourite influencers positioned in a higher level of professional strata.

5.5 Race, Ethnicity, and Appearance Identification

Race, ethnicity and appearance is the theme emerged regarding to the theoretical framework, the theory of homophily. Five of the participants identified with the influencers who share similar ethnicity to themselves. Two of the participants out of five, Jenny and Lisa, show a stronger connection to their favourite influencers than other participants in terms of ethnicity. Jenny, who is Finnish, has mentioned three persons as her favourite influencers. All of Jenny’s favourite influencers are from a Scandinavian country. Freja Wewer is Danish, Elin Kling is Swedish, and Marlen Digranes is Norwegian. Similarly, Three of Lisa’s (who is from Sweden) favourite influencers are also from Scandinavia. Anine Bing and Pernille are Danish, and Babba, who is originally from South Africa, but was raised in Sweden. Sara is French, and her favourite influencers are all Caucasian. Sara mentioned three people as her favourite influencers, Zoella who is British, Betty Autier who is French, and her most favourite influencer is Chiara Ferragni who is Italian. Laura who is Spanish, her favourite influencer, Love aesthetic, is Dutch. Peter is Salvadoran, and his favourite influencer is Mariano Di Vaio, who is Italian. For example, Sara mentions:

I have Chiara Ferragni as well, from Italy. […] And you have a French girl as well, who is called Betty Autier […].

Lisa, on the other hand mentions her favourite influencers as follow:

She is Danish and now she lives in L.A., and she is working with her brand that called Anine Bing.

Ok, let’s think of someone else... oh! this is also favourite, she is also Danish, her name is Pernille.
She is raised here in Sweden, but her parents are from South America.

These data are in line with what Rogers (2003) suggested that communication between two individuals who share similar beliefs and mutual language requires less effort to make the communication effective. It can be understood that the participant has a high degree of perceived race and ethnicity homophily with their favourite influencers (Rogers 2003).

The other three participants, Martha, Max, and Erik exhibit that they identified with their influencer regardless of race and ethnicity. Martha, who is German, has two persons as her favourite influencers, Shionat and Eva Chen. However, both of Martha’s favourite influencers have different ethnicity to Martha’s. Shionat is from Bahamas, and Eva Chen is American born Chinese. Max, who is Swedish, has Paulo Roland, who is Filipino as his favourite influencer. Erik is Swedish, and the ethnicity of his favourite influencer is black. For example, Martha says:

I know that she grown up in Bahamas, she has this like, islanders background.

Her parents, they have moved down to America, so they are immigrants, but she was born in America.

According to the theory of homophily and heterophily, Rogers (2003) suggested six characteristics of the leader who will be sought after, when the context of communication is heterophily. It can be interpreted that the participants admire their favourite influencers who are possessed a higher innovativeness level, a higher socioeconomic status, a higher cosmopolitan level, and have greater mass media, so that they look upon the fact the influencers have different race and ethnicity from themselves. Moreover, the following themes, career aspiration, appearance, race and ethnicity identification are in the category of status homophily. Status homophily can refer to similarity in terms of age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, religion, occupation or behaviours (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001).

Few of the participants identified with their favourite influencer through having a similar physical feature. The data emerged from the interviews of Jenny, Max, and Martha. Jenny identified with the influencer through having similar hair colour, while Max identified with the influencer through being bald. Martha, on the other hand, identified with the influencer through sharing similar body shape. For example, Jenny stated:

[... ] And I think we both have blonde long hair, so we can look the same.

Max, on the other hand, expressed:

Yeah, I think I saw him and I found him attractive but then I was like, oh but he’s bald and I’m bald, and I was like, ‘then I might be able to look a bit cool as well.

Martha mentioned:

For me it’s definitely much more relatable, [...] It’s one of the key for me to relate, but yeah pretty much so, like I said, like sometimes, that’s why the models are skinny because everything looks good on them, so I am like ‘it this really looking good on you, or just it looks good because you are skinny?’, so often that’s why I can’t relate.
[...] Yeah, because it feels like she does have the body that not the classic, because at the size zero, we all look the same, it felt more alive more relatable for sure.

According to the definition of the theory of identification, the scholars did not specifically mention physical appearance as one of the criteria. However, Burke (1969) included “image”, and Kelman (1961) mentioned that individual will adopt characteristic that the influencing agent possessed but he/she lacks into the formation of individual’s self–image, when defining the definition of identification. The appearance identification that emerged from the interview can be theoretically discuss as that the participants identified with the influencers through the similarity of self-image, such as hair colour, body shape, or genetic feature like being bald (Kelman 1961; Burke 1969).

On the other hand, when categorized the types of the homophily, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton mentioned “ascribed sociodemographic characteristics” which include specific physical feature and appearance that related to races and ethnicity. The appearance identification can be interpreted as the status homophily which make the communication effective (Rogers 2003).

5.6 Sexuality and sexual orientation

This theme is important to our first research question in view of the fact that sexuality is included as one of the homophily variables. In this investigation seven out of eight of the interview participants are informed themselves as heterosexual: Lisa, Martha, Jenny, Peter, Erik, Sara, and Laura. Max is the only participant who informed himself as homosexual.

Lisa, Martha, Laura, and Peter expressed that similarity in terms of sexual orientation between themselves and their favourites influencers does not affect the way they admire the influencers. For instance, Laura states:

I wouldn't mind the influencer being gay, in fact I follow other influencers that are. Fashion is about self-expression and identity, so sexuality shouldn’t be a problem; it should rather embrace all kinds of sexuality. I would like her the same. As on identifying with her… I probably would. Not on the sexual orientation, but I’m sure we would share other aspects in life: style, interest, etc…

On the other hand, Sara, who share the same point of view as the rest of the interviewees, adds that gay influencers offer something else than those who are straight. Furthermore, she highlights that in many cases followers are unaware of the sexual orientation of the influencers they follow. As Sara mentions:

Even if I’m straight I have absolutely no problem with gay influencers, on the contrary! They sometimes bring a different vision, they got talent… I mean I just see them as a person no matter who they are. I don’t really follow fashion gay influencers, or maybe I don’t know it, but I follow, and I admire the work of Mua Jake Warden and Flawless Kevin, and let’s be honest they are awesome and hilarious; and one of my favourite French youtuber (Emma Cakecup) is gay and she is gorgeous, smart, and super funny. So, no, it does bring something more and nothing less. I just love the person and the talent.
This fact makes it evident that participants do not establish a connection with their favourite influencers based on a similarity between their sexual preferences. Once more, interviewees only value the style and talent of the influencers they follow. According to the theory of homophily, sexuality and sexual orientation are ascribed characteristics that are considered as status homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). All of participants has mentioned their favourite influencers who share the same sexuality to themselves. Female participants are identified with and inspired by female influencers, while male participants are identified with and inspired by male influencers. The data are in line with what Rogers (2003) suggested as similarity in terms of sexuality can benefit the communication between two individuals. However, two participants out of eight, Jenny and Max expressed different opinions regarding sexual orientation. Max is the only participant who is homosexual, Max openly informed when asked about his sexual orientation. Max’s stated that he does not care whether if his favourite influencer has the same sexual orientation. The participants’ identification and admiration toward his favourite influencer’s sense of style, are not relate to the influencer’s sexual orientation. On the other hand, differences in terms of sexual orientation, that derive in the case of Max, are in line with the suggestion of Rogers (2003) on the characteristics of opinion leader that will be sought after when the context of communication is heterophily. Max’s case can demonstrate that sexual orientation heterophily between himself and his favourite influencer does not affect Max’s engagement and relatability towards his favourite influencer (Rogers 2003). Jenny is the only person who feels more relatable to a person who has similar sexual orientation, which shows that sexuality and sexual orientation homophily between Jenny and her favourite influencer have an effect on Jenny’s engagement and relatability towards her favourite influencer.

5.7 Followers’ purchase intention

This theme is relevant to the second research question of this paper inasmuch as it makes evident what the drivers behind followers’ purchase intention are, as well as, if identification with Instagram fashion influencers is behind the shopping decisions that are taken within this social network.

After having analysed the interview transcriptions, three different shopping behaviour patterns have arisen. Firstly, Instagram users purchase fashion items inspired by their favourite influencers (products or brands that the influencer wore or endorsed in a sponsored post), although they do not acquire those items through Instagram. Secondly, followers buy fashion products through Instagram in a casual way (not garments or accessories promoted by their preferred fashion influencer). Thirdly, followers have a desired purchase intention, which means that they would acquire the fashion products that the influencer endorses if they had enough purchase power.

Along these lines, three of the study participants admitted having purchase a product which their favourite fashion influencer advertised. For example, Erik affirmed that he purchased a H&M coat after having seen it on Paul Cedric Erwan Instagram profile. This fact is inquisitive since he explained that he only liked the coat after Paul Cedric Erwan displayed it on a picture; moreover, Erik explains that if another influencer, who is not in line with his personal taste, would have portrayed the exact same coat, he would never have considered to buy it. It becomes pertinent to highlight that the reason why he would not wear the coat is because he avoids being identified with a person he does not like. Erik states:
He wore this coat and I bought it. First time I saw it on the store I didn't like that and then I saw him wearing it and I was like ‘ok, maybe if I put on these trousers, and that shirt it would look nice’, and I tried it and it worked. So, he actually inspired me to go and get this coat. [...] If an influencer that I dislike would have posted this coat I would have never bought it, like never. Because I don’t wanna be identified with a person I don’t like. I like to be identified with people that I see as likeminded.

On the other hand, Jenny stated that she purchased a pair of Adidas tracksuit pants after having seen her favourite influencer wearing an identical pair just in a different colour. Additionally, Martha said that her favourite influencers (e.g. Eva Chen and Shiona Turini) uses Dior makeup, so she felt convinced to shift from Chanel makeup to Dior. Martha also admitted having considered buying H&M clothes after having seen their sponsored posts on Instagram, although she has not purchased anything from them yet. The three of them (Erik, Jenny, Martha) have answered that they experimented positive feelings after their purchases. An example from Martha statement is the following:

To be honest, her and a lot of girls around, like you see there, Songofstyle and Eva Chen, they work a lot with Dior make up, and then actually when my Chanel makeup was done, I was like, what was like 6 years or like, you know I’m gonna consider doing something new now, so I do feel like I probably been influenced by them, and now I’m wearing a Dior makeup, so. Most likely, you know, that’s how it works, you see it so often and then you start considering it. [...] I mean H&M does a lot of sponsored posts, where maybe in store you like, oh this isn’t look so good, and then when you see it on those girl wearing and styling it well, then it definitely is, like you feel like you more open to buy it.

These interviewees have recognized to feel identified with their favourite fashion influencers in terms of style, body shape, lifestyle, and career inspiration. Jenny also identifies herself with her favourite influencer in terms of ethnicity. It could be implied that these purchasements are related to the identification feelings the interviewees feel towards their favourite influencers and as an attempt of having a stronger connection with them.

As follows, the same number of persons have randomly purchased fashion items through Instagram. In this case, Laura, Max, and Lisa are the ones who admitted having bought something after having seen an advertisement or an influencer wearing the wished garment. As Laura mentions:

I did buy things before I studied fashion, actually I remember I was following this brand I bought a coat from them, through Instagram even. [...] I saw that an influencer was wearing it and she tagged the brand. And then I looked up the brand, and it wasn’t expensive, so I bought the coat.

While Lisa expresses:

I remember I bought a bikini that I saw on a girl on Instagram, that was really nice, she looks so good and it looks really pretty on her, then I bought it, then I also bought, shoes I think, after I saw them on Instagram.
Max’s point of view can be shown as follow:

I can’t just remember what things, but most probably yes, for example, I worked for Dior for many years and they posted lots of things and I can get really like anxious for a product and what something that they are going to release, but nothing direct that I can think of. And I never just gone on to just looking at something and then looking it up and then buy it, probably have it in mind, looking for it or have seen it on Instagram, and maybe look for it maybe 2 months later when I’m shopping.

Laura’s main reason for the purchase is the low price of the coat, in combination with the easiness of buying it through Instagram. Subsequently, Lisa’s motivation was seeing the bikini portrayed in an appealing image. On the contrary, Max have told that he has purchased some products (specially from Dior makeup, brand which he was working for) after having seen them repeatedly on Instagram, and always after a while of consideration. The cases of Laura and Lisa could be interpreted as impulsive online purchases; however, repeatedly the theory explained by Yakimin, Talib and Mat Saat (2017) is not in consonance with the interviewees’ statements since they did not purchase the fashion items influenced by reviews, recommendations or any other kind of social proof techniques they saw in Instagram.

Besides, another shopping behaviour pattern that all the interview respondents had in common was the generalized opinion of that influencers wears and collaborate with luxury brands that are out of their economic reach. Notwithstanding, the interviewees stated that they would definitely purchase these kinds of products if they had enough money. For instance, Erik said that he would acquire more expensive quality garments if he were not a student. Erik statement can be presented as follows:

I have more money I would buy more clothes, more expensive and more quality garments. But when an influencer post something like Louis Vuitton, I know that I’m student and I can’t afford it, so I pretty much scroll by.

Lisa, on the other hand, tells:

[...] So she is working with a lot of Swedish brands which I admire as well; Filippa K is one of my favourite brands and then there is these big brands like Valentino, and Celine, and so on that I know that they have working with and I like them, but I cannot really afford them. So, it’s a gap there. [...] So, I see on Instagram maybe but still I’m gonna check it up on website, I’m gonna see if I can find the cheaper price I’m gonna like think about it a little.

Since Erik’s student condition left him with not an elevated purchase power, so he do not pay attention to these types of advertisements. Lisa and Jenny would also purchase more of the expensive products that fashion influencers promote if they could (e.g. designer bags). What Lisa does instead is check on the brand’s website and search for other products with lower price or compare prices on the Internet. Laura would have also purchased a fashion product that she saw in Instagram (a pair of sunglasses), but in her case were problems with the shipment the reason why she did not proceed with the shop. As commented before under the heading ‘Instagram as a source of fashion inspiration’ some interviewees, such as Lisa, look for cheaper fashionable garments similar to those the influencers display on Instagram, this could be interpreted as an effort for achieving a style alike to their favourite fashion influencers and, thus, feel even more identified with them.
Contrariwise, Max and Peter are the participants who declared that they do not affected by the influencers’ influence; therefore, they prefer to not buy any of the products they promote. Max expressed that he finds the influencer-brand collaborations interesting, nevertheless, he would not buy anything from them. Thus, Peter explained that he prefers to go to the store and try the clothes himself. Besides, he is not interested in buying something that others advertise. As Peter says:

I’m not interested about buying something that other people use. I like to buy things that I want myself, not the things an influencer tells me to buy…[...] I like to go to the stores, see the clothes, try them… I don’t like to buy from the Internet.

Furthermore, Sara, after having had a bad experience with a mask an influencer recommended, says that she does not like to buy products influencers endorse. Yet, she would check the e-commerce of the brands that collaborate with different influencers. Sara statements can be seen as follow:

If I’m not interested in what she promotes, I’m not gonna go and check what it is, and if I’m interested in something that she’s not promoting, I’m gonna look for it. So, for me there’s not a difference, I’m not gonna be ‘oh my gosh, she’s promoting something.

I did once the mistake, a girl was promoting a mascara from Shiseido, and I bought it; it was really expensive, and I was so disappointed, it was really my young beginning at Instagram. Never again, I just stay truth to myself. If I wanna try something, I try in the shop, a take a tester, I see by myself, but I’m not gonna buy something because an influencer promoted it. I could if it’s good quality, if it’s something that is nice, that I feel like is a good product, then yes. But I need to see it, or to test it.

Overall, only three participants, Erik, Martha and Jenny, have admitted that they have purchased a garment (cosmetics in the case of Martha) that their favourite fashion influencers own. Nevertheless, Erik’s main motivation behind the purchase was the idea of styling the garment in a fashionable way as his favourite influencer did, as defined by him the shopping experience was ‘challenging’. Further, Jenny bought a pair of trousers that her favourite influencer owned; yet Jenny chose another colour since, according to her, she only got inspired by the influencer. As it was highlighted before, Erik thinks that possessing the same coat as Paul Cedric Erwan could make him to be identified with Paul Cedric Erwan, and this fact could be interpreted as positive from Erik’s perspective. Although Jenny confirm that she feels identified with Freja Wewer, the acquisition of the Adidas tracksuit pants was not motivated by these feelings. Martha explains that the reason why she bought Dior makeup was the intensively promotion of this brand by fashion influencers on Instagram, along with the facts that she needed to purchase more cosmetics and wanted to try something new and different. Eva Chen and Shiona Turini, who are Martha’s favourite influencers also collaborate with Dior makeup.

Likewise, (low) price is considered to be a decisive factor in deciding whether or not to buy a fashion item in this image-sharing social commerce platform. This could be clearly perceived in Laura’s statement, but also implied in the critics toward expensive product endorsements, and the appreciation of collaborations with affordable brands as Erik states.
In the cases where followers have purchased a fashion item that they have seen advertised on Instagram, and where they desire to acquire one of the fashion products influencers portray; followers are seemingly influenced just by the influencer’s endorsement not by the brand they endorse. This is discordant with Kumar et al. (2016) research’s results which affirm that firm-generated content has a significant positive effect on customer spending, cross buying, and customer profitability. In the case of Instagram is influencer generated content the one which apparently triggers customers’ purchase intention. This information is however related to Gunawan and Huarng (2015) investigation results since influencer’s credibility and social influence might have create a positive attitude towards the usefulness of their messages, which ultimately could have impact the followers purchase intention. Although, this is not true for Peter and Sara (the only full-time workers who took part in this study) who prefer to test by themselves in a physical store the products they are interested in. There is also a significant amount of Instagram users who declare to not feel affected by the advertisements they see on the social platform.

On the other hand, Smith and Rupp (2003) who making reference to Mowen declare that differences in heredity, childhood experiences, cultural exposure, and personal motivation in people are important factors that lead to different purchase behavior patterns; could be in accordance to the fact that those interviewees who affirmed to either have purchased a garment that they previously have seen announced in Instagram, or wished to purchase if they had a higher economic power, are all students. Contrariwise, those who affirmed not to feel affected by influencers’ endorsements (Peter, Sara, and Max) are those who (with the exception of Max) just work and lack a higher education background. Even though Max is an exception in this case, he has three years’ work experience within the cosmetic industry and is the only individual who have admitted considering his shops long time before accomplishing the purchaseament.

Finally, there is a lack of references to social norms pressure for purchasing more fashionable garments in Instagram, hence the TRA is not applicable in this context.

5.8 Sponsored posts and influencer’s trustworthiness

This theme contains the feelings that the interviewees have towards the influencers’ sponsored posts and collaborations with different brands, as well as, their perceptions regarding the influencer trustworthiness when he or she promotes fashion products. The importance of bringing this knowledge to light is because followers’ identification with fashion influencers might alter followers’ judgement towards this kind of advertisement.

All the interviewees, with the exception of Lisa, Laura and Erik, feel comfortable with the sponsored posts that their favourite fashion influencers publish on their Instagram profiles. Nevertheless, these three participants share a disagreement attitude. For example, Erik mentions:

I believe that our generation we understand the concept of an influencer so well, that when you see this famous person post about this mask you know she doesn’t like it. She just posts it because she gets paid to do it. So that kind of advertisement doesn’t really work in our generation as well as it is supposed to do, I think. Because we are very good at spotting advertisement, it’s like ‘you only say that because you get paid or something like that’.
Laura, on the other hand expresses:

I think that I don’t follow so many influencers because sometimes the brands, or the sponsorships control their style, and it’s not their own style anymore. So, I don’t really like it so much, but of course they have to get something from somewhere to be able to keep publishing content.

While, Lisa states:

I instinctively like distracted myself from it, I don’t read it very specifically, I don’t watch very very thoroughly, I zoom out from it because I think all paid content is boring, I don’t feel it’s authentic at all. I think it’s kind of soulless, cause I mean I know that she is only she posting this because she get paid for it, so it’s not that real.

As it is acknowledged above, the justification for disliking the sponsored posts and perceive them as unreliable lies in the fact that influencers receive a monetary compensation for endorsing the products being promoted in their Instagram profiles. Moreover, Laura adds that brands dominate the influencer style. Some followers believe that the earnings influencers receive from the brands they collaborate with covers the influencer’s real opinion toward the endorsed product.

On the other hand, Sara, Martha, Max, and Peter share the common belief that paid contents are acceptable since it is an important part of the influencers’ job. Furthermore, the four participants have a positive attitude toward the sponsored posts when they come across them on their Instagram feeds. However, Martha pinpoint that collaboration with brands would feel more authentic when the influencer him/her self is the one who get to decide how the paid post would look like. Martha’s point of view is similar to Laura’s in the sense that both of them prefer that the influencer control his/her publications independently of the payment they get. Max beliefs are also in consonance with Martha and Laura statements because he thinks that-sponsored posts are good, inasmuch as, these posts are in line with the rest of the influencer content, as well as, is the influencer the one who choose how the image will ultimately look like. These persons ideas are linked to Mathisen and Fredrick (2017) who explain that low-fit between brand and endorser has a negative effect on purchase intention for frequent buyers. For example, Martha expressed:

She does a great job, of course she has sponsorship with Matchesfashion who provide all of those stuffs, it doesn’t feel like she has somebody in the background telling her what to wear, it felt like she really makes her own decision and style that fit to her daily liking I guess, so, yeah I like that.

While Max says:

I feel that it was properly made and it fitted in with his other things, and it wasn’t, you could tell that it wasn’t like a photo-shoot, but he posted photo shoot and he posted like personal pictures as well, so that wasn’t weird in anyway but, I think I was kind of clear that it was a job that he was really into and that he also designed it himself so on and so on.

There always a bit of feel like, when people do collaboration, it just feel like they want to take the opportunity to earn money, which wasn’t something bad cause everybody
need to earn a living, if people can do it by that. That’s good but still, at least I get a bit turned off by it.

Peter and Sara point of view with regard sponsored post is good because they consider that they eventually have the choice of purchasing or not what is being announced by an influencer. They also prefer to try the products by themselves on a physical store. Sara explains:

 [...] You have a lot of influencers that are very honest, and you have some that would say ‘oh my god, this product is so good, bla bla bla’, so when it comes to that, I have decided that if even they sell very good their products, I will always test it by myself.

As follows, Laura just appreciate the sponsored posts which display something else than the item which is being advertised, for instance, a nice background that could make the picture more interesting. Laura expresses:

I think that as long as the content is good, it’s not like ‘oh I bought this Prada shoes…’, but actually you do something about it, then it’s nice. Because of course they want to sponsor, and that’s a very clever idea. I think it’s very clever to do sponsorships and I really like it if it’s something interesting. Otherwise is just another pair of shoes on another person, you know.

As I said, there’s lot of people wearing Prada shoes, so if you have a twist on the picture, you are just not taking a selfie with the pair of shoes, instead you go somewhere that is not so often portrayed, or just style it on a cooler way, just not the basic picture with a pair of shoes. I think it’s hard nowadays to do a very interesting post.

When it comes to the perceived trustworthiness the participants have toward their favourite influencers, Sara believes that the majority of influencers are honest. Anyhow, after had have a bad experience with an influencer recommendation Sara prefers to try the products by herself before buying something of her interest. Additionally, she expresses that the body shape of the influencer does not affect her purchase intention. Max’s opinion is parallel with Sara’s, since he thinks that influencers should be honest about the sponsored posts. Furthermore, Erik, who is a micro influencer, explained that he does not promote brands that he would not wear himself, he just endorses products that he would recommend personally. Jenny was the only one who mentioned that she does not know how to distinguish between paid and unpaid announces. Hence, she thinks that they must feel authentic. There were only three interviewees (Erik, Laura, and Lisa) who, as explained at the beginning of this theme, do not find the sponsored posts as a reliable source of information.

Laura and Lia admitted that they have purchased fashion items through Instagram after having seen an advertisement in this platform repetitively. The cases of Laura, and Lisa are in concordance with Mathisen and Fredrick’s (2017) suggestion that frequent buyers on Instagram prefer native advertising. The participants purchased also brands they did not know beforehand, which is analogous with Mathisen and Fredrick (2017) since they asserted that, when looking at purchase intention for the unknown brand, frequent buyers are positive. Additionally, these authors affirm that less frequents buyers prefer obvious advertisement which is also related to the rest of interviewees’ attitudes.
Over and over, identification is not one of the factors that might alter followers’ perceptions towards fashion influencers’ sponsored posts. When it comes to this topic, the majority of the interview participants have a positive opinion regarding the paid content fashion influencers publish in Instagram; nevertheless, a significant number of respondents did not trust this type of publications.

6 Discussion

In the forthcoming paragraphs the answer to the research questions formulated at the beginning of this paper will be offered.

According to the results and analysis of the data gathered from the participants, the first research question, that aims to uncover which types of identification and homophily variables drive engagement between the participants and their favourite Instagram influencers, can be discuss as follows. The participants have exhibited various aspects of identification between their favourite Instagram influencers and themselves. The participants engage with the influencer at an interpersonal level that can be illustrate into two processes of identification. Firstly, the participants identify with the influencer through realization by sharing similar interests and values (Pratt 1998; Kark et al. 2003); this includes similarity in preference for certain fashion products and/or specific fashion style, lifestyle (i.e. different ways of living, habitats and backstories) and career paths. Secondly, apart from the participants realization of sharing similarities in terms of style, lifestyle, and career paths, the participants desire to alter the values and beliefs that they think they share with the influencer to become even more similar to them (Pratt 1998; Kark et al.2003).

It can be that the factors behind the engagement are the participants’ realization of similarities that they receive from their favourite influencers and, later on, the participants develop the realized similarities into aspirations. Additionally, when connect the identifications that arise from the data to Littlejohn’s (1996) categorization of identification, it can be understand that the participants engage with the influencers through material identification, idealistic identification and identification through mystification. Furthermore, the participants identify with the influencers through physical appearance such hair colour and body shapes (Kelman 1961; Burke 1969).

Through the perspective of the theory of Homophily and Heterophily, the engagement between the participants and their favourite influencer is affected by both, status homophily which includes career fields, appearance, race, and ethnicity; as well as, value homophily which includes style, lifestyle, and career aspirations that the participants perceived they have in common with their favourite influencers (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). Furthermore, the participants not only engage with their favourite influencers through homophilous attributes, but also heterophilous attributes that their influencers ascribed. This heterophilous engagement can be seen, for instance, in the cases of the interviewees who admired an influencer from a different ethnicity than themselves (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). As expressed by the participants, the notable homophily/heterophily variables and identifications that drive the engagement between them and the influencers are the similarities in terms of mindset, ideas, and goals in life in various aspects. These similarities are important for the participants’ self-defining process and self-image formation.

Once the factors behind the engagement between the participants and their favourite Instagram influencers have been demonstrated in the first research question, the second
research question is aiming to unveil whether those factors have an effect on the participants purchase intention.

The answer regarding how do identification and homophily variables affect followers/consumers’ purchase intention towards the fashion products the influencer endorses, it can be discussed as follows. Two of the purchasing patterns shown in the empirical material, purchase intention motivated by the inspiration obtained from the fashion influencer, together with, desired purchase intention is affected by identification between followers and their favourite fashion influencers. When it comes to the first purchasing pattern, the research participants who have acquired a fashion item after having seen their favourite fashion influencer wearing or endorsing it on an Instagram post, declare that they feel identified with the influencer in terms of style, body shape, ethnicity, lifestyle, sexuality and career path. On the other hand, the wished purchase intention could also be stimulated by these homophily variables. In this case, style identification/aspiration is the main reason why the interviewees would buy such expensive garments. Along these lines, aleatory purachasements, as well as, search/buy cheaper alternative fashion items analogous to the ones the influencer portrays is also driven by style identification/inspiration since the followers adopt the information from their favourite influencers posts, to get alternatives that allow them to have a closer style to the ones they have as fashion references.

Brown and Reingen (1987) study shows that high level of homophilous relationship between the source and the receiver has an impact in information adoption process but not in decision-making. The result from this investigation is partly in accordance with the results from Brown and Reingen study. The participants of this research after having seen images of expensive fashion items that the influencers display on their Instagram profiles, opt for similar economical alternatives, although they recognize that if possible they would also buy the luxury products. Furthermore, the purpose of this study fulfils the suggestion made by Brown and Reingen (1987) about focusing on the attitudinal and value aspects of homophily. The result from this study shows that, identification affect purchase intention to some extent. Considering the two participants who demonstrated value homophily in terms of lifestyle, one has purchased similar fashion items that her favourite influencer owned, while the other has admitted that she shifted her preference to the brand that her favourite influencers endorsed and purchased some products. However, one of the participants who demonstrated status homophily in terms of body shape (silhouettes), has bought the coat that the influencer had portrayed on Instagram.

The result from Simpson et al’ s (2000) study suggests that the impact of higher level of perceived homophily on purchase intention was small but significant, Simpson et al’ s (2000) result is, to some extent relatable to the result of this study. The findings of this study indicate that five out of eight participants exhibit race/ethnicity homophily, while other three participants exhibit race/ethnicity heterophily, however, the result cannot pinpoint whether or not race/ethnicity homophily is directly affect or act as a major variable that has an effect on participants purchase intention. A contradictory example can be demonstrated by the cases of two participants: one of them exhibits race/ethnicity heterophily and other exhibits race/ethnicity homophily, but both them purchased products endorsed and/or represented by their favourite influencer.
7 Conclusion

7.1 Conclusion
The purpose of this investigation is to explore consumers’ attitudes towards Instagram fashion influencers, in order to find out to which homophily variables are behind consumers’ engagement with Instagram fashion influencers, and at the same time analyse if identification between the participants and their preferred fashion influences has an effect on purchase intention. The empirical data of this study derives from the participants feelings, attitudes, and perspectives toward their own experiences and engagement with the fashion influencers in Instagram collected through in-depth interviews.

It can be concluded that among the various types of identification and homophily variables analysed, it cannot be pinpoint which types of identification and homophily variables have a stronger influence on the participants information adoption process and purchase intention, instead is it various types of identification and homophily variables combined which lead an individual into engagement with their favourite influencers, and eventually purchase some of the fashionable garments they portray on their publications.

7.2 Managerial Implication
The result from this study has revealed interpersonal level of identification and homophily/heterophily variables that emerged from the participants’ statements. Each of the themes demonstrates a detailed information that could be beneficial for fashion companies to understand the engagement between consumers and Instagram influencers and how it impacts the consumers’ information adoption, purchase intention, and actual purchase patterns. It could facilitate fashion brands to choose the most suitable influencer to endorse their product and target customers. For example, the career path identification/aspiration may introduce fashion brands to a new area of influencer marketing, by hiring influencers with specific career paths, someone who offers not just popularity in a social platform, to endorse their product; this strategy might be able to reach new target customers that have similar career paths, and ambitions as the chosen influencer more effectively; for instance, students who aim to become entrepreneurs. This could also provide a better corporate image, making the company seen as less superficial and more engaged with delicate issues that their target value. Additionally, lifestyle identification/aspiration could also benefit the company in terms of international sale, when integrating the right product to the right environment with the right influencer, which can create an idealized image that may capture attention of customer abroad.

For luxury fashion brands, the result suggests that consumers with low economic power cannot afford the high-priced items being featured by the influencers; however, luxury brands can still gain benefit from the awareness that consumers have towards the brand. For fast-fashion brands, the result suggests that consumers opt for a cheaper alternative of high-priced items being featured by the influencers; by taking this fact into consideration, fast fashion brands could gain benefits and boost sales by providing similar products with cheaper prices.
7.3 Future research suggestions
This thesis proves results to be useful and reveals a significant onward in the research concerning people with different ages, educational backgrounds, cultures, purchasing power, etc. in order to examine the transferability of the findings. Moreover, future research could design the interview questions that includes a specific type of identification and homophily variable that may not derive from the findings of this study. In the same manner, identifying which homophily variables have the stronger impact in followers’ engagement and purchase intention on Instagram could also be further studied. An experimental research design could be performed to test participants’ attitude towards a fake influencer, who has been previously created by Instagram ready photoshoot equipment. The same study could be conducted with a quantitative approach through a survey.

7.4 Limitations
The major limitation of this study is the limited time available for carrying out the investigation. On the other hand, the fact that all the interview participants live in the same area, and have approximately the same age, could make the transferability of the results complicated. Finally, more female participants have answered the interview which could maybe have influenced the outcome of this paper.
References


Appendix

Interview guide

Interviewee personality
Can you describe your personal fashion style?
What are your hobbies?
How do you think about yourself, in terms of personal characteristic?
How do you and others see you, in terms of personality? And what about your fashion style?

Instagram influencers
How many times a day do you use Instagram?
What is your main purpose of using Instagram?
Can you show me your favourite Instagram Influencer?
Do you know any facts about him/her? Can you shortly talk about him/her?
Do you think she/he is attractive?
What do you like about her/him? In terms of appearances and personality?
How does u feel when you look at the pictures that she/he posts?
What do you think the influencer lacks?
What do you think the influencer gives you? by looking at her/his Instagram profile.
What do you think you have in common with her/him?
What are the differences between you and her/him?
How would you describe your relationship with the influencer?

Purchase intention
How do you feel when you see his/her sponsored posts?
Does is feel different for you when you compare to his/her normal post? (un-sponsored)
Have you ever buy any product that he or she advertised? If yes, can you tell me what is it?
If yes, how do you feel after purchasing it? Have you ever feel regret? Or very satisfied?
Interview transcriptions

This section gathers the interview transcriptions; ‘M’ and ‘C’ refer to María and Chonlattorn who has been the interviewers. The rest of letters stand for the pseudonym that makes reference to the each of the interviewees presented in Table 1.

Erik’s interview:

M: Hi, thank you so much for your time and attention! As I mentioned before the aim of this thesis is to discover if the identification with Instagram influencers could have any impact on customers’ purchase intention. Your answer will be anonymous, although a brief description about yourself will be provided along with a picture of your favourite Instagram influencer. Ok, it is time to start… could you please tell me about yourself?

E: My name is Erik, I’m 21 years old and I’ve studying here in Borås for almost three years now. I’m studying my first year of Textile Product Development and Entrepreneurship and last year I was studying the base year to get into my grade. I’m originally from Stockholm and the reason I chose to come here to Borås is because I’ve always interested in fashion and clothing and I thought “hey, I wanna work in the fashion industry so I should get an education that suits me” and I’m really happy to be here, I’m really enjoying, I think it’s a great school, the courses are great…

M: Yes, I agree with you!

E: And I have my Instagram since I was 15, but I didn’t start posting fashion related content until I was maybe 19 almost 20 and since then I have more followers that guys my age usually have. I mean I have around 1000 followers right now. I don’t strive to be an influencer, I just like sharing my outfits and things that inspire me. When I put on my outfit in the morning, I want to show it to people, so they can be inspired. I don’t really love the word influencer because that is not what I want to be, I just want to inspire… I know it sounds cheesy but…

M: No! That’s very good… Where does your interest in fashion come from?

E: I would say my mum because she has always been very fashionable, you know… My dad is actually the one in the family who works with fashion, actually he works for H&M, but his style is just terrible. I’m so sorry to say that but it’s true. My mum has always supported me dressing the way I want to, she was the one buying me my first nail polish. I just wear it sometimes. A lot of my friends have been supportive as well. I come from a very small city just outside Stockholm and I just had two friends who actually cared about fashion, the rest just like cars or soccer stuff… so I was never able to talk about fashion with my friends until I came to Borås and met many people, so I feel like my hobby or interest for fashion has really evolve during the last years and I’m really happy to be here.

M: Definitely… How would you describe your style?

E: I’ve been thinking quite a lot about that because I believe that in order to improve your fashion, in order to advance and learn more you have to try different looks and different styles, for example this Monday I wore a suit to school, and yesterday I wore a white t-shirt with a ripped leather jacket, and motorcycle boots. I feel like you have to adapt to the occasion, one day I want to wear a garment from 2005, and the next day I wanna dress in a
suit. I think it is very important to dress for very different occasions, you know... but probably high-end and streetwear are the most accurate.

M: I dress depending on how I feel that day, if I feel good I would wear something more bright... I don’t know... Do you know that your friends and persons do you know would describe your style in the same way you did it?

E: Yeah... Actually they helped me describe it because I have a lot of trouble describing the way I dress myself so my friends told me the same thing I just told you and I was like ‘yes, that’s probably me’.

M: It feels like you have a wide style and one day you are wearing a suit and...

E: Yes, I mean that is very different. I mean when I put out a cool outfit I feel good, you know, let’s say I wake up one Sunday morning and I am super hangover and I don’t feel well at all... If I put on a nice outfit I get energy and I feel happy, I want to do things. But if I wake up and walk around in like Adidas tracksuit pants I’m not gonna feel good, I’m just tired... Don’t wanna do anything today. The better I look, the better the clothes I have on, the better I feel.

M: I totally agree with you. Apart from fashion, what are your other hobbies or interest?

E: I have always been really interested in culture. I really enjoy music, photography, and art. I’m trying to paint. I’m not good at painting but I am trying. Like I said music, I used to play in bands when I was a kid and I am trying to start a band with a couple of friends right now. I also like running and swimming because I really hate to go to the gym. Apart from that... When I was a kid I used to do a lot of skateboarding and I recently picked that up, so I started skating in the summer. I’m pretty bad but it’s fun.

M: I’m also bad at skating, I’m not even trying. But I think it is very interesting the thing you said that you are interested in culture. Do you think that your culture is reflected in your style? Or do you try to pick up things from other cultures?

E: I try to pick up things from different cultures but I also try to be very reserved and respectful because. I’m actually a member of lot of fashion groups on Facebook and this is an ongoing debate, is it ok to steal other’s people culture? A lot of people have very strong opinions but I do not want to offend anybody, I mean if you see this t-shirt, I really like this t-shirt but if anybody is offended by it I wouldn’t wear it because that is not who I wanna be, I don’t wanna make people sad or upset just because I want to feel good in a t-shirt. Probably another t-shirt would be better. What I meant by culture is art, music, painting, stuff like that.

M: You are trying to be inspired by culture and at the same time you are careful about it... But from which culture would you say that you get inspiration from? Asiatic or..?

E: Right now I am really into rap music and so, I get a lot of inspiration from afro-american and black culture; but I also know that a lot of afro-american people have been having trouble with white people like me because they are stealing their culture and I don’t wanna be like that, because I know that a lot of people take offence. Like I say I don’t want to upset anyone. I also have a couple of italian friends and they actually get very pissed because I kind of ripped off their style. I walk around in a suit and pretend I am italian like ‘hey bella’. I do a lot
of travelling and everytime I am abroad I try to dress as if I were living in the country; when I go to France I image what frenchs would do and try to speak french, when I go to Spain I try what spanish people would do and try to speak spanish… it’s like a role, you know.

M: Why do you that?

E: I don’t know, I guess I just want to feel like I belong there.

M: Ok, that’s weird, I have never heard something like that, but that’s interesting as well. If we talk about your Instagram… Why you went into Instagram? You said you get in when you were 15, but what were your reasons?

E: I got my first iPhone as a Christmas gift and there were this girl in my class who really wanted an iPhone, but she didn’t have one… she wanted to download these apps like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram… and I was like ‘well I don’t use Instagram so you can use Instagram from my phone’. So she created an Instagram for me and she used to post all these pictures and I thought it was pretty cool so when we graduated from school I started to try it by myself. I started posting pictures like selfies, my friends, nature, things around me and one day when I was around 19 years old, I bought my first pair of Dr. Martins, you know the shoes, and I took a picture of them and posted them in Instagram, and I got a lot of likes. I thought ‘hey, people seems to like fashion stuff. Maybe this is a thing. Maybe is what I should do’, and from there it just kept going. Then I actually got some contact from brands who said ‘we noticed your Instagram, we like what you are doing, would you like to do some promotion to us, we’ll send you clothes and you post some pictures…’.

M: Wow, that’s pretty cool. How many followers do you have?

E: At the time not a lot, I think I had like 600 which is not many at all. Now I have around 1000 but I still get offers sometimes. Is really cool because back then, I felt it was an honour that someone noticed me, so I used to accept every offer. I promoted so many ugly clothes that I can’t really be proud of. Right now I actually turned down a lot of offers because I don’t wanna promote anything that I wouldn’t wear myself. I just promote things that I would recommend you personally.

M: I think one should follow his own style, otherwise is like you are not reliable.

E: That is something that I see with a lot of influencers today. You can see these famous blogger, she can post about this face mask which is a moisturizing cream… and I believe that our generation we understand the concept of an influencer so well, that when you see this famous person post about this mask you know she doesn’t like it. She just post it because she gets paid to do it. So that kind of advertisement doesn’t really work in our generation as well as it is supposed to do, I think. Because we are very good at spotting advertisement, it’s like ‘you only say that because you get paid or something like that’.

M: Actually, I have been reading a lot about Instagram and influencers are seen as friends, so even if you know it’s an advertisement and they get pay for that, you don’t see it like that. Maybe you do, but most of the people don’t…

E: Yes, you are actually right. There are a couple of influencers that I look up to, which I really enjoy what they are posting. When one of them posts this pair of shoes, I think that
those are a nice pair, or if it’s an influencer I don’t like at all, I would think ‘nope’. So it’s depend on the relationship with the person I follow of course. You were right.

M: You said that you first posted randomly the picture of your new Dr. Martens and got lot of likes, and then you continued posted about fashion, so what’s really motivates you are the likes?

E: At first it was the likes mostly, all was about the followers and chasing likes. But now I can feel like I don’t really wanna do that because… I actually won a prize, a swedish magazine called me one summer, I was on my way home from work and they say that I have been voted that week’s best dress on Instagram and they wanted an interview with me. I was like ‘oh wow…’, so I ended up on their Instagram page and after that I gained a lot of followers. I felt an enormous pressure to post content everyday, before that I was maybe posting pictures once a week, twice a week… but after that I feel like I had to post everyday, so what happened was that I pushed myself to take a new picture everyday and it didn’t went well… the content became worse and I lost a few followers. So I thought that maybe work for the likes wasn’t worth it. I’m trying something new actually, now I post twice a week and on my last four posts I believe I stopped using hashtags and I noticed it, I went from getting 166 likes to getting way less likes, but I don’t care because now I post pictures that I want to post. I post the content that I would like to see on my own feed. So I’m trying to care less about the likes. I mean still is something I care about. But I also use some tools, the company tools, and I can see like how many people see my pictures, how many people like it and such, for instance, in this picture I have 7 comments and 89 likes…

M: So you are kind of a micro influencer…

E: Yeah.

M: How would you describe the relationship with your followers? Do they interact with you?

E: Yes, I actually get a lot of comments and messages from people I don’t know and they are like ‘hey, I saw this picture…’, they talk to me as if they were real friends, and I am like ‘I don’t know you’, but at the same time is a nice feeling. I feel like I inspiring other people and that’s what I originally said like to do. It is still a weird feeling that someone you never met messages you and talk to you like you know each other like if we were friends, like ‘hey, how’s your friend doing?’ and I’m thinking like they don’t know my friend, they just saw a picture of him. It’s kind of weird but it’s fun.

M: Yes, it feels weird… kind of creepy also.

E: I actually used to study psychology when I was younger and my teacher told me that celebrities… when you see an actor that you have seen in all these movies and interviews, we feel like we know this person; so if you would meet him in the street you would ask ‘hey, how is it going?’ even if you don’t know him and interact with this person as if you were friends, even though you never met, because of you have seen so much of this person live, so you feel like you know him. And that is kind what is happening here, people think they know me just because they saw my pictures.

M: Why do you think your followers follow you? Is it because you have certain style? or because you post frequently...
E: I think it’s my style, the variety, like sometimes it’s suits, sometimes it’s leather jackets, sometimes is tracksuits and sneakers. I wouldn’t say it’s because I post too frequently. Right now I’m posting every six days or something. I try to post more often but now I’m more conscious about posting quality content. I don’t have a lot of time to do photographing anymore. So maybe one week where I don’t have a good picture, the I don’t post any.

M: Can you spot where your followers come from?

E: Yes, I can actually do that. Most of them are european; 30% of my followers are actually from Berlin, from Germany.

M: I guess they are also like blond people and share your style.

E: Yes, most of them are guys between age of 18 and 26, and mostly european, a couple of americans but most europeans, like London, Germany, Denmark… stuff like that.

M: That is interesting because we were talking about identification, is good to know this. These countries, Denmark and Germany are so similar to Sweden in a sense…

E: I mean, I actually received a lot of asian followers lately and they are in touch with me, that’s great.

M: Yes, how do you feel about these asian followers? Do you feel the same towards them as towards the others?

E: I mean, I would really like to have more followers. There are ways of getting more followers, like right now I’m following around 500 people but I could follow up to 2000 and they would follow me back, but I feel like that is a cheap loop and I don't wanna do that…

M: You can even pay for followers…

E: Yeah, right. I want the people follow me because they want to follow me, not because I’m following them. I want the persons following me because they enjoy my content and want to interact with me. It’s like I would rather have 100 hundred active followers than 20000 inactive followers.

M: Who is your favorite influencer? Like your reference. If you can show me a picture of him or her that would be so good.

E: (He shows me the instagram profile of @hypeflaw) This guy, I really love his style. He’s very active also; he doesn’t do a lot of patterns but what he do is silhouettes, layering, and I think that is really interesting, a lot of colors too.

M: I can actually see a similarity of his style with yours… also in the content he publishes… How would you describe the relationship with that guy?

E: Like he doesn't follow me back. I found his profile maybe six months ago and I… I watch only Instagram stories, and I like the pictures that I think are good, sometimes I drop comments… like he doesn’t respond right after because he has a lot of followers, but when he
does respond I feel like ‘wow, he knows I exist, he knows me’, well he probably doesn’t but still when he replies to my comments I feel like a little kid because it means so much to me, it’s like getting a picture with your favorite actor or musician, it’s something like that.

M: So it’s a friendly relationship…

E: I don’t know him personally, like maybe he’s a real rude guy, but I have like this image of him in my head, I built up this persona around the pictures I’ve seen, so I see him as a really cool guy, black, intelligent, smart… It’s weird because I have this image of him in my head even though we have never met, I’ve never seen him. That’s what make a good influencer you know; make that, through images, make your followers believe that you are good, kind, smart… make them believe in you, and he’s doing it very well.

M: But, for example, would you like to be like him? Because he sounds like a role model to you...

E: As I said, I would like just to inspire people. I don’t have like a goal like I wanna get this many followers, I wanna get this many likes, I just want people to follow me and enjoy the content I’m putting up.

M: Why did you start following this person? Is because of his style? Because of other content he publishes…

E: I only follow because of the style. Because he does this really good mix of very expensive, high-end fashion items and cheaper, like H&M. He wore this coat and I bought it. First time I saw it on the store I didn't like that and then I saw him wearing it and I was like ‘ok, maybe if I put on this trousers, and that shirt it would look nice’, and I tried it and it worked. So he actually inspired me to go and get this coat. So I follow him because he post a lot of affordable content, stuff you can afford, not just Gucci and Louis Vuitton which I can’t afford. He post a lot from Zara, H&M, Weekday… that I can actually buy and I really like that.

M: He does sponsored posts as well… how do you feel about that?

E: He doesn’t do as much as other people do. When he does it’s mostly for Dr. Martens, and that’s a brand that I actually like. So I enjoy his ads, I think is good and I can see why he is doing it. If it’s a very good deal I would take it as well. I just like his content overall.

M: When you bought the coat, you didn’t like it at all before, and then you saw it on him and you went and bought it… why did you do that?

E: I know, it’s a shame… I don’t know…

M: How did you decide to do that? That’s interesting to know...

E: My friend, he was at H&M trying on some pants and I saw this coat hanging there so I tried it on and I was like ‘hey, that’s work…’

M: Did you recognize the coat from him?
E: Yes

M: How did you feel afterwards when you purchased it? Did you feel like copying him maybe?

E: Yes, actually felt a bit like I was copying him, so I made sure like I sometimes wear it like with white suit trousers and a loose shirt, so I try to wear it in a similar way but not identical, instead of wearing like a loose shirt, I would try a slim fit shirt with slim trousers in the same color… it’s not like copying straight, it’s being inspired but not copy…

M: Ok, that’s interesting. Do you also identify with him in terms of lifestyle?

E: He doesn’t post a lot of pictures with lifestyle actually. The content is mostly fashion; maybe once in a while he post a picture of the lunch he is having and a drink he is having in a special bar… and I’m like ‘hey, I eat lunch too, I go to bars…’.

M: You mentioned that you like music, and that you like to be outdoors and so…this person…

E: He doesn’t post a lot about his private life, is mostly fashion content, so I’m not really sure about what he does, his hobbies… I’m not really sure to answer that, I’m sorry.

M: So you would describe that relationship as based only on style.

E: Definitely.

M: You think it’s matching and you have actually bought a product that he advertised… but if the coat were advertised by another influencer, would you have bought it?

E: It really depends on the influencer, like if it were a person I like and I like that person’s style probably, if not I don’t know…

M: But it’s the same coat you already own…

E: I’ve never thought about it that way, you are actually right. If an influencer that I dislike would have posted this coat I would have never bought it, like never. Because I don’t wanna be identified with a person I don’t like. I like to be identified with people that I see as like minded.

M: I’m just curious about how did you start liking it… Is because you saw it on him, or more after you have tried it?

E: I think it was the way he styled it, the way he wore it. I haven’t imagine it with the rest of the outfit he put it together, so it’s like he actually made that work, and I wanted to make it work as well…

M: Ok, so it was like a challenge…

E: It was a challenge, yes… I usually wear all black and this was like ‘ok, it has a color’.
M: That also happens to me, some of the garments that I see on Zara I don’t like them at first, but after I have seen them on other people I start liking them…

E: Yes, I used to work at H&M… you can see the shirt hanging on the hanger and you don’t like it, but then you see someone wearing it and think it’s pretty nice, or the other way around.

M: When it comes to more expensive stuff the influencer is advertising… how would you feel about that, would you also like to buy it if you have the economic power?

E: I mean… I have more money I would buy more clothes, more expensive and more quality garments. But when an influencer post something like Louis Vuitton, I know that I’m student and I can’t afford it, so I pretty much scroll by. I don’t feel pressure like I need to buy more expensive clothes, but I know that a lot of my friends they actually do and feel stressed. When an influencer post a really expensive pair of shoes, they feel like they need to afford the shoes, and they start feeling bad because they can’t. I’m really lucky because I don’t feel that way. If I can’t afford it, I can’t afford it.

M: I know many persons that have bought the Gucci belt, which costs almost 4000:-

E: I actually thought about buying it, but I looked at the price and I was like ‘I’m not gonna buy that’…

M: I always think it should be fake if so many people have it, where do they get it?

E: I think that the Gucci belt is gonna be out in two months, is already out

M: I was thinking also that…

E: Gucci is out.

M: It seems like you have a more specific style, it seems like you have your own style and wouldn’t change it for other just because is more fashionable.

E: Yes, I wouldn’t wear something just because is fashion, just because is trendy. I would buy it because I want to wear it, because I feel good in it. For instance, these shoes that Balenciaga and Gucci are releasing… all my friends are wondering why I don’t get them and I’m like ‘why would I, just because it is fashion?’. I don’t care, I don’t like them personally, they can wear them, but I’m not gonna wear them because if I don’t like them I’m not gonna buy them…

M: This influencer you show me… He is black, is another culture and ethnicity… How did you feel related to that?

E: Is mostly because we are wearing the same silhouettes, white trousers…

M: So you don’t care about where is he from, believes…

E: No, it doesn’t matter. I like him because of the way he dresses. I don’t know him personally. It really his sense of style what captivates me. I wanna follow him because he inspired me. But I get what you are saying.
M: How would you feel if @hypeflaw were gay?

E: I wouldn’t care, I would still admire him.

M: Would you still feel identified with him?

E: I like the way he dresses, his or my sexual orientation has nothing to do with it. My purchase intention wouldn’t change either.

M: I’m trying to discover why that person and not other…

E: Yes.

M: Would you say that your favorite influencer is an attractive person?

E: I’m personally not attracted to men. But objectively talking I think he’s attractive. I think that that’s a characteristic that helps many influencers, if an influencer is good-looking it is more likely that he or she became famous because there are many that want to be like them. I think that each person wants to be famous and good looking, so that’s why people look for pretty influencers.

M: Ok, that was all from my side! Thank you very much for your time and attention.

E: It was nothing!

Peter’s interview:

M: Hi, I’m gonna introduce myself first so you know a little bit myself, as well as, the project I’m carrying on. My name is Maria, I’m 25 years old and I’m studying Fashion Management and Marketing at The Swedish School of Textiles. Right now, I’m investigating how identification with fashion influencers can affect customers’ purchase intention towards the products the influencer endorses; that’s for my MSc thesis. This interview is anonymous, your answers will be published under a pseudonym, so no one will be able to identify you. I really appreciate your participation. If you are ready we can start now.

P: I’m ready

M: Ok, so you can also introduce yourself.

P: My name is Peter and I work at Zara. I’m a person that’s really into the fashion industry. I like to follow the trends and, in general, all about fashion. I like it very much.

M: So you work in a fashion store… but what do you do in there?

P: I’m a commercial. I decide what we are selling in the store, take away the things that we are not selling good, and things like that...I’m in charge of the visual.

M: I see, it’s creating the outfits that will be sold later… how do you create them? Where do you take the inspiration from?
P: I take the inspiration from the internet, and pictures that the headquarters send from Spain.

M: Can you tell me more about your hobbies?

P: I like to watch TV, listen to music, and I like also to run and watch fashion shows…

M: Ok, how would you describe your style? The kind of clothes you use, which brands...

P: I would say that I’m a very trendy person. I like fashion very much. I don’t follow any specific trend.

M: Which brands do you usually buy?

P: Just Zara I think.

M: Do you think that your style represents your personality?

P: I think so.

M: Why?

P: Because I wear clothes depending on how I feel. I wear also what I think it’s good and trendy.

M: Do you think that other people think the same about your style when they see you?

P: Yes, I think so.

M: How do you know that? Have they tell you?

P: Yes, the people say that they like for example my t-shirt, or that they like my outfit

M: Ok, would you say that you are an outgoing person and that your clothes reflect that? For instance, are you wearing colorful clothing, or is it more like black and serious garments with no prints?...

P: I like the colors, but I also like black and prints… I don’t know I’m not a person who use the same colors all the time; I like the variation.

M: Your style is trendy and with a great variety, and it reflects your personality…

P: Exactly!

M: Now we are going to talk about how do you use Instagram. Let’s start by when you started using Instagram…

P: Maybe around four or five years ago.

M: Why did you decided to create an account there?
P: It was maybe 2013… because I think it is a good way to communicate with your friends, and follow artists, or other people.

M: Do you follow persons that you don’t know?

P: Yes, I do.

M: Why? If you don’t know them…

P: Because I like to see how people communicate, the things they do…

M: How many times a day do you use Instagram?

P: Maybe three or five times a day…

M: That’s little… do you stay long time then?

P: No, just 10 minutes or a little more…

M: What is your purpose when checking Instagram? What do you expect to see in there?

P: I like to see the pictures of my friends, and I like to see the pictures of people that are making and posting fashion related content.

M: Then, how would you summarize your purpose of using Instagram?

P: The main purpose is to get inspiration from other persons that are posting something about fashion.

M: How do these persons inspire you?

P: Because I like the way they wear the clothes, as well as, how they combine certain garments and colors. I just like the way they do fashion.

M: Do you have any favorite Instagram influencer?

P: Not really, but I have some accounts that I like to check often.

M: Who is the one that you like the most? or the one that has the nicest style according to you?

P: I like Mariano Di Vaio.

M: I also like him! Why do you like him? Can you tell me something about him?

P: Yes, he is married and has a baby; I don’t know if it’s a boy or a girl… I think he’s from Italy.

M: Your are also married… Do you think that you like Mariano Di Vaio because he’s married as you?
P: Yes, maybe.

M: Do you find Mariano Di Vaio attractive?

P: Yes, sometimes.

M: What do you mean?

P: I mean that he’s not good looking all the time. Only in a few pictures. Because he has not only one style, he has a lot…

M: How would you describe the style that you like the most from Mariano Di Vaio?

P: I like the most trendy styles. I love his jackets, I can say is a casual style.

M: Do you think that your own casual style is similar to the one from Mariano Di Vaio?

P: No, I don’t think so. We don’t wear the same types of clothes, I think…

M: Then, why do you like him?

P: I like him as a source of inspiration, but not for doing the same things.

M: Ok, then is like he inspires you, but afterwards you don’t wear the same clothes…

P: Exactly.

M: Is it because he wears expensive clothes?

P: When I buy clothes, I don’t look at the price. I only think about the style, I think in a visual way. I don’t care about the prices.

M: Then why don’t you wear similar clothes to the ones from Mariano Di Vaio?

P: I just don’t like it.

M: I found it wear that you like him, but that you don’t share his clothing taste… How do you feel when you see the pictures of Mariano Di Vaio?

P: I have never think about that… Sometimes I feel like I want to look like him, because I like his outfits.

M: Would you like to have a wardrobe like his?

P: Yes.

M: Do you interact with him in Instagram? I mean, leave comments on his pictures, or likes?
P: I don’t do it. I just like to see the pictures in terms of inspiration. Maybe I think I like his jacket but not his t-shirt. Maybe I would have combine that jacket with another t-shirt or shirt…

M: How would you describe your relationship with Mariano Di Vaio? Why do you follow him?

P: I don’t know… I think I follow him because I like his lifestyle.

M: Do you think that you know the personality of this person just by the pictures he posts in Instagram?

P: No, I don’t think so…

M: Do you think he is similar to you in some ways?

P: Yes, he is interested in fashion as me. He is also travelling all the time, and that’s something I would like to do too. Maybe that’s another reason why I follow him. I like to see which kind of clothes, and how he wears them when he is travelling.

M: Do you think he is missing something in his Instagram profile, or that he can improve something?

P: No, I think he is very original.

M: Do you think that you can get something from Mariano Di Vaio by looking at his Instagram pictures?

P: Inspiration and motivation as well. Motivation is because when I look at his pictures I think ‘wow, this person is doing something good, and I could do the same’. I mean in another way, but a similar thing.

M: Tell me a couple of things that you believe you have in common with him.

P: We like fashion too much, but also travelling, and we like colorful clothes, prints, shirts…

M: And some differences?

P: He has a very public life. I don’t post all the things I do during my day, everyday.

M: No, I guess that would be boring to post picture while you are working at the store… Do Mariano has sponsored posts and collaborations with brands?

P: Yes, he has. He collaborates with Nohow, I like that brand.

M. Do you like it because Mariano Di Vaio advertises it or you liked it from before?

P: No, I like it because of Mariano Di Vaio.
M: How do you feel when he has this sponsored posts? Do you see them as advertisements? Do you feel comfortable with them?

P: Yes, I feel comfortable. It can be seen as he is trying to sell me something but I can decide if I want to buy it or not. Although I prefer posts when he is showing outfits or something like that. I don’t care if it’s a collaboration with a brand.

M: Have you ever buy something that Mariano advertises?

P: No, never. I think those products are expensive…

M: Have you ever buy something from another influencer?

P: No, never. I’m not interested about buying something that other people use. I like to buy things that I want myself, not the things an influencer tells me to buy…

M: So it is just a source of inspiration…

P: Exactly, I would never buy a product that an influencer advertises…

M: But if you have more money… then would you buy things that Mariano Di Vaio promotes?

P: No, I don’t think so. Because I like to go to the stores, see the clothes, try them… I don’t like to buy from the Internet…

M: If you can buy those products that Mariano endorses at a store, would you buy them then?

P: Why not?

M: Would you feel like you are copying him?

P: No, I think I have my own style; I just get a little of inspiration from Mariano Di Vaio sometimes.

M: Would you like the same way Mariano Di Vaio if he were homosexual?

P: Yes, I would like him because I just like his style. I don’t care about his sexual orientation.

M: Ok, that was all from my side… Thank you very much!

P: Thank you very much, this was very interesting!

**Sara’s interview:**

M: Hi, good evening! As you know my name is Maria. I’m studying a MSc program in Fashion Management and Marketing at The Swedish School of Textiles. At the moment I am writing my MSc thesis, which is about how identification with fashion influencers in Instagram can affect the customers’ purchase intention. You are now going to answer some questions regarding your Instagram usage, the influencers you follow… If you have
questions, or don’t understand something you can just interrupt me and ask...The interview will be recorded, your answer will be transcribed and published with the rest of the thesis. Also a brief description of yourself will be published along with a picture of your favorite influencer. Now it’s your time for describing yourself.

S: Ok, so my name is Sara and I’m 24 years old, I’m french... I’m really into fashion, but unfortunately I don’t study fashion even if I would love to. I tried to attend a fashion school in France but I had other priorities, and like things in life that make you not really able to reach what you want. I moved to Sweden and I decided to stay in the fashion industry, so I am working at Zara now. So I think I’m really in the heart of fashion.

M: Why do you like fashion so much?

S: I think that I am somebody that’s really into art. I’m painting, I’m drawing, I have a YouTube channel, I like photography… and fashion for me is the best form of art. Really. So I think that’s maybe why…

M: I really agree with you, I think fashion is a good way to show your personality, and how you feel at some moments...How would you describe your style then?

S: The thing is, I don’t have a style. My style is just like myself. Through fashion I express really how I feel, who I am... so that’s why I cannot say you ‘oh, I’m like streetwear or whatever’... I’m just myself, I buy what I like… I could have like Adidas bomber jacket one day, and have like a really fancy dress the next day. It’s really how I feel and what I like.

M: How would you describe your personality in terms of your style then? For example, if you are outgoing, do you think that your clothes reflect that?

S: I’m trying not to be like everybody, but at the same time I’m following as well the trends, so I don’t know... I don’t think like I’m really common because I don’t like the things that are too common; it’s good as well when you have something that is really basic, but it’s nice to be outstanding as well. I want something that makes a bit the difference too.

M: Of course, do you think that other people see you like that, as you describe yourself right now?

S: I don’t know what people think, but I know I have some contact with people that like my style, that like some garments that I have, my outfits... There also some people that ask me for advice as well. That’s really flattering. Of course, not everybody like how I dress up, but the people that do, I really appreciate it.

M: What are your favorite brands and why?

S: I would say… do you mean like couture? or the things that I really buy?

M: You can tell me both, just which brands and the reasons you wear them...

S: I love Zara really. Mango and Zara, both of these brands look alike, really, if you go to Zara you will see things that you see in Mango and vice versa. The thing is that for Zara, I know that they get inspired by what they see on the catwalk, by the collections of designers. I
think that is pretty interesting, and they have some things which you can use for creating outfits that going to be outstanding from the rest, and basic garments as well; and they have very good basics. So that’s why. From both of these brands, something that I really like is that they have very interesting garments. In the couture, I really like Gucci, Valentino and Chloé. Even if that, of course, I can’t afford it all the time, almost never… yes, they are three designers that I really like.

M: Gucci has become very popular on Instagram and social media, do you like it because of that? or do you like it from before…

S: Actually, I’m not really following the big designers on social media. I’m more into fashion magazines, like the press concerning the designers… Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, and things like this. Then the social media, the social media for me, it’s really more about to follow the influencers in Instagram; I don’t have Twitter, but I use Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat…It’s really more like this.

M: How many times a day do you use Instagram them?

S: Oh my god… like way too much. I don’t know I use it quite a lot, I know that I have to charge my phone like twice a day.

M: What is your main purpose for using Instagram?

S: Like you have art, because in some photos I love when they show very nice outfits, or a very nice panorama as well. But it can be somebody in front of a wall with a very nice outfit, it’s something that I found very pleasure to look at. So it’s to at art and appreciate some good photos, and as well, to look what are the last trends and how get ideas for an outfit for example. Yes, things like these.

M: What I understood from what you said is that you use Instagram mainly to keep in touch with fashion…

S: Exactly!

M: Ok, for how long have you been using Instagram?

S: Actually not that long, I started to use it on 2016.

M: When you went into Instagram then, was it because you were interested in fashion? or that is something that you have developed through the years…

S: The thing is that I’m not really that into social media. I’m really like on Facebook, like everybody and I was not in Instagram. When I discovered that I was like ‘ok…I’m gonna go for style and things like this’, but my main purpose was because I was starting a diet, and I wanted to publish my journey. It was motivating for me, and why not motivating others as well. After some time, I discover all the fashion universe that belongs to Instagram. So I started to post outfits and makeup, and actually those are the posts where I think I have most views and likes.
M: Do you interact with other users in Instagram? Or do you just keep it for yourself and prefer not to socialize.

S: I like to socialize. It’s what I said you, I’m really happy when people say that my outfit is nice, or my makeup is nice. I think it’s good to interact with people. Even negative comments, if someone waste time to talk to you, and to say you nice or bad things… ‘ok, you take your time, I will take two minutes of my life to answer you’.

M: Do you follow influencers?

S: Yes, I do.

M: Who is your favorite influencer?

S: I have quite a lot actually, from a little around the world. I really like Zoella, I really like her YouTube channel, and her Instagram content; what I like about it is that you have fashion, but it’s not like 100% fashion. You have style and things, and the fashion is always included in the content. I have Chiara Ferragni as well, from Italy. Like she’s so amazing. And you have a french girl as well, who is called Betty Autier. Her style is really close to what they do in the brand Celine or Chloé, it’s something really cool, really parisian basically. And I don’t know… I kind of like it.

M: From these three, who is your favorite?

S: I can’t tell…

M: So you cannot select just one… like for instance, Chiara is the best?

S: The thing is like yes, probably Chiara would be the best because she can show you a content with very couture things, and very classy, and things that you like to look at like ‘oh my god, that it’s artsy’. She can do outfits that even yourself can recreate, so yes, I think that Chiara is the best one.

M: Have you ever interact with her, like leaving comments to Chiara, did she reply, or something?

S: No, I don’t really leave comments to be honest. I give likes of course, but I really never comment on anything.

M: Do you think that you can know Chiara’s personality just by looking at her pictures on Instagram?

S: I don’t know, because let’s be honest, you can show whatever you want on social media, and as well, it’s her job. I think that she can feel like really depressed one day, and on the same day she has a photoshoot, so she has to be smiling and being very professional; so I don’t think that through social media you can know somebody.

M: How would you describe your relationship with this influencer? Do you just follow them? or do you try to engage more?
S: They try to inspire people, and that’s probably their main goal. And that’s is also my relationship with the influencer, they inspire me, and I don’t feel anything like personal with them. It’s just like really inspiration.

M: How do you feel when you look at Chiara’s pictures and she is wearing this amazing outfit, looking perfect… how does make you feel?

S: I feel like I wanna go shopping! I don’t know… it’s just make me feel like never negative. Fashion never make me feel negative. Of course, you have some things that make you feel worse, like little bit more touchy subjects, but when it comes to outfits… I mean that’s art so, she or anybody can express themselves the way they want. You can like it or not, but I have never felt like any negativity, I always feel like positive, even if I don’t like it…

M: For example, do you feel like you want to be like Chiara, or that you want to have her clothes…

S: No, it’s really like everybody is different, she is how she is, and I am who I am, so of course I would feel like that t-shirt is really nice and I would check it, because she put like the credit about where she bought it, so I would maybe check Moschino if the t-shirt is from Moschino. I would see that t-shirt, and then I would see another one…

M: By looking at the content she publishes, do you think she is missing something?

S: I don’t know to be honest. They like fashion, and that’s what they want us to feel too, I guess… I don’t know how to answer that to be honest. I told you, in Instagram, in social media, you can make people think what you want, you show what you want. It’s not something that I could answer like exactly.

M: Apart from your interest in fashion, do you think that you have things in common with Chiara?

S: No, I don’t know her personally so… I mean apart from the interest in fashion and having blue eyes, I don’t know. For saying that I officially have something in common with someone, I need to know that person personally. It’s really not something that I can feel in social media, because for me it’s something that it’s not authentic, it’s not true.

M: Could you answer if you feel identified with her somehow?

S: I can’t identify to anybody else than myself. Like really not. With social media it’s good to really get, at least from my opinion, to get inspiration, follow the trends, and it kind of helps as well sometimes for see how to combine some garments together… but I can’t identify to anybody because everybody is different. Everybody have their personality, their way to see the things, so really not…

M: As every other influencer, Chiara has sponsored post. How do you feel about them?

S: I don’t mind. It’s her job and that’s good for her. It’s probably the best.

M: I mean, that maybe you feel like she’s trying to sell you something…
S: Really not, because you have a lot of influencers that are very honest, and you have some
that would say ‘oh my god, this product is so good, bla bla bla’, so when it comes to that, I
have decided that if even they sell very good their products, I will always test it by myself. I
did once the mistake, a girl was promoting a mascara from Shiseido, and I bought it; it was
really expensive and I was so disappointed, it was really my young beginning at Instagram.
Never again, I just stay truth to myself. If I wanna try something, I try in the shop, a take a
tester, I see by myself, but I’m not gonna buy something because an influencer promoted it. I
could if it’s good quality, if it’s something that is nice, that I feel like is a good product, then
yes. But I need to see it, or to test it.

M: Do you trust influencers?

S: It’s not like I don’t trust them, but it’s not because Zoella is gonna say ‘oh, this foundation
is amazing’ that I would be like ‘I need to buy that foundation’.

M: How do you feel when you see a normal post from Chiara with clothes that are not being
advertised, in compared with when she advertises certain brands. Do you see the sponsored
post as the same?

S: Again it’s her job…

M: It’s different, because her job is to do the advertise, but in these pictures which are not
being used for getting money… do you see them as more reliable?

S: Let’s say, entertainment is her job as a blogger, so I really don’t mind. If I’m not interested
in what she promotes, I’m not gonna go and check what it is, and if I’m interested in
something that she’s not promoting, I’m gonna look for it. So for me there’s not a difference,
I’m not gonna be ‘oh my gosh, she’s promoting something…’. I know some persons really
have a negative perceptions about influencers promoting and having free samples, and things
like this. I’m really not this kind of person. Is just good for them, and if I’m interested
interested in something they promote, I’ll go and see, if I’m not, then whatever, I even don’t
look at it.

M: This influencers wear usually these very expensive clothes, like Chanel bags, Gucci belts,
and so on...How do you feel about that? Would you like to have these expensive products?
Would you buy them if you had the money?

S: Of course, I love fashion. So even if they don’t promote something, and that’s please me…
the only barrier you have is yourself, if you want something like you can have it, why would
you stop yourself? I know I want the Gucci belt, I know when I want it, and I’m starting to
save for it, because I can’t purchase it like right now; so of course, I’m saving to have it,
because that’s something that I really want. If I see them having nice clothes, I will just enjoy
the content, and think that is a really nice outfit…

M: The Gucci belt is something that you have seen in Instagram during the last year a lot,
would you say that you want it because of the advertisement that many people have done to
Gucci? or did you wanted from before?

S: Really not.
M: I mean it’s something that is everywhere, like ‘how to combine the Gucci belt’...

S: Exactly, I know how you feel… I really hope that is something I’m not gonna regret. I know I saw it a lot, and it something that I actually need, so I was like ‘ok, I need a belt with a very good quality, and this one suits a lot of outfits’; I think it enhances a lot of outfits, sometimes is that little detail… so I was like, ‘ok, why not?’; I really feel what you say, for example last year everybody had Levi’s t-shirts, and that something that I wanted before that trend started to spread everywhere, and unfortunately I bought it after I saw everybody wearing it; and I swear to you I wore that t-shirt two times. I regret a lot to have bought it. I’ve seen it so many times, so much, that now it’s like I just can’t.

M: Wouldn’t you feel the same with the Gucci belt, because that something like the Levi’s t-shirt, is everywhere…

S: It’s not…

M: It’s kind of like the same description, in the sense that is a product that is so popular right now…

S: Exactly, as I told you I’m saving for it, so I will have a pretty good amount of money… when I’m gonna be facing the belt, trying it, and see if it’s really something that I want, what I feel for, and if not then… like a have a pretty good amount of money, I’m sure I can buy another belt somewhere else.

M: The Hermès one, I think that’s a better investment. Apart from the Shiseido mask, have you ever bought a product that is advertised by an influencer? A fashion product, like a t-shirt, jeans, shoes…

S: Let me think… I don’t think so. It’s really like, for example Zoella she did a video, a Zara haul a while ago, and she bought a bag in rafia, and I saw that bag in real and I thought it was really nice. But still I don’t know if I’m gonna buy it or not. Influencers don’t push me to buy, I don’t feel like I have to have something because I saw that person having it. I really don’t think so to be honest.

M: If you, for example, purchase that bag that Zoella has… Would you feel like you are imitating her style?

S: No, really not because, again, like everybody is different and they are here to influence you, and they are here to give you ideas. So Zara didn’t make that bag just like one for her, they make billions and billions for like a lot of people… and they give you ideas, so if I buy the bag, I wouldn’t think I’m so much like her. I feel that she showed me that bag, and that’s pretty nice, so why not?, but it doesn’t mean that I’m gonna wear it exactly how she wear it. I don’t feel like her or like anybody at all.

M: We are almost done… you feel that influencers don’t influence you, they are more a source of inspiration… I would say that your relationship with them is kind of cold… Do you think that these influencers are attractive? Like good looking people.

S: Of course! Everybody is beautiful. There’s nobody that is ugly. Everybody is beautiful, everybody has something unique. Imagine if we were all looking the same, that would be
horrible. Everybody have very different influencers and YouTubers they like… that’s amazing.

M: Wouldn’t you follow, for example Chiara, because she is pretty and have a nice body?

S: I follow Chiara, but I follow as well Nikkie Tutorials, who is a plus size girl and she’s absolutely gorgeous. She’s really beautiful, it has nothing to do with her body shape, or whatsoever, is just because I like her content.

M: Why do you like the content of Nikkie Tutorials?

S: She does amazing makeup. It’s really like she has a friendly tone, she’s very cool and nice to watch and listen to, so yes.

M: Do you like the things that she promotes more than the things that Chiara promotes?

S: No, they do very different things. The one does fashion and the other is more about makeup. But it’s not because like ‘oh, she is plus size… she is so beautiful, I’m gonna buy what she endorses’. Is like you have a good content, you promote good products, if it’s something that she got a new palette, I’m interested in… like some days ago, last weekend, I saw a palette from Too Faced, and I went to Sephora and I didn’t like it in real; I bought something else instead which I thought it was better for me. It’s not like I’m going to like something more because they promote it.

M: I already know that you are straight but I have to ask… if your favorite influencers were gay, would you still following them or admiring them the same way?

S: Even if I’m straight I have absolutely no problem with gay influencers, on the contrary! They sometimes bring a different vision, they got talent… I mean I just see them as a person no matter who they are. I don’t really follow fashion gay influencers, or maybe I don’t know it, but I follow and I admire the work of Mua Jake Warden and Flawless Kevin, and let’s be honest they are awesome and hilarious; and one of my favorite french youtuber (Emma Cakecup) is gay and she is gorgeous, smart, and super funny. So no, it does bring something more and nothing less. I just love the person and the talent.

M: That was all, thanks a lot! Have a nice weekend.

S: The same!

Laura’s interview:
M: Hi, thank you very much for your time and interest in my project. We are researching if identification with fashion influencers in Instagram affects customers’ purchase intention towards the fashion products the influencer advertises. Don’t worry because your answers will be treated anonymously. I will start by saying something about myself, I’m studying the last year of a MSc program in Fashion Management and Marketing, but I also work as a salesperson and I’m really into fashion, fashion influencers and Instagram; that’s why I’m researching this topic. You can also tell me about yourself.
L: Well, I study fashion design actually, this is my fourth year. Usually I study in Holland, although I’m Spanish, but I moved to Holland for my studies and now I’m living in Sweden for my exchange, also during my studies. As you can imagine, I’m really into fashion in general, because that’s what I want to work with.

M: What are your sources of inspiration when it comes to fashion?

L: Usually I have quite social-related collections, so when I’m going to design I research into what is going on nowadays, and why we act the way we do. The most recent collection I’m working with right now is about anomalies, and how we treat people that look a bit different, in a different way, and maybe they don’t feel different at the beginning of their lives but we, the rest of the society, that are supposed to be normal standard, make them feel different. So, it’s mostly a bit psychological and society-related so it’s also directly related to fashion. Fashion is really society related.

M: Of course it is, that is what I like about fashion actually… What other hobbies do you have apart from fashion?

L: Since I started my studies all my hobbies are mostly fashion related, but usually I would do a lot of dancing, that is kind of my biggest hobby if I have time, any kind of dance, I guess the most interesting to me would be contemporary dance. Actually the collection I’m working with right now, I’m doing a collaboration with contemporary dancers as well. So I guess it’s also quite influenced by movement the, related to the question you asked before. And besides that… I don’t know… I guess socializing, going outdoors, doing some sports, or just going for food. I’m really millennial. That’s not really a hobby, I guess.

M: When it comes to your own style, how would you describe it?

L: I wouldn’t say minimal, but comfortable. I try to be stylish in a comfortable way. Since I’m surrounded all the time by people working in fashion, being stylish is a requirement, and you do it unconsciously. It’s something that I can wear during the weekends, it’s quite sober as well, like I have a lot of grey and black pieces, but with a little bit of a twist I guess. The details are quite important to me. I don’t know how I would describe it…

M: Do you think that your style describes your personality?

L: Yes, I think it would because I’m also quite a comfortable person, but also a bit difficult. I think about myself as I think about the outfits I’m wearing, but in a really simple way, I don’t make it too difficult for myself. And I think I’m a bit like this, if something becomes too difficult to me, if I have to put too much personal effort, I don’t really go for it, unless it’s challenging, you know…

M: Do you think that other persons see your style as you have described it?

L: I guess so, it depends because, for example, friends that are not studying fashion at all and have different backgrounds, they always say that I’m dressing up a bit too much, but for me that’s not something… because as I said, I try to look for outfits that looks good but are also comfortable; so for them is like looking too polished, but for me it’s just mainstream and normal. But the friends I have within fashion, I think they would it’s quite normal style. I don’t think I’m really striking.
M: Do you use Instagram?
L: Yes, I do.
M: Since when do you use it?
L: I can look it up… I think that seven years probably. I’m not really sure…
M: Why did you get into Instagram?
L: I think I downloaded it when I was quite a teenager, in 2013, like ‘oh, there’s this new app…’. I just downloaded because it was like a cool new app, and I wanted to try it with my friends, but I guess I didn’t use it so much then, and now I’m using it a lot for inspiration, and more for keeping up, because otherwise it’s hard to know what’s going on. It’s really important for me to do that…
M: How many times a day do you think you use Instagram?
L: Way too many, I couldn’t count I think. It depends, but I’m probably sure more than ten times a day… way too many times…
M: Why is the main reason for using Instagram right now? Apart from inspiration, I mean…
L: Yes, right now because they have Instagram Stories as well, I publish a lot of content when I’m having fun, or when I see something, either inspirational or if I see my friend dancing or whatsoever… so I guess it’s something social as well, not only inspirational, but social with my friends. The Stories are to check what my friends are up to. Really millennial as well. I think that would be mostly it..
M: When it comes to inspiration, which type of influencers do you follow?
L: So I follow a lot of artist, but bloggers as really influencers, I used to follow a lot , and now I follow less, I think because I have more knowledge about fashion, and I follow the bigger brands mostly, rather than the influencer themselves, but of course the bigger brands publish the influencers pictures as well, all the collaborations…
M: Why do you prefer to follow brands instead of following influencers?
L: Because I think influencers have their own style, and their purpose it’s to show their style to people, and kind of to advice how they should style it… it could be really cool. But then I also found that there are really good stylists in Instagram… I guess they are also influencers right? Stylists that have an Instagram account, they are also influencers. I think the content from bigger brands, like Balenciaga, they have a variety of collaborations with different influencers, so I’m not only following one style but different styles within the brand.
M: So you prefer to see different influencers, not just one… But is there any favorite?
L: I think that I have two that are the ones that I check out the most, as in real influencers or what I consider more like influencers, and there is one that is called Man Repeller, is from
New York, and it’s a really fun account, it’s not only fashion but they also have lifestyle, they have quite good articles on political themes, but mostly fashion of course.

M: Is it not a person we are talking about?

L: She used to be a person, is Leandra Medine, and she was the one running the account, but now, because she has been there for so long, she has a whole team, that’s man repeller, so it’s a whole team producing articles and content for the website.

M: Is there any special person that you follow? For example Chiara Ferragni…

L: Yes, I follow her of course, she’s like the queen. But that’s why I follow her, because I think you have, as a fashion person you have to keep up with what she’s doing because she is so important right now. But I think my favorite person would be one that is called Love Aesthetics, and it’s really minimalistic. I think that’s why I follow her because it’s impressive how minimalistic and how wide she can be. It’s really clear, she’s really cool as well, so that something that catch my attention in compare, for example, to the Man Repeller, which is so over the top.

M: You also described your style as minimalistic, could it be one of the reasons you follow this girl?

L: Yes, I think so. But she is way more minimalistic, I think that’s why because I can relate to that.

M: Is there any other reasons why you follow her? Or just because of the style and the clothes?

L: I think I also started to follow her because she was doing a lot of DIY as well on her outfits, and the accessories she was wearing, she was making them herself. I think she also studied design, and then she became more like a blogger, she was cool. I think she is also from Amsterdam so I can relate to her even more because I used to live there…

M: Yes, I can see that you have many things in common with her… share the same studies, style…
L: Yes, I’ve never realized…

M: But that’s cool. In terms of lifestyle, do you think you follow the same lifestyle as her?

L: Of course, I’m student and she’s already working and earning a lot of money, so I guess she has more like an elevated lifestyle, she is also invited to all these cool events that I can’t access so…No, I don’t think we have the same lifestyle, but maybe a bit. As I said, I go out quite often for food, socialize… and this is really what bloggers also do, so…

M: How would you describe your relationship with her?

L: The thing is that I have grown to have this weird relationship with influencers, of course it wasn’t easy for them but it became very easy to have this lifestyle and not really do anything… of course they are working, it’s a different kind of work, but it’s not like I’m
admiring them, it’s just cool and of course I wish I have the same job. So maybe it’s also because of jealousy; a little bit of admiration and jealousy, but I hate myself for that.

M: Do you interact with this person? Comment and like the pictures she posts…

L: No, I’m not that active in this aspect. I’m active into looking into the content, but usually I don’t really like or comment. Only my friends’ pictures.

M: How do you feel when you see a very cool picture of this woman?

L: I don’t know how I feel…

M: Would you like to have the same clothes as her…or…

L: Yes, yes...probably.

M: Do you think that she is attractive and good looking?

L: Yes, I think so. She has a weird face though...is not the kind of person that you would say is so beautiful, but she is special.

M: Does she sponsor some products?

L: I think so, I’m not really sure but I guess so because she also tags the brands that she is wearing, and she has been invited with DJs to some places that are usually sponsored.

M: How do you feel about this content that is paid?

L: I think that I don’t follow so many influencers because sometimes the brands, or the sponsorships control their style, and it’s not their own style anymore. So I don’t really like it so much, but of course they have to get something from somewhere to be able to keep publishing content.

M: In compare with a normal post, how do you feel with sponsored posts…

L: I think that as long as the content is good, it’s not like ‘oh I bought this Prada shoes…’, but actually you do something about it, then it’s nice. Because of course they want to sponsor, and that’s a very clever idea. I think it’s very clever to do sponsorships and I really like it if it’s something interesting. Otherwise is just another pair of shoes on another person, you know…

M: How would you describe ‘something interesting going on…’

L: As I said, there’s lot of people wearing Prada shoes, so if you have a twist on the picture, you are just not taking a selfie with the pair of shoes, instead you go somewhere that is not so often portrayed, or just style it on a cooler way, just not the basic picture with a pair of shoes. I think it’s hard nowadays to do a very interesting post.

M: Does the influencer you follow these kind of twists?
L: Well, I think she does it because she is so minimalistic in a way, it’s really her style, that even if she has these Prada shoes, I’m giving the same example, she still would wear them with her really minimalistic clothes, and with a really minimalistic style, even though Prada shoes can sometimes be very extreme and if you put them with red, blue or whatever… she really keeps it with her own way, and that’s something important.

M: Would you prefer that she advertises more affordable products?

L: I think that she does advertise less expensive things, yes maybe why not…but I would say that rather than less expensive things, less important designers. There are lot of designers out there that are willing to do sponsorships or collaborations… then the balance becomes more equal. You know, I was doing this internship at Anne Sofie Madsen, it’s a danish brand, and we would ship a lot of clothes to Kim Kardashian, and all these people, and Nicki Minaj, but then the people don’t really tag the brand; they wear it and have been spotted with the clothes but they don’t feel it’s a sponsorship because it’s not such a big brand. So I think they should also take care of this kind of sponsorships. Maybe the brand could have been also more… asking for it more for mention and tag them somewhere, but it’s a bit hard to tell these people to do that. If they don’t want to, they are not gonna do it… you know.

M: Anyway, it seems like in general you have a positive image of sponsored posts…

L: Yes, it is positive of course, but not for Prada, it is also positive but it is so easy to sponsor Prada; but I think that as a way for making awareness for some other designers, or whatever the company is, they need a bit of a push, because I think that right now there’s no balance. There’re big brands and small brands, but then in between there’s a huge gap.

M: Have you ever think about buying one of the products the influencer advertises?

L: I did buy things before I studied fashion, actually I remember I was following this brand I bought a coat from them, through Instagram even. It was a spanish brand, but I can’t remember which, it was a long time ago.

M: But it was a brand, not an influencer…

L: I saw that an influencer was wearing it and she tagged the brand. And then I looked up the brand, and it wasn’t expensive so I bought the coat. But I think that was the last thing I purchased and that was a long time ago.

M: Why after have studied fashion you don’t do it anymore?

L: I think I’ve become more critical with the whole world. I’m more aware of what’s going on, and I know more brands than I did before.

M: How are you more critical? Is it in terms of materials, production, or…

L: Yes, materials, production, and as I just explained I think the system is really not balanced, and I think that there are a lot of brands out there that could be as cool as the bigger brands. Of course I wish I could buy things from Balmain, or Balenciaga, or these things of course...But in general, I buy less clothes since I study fashion, because when I go to the store
and then I see all the pockets placed super strange, or this is not properly stitched… I don’t feel like spending money on these. So that’s quality wise, and material wise.

M: But if an influencer wears and endorse these brands you are mentioning… would you consider to purchase then?

L: Yes, I think so. They put it there and as I say they also make this kind of jealousy. You wish you were as cool as they are. So yes, I think they put the desired on you through the sponsorship.

M: What was your first motivation when you bought the coat?

L: I think it was this trendy coat, and then fur was quite in and then I thought I would look super cool in this coat. She really portrayed in a nice way and I thought that I would look as good as she did.

M: Didn’t you feel like you were copying her? Did you feel good?

L: Yes, I guess, but I felt good about wearing it. Of course, it was a while ago, I don’t know how I would feel right now; but also unless you are copying the whole outfit, you are never really copying…it something that is out there anyway, and you can buy it even though you are not seeing it on the person. If you style it differently, you are not really copying, no?

M: Do you remember any other thing that you have bought through Instagram? Or considered to buy through Instagram?

L: Yes, jewellery, for example, it’s something that I have considered buying quite often through Instagram. I found these brands that are quite minimalistic but cute, and it’s hard to found those.

M: How did you find these brands? Was it through influencers?

L: I think through influencers, yes. When you see them in a picture it’s like ‘oh she’s wearing a cute bracelet’ or something I would wear, and then you tap on the picture and the brand is tagged, and you go to the account, and then you start following them, and then you want to buy the things…

M: Why you haven’t purchase one of these items?

L: I really tried but there were something wrong with the shipment because I was already living in Holland and it was a brand from Spain, so I thought I would buy it when I were in Spain again, but I forgot about it then, so I have never bought it. There’s also this sunglasses, that now have sponsored advertisement in Instagram, they popped out on my feed and I thought that those glasses were cool. It was not through influencers but through advertisement, and I also wanted to buy them, but same thing… I’m not living in Holland anymore, I’m here so I thought that when I’m back in Amsterdam the shipping costs would be less, so I would buy when I’m there.

M: It seems that you want to buy the products that you see on Instagram…
L: Yes, that’s true.

M: Do you think that these influencers are missing something?

L: A while ago, I would miss the realness of influencers but more and more, they are being more real and more true to what their life really is…

M: How do you feel that?

L: Because before it used to be really posed, a few years ago everything was really posing for pictures; but nowadays the pictures are more daily life as well, even though they are framed or with a filter; there are bloggers that show their parents, their kids, what she is doing, and if she looks ugly she doesn't care… I think they are becoming more real, but that’s something society also wants because, at some point, we got also a little bit sick of not getting to their level…

M: I think that is also a way or feeling more identify with a person, seeing that they also have normal lifes…

L: Yes, exactly…

M: This minimalistic influencer that you follow… Is she also doing this?

L: Yes, I think so, because she also have a daughter and a husband… I never knew that before but now in her stories and some of the pictures, she also portrays them. She’s also posting behind the scenes pictures, and I have never seen that before, only recently.

M: Did you like to discover this part of her life?

L: Yes, I like to discover that they are also fun, when they are more natural, you see that they are laughing, or doing stupid things… I think that they are also fun, they are not just these perfect people.

M: How do you feel about the fact that she’s a mother?

L: Well, I’m not a mother yet. I don’t really relate to that.

M: What would you thing if your favorite influencer were gay? Would you still like her the same or feel identified with her?

L: I wouldn't mind the influencer being gay, in fact I follow other influencers that are. Fashion is about self expression and identity, so sexuality shouldn’t be a problem; it should rather embrace all kinds of sexuality. I would like her the same. As on identifying with her… I probably would. Not on the sexual orientation, but I’m sure we would share other aspects in life, style interest, etc…

M: Ok, we are done. Thanks a lot!

L: You are welcome!
Max’s interview:

C: This interview is going to be used for my Thesis, it’s going to anonymous I’m not going to
tell who you are or anything about you; it is going to be secret. Can you tell me about
yourself, like what’s your name, where are you from, you job and your experience in the past.

M: My name is Max, I’m 25 years old, I come from Gothenburg, and I’m Swedish and study
at Borås textile school of fashion. I worked as a counter manager for Dior for 3 years.

C: So you considered as someone who has a fashion background?

M: I do, I also studied fashion design in 2011 at the Borås textile school of fashion, I just did
a basic course for 1 year. After that year I got a lot of jobs around clothing, so I have done
some jobs for artists and such, but then it kind of become accelerated and it is a bit too much
so I have to choose between work and making clothes so I chose to work and now I’m back.

C: What is your hobby or activities that you like to do in your free time or on holiday?

M: I don’t quite see me as a hobby guy. I don’t do specific sports, but I like a long talk with
people, so I like meeting friends, talking about my life, their life. I like to travel, trying to go
to quite exotic places, to experience thing and to get inspired. Then there is always something
like either me going with my family to some place, or I’m currently renovating my apartment
while I’m doing school and working, so it’s like there’s always something so it’s not that I
just sit.

C: How would you describe your personal fashion style?

M: That is so hard I think, first of all I’m 100 percent into womens wear so I feel really bad at
men’s clothing in general.

C: In general, don’t you like men’s wear?

M: Like, I like it, but I don’t feel comfortable making it myself. So I don’t feel like I have that
type of interest.

C: But when it comes to dressing yourself, how do you see it?

M: That’s being said, dressing myself I just like... I just, try to look like, a bit tougher than I
am. So I think I try to build like a really strong, and a bit like, ‘don’t talk to me’ persona when
people see me. And then when they actually talk to me, I think I would like them meet the
opposite, so it’s like clashing and contradictory.

C: Wow that’s nice, very impressive. And how would you describe your outfit today? Can
you describe it?

M: It is actually quite funny, cause just some days ago... I usually don’t buy clothes but I got a
flash in my head telling me that you need to buy something new. And I got really inspired by
those really like white trash wolf painted t-shirts and sweater, so I went out to every store,
picking all the wolf printed t-shirt and shirts I could find, so I think I bought like a collection
of 15 pieces with printed wolf.
C: Oh I see now, this one is on fire.

M: So this one is a, the crazy Harley Davidson fiery wolf. So that is what I’m wearing together with a jeans jacket in black with some studs on it.

C: Would you say that your outfit today kind of reflects your personal style that you said earlier, like to be like a strong.

M: I think it really does. And I always try to incorporate some history into it. Like some personal thing. So for example, the necklaces, the pearls are from my grandma and she passed away not long ago. Then I have a silver necklace and it’s from my father’s mother’s sister, she’s like a silver maker, so she made this one and brace lace. And then I have this Thai charms that I got from a Thai monk I always carry, so these I always carry and then I switch up the other jewelry sometimes.

C: How do you think, since you said that you kind of portray a strong look and ‘don’t talk to me’ look. How do you think people see you, like others? Do you think that they see you as you see yourself?

M: No, maybe, but I think that’s a bit like experiment with it. Cause I don't know what I see myself when I look at myself, and it’s hard to know what I like people to know or like people to see, me just as me or me or would they like to see the persona or.

C: But then your friends or strangers, when they approach you do you see the differences?

M: That’s really true, cause people that met me the first time and after we kind of get along and they get to know me, they always said like ‘Oh I thought you were such a bitch’, or ‘I thought you were such a diva or such high maintenance, and really like too cool for school and…’.

C: Like you deserved a throne.

M: Yeah yeah yeah, so when they meet me I’m like this really warm and cuddly person I think.

C: Once they got to know you.

M: That’s a part of it.

C: Do you use social media?

M: I do, I use Facebook and I use Instagram, I would say Facebook is like 5 percent, like I just go there and just use messenger, maybe look up some like old old old relatives and friends like that, it’s not something that I use as a communication, in order to look up things or show myself, it’s more like a chat place.

C: For you and your friends and your family.

M: Exactly, but then Instagram is more place where you, at least I find more inspiration, and I try to show me as a brand, or me as somebody trying to become something in fashion.
C: So it’s a platform for you to put your image to the world?

M: I never show, like I do but really really seldomly show myself, I don’t take picture of myself; I have never taken a selfie so I don’t have picture of myself, I just have pictures of what I do, my works and things that inspired me. Cause I think that’s a bit more interesting to get to know a person’s mind instead of a person’s outside.

C: So what is the main purpose that you use Instagram?

M: My main, I use it for networking. I use it as, to get information and to find inspiration, and I use to show people my brand.

C: How many times a day or how often do you open Instagram?

M: It’s so depends on, I would say, at least, probably at least 20 times a day. But I would say that, because I use it as a chat as well, I might use it more often but I don’t look at the pictures but just it as a chat. I also, like when I find somebody interesting, I might get a bit more obsessed with it, and then I might use it more. So I would say about 20 times a day and a bit more when it comes to chat.

C: Can you show me your favorite Instagram influencer? It could be influencer anywhere in the world or someone who is close to you and inspired you.

M: This is interesting, let’s see the first one, oh this one, for example, this is an artist, she’s a painter, she made huge drawing, artworks, from New York, called Kellymariebman and I think she makes amazing pictures. Then I follow a lot of Thai people, because one of my closest friends she is from Thailand. I’m gonna say her name like Davikah, so I find her really beautiful, so she is really just nice to look at, but I don’t think I would find her, as interesting as somebody that would inspired me. I think she is more of a somebody to look at, like the opposite of what I would like to be, cause I don’t take picture myself, I just posted things that I find interesting, but she is the opposite.

C: She does everything that you don’t.

M: Yeah, That really interests me as well. Ok this guy, called Peter Phillip; he’s a creative director of Dior, the makeup. I’ve been following him for quite sometimes. I also have a bit of a contact with him, so sometime we chat, and sometime he likes my pictures and is he really influential so... and this designer I really like her, she’s a Russian designer called Ulyana Sergeenko, she was one of the haute couture clients in the beginning, and then she started her own brand, and she has a really nice concept, and she’s really, she has such a strong branding which I really like, it’s inspiring.

C: So those are the ones that you like. When you about to dress yourself, have you ever look for an inspiration on Instagram?

M: Hmmm, yeah
C: Ok then, do you have any influencer that you like the way he or she dress, that you see his or her outfit or outfits, and then you feel like ok this is attracts my attention and I want to possess one or more of the items that he or she has, or something like that.

M: I actually do, I didn’t think I have but I actually do, he’s called Paulo Roland, and he’s a Filipino model. And I think he is really like, he is really cool, and tough.

C: Ok, he looks tough.

M: Yeah, he’s kind of like, rough edge and really like stylish in a way. Both polish and rough in a way, so yeah I would say him.

C: So you would say that this person inspired you?

M: Yeah.

C: What do you like about him, in terms of appearances? The exterior, what traits about him that you like the most?

M: When I was little, it thought like the look of Asian, really like, clean, so I found that really beautiful. So, he’s from Asia that was one of the things. Then I like his expression, because he looks really like tough. And he’s actually takes pictures, when he takes picture of himself or selfie, he always takes them from a really really low low low angle, so you see underneath his chin, he looks really bad ass, I find that very funny and really cool and really like unusual.

C: Do you find him attractive?

M: Yeah I do, I do.

C: What do you think you have in common with him? And difference?

M: I would say there’s a lots of things we don’t have in common, first of all, our job, he’s model, I’m not. He’s the one that shows himself, I’m not. And I would say he is confident in another way but I am.

C: So you say he is confident in his own way and you are confident in your own way?

M: Yeah, exactly. I think he is confident just showing his outside, and he might not be that confident in his personality or getting to know people; I would say I’m the opposite, and then I would say a thing that we have in common that we both bald, so like just look wise.

C: So you would say you identify with him because he doesn’t have hair and you don’t have hair, so it’s kind of attract you in the way?

M: Yeah, I think I saw him and I found him attractive but then I was like, oh but he’s bald and I’m bald, and I was like, “then I might be able to look a bit cool as well”.

C: It created more like an engagement would you say? when you find something similar from him.
M: Yeah, in the case of him, I would say yes.

C: From looking at his Instagram profile, what kind of feeling, value or impression that it gives you? How does it feel when looking at his pictures?

M: I think it’s a mixed of feelings, it might be a bit of jealousy. He is cool, like I wish I was him, and it might be a bit of like, just a specific vibe, like a don’t give a fuck vibe, and I think that is really attracts me.

C: The persona of his profile, the persona of ‘don’t give a fuck’ attracts you.

M: Yeah exactly.

C: What do you think he lacks off? Or he’s perfectly fine?

M: I think he does, he is really like an outside, like he does posted things about his family and when he meets friends and such, but I don’t think that people are that interested in that, so they just like, scroll through and don’t like it or things like that, and when it’s….., the things that they want a bit of skin or him showing his muscle or him being like, this tough-looking dude, and people like it, and I think that might be a bit hurtful for him. So I could imagine that he needs to be this thing to look at, and nothing more than that. And I think that it might be something he has to work with or that it might be tough for him.

C: Have you ever commented on his profile to encourage him or express your thoughts about him?

M: I have written something when he posted on the Instagram story, things that pop up and then they get removed, and I just written like, cool dude or fire or something, so, nothing more and he never replied so, and I don’t expect him to and I don’t mind.

C: How do you think about fashion products, like clothes that he use, do you think it’s suitable for him? Do you like to see those fashion products on him?

M: Yeah I do, he wears like very special shoes for example, and those I don’t find attractive at all but they kind of fit him and it’s a part of his persona. And then like, I can tell that he’s really into fashion, and he have done some collaboration with making socks and underwear as well, I don’t find them interesting and I wouldn’t buy them.

C: Do you see yourself wearing some of the product that he wears, or most of them, or only some?

M: I wouldn’t say I get inspired by the actual products, I would say the actual items are just a part of an outfit and style. I’m more interested in looks and the feel of it and not the actual garments.

C: Since you just mentioned that he collaborated with underwear, so he sponsored by.

W: Yeah, probably yeah.
C: When you see that kind of sponsored posts, and you compare to the normal posts, how do you feel between those two?

M: I feel that it was properly made and it fitted in with his other things, and it wasn’t, you could tell that it wasn’t like a photo-shoot, but he posted photo shoot and he posted like personal pictures as well, so that wasn’t weird in anyway but, I think I was kind of clear that it was a job that he was really into and that he also designed it himself so on and so on. There always a bit of feel like, when people do collaboration, it just feel like they want to take the opportunity to earn money, which wasn’t something bad cause everybody need to earn a living, if people can do it by that. That’s good but still, at least I get a bit turned off by it.

C: Would you consider buying sponsored product that he portrayed?

M: Me, personally, no.

C: But if you like the vibe, and the product itself combined with the way he portrays it, would you but it?

M: Maybe.

C: Have you ever bought any products that he advertised?

M: No.

C: Have you ever buy any products, just because you got inspired by anybody on Instagram?, like when you scroll through and you got inspired and then you just buy that product.

M: I probably had, I can’t just remember what things, but most probably yes, for example I worked for Dior for many years and they posted lots of things and I can get really like anxious for a product and what something that they are going to release, but nothing direct that I can think of. And I never just gone on to just looking at something and then looking it up and then buy it, probably have it in mind, looking for it or have seen it on Instagram, and maybe look for it maybe 2 months later when I’m shopping, but can’t think of anything specific.

C: How long have you been following this guy? Do you remember?

M: Oh wow, that’s a good question. It would probably be like 3 years.

C: Have you ever follow someone, and then after 3 months or 6 months and then you got bored of them and unfollow them?

M: Yes.

C: But not with this guy. You still hold an interest, right?

M: Yes.

C: Where is he from again?
M: The Philippines, I think his family and he live in Canada. But originally, they’re from the Philippines.

C: Does he play sport?

M: He pumps up at gym a lot, I can tell. But I have no clue if he plays any sport.

C: Would that make you want to go to gym?

M: Oh yeah, like I really need to, I feel like damn I would like to be that.

C: He motivated you.

M: Yeah, yeah, but if I do, that’s a different answer. He does inspire me to work out. Have I done it, maybe not.

C: Would you see yourself hanging out with him, if you have a chance. Would you consider him as one of friends in your squad?

M: I don’t think we would ever be good friend.

C: Why?

M: Cause, I think we have so much in common, I felt like he is a guy guy, like a typical dude.

C: like a typical straight guy?

M: Yeah, and I’m really not like that, I think I try to portray that, trying to like, look a bit tough and slightly straight, just to mind fuck people. But it doesn’t have to be too obvious. But I think his personality is what he has shown.

C: Do you think he is homophobic?

M: No, I don’t think he would be homophobic, but I don’t think we would have anything to talk about. He would be like, do you want to take a smoke, and I would be like, no I don’t smoke, and he would be like ‘ok dude’ and I would be like ‘sure!’, and then he would be like ‘want to grab a beer’, and I don’t drink, maybe some tea, and he would be like ‘what the fuck’, so I don’t think we would get along. But, we would get along, but I don’t think we would have click.

C: But what if like, you put yourself next to him and then take a picture, do you think the vibes of you and him kind of go in the same direction? Would you think it will create the same story and impact?

M: Oh wow, first of all I would never take a picture with him, cause he’s that good looking and I don’t like looking at myself in the picture, so I would never do that, but, no.

C: What if it is not a picture, let’s say, walking together on the street?
M: That would be cool, that would feel badass, I like that, like I like to surround myself with cool people. The look of people that is not the most interesting things, but I love to surrounded myself with different kind of people, so I have friends with super pumped with like lips injection, silicone boobs, like long long long hair, super much makeup, so I have that. And I have like, one of my closest friends, she’s almost 60 and I love to hang out with her, and then I have some friend at school that is really into fashion, they have really cool style, that’s every types of friendship I have is a story by itself.

C: That’s very nice the way you explained it, I’m impressed.

M: Like, I always up for story, cause my dad he works with advertisement and branding, I think I’ve been really......... inspired is a wrong word, but it’s true as well, by him working with what he does, so I’m always trying to build that story and depth behind things, in order for it to become more interesting.

C: Do you have any opinions or feeling toward that guy that you don’t tell me yet?, you can still tell me if you have any.

M: Wow.

C: Would you date him?

M: Yeah if we would hook up, but yeah it is just a fun thought, but I would never actually think about it.

C: What you go through his closet and wear some of this stuffs?

M: I think we would not have the same size, but some items if he would allow me too I would have try, and I think we could bond on accessories or specific styles

C: The way to formulate and outfit and styling skill, you would bonded by that

M: Exactly.

**Jenny’s interview:**

C: Can you to tell me about yourself, your background and your experiences in life?

J: What you wanna know about me, my age?

C: No no no, like your name, where you from.

J: I’m Jenny, and I’m from Finland, I currently living in Sweden. I had bachelor degree in fashion design, and now I’m doing my master in fashion marketing and management, and I’ve worked in fashion retail and e-commerce.

C: For how long that you have worked in fashion retailing?

J: Like in total... I would say 4 years.
C: And how long for the fashion e-commerce?

J: Half a year.

C: Ok, and now you are studying.

J: Yes, now I’m only studying and finishing my degree.

C: Do you have future career goal, or the position that you want to become in the future?

J: Yes and no, I want to work in fashion, but I’m not exactly sure which position, I’m more into merchandising and buying, or something like that, but not like exactly sure what it would be.

C: Ok, you don’t have a position goal, where you are, ok you have to be this.

J: When I went to my first interview as a store assistant, they asked me where I want to be in 10 years, and I said I want to be country manager for Lindex, and that is still something, that is in back of my head, so I have 5 more years to go for that.

C: If you could fast forward, like now.

J: If I could do whatever I want, I would like to be like, a manager for some buying team or design team or something like that.

C: Do you have any hobbies or things that you do in your free time?

J: I do sports, like spinning and things like that, and then traveling, I used to really love interior design, but now cuz I don’t really have a fixed home, so I little bit back, like left it a little bit, but those are the things that I like.

C: How would you describe your personal fashion style, or sense of style?

J: Simple, I would say, maybe people would say Scandinavian, but because I’m from Scandinavia, I can see the differences so I would say more like maybe Copenhagen, not really Swedish though. More like simple, relaxed, maybe some sport vibes on it.

C: Can you explain what you are wearing today?

J: Today I have black high heels, blue jeans, white cotton sweater and a scarf on my neck.

C: Would you say that what you are wearing today is represents your style?

J: Yes and no. It’s yes as it really simple and classic maybe. No, because it’s maybe, this is like the most women-like of my outfits.

C: Aha, so what’s that so women-like, how would you...?

J: Maybe the high heels and stuff.
C: Ok.

J: I usually have high heels but then I have something more relaxed, today I feel ladylike.

C: But normally you would dress a bit more masculine, would you say?

J: Yes, more like no female or no feminine, what you say, like more neutral.

C: How you do think about yourself, in terms of characteristic and personality?

J: I think I come out, quite cold, when you don’t know me, when I meet new people, I really like to like, stand in the back side and see what is going on, but when you know me, I hope I’m funny and trustworthy and opinionated. I would say that who I am.

C: That’s how you think about yourself, how do you think other people see you?

J: Cold, ambitious, boring, that’s what I think people think I am.

C: Have people ever tell you, their opinion about you between before you meet you and after they getting to know you?

J: I have a resting bitch face, so that’s what I have heard, and I know that myself as well, I don’t know if people have told me how they thought I was before we became friends, because, I don’t know, but I think I come out, I think people have told me I come out like really tough, and like I don’t care, and I’m really strong and don’t let other people opinions effect on me. And also nice.

C: Do you use social media? and which you that you use the most?

J: I use social media, I use Instagram, Facebook, Linkedin, Youtube, and those are the channels that I use, and I mostly use Instagram, or Linkedin now because I’m trying to looking for job.

C: Now we gonna talk about your usage of Instagram, so how often in a day do you open Instagram?

J: Many times.

C: Ok, can you give me approximate number?

J: Ten I think, in the morning, during the day, I would say 10, because I think, now if I’m trying to count, 1 in the morning, 2 during the day, then in the evening, it’s maybe 5, but I’m sure I do it more often than I even think about it. I would say 10.

C: What are the main purposes for using Instagram?

J: Checking what people are doing, I think that the most I love, the Instagram Stories, and I use that function a lot, I think that’s what I mainly use now. I’m a bit bored with just pictures, maybe. It’s nice to see the Instagram Stories because I think people also posted more like a
real stuffs because it will go away, but when they posted a picture, it’s more like, maybe they have spent more time on it, and thought about it more, so I think that’s why Instagram Stories are more near or more engaging in me, at least; and I also follow some people of course, that are inspiring, some are my friends, that why I’m interested about what they are doing, some are in fashion industry, maybe they are have a really nice position or their style is nice or something.

C: So you also use Instagram to look for inspiration.

J: Yes.

C: So when we mentioned inspiration, do you also use it to look for inspiration for dressing up yourself?

J: Yes, and maybe more on like, what should I buy, kind of aspect, but then of course that’s like, so what I’m gonna wear. Maybe if I had an idea, like yeah, I need a new dress, then I go through Instagram like what kind of dress people are wearing and if there something that I like, and where it’s from.

C: I believe you have your favourite Instagram influencer, or person who inspired you.

J: I don’t have one.

C: You can have like many.

J: Can I check the name, because I don’t remember any name, and that what I noticed that I think it’s like not cool to follow so many people, so then I don’t follow that many, but I just random, not randomly, I know who I will go and look for but, you know, you just go and check them.

C: I want to see the one that you follow and really admire their, could be like style, or values, or life.

J: Yeah, this is one, Freja Wewer.

C: Ok I’m gonna put here, because I don’t know her. Do you any facts about her? Can you tell me about that?

J: Not really, I like that she is a model, she is from Copenhagen, and I love the Danish style, and that’s what I would like to be, and I like her style. I think it’s like simple, still fun and really like’ I don’t care’ attitude, but still she looks so cool, and I think we both have blonde long hair so we can look the same.

C: That’s interesting, so when you look at her overall feeds, how do you feel? What feelings it gives you?

J: It gives me a feeling that she has a really nice life, and I like how she use, you can see that she is now try to have an outfit posts, but then she also posts picture about ‘ok I’m just hanging here’ so it doesn’t feel that thought out, probably it is, but it feels like, it’s not that like ‘ok you are gonna know what is next picture about’, you know.
C: What do you think you have in common with her, because most of you have like a long blonde hair, what else do you think you have?

J: Well I think because she works as model, so she works in the fashion, so I think when I get a job, we would have the same lifestyle kind of, that’s what I’m hoping for, and also like. How she lives in Copenhagen, that would be so nice to live there, sometimes you can see her flat, I could imagine myself living in that kind of place.

C: She is relatable to you because of?

J: Yeah, because I could see myself living like she is, why I’m not living the life that she is now, it’s basically, I believe the money things, because I’m still a student, so I can’t go out all the time, but she doesn’t post that much pictures like ‘I’m on the fancy holiday’, it’s more like her life, so then it feels like, that’s my life basically.

C: But her fashion sense, do you relate to that?

J: That’s what I would like to look.

C: That’s what you would like to look like, or?

J: Yes, like now I have similar stuffs that she has, but maybe I’m not brave enough to do all the things that she does, or maybe it’s a body thing, because she is a model and I’m not, so then maybe that something that, we are not always wearing the same outfit, or I think I play more safe, and she more edgier, but that is my target, that what I want to look like.

C: Is it has something to do with her hair color or ethnicity?

J: Yeah I think she has the look that I like, so she is really beautiful but it looks like, she doesn’t really use that much of makeup, and she is really natural beauty, and that’s what I like, I don’t like to use that much makeup.

C: For yourself.

J: For myself, yes.

C: When you look at her feeds, do you think if she lacks of something?

J: Even more something about her personal life, it’s always nice to know she more, but then you can watch the Instagram Stories, and there she is more unique and more like herself.

C: Have you ever buy the products that she posted?

J: Not exactly, because like I said I don’t have money for it, but if you go like, up a little bit, there is light grey sweater, I have, not exact the same but you can get the same style, she has Adidas three stripes tracksuit pants, I bought one, not maybe the same color but inspired by this, and I have long skirt and, so I could say I have those same, not exactly the same but similar.
C: So you got inspired by her. Do you see yourself, if you could possess all of her closet, do you see yourself in all of them?

J: Not all, no some of them, like those pants, that looks dirty. No.

C: How many percentage you would use out of her closet?

J: Like almost everything, I think those are the only one that I don't like, I have the funny pack, I have like everything, so, yeah, I think that’s the only one, and maybe the hat, fisherman's hat, that’ not might be me. I don’t think I would look cool.

C: Does she post sponsor posts also?

J: I want to say no, but I can’t be 100 percent sure, but if you just ask and I answer, I would say no. Or maybe she does, but she does it very well, so I don’t even understand or realize that. Maybe that’s also one thing why I like her, because it feels authentic

C: Do you see yourself, hanging out with her?

J: Yes, I would love to, and she does the things that I like, go and have a dinner with friends, or drink in the evening, spend Sunday in bed, watching Netflix.

C: So you would say that you have similar lifestyle?

J: At least I believe so, maybe not that cool environment but still.

C: Share some similar things.

J: Yes.

C: And also she inspired you too.

J: To like step up my game.

C: Apart from the style, which trait of her that you like?

J: I like how she is like a professionally in fashion but it seems like she has a really like relaxed attitude toward life, I think that’s nice.

C: That’s the most attractive thing.

J: Yes, she works hard and enjoy her life and that’s something I think I forget sometimes, to enjoy the life.

C: Do you have any other person that you like?

J: Yes, Elin Kling.

C: Can you tell me about her background?
J: She used to be a blogger only, now she has built this empire, and she is a head of Toteme studio, it’s a fashion brand from here, Sweden. It’s really Scandinavian style, I like her as a woman, a business woman and that’s why I follow her, I also like her style, it’s really minimalistic, really Scandinavian, I would say, she is really Swedish, minimalistic style, she is more feminine than I am. But I follow her more as a women working in business and fashion.

C: Her values that inspired you, what is it?
J: I like how she combines her family life together with working life.

C: You told that she has an empire, like a brand, is it one of the thing that inspired you?
J: Yes the brand is so cool.

C: Because of...
J: I like the minimalistic style they are giving, basic clothes that are really nice with some kind of twist, as you can see the store pictures over there, it’s so cool, so it’s really simple.

C: Do you also dream to have like your own business one day?
J: Yes, but even more to be like leader, maybe not having an owned business, but working as a head of some brand or something like that.

C: What do you think that you and she have in common not only appearance but mindset, values?
J: I don’t know if we have anything in common but, I look up to her, that’s like where I wanna be when, she is probably my age actually, but that’s is the life I hope I have in 10 years, so I think that’s what it is.

C: So she inspired you to strive
J: Exactly, she like, show me what I hopefully will have some day. Have a family and have a nice work life, so maybe that is what in common, because I want to have it all as well, like she has

C: Have you ever buy products she portrayed, or at least took it as inspiration.
J: As and inspiration yes, because her style is really simple, she has similar shoes that I’m wearing now, things like that, so yes, and actually when she got married, she had a really really nice simple ponytail, and when I went to my friend’s wedding as a guest, I shown her that picture and said I want that hair.

C: On your own wedding day.
J: Yes, so she inspired me.

C: Do you have any other person, or?
J: Yes, here, Marlen Digranes.

C: So you have to tell me about her.

J: This is like my newest found from Instagram, she a co-founder of like agency in Oslo, so that’s why I found her.

C: Is she Norwegian?

J: Yes, and I think she has really cool style, it’s totally different from what I am wearing, but that’s why I like it, I want to look her outfits to get more inspired, to not always wear the so cold boring stuffs, that’s why I look her.

C: You like her style, but you don’t think you have the same style

J: Exactly, no. I like her style but I don’t have that style.

C: So she more like, a source for new inspiration.

J: Yes, definitely.

C: When we compare her to the first one, which one of them you would fit more in terms of style?

J: The first one, definitely, this one she is more colorful, and more like try new stuffs but then she has like that dress look, that I could see myself wearing, but then you can see there is a white t-shirt and dress that has no color basically, but still I don’t think I would ever come up with that like together that’s why I like her, she does things differently than I do, so I can get new inspiration, and it looks like she pays a lot of quite attention, how she looks, and that’s something that I don’t do during my like normal days, of course I think what I wear, and I pay some kind of attention to it, but my normal style is really, I want to feel comfortable and if I choose style or comfort, I choose comfort, and I don’t think she does that. And with the other one that I showed you first, I don’t think she does the same, but it looks like she is comfortable all the time.

C: These three are the person you admire.

J: I have some that I go back and forth, but these are the main ones that I’m not interested, but it also, it changes, maybe that first one that will stay, because it’s so close to myself, but then, for example, this one that is now that I just found few months ago, and now I like her but if could be that if I don’t change my style a little more into her, maybe I get bored then I’ll change her to something else.

C: Three of them, you would say that the first one is your most admire?

J: Like I like everything about her.

C: For you is she perfect?
J: I don’t wanna say perfect, but she has the look, she has the style, she has the lifestyle.

C: That you...

J: Want to have as well, or partly I already think I have.

C: Maybe we will go back at her one more time, Do you think that the fashion products that she use, is it suits her?

J: Yes.

C: Do you think it suits you?

J: I think it's a mixed of a simple but still like street where relaxed, still some feminine things.

C: She only works as a model right, or does she has another job as well?

J: That I don’t know, but I think she is not just a model, maybe she actually studies.

C: Apart from these three people, have you every buy products from Instagram, whether you see it randomly or another girl.

J: I don’t know if I bought, but if I see something and it has like swipe and go and see more, that function I use a lot, why I haven’t bought those things might be that they are out of my price range or something, or there must be that my size is out of stock or something, but yes if there is like something interesting I will go and look.

C: But you never exactly bought, but the exact product or.

J: No, no, but usually it’s because like with her as well, I know that that bag will cost a lot, and I don’t have money for that, so I don’t think about buying that exact same thing, because I know I can’t, but then I’m like ok where could I find the similar one.

C: You look for a similar with a cheaper option or price range, I do that too.

C: Have you ever dm (direct message) or comment on the pictures?

J: No, that is not something that I do. I only dm people that I know, maybe like, like, but I use that function really rarely.

C: But you commented?

J: No.

**Martha’s interview**

C: Good morning, thanks for showing interest in my thesis and for your time as well. My name is Chonlatorn, I’m from Thailand, and I’m researching if identification with fashion influencers in Instagram have an impact on purchase intention... Can you please tell me a little about you and your background?
M: Both of my parents are doctor, and they still waiting for me to turn around and be like ‘I want to be a doctor too dad’, like ‘when do you gonna stop with that bullshit?’. Yeah, Martha medical school, Martha go to medical school. And you know now I have a master, he is like ‘ok, if you don’t find a job you can still go to medical school’, and I’m like ‘argghh’ they not really accept, I feel like ‘why don’t you become a doctor?something serious’, ‘why do you have to do fashion’, I understand what you mean...

C: Now, I since you mentioned about your parents and background, I want to know more about your background.

M: So, I grew up in the south of Germany, like a smaller town, quite close to Munich, it’s quite traditional, Bavarian that very classic German value that you see a lot abroad, Oktoberfest, beer drinking type of thing, that pretty much like that. But at very young age I quite involve at sport.

M: My dad was a former Olympic sailor, so it was very important for him that I also sail, so I started competing at the age of 6, all across Germany at first, and I think the first time I qualified for an international championship was at 10 and then from 10 on I think I’m like, basically went from a small boat to the big Olympic class, and I was in the junior international team from 14 years old, and made it to the Olympic national team quite fast. Since then I travelled literally 37 countries and represented my country in more than 6 or 10 or more world championships. The Olympic was really really cool; I had a really great chance to see like all sort of places in the world, I think a lot of people my age haven’t done that so It have been really really grateful.

M: And basically during my bachelor I study from a far, so I was able to do, like we have like a world cup circus, like almost, with skiing, you go to Australia every winter. I lived three winter in Australia, then you live in Miami, then you live in Palma, which is a small island out in Mallorca, in Spain, and there is a few different championships in Europe during the summer, and then you go back China, so yeah that I travelled a lot in Asia. I also competed before in Thailand, I really love Phuket , it really beautiful, I think like I said through this I had like a great opportunities to see like a lot of diversity in the world, like you know cause I have this interest in fashion, and super interest about the Asia and see those markets, no matter if it’s a fake market or the fabric market, just the idea of like, some of the girls they went to the tailor when we lived in Asia and said, I like this dress from the internet and these girls would made it like on spot, they have such a good skill you know, it’s crazy, the handwork was really really impressive to see, so through this I think I was able to like, grow quite diverse and saw a lot of things and like, kind of matured a lot.

M: But then after my bachelor I felt like the working opportunities weren’t that great to be honest, I worked a little bit in a PR company and I just thought that it was just, you know I felt like there was more to it. You know, I felt like I could step up my knowledge a little bit more, I felt that, especially in the fashion industry, there are too many girls that wanted, too many girls that are like ‘I like fashion’, ‘I’m with Vogue’, ‘come on give me a job’, so I really want to gain a competitive over them, on paper, because so often you can sale ‘oh, I can do this and that and that’, but like, with a degree it’s a little more curtain, you understand what I mean, it’s more clear, you know, you separate yourself a little easier, that’s why I came here. Like you have said, I have looked at different fashion school, it was really hard for me to capture whether spending that much money, would really it give me a better value. And at the
end of the day I thought, the idea, I do like the idea of no matter what education you should be getting it should be free. I understand that now you come from outside of the Europe Union that they charged you a little bit at least, but for me I think it really great if you come here and it’s free. Why should only girls have a background or who parents can spend 300,000 bucks, get to go to Parson? Do you think only then the great only the greatest and the best people? No, I don’t think that’s how it works; I think education should be reachable for everybody. That’s why I like coming here, to get to mingle with normal people as well, when I visited the campus in London, there was girls in full ready to wear outfit, like I was like ‘WHAT?’ Like if you wearing a full Balenciaga outfit like what 15-16000 euro, you know, that’s not the value, I’m looking for heart value, like skills that separated you from the crowd, that’s why I came here, it’s been interesting since I lived in a big city before, I love Sydney for example I lived there quite a while, it’s very different then here.

C: Since which age did you develop your interest for fashion?

M: I think from my 10th birthday I’ve got subscription to Italian Vogue, I wanted the Italian cause I know that was a better one, I have been really interested in, in my childhood room, there is all these magazines, cause I starting collect, you know and of the title, the Elle the Vogue. And I always went and bought you know, that Elle came out twice a year where they put all the collection in a row, before I was really much into that, you didn’t have the easy access, and then you could see every single, you really know what to whole collection made of, and you could really understand, ok, how all the looks and the themes, because otherwise in the normal book you could see like maybe one look or pieces, I want to and interested in understanding how the whole collection built so.

M: I was interested in doing fashion design as well, but then for me, I was like there were too many graduated fashion designers who just weren’t making it, you know, I thought that was important to learn a business perspective and still maintain that creativity within me, so I thought it was smarter to study fashion management. So I had background in the bachelor of business administration and fashion economic, and now as you know, we are doing fashion marketing, let’s see where it takes us, and hope we can find a job.

C: How would you describe your personal fashion style?

M: I think my personal fashion style is quite diverse in the sense that some morning I wake up and I want to be dressed in all black and quite sleek, and other morning I really want to be like colorful and fun, so it depends a bit on my mood. I would definitely descript my style more outgoing, I love involving like prints, patterns, I love things clash a bit, I love coordinating maybe colors where people would necessary think of would go together.

C: Can you describe your outfit today?

M: Today I’m wearing a flower blouse, and it come together with a floral skirt, I really love combination outfits, I love when brands doing something that matchy matchy, I know why I really like that, for some reason not a lot of girl are doing it, so I felt like, this way I’m like ‘hey, it’s me’. Now I really love Zara and high street retail do matchy matchy so, yeah, I combined it with a little bit of belt to give me some waist, because it is very flowy and oversized, how it looks, but I really like it, and then I think it always good to always keep it more sport, so I’m wearing sneakers with it, because I don’t want to be too made up either and to be able to walk fast after the bus.
C: Would you say this represent your personal style?

M: Yes, very much. I like flowers, I like more dressy types of things, I mean I do wear pants, do I like skirt and dresses so.

C: How do you think about yourself, in terms of personality and characteristic?

M: Well, I think that I’m quite outgoing person and I’m quite open, I’m definitely usually quite confident in who I am, and I like speaking out my opinion, sometimes maybe a little too much, but I try to get that under control, I guess. I’m usually like friendly, I think I’m quite like when I walk in a room or when I speak people hear me, I’m quite loud in that sense, I think my style little bit the same so, I feel like sometimes people notice me, not always positively, sometimes negatively, but I think that they do notice me.

C: How you do think people really noticed you or perceived you? In your opinion.

M: I think it’s very different, for some people it’s too much. I think people find it like, maybe a little like a little too loud, speaking a little too fast, that I am a little too much in the foreground, but other people do I see that and appreciate me for that fact that you know, say what I think, that I have fast idea, that I can quickly come up with something, definitely I’m somebody that you know, stand for my word a lot, so I think that some people appreciate that, I think it whether you like it or you don’t, I’m definitely that type of characteristic you know.

C: Love or hate it.

M: Yes, yes exactly.

C: Have people ever tell you the differences of their perception about you, between before and after they get to know you? It could be friend from high school, or...

M: Oh yeah, I do get that, it’s very odd, like I had an instant, when we first went here on the introduction day and somehow the German girls they didn’t think I spoke German, you know we spoke English and then they spoke German in front of me and actually spoke pretty negatively about me. ‘Why they are so mean they don’t even know me yet?’ they were like this loud leather jacket, talk badly about my style you know, like my American accent in my English and stuff, and I was like I understand you guys, so I mean I didn’t say it, but then later we actually became friends and I actually brought the stuffs like, you know you made a different perception, that I came across maybe a little arrogant also in the beginning and then they actually realized I’m mellow and down to earth and I mean you know, let’s say I’m confident about who I am but I never over the top like ‘oh I’m so beautiful’. I think that perceptions do change, and I think I should try to make a better first impression.

C: Would you say you represent like a majority of young German women of your generation?

M: I think, probably yeah, I do think that we become more outgoing, we know more what we want, I have a lot of friends that don’t let negative behaviors from men or other people in their life get them down as much anymore. I think we really grow up to see that there are a lot of opportunities and you can be who you want to be, you just need to find that place where you fit in. So I think it’s happening more and more, I think it’s important you know.
C: Do you use social media? Which one that you use the most?

M: I must admit that I use Instagram way more than Facebook, maybe I check my Facebook now, once a day, but Instagram, you stand at a red light, scrolling, you wait your food heating in the microwave, scrolling, TV, commercial breaks, scrolling, it’s becoming quite overwhelming but yeah, because I think there is always something new, it felt like a never ending source of new pictures, it’s crazy, so definitely Instagram.

C: How many times a day do you use Instagram?

M: More than 50 times.

C: What are your main purposes of using Instagram?

M: From a very early beginning on, I never really conceive myself that I wanted to become a brand, or one of those Instagram influencers, like now I keep up a casual Instagram account where I post now and then, because I know that some brands that you apply for will have a look at it. So I know that it’s important to establish something there, but I don’t agree with all this aesthetic that you always have to be the pretty girls that make out and the perfect photos and, you know I just want to wear my outfit, feel comfortable and have fun, and not post for a photo for 15 minutes until the right light shows up. So I don’t use it as much for myself, I use it to get access to all the different fashion design that they put all the information out, it’s amazing, literally I was live at the Gucci show and I was able to see it, and probably from a better angle from the girls who sat in the fifth row, like it’s amazing, the access to all the information, it’s live, it’s there, it’s straight away, you can get opinion from different people from all the big fashion players, the judges, the people that involved, you know Anna Wintour, you get to see literally, almost it feels like, you know. It’s great, I don’t have to go anywhere anymore, I don’t have to buy the expensive magazine anymore, I can just literally be part of it, screen shot it, save it to my folder and get a visual diary, so that what I use Instagram mostly for.

C: Ok, for looking for an inspiration.

M: Yes, just trend research, what gonna come, what’s next, you know just to keep myself up to date with the fashion industry basically.

C: Do you use it for also like, looking for an inspiration for dressing yourself?

M: Very much, I really enjoy some of the account that try to copy high fashion outfits and see what the options to could turn it into with like high street option, I think there are a lot of fun things out there, or even sometime, you have pieces from Zara that everybody else has, but then you see, oh this girl styled it like this, this girl, it’s very interesting you know, so lots of inspiration for sure.

C: Do you have any favorite influencer? That you admire the most.

M: There is a girl that I really like, it’s Shionat.

C: Do you know any facts about her, can you tell me?
M: I know that she grown up in Bahamas, she has this like, islanders background. And then she started working for different publication like Conde Nast. So I think she was like stylist, like freelance stylist at Vogue for a while, and now she works for Instagram as the same as fashion headquarter as Eva Chen work for.

C: What do you like most about her?

M: I really like that she bring some diversity into the fashion game, I think it’s really important that girls like her or just, from different background are more represented. I think that it often can be pretty much like Prada show where everybody are skinny white girls, I think it’s important that some diversity is brought in, and I really like how, she just kinda like, Shionat’s fashion more me is a little more fun, often all these bloggers seems to take themselves very seriously, and it’s very much like, head to toe, one outfits that I can tell, ok you were paid to wear this, no styling, no personal feeling went into this, you just got told, wear this, I’ll wear this. Shionat’s is little more alive a little more fun with a little more sporty touch, which I really really like, which is more like, little more alive to be honest. There are many pretty girls out there, if you put them in a runway they gonna look good, but that’s not enough for me anyhow to be inspired.

C: So when you look at her, all the pictures she posted, how do you feel? What she gives you?

M: I think like a lot of inspiration, to think out of the box and to just kind of incorporate a bit of sportier looks into high fashion.

C: What about her appearance and ethnicity? Where is she from again? Like her origin.

M: She is from Bahamas, so she is an island girl, she’s black, her ethnicity, I don’t know, what you called. Cause they are in the pacific, so I think those you don’t call. Anyhow, she is from Bahamas and her parents are both black.

C: How do you think about her appearance?

M: I think it’s very nice to see some body that lives out that black girl appearance, she wear the natural hair, she doesn’t feel the need to constantly wear different wigs. And also very clear that she not that size zero type of girl, still she is very slim and fit but she has that little bit more black girl curves, and I think it’s very nice that muscular and sporty look and I think it’s really good that she’s like get to live that out quite freely, you know.

C: About her body shape, you mean.

M: Yeah, exactly.

C: Do you have anything that you think you have in common with her?

M: Well I think, she likes really bright colors and fun combinations, and I would at least aspired to be like that, lots of looks that I feel like it is out of the box, she put lots of effort into this, I think it’s really fun, and she love wearing crop top, so I like to do that too.

C: Earlier you mentioned actually, not this time but the first time that she has the body shape.
M: For me it’s definitely much more relatable, I mean at the end of the day a lot of things look very nice if you extremely skinny, but I don’t at this point I feel like it’s not something that in reach for me. I’m not that big, but I mean at the end of the day it’s ok to be as a healthy way and still look good, and I think that she definitely represented that for me, she is not the classic, super skinny sample size, but still there is no problem pulling out all these awesome looks.

C: So would you say that, because she has similar body shape to you, that’s why.

M: It’s one of the key for me to relate, but yeah pretty much so, like I said, like sometimes, that’s why the models are skinny because everything look good on them, so I am like ‘it this really looking good on you, or just it looking good because you are skinny?’, so often that’s why I can’t relate.

C: So she is more relatable to you.

M: Yeah, because it feels like she does have the body that not the classic, because at the size zero, we all look the same, it felt more alive more relatable for sure.

C: What are the differences between you and her?

M: I think that she seems to be very close and connected back to the Bahamas, there are a lot of traditional things involved there. I think I come from a very non traditional household to be very honest; we don’t do any of these classic German traditional things and not with my grandparents either to be very honest, she has very strong background to her ethnicity, to her home in Bahamas. Well I feel connected to Germany somewhat, we don’t get to be as proud to be German, I think she is very proud to be from Bahamas and her ethnicity, that’s great, but we as a German, we really have that proudness of our background, to be honest, at least we a little held back, we lost two world wars, you know. I don’t really relate personally as much to my roots, which is probably sad, but it’s definitely like that.

C: Have you ever like, contact her, comment on her pictures, or dm her ?

M: I left some comments but I like, but I never DM before.

C: Has she ever like, reply your comments?

M: She hasn’t reply, she has so many comments so I think it’s nice to show appreciation and engagement, cause that’s how Instagram works, but I’m yeah, I haven’t ask things specifically.

C: If she were one of our classmate, do you see yourself hanging out with her?

M: Yeah I think so, she seems, you know, I see a little more of them in the story as well, so she seems really fun, she does, you know. It’s hard to tell because people are somebody else on Instagram, they aren’t in real life. But the impression that I get, yes I found her like, still down to earth kind of person, that kind of see fashion, you know, with an eye twink, you know, not too serious, so I like that.
C: How do you think about the fashion products that she portrayed? Do you think it suits her?

M: I think it suits her really well, like I said it feels like, she put her own effort into styling them, so I think yeah. She does a great job, of course she has sponsorship with Matchesfashion who provide all of those stuffs, it doesn’t feel like she has somebody in the background telling her what to wear, it felt like she really make her own decision and style that fit to her daily liking I guess, so, yeah I like that.

C: Do you see yourself wearing, any of her outfits?

M: Oh very much, you know if I had the choice, for sure.

C: How many percentages would you wear out of her closet?

M: Yeah, if you scroll through this outfits, there are very very little outfit that I would say I wouldn’t wear to be honest, like I think they all very cool, look at that blue one, that’s cool, or the green coat, no I would I think, you know, if it’s possible I’m there for it.

C: Have she ever had like a sponsored post? Does she have many of sponsored posts?

M: Not too many, I think it’s really great that, it’s quite authentic, she works together with Dior make up from time to time, especially these types of event and she does work with Matchesfashion.

C: How do you feel when you see her sponsor posts?

M: I think it’s totally ok, I think these people need to make a living, I think it’s absolutely ok, I’m not mad. I mean she is really open about it, in the fashion industry, it’s a lot of these clothes are lend and I’m aware of this, that they don’t buy all of it by themselves, no I think it’s fair.

C: Have you ever buy any products that she posted?

M: To be honest, her and a lot of girls around, like you see there, Songofstyle and Eva Chen. They work a lot with Dior make up, and then actually when my Chanel makeup done, I was like, what was like 6 years or like, you know I’m gonna consider doing something new now, so I do feel like I probably been influenced them, and now I’m wearing a Dior makeup, so. Most likely, you know, that’s how it works, you see it so often and then you start considering it, so I think it’s probably. But when it comes to clothes, most of her collaboration are out of my reach, unfortunately sadly at this point, but I think you get inspired, for example like a cool coat, and then you went to Matchesfashion and had the money, I’ll probably do it.

C: You got inspired by her many times, that influenced how you shop.

M: Yes yes for sure, you see like the all blue look out there, I saw it and I was like, ok I could probably go for something all blue, you know, so yeah. Of course I have to turn it into different stuffs; cuz I can’t find the exact same, but definitely inspiration is there. I love color coordinated.
C: Apart from her, have you ever purchase any product that you see on Instagram from anybody who you don’t really admire, or any random page?

M: For sure yeah, I mean H&M does a lot of sponsored posts, where maybe in store you like, oh this isn’t look so good, and then when you see it on those girl wearing and styling it well, then it definitely is, like you feel like you more open to buy it. Maybe I can do it this way and that way, yeah.

C: How do you feel about the after purchase, have you ever evaluate that feeling?

M: I think it’s a good feeling to get this type of inspiration, I think I’m very thankful because at the end of the day, especially we kind of live, I don’t feel like I see a lot of people that I’m inspired by on the street, I think the street style isn’t as strong, I think it’s great that I can get this type of street style motivation like basically anywhere in the world, and I think a lot of girls did a really good job, I think it’s good fun, I’m really appreciate it.

C: Do you have any other person that you also admire, apart from her?

M: I really like Eva Chen

C: Asian? Teen Vogue right?

M: She doesn’t no longer work at Teen Vogue but Teen Vogue is no longer, and now she’s like, the head of fashion at Instagram, a pretty cool job, I don’t know what she does exactly, she seems have a good fun. Definitely she’s able to buy Chanel bag as we see.

C: But then when I compare Eva Chen’s style and Shionat’s, which person do you like?

M: So I think the differences here is she now at least 7 years older and she already had a family, so I think what she does really great is, have to be that cool mom style, which is something that I would see myself doing in a few years, you know, that’s how I relate to her, I think it’s really great that. When I go to a lot of interview, people already started to ask me, do you want children at some point, and I feel like, lots of people are very hostile about children, and I think it’s really admirable how she managed to be a very fashionally cool, and also have a cool job as still have a love family, so I think juggling these balls in the air is really inspirational to me, so it has different point of view I guess.

C: Are there other facts apart from, her sense of style that impressed you?

M: what really impressed me is that, basically she works at two magazines s before that shut down, like you know, that’s pretty hard, to get back from it I mean, she worked at Lucy or Lucky, it was an American magazines also under Conde Nast, and it literally, she was the head of editorial, so the main person in charge, and it shut down you know, it’s hard to come back from this because, basically it’s not her fault, the print industry has such, you know definitely on a downward slow, but still it’s a failed project, it never seems to bother her, she never seems to be like ‘oh no, what am I gonna do now?’, she seems to be, have a very strong focus on how things move on, and I think that’s super important, and I think, it doesn’t even look bad at her resume anymore, it’s just look like you know, this happened, I will made something good out of it, I think it’s super important, I’m very impressed by that. Also, she
quit medical school to work in fashion, she was doing some medical school, and then Harper bazaar offered her an internship and she did that, and ever since she never look back, so.

C: Would you say that she is inspiring in the sense.

M: For sure, yeah. And she seems that, long term loving relationship which many fashion, is not that often, she met her husband in high school and they’ve together for 20 years, may be like 17, but you get the jizz, I think that’s very inspirational, I think it’s nice to have like, almost this relationship rocks, and it will last, so.

C: Are there any other person, or you would say these two are the most admirable for you?

M: I mean, a lot of fashion Models are quite interesting as well, but I don’t think, it’s more like you scroll through your feed and you see oh, that was nice, but like, these two are definitely somebody where I watch Instagram Stories, where I go like, ‘oh did they post something new?’, like what are they interested, little more engaged for sure, and then I think the next one would definitely probably designers that I would follow a lot, like Mr. Kim Jones, I follow a lot, now he started his new job at Dior, I’m super excited to see what he’s gonna do, so those probably the next one that I follow a lot.

C: You must have like a life goal, what is your future career that you aim to achieve?

M: Well, I think I would like to work in fashion,.I would like to really find a place where I can be quite creative, I would like to do something that is more relate to, involving marketing campaign, for example like the latest campaign of Gucci, I really like, it’s extremely creative and out of the box and fun, I mean if you could be creative director of something like that, that would be amazing you know, so that’s definitely I have been interested in.

C: Before, have you ever had work experience or anything that related to fashion industry?

M: I worked at Vogue for six months that was an interesting experience; I was as an assistant editorial stylist, so. We did a lot of content creation, lots of writing, we did, obviously the styling aspects of it, that was quite interesting I mean, but it was very sad to see that the environment were hostile, maybe too many women in one place, but I’m, I like competitive and I have never had a problem for competitive, since I have athletic background but, it has to make sense, you can’t just sabotage the others, that’s not competitive, that’s just dumb, things wouldn’t get done because somebody, this person or that person, and everybody talk bad behind each other’s back so much, I was just like, come on girls snap out of it, like you know, like I felt like too much of that going on, it’s a little disappointing, because i was really like, hoping for the Anna Wintour type of things where everybody ‘ooh work now we are scare’, you know, but no I didn’t feel that much like it, so I was a little bit disappointed by that, maybe it’s just people who just work there, maybe different magazine will be different, I do like magazines, it is that creative content creation that related to fashion. And then I also previously worked at product development, mostly for swimwear actually, it was a fun job, I didn’t really know you know, the whole pattern making and all these type of things and, you know the sample making and all the different things that going on, it’s good to learn about that. And then I worked in Sydney in a big fashion and beauty PR company, I’m quite lucky that I got to do lots of stuffs, it was a lot of event organization, was a lot of you know, working with influencers, just basically a lot of marketing efforts to create a brand awareness.
C: But you prefer to have more like creative direction/director title?

M: Yeah I think so I think that yeah, I mean I think buying it’s quite interesting too, but I have really found like a place where I was like ‘ok, what I wanna do’, I think I interviewed for H&M, and it’s pretty disappointed to be honest, well yeah, you start at the sock, assistant girl to the sock buyer, woven you know, the wool socks, that’s how it is, for a year at least, you only do wool socks, how much can you really make a different to wool socks, and then you becoming the person that is buyer, but then you still do wool socks, it is very hierarchical, and not very flexible, and I felt like, you know, they asked where do you want to work, ‘oh women’, she basically laughed at me, that’s basically a six years journey, and the pay was, they want to pay me 24,000 kr a month only in Stockholm, that’s not a lot of money for the fact that the rent will be half of that in Stockholm, so I didn’t feel that I work for something a little bit more open for, where I can learn a lot, where it’s not so hierarchal, you know. Where it’s not like you are the assistant to this person and this person is actually an assistant to this person, it felt like, you have to jump in so many hoops. Like I said, how creative can you be with socks, but she was like but its women socks and baby socks, can you see yourself now after the master working on the baby sock, I can’t, maybe it is fun, is it?. Yeah so, I would like to do more, I think would be interesting to do would be buying for Matchesfashion and Net-a-porter and stuffs, I know that it’s not that easy to get in and right now, lots of them located in London or the US, so it’s so expensive to go there, I mean I’m gonna apply and see what they offer, and I think buying is very interesting because you get to go to all the cool show, see everything , I’m very much interested in high fashion, but the end of the day, it need to make sense, you know, you need to have a position where you feel like, ok, it’s gonna be fun, it’s gonna be, still hard work but you gonna get somewhat fairly, which I think difficult in fashion industry, often it’s basically for free, or very low salary, I think it’s kind of sad, but yeah I could always do sport, but I really like sport, and Adidas is a great company, we will see what the future holds.

C: And then you mentioned that you were interned for Vogue, for six months, you did most of the tasks there right? Styling and writing, so would you see yourself working in the position of those two?

M: I’d love to you know, but I’m really not exactly sure how to get there.

C: If you have chance.

M: I googled, how do you work in fashion team at Instagram, they doesn’t even say anywhere, I don’t even know to how to get in, I feel like it’s more like an organic thing, you have to work for a while and work hard and hope that somebody at Instagram will call you and say hey, how do you feel, but totally I’d love to, I think it’s very fun job, I think that, this is something that I could definitely see myself doing.

C: Is she American?

M: Her parents, they have moved down to America, so they are immigrants, but she was born in America

C: What’s her parent’s ethnicity?

M: Chinese, her parents’ lives with her and they take care the children.
C: Oh that’s Asian way.

M: It’s so perfect, no?, you know she works and her mother take care of the children, I’m like ‘everybody is happy’.

C: Is it like that in German culture?

M: Oh my mother would probably help out, I mean I’m not sure if she would move to this town but, you know, she would try.

Lisa’s interview:
L: My name is Lisa, I’m 25 years old, my previous academic background is included some fashion management course I took in New York.

C: How long have you been there in New York?

L: I was there only six months, I got there because I have always been interested in fashion and I have always been wanted to experience a new city and I have always been attracted to New York from all the movies. Then i realized I need another foundation to stand on, so I came back to Sweden after six months, and started to study business administration in Lund, and after three years, when I finished and graduated I still felt that I lacked of some knowledge of Fashion industry since that program wasn’t related to fashion, so that’s why I went to the School of Textiles and took this 2 years master.

L: And I always been interested in fashion and clothes, traveling, pop culture, interior design and museums and that’s kind of stuffs.

C: Do you have any work experience in fashion industry?

L: Yes, before I moved to New York I worked to save money, I worked at Zara. So I have worked in retail, it was mainly standing as a cashier or sale associate on the floor, helping customers and so on. So I did that for quite a long time. And I also worked at e-commerce online shop, webshop here in Gothenburg called Wakaku, which is a little bit more high fashion more premium brand which I enjoyed very much, now during this program I also done an internship and gain some practical experience and I also worked there during summer.

C: How was your feeling working at Zara?

L: I was exhausted. I was so tired because working at Zara actually has not much to do with fashion, you working there like a service, you help customers, work down in a stock, work as a cashier... You are not dealing with fashion and clothes in that way, you mostly manage the flow, it's like working in whatever store, like it could be working in a grocery store for food. It's the same process such as having delivery packing them up bring them to the stock room and shop floor, I mean of course it was nice working with the products, but its not creative, it's like a wheel, doing, doing, doing. And I realized that working there wasn’t creative.

C: You kind of know before hand.
L: I had an idea, but I got very clear, still I enjoyed working there and since I didn’t have any education at that point so it was perfect step for me.

C: And when you were working at the e-commerce company, was that also about managing also?

L: It was also like sale, in the store and it also packing, and delivery and so on.

C: Do you have any future career goal? Position that you dream of in the Fashion industry.

L: I’m switching my mind between buying and marketing. But right now, I think I’m going towards more of marketing. So, brand management, working as a brand manager, I think it is really fun. I really enjoy how you shaping the brand with their value and association and how you going to communicate them through a brand, I think it's very interesting. So I think marketing and digital marketing like online content is an area that interests me. So, I hope something like that.

C: Can you describe your outfit today?

L: I'm wearing a pair of all white sneakers, first time of the year, and then I'm wearing a slake, navy blue with yellow stripes. A grey linen t-shirt and a white quite chunky knit.

C: Would you say that it represents your everyday fashion style?

L: I do, I think it is, its convenience it is a little bit baggier then I usually have, usually I have like tight leather pants or something up here that tight or down tight, but yeah it's basically who I am.

C: How would you describe your sense of style.

L: Maybe I like to stay like classic, quite traditional, not traditional boring preppy but blazer with a pairs of leather pants maybe, this is so hard, how would you describe it. Maybe classic but a little bit trendy. In material I like to have a quality material like cashmere, leather or suede, I prefer that. I try to incorporate like mixing different material, I like that very much.

C: So you prefer items that are well made with a good quality material.

L: I would rather pay for one item that has a really good quality than buying 5 pieces from H&M or Zara, but then of course I buy a lot of H&M and Zara as well. I’m trying to create wardrobe with more quality pieces. I really like the french editors for Vogue and so on, they really inspired me in a fashion way, they all wearing like really simple stuff, a pair of jean and a blazer and that’s it, and a pair of heels, they are very classic and quite traditional but always looking very elegant.

C: Do you have any hobbies?

L: I like to go skiing, I like traveling. I like skiing, I’m into interior design, and I’m into beauty as well, I go to the gym sometimes and I like to play tennis in the summer.

C: How do think about yourself in terms of characteristics?
L: I see myself as, this is hard, I think will describe myself as a happy person, I'm quite outgoing and I like to meet new people, I'm confident and I believe in myself and I care about my friends, I have quite bad patient, I really want things to happen now, when it doesn't go my way I can get quite mad. I'm curious, I like meet new people from different cultures and places, and learn from them, I like to learn new thing. I'm hoping, I want to be ambitious and I'm striving to have a career which is very important for me, so that is something very inspiring, that to have a career.

C: How do think what others people see you?

L: I think people perceived me as, I hope that I give energy, positive. This is so hard, I don't know, I think sometimes people might perceive me as a little like maybe that I'm not so...well I hope people don't see me as spoiled , I have heard that sometimes that 'well, you have everything served', but I haven't so I hope people know that I have my foots on the ground. Because I think that those kinds of values are important. You know, you have to work for yourself and everything isn't coming free here. I don't know actually how people perceive me.

C: Have you ever heard, how people talk about you like through friends or gossip.

L: Well, when I’m with friends and we always joke like ‘well Linnea you haven't been to the other side of the city’, you know like that kind of stuff, so I know that that sense is always around me. Like its ok to joke about it with my friends because I know that is not how they perceived me, and they know that I’m humble as well. But I just get that feeling sometimes, but I don’t people are like, its not like I’m up in the blue.

C: It’s not like you are from the Upper East Side.

L: Yes, yes.

C: But people might perceived that right.

L: Maybe because I like expensive stuff, but I save up, I prefer like buying an expensive bag so people might think that well, she has these expensive bags, but I don’t, well I do but I worked hard for that.

C: How about sense of style, how people perceive you as?

L: I think people perceived me as, I think it is obvious that I have an interesting fashion, I think people can see that whether they know me or not. Because I put a lot of thoughts into what I’m wearing, not everyday, but I’m trying to pick pieces that I like and that going well with my body shape and what kind of material that I enjoy wearing and so on, so I think people would describe me style wise as, quite well dressed, I hope, I don't often wear like trashy jeans or ripped jeans, I’m not very street, I’m not very like punk or like not street style, not hip hop, I’m more like i want to dress chic, that’s my inspiration.

C: So you want to be chic?

L: Yes, like parisian chic.
C: You said earlier that you put a lot of thought into dressing yourself, is it also meaning that you put a lot thoughts before you buying those items?

L: Yes I do, but that is mostly because I don't want to over consume, of course I want to buy pieces that fits well into my wardrobe but I’m trying to not quickly, too impulsively because I end up not wearing it. And also all of us have to think about environment and I think buying too much clothes. So I’m trying to put more thought into what I’m buying so it will last longer in my wardrobe, so it’s a combination of those two.

C: Have you ever experience meeting new people, before and after they meet and get to know you, have they ever tell the differences of how they perceive you ?

L: A friend of my she thought, when she didn’t know me she thought I was a bitch, and she one of my closest friend, I don't why she perceived that actually, maybe it was in childhood, and I was a little bit insecure of myself i don't know.

C: But after she knew you.

L: She don't think I was a bitch anymore, but I don't mind it, I can be quite a bitch, when I think people are doing mean stuffs and I don't mind telling them like ‘come on, you have to behave now, this is not ok’, so I’m sure when I put my feet down and say that this is not ok, I'm sure it might have sounded bitchy, and I don't mind because it is important for me to stand up for myself.

C: Do you use any social media.

L: Yes I do, I use Instagram mostly, I also use facebook and I have Snapchat and then I have Linkedin, Whatsapp, but social media Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook.

C: How many times a day do you use Instagram ?

L: Way too many, I do it so often, I mean maybe, at least like 5 or 10 times in an hour. But it also depends on what I’m doing, if I’m busy like now, for example, when I’m meeting you and having a chat so I’m not on it, but in the evening if I’m at home like having dinner watching series, I’m lying with my phone like this. I have read about the phenomenon about our generation like, we are having two screens, like we are watching tv or having computer in front of us, but also have our phone, so it’s two screen, you know. But I mean at least like 50 times minimum, maybe 100. I actually use it a lot, I mean, I actually use it for entertainment as well, because I want to get inspired, so even though it hasn't updated yet, I still checking on you know, explore feed. I’m also going into stories, and I’m going through you know people that I follow to see their photos and i use it a lot; so between 50 and 100 times per day. You know, when I wake up I checked Instagram, I have breakfast I check Instagram, also on the bus on the way going to the city, so I’m doing it very repetitively.

C: What are the main purpose of using Instagram?

L: First is to see how my friends update what they are doing around the world , and I think that’s very nice because now you know my friends and family are living in different places, some living in Stockholm, some like my sister she is living in Lund and it's always nice to see what they are up to, without talking to them, so that is one of the reason. And i also use it for
inspiration, for following all my favourite designers and brands, and following like editors at
different magazines and artists and so on, so inspiration and entertainment.

C: When you mention inspiration, is that has something to do with fashion inspiration for
dressing up yourself?

L: Very mostly fashion, because that is one of my biggest interest in life, I think it is
interesting to read about it but also look,because it’s so visual, so mostly fashion.

C: Do you have your favourite editor in chief, or influencer, or anybody that you most
applause and admire? It could be more than one person.

L: You know all this different influencers that are working with different brands. I’m kind of
tired of them because it has been so commercial, so I really like girls who have something
else than just an influencer career. So this one girl called Annine Bing, I really like her
because she is having her own brand, so she is having a career that is not based on you know
just showing off clothes from different brands, she showing up different pictures from her life
and her brand.

C: Do you know her background ?

L: She is Danish and now she lives in L.A., and she is working with her brand that called
Annine Bing. So I like that she shows picture from her own career and I like her style. And
then there is another girl, this is another girl, she called Babba, I maybe don't really related to
her style very much, but I really enjoy what she is doing and her career, she is working on her
own agency that she started herself in New York, and she really living like an inspirational
life, she traveling a lot and working with different brands. They are not like super trendy, but I
really like them, because they are doing their things.

C: What is her ethnicity?

L: She is raised here in Sweden, but her parents are from South America, I don’t know where
it was, because I listened to her podcast but I’m not sure where she is from.

C: Both of them are entrepreneur?

L: Yes exactly, that’s a great definition. And she works at the Uber before, she started with
Uber in Sweden, it was very successful. Ok, let’s think of someone else... oh! this is also
favorite, she is also Danish, her name is Pernille and she also started her own Agency and also
working with different brands. So it’s a lot about herself but also her family. I really like to
follow mainly women who are having like strong career and doing their things and not only
showcasing a lot of brands or working with Na-kd or Nelly or... you know, I think that’s kind
of boring.

C: What do you like about them in terms of appearance?

L: Babba for example, I think she is very beautiful but style wise, I don’t really like, into her
style, it’s not my style but I think she is doing her things and she so cool in her outfits, so even
thought I would not put on the same outfit, I still really admire her, style wise. I think it’s
really cool to follow her, and she is doing interesting combination of putting outfits together
that so on point for her and that’s very inspiring. And Annine as well, she is following her own style and who she is, and Pernille she is very trendy she working with like, Loewe, Celine, and she has many expensive designer handbags and that’s not something I could afford either but I think it’s inspiring that they are following their own sense of style, even though they were different, style wise, I think it’s interesting.

C: What do you like about the way she represent herself on Instagram?

L: I think that they are showing the combination of posts, it’s not only makeup, they are showing a wide selection of their life when they traveling and when they are at home with their family having a diner and so on. I think that’s what I like, but they are also having a lot of fashion integrated.

C: What is the thing that captures your interest the most?

L: Sense of style, there are a lot of super ambitious woman around the world that I admire, but the reason I’m following these is because I think they have good style.

C: Do you have anything in common with them, aspirational purpose in life that you share with them?

L: I think, what very in common of these three is that they are very powerful woman who have built own company and they are very successful, so that is common for all three of them that they are striving to make their company successful, they are working very very hard, and I also like that they are not living in Sweden that they are international in that sense, like Baba she is living in New York, Annina she is living in L.A. and Pernilla, she is living in Copenhagen; but they are all traveling so it feels like they are gaining international spirit, and that I mean that is one of the dreams that I have, maybe that’s why I’m so inspired by them and that’s why I admire them so much because they are doing what I hope I will do someday.

C: Do you see any differences between them and you?

L: They have chosen different career path, they have different life and style, they are ambitious and they are very, very successful, and I'm not very successful yet. They are working and I’m still studying, and I’m like living here in Gothenburg, quite a small city.

C: What are the feelings you get when looking at their pictures?

L: I get happy, inspired, I think it’s great to see them styling on different outfits... what they have for dinner, you know.

C: Would you say that they inspired you to become a successful woman?

L: Yes they really do, they inspired me because they are doing exactly what they want to do, they are showing that you know, you can find your things, what you think it’s great and funny and interesting and make a living out of it. Not like working as a doctor because your dad told you to be a doctor when you grow up. They follow their dreams and they went into the industry they thought that was interesting, and they created the business. There are a lot of women out there with great style and I follow them as well, but these are those that I admire most. And there are also editor in chief of Vogue and buyer at Net a Porter, I’m following...
some of them, and they are also like doing their things, working with fashion, having a great
time.

C: Do you have any brand that you have the same interest as three of them?

L: I know that Baba she is from Sweden, so she is working with a lot of Swedish brands
which I admire as well; Filippa K is one of my favorite brands and then there is these big
brands like Valentino, and Celine, and so on that I know that they have working with and I
like them, but I cannot really afford them. So it’s a gap there.

C: Have you ever buy any items that they posted?

L: I never bought exactly what they are wearing. No I haven’t actually, so it is more like a
gather inspiration and see like. Maybe more like, brands, ok she wearing this brand now, wow
they have really nice products and then maybe I find another product from that brand and then
I buy that product instead, so that is more similar of how I do it.

C: Ok, exclude all of these three person, have you ever buy product that posted by anybody
that you saw on Instagram ?

L: Yes definitely, yes I do it all the time, I bought, now I can’t come up with anything, yeah I
remember I bought a bikini that I saw on a girl on Instagram, that was really nice, she looks so
good and it looks really pretty on her, then I bought it, then I also bought, shoes I think , after
I saw them on Instagram. so yeah I have done that.

C: After you bought those items, have you ever evaluate your feeling about the purchase?
You felt contented with it or...?

L: I’m quite aware about my consumption decisions, although I see them on Instagram, I’m
not very...Im still putting a lot of thought into what I am buying, until like I final purchase,
even though I see it on Instagram, I don’t go straight away and buy it. So, I see on Instagram
maybe but still im gonna check it up on website, I’m gonna see if I can find the cheaper price
I’m gonna like think about it a little, so although, as I said before I’m putting a lot of thought
into what I buy, I often contented with it because it’s not that spontaneous in the end.

C: You said that Baba style wasn’t your style at all...

L: I don’t think it’s ugly... but not my style...

C: So in three of them, which one that you see yourself sharing their closet the most ?

L: Maybe AnninaB, but you know it’s not very like. Now this is very similar, I kind of like
the silhouette with the heels and the dress, like that, it still kind of simple.

C: In three of them, this person would be the person that, if you go into her closet, the most of
her clothes would work on you?

L: Yes, this is an outfit that I really could see myself wearing, I mean this too, and this is what
I like, a pair of jeans and a pair of boots, don’t you think that I could wear that?
C: Yes.

L: Like this is could be a pieces from my wardrobe.

C: If you could possesses all of those, how many percentage you would use out of all of it?

L: Of her wardrobe?

C: Yes.

L: I would probably use it all because I think she has really great style, I think this is a really cool outfit. I don’t know if I understand you correctly but...

C: It’s like if you own all of her closet how many percentage out of those you would wear?

L: Ok, maybe not everything but I think she has really nice style but I would probably wear a lot of.

C: But you see yourself in most of them.

L: Yeah, definitely.

L: I’m thinking in a consumption wise way, it's good that I like her because, I could buy all of it but I cannot do that, but if I have the resources to do it, I would probably do, because I really like her and also because of she having her own brand, a lot of the clothing she wearing, she had designed them and they are for sell.

C: She also represents her own product?

L: Exactly, and her brand.

C: Does she also do like, sponsorship post?

L: Yes, I think yes.

C: When you see her do a sponsorship post, how do you feel?

L: I instinctively like distracted myself from it, I don’t read it very specifically, I don’t watch very very thoroughly, I zoom out from it because I think all paid content is boring, I don’t feel it’s authentic at all. I think it’s kind of soulless, cause I mean I know that she is only she posting this because she get paid for it, so it’s not that real.

C: So you think that the product she sponsored to posted is not in line with the rest of?

L: I mean it probably is, in line with her identity and her brand, but I don’t think it’s real. I think it so much more real and authentic if it’s a recommendation from her like, oh I really like this, this nail polish, I think it’s so beautiful. But if I see in collaboration with Etsy, which is a nail polish brand, then I will not probably even look that specifically on it

C: So you pretty much not gonna buy it
L: No, and actually I also feel that now when I'm reading blogs and so on, if I see that this is a sponsor post, I just scroll, I don’t want to read it, even that it might actually be the product that I do like and do fancy or do think of already, it like the opposite, I get even more decisive not buy those products, so it’s really like the opposite.

C: She is Danish right ?
L: Yes.

C: Does she have kids?
L: Yeah, she has 1 or 2 kids I think.

C: How old is ?
L: Maybe 35.

C: Would you want to have kids also?
L: Yes, but not now... maybe like in 10 years or something.

C: How old are you again?
L: I’m 25 , so not in a few years.

C: Do you see yourself hangout with her, if you guys are in the same age.
L: Yes, I really would like to be friend with her because I think they seems like cool person, cool people with ambition, I think I could learn a lot.

C: Would you say that you would fit in if three of them are walk on street together and you put yourself next to them.
L: I would feel a little bit like ‘wow, am I really walking with them?’, a little bit intimidated, and also you know they are so like confident in those styles and they wearing all these cool brands, I would be wearing my like H&M jacket and I would feel bit like, you know what I mean, like a cousin from the country. But I think they are very inspiring and cool people with high ambitions.

C: Do you know any education background of them?
L: I don’t know actually, I think Baba she has some kind of education, I think they quite self-learnt, actually I think they learn from the business and from being within the industry.

C: Do you have like any influencer, which the see you face and appearance and you were like wow this is like so attractive? Or model or...?
L: Yes, I have. I follow some model, that I think she is beautiful, this girl I think she is from Brazil I think she is really beautiful with her color and everything.
L: This is the girl that I like a lot, I think she is very beautiful.

C: Do you know anything about her?

L: Nothing, just she’s a model. I don’t really engage, but if you only talk about appearance, I think she is beautiful but I don’t know who she is working with or where she is from, I don’t think I’m that engaged. Other model, I like, Natasha Poly. But I mean I don’t get inspired from them but I think they are beautiful, but I don’t go into their account to get inspired because I don’t think they have that personal style that I admire.

C: How do you feel when looking at their feeds? Those 3 models.

L: I feel like ‘wow they are beautiful’, but I’m not like inspired that much, maybe I see they do some exercising, I’m like ‘wow, I’m gonna do it’, but I’m not inspired in a fashion way.

C: Now we go back to those three entrepreneur girls, when you look at their feed, do you think they lack of something?

L: No I mean, I think it would be weird if I say well you don’t have this you don’t have that, they doing their thing and I inspired by them.

C: Thank you.