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The Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure and Involvement on
Instagram Users”

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Abstract

The relatively new phenomenon of social media advertising is a beneficial strategy for marketers, however it might harm transparency and fair communication with consumers. For this reason, many countries introduced a new law making sponsorship disclosure mandatory. The present research examines the effectiveness of “Paid partnership with...”, located in a subheading, “#advertising”, placed in the text under the post and no sponsorship disclosure on the popular social platform, Instagram. Results from the online survey-experiment, conducted on 193 females, indicate that while there is no difference between hashtag disclosure and no sponsorship disclosure, the sponsorship located in the subheading leads to significantly higher ad recognition and persuasion knowledge. This results in a more negative attitude towards the influencer and lower purchase intention, but has no effect on brand recall and attitude towards the brand. Although the moderating role of involvement was not found, the high-involved viewers were more likely to recall the brand name. Practical implications for legislators, advertisers and influencers, as well as suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords *Social media advertising · Influencer marketing · Sponsorship disclosure · Instagram · Persuasion Knowledge · Elaboration Likelihood Model*

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Abstract

Das relativ neue Phänomen des Social Media Advertising ist eine nützliche Strategie für Werbetreibende, kann jedoch die Transparenz und faire Kommunikation mit den KonsumentInnen beeinträchtigen. Aus diesem Grund haben viele Staaten ein neues Gesetz eingeführt, welches eine verbindliche Kennzeichnung gesponserter Produkte vorschreibt. Die vorliegende Forschungsarbeit untersucht die Wirksamkeit von zwei Arten der Kennzeichnung auf der beliebten sozialen Plattform Instagram: "Paid Partnership with ...", platziert in einem Untertitel, "#advertising", platziert in dem Text unter dem Post, sowie von keiner Kennzeichnung. Ergebnisse der experimentellen Studie, die an 193 Frauen durchgeführt wurde, zeigen, obwohl es keinen Unterschied zwischen der Kennzeichnung mittels Hashtag und keiner Kennzeichnung gibt, hat die Kennzeichnung in einem Untertitel zu einer signifikant höheren Werbungserkennung und Persuasion Knowledge geführt. Dies hat zur Folge, dass KonsumentInnen eine negativere Einstellung gegenüber dem Influencer zeigen und eine geringere Kaufabsicht haben, wiederum hat es keinen Einfluss auf die Markenerinnerung und die Einstellung zur Marke. Obwohl die moderierende Rolle der Involvierung nicht gefunden wurde, erinnerten sich die hoch involvierten NutzerInnen eher an den Markennamen. Abschließend werden in dieser Forschungsarbeit praktische Implikationen für Influencer, Werbetreibende und Gesetzgeber sowie Vorschläge für zukünftige Forschung diskutiert.

Schlüsselwörter *Social Media Advertising · Influencer Marketing · Werbekennzeichnung · Instagram · Persuasion Knowledge · Elaboration Likelihood Model*

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of social media led to the recognition of a new type of marketing. Social media marketing enables consumers to interact and engage with the brands (Tuten & Solomon, 2014) on social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and LinkedIn (Ipsos, 2017). This is done by following brands' profiles and sharing content, commenting and liking the published content (Erkan, 2015). At the same time, marketers benefit from social media, which give them the opportunity to reach their target groups in less obtrusive and cheaper ways than traditional media (Minton et al., 2012). In order to make their social media advertising even more effective, sellers tend to collaborate with influencers, which can be seen as a new form of celebrity endorsement (Weinswig, 2016). Influencers build their popularity through their online activities on blogs or social platforms. Involving them in advertising campaigns is a relatively new, but rapidly growing marketing strategy, known as influencer marketing (Ewers, 2017). According to a survey conducted on 170 American marketers from various industries, 86% used influencer marketing in 2016 (Linqia, 2016). The main reasons of using influencer marketing was to “[create] authentic content about my brand” and “drive engagement around my product/brand” (Linqia, 2016).

With the rise and evolution of social media advertising, it has also lead to extensive criticism. This is due to covert advertising, which may mislead and hinder consumers' abilities to recognise the sponsored content (Boerman et al., 2014; Boerman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017). As a result, users become unaware of persuasive message and thus act less critically towards its content (Boerman et al., 2012). In order to guarantee transparency, fair communication, and consumer protection, the European Union and the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) obliged marketers to disclose the sponsored nature of covert marketing (Cambell et al., 2012; Ewers, 2017).

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Despite these legal regulations, little is known about the effects of sponsorship disclosure on social media (Braatz, 2017; Evans et al., 2017; Ewers, 2017). Recent research has broadly discussed the effects of sponsorship disclosure and product placement in videos, namely in TV programs and movies (e.g. Campbell et al., 2012; van Reijmersdal et al., 2013; Boerman et al., 2012; Boerman et al., 2014) and in the written content on blogs (e.g. Lu et al., 2014; Hwang, 2016). Surprisingly, little attention has been paid to Instagram, a very popular, yet barely investigated social platform.

This study addresses this research gap and as first examines a new tool for disclosing sponsorship, released on Instagram in June 2017 (Rissmiller, 2017). The objective of the research is to measure the effects of different types of sponsorship disclosure on Instagram on users' attitudes towards the brand, brand recall, purchase intention and attitudes towards the influencer. Moreover, as a novelty the involvement of participants is investigated as a possible moderator and the persuasion knowledge as a possible mediator of this relationship. Therefore, the following research is based on the assumptions of the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKL) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The findings of this paper are expected to be a valuable contribution to the current state of knowledge about sponsorship disclosure and influencer marketing. Additionally, they are expected to be of great importance to marketers and Instagram opinion leaders.

2. Literature review

2.1. Influencer marketing on Instagram

Instagram is a mobile phone application introduced in 2012, providing its users with photo and video-sharing services (Erkan, 2015). Under shared content, Instagrammers can write captions or use hashtags in order to categorise and popularise a posted image (Braatz,

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2017). The application achieved a spectacular success, becoming one of the most popular social network platforms worldwide and is still rapidly growing. With 800 million monthly active users (Statista, 2017), Instagram has given rise to micro-celebrities, which are its most-followed users and a fundamental tool for influencer marketing (Braatz, 2017).

According to the Content Marketing Institute, 44% of B2C marketers and businesses report that they most effectively reach their audience on Instagram (Delzio, 2016). At the same time, 56% of US social media users named sponsored social messages on Instagram the most effective marketing tactic (Delzio, 2016). Influencers advertise goods on the platform through visual information (Braatz, 2017). The central parts of an advertised photo on Instagram are how influencers pose, what they pose with, what they wear, and which products they show in an everyday environment. It may give users the impression that an endorser is an authentic consumer of the product (Boerman et al., 2017). In fact, in return for the promotion, influencers receive compensation (monetary or non-monetary) from producers or marketing agencies (Lu et al., 2014). In order to label a photo as sponsored content, Instagrammers have a possibility to tag the post using hashtags such as “#sponsored”, “#advertising”, “#ad” in the text below the photo. Recently, Instagram introduced a new option, allowing influencers to inform about their relationship with sponsors by adding a subheading to the post “Paid partnership with the...” (Rissemiller, 2017), placed underneath the Instagrammer's name.

2.2. Sponsorship disclosure recognition

The aim of the disclosure is the recognition of advertising (Boerman et al., 2013). Therefore, researchers investigate which characteristics of sponsorship disclosure are the most effective in the process of recognition. Recent papers have analysed the position, time and language of the disclosure. In a study focusing on brand placement disclosure in a movie, van

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Reijmersdal et al. (2013) found that viewers are more likely to recognise the sponsored content as advertising and recall the brand when the disclosure is displayed during the brand placement. This conclusion was augmented by Boerman et al. (2014), who stated that advertising recognition is higher when the disclosure is shown prior to or concurrent with the sponsored content in TV programs. However, a year later, the same group of scientists showed the opposite findings, namely that a disclosure displayed at the beginning of a TV programme is less effective than a disclosure shown in the middle or at the end in regards to disclosure recall and recognition (Boerman et al., 2015). Nevertheless, results from the discussed papers are not directly related to the subject of this study. This research focuses namely on the advertising in shorter content with a use of a picture and caption instead of a video. Hence, the exposure and the engagement with an advertisement on social media last shorter. Moreover, the placement of a disclosure on Instagram is possible only directly above or directly underneath the photo. Therefore, further investigation on the effectiveness of sponsorship disclosure is necessary.

In the context of advertising recognition, findings from studies investigating visual behaviour with the use of eye-tracking equipment might be of a great importance. According to Wartenberg and Holmqvist (2005), readers exposed to newspapers spot items in the upper left side of the page earlier than items in the lower right. This finding is in line with results from Zambarbieri, Carniglia & Robino (2008). Their research on eye tracking analysis in reading online newspapers described the left side in the top area as the entry point of exploration and thus, the most important zone (Zambarbieri, Carniglia & Robino, 2008). The importance of items in the upper left corner was also underlined in Outing and Ruel (2004), who investigated the effectiveness of homepage layouts. They found that a reader's first instinct is to look in the upper left (Outing & Ruel, 2004). For this reason, logos and flags tend to be located in this part of the page. Moreover, the typical manner of reading web content is in a F-shape pattern

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(Nielsen, 2006). It means that users start reading in the upper left corner and move their eyes horizontally. As a next step, they become less attentive and just scan the text vertically, on the left side of the page. The tendency of readers to scan a newspaper instead of reading it was already noted in 1991 by Garcia & Stark (Holmqvist & Wartenberg, 2005). Holmqvist et al. (2003) partly confirmed this finding in their research on reading newspaper and website content. 45% of newspaper readers and 56% of online news readers were found to just scan the text (Holmqvist et al, 2003).

The discussed literature can lead us to assume that viewer attention might also be first concentrated in the upper left corner in Instagram settings. Therefore, the sponsorship disclosure in the subheading might be easier to notice. As a result, this could be the most effective positioning of sponsorship disclosure. Moreover, disclosing the sponsorship in the hashtag might be disadvantageous due to its position in the less easily noticed, lower right corner. Additionally, a disclosure embedded in the hashtag might be hidden from the viewer and hamper sponsorship recognition, especially if viewers briefly scan the text instead of reading it.

Another essential role in recognizing advertisements relates to language. To the best of my knowledge, only two studies have examined sponsorship disclosure on Instagram. Evans et al. (2017) investigated the effects of hashtag-use with “SP”, “Sponsored” and “Paid Ad” under the post. Their findings indicated that disclosure with “Paid Ad” led to higher ad recognition (Evans et al., 2017). The importance of language clarity is also underlined by Wojdyski and Evans (2016). They found that more commonly used terminology (“advertisement” and “sponsored content”) was more effective than the use of neologisms (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). In the second study on Instagram sponsorship disclosure, Ewers (2017) compared “#sponsorship” disclosure with no disclosure, and found no significant difference in ad

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recognition effects (Ewers, 2017). A possible explanation for this finding might be a mere misinterpretation of the word in an advertising context. In fact, a court in Munich declared the use “#sponsored” insufficient (Petersen, 2015; Laukemann, 2016 as in Ewers, 2017). However, Boerman et al. (2017) researched sponsorship disclosure on Facebook, and found that when the “sponsored” was placed in the subheading, it positively affected ad recognition. This finding suggests that the placement of disclosure may be of greater importance than its language.

The discussed literature indicate that positioning and language of disclosure may influence the recognition of sponsored content. This research aims to provide a better understanding of sponsorship disclosure effects on Instagram. Therefore, it examines a new tool, namely “Paid partnership with...” displayed above the photo, an often-used hashtag “advertisement” composed into the short text below the photo, and lastly, no form of disclosure. Due to prior studies and their findings, the hashtag with the word “sponsored” is not taken into account. On the basis of the presented literature, it can be assumed that “Paid partnership with...” may be the most effective way of disclosing sponsorship on Instagram, not only because of its beneficial position, but also due to its straightforward language, which clearly informs users about its sponsored nature. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Use of “Paid partnership with” above the advertising photo leads to higher ad recognition than the use of “#advertising” below the photo and no sponsorship.

On the one hand, the language clarity of the hashtag “advertising” is relatively high, but on the other hand, its positioning, as previously discussed, might be disadvantageous in terms of ad recognition. Additionally, no prior research has analysed the actual effectiveness of this

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type of sponsorship disclosure, nor compared it with photos containing no sponsorship disclosure. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the use of hashtag disclosure, broadly used by influencers, is more beneficial than using no disclosure and thus, whether it fulfills its role in increasing the awareness of Instagram users. This study addresses this research gap and aims to answer the following question:

RQ1: Does the use of “#advertising” below the photo lead to a higher ad recognition than no sponsorship disclosure?

2.3. Persuasion Knowledge

The importance of advertising recognition is well explained through the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). The authors of this theory, Fristad and Wright (1994), described persuasive knowledge as the consumers' knowledge about aims and tactics of persuasion agents (e.g. salesperson, company responsible for advertising campaign) as well as their own beliefs on how to respond to persuasive attempts (e.g. ad, sales presentation). This learning process already begins in childhood and is fully manifested in adulthood (van Reijmersdal et al., 2013). Researchers distinguish between two dimensions of persuasive knowledge – conceptual and attitudinal (Rozendaal et al., 2011 as in Boerman et al., 2012). The first dimension is a cognitive construct, which refers to the recognition of an advertisement and its persuasive intent (Boerman et al., 2012). The latter dimension considers a consumer's negative response to the advertisement as a result of awareness to the persuasive attempt (van Reijmersdal, 2017). These critical attitudes may appear in the form of skepticism, distrust or disliking (Boerman et al., 2017). In other words, recognising something as an advertisement is

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required to activate the persuasive knowledge, thereby starting the process of reacting to the persuasive message (Boerman et al., 2012).

In line with the discussed theory, many scholars have confirmed the influence of persuasion knowledge on consumers' negative beliefs regarding persuasion attempts (e.g. Boerman et al., 2013 & 2014). Due to the nature of Instagram and this study's objective to bring useful information to marketers and influencers, the following paragraphs discuss brand and influencer responses in relation to persuasive knowledge. Brand responses are represented by brand recall, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. These brand responses are analysed as dependent variables in a later part of this research.

2.4. Brand responses

Cambell et al. (2013) studied disclosure in a TV program and found that disclosures have a negative effect on brand recall. This might be due to the fact that viewers who recognise a persuasive attempt "make a determination that the reason for their recall is not their 'true' memory, but instead is a result of covert marketing, such that they decide not to include the brand in their memory set" (Cambell et al., 2013, P. 493). This finding is in line with the assumptions put forth in the Persuasion Knowledge Model. However, not all scholars came to the same conclusion. Boerman et al. (2012) argued that disclosures lead to greater brand memory, and as a result of more frequent exposure to the brand name, consumers have increased attention to and processing of the brand. Therefore, Boerman et al. (2012) stated that persuasion knowledge does not mediate brand recall. This assumption was supported by van Reijmersdal et al. (2013). The researchers agreed that alerting consumers about the presence of brands in a movie makes viewers more attentive and their brand processing more thorough (van Reijmersdal et al., 2013). However, consumers on Instagram are not warned about the product

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placement as directly as in a TV program or in a movie. They are also not exposed to the disclosure numerous times, as it might happen in the TV content. Therefore, the argument of van Reijmersdal et al. (2013) and Boerman et al. (2012) may not be valid in the presented research.

Scholars' opinions also vary regarding the influence of persuasive knowledge on attitudes towards a brand. In the study on sponsorship disclosure through the use of the hashtags “Paid Ad”, “Sponsored” and “SP”, Evans et al. (2017) argued that only advertising recognition in combination with disclosure memory can affect the negative evaluation of the brand. A similar finding was presented by Boerman et al. (2013), who claimed that exposure to sponsorship disclosure and later visual recall may lead to a decrease in positive brand attitudes.

Furthermore, Boerman et al. (2013) found that recognising an advertisement activates reactance, where consumers avoid processing the brand and thus develop negative opinions. This view was supported in another study, conducted by the same group of researchers a year later. Boerman et al. (2014) confirmed that due to the awareness of sponsored content, viewers activate critical thinking processes and resistance, which negatively affects brand attitudes. These findings directly confirm the assumptions of the Persuasion Knowledge Model.

Little is known about the relationship between persuasion knowledge and purchase intention. Evans et al. (2017) hypothesised that higher ad recognition would lead to lower purchase intention. However, their hypothesis was not supported, as no effect between the two variables was found (Evans et al., 2017). To my knowledge, no other study on sponsorship disclosure has discussed the effect of persuasion knowledge on purchase intention. This research aims to fill this gap. This finding is of a great importance especially to marketers, as increasing sales and profits is one of the main objectives of an advertisement (Suttle, n.d.).

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2.5. Influencer response

Influencer response, the subject of this paper, has not yet been researched as such. Recent scholars analysing the role of influencers focused on their credibility (Ewers, 2017; Braatz, 2017). For example, Braatz (2017) investigated how message sidedness and product depiction in an advertisement on Instagram influences source credibility. However, he concentrated on attributes such as professionalism, knowledgeable and trustworthiness (Braatz, 2017) which are not of interest in this study. This is because evaluating a fashion influencer on Instagram requires modern measurements such as likeliness, fashionability, attractiveness and popularity. In a study on influencer marketing on Instagram, Ewers (2017) examined source credibility as a mediator, which positively influences purchase intention. Her results suggested that an influencer coming across as attractive is more likely to awake interest in the depicted product (Evans, 2017). However, these findings do not contribute to knowledge about the effects of persuasion knowledge. The conclusions reached by Wojdynski (2016) however are of great importance for this study. Wojdynski (2016) found that recognising a news article as an advertisement leads to a negative attitude towards the publisher, what again indicates a strong relationship between conceptual and attitudinal dimensions of persuasion knowledge.

In the context of attitudes towards the influencer, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) may play an important role. Consumers on social media have an opportunity to share their opinions and experiences as well as engage with a brand or an influencer. They do so by commenting, liking or becoming a follower of a profile (Erkan, 2015; Luna-Nevarez & Torres, 2015). Similarly, influencers looking for popularity seek to attract new followers and collect “likes”. Therefore, the intention to like a post and following an influencer can be important measurements for influencer response in this study.

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The discussed literature present a variety of views on the effects of persuasion knowledge on brand recall and brand attitudes. At the same time, purchase intention and attitudes towards an influencer are identified as a research gap in the context of persuasion knowledge effects. Following the theory presented in the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Fristad & Wright, 1994), it can be assumed that if activation of persuasion knowledge negatively influences brand review and brand recall, it may also lead to lower purchase intention and more negative attitudes towards a brand. This might be the case because if a consumer is not fond of nor remembers the name of a brand, it is likely that they are not interested in the purchasing the product or do not like the influencer promoting the brand.

The current study examines the relationship between different types of sponsorship disclosure on Instagram and dependent variables via persuasion knowledge. The ad recognition literature discussed in the previous chapter (see 2.2.) is an important part of the persuasion knowledge model. Therefore, the theoretical assumptions from Chapter 2.2. are applied not only in the context of ad recognition, but also in the recognition of persuasive intent, forming the concept of persuasion knowledge. The following hypothesis and research question are proposed:

H2: Compared to the use of “#advertising” below the photo and no disclosure, the use of “Paid partnership with” above the advertising photo leads to a) a higher persuasion knowledge, which results in b) a more negative attitude towards the influencer, c) lower brand recall, d) more negative attitudes towards the brand and e) lower purchase intention.

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RQ2: Does the use of “#advertising” below the photo lead to a) a higher persuasion knowledge than no sponsorship disclosure, which results in b) a more negative attitude towards the influencer, c) lower brand recall, d) more negative attitudes towards the brand and e) lower purchase intention?

2.6. Involvement of consumers

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), introduced by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo in 1986, discussed two different kinds of persuasion processes (O'Keefe, 2008). The first is recognised as a central route, characterised by strong cognitive efforts from consumers. In order to achieve persuasion, they examine the information within a message, analyse arguments and consider issue-relevant materials. This route is typical for consumers engaged in the topic, in other words, when their involvement is high (O'Keefe, 2008). The second type of persuasion process is known as a peripheral route. It is chosen by individuals with low motivation and low ability to process the message, who focus on non-content cues (Park et al., 2007). Therefore, low-involved consumers tend to focus on the quantity of the arguments, rather than their quality. Furthermore, these consumers are guided by conditions such as credibility and liking of a communicator, as well as reactions of others to the message (O'Keefe, 2008). On the basis of these assumptions, it can be assumed that high-involved consumers are more likely to pay attention to the details and evaluate the message in a more critical way than their low-involved counterparts. In the present study, it could imply that individuals highly involved in Instagram content may be more likely to recognise it as an advertisement, and therefore activate their persuasion knowledge easier and faster than low-involved viewers.

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To the best of my knowledge, the topic of consumers' involvement in the context of persuasion knowledge has been understudied. This paper addresses the following research gap: consumer involvement may possibly moderate the effects of different types of sponsorship disclosure on persuasion knowledge, and as a result it might affect brand recall, brand attitudes, purchase intention and attitudes towards the influencer. Considering the assumptions discussed in the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: When sponsorship disclosure is present, high involvement of viewers leads to a) higher persuasion knowledge, which results in b) a more negative attitude towards the influencer, c) lower brand recall, d) more negative attitudes towards the brand and e) lower purchase intention in comparison to viewers with low involvement.

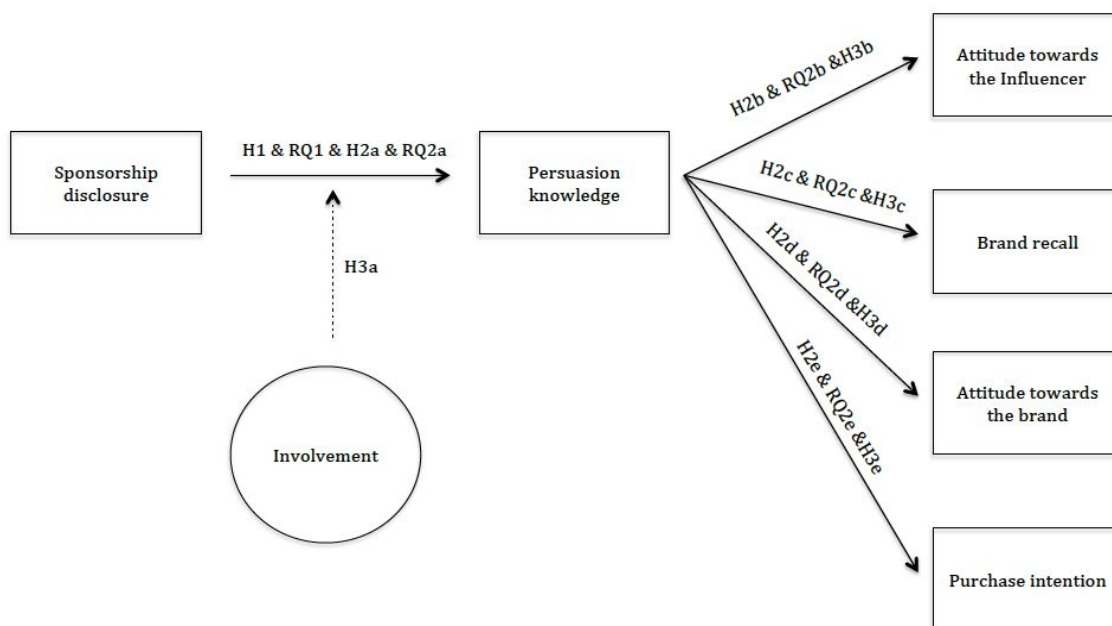


Figure 1. Conceptual model

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3. Method

3.1. Research design

In order to test the hypotheses, a 3 (sponsorship disclosure type: disclosure in the subheading vs. disclosure in the hashtag vs. no disclosure) x 2 (level of involvement: high vs. low) between subjects design was applied. The participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental groups (Table 1). Attitude towards the brand, brand recall, purchase intention and attitude towards the influencer were selected as dependent variables. Moreover, the involvement of participants was investigated as a moderating variable and the persuasion knowledge as a mediating variable.

Table 1.

Experimental groups and division of the participants, N=193

	Sponsorship disclosure in the subheading	Sponsorship disclosure in the hashtag	No sponsorship disclosure
Low-involvement	31	31	33
High-involvement	30	35	33

3.2. Stimuli creation

Stimulus materials were created in collaboration with a graphic designer from Vienna, Austria. The prepared materials were authentic pictures posted on Instagram by fashion bloggers not popular in Western Europe. However, to avoid the recognition of a blogger, names were changed and only the pictures in which a blogger is not facing a camera were chosen. The apparel sector is one of the most popular on Instagram (Erkan, 2015). For this reason, the pullover was selected as a promoted product. The selected product is expected to interest many young females. The number of likes under posting was kept on a high level to indicate the popularity of a blogger on Instagram. Moreover, the short caption focusing the attention on the promoted product was included. A fictitious brand of the pullover was created to avoid any bias. In the first condition, sponsorship disclosure was used in the subheading ("Paid

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partnership with...”). In the second condition, “#advertising” was used at the end of the caption under the picture. Finally, in the third condition, no disclosure was used. Stimulus materials are presented in the Appendix B.

3.3. Pre-test

A pre-test was conducted in order to choose the most relevant stimuli for the main study. To avoid bias, the selection was based on the lowest recognition of the blogger and the highest level of authenticity of the post. Additionally, the two involvement groups were tested in order to find the biggest difference in ad recognition. The second reason for the pre-test was to check for possible manipulations in involvement.

A sample of 33 students from the University of Vienna participated in the pre-test and were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions – low-involvement (N=16) and high-involvement (N=17). Participants were exposed to three different posts (all advertising a pullover of different brands, with the same type of sponsorship disclosure) and asked to answer a set of questions.

The results of the pre-test (Table 2) indicated that both the least recognized influencer and the biggest difference in advertisement recognition between two conditions was the blogger from post A. Post authenticity was measured by the question: “In your, opinion, how likely is it that such a post would be published on Instagram?” (1 = very unlikely, 5 = very likely). All of the posts in the conditions were scored as highly likely to be posted to Instagram. For this reason, post A was selected as the most relevant stimulus for the final study.

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Table 2.

Pre-test results, Low-involvement (N=16), High-involvement (N=17)

	Low involvement			High involvement		
	Post A	Post B	Post C	Post A	Post B	Post C
Recognition of the Influencer	13%	44%	50%	12%	12%	29%
Authenticity of the post	M=4.69 SD=.602	M=4.81 SD=.403	M=4.69 SD=.479	M=4.47 SD=.874	M=4.47 SD=.874	M=4.06 SD=1.298
Recognition of the advertisement	31%	50%	56%	77%	82%	94%

Manipulation-check

To check whether participants understood the manipulations in the survey, a manipulation-check for involvement was tested. Participant involvement while looking at the posts was measured by three items: *I tried to memorize all aspects*, *I observed everything carefully* and *I looked at all details in a very concentrated way*. Participants evaluated their level of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) ($\alpha=.908$).

An independent-sample T-test was conducted to compare the actual involvement of participants in the low and high-involvement conditions. Results showed a significant difference between the conditions. The involvement of the participants in the high-involvement group was higher ($M=4.15$, $SD=.86$) than in the low-involvement condition ($M=3.08$, $SD=1.29$); $t(31)= -2.812$, $p=0.008$. Therefore, the manipulation-check of involvement was successful.

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3.4. Participants and data collection

The experiment was conducted using a random sample, consisting of students (85.5% of participants) and faculty members (14.5%) from the University of Vienna in Austria. Only females were invited to participate due to the research topic's nature and the fact that majority of Instagram users are female (Aslam, 2018). The final sample consisted of 193 women, with the average of 25 years old ($M=25.44$, $SD=5.54$). 82% of respondents were Instagram users. Participants were approached using two strategies: directly on the Internet, using forums for students and personally at the University of Vienna and by using snowball (network) sampling. Data was collected in March 2018.

3.5. Procedure

After opening the link, participants read the cover story, inviting them to participate in a study on fashion on Instagram. However, the real purpose of the study was not disclosed. As a next step, they were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions. Participants assigned to the low-involvement condition were asked to look at the post as they normally would when using Instagram. In the high-involvement condition, they were asked to observe everything carefully and memorize all aspects. Therefore, respondents were allowed to take as long as they needed to look at the post and proceed to the next page. After exposure to the manipulated Instagram post, participants received a set of questions regarding whether or not they recognized the ad, their attitude towards the influencer, attitude towards the brand, brand recall and their purchase intention. The second part of the questionnaire focused on demographics – age, gender, affiliation to the University of Vienna, English language level and use of Instagram. After completion of the survey, they were thanked for their participation.

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3.6. Operationalization of variables

Persuasion knowledge

To evaluate the activation of persuasion knowledge, 2 different scales were combined – *recognition of the advertising* (Boerman et al., 2014) and *understanding of persuasive intent* (van Reijmersdal et al., 2017). The first scale was a one-item measure – participants were asked to indicate on a 7 point-scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) their level of agreement with the statement: *The posting was an advertisement. The understanding of persuasive intent* was measured in the same manner, but by the three statements: *This post was published to make me like the brand, This post was published to sell the product and This post was published to influence me*. The scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha=.907$).

Attitude towards the influencer

The influencer attitude was measured on a 5-item five-point semantic differential attractiveness scale (Ohanian, 1990 in Ewers, 2017): *Attractive/ Unattractive, Classy/ Not classy, Beautiful/ Ugly, Elegant/ Plain, and Sexy/ Not sexy*. However, due to the novelty of the measurement, some items had to be invented for the purpose of the current study: *Fashionable/ Unfashionable, and Popular/ Unpopular*. Participants were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements on the 5-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree): *I would follow this Instagrammer and I would like this post*. All items were added into a single index ($\alpha=.889$).

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Brand recall

Respondents were asked whether they recalled seeing any brand in the post (Boerman et al., 2012). If the answer was yes, they were asked to fill out the name of the brand. Only full and correct names were coded as a 1.

Attitude towards the brand

Brand attitude was measured by six items, introduced by Bruner and Kumar (2000) in Evans et al. (2017) on a seven-point semantic differential scale. Participants were asked to indicate how they felt about the brand: *Unappealing/ Appealing*, *Unpleasant/ Pleasant*, *Boring/ Interesting*, *Dislike/ Like*, *Negative/ Positive*, and *Bad/ Good*. Keeping in mind the needs of a target group and subject of the experiment, additional items were added: *Old-fashioned/ Fashionable*, and *Undesirable/ Desirable*. The formed index was reliable ($\alpha=.960$).

Purchase intention

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*) with the following statements: *I would like to try this brand*, *I would buy other products by this brand*, *I would buy this product if I happened to see the brand* and *I would actively seek out this product in a store in order to purchase it* (Baker and Churchill, 1977 in Evans et al., 2017). All items were added into a single and reliable index ($\alpha=.924$).

Control variables

Participants were asked whether they were users of Instagram. Gender, age, English language ability and affiliation to the University of Vienna were also measured.

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4. Results

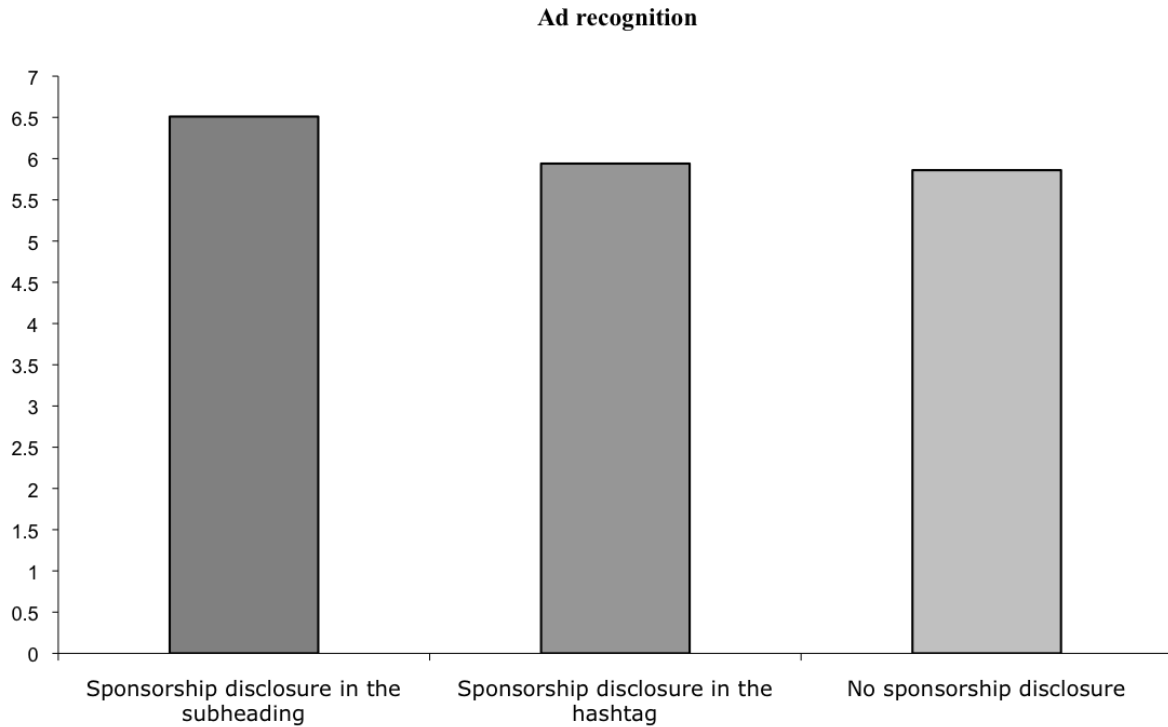
4.1. Advertising recognition

Firstly, a factorial analysis of variance was conducted in order to test the effects of sponsorship disclosure (in the subheading vs. in the hashtag vs. no disclosure) and involvement (low vs. high) on the respondents' recognition of the ad. The ANOVA results showed a significant main effect of sponsorship disclosure [$F(2,181)=3,587$, $p=.03$]. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey test indicated that ad recognition for sponsorship disclosure in the subheading condition ($M=6.51$, $SD=.98$) was significantly higher than for sponsorship disclosure in the hashtag condition ($M=5.94$, $SD=1.38$) and in the no disclosure condition ($M=5.86$, $SD=1.38$). Therefore, H1 was supported. However, there was no significant difference found between sponsorship disclosure in the hashtag and a non-sponsorship disclosure condition in the recognition of the ad, which directly answered RQ1. Respondents' ad recognition in each sponsorship disclosure condition is presented in Figure 2. Moreover, there was no main effect found for involvement [$F(1,181)=.209$, $p=.65$] nor prior use of Instagram, which was used as a control variable [$F(1,181)=3.208$, $p=.07$]. There was also no interaction effect found of sponsorship disclosure and level of involvement on ad recognition [$F(2,181)=3.208$, $p=.139$].

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Figure 2.

Ad recognition in each sponsorship disclosure condition, N=193



4.2. Persuasion knowledge

Similarly, in order to test the effects of sponsorship disclosure and involvement on persuasion knowledge another factorial analysis of variance was performed. Its results indicated a significant main effect for the type of sponsorship disclosure on persuasion knowledge [$F(2,181)=6.084$, $p=.003$]. Post hoc Tukey test showed that the persuasion knowledge for the sponsorship disclosure in the subheading ($M=6.59$, $SD=.53$) was significantly higher than in the hashtag condition ($M=5.96$, $SD=1.03$) and no sponsorship condition ($M=5.89$, $SD=1.27$). Thus, H2a was supported. However, there was no significant difference found between persuasion knowledge in the hashtag condition and no disclosure condition. In other words, the use of “#advertising” below the photo does not lead to the higher persuasion knowledge than no sponsorship disclosure, what answers the RQ2a. At the same time, this finding indicates that due to the same level of persuasion knowledge, there cannot be

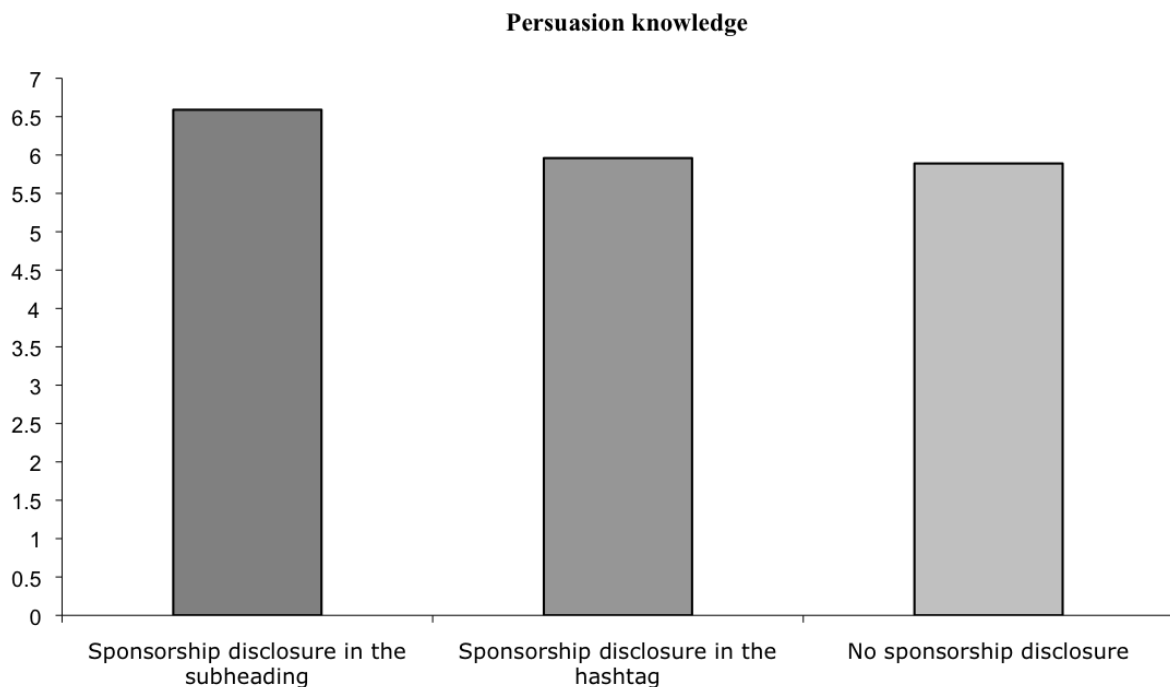
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any differences found between the hashtag condition and no disclosure condition in dependent variables, mediated by persuasion knowledge. This answers RQ2b, RQ2c, RQ2d and RQ2e.

Figure 3 shows the differences in persuasion knowledge between the sponsorship disclosure conditions. Both the effect of involvement [$F(1,181)=.001$, $p=.97$] and the interaction effect between the sponsorship disclosure type and involvement were not significant [$F(2, 181)=.676$, $p=.051$]. Without the effect of involvement on persuasion knowledge, the entire H3 had to be rejected.

Figure 3.

Persuasion knowledge in each sponsorship disclosure condition, N=193



Additionally, the set of factorial analysis of variance was run in order to test the direct effects of the type of sponsorship disclosure and involvement on the dependent variables, with the use of previous Instagram use as a control variable. The results showed no main effects of neither sponsorship disclosure [$F(2,181)=.253$, $p=.777$], nor involvement [$F(1,181)=2.27$, $p=.133$] nor previous use of Instagram [$F(1,181)=.055$, $p=.814$] on the attitude towards the influencer. Also, there was no interaction effect found between sponsorship disclosure and

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involvement [$F(2,181)=1.30$, $p=.275$] nor between sponsorship disclosure, involvement and previous use of Instagram [$F(2,181)=1.215$, $p=.299$] on attitude towards the influencer. Similar analysis measuring the effects of the same independent variables on attitude towards the brand was conducted. Its results indicated no main effect of sponsorship disclosure [$F(2,181)=.417$, $p=.660$], nor involvement [$F(1,181)=1.674$, $p=.197$] and nor prior use of Instagram [$F(1,181)=.045$, $p=.831$] on attitude towards the brand. Also, there were no interaction effects found between involvement and sponsorship disclosure [$F(2,181)=.605$, $p=.547$] and involvement, sponsorship disclosure and previous use of Instagram [$F(2,181)=1.108$, $p=.332$]. Finally, the factorial analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effects of independent variables on purchase intention, showing no main effects of neither sponsorship disclosure [$F(2,181)=1.650$, $p=.195$] nor involvement [$F(1,181)=.919$, $p=.339$]. Also, there was no effect found of the control variable, previous use of Instagram on purchase intention [$F(1,181)=.001$, $p=.975$]. Both interaction effects between involvement and sponsorship disclosure [$F(2,181)=1.400$, $p=.249$] as well as between involvement, sponsorship disclosure and prior use of Instagram [$F(2,181)=.698$, $p=.499$] were not significant. These findings indicated no direct influence of neither type of sponsorship disclosure nor involvement on the brand review, purchase intention and influencer review.

However, the results of the analysis investigating the effects of independent variables on brand recall showed a significant main effect of involvement [$F(1,187)=6.108$, $p=.014$]. The brand recall was significantly higher in the high-involvement condition ($M=.23$, $SD=.43$) than in the low-involvement condition ($M=.11$, $SD=.31$).

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4.3. Effects of persuasion knowledge

Several regression analyses were calculated in order to test the predicting power of persuasion knowledge on dependent variables (brand recall, purchase intention, attitude towards the brand and attitude towards the influencer). Involvement and the previous use of Instagram were used as control variables.

4.3.1. Attitude towards the influencer

The results of the regression analysis indicated that the three predictors (persuasion knowledge, involvement, prior use of Instagram) explained 4% of the variance ($R^2=.04$, $F(3,192)=2.705$, $p=.047$). Persuasion knowledge was found to have a significant influence on attitudes towards the influencer. The higher the persuasion knowledge, the more negative the review of the influencer ($b=-.202$, $p=.005$). This supported H2b. Neither involvement ($b=.037$, $p=.602$), nor previous Instagram use ($b=-.015$, $p=.838$) were found to have a significant influence on attitude towards the influencer.

4.3.2. Brand recall

Due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, a logistic regression was chosen to investigate the influence of persuasion knowledge on brand recall, controlling for involvement and previous use of Instagram. The results showed that higher involvement positively influenced brand recall ($-22L=169.22$, $R^2=.06$, $b=.96$, $p=.02$). The results showed no significant difference in brand recall for persuasion knowledge ($b=.258$, $p=.24$) and previous Instagram use ($b=.04$, $p=.937$). Thus, H2c was rejected.

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4.3.3. Attitude towards the brand

The proposed model measuring the influence of persuasion knowledge, involvement and previous Instagram use on attitude towards the brand was not significant ($R^2=.03$, $F(3,192)=2.416$, $p=.068$), indicating no effect of persuasion knowledge on attitude towards the brand. Therefore, H2d was rejected.

4.3.4. Purchase intention

Finally, the effect of persuasion knowledge, involvement and previous Instagram use on purchase intention was examined. It was found that 9% of the variance was explained by the predictors ($R^2=.09$, $F(3,192)=6.812$, $p=.000$). Results indicated that persuasion knowledge has a significant influence on purchase intention ($b=-.43$, $P=0.000$). Higher persuasion knowledge leads to the lower purchase intention. H2e was supported. Involvement ($b=.001$, $p=.987$) and previous Instagram use ($b=-.037$, $p=.591$) were found to have no significant influence on purchase intention.

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to measure the effectiveness of different types of sponsorship disclosure on Instagram. The research also aimed to investigate how sponsorship disclosure, moderated by viewer's involvement, affects persuasion knowledge, and as a result, brand review (brand recall, attitude towards the brand, purchase intention) and influencer review.

Recognition of advertising, which is the main aim of advertisement disclosure (Boerman et al., 2013), as well as persuasion knowledge were found to be the highest in the "Paid partnership with..." condition. A possible explanation of the high effectiveness of the

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subheading disclosure can be the clarity of its language, and as suggested by previous literature (e.g. Outing & Ruel, 2004; Wartenberg & Homlqvist, 2005; Nielsen, 2006), beneficial position, which attracts viewer attention. Although ad recognition and persuasion knowledge were relatively high in all three sponsorship disclosure conditions, there was no significant difference found between the hashtag group and no disclosure group. This finding indicates two important things. Firstly, it can be assumed that viewers' overall awareness of sponsored content on Instagram is high, no matter if sponsorship disclosure is present. On the other hand, the results suggest that hashtag "advertising" does not fulfil its role in increasing the awareness of Instagram users. Its ineffectiveness might be due to its location at the end of the text, which users either skip or do not read carefully. Additionally, in contrast to the assumptions of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & John, 1986 as in O'Keefe, 2008), involvement, used as a moderator, was found to have no influence on the effects of sponsorship disclosure on persuasion knowledge. This suggests that even viewers, assigned to the low-involvement condition, symbolizing the "normal" browsing behaviour, were able to recognize the persuasion attempt. Also, previous use of Instagram did not play any role in ad recognition nor in persuasion knowledge, indicating that new users' awareness is as high as one of the experienced users.

The set of regression analysis aimed to investigate the effects of persuasion knowledge. In line with the assumptions of the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994), it was found that persuasion knowledge negatively influences attitude towards the influencer and purchase intention. In other words, viewers who recognized the sponsored content and were aware of persuasion attempt, were also more likely to be critical about the author of the post and showed less interest in buying promoted product. Surprisingly, findings indicated that there is no effect of persuasion knowledge on brand recall nor attitude towards the brand. This is in

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contrast to the research of Boerman et al. (2014) who stated that viewers' awareness of sponsored content leads to the resistance. Again, previous use of Instagram was used as a control variable, however no significant effects were found.

Lastly, additional analysis showed no effects of sponsorship disclosure on dependent variables. So, it is not the sponsorship disclosure which affects the brand reviews or influencer reviews, but only the persuasion knowledge. In other words, sponsorship disclosure might harm the influencer review and purchase intention, but only when the persuasion knowledge is activated. Therefore, "Paid partnership with..." leads to the negative attitude towards the influencer and purchase intention not directly, but only due to the higher persuasion knowledge, which is typical for people exposed to this type of disclosure. Also, only the dependent variable of brand recall was influenced by levels of involvement in respondents. This finding indicated that people with a larger interest in the Instagram post view it more carefully and with a greater attention to detail and thus, are more likely to recall the brand.

6. Limitations and future research

There are several limitations to this study that may decrease the significance and generalizability of the findings. Firstly, this research analysed the effects of only two types of sponsorship disclosure on Instagram – "Paid partnership with..." and #advertising. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of other hashtags and their combination with subheading disclosure. Moreover, involvement of viewers was examined as a moderating variable and previous Instagram use as a control variable. Future research should consider other variables, which may influence the effects of sponsorship disclosure or persuasion knowledge, such as mood. People feeling positive may have an overall better attitude toward the sponsored content, despite seeing the disclosure. Thirdly, one could argue that the setting of this

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experimental study was unrealistic, as participants were exposed to one single post, which may have unnaturally increased their attentiveness and concentration. For this reason, future research should recreate Instagram settings and enable participants to browse posts to match the look and feel of an authentic Instagram newsfeed. Additionally, the study used a new concept of attitude towards the influencer as one of the dependent variables. However, the items used for its measurement were not tested before and may require future improvements.

Finally, there are several limitations regarding the sample. In this study, a pullover was selected as a promoted fashion product in order to interest women, who were the only participants in the experiment. To broaden the understanding of sponsorship disclosure on Instagram, future research could use a product dedicated to men and review their evaluations. Moreover, the participants of the study were well-educated, with an average age of 25 years. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the effects of sponsorship disclosures on less -educated and younger people, who are also active users of the platform. With the use of such sample, findings could be entirely different due to the possibility of less critical attitudes towards the sponsored content.

7. Practical implications

Findings of this study provide several practical implications, relevant for legislators, marketers and opinion leaders on Instagram. Based on the results indicating the effectiveness of “Paid partnership with...” used in the subheading, but insufficiency of #advertising, located in the text below the post, it can be assumed that introducing a law-making sponsorship disclosure mandatory might be not enough to protect consumers. Legislators should specify where and how the sponsorship should be disclosed. In the case of Instagram, opinion leaders should be strongly encouraged to use the sponsorship disclosure with the use of the new tool in the

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subheading.

This type of sponsorship disclosure might be especially harmful for influencers. However, as findings indicated, due to the overall high awareness of sponsored content on Instagram, regardless of the presence and type of disclosure, opinion leaders should be aware of the consequences of collaborating with brands, which may lead to the damage of their image.

When it comes to a marketer's perspective, disclosing sponsorship on Instagram might be beneficial in the case of consumers who are highly involved in fashion, as they are more likely to recall the brand name. On the other hand, results suggest that marketers should avoid collaborations on Instagram, especially those, which are disclosed in the subheading, because they may increase the persuasion knowledge of the consumers, which in result will lead to lower purchase intention.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Dear participant,

thank you for taking part in this survey! Its aim is the evaluation of the fashion post on Instagram. There is no right or wrong, don't worry too much about your answers and just tell spontaneously what you think. Completing the survey will take you max. 5 minutes. Answering the questions honestly and fully will help me to obtain the most reliable data.

The survey is a part of my Master project, conducted at the University of Vienna. Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you have any questions regarding the project, please feel free to contact me.

Exposure to the involvement manipulation

Low involvement:

You will now see 1 Instagram post. Please look at it as you would do while browsing Instagram. Thank you!

High involvement:

You will now see 1 Instagram post.

Your task is to:

- Take as much time as you need to **observe everything carefully**
- **Memorize all aspects** attentively
- **Look at all details** in a very concentrated way

This is very important, since you will be asked questions regarding your memory of the posts later on.

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Thank you for your effort!

Exposure to the stimulus material (Appendix B)

Post review

1. What do you think about the post?

Please indicate on the scales:

bad	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	good
boring	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	interesting
negative	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	positive

2. What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

Please indicate on the scales.

The post was an advertising.

strongly disagree	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	strongly agree
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This post was published to make me like the brand.

strongly disagree	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	strongly agree
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This post was published to sell the product.

strongly disagree	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	strongly agree
-------------------	---------------------------	----------------

This post was published to influence me.

strongly disagree	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7	strongly agree
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3. What do you think about the Instagrammer whose post you have just seen?

Please indicate on the scales:

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unattractive	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	attractive
not classy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	classy
ugly	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	beautiful
not sexy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	sexy
plain	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	elegant
unfashionable	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	fashionable
unpopular	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	popular

4. What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

Please indicate on the scales.

I would follow this Instagrammer.

strongly agree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 strongly disagree

I would like this post.

strongly agree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 strongly disagree

5. Did you recognize the Instagrammer whose post you have just seen?

- Yes
- No

Brand review

1. What do you think about the brand of the pullover, worn by the Instagrammer in the post you have just seen?

Please indicate on the scales:

unappealing 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 appealing

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unpleasant	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	pleasant
boring	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	interesting
dislike	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	like
negative	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	positive
bad	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	good
old-fashioned	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	fashionable
undesirable	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	desirable

2. What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

Please indicate on the scales.

I would actively seek out this pullover in a store in order to purchase it.

strongly disagree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 strongly agree

I would like to try the brand of the pullover.

strongly disagree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 strongly agree

I would buy other products of this brand.

strongly disagree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 strongly agree

I would buy this pullover if I happened to see the brand.

strongly disagree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 strongly agree

3. Do you recall the brand of the pullover, worn by the Instagrammer in the post you have just seen?

If yes, please fill out the name of the brand.

- Yes [.....]

- No

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Manipulation check

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, regarding the Instagram posts you have just seen.

I tried to memorize all aspects.

strongly agree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 strongly disagree

I observed everything carefully.

strongly agree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 strongly disagree

I looked at all details in a very concentrated way.

strongly agree 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 strongly disagree

Demographics

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. How old are you?

[...]

3. Are you an Instagram user?

- Yes
- No

4. Please provide your affiliation to the University of Vienna

- Undergraduate student
- Graduate student
- Academic faculty member
- Non-academic faculty member

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5. Please rate your overall English language skills

- Beginner (A1)
- Elementary (A2)
- Intermediate (B1)
- Upper-Intermediate (B2)
- Advanced (C1)
- Proficiency (C2)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your answers were transmitted, you may close the browser window or tab now.

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Appendix B

Stimulus materials

Sponsorship disclosure in the subheading “Paid partnership with...”



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Sponsorship disclosure in the hashtag “#advertising”



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No sponsorship disclosure