Small influencers, big impact?

The use of (different types of) social media influencers in service recovery

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Preface

In front of you lies my thesis about the impact of (different types of) social media influencers (nano- and micro- versus macro- and mega-) on customer forgiveness following a service failure. From November 2023 until June 2024, I have dedicated time and energy to conducting the research and writing this thesis. My supervisor, Dr. Herm Joosten, provided me with valuable advice during this time. I am grateful for his time, feedback, knowledge, and insights throughout this journey. Furthermore, I would like to thank the second examiner, Prof. Dr. José Bloemer, for her time and dedication. Lastly, I wish to thank all the participants in the experiment for their cooperation and time. It has been a very educational experience, and I am happy with the outcome.

I hope you enjoy reading.

Eline van Alebeek
Nijmegen, June 17, 2024

Abstract

Service failures are inevitable due to the inconsistent nature of service delivery, resulting in customer dissatisfaction, switching behavior, and negative word-of-mouth. Companies must address these service failures effectively, as proper recovery can enhance the recovery paradox where customer satisfaction exceeds pre-failure levels. Social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors, including during service recovery. Through an online experiment (n = 107), this study investigated the impact of (different types of) social media influencers (nano- and micro- versus macro- and mega-) on customer forgiveness following a service failure.

The results indicate that the use of a social media influencer in an organization's response to a service complaint does not significantly impact customer forgiveness. Moreover, there were no significant differences in customer forgiveness between those mentioning nano- and micro-influencers and those mentioning macro- and mega-influencers.

The study concludes by discussing potential explanations and limitations of the research. Suggestions for future research include collecting a representative sample and a more balanced sample size.

Keywords: complaint handling, service failure recovery, social media influencers, customer forgiveness

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1. Introduction

Everyone makes mistakes; it is part of being human. Offering services carries the constant risk of things going wrong because the main characteristic of a service is an inconsistency in its delivery process (Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 1996). Mistakes in service delivery are thus almost inevitable; errors occur even with the best service providers (Hess et al., 2003). If a customer perceives a service performance as falling short of their expectations, this is known as a *service failure* (Bell & Zemke, 1987; Bitner et al., 1990). These service failures might have damaging effects on the company, such as customer dissatisfaction, customer switching behavior, or negative word-of-mouth (Chang & Cheng, 2021).

Therefore, companies face more pressure than ever to provide excellent customer service. When a service failure happens, the company's response could either worsen the situation, or it could make things better and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. The steps an organization takes to restore its services after a service failure is referred to as a *service recovery* (Grönroos, 1988). Addressing service failures and recovery is critical as they can impact customer (dis)satisfaction (Jones, 2022; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013). After receiving satisfactory service recovery, customers are more likely to recommend the company to others, stay loyal, and eventually decide to repurchase the service in the future (de Matos et al., 2009; Eccles & Durand, 1998). Moreover, successful recovery attempts could result in a service recovery paradox, where consumers' satisfaction after the service recovery becomes greater than before the failure (Karande et al., 2007).

As service failures are an inevitable yet influential phenomenon in the service context (Zhu et al., 2021), service providers need to understand how customers respond to them. When faced with a service failure, customers experience disconfirmation (Smith et al., 1999; Ho et al., 2020), triggering coping strategies to reduce stress (Sengupta et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2021). Common coping strategies include avoidance, seeking support, and forgiveness (Yagil & Luria, 2016). While existing literature primarily focuses on avoidance behaviors and support-seeking strategies, the concept of customer forgiveness has received little attention (Chen et al., 2022). Consequently, the current research focuses on customer forgiveness. *Customer forgiveness* is often defined as "a process aimed at reducing feelings of anger, giving up the desire for revenge, and developing a sense of empathy and generosity toward the service provider" (Chen et al., 2022).

Customers' willingness to forgive service providers may be influenced by their perception of a service failure incident (Strizhakova et al., 2012). Sometimes, individuals can

easily stop thinking about the incident, a concept referred to as *distraction* (Denson, 2013). On other occasions, individuals may find themselves fixating on the incident, a phenomenon known as *rumination* (Denson, 2013). If customers become obsessed with the incident, they have three choices: loyalty, exit, or voice (Jones, 2022). Loyalty means taking no action, exit means switching brands, and voice means filing a complaint with the company (Jones, 2022). Customers who choose to voice their complaints typically do so to vent their frustration, share negative experiences, and seek revenge by damaging the company's reputation, providing the company with an opportunity to improve (Jones, 2022).

Social network sites (SNSs) have transformed how customers voice complaints (Jones, 2022). More people than ever before use the Internet (Istanbulluoglu, 2017). In 2023, 89 percent of Dutch people aged fifteen and above used social media (Newcom Research and Consultancy Onderzoeksbureau, 2023). The introduction of SNSs has provided customers with numerous ways to share information and express their opinions regarding a company and its products. This phenomenon, known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), involves individuals expressing their views and making statements, whether positive or negative, about products and services through online platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Companies need to constantly monitor and handle online opinions because of the effectiveness of the Internet in spreading these messages (Li et al., 2018). While positive feedback can benefit companies, negative feedback can significantly harm their reputation, especially if the company fails to meet customer expectations.

The explosive growth of SNSs is closely associated with the increasing use of social media influencers (SMIs). Many companies now prefer online marketing through SMIs over traditional forms of marketing (Breves et al., 2019). SMIs are considered modern opinion leaders, consistently endorsing brands on social media (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The strength of influencers lies in their ability to gain trust and credibility among customers by sharing their personal experiences and lifestyles (Bohan, 2016; McQuarrie et al., 2013). Since SMIs often have large followings and are highly popular on social media, they can significantly influence the opinions, attitudes, and purchasing behavior of their followers (Van den Bulte & Joshi, 2007). The recommendations of influencers are highly valued by their followers, who trust their recommendations and tend to purchase the products promoted in these collaborations (Belanche et al., 2021; Rakuten, 2019).

The potential impact of SMIs on the consumer decision-making process, particularly during the prepurchase and purchase stage, is well-documented in the literature (Li et al., 2012; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; de Veirman et al., 2017). However, exposure to an influencer's

opinion is not restricted to the prepurchase phase, as customers follow and interact with others throughout the whole customer journey (Hamilton et al., 2021). After a purchase, customers may seek an influencer's opinion on a product, which will likely affect customer's reactions and satisfaction in the post-purchase stage (Suri et al., 2023).

Research on the impact of influencers in the post-purchase stage is limited, yet they do show positive effects. For example, earlier research by Suri et al. (2023) revealed that participants experienced more positive emotions after reading an influencer's positive review of the product, even if the product had failed to meet their expectations. In the study, 82 participants were asked to imagine a scenario where they had purchased a pair of headphones that did not meet their expectations. Following this, participants were informed that, after their own disappointing experience, they decided to seek out reviews from other customers about the same product (Suri et al., 2023). The participants were shown either a positive or negative review of the headphones by a well-known influencer. The results showed that participants felt more positive emotions after viewing an influencer's positive review compared to a negative one, despite their own disappointing experience (Suri et al., 2023).

This research of Suri et al. (2023) on the use of SMIs in the service recovery process was restricted to macro-influencers. Perceptions of an influencer's expertise can, however, differ depending on the influencer's category, because they differ on several characteristics, such as engagement rate, authenticity, and accessibility (Suri et al., 2023). Therefore, the current study aims to investigate how various types of influencers (nano-, micro-, macro-, and mega-influencers) have different effects on customer forgiveness after a service failure. The term *nano-influencer* refers to a social media user who has fewer than 10,000 followers, while *micro-influencers* are individuals with 10,000 to 100,000 followers. On the other hand, *macro-influencers* have 100,000 to 1 million followers, while *mega-influencers* are those with over one million followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Because earlier research on the use of social media influencers in the service recovery process is limited, research on this subject is needed to bridge the gap. Hence, the current research contributes to the online service recovery framework by investigating the effects of (different types of) social media influencers on customer forgiveness during service recovery.

1.1 Research aim and research question

The purpose of the present study is to contribute to earlier research by gaining insight into the effects of the use of social media influencers in an organization's response to a service complaint on customer forgiveness. This leads to the following research question: "*What is*

the effect of the use of social media influencers in the organization's response to a service complaint on customer forgiveness and what role plays the different influencer types (nano- and micro- versus macro- and mega-) in this relationship?"

1.2 Theoretical relevance

Social media has transformed complaint handling, service failures, and service recoveries (Jones, 2022). Current research contributes to the existing literature by focusing on customers complaining on social media and the corresponding recovery framework. Existing literature on the use of social media influencers in service recovery is limited but promising (Suri et al., 2023). More research is therefore needed to draw more definitive conclusions. Hence, the current study aims to fill this gap by examining the complex dynamics involved in incorporating social media influencers into service recovery strategies.

Moreover, earlier research on the use of social media influencers in service recovery was restricted to macro-influencers (Suri et al., 2023). However, as elaborated further in Chapter 2, different types of influencers display distinct characteristics that define them, which may potentially affect the service recovery process (Suri et al., 2023). The current study, therefore, investigates how different types of influencers (nano- and micro- versus macro- and mega-) have different effects on customer forgiveness after a service failure.

1.3 Practical relevance

Current research will provide companies with valuable insights into the use of social media influencers in an organization's response to service complaints. This has several practical implications. Firstly, companies can improve their marketing strategies by understanding the impact of SMIs on customer forgiveness. By using this information, companies can effectively use influencer marketing and engagement strategies. Given the large number of diverse influencers present on social media today, it is critical for companies to understand the dynamics of this relationship. Different types of influencers (nano-, micro-, mega-, and macro-) may have varying effects on customer forgiveness. Organizations can use this information to choose influencers that align with their brand image and target audience, thereby maximizing the impact of their marketing campaigns.

The current research can also shed light on the role of social media influencers in crisis management. If influencers indeed play a significant role in minimizing the negative effects of service complaints, organizations can strategically incorporate them into their crisis communication strategies. Particularly in the digital era, it is important to understand how

influencers help to lessen the negative impact of service complaints since public reaction to crises can happen quickly and negatively impact customer satisfaction for a long time.

1.4 Thesis outline

In Chapter 2, a theoretical background is given, discussing the theoretical perspectives, the hypotheses, and the conceptual model. The research design and the corresponding methodological decisions, including research ethics, are explained in Chapter 3. The analysis and findings of the research are presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, the conclusion and discussion, which answers the research question, will be discussed, along with the practical and managerial implications, and recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical background

To answer the research question, two hypotheses have been formulated based on the literature and theories that will be discussed in this chapter. First, the concepts of service failure and service recovery are discussed, followed by social media influencers, the Feel Better-effect, the Social influence theory, and the Commitment-Trust theory. Finally, all of the variables and their relationships will be visualized in a conceptual model.

2.1. Service failure

In service transactions, failures will inevitably occur. Despite the company's best efforts to maintain service quality, service failures cannot be completely eliminated (Jean Harrison-Walker, 2012). Service failures happen when a service provider fails to provide the level of service that the customer expects or when the service provider performs actions that the customer deems inadequate (Lin, 2006).

Service failures could either be outcome-oriented or process-oriented (Bitner et al., 1990; Hoffman et al., 1995). Process-oriented service failure relates to the way the service is provided, while outcome-oriented service failure concerns the actual outcomes of the service (Grönroos, 1988; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Outcome-oriented service failures occur when a company fails to provide essential services, whereas process-oriented service failures are caused by flaws in the service process or specific areas (Jean Harrison-Walker, 2012).

Service failures could hurt the company. According to earlier research, they may result in a decline in customer satisfaction (Lam et al., 2004), a loss of customer trust (Liu et al., 2014), and unfavorable word-of-mouth (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). Understanding the causes and consequences of service failures is crucial for companies to implement effective service recovery strategies, restore customer satisfaction, and preserve a positive brand image.

2.2. (Online) service recovery

Given the prevalence of service failures within companies and the potential for customer dissatisfaction resulting from these service failures, it is crucial to attempt to win back dissatisfied customers through a successful series of steps known as the service recovery process (Mc-Coll-Kennedy et al., 2003; Tax et al., 1998). The actions taken by service providers when a mistake or problem arises are known as service recovery (Grönroos, 1988).

By handling service failures with effectiveness, organizations can show their commitment to customer satisfaction and even turn a bad experience around. To ensure

effective service recovery, companies should adopt a proactive approach, which involves anticipating possible service failures and creating a plan to handle them (Bitner et al., 1990). To continuously improve and refine their strategies, companies should actively seek feedback from customers regarding their service recovery efforts (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Research has shown that effective service recovery can positively impact customer's repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004; Tax et al., 1990).

2.3. Online / social media service recovery

Customers express their dissatisfaction through various channels, including rating sites, online forums, and social networks (Johnen & Schnittka, 2019; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). These complaints are accessible to a wide audience and can significantly influence a company's sales (Johnen & Schnittka, 2019). Therefore, companies strive to minimize the impact of social media complaints. Initially, companies must decide whether to engage or to remain passive. Research suggests that taking action leads to more favorable outcomes compared to staying silent, as viewers value companies' willingness to engage with customers as a sign of professionalism and respect (Johnen & Schnittka, 2019; Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2017). Subsequently, after deciding to reply, companies must select an appropriate response strategy. As outlined in the introduction, a new trend has emerged in companies' response strategies, which involves the use of social media influencers.

2.4. Social media influencers

The rise of various social media platforms has transformed how individuals acquire information about products and services and make purchase decisions (Jun & Yi, 2020). This shift has led to new marketing techniques, such as social media influencer marketing (Carter, 2016). Influencer marketing has become a vital part of businesses' integrated marketing strategies in recent years due to the substantial business opportunities that social media influencers offer. *Social media influencers* are defined as "individuals, groups, or even virtual avatars who have built a following on social media platforms and are acknowledged as digital opinion leaders who have significant social influence over their following" (Leung et al., 2022).

2.5. Different types of social media influencers

With the introduction of social media, influencers of all sizes – nano, micro, macro, and mega – have proliferated (Ismail, 2018). These influencers differ on several characteristics, such as engagement rate, authenticity, and accessibility, which will be further explained in this

paragraph.

The term nano-influencer is a relatively new concept that refers to a social media user who has less than 10,000 followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Previous research shows that engagement rates among nano-influencers are twice as high as those of other influencer categories (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020). Nano-influencers are more and more recognized as the future of influencer marketing and the marketing industry as a whole because of the intimate relationships they build with their followers (Kucey, 2019). Presently, many brands prefer working with nano-influencers because of their audience-focused and targeted approach (Durfy, 2019).

Micro-influencers, who typically have follower counts ranging from 10,000 to 100,000, are recognized as experts in specific topics (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). These influencers are characterized by a heightened level of confidence and credibility when engaging with their audience (Alassani & Göretz, 2019). Micro-influencers offer several advantages for companies, notably their authenticity, which fosters trust and belief among followers in terms of brand recommendations. Additionally, they are often more cost-effective compared to macro-influencers (Sorilbran, 2019). Micro-influencers specialize in niche topics and exhibit more active engagement on social media platforms (Cassia et al., 2019).

Macro-influencers are individuals or entities with follower counts typically ranging between 100,000 and 1 million followers, characterized by their frequent posting (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). The key advantage of using macro-influencers lies in their ability to independently generate high-quality content without requiring direction from the company. Moreover, brands can reach a large audience through one influencer. Macro-influencers maintain a strong presence across multiple platforms, effectively using various social media channels for cross-promotion and enhanced brand value (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Individuals such as actors, artists, and athletes, as well as those who specialize in particular subjects on their social media platforms and who have over one million followers, are considered mega-influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Mega-influencers possess the ability to capture widespread attention, often surpassing the audience reach of traditional mass media channels (Ruiz-Gomez, 2018). Due to their substantial following, mega-influencers can significantly enhance a brand's global recognition (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

It is widely recognized that micro-influencers are more effective than macro-influencers in terms of their connection and relationship with their followers (Dhanik, 2016). As the number of followers increases, the level of engagement and attention directed towards followers by influencers tends to diminish (Chen, 2016). The quality of the relationships

established between influencers and their followers holds significant implications for brand trust, product awareness, and ultimately, purchase intent.

When selecting an influencer to partner with, the influencer's level of trustworthiness is an important factor to consider, as this can significantly impact consumer evaluations (Bijen, 2017). The more followers identify with influencers, the greater the level of trust they place in their recommendations. Given that micro-influencers are perceived as "everyday individuals," users tend to find them more relatable, resulting in higher levels of trust within this group (Pusztai, 2019).

2.6. Customer forgiveness

Forgiveness is defined as "the act of reducing negative feelings towards someone who has harmed or offended the self" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). It involves a change or progression in which an individual adopts a more favorable or less favorable attitude toward the transgressor, leading to reduced avoidance and vengefulness, and increased kindness towards them (Enright & Coyle, 1998; McCullough et al., 2001).

Over the last two decades, researchers have examined the concept of forgiveness from three distinct perspectives: motivational, emotional, and decisional. The motivational perspective, on the one hand, is about the internal motivations that drive individuals to forgive transgressors, such as the desire to reduce feelings of revenge (McCullough et al., 2003). On the other hand, from an emotional standpoint, forgiveness is seen as heavily influenced by the emotional dynamics at play. This perspective highlights the gap between how individuals ideally wish a transgression to be resolved and the actual resolution. The greater this gap, the less likely individuals are to forgive the transgressor (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Additionally, the decisional perspective centers around whether forgiving someone causes individuals to behave differently than they would have before the transgression occurred (Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

Forgiveness is vital for repairing relationships and fostering emotional and physical well-being (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). In any close relationship, occasional offenses are inevitable. Therefore, acts of sacrifice, such as forgiveness, are crucial for maintaining these relationships over time (McCullough et al., 2003). Moreover, forgiveness helps people release negative emotions and improves their emotional well-being by freeing them from emotional burdens like anger or resentment (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

In the context of consumption, forgiveness can be important in helping customers regain psychological balance and achieve optimal service outcomes while releasing negative

emotions (Tsarenko & Rooslani Tojib, 2012). Particularly in services, where consumer-service provider relationships are especially important, customers may consider forgiveness as a way to deal with service-related problems. Furthermore, when customers have invested resources into a service, they are more likely to forgive service providers in the event of a transgression, thereby releasing themselves from negative feelings (Hur & Jang 2019). Therefore, the present study incorporates the concept of customer forgiveness within the context of service recovery to explore the factors that influence customer's intentions to forgive service providers.

2.7. Social media influencers and the service recovery process

2.7.1. The Feel Better-effect

Literature on the use of social media influencers in service recovery is limited but promising. For example, Suri et al. (2023) found a positive relationship between social media influencers and consumer's post-failure affect, supported by the Feel Better-effect. The authors suggest that when a customer reads a positive review from an influencer after having a negative experience with a product, they should "feel better" as a result of this exposure. This is because social contagion might occur, causing the influencer to influence the beliefs and opinions of the customer regarding this product. *Social contagion* refers to the "spread and adoption of knowledge, emotions, beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviors of actors (individuals, groups or organizations) among other actors who are exposed to and influenced by the knowledge, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the former" (Plé & Demangeot, 2020).

Typically, interactions within a particular social network are the source of social contagion. This network typically consists of an influencer and their followers, who engage by reading posts and comments as well as watching videos like vlogs and product reviews. Given that influencers are commonly viewed as opinion leaders within their particular social networks, followers are more inclined to adopt the influencer's beliefs and attitudes through social influence (Casaló et al., 2020; Plé & Demangeot, 2020). As a result of their desire to imitate the influencer, customer's thoughts are altered in a way that facilitates social contagion. Since customer's initial negative opinions about the product are transformed after encountering positive opinions about the product, it is proposed that this cognitive contagion results in an emotional improvement known as the Feel Better-effect (Suri et al., 2023).

After a service failure, customers are likely to experience an initial decrease in their emotional well-being because of the activation of negative emotions such as dissatisfaction

and annoyance (Folkes, 1984; Gelbrich, 2010). However, these negative attitudes could potentially be transformed positively by a favorable review from an influencer, leading to an improvement in their emotional states. Therefore, it is expected that the use of social media influencers will positively impact customer forgiveness.

2.7.2. Social influence theory

Social influence theory was first introduced by Kelman in 1958. This theory distinguishes three primary levels of social influence: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance occurs when people conform to normative and peer expectations to gain acceptance from their peers (Kelman, 1958). Social media influencers use social influence to spread marketing messages and influence other people's behaviors (Zhang et al., 2017). Despite not having direct verbal or physical interactions with potential customers in online environments, social media influencers can still exert social influence through shared social experiences and indirect engagement (Argo & Dahl, 2020). In the context of the service recovery process, influencers may post positive reviews of a product online. Consequently, customers may comply with the influencer's positive reviews and recommendations as a means of fitting in with their social circle, potentially resulting in forgiveness for service failures.

Individuals are motivated to align their beliefs and actions to form a self-defining connection with peers who are perceived as members of reference groups, a concept referred to as identification influence (Kelman, 1958). This concept suggests that individuals try to imitate those who they admire or who they consider to be influential in their social circles (Kelman, 1958). In the context of social media, influencers significantly shape attitudes and behaviors. Social media influencers often represent certain lifestyles, values, or ideals that their followers want to imitate. Consequently, customers may identify with influencers, seeking to imitate the qualities and lifestyles depicted in their content. This alignment with influencers can influence individuals to adopt similar attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the influence of social media influencers extends beyond mere endorsement, influencing follower's perceptions and decisions through the process of identification.

When people internalize information from their peers, they adjust their beliefs and behaviors based on the interactions and messages they receive, a process known as internalization influence (Kelman, 1958). These social influence factors can change a person's belief system and cause them to take actions that could improve their social status (Hwang, 2016). In the context of social media, influencers can influence customer's belief systems

through their content and engagement. By sharing their positive experiences and endorsing particular products or services, influencers can shape the perceptions of their followers (Hwang, 2016). Consequently, customers may internalize the experiences and perspectives shared by influencers, resulting in a shift in their perceptions and attitudes. In the context of service failures, customers who are exposed to positive experiences from influencers may be more inclined to forgive such failures because the internalization of the influencer's perspective has the potential to cause customers to reconsider their initial negative opinions. This internalization can encourage forgiveness and favorable feelings toward the product or service.

Based on the concept of the Feel Better-effect, social contagion, and customer's desire to imitate an influencer, it is expected that the use of social media influencers in service recovery will positively impact customer forgiveness. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: The use of social media influencers in service recovery positively impacts customer forgiveness.

2.7.3. Commitment-Trust theory

According to the Commitment-Trust theory, trust is essential to build long-lasting relationships between parties involved in a transaction (Lin et al., 2023). To start this process, marketers can implement relationship and loyalty programs aimed at developing and maintaining customer's psychological commitment (Sheikh et al., 2019). In virtual environments characterized by disconnection and unclear data, trust is essential for fostering sustained dedication. Customer's willingness to commit to a business and use online resources for information is reflected in their trust in an engaging party, thereby reducing the need for offline sources (Sheikh et al., 2019). This highlights the importance of commitment and trust in evaluating the role of social media influencers in online service failures and recovery scenarios, highlighting their inseparable nature (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Prior research has suggested that the trust that customer place in a third-party influencer plays a crucial role in strengthening their commitment to sharing positive information regularly, thereby building trusting relationships and reducing dissatisfaction in the context of influencer marketing. Trust exists when people have faith in others' reliability and integrity. In the context of service failure and recovery (SFR) efforts, confidence is a key component in explaining how relationships change. Social media influencers can foster mutually beneficial relationships between brands and their customers. Such relationships can lead to increased commitment to the SFR process. According to several studies (Goo &

Huang, 2008; Yen, 2009), commitment is a significant mediating factor that influences relationship stability. A strong commitment is associated with the development of long-lasting relationships during the SFR process.

As previously stated, customers are more likely to trust information from individuals they perceive as trustworthy, thereby enhancing commitment to the service failure recovery process. Nano- and micro-influencers, due to their smaller and more niche audiences, are often seen as more relatable and trustworthy, compared to macro- and mega-influencers. Therefore, the second hypothesis states:

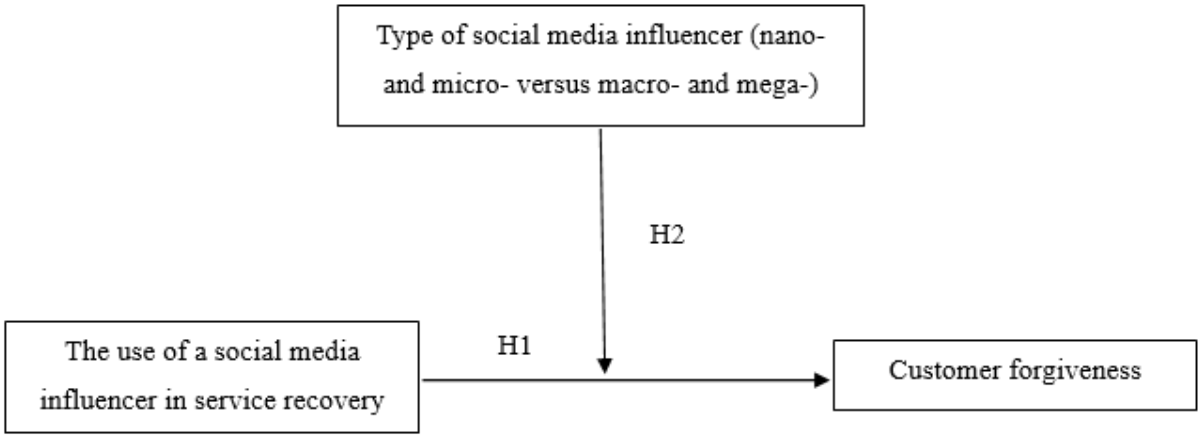
> *H2: The use of nano- and micro-influencers more positively impacts customer forgiveness than the use of macro- and mega-influencers.*

2.8. Conceptual model

The concluding section of this chapter will provide a visual depiction of the selected variables. Each assumed causal relationship is accompanied by a corresponding hypothesis. Consequently, current research will assess a total of two hypotheses, which are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual model



3. Methodology

This chapter describes and explains the design and implementation of the research. The research design, the scenario, the sample, the stimulus material, the operationalizations, the pre-test, the analysis, the validity and reliability, and the research ethics are discussed.

3.1. Research design

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of influencers in service recovery. Subsequently, the purpose of this research is to investigate which type of influencer is most appropriate for service recovery. A quantitative research approach is used to answer the research question. The selection of quantitative methods is based on their reproducibility, which is known to improve the reliability and robustness of the data and findings. This method reduces the possibility of inaccuracies and subjective interpretations by facilitating a clear presentation of the data and findings (Field, 2018).

This research adopts an online scenario-based experimental approach, meaning that participants are presented with hypothetical scenarios and are required to answer as if they were experiencing the scenario. An experimental design is deemed appropriate for this study, as it allows for the manipulation of one variable to see its effect on another variable (Field, 2018). In the field of service recoveries, scenario-based experiments are preferred because they can create controlled, lifelike environments that allow for a more in-depth investigation of the impact of service recovery strategies (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001).

This study sets up a scenario in which an influencer plays a crucial role in service recovery. Using a 2x2 between-subjects design, participants' responses within one condition are compared to those within the other condition (Charness et al., 2012). Each participant was randomly assigned to one of two conditions.

The survey is conducted via Qualtrics and consists of self-administered questionnaires. In self-administered questionnaires, participants complete the questionnaire independently (De Leeuw, 2008). This approach has several advantages, such as allowing participants to complete the questionnaire at their own pace and time, potentially increasing the sample size (De Leeuw, 2008). Moreover, the absence of an interviewer creates a sense of comfort among participants, reducing concerns about being judged and encouraging open communication (De Leeuw, 2008).

3.2. Scenario

In the scenario, the participants are asked to picture themselves as being the personage in the scenario. In this study, participants will be presented with two different scenarios involving a service failure. Similar to the research of Suri et al. (2023), the participants are asked to imagine themselves in a scenario where they have purchased a pair of headphones. However, these headphones fail to meet their expectations as there is no sound coming from the left side. Consequently, the participants decide to search social media platforms for reviews from other customers regarding the headphones. Participants are now being subjected to a form of manipulation. In one scenario, they come across a positive review from their favorite influencer, while in the other scenario, they find a positive review from a regular customer. In these reviews, either the influencer or the customer expresses enthusiasm regarding the headphones' sound quality, comfort, and style (see Appendix 3).

3.3. Sample

The experiment targets Dutch consumers aged eighteen and above. To gather participants, a non-probability sampling technique called convenience sampling is used, taking advantage of the ease of access to participants (Sedgwick, 2013). Given the similarity of individuals within social circles, this approach may lead to an overrepresentation of certain demographic groups, such as age or education level, potentially limiting the generalizability and external validity of findings (Sedgwick, 2013).

In addition to convenience sampling, snowball sampling is also used, though it is subject to the same objections regarding representativeness, generalizability, and selection bias (Parker et al., 2019). The experiment is distributed via various social media sites, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. Furthermore, participants are encouraged to share the experiment with their relatives, resulting in a snowball sampling technique.

To achieve sufficient statistical power, both sampling techniques are used to obtain the necessary minimum number of participants (Hair et al., 2018). To ensure the reliability of this research, a minimum of thirty participants per scenario is considered statistically robust (Hair et al., 2018). Consequently, the goal of this research is to attain a minimum of sixty participants. However, a larger sample size is preferred to achieve greater statistical power (Hair et al., 2018). Participants are randomly assigned to one of two groups using the Qualtrics tool.

3.4. Procedure

The experiment is divided into several parts. Before the experiment, participants are thanked for their interest in the study and briefed on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and further participation in the research. Moreover, an introduction page detailing the study, the experiment, and the research ethics is included. Based on this information, participants can voluntarily decide whether they want to participate in the study. Hereafter, participants are required to provide their consent to the use of their responses for research objectives.

After participants have given consent to participate in the research, each participant is randomly assigned to one of the following two options:

Scenario 1: The use of a regular customer in a service recovery
Scenario 2: The use of a favorite social media influencer in a service recovery

Before being exposed to the scenario, participants in the social media influencer condition are asked additional questions about their general Instagram usage, their following of influencers, and their favorite influencer. Furthermore, they are asked four questions to measure their level of trust and commitment towards their favorite influencer.

Thereafter, participants are asked to picture themselves in the assigned scenario. The scenarios presented to the participants are detailed in Appendix 3. All scenarios have the same format and are modified only in terms of featuring a social media influencer or a regular customer.

After participants finish reading the scenario, they are given a series of questions regarding their customer forgiveness. Subsequently, a manipulation check, and a realism check are performed to assess whether the stimuli presented are perceived as authentic by the participants.

Finally, at the end of the experiment, participants are thanked for their participation and briefed on the purpose of the research. In the closing statement, it is explicitly noted that the stimulus material is prepared for scientific investigation. The complete experiment can be found in Appendix 2.

3.5. Operationalizations

For this research, data collection is performed through an online questionnaire designed as an experiment. The questionnaire is constructed based on established measurement scales from earlier studies. A seven-point Likert scale is used to assess each participant's opinions on individual statements. The seven-point Likert scale ranges from '1 = Strongly disagree' to '7

= Strongly agree'. Because the experiment is conducted in the Netherlands, the experiment is presented in Dutch to avoid misunderstandings. The measurement scales used in the research are translated into Dutch (see Appendix 2).

Customer forgiveness – This concept is measured through four items, based on the research of Hur and Jang (2019). These items are as follows: (1) I forgive the brand for the incident; (2) Even though the incident annoyed me, I have good will for the brand; (3) Despite the incident, I want to have a positive relationship with the brand; and (4) Although the incident aggravated me, I am putting the negative feeling aside so I could continue the relationship with the brand.

Manipulation check – To assess whether the participants have noticed and can recall the manipulation, four own-invented multiple-choice statements with only one right answer are included. The manipulation check consists of the following questions: (1) Which product did not function properly in the scenario?; (2) What was specifically defective or flawed with the product?; (3) In the scenario, where did you read the review about the product?; and (4) Did you read a review from your favorite influencer or from a customer?

Realism check – Because this study requires participants to imagine themselves as customers in hypothetical scenarios, several items are included to assess the realism of various aspects of the stimuli presented (Willson & McNamara, 1982). The items are derived from the article of Maxham (2001), Goodwin and Ross (1992), and Ok (2004), and are as follows: (1) I think something similar could happen to me; (2) The situation in the scenario is …; and (3) Imagining myself in this situation is …. The items were measured on a seven-point Likert-scale, ranging from '1 = Very unlikely' to '7 = Very likely', '1 = Very unrealistic' to '7 = Very realistic', and '1 = Very difficult' to '7 = Very easy'.

Age – To find out the age of the participants, they are asked the following open-ended question: "What is your age in years?."

Gender – The gender of the participant is determined through the question: "What is your gender?." Response options include 'Male,' 'Female,' Non-binary / third gender,' and 'I would rather not tell.'

Educational level – To measure the educational level of the respondents, the following question is asked: "What is your current or highest completed level of education?." Participants could select one of the following response options: 'Primary / elementary school,' 'VMBO,' 'HAVO,' 'VWO,' 'MBO,' 'HBO,' 'WO-bachelor,' 'WO-master,' and 'PhD / postdoctoral.'

3.6. Pre-test

A pre-test is conducted on a smaller subset of participants to ensure the comprehensibility of the experimental setup and to validate the effectiveness of the manipulations. A total of ten participants are involved in evaluating the experiment and participating in the pre-test phase. The participants are asked to test the questionnaire in Qualtrics and are encouraged to share any questions or comments they might have. Since the experiment is scenario-based, it is necessary to confirm that the participants understand the scenario. It is possible that the participants will not perceive the scenario as realistic, so a careful analysis is necessary to determine its perceived authenticity. The participants found the scenarios to be clear and realistic. The final questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2.

3.7. Data analysis

For data analysis, the data is first extracted as an SPSS file from Qualtrics and then analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Before the analysis, the dataset is cleaned, which involves removing unnecessary variables, missing values, and incomplete responses. Subsequently, a reliability analysis is performed. Descriptive statistics are then reported, a correlation analysis is conducted, and a randomization check is performed.

A t-test is selected as the analytical method for this study, due to its capacity to test for differences between the means of two groups (Hair et al., 2018). Before a t-test can be conducted, the data needs to be divided into two distinct groups. During the data collection, participants are asked to provide information about their favorite influencer. The number of followers for each of these influencers is gathered during the data analysis. Based on this data, the influencers are manually categorized into two distinct groups: the nano- and micro-influencers group and the macro- and mega-influencers group.

Before the hypothesis can be tested, the assumptions are checked. Subsequently, the hypotheses are tested using an independent samples t-test (Hayes, 2013) to provide an answer to the research question.

3.8. Validity and reliability

To ensure validity, the concept of customer forgiveness is measured using a validated scale from a prior study (Hur & Jang, 2019). The wording of the items, however, is modified to suit the context of the current study. To ensure reliability, Cronbach's alpha values are evaluated.

A Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.70 is necessary for a variable to be considered reliable (Hair et al., 2018). The variable customer forgiveness (4 items, α = .851) has a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.70, indicating that the construct is reliable. If the first item ("I forgive the

brand for the incident") is removed, Cronbach's alpha would slightly increase (α =.859). However, this increase is minimal (< .05, Hair et al., 2018), leading to the decision to retain all items in the final scale (M = 4.52, SD = 1.26). The reliability analysis can be found in Appendix 4.

3.9. Research ethics

The study is conducted in accordance with a strict ethical framework. Participants are asked to participate voluntarily and are specifically asked to provide consent to the use of their data for research purposes. Before the study starts, participants receive a detailed explanation of its goals and are reassured that they can stop participating whenever they want to without any consequences. Participants are asked to willingly immerse themselves in pre-established scenarios. Moreover, protections are implemented to guarantee the privacy of personal information, making it completely anonymous. The use of the data is limited solely to the requirements of this particular study, and once the analysis is complete, the data is deleted. To ensure confidentiality and integrity, the researcher has exclusive access to the data. Furthermore, the researcher's contact information is provided, allowing for easy communication about any aspect of the study. As a result, participants feel empowered to voice concerns or to end their participation at any time, guaranteeing that their comfort is the top priority during the entire survey process.

4. Results

In this chapter, the research findings are discussed. First, relevant descriptive data are examined, followed by an examination of the randomization check, a correlation analysis, and an evaluation of the manipulation checks and the realism check. Subsequently, the assumptions of the t-test will be assessed, and the hypotheses will be tested.

4.1. Descriptive statistics

The initial sample consisted of 170 participants. However, due to non-completion of the survey, fifty participants were excluded. Moreover, three participants were removed because they did not consent to the use of their data. Additionally, participants who did not pass the manipulation checks were eliminated, resulting in the removal of ten participants. Following these exclusions, 107 participants remained for analysis (n = 107). Within the sample, 79.4% of the participants identified as female, 19.6% as male, and 0.9% as non-binary. The average age of the participants was 26.38 years, ranging from 17 to 81 years old. A significant portion of the sample had completed HBO (28.0%), WO bachelor (32.7%), or WO master (28.0%) degrees (see Appendix 5).

Because the study involved two scenarios, two distinct groups were created. Out of the total of 107 participants, 59 participants (55.1%) were exposed to the review of their favorite influencer (condition 1), while the remaining 48 participants (44.9%) were exposed to the review of a regular customer (condition 2). As previously discussed in Chapter 3, it was essential for each scenario to have a minimum of thirty respondents, so this requirement has been met. In condition 1, 2 participants (1.9%) mentioned a nano-influencer, while 15 participants (14.0%) mentioned a micro-influencer. Furthermore, 23 participants (21.5%) mentioned a macro-influencer and 19 participants (55.1%) mentioned a mega-influencer (see Appendix 5). Due to the uneven distribution of the nano-influencers and the mega-influencers groups, it was decided to combine the nano- and micro-influencers groups, as well as the macro- and mega-influencers groups.

4.2. Randomization check

A randomization check was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the randomization procedure by examining whether the subsamples did not significantly differ in terms of gender, age, and educational level. The distribution of gender was found not to significantly differ between the two subsamples ($x^2(2, n = 107) = 1.355$, $p = .508$). Similarly, the average age of the influencer group ($M = 25.47$, $SD = 8.37$) and the customer group ($M = 27.50$, $SD =$

11.92) did not show any significant differences between the two subsamples ($F(1,105) = .1.061$, $p = .305$). Furthermore, the average educational level did not significantly differ between the two subsamples ($x^2(5, n = 107) = .811$, $p = .976$) (see Appendix 6). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that randomization across the two subsamples was successful.

Table 1

Randomization check

	Condition			
	Influencer's review			*Customer's review*
		Nano + micro	*Macro + mega*	
Age	*M* = 25.47	*M* = 27.00	*M* = 24.86	*M* = 27.50
	SD = 8.37	*SD* = 10.40	*SD* = 7.46	*SD* = 11.92
Gender				
Male	16.9%	17.6%	16.7%	22.9%
Female	81.4%	82.4%	81.0%	77.1%
Non-binary	1.7%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%
Education				
HAVO	3.4%	0.0%	4.8%	2.1%
VWO	1.7%	5.9%	0.0%	2.1%
MBO	6.8%	5.9%	7.1%	6.3%
HBO	25.4%	29.4%	23.8%	31.3%
WO-bachelor	32.2%	23.%	35.7%	33.3%
WO-master or higher	30.5%	35.3%	28.6%	25.0%
Total	n = 59	n = 17	n = 42	n = 48

4.3. Manipulation check

To ensure that the participants had properly read the scenario and noticed the manipulation, four control questions were added. If participants answered these questions incorrectly, it could be assumed that they did not read the scenario carefully enough and that the manipulation was ineffective. Therefore, these participants were removed from the dataset.

The first question checked whether participants correctly recalled which product was damaged in the scenario. Eight participants answered this question incorrectly and were therefore removed from the dataset. The second question checked whether participants

remembered the specific issue with the product in the scenario. Five participants answered this question incorrectly and were therefore removed from the dataset. The third question examined whether participants remembered the social media platform where they had read the review from the customer or influencer in the scenario. Ten participants answered this question incorrectly. However, it was decided to include these participants in the analysis, as they might have been confused by the platform through which they completed the survey, given that it was distributed on the same social media channels. The final question checked if participants had correctly remembered whether they read the review of a customer or their favorite influencer in the scenario. All participants answered this question correctly.

4.4. Realism check

As this study required participants to envision themselves as customers in a hypothetical scenario, the questionnaire included three items evaluating participants' perceptions of the experiment's realism, rated on a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha for these items is .850, indicating a high level of reliability for this construct. Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each item within the construct. It can be concluded that the experiment was perceived as realistic (see Appendix 8).

Table 2

Results realism check

Item	Mean	SD
I think something similar could happen to me… (very unlikely – very likely)	4.88	1.46
The situation in the scenario is… (very unrealistic – very realistic)	5.50	1.17
Imagining myself in this situation is… (very difficult – very easy)	5.29	1.30

4.5. Tests of assumptions of the t-test

To conduct an independent t-test, certain assumptions must be met. According to Hair et al. (2019), t-tests rely on five key assumptions. This paragraph will discuss whether these assumptions are met in this study.

The first assumption requires a dependent variable at the interval or ratio level (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the variable customer forgiveness fulfills this requirement as it is measured at the ratio level.

The second assumption states that the scores must be obtained using random sampling from the population. However, in this particular study, the Qualtrics survey was distributed using non-probability sampling techniques, which means that the assumption of random sampling was not met.

The third assumption states that the observations must be independent, meaning they should not be influenced by other observations or measurements (Hair et al., 2019). Since the participants completed the questionnaire in individual settings, their responses were not influenced by others, so this assumption appears to be satisfied.

The next assumption is that the data are drawn from a normally distributed population. To confirm normality, a Test of Normality was conducted, and the skewness, kurtosis, and normality histograms were evaluated. All variables have skewness and kurtosis values within the range of |2|, indicating a normal distribution (Field, 2018). Additionally, the normal probability plots display significant straight lines, and the scatter plots do not exhibit substantial clustering. This further supports the conclusion that the population is normally distributed, thus meeting the assumption of normality (see Appendix 9).

The final assumption for conducting a t-test is that the residual variances are equal across all groups. The Levene test for equality of variances indicated an insignificant result, suggesting that there is no significant difference in variances across the groups. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met (see Appendix 9).

4.6. Hypotheses testing

4.6.1. Hypothesis 1

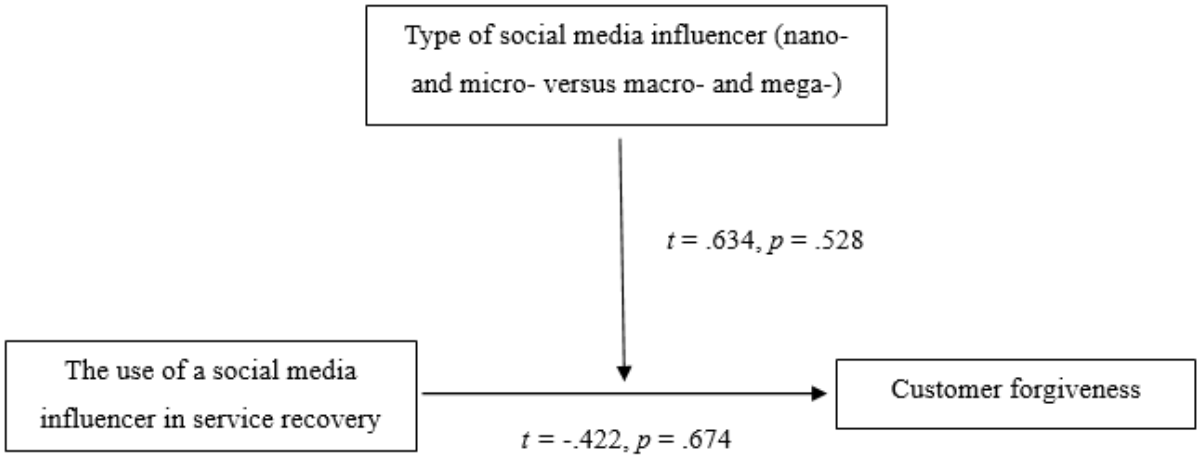
The first hypothesis stated that the use of reviews from social media influencers in service recovery has a more positive impact on customer forgiveness compared to reviews from regular customers. An independent samples t-test was performed to test if there were significant differences between groups (see Appendix 10). The results indicated that the average customer forgiveness of participants exposed to an influencer's review (M = 4.47, SD = 1.32) did not significantly differ from the average customer forgiveness of participants exposed to a customer's review (M = 4.58, SD = 1.19) ($t(105) = -.422$, $p = .674$). Therefore, being exposed to an influencer's review does not result in higher customer forgiveness when compared to a customer's review. Consequently, the first hypothesis is rejected.

4.6.2. Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis stated that the use of reviews of nano- and micro-influencers would more positively impact customer forgiveness than the use of reviews of macro- and mega-influencers. Again, an independent samples t-test was performed to test if there were significant differences between groups (see Appendix 10). The results indicated that the average customer forgiveness of participants exposed to a nano- and micro-influencer's review (M = 4.65, SD = 1.53) did not significantly differ from the average customer forgiveness of participants exposed to a macro- and mega-influencer's review (M = 4.40, SD = 1.24) ($t(57)$ = .634, p = .528). Therefore, exposure to a review from a nano- and micro-influencer does not lead to higher customer forgiveness compared to a review of a macro- and mega-influencer. Consequently, the second hypothesis is also rejected.

Figure 2

Theoretical model explaining the effects of exposure to an influencer's review on customer forgiveness with t-values



4.7. Additional analyses

In addition to the analyses related to the hypotheses, other interesting analyses can be conducted. Firstly, it is interesting to investigate whether there is a difference in influencer trust between the nano- and micro-influencer group and the macro- and mega-influencer group. *Trust* is defined as "the confidence placed in the reliability and honesty of a partner involved in an exchange" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, trust plays a crucial role in establishing long-lasting relationships between parties involved in a

transaction, according to the Commitment-Trust theory (Lin et al., 2023). Customers tend to have greater trust in information provided by individuals they perceive as trustworthy, leading to increased commitment to the process of service failure recovery. Additionally, nano- and micro-influencers are often regarded as more trustworthy by their followers compared to macro- and mega-influencers, due to their smaller and more specialized audiences. Hence, it was interesting to investigate the concept of influencer trust. The concept of influencer trust was measured using four items derived from the research of Kim and Kim (2021). These items were as follows: (1) The influencer can be relied upon on his (her) content; (2) I believe what this influencer says and that he/she would not try to take advantage of the followers; (3) The influencer is straightforward and honest even though his/her self-interests are involved; and (4) The influencer would not tell a lie even if he/she could gain by it. The variable (α = .859) had a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70, indicating that the construct is reliable. However, if the first item ("The influencer can be relied upon on his (her) content") was removed, Cronbach's alpha would to 0.863. Given the rule of thumb by Hair et al. (2018) (increase is greater than .05), this item was deleted (M = 5.23, SD = 1.20).

To investigate if there were any significant differences in influencer trust between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results indicated that the average influencer trust of participants who mentioned a nano- and micro-influencer (M = 5.51, SD = 1.23) did not significantly differ from the average influencer trust of participants who mentioned a macro- and mega-influencer's review (M = 5.12, SD = 1.19) ($t(57) = 1.135$, p = .261). Consequently, it can be concluded that participants did not have significantly more trust in nano- and micro-influencers than in macro- and mega-influencers.

Additionally, it is interesting to investigate whether there is a difference in influencer commitment between the nano- and micro-influencer group and the macro- and mega-influencer group. *Commitment* is defined as "the customer's desire to maintain a relationship" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As discussed in Chapter 2, being committed to an influencer can lead to increased commitment to the service failure recovery process. Hence, it was interesting to investigate the concept of influencer commitment. The concept of influencer commitment was measured through four items derived from the research of Kim and Kim (2021). These items were as follows: (1) I would recommend this influencer to someone who seeks my advice; (2) I say positive things about this influencer; (3) I intend to continue following this influencer; and (4) I will continue watching the posting of this influencer. The variable (α = .859) had a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.70, indicating that the construct was reliable. Removing the first item ("The influencer can be relied upon on his (her) content") would result in only a

minimal increase in Cronbach's alpha (α = .863). Therefore, no items were deleted (*M* = 5.61, *SD* = .83).

To investigate if there were any significant differences in influencer commitment between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results indicated that the average influencer commitment of participants who mentioned a nano- and micro-influencer (*M* = 6.00, *SD* = .79) did significantly differ from the average influencer commitment of participants who mentioned a macro- and mega-influencer's review (*M* = 5.46, *SD* = .81) (*t*(57) = 2.347, *p* = .022). Consequently, it can be concluded that participants were significantly more committed to nano- and micro-influencers than to macro- and mega-influencers.

To determine whether the variable could be included as a covariate, the correlations between the demographic variables and the variables influencer trust and influencer commitment were examined. The results of these correlations are reported in Table 3. The analysis revealed that the variables gender, age, and educational level did not significantly correlate with influencer trust and influencer commitment. As a result, these variables were not included as control variables during the testing of the hypotheses.

Table 3

Correlations between control variables and Influencer trust and Influencer commitment

	Influencer trust		Influencer commitment	
	r	*p*	*r*	*p*
Gender	.213	.105	.062	.641
Age	.001	.996	-.099	.454
Educational level	.033	.807	.014	.915

5. Conclusion and discussion

This chapter discusses the main conclusions of the study and answers the research question. Furthermore, it provides an explanation for the findings, critically reflects on the research, offers suggestions for future research, and discusses the implications.

5.1. Conclusion

This study sought to answer the following research question: "*What is the effect of the use of social media influencers in the organization's response to a service complaint on customer forgiveness and what role plays the different influencer types (nano- and micro- versus macro- and mega-) in this relationship"*

First, it was expected that the use of social media influencers in an organization's response to a service complaint would significantly impact customer forgiveness compared to the use of regular customers. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of social media influencers in an organization's response to a service complaint does not significantly impact customer forgiveness compared to the use of regular customers. Therefore, the first hypothesis is rejected.

Additionally, the second hypothesis suggested that reviews from nano- and micro-influencers would have a more positive impact on customer forgiveness than reviews from macro- and mega-influencers. However, the results of this study showed no significant difference in customer forgiveness between those exposed to nano- and micro-influencer's reviews and those exposed to macro- and mega-influencer's reviews. Thus, the second hypothesis was also rejected.

The additional analyses revealed that participants' trust levels did not significantly differ between nano- and micro-influencers compared to macro- and mega-influencers. However, participants did show significantly higher commitment towards nano- and micro-influencers than towards macro- and mega-influencers.

In summary, it can be concluded that the use of social media influencers, regardless of their type, does not significantly enhance customer forgiveness in the context of service recovery. Additionally, the level of trust in influencers does not significantly differ between different types of influencers. However, the level of commitment to influencers does significantly differ between different types of influencers.

5.2. Theoretical implications

The findings of this study are largely inconsistent with existing scientific literature. It was expected that using social media influencers in service recovery would positively impact customer forgiveness. This expectation was previously supported by the Feel Better-effect (Suri et al., 2023). It was expected that encountering a positive review from an influencer would improve a customer's feelings after a negative product experience through social contagion, resulting in emotional improvement known as the Feel Better-effect. However, contrary to these expectations, this effect was not found in the current study. More surprisingly, the average customer forgiveness was higher among participants who were exposed to a regular customer's review compared to a favorite influencer's review, although the differences between the two groups were non-significant. There are various potential explanations for this. Firstly, it is possible that the hypothesized effect simply does not exist. Secondly, the absence of an effect could potentially be attributed to the research design, where participants were not directly exposed to real reviews but rather to descriptions mentioning such reviews, which may have prevented social contagion from occurring. Thirdly, the surprising results may be explained by the Source Credibility-theory, which suggests that information obtained from a credible source can positively impact the beliefs and behaviors of individuals (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Reviews from loyal customers may be perceived as more authentic and relatable compared to those from influencers. Influencers, who often collaborate with brands and sponsors, are often perceived as having ulterior motives, potentially diminishing the credibility of their reviews.

Moreover, previous research showed that trust in influencers strengthens customer commitment, reduces dissatisfaction, and fosters mutually beneficial relationships during service failure and recovery efforts (Lin et al., 2023). Trustworthy influencers, particularly nano-influencers with niche audiences, can enhance customer commitment to the service failure and recovery process, leading to more stable and long-lasting relationships. Therefore, it was expected that the use of nano- and micro-influencers in service recovery would more positively impact customer forgiveness than the use of macro- and mega-influencers. However, contrary to these expectations, this effect was not found in the current study. Participants who mentioned nano- and micro-influencers showed greater levels of customer forgiveness compared to those who mentioned macro- and mega-influencers. Nevertheless, the differences between these two groups were non-significant. This might be explained by the absence of significant differences in influencer trust between the nano- and micro-influencer group and the macro- and mega-influencer group. If participants saw nano- and

micro-influencers and macro- and mega-influencers as equally trustworthy, this might explain why there were not any expected differences in how influencer type affected customer forgiveness. However, despite their similarity in trust perception, surprisingly, there were significant differences in influencer commitment between the nano- and micro-influencer group and the macro- and mega-influencer group. Participants showed significantly higher commitment towards nano- and micro-influencers than towards macro- and mega-influencers This unexpected finding suggests that while customers may perceive different types of influencers as equally trustworthy, their level of commitment to these influencers may vary significantly. Further research on the factors influencing influencer trust and commitment and its impact on customer forgiveness is needed to fully understand the dynamics involved in influencer marketing strategies.

5.3. Practical implications

The current research provides useful insights for companies aiming to use social media influencers in the context of service recovery. The findings of this research suggest that investing resources into influencer reviews, regardless of their type, may not make a significant difference and should be largely avoided. This insight can help companies spend their marketing budgets more efficiently by preventing them from spending money on influencer reviews that may not significantly enhance customer forgiveness. By reallocating these resources, companies can explore alternative marketing strategies, which may prove to be significantly more helpful in enhancing overall customer experience and customer satisfaction. Moreover, this can help companies use available resources more effectively, thereby helping to achieve organizational goals cost-effectively.

5.4. Limitations and future research

Despite the careful design and execution of the research, there are some limitations. Firstly, the sample had an overrepresentation of females, young adults, and highly educated participants. This could be attributed to the use of convenience and snowball sampling methods, making the sample non-representative of the Dutch population aged eighteen and above. Therefore, future research should aim to collect an equal, representative sample using probability sampling techniques.

A significant limitation of the study is the disproportionate sample sizes among the different groups of influencers. Specifically, the groups of nano- and micro-influencers were much smaller than those of macro- and mega-influencers, leading to a highly skewed distribution. This might have caused biased outcomes and limited the generalizability of the

findings. The effects observed for nano- and micro-influencers might not be as reliable due to the smaller sample sizes, potentially underrepresenting their true impact compared to the larger groups of macro- and mega-influencers. Consequently, future research should aim to achieve more balanced sample sizes across all influencer categories to ensure more reliable and generalizable results.

Another limitation of the study concerns the research design. Rather than being directly exposed to real reviews, participants in the study were presented with descriptions mentioning these reviews. This may have prevented social contagion from occurring, potentially influencing the results. Consequently, it is recommended for future research designs to include direct exposure to actual influencer reviews rather than descriptions. This could better capture social contagion and provide more accurate insights into the effect of influencer reviews on customer forgiveness.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Integrity Form – Master thesis

Name: Eline van Alebeek	**Student number:** s1028495
RU e-mail address: eline.vanalebeek@ru.nl	**Master specialization:** Marketing

Thesis title: Small influencers, big impact? The use of (different types of) social media influencers in service recovery
Brief description of the study: Through an online experiment (n = 107), this study investigated the impact of (different types of) social media influencers (nano- and micro- versus macro- and mega-) on customer forgiveness following a service failure. The results indicate that the use of a social media influencer in an organization's response to a service complaint does not significantly impact customer forgiveness. Moreover, there were no significant differences in customer forgiveness between those mentioning nano- and micro-influencers and those mentioning macro- and mega-influencer's review.

It is my responsibility to follow the university's code of academic integrity and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of my study. This includes:

- providing original work or proper use of references;
- providing appropriate information to all involved in my study;
- requesting informed consent from participants;
- transparency in the way data is processed and represented;
- ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data;

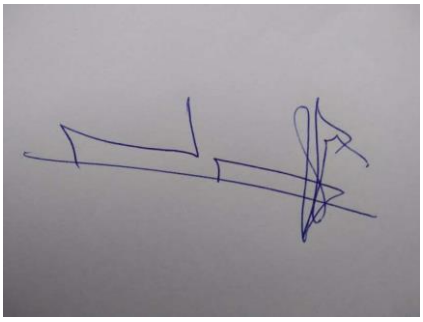
If there is any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research, I will complete another Research Integrity Form.

Breaches of the code of conduct with respect to academic integrity (as described / referred to in the thesis handbook) should and will be forwarded to the examination board. Acting contrary to the code of conduct can result in declaring the thesis invalid

Student's Signature: _____ **Date:** 17-06-2024

To be signed by supervisor

I have instructed the student about ethical issues related to their specific study. I hereby declare that I will challenge him / her on ethical aspects through their investigation and to act on any violations that I may encounter.



Supervisor's Signature: _____ **Date:**

Appendix 2: Experiment

Start van blok: Blok 1: Introductie en toestemmingsverklaring

INFORMATIE OVER HET ONDERZOEK

Bedankt voor uw interesse in deze studie. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om inzicht te krijgen in klachtenafhandeling op sociale media. In deze zeer korte enquête zullen we u vragen een klein aantal vragen te beantwoorden.

Het onderzoek duurt ongeveer 5 minuten. Opslaan en later doorgaan is niet mogelijk, vul daarom de enquête in één keer in. Daarnaast willen we u vragen om de enquête in een rustige omgeving in te vullen met minimale afleiding. Tot slot benadrukken we hier dat u alleen aan de enquête mee kunt doen als u 16 jaar of ouder bent.

Uw deelname

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. Als u besluit niet deel te nemen, heeft dit geen gevolgen. Als u tijdens het onderzoek uw toestemming wilt intrekken en uw deelname wilt beëindigen, kunt u dit doen door simpelweg het enquêtetabblad in uw browser te sluiten. Eventuele resterende gegevens worden verwijderd. Als u vragen of opmerkingen heeft over dit onderzoek, stuur dan een e-mail naar: eline.vanalebeek@ru.nl (onderzoeker) of herm.joosten@ru.nl (supervisor).

TOESTEMMINGSVERKLARING

Ik bevestig dat:
- ik 16 jaar of ouder ben;
- ik naar tevredenheid over het onderzoek geïnformeerd ben;
- ik de informatie goed heb gelezen;
- ik in de gelegenheid ben gesteld om vragen over het onderzoek te stellen;
- mijn eventuele vragen naar tevredenheid zijn beantwoord;
- ik goed over deelname aan het onderzoek heb kunnen nadenken;
- ik uit vrije wil deelneem aan het onderzoek.

Ik begrijp dat:
- ik het recht heb om mijn toestemming op ieder moment weer in te trekken zonder opgave van redenen en zonder dat dit nadelige gevolgen voor mij heeft, door het enquêtetabblad in de browser af te sluiten;
- mijn persoonsgegevens worden verwerkt volgens de AVG;
- mijn persoonsgegevens worden verwerkt volgens de privacyverklaring van de Radboud Universiteit (https://www.ru.nl/vaste-onderdelen/privacyverklaring-radboud-universiteit);

Ik stem in dat:
- mijn persoons- en/of onderzoeksgegevens binnen dit onderzoek voor wetenschappelijke doelen worden verkregen en beschikbaar zullen zijn voor controle, hergebruik en replicatie; - voor de controle van het onderzoek toezichthoudende autoriteiten mijn persoons- en onderzoeksgegevens kunnen inzien.

Ik stem in met deelname aan de studie (vink aan)

○ Ja, ik geef toestemming. (1)

○ Nee, ik geef geen toestemming. (2)

Ga naar: Einde enquête Als INFORMATIE OVER HET ONDERZOEK Bedankt voor uw interesse in deze studie. Het doel van dit onderzoe... = Nee, ik geef geen toestemming.

Einde blok: Blok 1: Introductie en toestemmingsverklaring

Start van blok: Blok X: Scenario met influencer

De volgende vragen gaan over uw Instagram-gebruik en het volgen van influencers.
Beantwoord de vragen zo nauwkeurig mogelijk.

Ik ben actief op Instagram.

	Nooit (1)	Zelden (2)	Niet vaak (3)	Soms (4)	Regelmatig (5)	Vaak (6)	Heel erg vaak (7)
Ik ben actief op Instagram... (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Hoeveel influencers volgt u op Instagram? Influencers zijn mensen, groepen of virtuele personages die een groep volgers hebben op sociale media en die veel sociale invloed hebben op hun volgers.

	Heel erg weinig (1)	Weinig (2)	Een beetje weinig (3)	Niet veel, niet weinig (4)	Een beetje veel (5)	Veel (6)	Heel erg veel (7)
Ik volg er (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Wie is uw favoriete influencer? Graag één specifieke naam opgeven.

_____

Pagina-einde

Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Een beetje mee oneens, een beetje mee eens (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Je kunt vertrouwen op de inhoud van mijn favoriete influencer (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ik geloof wat mijn favoriete influencer zegt en dat hij/zij niet zou proberen om misbruik te maken van zijn/haar volgers. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mijn favoriete influencer is eerlijk, zelfs als zijn/haar eigenbelangen	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

een rol spelen. (3)							
Mijn favoriete influencer zou geen leugen vertellen, zelfs niet als hij/zij er voordeel uit kon halen. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Pagina-einde

Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u eerder heeft ingevuld in gedachten.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Een beetje mee oneens (3)	Een beetje mee oneens, een beetje mee eens (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik zou mijn favoriete influencer aanbevelen aan iemand die mijn advies zoekt. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ik zeg positieve dingen over mijn favoriete influencer. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ik ben van plan om mijn favoriete	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

influencer te blijven volgen. (3)							
Ik zal de berichten van mijn favoriete influencer blijven bekijken. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Pagina-einde

Lees de volgende situatie goed door:

Stel je voor dat je een koptelefoon bij JBL hebt besteld. Je bent erg enthousiast wanneer de koptelefoon na een aantal dagen bij je thuis wordt bezorgd en je kunt niet wachten om hem uit te proberen. Maar wanneer je de koptelefoon voor de eerste keer gebruikt, merk je iets verontrustends op: er komt geen geluid uit de linkerkant. Het is een teleurstellende ontdekking na al je opgebouwde verwachtingen. Daarom besluit je om op sociale media op zoek te gaan naar recensies van andere consumenten over de koptelefoon. Op Instagram stuit je vervolgens op een positieve recensie van jouw favoriete influencer (die je bij de vorige vraag hebt ingevuld). De influencer deelt een uitgebreide post waarin hij/zij enorm enthousiast is over de geluidskwaliteit, het comfort en de stijl van de koptelefoon.

Einde blok: Blok X: Scenario met influencer

Start van blok: Blok X: Scenario zonder influencer

Lees de volgende situatie goed door:

Stel je voor dat je een koptelefoon bij JBL hebt besteld. Je bent erg enthousiast wanneer de koptelefoon na een aantal dagen bij je thuis wordt bezorgd en je kunt niet wachten om hem uit te proberen. Maar wanneer je de koptelefoon voor de eerste keer gebruikt, merk je iets verontrustends op: er komt geen geluid uit de linkerkant. Het is een teleurstellende ontdekking na al je opgebouwde verwachtingen. Daarom besluit je om op sociale media op zoek te gaan naar recensies van andere consumenten over de koptelefoon. Op Instagram stuit je vervolgens op een positieve recensie van een andere consument. De consument deelt een uitgebreide post waarin hij/zij enorm enthousiast is over de geluidskwaliteit, het comfort en de stijl van de koptelefoon.

Einde blok: Blok X: Scenario zonder influencer

Start van blok: Blok X: Customer forgiveness

Zojuist heeft u gelezen over een scenario waarin u problemen ondervindt met een JBL koptelefoon. Geef nu aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Een beetje mee oneens (3)	Een beetje mee oneens, een beetje mee eens (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik vergeef JBL voor het voorval. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ondanks dat het voorval me stoorde, heb ik nog steeds een positief gevoel over JBL. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ondanks het voorval wil ik graag een positieve relatie met JBL hebben. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Hoewel het voorval me irriteerde, zet ik het negatieve gevoel opzij zodat ik de relatie met JBL kan voortzetten. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Einde blok: Blok X: Customer forgiveness

Start van blok: Blok X: Manipulatiecheck

Onderstaand volgen nog enkele vragen over het scenario dat u heeft gelezen. Beantwoord de vragen zo nauwkeurig en goed mogelijk.

Welk product werkte in het scenario niet naar behoren?

- ○ Een JBL speaker (1)
- ○ Een JBL koptelefoon (2)
- ○ JBL oordopjes (3)
- ○ Een JBL radio (4)

Pagina-einde

Wat was er precies kapot aan of mis met het product?

- ○ Er miste onderdelen van het product. (1)
- ○ Het product verbond niet met Bluetooth. (2)
- ○ Er zaten krassen op het product. (3)
- ○ Er kwam geen geluid uit de linkerkant. (4)

In het scenario, waar heeft u de recensie over het product gelezen?

- ○ Instagram (1)
- ○ Facebook (2)
- ○ Twitter (3)
- ○ TikTok (4)

Heeft u een recensie van uw favoriete influencer of van een consument gelezen?

- ○ Mijn favoriete influencer (1)
- ○ Een consument (2)

Einde blok: Blok X: Manipulatiecheck

Start van blok: Blok X: Realismecheck

Hieronder volgen enkele vragen over het zojuist aan u gepresenteerde scenario. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen.

Kunt u zich voorstellen dat u zich nu of in de toekomst in zo'n situatie bevindt?

	Zeer onwaarschijnlijk (1)	Onwaarschijnlijk (2)	Eerder onwaarschijnlijk (3)	Niet onwaarschijnlijk, niet waarschijnlijk (4)	Eerder waarschijnlijk (5)	Waarschijnlijk (6)	Zeer waarschijnlijk (7)
Ik denk dat mij iets soortgelijks kan gebeuren. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Hoe realistisch is dit scenario?

	Zeer onrealistisch (1)	Onrealistisch (2)	Een beetje onrealistisch (3)	Niet onrealistisch, niet realistisch (4)	Een beetje realistisch (5)	Realistisch (6)	Zeer realistisch (7)
De situatie in het scenario is (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Kunt u zichzelf in deze situatie voorstellen?

	Heel moeilijk (1)	Moeilijk (2)	Redelijk moeilijk (3)	Niet moeilijk, niet makkelijk (4)	Redelijk makkelijk (5)	Makkelijk (6)	Heel makkelijk (7)
Mezelf in deze situatie voorstellen is (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Einde blok: Blok X: Realismecheck

Start van blok: Blok X: Demografische gegevens

Afsluitend worden er nog enkele demografische gegevens gevraagd.

Wat is uw geslacht?

- ○ Man (1)
- ○ Vrouw (2)
- ○ Niet-binair/derde geslacht (3)
- ○ Ik zeg dat liever niet (4)

Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul deze enkel in getallen in.

_____

Ga naar: Einde enquête Als Voorwaarde: Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul dez... is kleiner dan 16. Ga naar: Einde enquête.

Wat is uw huidige of hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?

- ○ VMBO (1)
- ○ HAVO (2)
- ○ VWO (3)
- ○ MBO (4)
- ○ HBO (5)
- ○ WO-bachelor (6)
- ○ WO-master of hoger (7)

Einde blok: Blok X: Demografische gegevens

Appendix 3: Scenarios

Scenario 1: Scenario with an influencers' review

Stel je voor dat je een koptelefoon bij JBL hebt besteld. Je bent erg enthousiast wanneer de koptelefoon na een aantal dagen bij je thuis wordt bezorgd en je kunt niet wachten om hem uit te proberen. Maar wanneer je de koptelefoon voor de eerste keer gebruikt, merk je iets verontrustends op: er komt geen geluid uit de linkerkant. Het is een teleurstellende ontdekking na al je opgebouwde verwachtingen. Daarom besluit je om op sociale media op zoek te gaan naar recensies van andere consumenten over de koptelefoon. Op Instagram stuit je vervolgens op een positieve recensie van jouw favoriete influencer (die je bij de vorige vraag hebt ingevuld). De influencer deelt een uitgebreide post waarin hij/zij enorm enthousiast is over de geluidskwaliteit, het comfort en de stijl van de koptelefoon.

Translation to English

Imagine you ordered a pair of headphones from JBL. You are very excited when the headphones are delivered to your home after a few days, and you can't wait to try them out. However, when you use the headphones for the first time, you notice something alarming: no sound is coming from the left side. This is a disappointing discovery after all your built-up expectations. Consequently, you decide to look for reviews from other consumers about the headphones on social media. On Instagram, you come across a positive review from your favorite influencer (the one you mentioned in the previous question). The influencer shares a detailed post expressing great enthusiasm about the sound quality, comfort, and style of the headphones.

Scenario 2: Scenario with a consumers' review

Stel je voor dat je een koptelefoon bij JBL hebt besteld. Je bent erg enthousiast wanneer de koptelefoon na een aantal dagen bij je thuis wordt bezorgd en je kunt niet wachten om hem uit te proberen. Maar wanneer je de koptelefoon voor de eerste keer gebruikt, merk je iets verontrustends op: er komt geen geluid uit de linkerkant. Het is een teleurstellende ontdekking na al je opgebouwde verwachtingen. Daarom besluit je om op sociale media op zoek te gaan naar recensies van andere consumenten over de koptelefoon. Op Instagram stuit je vervolgens op een positieve recensie van een andere consument. De consument deelt een uitgebreide post

waarin hij/zij enorm enthousiast is over de geluidskwaliteit, het comfort en de stijl van de koptelefoon.

Translation to English

Imagine you ordered a pair of headphones from JBL. You are very excited when the headphones are delivered to your home after a few days, and you can't wait to try them out. However, when you use the headphones for the first time, you notice something alarming: no sound is coming from the left side. This is a disappointing discovery after all your built-up expectations. Consequently, you decide to look for reviews from other consumers about the headphones on social media. On Instagram, you come across a positive review from another consumer. The consumer shares a detailed post expressing great enthusiasm about the sound quality, comfort, and style of the headphones.

Appendix 4: Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis: Variable 'Influencer trust'

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,859	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Je kunt vertrouwen op de inhoud van mijn favoriete influencer	15,69	12,974	,604	,863
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Ik geloof wat mijn favoriete influencer zegt en dat hij/zij niet zou proberen om misbruik te maken van zijn/haar volgers.	15,76	10,770	,746	,804
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Mijn favoriete influencer is eerlijk, zelfs als zijn/haar eigenbelangen een rol spelen.	15,93	9,788	,782	,787
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Mijn favoriete influencer zou geen leugen vertellen, zelfs niet als hij/zij er voordeel uit kon halen.	16,32	9,463	,727	,817

Reliability analysis: Variable 'Influencer trust' after deletion of item 1

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,863	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Ik geloof wat mijn favoriete influencer zegt en dat hij/zij niet zou proberen om misbruik te maken van zijn/haar volgers.	10,22	6,933	,706	,841
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Mijn favoriete influencer is eerlijk, zelfs als zijn/haar eigenbelangen een rol spelen.	10,39	5,897	,796	,753
Beoordeel de volgende stellingen. Houd hierbij uw favoriete influencer die u bij de vorige gevraagd heeft ingevuld in gedachten. - Mijn favoriete influencer zou geen leugen vertellen, zelfs niet als hij/zij er voordeel uit kon halen.	10,78	5,658	,731	,822

Reliability analysis: Variable 'Customer forgiveness'

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,851	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Zojuist heeft u gelezen over een scenario waarin u problemen ondervindt met een JBL koptelefoon. Geef nu aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. - Ik vergeef JBL voor het voorval.	13,98	14,452	,599	,859
Zojuist heeft u gelezen over een scenario waarin u problemen ondervindt met een JBL koptelefoon. Geef nu aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. - Ondanks dat het voorval me stoorde, heb ik nog steeds een positief gevoel over JBL.	13,39	15,448	,756	,788
Zojuist heeft u gelezen over een scenario waarin u problemen ondervindt met een JBL koptelefoon. Geef nu aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. - Ondanks het voorval wil ik graag een positieve relatie met JBL hebben.	13,25	16,681	,626	,837
Zojuist heeft u gelezen over een scenario waarin u problemen ondervindt met een JBL koptelefoon. Geef nu aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. - Hoewel het voorval me irriteerde, zet ik het negatieve gevoel opzij zodat ik de relatie met JBL kan voortzetten.	13,63	13,274	,822	,750

Appendix 5: Descriptive statistics

Distribution of gender in the sample

Wat is uw geslacht?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Man	21	19,6	19,6	19,6
	Vrouw	85	79,4	79,4	99,1
	Ik zeg dat liever niet	1	,9	,9	100,0
	Total	107	100,0	100,0	

Average age of the sample

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul deze enkel in getallen in.	107	17	81	26,38	10,119
Valid N (listwise)	107				

Distribution of educational level in the sample

Wat is uw huidige of hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HAVO	3	2,8	2,8	2,8
	VWO	2	1,9	1,9	4,7
	MBO	7	6,5	6,5	11,2
	HBO	30	28,0	28,0	39,3
	WO-bachelor	35	32,7	32,7	72,0
	WO-master of hoger	30	28,0	28,0	100,0
	Total	107	100,0	100,0	

Distribution of the participants exposed to an influencer's review and those exposed to a customer's review

Condities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Conditie_metinfluencer	59	55,1	55,1	55,1
	Conditie_zonderinfluencer	48	44,9	44,9	100,0
	Total	107	100,0	100,0	

Distribution of the participants who mentioned nano- and micro-influencers and those who mentioned macro- and mega-influencers

Conditie_typeinfluencer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Conditie_nano_micro	17	15,9	28,8	28,8
	Conditie_macro_mega	42	39,3	71,2	100,0
	Total	59	55,1	100,0	
Missing	System	48	44,9		
Total		107	100,0		

Appendix 6: Randomization analysis

Randomization analysis: Age by Conditions

ANOVA

Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul deze enkel in getallen in.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	108,578	1	108,578	1,061	,305
Within Groups	10744,712	105	102,331		
Total	10853,290	106			

ANOVA Effect Sizes[a,b]

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper
Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul deze enkel in getallen in.	Eta-squared	,010	,000	,077
	Epsilon-squared	,001	-,010	,068
	Omega-squared Fixed-effec	,001	-,009	,068
	Omega-squared Random-effect	,001	-,009	,068

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Randomization analysis: Gender by Conditions

Wat is uw geslacht? * Condities Crosstabulation

Count

		Condities		
		Conditie_metinfluencer	Conditie_zonderinfluencer	Total
Wat is uw geslacht?	Man	10	11	21
	Vrouw	48	37	85
	Ik zeg dat liever niet	1	0	1
Total		59	48	107

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1,355[a]	2	,508
Likelihood Ratio	1,729	2	,421
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,136	1	,287
N of Valid Cases	107		

a. 2 cells (33,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,45.

Randomization analysis: Educational level by Conditions

Wat is uw huidige of hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau? * Condities Crosstabulation

Count

		Condities		
		Conditie_metinfluencer	Conditie_zonderinfluencer	Total
Wat is uw huidige of hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?	HAVO	2	1	3
	VWO	1	1	2
	MBO	4	3	7
	HBO	15	15	30
	WO-bachelor	19	16	35
	WO-master of hoger	18	12	30
Total		59	48	107

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,811[a]	5	,976
Likelihood Ratio	,816	5	,976
Linear-by-Linear Association	,075	1	,784
N of Valid Cases	107		

a. 6 cells (50,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,90.

Appendix 7: Manipulation check

Welk product werkte in het scenario niet naar behoren?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Een JBL speaker	5	4,1	4,1	4,1
	Een JBL koptelefoon	115	93,5	93,5	97,6
	JBL oordopjes	2	1,6	1,6	99,2
	Een JBL radio	1	,8	,8	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

Wat was er precies kapot aan of mis met het product?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Er miste onderdelen van het product.	1	,8	,8	,8
	Het product verbond niet met Bluetooth.	2	1,6	1,6	2,4
	Er zaten krassen op het product.	2	1,6	1,6	4,1
	Er kwam geen geluid uit de linkerkant.	118	95,9	95,9	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

In het scenario, waar heeft u de recensie over het product gelezen?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Instagram	113	91,9	91,9	91,9
	Facebook	7	5,7	5,7	97,6
	Twitter	2	1,6	1,6	99,2
	TikTok	1	,8	,8	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

Heeft u een recensie van uw favoriete influencer of van een consument gelezen?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mijn favoriete influencer	70	56,9	56,9	56,9
	Een consument	53	43,1	43,1	100,0
	Total	123	100,0	100,0	

Appendix 8: Realism check

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	107	100,0
	Excluded[a]	0	,0
	Total	107	100,0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,850	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Hieronder volgen enkele vragen over het zojuist aan u gepresenteerde scenario. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. Kunt u zich voorstellen dat u zich nu of in de toekomst in zo'n situatie bevindt? - Ik denk dat mij iets soortgelijks kan gebeuren.	10,79	4,882	,771	,745
Hoe realistisch is dit scenario? - De situatie in het scenario is	10,17	6,349	,724	,795
Kunt u zichzelf in deze situatie voorstellen? - Mezelf in deze situatie voorstellen is	10,38	5,937	,684	,824

Descriptive Statistics

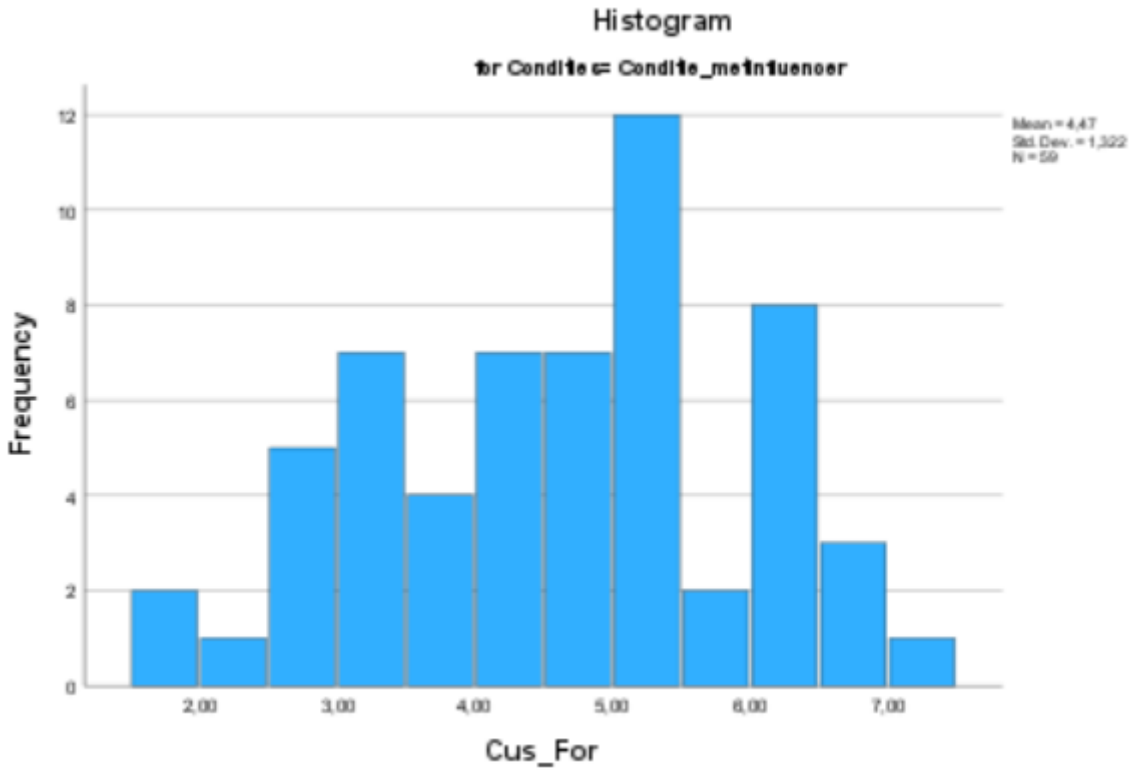
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hieronder volgen enkele vragen over het zojuist aan u gepresenteerde scenario. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. Kunt u zich voorstellen dat u zich nu of in de toekomst in zo'n situatie bevindt? - Ik denk dat mij iets soortgelijks kan gebeuren.	107	1	7	4,88	1,458
Hoe realistisch is dit scenario? - De situatie in het scenario is	107	1	7	5,50	1,169
Kunt u zichzelf in deze situatie voorstellen? - Mezelf in deze situatie voorstellen is	107	1	7	5,29	1,303
Valid N (listwise)	107				

Appendix 9: Assumptions t-test

Test of Normality

Descriptives

	Condities			Statistic
Cus_For	Conditie_metinfluencer	Mean		4,4746
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4,1301
			Upper Bound	4,8190
		5% Trimmed Mean		4,4859
		Median		4,5000
		Variance		1,747
		Std. Deviation		1,32181
		Minimum		1,75
		Maximum		7,00
		Range		5,25
		Interquartile Range		2,00
		Skewness		-,163
		Kurtosis		-,747
	Conditie_zonderinfluencer	Mean		4,5781
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4,2333
			Upper Bound	4,9229
		5% Trimmed Mean		4,6123
		Median		4,8750
		Variance		1,410
		Std. Deviation		1,18743
		Minimum		1,75
		Maximum		6,50
		Range		4,75
		Interquartile Range		2,00
		Skewness		-,444
		Kurtosis		-,767


Histogram
for Condite= Condite_meinfluencer
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Std. Dev. = 1,322
N = 59
Frequency
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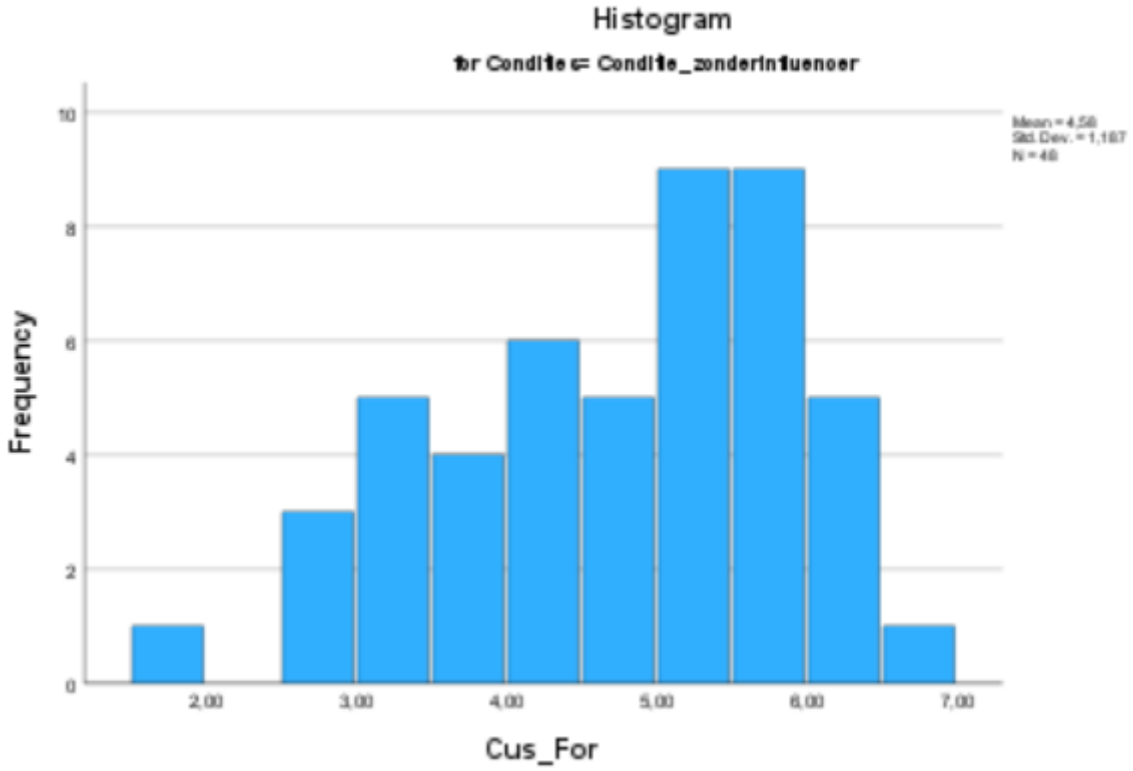
4
6
8
10
12
2,00
3,00
4,00
5,00
6,00
7,00
Cus_For


Histogram
for Condite= Condite_zonderinfluencer
Mean = 4,58
Std. Dev. = 1,187
N = 48
Frequency
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4
6
8
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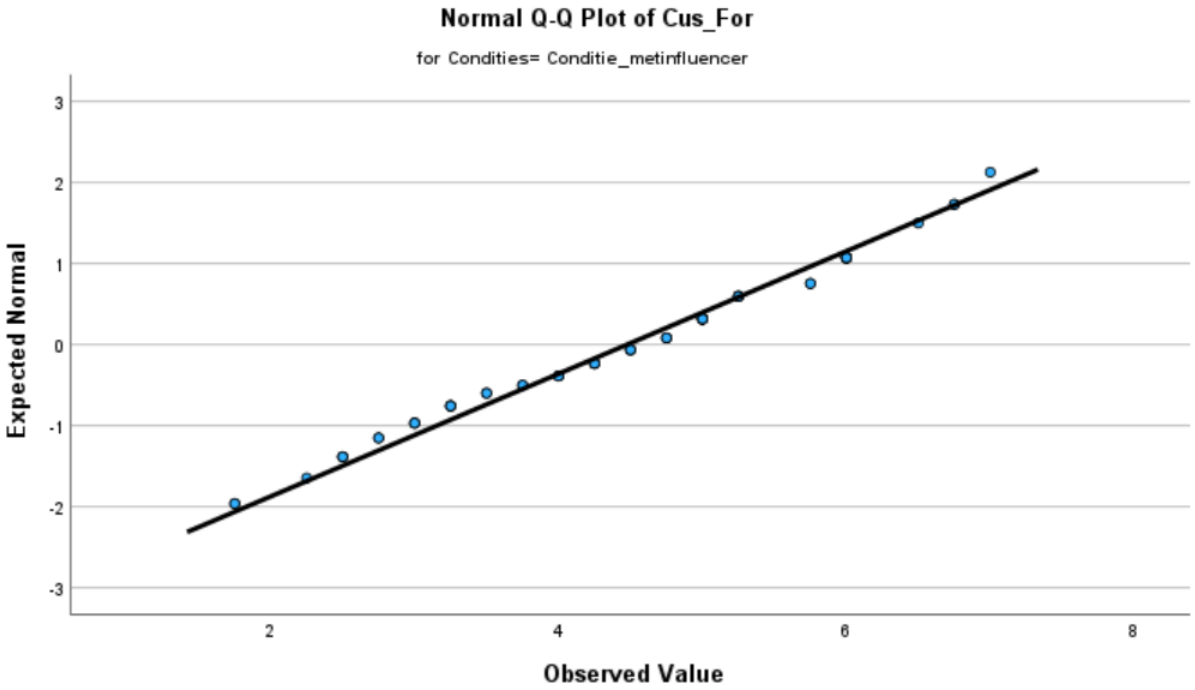
3,00
4,00
5,00
6,00
7,00
Cus_For


Normal Q-Q Plot of Cus_For
for Condities= Conditie_metinfluencer
Expected Normal
Observed Value
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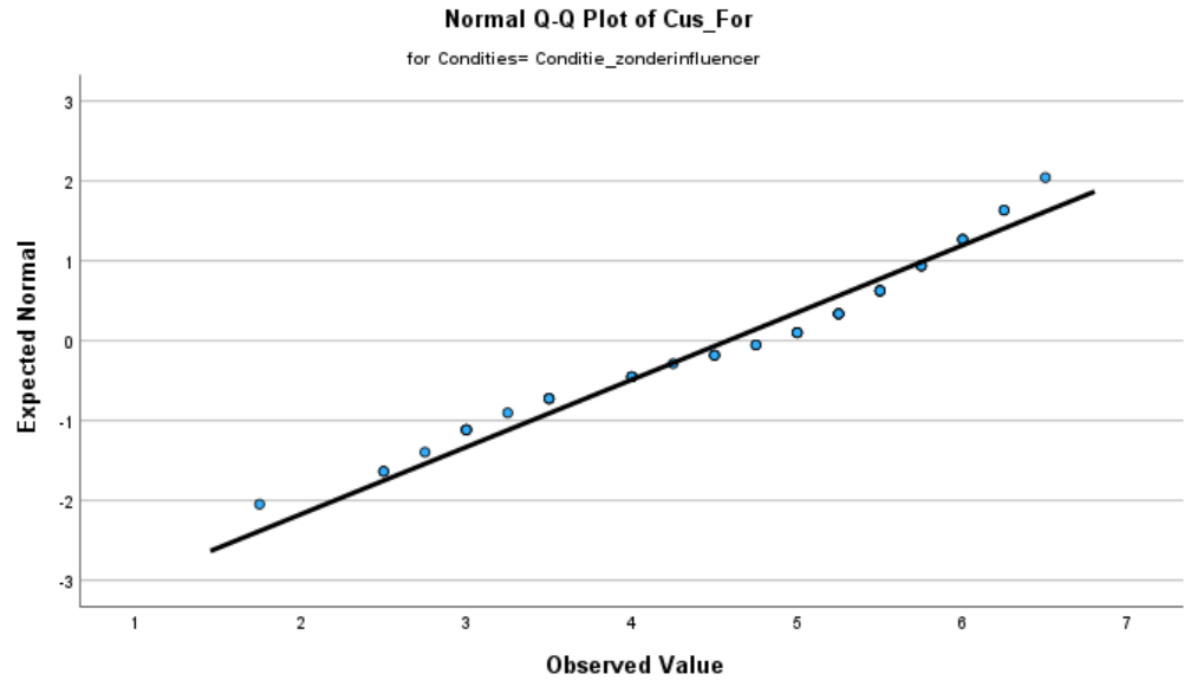
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3
2
4
6
8


Normal Q-Q Plot of Cus_For
for Condities= Conditie_zonderinfluencer
Expected Normal
Observed Value
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3
1
2
3
4
5
6
7

Homogeneity of variances

Descriptives

Cus_For

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for ... Lower Bound
Conditie_metinfluencer	59	4,4746	1,32181	,17209	4,1301
Conditie_zonderinfluencer	48	4,5781	1,18743	,17139	4,2333
Total	107	4,5210	1,25852	,12167	4,2798

Descriptives

Cus_For

	95% Confidence Interval for ... Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Conditie_metinfluencer	4,8190	1,75	7,00
Conditie_zonderinfluencer	4,9229	1,75	6,50
Total	4,7622	1,75	7,00

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Cus_For	Based on Mean	,351	1	105	,555
	Based on Median	,409	1	105	,524
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,409	1	104,642	,524
	Based on trimmed mean	,361	1	105	,549

ANOVA

Cus_For

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	,284	1	,284	,178	,674
Within Groups	167,606	105	1,596		
Total	167,890	106			

ANOVA Effect Sizes[a,b]

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Cus_For	Eta-squared	,002	,000	,048
	Epsilon-squared	-,008	-,010	,039
	Omega-squared Fixed-effec	-,008	-,009	,039
	Omega-squared Random-effect	-,008	-,009	,039

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Appendix 10: Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1

Group Statistics

	Condities	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cus_For	Conditie_metinfluencer	59	4,4746	1,32181	,17209
	Conditie_zonderinfluencer	48	4,5781	1,18743	,17139

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Cus_For	Equal variances assumed	,351	,555	-,422	105
	Equal variances not assumed			-,426	103,934

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Significance			
		One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Cus_For	Equal variances assumed	,337	,674	-,10355	,24558
	Equal variances not assumed	,335	,671	-,10355	,24287

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Cus_For	Equal variances assumed	-,59049	,38339
	Equal variances not assumed	-,58518	,37808

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Cus_For	Cohen's d	1,26343	-,082	-,463	,299
	Hedges' correction	1,27254	-,081	-,460	,297
	Glass's delta	1,18743	-,087	-,468	,295

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Hypothesis 2

Group Statistics

	Typ_infl	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cus_For	Conditie_nano_micro	17	4,6471	1,53363	,37196
	Conditie_macro_mega	42	4,4048	1,23953	,19126

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Cus_For	Equal variances assumed	1,095	,300	,634	57
	Equal variances not assumed			,579	24,900

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Significance			
		One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Cus_For	Equal variances assumed	,264	,528	,24230	,38194
	Equal variances not assumed	,284	,568	,24230	,41825

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Cus_For	Equal variances assumed	-,52253	1,00712
	Equal variances not assumed	-,61929	1,10388

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Cus_For	Cohen's d	1,32867	,182	-,383	,746
	Hedges' correction	1,34648	,180	-,378	,736
	Glass's delta	1,23953	,195	-,371	,759

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Appendix 11: Additional analyses

Group Statistics

	Typ_infl	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Influencer_trust2	Conditie_nano_micro	17	5,5098	1,22541	,29721
	Conditie_macro_mega	42	5,1190	1,18670	,18311

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of
		F	Sig.	t
Influencer_trust2	Equal variances assumed	,342	,561	1,135
	Equal variances not assumed			1,119

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
			Significance	
		df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Influencer_trust2	Equal variances assumed	57	,131	,261
	Equal variances not assumed	28,831	,136	,272

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the . Lower
Influencer_trust2	Equal variances assumed	,39076	,34429	-,29867
	Equal variances not assumed	,39076	,34909	-,32339

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of ... 95% Confidence Interval of the .. Upper
Influencer_trust2	Equal variances assumed	1,08018
	Equal variances not assumed	1,10490

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Influencer_trust2	Cohen's d	1,19769	,326	-,242	,891
	Hedges' correction	1,21374	,322	-,239	,880
	Glass's delta	1,18670	,329	-,241	,895

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Group Statistics

	Typ_infl	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Infl_loy	Conditie_nano_micro	17	6,0000	,78561	,19054
	Conditie_macro_mega	42	5,4583	,80947	,12490

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Infl_loy	Equal variances assumed	,961	,331	2,347	57
	Equal variances not assumed			2,378	30,507

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Significance One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Infl_loy	Equal variances assumed	,011	,022	,54167	,23078
	Equal variances not assumed	,012	,024	,54167	,22783

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Infl_loy	Equal variances assumed	,07953	1,00380
	Equal variances not assumed	,07670	1,00663

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Infl_loy	Cohen's d	,80284	,675	,095	1,249
	Hedges' correction	,81360	,666	,094	1,232
	Glass's delta	,80947	,669	,084	1,247

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Correlation analysis

Correlations

		Wat is uw geslacht?	Influencer_trust
Wat is uw geslacht?	Pearson Correlation	1	,213
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,105
	N	107	59
Influencer_trust	Pearson Correlation	,213	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,105	
	N	59	59

Correlations

Correlations

		Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul deze enkel in getallen in.	Influencer_trust
Wat is uw leeftijd? Vul deze enkel in getallen in.	Pearson Correlation	1	,001
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,996
	N	107	59
Influencer_trust	Pearson Correlation	,001	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,996	
	N	59	59

Correlations

Correlations

		Wat is uw huidige of hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?	Influencer_trust
Wat is uw huidige of hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?	Pearson Correlation	1	,033
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,807
	N	107	59
Influencer_trust	Pearson Correlation	,033	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,807	
	N	59	59