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To buy or not to buy? The role of influencer marketing in the development of materialistic mindsets and intentions.

Influencer characteristics, and the role of materialism in following influencer recommendations.

Abstract

Social media has been widely accepted as an effective marketing channel, with social media influencers standing at the center of this phenomenon. This study adds to the growing body of literature on the fairly new phenomenon of influencer marketing. Influencers can be found in all shapes and forms, which makes it a dynamic and interesting concept to research. This research examines how and whether different characteristics of social media influencers influence on the materialistic orientation of followers, while also aiming to find the relationship between materialism and the tendency to follow influencer recommendations. A survey evaluating a maximum of three influencers has been distributed and based on the answers of 451 respondents a regression analysis is conducted. This research showed that a higher number of followers appeared to stimulate a heightened materialistic orientation in followers, while the gender and type of content created by the social media influencer did not alter the materialism of followers. The materialism subsequently positively influenced the tendency to follow SMI recommendations. While hedonic content created by influencers directly influenced the tendency to follow recommendations made by influencers positively, the number of followers of an influencer did not have this significant effect. This knowledge offers an inventory perspective upon the matter and broadens the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing, while also offering practical insights.

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1. Introduction

Social media is used by billions of people around the world and has become one of the defining technologies of our time. Through the use of social media, a massive potential audience becomes available who spend many hours a day using various social media platforms. Therefore, it is no surprise social media is nowadays accepted as a solid marketing channel (Appel et al., 2020). However, brands often struggle to create social media content that is engaging to its viewers. For this reason, firms are resorting to social media influencers (hereafter SMIs) to endorse their brands as SMIs link the intended audience with the brand while maintaining a direct connection with their followers (Childers, Lemon and Hoy, 2018). In these collaborations, SMIs function as brand ambassadors through the creation of content for the brand in question. This is done by mentioning the product/brand, doing sponsored posts on their own social media page, or sharing/being part of a larger campaign and events (Boerman, 2020).

SMIs are specialists at creating content consumers are willing to interact with, which spreads the message more widely across social media. As compensation for reaching masses of consumers, SMIs can generate a significant income (McCoole, 2018). By recommending brands to consumers, SMIs stimulate the development of positive and affective connections with the mentioned brands. As a result, the intention to proceed to purchase increases. This reflects the importance of investing and incorporating digital SMIs in brand strategies (Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). On another note, the positive influence of influencer marketing on purchase intention may also facilitate materialism. Many marketing efforts encourage materialism in general, which may have negative societal effects such as compulsive buying (Islam et al., 2018), and decreased level of psychological well-being (Christopher et al., 2009).

SMIs can differ significantly in their branding and focus, follower base, engagement rates, monetary requirements for collaborations, gender, content, and skill sets all of which comprise the package the SMI can offer a brand (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). This wide range of characteristics makes SMIs a very interesting and dynamic element in influencer marketing. Given these differences, many different shapes and forms of influencers can be found, all with different influences on the follower. In this research, an influencer portfolio consisting of three SMIs will be composed. This portfolio reflects a consumer evaluating a maximum of three different SMIs based on varying characteristics. The characteristics considered and evaluated

in this research are the *SMI's number of followers*, *SMI's gender*, and the *content category in which the SMIs operate*. This will result in a cluster of SMIs per consumer, evaluated based on different characteristics. Evaluating and considering multiple SMIs per consumer is also of additional value as opposed to evaluating only one SMI, as most people follow more than one SMI. Including more SMIs broadens and richens the perspective on the matter and its understanding.

It will be interesting to research whether these variations between SMIs make a difference in the degree of materialism followers develop, as materialism has been increasing among youth partially due to the rise in advertisements by SMIs (Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal and Valkenburg, 2013). This interest in materialistic possessions may also increase the tendency to follow SMIs recommendations, due to the connectedness and appeal consumers have to SMIs (Lou and Kim, 2019). This results in the research question central in this thesis, namely:

How do different social media influencer characteristics affect consumers' materialism, and how does this influence the tendency to follow recommendations made by social media influencers?

The research conducted in this thesis is academically relevant, given that an influencer portfolio consisting of a maximum of three SMIs will be composed. This method is chosen, as the effects of different characteristics of SMIs on materialism are not likely to be attributed to following only one single SMI, but the pattern that can be detected among following multiple SMIs. This is of academic value, as most contemporary research is conducted only evaluating one SMI instead of multiple. Evaluating multiple SMIs at the same time can give new insights into the consequences they can have. In addition, there is a gap in research regarding the effects of influencer marketing on consumer wellbeing, through the development of materialism. It is important to become aware of these effects, as a negative influence on consumer wellbeing may affect a business's ethics. Further, relatively little academic insight is available for marketers looking to implement influencer marketing, given that is quite a recent development in the marketing field. This is of crucial importance, given its mentioned benefits. The mentioned contributions are therefore not only academically relevant, but also applicable for managers.

To encapsulate, given the academic and practical need to expand knowledge regarding SMI types and how it influences consumer wellbeing, this thesis develops a model based on an influencer portfolio, and its effect on materialism, combined with materialism's influence on the

tendency to follow SMIs recommendations. In doing so, first the theoretical background will be delineated. Hereafter, the methodology will be presented, followed by the results of the analysis. A discussion of the findings will proceed which will result in the conclusion of this thesis.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 SMIs

A social media influencer is someone who posts on social media platforms in exchange for compensation (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). Companies compensate these influencers with money, or something else such as free products, services, trips, or experiences (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). SMIs represent a variety of independent third-party endorsers who intend to shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media (Freberg et al., 2011). Crucial in a SMI's success are the relationships they build and nurture between themselves and their followers. A SMI can construct and maintain relationships with their followers on social media, and can inform, entertain, and potentially influence followers' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors (Dhanesh and Duthler, 2019). SMIs represent or recommend brands on various social media platforms. Consumers prefer to seek the opinions of other consumers and influencers to make an informed decision. This makes SMIs not only useful from a hedonic, but also a utilitarian perspective. Therefore, SMIs are now playing a central role in shaping a consumer's opinion on a brand's products or services (Chopra, Avhad and Jaju, 2021). For these reasons, it makes sense for brands to utilize influencer marketing as the leading strategy in acquiring customers (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020), as it also additionally increases brand engagement and ROI (Tapinfluence, 2019).

2.2 Materialism

The present age is witnessing a rise in materialism (Jhamb and Mittal, 2022). Materialism is defined as the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Belk, 1984). Though materialism does not necessarily result in negative outcomes (Belk, 1985), it does have unintended consequences such as compulsive buying (Islam et al., 2018), and decreased level of psychological well-being (Christopher et al., 2009). Given that social media is likely related to materialistic views (Debrececi & Hofmeister-Toth, 2018), concerns regarding the impact of SMIs on psychological well-being and materialism have been increasing (Gritters, 2019;

Stokel-Walker, 2019). For instance, social media can be attributed as one of the major causes of materialistic thinking among youth. Nowadays, SMIs constantly promote sponsored products to followers, which can result in an increasing interest in material possessions (Lou and Kim, 2019). This is the evident reason for the increase in materialism, as social media is responsible for a large portion of the advertisements people are exposed to (Neve and Trivedi, 2020).

SMIs often reflect wealth, success, and happiness (Hannell, 2019). Their social media platforms showcase these idealized images, which makes it desirable to be like them and follow them (Chan & Zhang, 2007). Research by Neve & Trivedi (2020) found that youth are attracted to the idealized pictures of (social media) celebrities in advertisements, and as a result their level of materialism increased. The arising materialistic mindset related to SMIs can partially be attributed to the fact that social comparison is inevitable on social media (La Ferle and Chan, 2008). SMIs display their luxurious lifestyle, and therefore encourage their followers towards social comparison (Chae, 2017). SMIs typically are role models to their followers and can incite social comparisons further, which can lead to imitation of the SMI. Thoumrungroje (2018) found that when people are repeatedly and frequently exposed to messages, pictures, advertisements, or stories that demonstrate wealth, happiness, and success through ownership of products and consumption of services, they tend to become more materialistic. When an individual imitates their favorite celebrities or SMIs, they will consider material possessions to be more important (Chan, 2008), it stimulates their followers' interest in material possessions (Lou and Kim, 2019), and can result in more materialistic views of the follower overall (La Ferle and Chan, 2018).

Important to note is that a study on youth in the US and Arabian countries found that materialism is higher when the use of social media increases (American Psychology Association, 2014). This finding was also present in a study by Thoumrungroje (2018), where it was concluded that social media intensity significantly increased materialism among samples in the US and South-Kora. Further, a study by Oprea et al. (2013) found that materialistic values can be promoted by increased exposure to consumer advertising. Given that the role of SMIs is to advertise products to their followers, it may be expected that SMIs in general can alter the materialistic values of their followers.

The above gives reason to believe that the level of materialistic orientation of a person can be influenced by external forces (e.g., SMIs), and it would be interesting to see whether this is the case for multiple characteristics that SMIs possess due to the connection the SMIs have with advertising and marketing.

2.3 Influencer portfolio

In this research, the concept ‘influencer portfolio’ will be introduced. An influencer portfolio consists of a cluster of SMIs a person follows, and how these influencers score on certain characteristics. Thus, a consumer will be asked to evaluate a maximum of three SMIs based on three characteristics. The objective is to get insights into what type of SMIs consumers surround themselves with, and subsequently see the effect these characteristics have on materialism, and thereafter the tendency to follow the SMIs recommendations. The characteristics that will be considered in this research, and therefore the inventory of the personal influencer portfolio, are the SMI’s number of followers, the SMI’s gender, and the content category in which the SMI operates. The SMI’s number of followers was decided upon as it plays a crucial role in the reach a SMI has, which can determine the SMI’s further career (Stockwell, 2017). The gender of the SMI also plays a role in determining whether the consumer wants to follow and consume information from this SMI, which makes its relationship with materialism interesting to research. Content category is relevant as little is known about the role of the type of content that SMIs create and how it influences materialism, it will enrich the understanding of the matter and open up new fields of research. The three categories are visualized in Figure I. The characteristics and the conform hypotheses will be introduced in the following sections.

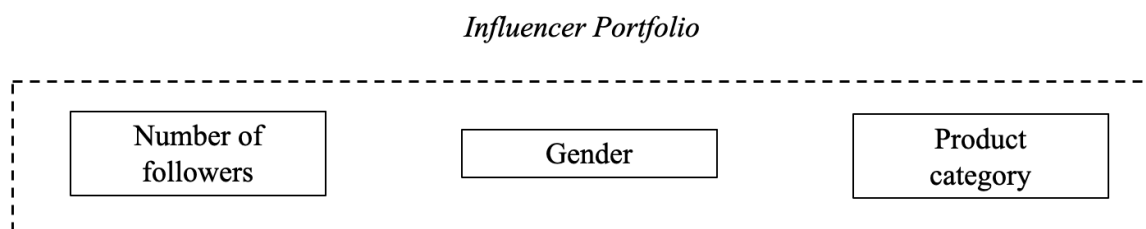


Figure I *Characteristics constituting the SMI portfolio*

2.3.1 Characteristic 1: Influencer’s number of followers

The first influencer characteristic evaluated is based on the SMI’s number of followers. An SMI’s style, visuals, and ability to influence people’s lifestyle choices are one of the main factors that gets them followers, sometimes in the millions (Stockwell, 2017). In the past, the classification of SMIs was confined to only those who became popular through their social media activities, excluding traditional celebrities who found fame through other sources (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2016). However, nowadays, there is no distinct boundary to distinguish between an SMI and a traditional celebrity, as a person can possess both identities

(Koay, Cheung, Soh, and Teoh, 2021). For this reason, this distinction will not be made in this paper either and it will be solely based on their absolute number of followers.

Research by Maheshawari (2018) found that SMIs with relatively lower number of followers, have relatively higher engagement rates, and research suggests that as the number of followers increases, the engagement of influencers drop (Chen, 2017). The engagement rate reflects the followers' involvement in and interactive responses to SMIs content on social media (Arora et al., 2019). The higher engagement of SMIs with less followers is likely due to the audience perceiving them as more trustworthy, honest, and truthful compared to SMIs with more followers (Extendzani, 2017). Research by Park et al. (2021) found that SMIs with fewer followers are perceived as more persuasive than SMIs with more followers, as endorsements by the former group are seen as more authentic. Due to this authenticity, followers engage more with SMIs, but SMIs engage with followers as well. This two-way relationship between SMI and follower is positively related to an increase in the materialistic views of the follower (Lou and Kim, 2019).

Given that the engagement rate is higher between consumers and SMIs with less followers, and an increase in engagement can result in a higher degree of materialism due to the two-way interaction that occurs between SMI and followers, it is expected that consumers who have more SMIs with less followers in their influencer portfolio, are more likely to be more materialistic, compared to consumers who have more SMIs with many followers in their portfolio. This results in the following hypothesis:

***H1** Consumers that follow more SMIs with lower numbers of followers in their portfolio are more likely to develop a materialistic mindset, compared to consumers that have less SMIs with lower numbers of followers in their portfolio.*

2.3.2 Characteristic 2: SMIs gender

Research is fractured when it comes to gender and SMIs. Winter and Krämer (2014), found that blogs by female authors are always favored, no matter the gender of the reader. In contrast, the study by Vaiciukynaite (2019) indicated that social media posts generated by male SMIs drew more client attention and received more views. The study of Pinto, Mota, Leite and Alves (2017) has shown that male adolescents are generally more materialistic compared to adolescent females. This higher degree of materialism for men is also found in research by Segal and Podoshen, 2012. For this reason, male SMIs may also express their materialism, and their materialistic possessions to a greater degree on their social media channels. Due to this, their

followers are likely exposed to this materialism to a greater extent and given that social comparison with SMIs results in more materialistic views (Chan, 2008; Lou and Kim, 2019; La Ferle and Chan, 2018), it may also influence the materialism of their followers.

Further, research by Tafesse and Wood (2021) found that male SMIs incite a greater degree of engagement with their following compared to female SMIs. As it was previously established that the engagement and two-way relationship between follower and SMI significantly influences the materialistic orientation of the follower (Lou and Kim, 2019), it is also expected that consumers who have more male SMIs in their portfolio, are more likely to become more materialistic compared to having more non-male SMIs in their portfolio.

For this reason, it is hypothesized that:

***H2** Consumers that have more male SMIs in their portfolio develop a significantly greater degree of materialism, compared to having more non-male SMIs.*

2.3.3 Characteristic 3: content category the SMI operates in

SMIs typically have a specialization which enables them to be classified by category. Patterns within their created content can be identified, which are used to associate the categories and types of content present in most of their posted images with each other (Rutter et al., 2021). Rutter et al. (2021) and Mediakix (2020) identified categories in which SMIs can be allocated, namely ‘beauty’, ‘traditional celebrity’, ‘fashion’, ‘food’, ‘fitness’, ‘sports’, ‘travel’, ‘entertainment’ and ‘gaming’. Interestingly, most of the research on SMIs is conducted on fashion or beauty influencers, and the majority of the SMIs is also active in this field (Dinh and Lee, 2021). A division can be made within these content categories, namely the SMIs being of hedonic or utilitarian value to the follower. Hedonic consumption can be perceived as more emotional in nature, whereas utilitarian consumption of more rational (Klein and Melnyk, 2016). A crucial distinction between the two is that they serve different consumption goals (Chernev, 2004). Hedonic consumption has a focus on satisfying pleasure-seeking goals, and utilitarian consumption fulfills more functionality-related goals (Chitturi, Raghunathan, and Mahajan 2008). In this research, a distinction will be made between the SMI creating either hedonic or utilitarian content. The content categories mentioned earlier (created by Rutter et al., 2021 and Mediakix, 2020) will be grouped into the category being either hedonic or utilitarian. Realistically, content created by SMIs can be a combination of hedonic and utilitarian content and can serve both knowledge and appeal functions for certain products and consumers (Lin, 2018). But, due to the complexity of assigning the beforementioned categories to both groups,

it was decided to assign the categories to either the hedonic or utilitarian group and not a combination.

SIMs can enhance a consumers' personal attachment to products, which in return increases the hedonic value. This is due to the connection the consumer has to the SIM, and the SIMs apparent connection to the product. In this situation social comparison can occur as the follower perceived the current state of the SIM as desirable, which plays a significant role in the development of materialistic values (Islam et al., 2018). At the same time, when information regarding a product or service is provided by an SIM, it is often not perceived as merely motivated by commercial interests (Bao and Chang, 2014), making their opinions more credible and influential compared to other sorts of sponsored promotion. This important functional information drives the utilitarian value of products and is simultaneously a prominent source of pre-purchase information for the consumer (Lin et al., 2018).

Previous research has suggested that a higher degree of materialism drives more positive responses towards sponsored content by SIMs, which can be explained through hedonic enjoyment and a high trust in the SIM, given that materialistic consumers are more trusting towards SIMs compared to less materialistic consumers (Kim et al., 2021). In the past, research has been conducted regarding materialism and its effect on consumption of consumers has been confirmed (Rindfleisch et al., 2009). This in addition with the finding that promoting sponsored products to followers increases the interest in materialistic possessions (Lou and Kim, 2019), it may be interesting to find whether this alternation in materialistic orientation differs for the type of SIM (e.g., hedonic or utilitarian). Previous research has focused mainly on the relationship of materialism on persuasion and purchase intention, but no studies have been conducted on the inversed relationship. It would be interesting to see whether a link is present when following SIMs who are oriented at being of hedonic or utilitarian value to consumers, and how this influences the materialistic orientation of the follower. Due to the lack in research regarding the effect of content type on the materialistic orientation of the follower, no hypothesis will be formulated, but the findings will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

2.4 Tendency to follow SIM's recommendations

There is no doubt that SIM recommendations play a crucial role in influencer marketing, given that 49% of consumers nowadays depend on influencer recommendations for their purchase decisions (Dimitrieska and Efremova, 2021). When an influencer recommends a product, it is perceived as more trustworthy compared to traditional advertising, and therefore consumers are more likely to purchase the recommended product (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Lou and

Yuan 2019). SMIs tend to integrate detailed description of their experience with a product in influencing their following on the purchase decision-making process (Erkan and Evans, 2016). SMIs often give advice in their posts on which products to use and give their following insight into the brands they use and like. These recommendations are strongly followed by the followers and attracts high engagement in the form of likes, comments, and shares, which in response increases the SMI's popularity and impact. This makes SMIs a captivating asset from a marketing point of view (De Veirman and Hudders, 2020).

SMIs are often adored by their followers, which makes the followers more likely to follow SMIs recommendations through social comparison to mitigate the gap between the followers themselves and the SMI (Chan and Prendergast, 2008; Ki and Kim, 2019). The perceived connectedness that consumers have with SMIs, combined with the appeal SMIs have on followers, has resulted in heightened materialistic views, purchase intentions, as well as increased interest in products among adolescent followers (Lou and Kim, 2019; Yuan and Lou, 2020). Research by Kim et al. (2021) showed that consumers who are highly materialistic show greater purchase intent and higher engagement with sponsored content by SMIs through hedonic enjoyment and trust in the SMI. In addition, Jin and Ryu (2020) found that followers with higher levels of materialism have a higher willingness to trust information supplied by SMIs, making them more likely to engage and potentially purchase from endorsed brands.

Given that it seems that SMIs can influence the materialistic orientation of followers and it can subsequently influence their tendency to follow SMI recommendations, it is deduced that the tendency to follow an influencer's recommendations is higher for followers with a high level of materialism, compared to followers with a lower degree of materialism. This results in the following hypotheses:

***H3** The higher a follower's level of materialism, the higher the tendency to follow a SMI's recommendation.*

Regarding the direct relationship of the SMI characteristics on the tendency to follow SMI recommendations, research by Gupta and Mahajan (2019) found that SMIs with less followers are often perceived as more credible due to their perceived authenticity, which in had a positive effect on the behavioral intentions and purchase intention of consumers. Park et al. (2021) also found that consumers reported more favorable attitudes towards products endorsed by SMIs with less followers, compared to products endorsed by SMIs with more followers. Additionally, consumers showed higher purchase intentions for products endorsed by SMIs with less

followers. However, this condition only held when the product endorsed was of hedonic value to the consumer and was not significant for utilitarian value. Finally, a study by Denkers (2020) found that the gender of an influencer has no significant impact on source credibility, therefore not being likely to directly influence the tendency to follow recommendations.

For these reasons, this separate study will aim to find in what conditions the tendency to follow SMI recommendations are directly influenced by characteristics of the SMI. The following hypothesis are formulated:

H4 Consumers with more SMIs with lower numbers of followers in their influencer portfolio, have a higher tendency to follow SMIs recommendations.

H5 Consumers who have more SMIs in their portfolio with a hedonic orientation, have a higher tendency to follow SMI recommendations compared to consumers who follow less SMIs who make hedonic content.

A visualization of an example of an influencer portfolio of one person is presented in Figure II.

SMI	Evaluated characteristics
<i>SMI 1</i>	Follower count: 100.000-500.000 Gender: Female Content category: Hedonic
<i>SMI 2</i>	Follower count: 1.000.000+ Gender: Female Content category: Hedonic
<i>SMI 3</i>	Follower count: 1.000.000+ Gender: Male Content category: Utilitarian

Figure II *Example influencer portfolio*

2.5 Conceptual model

The proposed conceptual model, conform with the hypotheses, is visualized in Figure III. In this thesis, it is presumed that a lower number of followers results in a higher degree of

materialism. It is also expected that male SMIs will incite a greater degree of materialism in consumers. The relationship hedonic content has with materialism is not hypothesized but will be analyzed as there appears to be some form of correlation according to existing literature. In a separate study, the relationship between materialism and the tendency to follow SMI recommendations will be analyzed, as well as the direct effect two characteristics of SMIs have on the tendency to follow SMI recommendations.

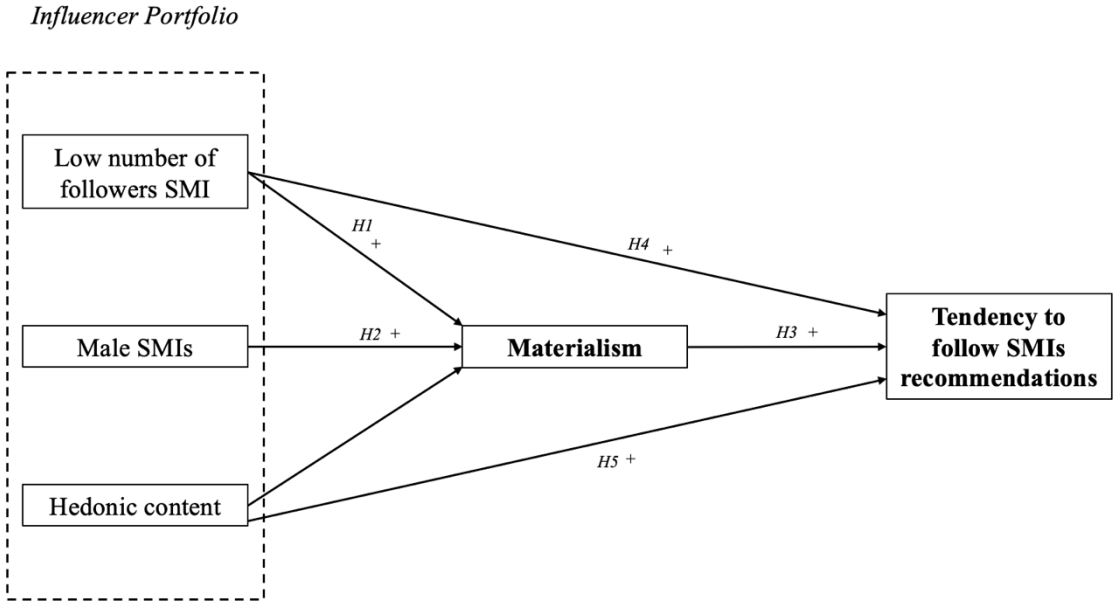


Figure III *Conceptual model*

3. Methodology

The following section will introduce the methodology, including information regarding the procedures, participants, measures, control variables, and research ethics.

3.1 Procedures

A survey among consumers that follow SMIs was conducted on Qualtrics. After clicking on the questionnaire link, the respondent was redirected to the questionnaire and the introductory text. Here the instructions and the definition of an SMI could be found, namely as ‘someone who has access to an audience that listens to and engages with them on social media, can vary in their degree of popularity, has established credibility in an industry and posts content about his area of expertise on a frequent basis’. In the survey it emphasized “there are no right or wrong

answers; only your personal opinions matter” to minimize possible response bias (Aronson, Ellsworth, Carlsmith, and Gonzales 1990, as cited in Yoo et al., 2000). Before starting the questionnaire, the respondents were asked if they followed at least one SMI, as otherwise the questionnaire could not be filled in validly. They were also asked whether they agreed their answers in the questionnaire would be used in further research and analysis, and anonymity was ensured. During the questionnaire, the respondents were first asked to give their best estimate as to how many SMIs they are currently following. Next, they were asked to name the three SMIs they overall interact with the most, and evaluate them based on their number of followers, gender, and the product category they operate in. If the respondent followed less than three SMIs, they could evaluate one, or two SMIs, based on their answer to the previous question. Hereafter the respondents were asked to evaluate the SMIs of choice based on the three characteristics central in this study, namely the number of followers of the SMI, the gender of the SMI, and the content category/categories in which the SMI is active. Next, the respondents were asked to reflect on their materialistic orientation. This was followed by items reflecting how likely the respondent is to follow the recommendations of an SMI. Hereafter, the respondents were asked various questions regarding their socio-demographics. At the end of the survey, they were thanked for their collaboration.

Respondents from the age of 16 were able to fill in the survey, as SMIs are especially relevant and influential in younger generations (Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). The questionnaire was available on social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, as well as distributed on WhatsApp and thus distributed through snowball sampling, probability sampling and random sampling from the 7th of April 2022, till the 13th of April 2022. The questionnaire could be filled in by anyone who had the link, and the respondents were given as much time as needed to complete the questionnaire, which was available in the Dutch and English language. The full survey in Dutch as presented to the respondents can be found in Appendix I.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 *Influencer portfolio*

Respondents were initially asked to indicate the number of SMIs they follow on Instagram to measure the breadth of the portfolio. Hereafter, they were asked to evaluate the three SMIs they engage with the most, based on their number of followers, gender, and the product category they are active in. Regarding number of followers, it was suspected that the followers did not

know the number of followers of the SMI exactly. Therefore, five follower ranges were included, namely <10.000 followers, 10.000-100.000 followers, 100.000-500.000 followers, 500.000-1.000.000 followers, and 1.000.000+ followers ($M = 11,534,486.917$, $SD = 11,003,749.446$), based on research by Campbell & Farrell (2020). In making the data suitable for analysis, some alterations were made. For instance, the collected data regarding number of followers was of categorical nature. In making the variable metric, a midpoint value for every range of followers was used to calculate averages and make the variable suitable for regression analysis. The final range (>1.000.000 followers) does not have an endpoint to derive an average from. Therefore, a sample of 25 SMIs with more than 1.000.000 followers was taken as an example and the average of the number of followers on Instagram of these SMIs was taken (Appendix II). The calculated average was 31.000.000 followers, which was used as the midpoint for the fifth range. Important to note is that these averages and mid-points are only an estimate but are still useful for data analysis.

For gender, three options were available to choose from, namely 'male', 'female', or 'non-binary'. The variable gender of the SMI is also of categorical nature. The gender values of the evaluated SMIs were first transformed into count variables and then summed, with males being ascribed the value of 1 and non-males the value of 0. Given that multiple SMIs were evaluated, a value of 3 implies that three males were present in the respondent's portfolio, while a value of 0 represents zero males in the portfolio. Using this dummy variable, a regression analysis is still possible.

Lastly, in choosing which category the SMI is active in, ten choices were available based on Rutter et al. (2021) and Mediakix (2020), namely 'beauty', 'fashion', 'sports', 'fitness', 'travel', 'food', 'gaming', 'entertainment' and 'traditional celebrity'. To avoid a respondent not being able to answer the question because their SMI of choice does not operate in any of the optional categories, a final option was added, namely 'other'. The responses collected through the option 'other' were attributed to six other categories, namely 'religion', 'motivation and inspiration', 'education', 'home design', 'family', and 'gossip'. Worth mentioning is that when 'vlogs' were filled in under the 'other' option, they were assigned to the 'entertainment' category. Hereafter, the categories were divided in them either being hedonic or utilitarian. This was based on an additional test conducted by five respondents, where they were asked to indicate whether they found the categories to be either hedonic or utilitarian. Through this test and reaching internal consensus it was established that the categories 'beauty', 'fashion', 'sports', 'travel', 'food', 'gaming', 'entertainment', 'traditional celebrity', 'family', and 'gossip' are hedonic, while 'fitness', 'religion', 'education', 'motivation and inspiration' and

'home design' have a more utilitarian orientation. The categories were then transformed into count variables and summed as it was possible to evaluate multiple SMIs and select multiple categories. A relatively high score on hedonic content therefore indicates that a respondent has evaluated SMIs who are followed for hedonic purposes ($M = 5.4455$, $SD = 2.9793$). The opposite holds for respondents who score relatively high on utilitarian content, which indicates that the respondent has evaluated mainly or solely SMIs who create more utilitarian content ($M = 1.3168$, $SD = .6297$). The constructs and corresponding items can be found in Table I.

3.2.2 Materialism

In measuring the respondent's level of materialism, five items adapted from Koay et al. (2021) were implemented based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely). An example of an item is 'Happiness can be purchased with money' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .733$) The full list of utilized items can be found in Table I.

3.2.3 Tendency to follow influencer recommendations

The general tendency of consumers to follow an SMIs recommendations were measured based on a scale developed by Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019). The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (completely agree). One of the items operated was 'I would follow brand recommendations from the influencers that I follow' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .888$). The full list of items can be found in Table I.

3.2.3 Perceived authenticity of the SMI

The perceived authenticity of the SMI were measured using a scale developed by Moulard, Garrity and Rice (2015) consisting of three items. The respondents were asked to indicate the perceived authenticity for all SMIs they evaluated, thus three at most. The SMIs were evaluated based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). One of the items implemented was 'The SMI seems real to me' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .876$). The full list of items can be found in Table I.

Construct...	Items	Scale	Source
<i>related to the SMI</i>			
<i>SMI's number of followers</i>	How many followers does your influencer of choice have?	– <10.000 followers	Campbell & Farrell (2020)

		– 10.000-100.000 followers	
		– 100.000-500.000 followers	
		– 500.000-1.000.000 followers	
		– 1.000.000+ followers	
<i>SMI's gender</i>	What is the gender of your influencer of choice?	– Male – Female – Non-binary	
<i>Product category SMI operates in</i>	In what product category does your influencer of choice many operate in?	– Beauty – Fashion – Sports – Fitness – Travel – Food – Gaming – Entertainment – Traditional celebrity – Other	Rutter et al., (2021); Mediakix (2020)
<i>related to the portfolio</i>			
<i>Materialism</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions. I like to own things that impress people. I like a lot of materialism in my life. Happiness can be purchased with money. 	1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)	Koay et al. (2021)
<i>Tendency to follow SMIs recommendations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I would purchase a brand based on the advice I am given by the influencers that I follow. I would follow brand recommendations from the influencers that I follow 	1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)	Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019)

-
3. In the future, I will purchase the products of brands recommended by the influencers that I follow.
-

related to the follower

<i>Age</i>	How old are you?	From 16 years old (absolute number)	
<i>Gender</i>	What is your gender?	– Male – Female – Other	
<i>Nationality</i>	What country are you from?	Fill in option	
<i>Education level</i>	What is the highest education level you have achieved?	1 (elementary school) to 6 (postgraduate)	
<i>Authenticity</i>	1. The SMI is genuine. 2. The SMI seems real to me. 3. The SMI is authentic.	1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)	Moulard et al. (2015)

Table I *Constructs and measures*

3.3 Control variables

To control for socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; age, gender and nationality were included as control variables. In minimizing the influence of external and confounding variables, the internal validity of the study increases, as well as recognizes the correlations between pertinent variables with higher reliability. For these reasons, concluding the survey respondents were asked to indicate their age in absolute numbers, gender (male, female, and other), nationality (country where the respondent resides in), and education level (1= elementary school to 6 = postgraduate). The control variable ‘nationality of the follower’ was therefore recoded into the follower being either Dutch (1), or non-Dutch (0) the make it suitable for comparison in regression analysis and was included as a dummy variable. The gender of the follower was also recoded into the respondent being either male (1) or non-male (0) and was used as a dummy variable.

Lastly, ‘perceived authenticity’ will be incorporated as a control variable as the power, influence, and value of SMIs, as trend setters to their following, is partially due to the increased

authenticity of these SMIs as they are perceived as a more trusted information source compared to traditional advertisements (Audrezet et al., 2018). A SMI's ability to affect decision making and purchase behavior depends on the perceived genuineness of the endorsement, as SMI-brand partnerships that appear dishonest can quickly become counterproductive (Lee and Eastin, 2020). For this reason, this variable is controlled for regarding the correlations between the influencer portfolio characteristics, materialism, and tendency to follow influencer recommendations. The perceived authenticity is measured through three items using a 7-point Likert scale based on Moulard et al. (2015) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .876$). The questions will be asked for every SMI evaluated by the respondent. The items regarding perceived authenticity can be found in Table I.

3.4 Research ethics

Participation of the online questionnaire was voluntary. The respondents were introduced to the objective of the research, the procedures, and a time estimate of the duration of the questionnaire was provided. Participation was strictly anonymous, and the data was treated confidentially. At the end, the participants could leave their e-mail in order to win a gift card, and also this information was treated with utmost security. At the end of the survey, contact details were provided which gave the respondents the opportunity to contact the researchers in case of questions or ambiguity.

4. Analysis and results

This chapter will discuss the findings of this research. First analysis and data will be described, and the assumptions for a regression analysis will be tested. The results in the multiple regression analyses will be provided and hypotheses will be either accepted or rejected.

4.1 Sample

In total 764 respondents participated in the study. The data set was cleaned before the analyses was conducted. People who did not finish the survey and the respondents with excessive missing data were excluded from the sample. Eventually, a total of 452 valid and complete responses were collected. The average age of the respondents was 25.64 years old (SD = 6.24). The youngest participant was 16 years old, and the oldest 63 years old. Regarding gender, 81.8 per cent of the respondents were female, and 17.7 per cent were male. Most of the respondents

held a university of applied sciences diploma (39.6%). Regarding nationality, the majority of the respondents (83.8 per cent) is of Dutch origin. The complete descriptive statistics can be found in Table II.

Demographics		Frequency N (%)
Age	16-30	393 (86.9)
	31-45	47 (13.1)
	45+	12 (3)
Gender	Male	78 (17.3)
	Female	372 (82.3)
	Would rather not say	2 (.4)
Education	Elementary school	2 (.4)
	High school	24 (5.3)
	Community college	81 (17.9)
	University of Applied sciences	179 (39.6)
	University's Bachelor's	95 (21)
	University Master's	70 (15.5)
Nationality	PhD or higher	1 (.2)
	Dutch	382 (84.7)
	German	19 (4.2)
	Belgian	13 (2.9)
	United States	24 (5.3)
	Other	13 (2.7)
Total		452 (100)

Table II *Demographics of respondents*

4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to check whether the items of the scales implemented measure one single construct, are unidimensional and to prove the structure of the variable. Principal component analysis (PCA) is used, as data reduction was the main concern, and the total variance is considered. The PCA was ran on eleven items initially belonging to three constructs, namely *materialism*, *tendency to follow SMI recommendations*, and *perceived authenticity*.

Beforehand, two assumptions must be met to check the suitability of PCA: linearity between all variables and sampling adequacy (Hair et al., 2018). The correlation matrix indicates the linearity between variables, and the r of an item must be $>.30$ for it to be considered worthy of inclusion. All items load higher than this threshold on at least one other item, and therefore the first assumption is met. Second, the sampling adequacy is tested through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO test must exceed the critical value of $.50$, and with a presented value of $.772$ this is the case. Further, Bartlett's test of sphericity must be significant, which is the matter ($p<.001$). Therefore, the second assumption is met as well, and the CFA can be continued.

All items concerning the variables materialism, tendency to follow SMI recommendations and SMI's authenticity were put into a factor analysis together to determine the discriminant validity and indicate statistical difference between the variables and its items. In conducting the CFA and establishing the discriminant validity, first the communalities are checked. All the communalities after extraction were higher than the threshold value of $.2$, which makes them suitable for further analysis. Hereafter, the number of factors to be used was determined. This was determined to be three constructs, as the eigenvalue exceeds 1 at this value, as well as the total explained variance is $>60\%$ at this point. Next, the rotation was determined. As it is assumed that the constructs are not related to each other, orthogonal rotation is applied to the model. Regarding the interpretation and model fit, the factor loadings are interpreted. Here, no abnormalities or cross loadings are found, which indicates that no items are to be deleted from the dataset and all existing items can be utilized for further analysis.

In establishing the convergent validity, all items of a construct were checked for one-dimensionality. Regarding *materialism*, the Eigenvalue was >1 on only one construct. In addition, the communalities had loadings of $>.5$ for all items. This reflects that the items correlate sufficiently with each other and are unidimensional. Next, the construct *tendency to follow SMI recommendations* was checked. Here the Eigenvalue was also >1 on only one construct, and the communalities had a sufficient loading of $>.5$. For the construct *perceived authenticity*, the Eigenvalue is >1 on only one construct, with a corresponding total explained variance of 80.52 per cent, and a sufficient loading regarding communalities of $>.5$. For this reason, the constructs can be all perceived as unidimensional and no items will be deleted. The constructs and items are all suitable for further analysis.

4.3 Reliability analysis

To assess the internal validity of the scales, Cronbach's α was employed. High internal consistency is reflected when Cronbach's α is above .70 (Hair et al., 2018), which criterion is met in this dataset. All scales appeared to be sufficiently reliable, as the items constituting *materialism* had a Cronbach's α of .773, and the variable *tendency to follow SMI recommendations* had a Cronbach's α of .888. This reflects a good internal consistency for both variables, which could not be improved if an item was deleted as the increase would have been less than .05 (Hair et al., 2018). Therefore, the scales are seen as suitable for further analysis. This is visualized in Table III.

Construct	Original # items	Cronbach's α	# of items deleted	Percentage explained variance
Materialism	5	.733	0	53%
Tendency to follow SMI recommendations	3	.888	0	82%
Authenticity	3	.876	0	81%

Table III Reliability checks

4.4 Assumptions for multiple regression analysis

Next, all data were tested for statistical assumptions, ensuring them suitable for analysis (Hair et al., 2018). Five assumptions must be met to continue analysis. First, a normal distribution must be assumed, tested through the variable's skewness and kurtosis. No value lies outside the $|3|$ threshold, indicating that the data is normally distributed.

The second assumption that must be met is the metric nature of the variables. The gender of the SMI was originally a categorical value, but through transformation it was turned into a dummy variable and therefore suitable for interpretation in a multiple regression analysis. The remainder of the variables were already measured metrically.

Linearity must be assumed as well, which represents the third assumption. Linearity indicates that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables are linear. This is established by inspecting scatterplots (Appendix III), which indicated the relationships were linear and horizontal. For this reason, linearity can be assumed, and this assumption is met as well.

Fourth, multicollinearity is not allowed in the variables, which indicates that independent variables correlate highly with each other. The TOL value must be $>.2$ (minimum

of .505) and the VIF value below 10 (maximum of 1.981). All independent variables met this criterion, indicating that the assumption is met.

Homoscedasticity must also be assumed to conduct a regression analysis to ensure the variance of the residuals is equal (Hair, 2018). An equal distribution was visible in the generated scatterplot, indicating that the fifth assumption is met as well (Appendix III).

Lastly, the fifth assumptions testes for “serial correlations between errors” (Hair et al., 2018), and is checked by the Durbin-Watson test. The test values for both regressions lied within the 1.5-2.5 range, indicating that this assumption is met as well.

As all assumptions were met, a regression analysis can be executed, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.5 Control variables

To analyze the data, variables were checked for Pearson and Spearman correlations to potentially include them as control variables. Dummy variables can be included in regression analysis, therefore variables that were of categorical nature were transformed into dummy variables. Some correlations between variables are noteworthy, as they exceed the .20 threshold.

Regarding these correlations, it could be concluded that materialism has a positive weak correlation with the tendency to follow SMI recommendations ($r(451)=.249$, $p<.05$). The gender of the SMI and the gender of the follower appear to have a strong positive correlation ($r(451)=.604$, $p<.001$). Materialism and the nationality of the follower are weakly positively correlated ($r(451)=.285$, $p<.001$). The tendency to follow SMI recommendations the authenticity of the SMI are positively correlated, but weakly ($r(451)=.205$, $p<.001$). It was also found that the gender of the SMI positively correlates with SMIs that are of hedonic nature ($r(451)=.334$, $p<.01$). Lastly, the gender of the follower correlates positively with the SMI being hedonic ($r(451)=.322$, $p<.001$).

Based on these correlations, the gender and nationality of the follower will be included as control variables, as well as the perceived authenticity of the SMI in the analysis of characteristics of the SMI and its relationship with and materialism. In the analysis concerning materialism and the tendency to follow SMI recommendations, the nationality of the follower would be included as control variable. The correlations, means and standard deviations of the variables can be found in Table III.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Follower count SMI		-.127**	.199**	.020	-.031	-	-.078	.118*	.144**	-.046
2. SMI gender			-	.108*	-.106*	-.077	.604**	-	.334**	-.063
3. Materialism			.116**	.249*	-.014	-.079	-	.181**	-.111*	-.045
4. Tendency to follow SMI recommendations				.205**	-.046	.080	.159**	.285**	.075	-.027
5. Authenticity SMI					.010	-.042	.068	-.111*		.078
6. Age of follower							-.055	.132**	-.195*	-.043
7. Gender of follower								-.171**	.322**	-.009
8. Nationality of follower									-.109*	.024
9. Hedonic content										.127**
10. Utilitarian content										
Mean	3.67	1.75	2.50	3.02	3.83	25.56	1.83	1.43	.13	.03
SD	.96	.38	.78	.91	.62	6.62	.39	1.27	.08	.04

Table III *Correlation matrix and descriptive statistics*

4.6 Hypotheses testing

4.6.1 Study 1: SMI characteristics and materialism

In finding the relationship between an SMI's number of followers and the degree of materialism of followers, the values of the three evaluated SMIs by the respondents were computed into one variable representing the influencer portfolio based on the SMI's number of followers. Hereafter, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. Three additional variables were controlled for, namely the follower's age, gender, and nationality. Gender and nationality were included as dummy variables.

First, only the control variables were included in the model. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the model explains a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2=.091$, $F(3,446) = 15.903$, $p<.001$). It was found that the follower's gender has a positive influence on their level of materialism ($b=.230$, $p<.05$), indicating that non-males are generally less materialistic than males. Further, it was established that non-Dutch followers are significantly more materialistic compared to Dutch followers ($b=-.593$, $p<.05$).

Next, the main variables are added to the model. A multiple regression analysis was used to test if SMIs with less followers, male SMIs and hedonic content made by SMIs significantly explained materialism. The results of the regression analysis indicated that the model explains a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2=.180$, $F(7,180) = 5.640$, $p<.001$) (Appendix III & V). It appeared that if a person has relatively many SMIs with high numbers

of followers in their portfolio, they seem to be significantly more materialistic compared to people who have more SMIs with a smaller following in their portfolio ($b=4.701$, $p<.001$). Hypothesis 1 is therefore rejected, as the opposite effect seems to be present. This counters the expectation that SMI's with less followers incite higher engagement and would instigate higher materialistic values. Instead, people who have more SMIs with higher numbers of followers in their portfolio appear to develop a higher materialistic orientation.

The SMI's gender was included as a dummy variable and consisted of two categories, with male being referenced to as 0 and non-male as 1. Through analysis, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant influence of the gender of the SMI on materialism. This indicates that people who have more male SMIs in their portfolio do not become more materialistic due to a heightened exposure to materialistic possessions which is related to males. For this reason, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

In finding the relationship between content type and materialism, no significant influence of hedonic or utilitarian content on materialism is found. This indicates that the SMI creating either hedonic or utilitarian does not alter the degree of materialism of the follower. As no hypotheses were formulated regarding hedonic and utilitarian content, the findings will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

All the findings, b-values, SE-values, and p-values of the multiple regression analysis can be found in Table V.

	Model 1: Control variables only			Model 2: With main variables		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
SMI's number of followers				4.701	.000	.001
SMI's gender				.065	.070	.621
Hedonic content				-.010	.018	.579
Utilitarian content				-.086	.082	.295
Followers' gender	-.048	.094	.015	.408	.196	.039
Followers' nationality	-.593	.099	.000	-.506	.143	.000
SMI's authenticity	-.048	.057	.397	.045	.090	.618
R ² (Adjusted R ²)		.091			.148	

Table V Outcome multiple regression analysis Study 1.

4.6.1 Study 2: SMI characteristics, materialism, and tendency to follow SMI recommendations

To find the correlation between the degree of materialism of the follower, and the tendency to follow SMI recommendations, a second multiple regression analysis was conducted, including the SMI's number of followers direct relationship towards tendency to follow SMI recommendations and the control variable nationality of the follower. First, the model was tested only including the control variables. The results of this regression indicated that the model explains a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2=.028$, $F(8,449) = 13.937$, $p<.001$) (Appendix VI & VII). A significant effect was present for the nationality of the follower on the tendency to follow SMI recommendations ($b=-.440$, $p<.05$), which indicates that non-Dutch residents have a higher tendency to follow SMI recommendations, compared to Dutch residents.

The regression model including the main variables explains a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2=.075$, $F(4,439) = 89.914$, $p<.001$). Through this analysis, it appeared that the tendency to follow SMI recommendations increases when the level of materialism of the follower is high compared to when the degree of materialistic orientation of the follower is low ($b = .282$, $p<.001$). This indicates that an increase in materialism results in an increase in the tendency to follow SMI recommendations. Therefore, it can be concluded that H3 is supported, and is compliant with the expectation that materialism has a direct influence on tendency to follow a SMI recommendation.

The relationship between the number of followers of an SMI and the tendency to follow SMI recommendations did not appear to be significant ($b=- 1.674$, $p>.05$), which reflects that a person who follows more SMIs with a higher number of followers is not directly incited to

follow SMI recommendations to a higher extend, which was initially expected and hypothesized. Therefore, H4 is rejected. Content type and tendency to follow SMI did appear to be significantly correlated. Here it was found that hedonic content has a significant positive impact on the tendency to follow SMI recommendations ($b=.028$, $p<.05$). This indicates that when a person follows more SMIs who create hedonic content, they are more likely to follow the recommendation these SMIs make. Lastly, through adding the control variable followers' nationality, it appears that followers from the Netherlands are less likely to follow SMI recommendations, compared to non-Dutch followers ($b = -.293$, $p<.05$). The findings of study 2 are visualized in Table VI.

	Model 1: Control variables only			Model 2: With main variables		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Materialism				.282	.059	.000
SMI's number of followers				-1.674	.000	.155
Hedonic content				.028	.014	.046
Followers' nationality	-.440	.118	.000	-.293	.122	.017
R ² (Adjusted R ²)		.028			.075	

Table VI Results multiple regression analysis Study 2.

5. Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the following research question: *How do different social media influencer characteristics affect consumers' materialism, and how does this influence the tendency to follow recommendations made by social media influencers?* Concerning the results from hypotheses testing, the major conclusions are as follows. First, it was found that SMIs with many followers incite a greater degree of materialism in their followers, compared to SMIs who have less followers. This degree of materialism is also influenced by the nationality of the follower, as it appeared that followers who are non-Dutch are more likely to develop materialistic mindsets in general, compared to Dutch followers. The degree to which this materialism develops depends on gender, as males seemed to be more materialistic in general compared to non-males. The gender of the SMI did not appear to influence the degree to which followers develop a more materialistic orientation. The same finding was found regarding hedonic content, as results indicated that a person who follows more SMIs who make hedonic

content do not become more materialistic, compared to a person who follows less SMIs creating hedonic content.

The materialistic orientation of followers in turn appeared to affect the tendency to follow influencer recommendations, indicating that followers who are generally more materialistic, are more likely to listen and act upon the recommendations made by SMIs they follow. Whether they follow the recommendations made by SMIs also depends on the nationality of the follower, as non-Dutch followers appear to be more susceptible to recommendations made by SMIs compared to Dutch followers. It was also found that the followers who engage more with hedonic content created by SMIs are more likely to follow SMI recommendations compared to followers who engage with this type of content to a lesser extent. The findings and hypotheses are summarized in Table VII.

Hypothesis		Acceptance or rejection
H1	Number of followers → Materialism	✗
H2	SMI's gender → Materialism	✗
H3	Materialism → Tendency to follow SMI recommendations	✓
H4	Number of followers → Tendency to follow SMI recommendations	✗
H5	Hedonic content → Tendency to follow SMI recommendations	✓

Table VII *Hypotheses outcomes*

5.2 SMI characteristics, materialism, and tendency to follow SMI recommendations

The findings provide evidence that brings some degree of order to at what times SMIs appear to influence the materialistic orientation of followers. The first element of this study was to find whether a correlation is present between different characteristics of SMIs and the degree of materialism of the follower. The results indicate that the SMI's number of followers affects the materialistic orientation of the follower, only not as anticipated. It was hypothesized and expected that a lower number of followers would result in a higher degree of materialism, since SMIs with less followers generally have a higher engagement and higher conversion to purchase rates. However, the findings in the study indicate that followers who have more SMIs with higher numbers of followers in their portfolio are significantly more materialistic compared to people who have more SMIs with less followers in their portfolio. This may be explained by Lewallen (2016), who found that an increase in celebrity media consumption results in a higher degree of materialism. Celebrities have a significantly large following, and SMIs with many followers are often perceived as celebrities as well (Lou, 2022). This may reflect why this group of SMIs with many followers incites a greater degree of materialism in

followers, given that when content consumption from this group increases, the materialistic orientation of followers increases as well. In addition, an explanation can be found in the fact that people who tend to value materialism to a higher degree, also tend to worship celebrities to a greater extent (Green et al., 2014) and thus are more likely to follow celebrities more often. This also allows for further research examining the reversed relationship between materialism and a SMI's number of followers.

Next, the relationship between SMI gender and materialism will be discussed. Generally, men are found to be more materialistic and prone to conspicuous consumption compared to women (Segal and Podoshen, 2013), but males also have a greater tendency to consume luxury goods in social contexts (Verdugo and Ponce, 2020). Especially given the latter, it was expected that male SMIs would express their materialistic orientation to a greater degree on their social media pages and thus facilitate a higher degree of materialism in their followers. This did not appear to be the case, as no significant difference between the influence of male or non-male SMIs on materialism was found.

Subsequently, it was also analyzed whether the degree of materialism of the follower affects the tendency to follow the recommendations of influencers. The results in this study indicate that materialism significantly influences the tendency to follow influencer recommendations, as it was found that followers who are more materialistic, are more likely to follow SMI recommendations. This is in line with the hypothesis postulated, which can be explained given that followers who are more materialistic are more willing to trust information supplied by SMIs (Jin and Ryu, 2020). This subsequently can explain why people who have a higher materialistic orientation are also more inclined to follow SMI recommendations to a greater extent. This is also supported in research by Dinh and Lee (2021), as they found that materialism mediates the relationship between SMI imitation by followers and their intention to buy endorsed products, indicating that imitation increases the level of materialism, which subsequently increases the tendency to follow product recommendations made by SMIs.

Interestingly, present research conducted on fashion and beauty SMIs indicated that SMIs with more followers have the highest value for a brand in these specific industries, as SMIs with more followers are often perceived as experts in the field and consumers want to engage with fashion and beauty SMIs for valued information, not emotional messages (Britt et al., 2020). This difference may influence the tendency to follow recommendations made by these SMIs, as it alters the behavioral and attitudinal intentions of the follower. On the contrary, SMIs with less followers are more likely to increase the purchase intention of followers compared to SMIs with more follower. However, this only holds when the product being

endorsed is hedonic, not when the product is utilitarian (Park et al., 2021). The findings in this study also did not find consensus on this matter, as neither a high nor a low following appeared to significantly influence the tendency to follow SMI recommendations. Due to these inconsistencies, conducting future research regarding the number of followers of SMIs and the tendency to follow their recommendations is recommended, to extend knowledge on the correlation between the concepts.

This research additionally aimed to find whether hedonic enjoyment regarding content created by SMIs also results in a higher degree of materialism. The constructs appear to be interrelated to some degree as the study by Goldsmith, Flynn, and Clark (2011) implies that materialistic urges stimulate shopping enjoyment, thus the inverse relationship is present. Prior research indicated that people who are highly materialistic experience hedonic elevation in anticipation of a purchase (Richins, 2013), which increases purchase intention and engagement with SMI branded content (Kim et al., 2021). Materialists seem to enjoy browsing through a SMI's branded content, while increasing the potential for instant gratification through purchasing the products endorsed (Gao & Feng, 2016). This study further deepened this relationship between consuming content because of hedonic enjoyment and materialism, and the findings revealed that hedonic content created by SMIs do not result in a higher degree of materialism for the follower. This indicates that materialism is not dependent on hedonic content, while materialism can facilitate the enjoyment of hedonic content.

Lastly, the finding regarding the positive effect of hedonic content created by SMI on the tendency to follow SMI recommendations will be discussed. This interaction can be further substantiated through the study by Kim et al. (2021), as they found that a greater purchase intent for products advertised by SMIs was found for followers who are highly materialistic and engage to a greater extent with this content through hedonic enjoyment. This indicates that when people engage with content because they enjoy it, the tendency to follow SMI recommendations will increase. A difference in this study and the study by Kim et al. (2021) is that the effect of hedonic content on tendency to follow SMI recommendations is mediated by materialism, while this is not the case in this study as no direct positive effect of an increase in hedonic content can be found on materialism.

5.3 Theoretical and managerial implications

To sum up, the study has both theoretical as well as managerial implications. Theoretically, the findings in this study extend previous literature written about influencer marketing by examining how different characteristics of SMIs influence the materialistic orientation of their

followers, as well as how this materialistic orientation influences their altogether tendency to follow recommendations made by SMIs. The findings also offer a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the SMIs, as the respondents were asked to evaluate multiple SMIs instead of one based on these SMI elements. This portfolio view broadens the perspective on the subject as richer information is collected, compared to only evaluating one SMI, which is most often the case in previous research. It also adds to existing literature as it treats materialism as a dependent variable, instead of an independent variable. This route is usually taken when materialism is researched, as it is regarded as quite a stable factor. However, due to the increase in social media use especially youth among, materialism has been rising consequently. For this reason, it seems wise to treat materialism as a consequential outcome as well and contribute to the sparse literature in this field.

From a managerial point of view, the results of this thesis provide suggestions to both SMIs and brand managers aspiring to make effective use of social media platforms from a marketing perspective. For SMIs it is important to realize that the content they are putting on their platforms influences followers and can alter their attitude towards matters, in this case the follower's attitude towards materialistic possessions. It is also important for social media managers to know what they are promoting on social media platforms can have negative societal consequences, such as how materialism is perceived. At the same time, a business will remain a business and important lessons and strategies can be extracted and implemented from the knowledge presented in this thesis. For instance, hedonic content appeared to directly influence the tendency to follow SMI recommendations, which is desirable for the sales of the product endorsed on the SMIs social media page. This would indicate that when a brand or SMI wants to influence the behavior of the follower, they are more likely to succeed at this when the content they are putting on their socials is of hedonic nature and therefore enjoyable, instead of not hedonic. The same goes for the finding that a SMI having more followers seemed to influence materialism, but not the tendency to follow SMI recommendations.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This study has its limitations that allow for future research. First, a limitation is the aspect of social desirability bias, as individuals want to make themselves look good according to certain norms when answering researchers' questions. This can also be the case with materialism, as it is not socially desirable to place a high value on materialistic possessions. For this reason, it is anticipated that the respondents in this research indicated their materialistic orientation to be

lower than it is. This affects the outcomes of this research and is something to keep in mind. It is a common mistake by consumer researchers to neglect the possibility of social desirability bias, while it can have detrimental effects on the research conclusions (Mick, 1996). For this reason, it is recommended for future research to implement methods to diminish the possibility of this occurring. Nederhof (1985) has suggested seven methods to prevent or reduce social desirability bias, namely the use of forced-choice items, the randomized response technique, the bogus pipeline, self-administration of the questionnaire, the selection of interviewers, and the use of proxy subjects. In hindsight of writing this thesis, it would have been wise to implement (some of) these techniques to diminish the possibility of social desirability bias to increase the validity of the findings.

In this study the variable materialism is measured through one overacting dimension, while the conceptualization can also be deepened in future research. Based on the theorization of Belk (1984), materialism can also be measured through the implementation of materialistic traits. These traits consist of possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy. It would be of additional value to see whether different characteristics of SMIs can influence these traits, and whether differences can be found within this cluster of traits. This offers possibilities for future research and would expand the understanding of materialism as an outcome variable, as little research has been conducted in examining materialism in this role.

In addition, content on social media is not only created by SMIs or firms, but also by 'regular' social media users. This content generated, named user-generated content (UGC) can be considered as social commerce as well and is likely to influence the attitudes toward products and purchase intentions of other consumers. Research has found that this user-generated website content of hedonic nature does not have a significant influence on the intention to purchase. The findings in this research found that hedonic content generated by SMIs does result in the tendency to follow recommendations made by SMIs, subsequently influencing the followers' attitudes and thus their intention to purchase (Chen, Lou and Kim, 2015). It would be interesting to see whether social media content made by general users does influence the tendency to follow recommendations made by them, which allows for future research on the matter.

Next, the use of hedonic and utilitarian content categories gives helpful insights as they are the most used product categorizations (Chen et al., 2015) but also limitations as both categories are quite broad and open to interpretation. This is especially the case in this research, as the initial content categories assigned to the SMI of choice were later merged into the two

overarching categories. This was done through a test by five respondents but is still open to interpretation by the respondents. Additionally, no categories were assigned as both hedonic and utilitarian, as this would complicate the analysis to a great extent. In hindsight, it would have been wise to assign the SMI's content as hedonic, utilitarian, or both initially instead of assigning the categories as either hedonic or utilitarian afterwards. Interesting directions for future research can also be found here, as it may be interesting to zoom in on more content categories in future research, such as fashion, beauty, gaming, or travel. In analyzing multiple specific categories, differences between the effects that different content categories have on materialism or purchase intention can be found, which provides a more extensive view and broader understanding of the matter.

In reviewing the role of SMI characteristics and its possible role in the development of materialism and the tendency to follow recommendations, it can be concluded that this is an area that is still in need of additional research. The future of SMI advertisement is rich and full of possibilities, and it would be wise to gain more knowledge regarding the different characteristics and portfolios SMIs have to offer, as a diverse pool of talent is available for marketers. Ideally, the research conducted in this thesis stimulates new ideas and research concerning the implementation of SMIs in marketing which aims to enrich the knowledge on this relatively new, but impactful phenomenon.

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7. Appendices

Appendix I Complete survey

Beste lezer/deelnemer,

Voor onze masterscriptie over influencer marketing zijn we op zoek naar mensen die influencers volgen op social media om mee te doen aan ons onderzoek. Het onderzoek is bedoeld om inzicht te krijgen in welke influencers consumenten volgen op sociale media. Dit onderzoek duurt ongeveer 10 minuten en wordt volledig anoniem uitgevoerd. Er worden geen gegevens gedeeld met andere partijen. Om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek moet je ouder zijn dan 16 jaar.

Er worden 3 bol.com cadeaukaarten t.w.v. €20,- verloot onder de deelnemers, hiervoor dien je aan het einde van het onderzoek je e-mailadres in te vullen.

Alvast bedankt!

Esra, Fabienne & Susan

Ik ben 16 jaar of ouder en wil deelnemen aan dit onderzoek.

Een influencer is iemand met een publiek die hem of haar volgt op social media (YouTube, Instagram, blogs, etc.). Influencers kunnen variëren in hun mate van populariteit. Er zijn influencers met een klein aantal volgers maar ook met veel volgers. Er zijn zelfs ook grote beroemdheden. Het publiek luistert naar deze influencers en zij bekijken, liken en/of delen posts of reageren op posts. Een influencer op social media heeft geloofwaardigheid

opgebouwd in een specifieke branche en plaatst regelmatig content over zijn of haar expertisegebied.

1. Volg je tenminste 1 influencer op social media?

Ja (1)

Nee (2)

2. Hoeveel influencers volg jij op social media?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

Meer, namelijk (als je het niet precies weet geef dan een schatting van het aantal)

In dit deel van de enquête worden vragen gesteld over de social media influencers die je volgt. Kies de influencers waarmee je het meest betrokken bent (waarvan je de posts liked, deelt etc.). Je krijgt voor elke influencer dezelfde vragen getoond.

3. Wat is de naam van de eerste influencer die in je opkomt?

4. Wat is het geslacht van (naam influencer)?

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Anders (bijvoorbeeld non-binair) (3)

5. Wat is de leeftijd van (naam influencer)?

- Jonger dan 18 jaar (1)
- 18-25 jaar (2)
- 26-35 jaar (3)
- 36-45 jaar (4)
- 46 jaar of ouder (5)

6. Hoeveel volgers heeft (naam influencer)?

- Minder dan 10.000 volgers (1)
- 10.000 tot 100.000 volgers (2)
- 100.000 tot 500.000 volgers (3)
- 500.000 tot 1 miljoen volgers (4)
- 1 miljoen of meer volgers (5)

7. Hoe nauwkeurig denk je dat je het aantal volgers hebt ingeschat?

- Totaal niet nauwkeurig (1)
- Niet nauwkeurig (2)
- Neutraal (3)
- Nauwkeurig (4)
- Totaal nauwkeurig (5)

8. Sommige influencers waren al beroemdheden voordat ze influencers werden op sociale media, denk maar aan Selena Gomez, Paris Hilton en Kim Kardashian. Was (naam influencer) al een beroemdheid voordat hij/zij een social media influencer werd?

- Ja (1)
- Nee (2)
- Weet ik niet (3)

9. In welke categorie is (naam influencer) actief? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Beauty (1)
- Mode (2)
- Sport (3)
- Fitness (4)
- Reizen (5)
- Eten (6)
- Gamen (7)
- Entertainment (bijvoorbeeld grappige videos) (8)
- Traditionele beroemdheid (9)
- Anders, namelijk (10)

10. Kun je kort aangeven wat voor soort content (naam influencer) voornamelijk post? Denk hierbij bijvoorbeeld aan kookvideo's, uitleg over producten, vlogs over hun dag etc.

11. Op welk social media platform volg je (naam influencer) (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Instagram (1)
- TikTok (2)
- Facebook (3)
- YouTube (4)
- Twitter (5)
- Blog (6)
- Anders, namelijk (7)

12. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
(naam influencer) is oprecht. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) komt realistisch over. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) is authentiek. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? Het beeld dat ik heb van (naam influencer)...

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Komt overeen met hoe ik mezelf zie. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van mij. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Komt overeen met hoe ik zou willen zijn. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van hoe ik zou willen zijn. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

De vragen die je zojuist hebt ingevuld worden nu herhaald voor een tweede influencer die je volgt.

14. Wat is de naam van de tweede influencer die in je opkomt?

15. Wat is het geslacht van (naam influencer)?

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Anders (bijvoorbeeld non-binair) (3)

16. Wat is de leeftijd van (naam influencer)?

- Jonger dan 18 jaar (1)
- 18-25 jaar (2)
- 26-35 jaar (3)
- 36-45 jaar (4)
- 46 jaar of ouder (5)

17. Hoeveel volgers heeft (naam influencer)?

- Minder dan 10.000 volgers (1)
- 10.000 tot 100.000 volgers (2)
- 100.000 tot 500.000 volgers (3)
- 500.000 tot 1 miljoen volgers (4)
- 1 miljoen of meer volgers (5)

18. Hoe nauwkeurig denk je dat je het aantal volgers hebt ingeschat?

- Totaal niet nauwkeurig (1)
- Niet nauwkeurig (2)
- Neutraal (3)
- Nauwkeurig (4)
- Totaal nauwkeurig (5)

19. Sommige influencers waren al beroemdheden voordat ze influencers werden op sociale media, denk maar aan Selena Gomez, Paris Hilton en Kim Kardashian. Was (naam influencer) al een beroemdheid voordat hij/zij een social media influencer werd?

- Ja (1)
- Nee (2)
- Weet ik niet (3)

20. In welke categorie is (naam influencer) actief? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Beauty (1)
- Mode (2)
- Sport (3)
- Fitness (4)
- Reizen (5)
- Eten (6)
- Gamen (7)
- Entertainment (bijvoorbeeld grappige videos) (8)
- Traditionele beroemdheid (9)
- Anders, namelijk (10)

21. Kun je kort aangeven wat voor soort content (naam influencer) voornamelijk post? Denk hierbij bijvoorbeeld aan kookvideo's, uitleg over producten, vlogs over hun dag etc.

22. Op welk social media platform volg je (naam influencer)? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

Instagram (1)

TikTok (2)

Facebook (3)

YouTube (4)

Twitter (5)

Blog (6)

Anders, namelijk (7)

23. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
(naam influencer) is oprecht. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) komt realistisch over. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) is authentiek. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? Het beeld dat ik heb van (naam influencer)...

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Komt overeen met hoe ik mezelf zie. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van mij. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Komt overeen met hoe ik zou willen zijn. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van hoe ik zou willen zijn. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

De vragen die je zojuist hebt ingevuld worden nu herhaald voor een derde influencer die je volgt.

25. Wat is de naam van de derde influencer die in je opkomt?

26. Wat is het geslacht van (naam influencer)?

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Anders (bijvoorbeeld non-binair) (3)

27. Wat is de leeftijd van (naam influencer)?

- Jonger dan 18 jaar (1)
- 18-25 jaar (2)
- 26-35 jaar (3)
- 36-45 jaar (4)
- 46 jaar of ouder (5)

28. Hoeveel volgers heeft (naam influencer)?

- Minder dan 10.000 volgers (1)
- 10.000 tot 100.000 volgers (2)
- 100.000 tot 500.000 volgers (3)
- 500.000 tot 1 miljoen volgers (4)
- 1 miljoen of meer volgers (5)

29. Hoe nauwkeurig denk je dat je het aantal volgers hebt ingeschat?

- Totaal niet nauwkeurig (1)
- Niet nauwkeurig (2)
- Neutraal (3)
- Nauwkeurig (4)
- Totaal nauwkeurig (5)

30. Sommige influencers waren al beroemdheden voordat ze influencers werden op sociale media, denk maar aan Selena Gomez, Paris Hilton en Kim Kardashian. Was (naam influencer) al een beroemdheid voordat hij/zij een social media influencer werd?

- Ja (1)
- Nee (2)
- Weet ik niet (3)

31. In welke categorie is (naam influencer) actief? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Beauty (1)
- Mode (2)
- Sport (3)
- Fitness (4)
- Reizen (5)
- Eten (6)
- Gamen (7)
- Entertainment (bijvoorbeeld grappige video's) (8)
- Traditionele beroemdheid (9)
- Anders, namelijk (10)

32. Kun je kort aangeven wat voor soort content (naam influencer) voornamelijk post? Denk hierbij bijvoorbeeld aan kookvideo's, uitleg over producten, vlogs over hun dag etc.

33. Op welk social media platform volg je (naam influencer)? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

Instagram (1)

TikTok (2)

Facebook (3)

YouTube (4)

Twitter (5)

Blog (6)

Anders, namelijk (7)

34. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
(naam influencer) is oprecht. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) komt realistisch over. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) is authentiek. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? De persoonlijkheid van (naam influencer)...

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Komt overeen met hoe ik mezelf zie. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van mij. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Komt overeen met hoe ik zou willen zijn. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van hoe ik zou willen zijn. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Questions when only one influencer was followed:

36. In dit deel van de enquête worden vragen gesteld over de social media influencer die jij volgt.

37. Wat is de naam van deze influencer die je volgt?

38. Wat is het geslacht van (naam influencer)?

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Anders (bijvoorbeeld non-binair) (3)

39. Wat is de leeftijd van (naam influencer)?

- Jonger dan 18 jaar (1)
- 18-25 jaar (2)
- 26-35 jaar (3)
- 36-45 jaar (4)
- 46 jaar of ouder (5)

40. Hoeveel volgers heeft (naam influencer)?

- Minder dan 10.000 volgers (1)
- 10.000 tot 100.000 volgers (2)
- 100.000 tot 500.000 volgers (3)
- 500.000 tot 1 miljoen volgers (4)
- 1 miljoen of meer volgers (5)

41. Hoe nauwkeurig denk je dat je het aantal volgers hebt ingeschat?

- Totaal niet nauwkeurig (1)
- Niet nauwkeurig (2)
- Neutraal (3)
- Nauwkeurig (4)
- Totaal nauwkeurig (5)

42. Sommige influencers waren al beroemdheden voordat ze influencers werden op sociale media, denk maar aan Selena Gomez, Paris Hilton en Kim Kardashian. Was (naam influencer) al een beroemdheid voordat hij/zij een social media influencer werd?

- Ja (1)
- Nee (2)
- Weet ik niet (3)

43. In welke categorie is (naam influencer) actief? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Beauty (1)
- Mode (2)
- Sport (3)
- Fitness (4)
- Reizen (5)
- Eten (6)
- Gamen (7)
- Entertainment (bijvoorbeeld grappige videos) (8)
- Traditionele beroemdheid (9)
- Anders, namelijk (10)

44. Kun je kort aangeven wat voor soort content (naam influencer) voornamelijk post? Denk hierbij bijvoorbeeld aan kookvideo's, uitleg over producten, vlogs over hun dag etc.

45. Op welk social media platform volg je (naam influencer)? (Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Instagram (1)
- TikTok (2)
- Facebook (3)
- YouTube (4)
- Twitter (5)
- Blog (6)
- Anders, namelijk (7)

46. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
(naam influencer) is oprecht. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) komt realistisch over. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(naam influencer) is authentiek. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

47. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? Het beeld dat ik heb van (naam influencer)...

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Komt overeen met hoe ik mezelf zie. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van mij. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Komt overeen met hoe ik zou willen zijn. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is een spiegelbeeld van hoe ik zou willen zijn. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nu zullen er enkele vragen over jou als persoon worden gesteld. Er is hier geen goed of fout antwoord, probeer de vragen zo eerlijk mogelijk te beantwoorden.

48. In welke mate ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
De dingen die ik bezit zeggen veel over hoe goed ik het doe in het leven. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enkele van de belangrijkste prestaties in het leven zijn het verwerven van materiële bezittingen. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik hou ervan om dingen te bezitten die indruk op mensen maken. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik hou van veel materialisme in mijn leven. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Geluk kan worden gekocht met geld. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

49. In welke mate ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Over het algemeen ben ik tevreden met mezelf. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soms denk ik dat ik niet goed genoeg ben. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb het gevoel dat ik een aantal goede kwaliteiten heb. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik kan dingen net zo goed als de meeste andere mensen het kunnen. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb het idee dat ik niet veel heb om trots op te zijn. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soms voel ik me waardeloos. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb het gevoel dat ik als persoon waarde heb, in ieder geval op hetzelfde niveau als anderen. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ik zou willen dat ik meer respect voor mezelf kon hebben. (8)

Over het algemeen ben ik geneigd mezelf als mislukking te zien. (9)

Ik neem een positieve houding aan ten opzichte van mezelf. (10)

50. Noem vier eigenschappen die je idealiter zou willen bezitten. Je kan zelf eigenschappen verzinnen en indien gewenst ook woorden uit de lijst hieronder gebruiken. *Voorbeeld: "Ik wil een creatief persoon zijn"*

- Ideaal 2
- Ideaal 2
- Ideaal 3
- Ideaal 4

Vul nu voor elke eigenschap de mate in hoeverre je denkt deze eigenschap al te bezitten.

	Beschrijft mij helemaal niet (1)	Beschrijft mij niet echt (2)	Neutraal (3)	Beschrijft mij enigzins (4)	Beschrijft mij helemaal (5)
Eigenschap 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eigenschap 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eigenschap 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eigenschap 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

51. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Neutraal (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Ik zou producten van een merk kopen gebaseerd op het advies dat ik heb ontvangen van de influencers die ik volg. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou aanbevelingen volgen van influencers die ik volg. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In de toekomst zou ik producten van merken kopen die aanbevolen zijn door influencers die ik volg. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

52. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Neutraal (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik voel me vaak teleurgesteld. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me vaak ontevreden. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me vaak verdrietig. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

53. Wat is je leeftijd? (vul in in jaren)

54. Wat is je geslacht?

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Anders / wil ik niet zeggen (3)

55. Wat is je hoogst genoten opleidingsniveau?

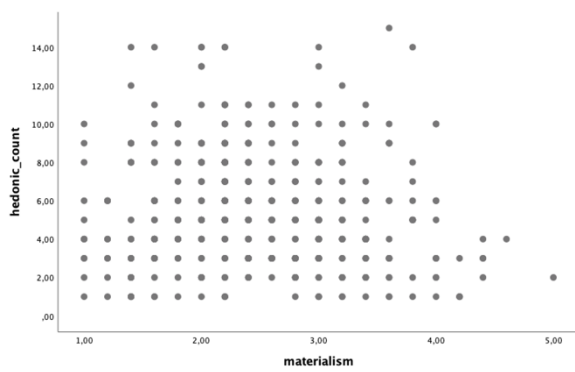
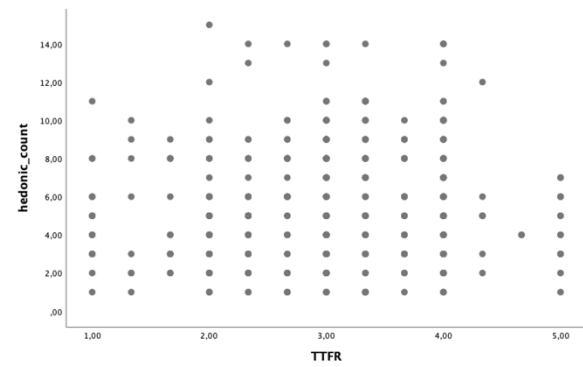
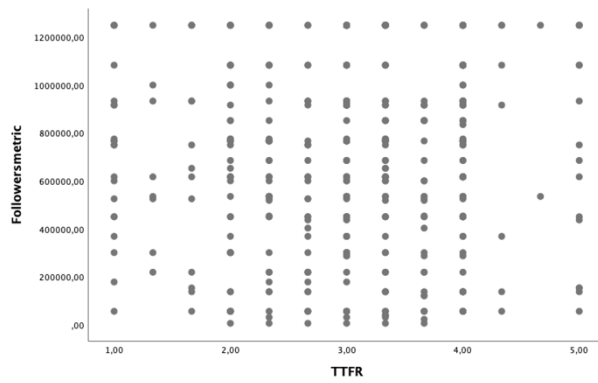
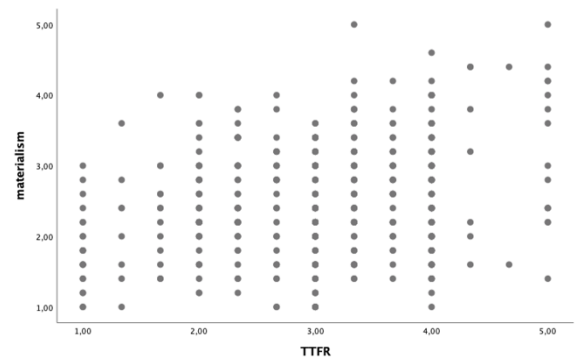
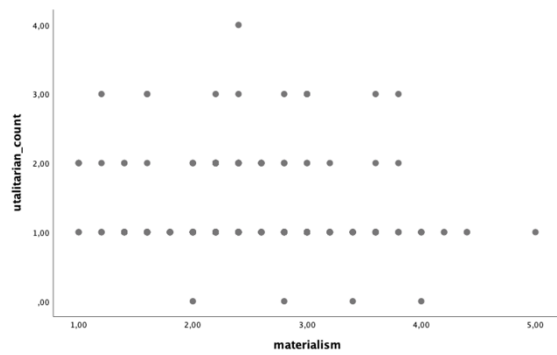
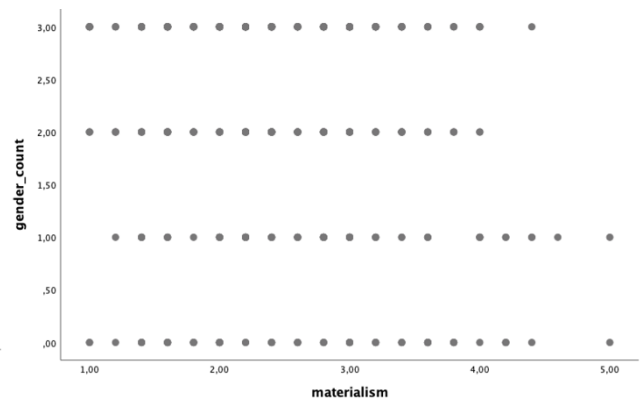
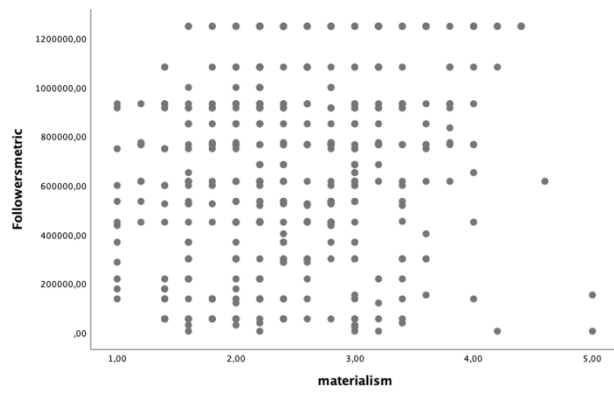
- Basisschool (1)
- Middelbare school (2)
- MBO (3)
- HBO (4)
- WO bachelor (5)
- WO master (6)
- PhD of hoger (7)

56. In welk land woon je?

Appendix II *Sample SMI's and their followers*

Monica Geuze 1.300.000
Kim Kardashian: 314.000.000
Rianne Meijer 1.500.000
Bram Krikke 1.000.000
Romee Strijd 7.500.000
Dee 1.500.000
Yasemin Ozilhan 1.500.000
Kobe Bryant: 20.800.000
Enzo Knol 1.900.000
Anna Nooshin 956.000
Chloe Ting 3.100.000
Nikkie Tutorials 15.900.000
Chantal Janzen 1.700.000
Zoë Sugg 9.300.000
Kalvijn 1.000.000
Selena Gomez 322.000.000
Juultje Tieleman 1.000.000
Boef 1.500.000
Frenkie de Jong 10.300.000
Zach King 24.500.000
Jonathan Bailey 3.300.000
Omayya Zein 1.300.000
Molly Mae 6.300.000
Chris Bumstead 8.000.000
Chiara Ferragni 27.100.000

Appendix III Scatterplots



Appendix III Study 1 Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate	Change Statistics				
					R square change	F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change
1	.424	.180	.148	.69876	.180	5.640	7	180	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), SMIGender, content_hedonic, content_utilitarian, SMIfollowers, Dutch vs non-Dutch, male vs non-male

b. Dependent Variable: materialism

Appendix V Study 1 ANOVA

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.276	7	2.754	5.640	.000
	Residual	87.887	180	.488		
	Total	107.163	187			

a. Dependent Variable: materialism

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMIGender, content_hedonic, content_ utilitarian, SMIfollowers, Dutch vs non-Dutch, male vs non-male

Appendix VI Study 2 Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate	Change Statistics				
					R square change	F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change
1	.289	.084	.075	.87464	.084	9.914	4	435	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), SMIfollowers, content_hedonic, Dutch vs non-Dutch, materlialism

b. Dependent variable: TTFR

Appendix VII Study 2 ANOVA

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.335	4	7.584	9.914	.000
	Residual	332.773	435	.765		
	Total	363.109	439			

a. Dependent Variable: TFR

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMIfollowers, content_hedonic, Dutch vs. non-Dutch, materialism