The Influences of Ad-Targeting on Teen Purchasing Decision Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

Due to an increased awareness and adherence to the social comparison theory, where individuals have a fundamental need to be liked and ranked amongst their peers, teens fall victim to the wishful identification phenomenon potentially leading to long-term dependence on materialism for fulfilment in life. Influencers derive their social powers from wishful identification because of their seeming relatability, often presenting themselves as ordinary and relatable the status of an influencer appears more commonly achievable than the fame of the typical, mainstream celebrity, micro-celebrity audiences, "followers," often demonstrate a greater desire to emulate and achieve the status of these "micro-celebrities," in comparison to an A-list celebrity. Knowing this, the following study utilized a quantitative, quasi-experimental method to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted advertisements. To begin, the personality of an influencer was matched with the personality of a female teenage subject using the 5 Factors of Personality Test. After matches were made, everyone was presented with two influencer advertisements – one with the best personality match and mismatch – and an online survey evaluated whether the individual would buy the presenting product and why or why not, depending. Ad-targeting does prove to be successful in making impactful marketing matches for teen female subjects in influencer marketing; this boost is only noted where there is great enough personality resonation between the subject in the influencer in both introverted and extroverted traits to be able to establish the wishful identification connections needed to spur the persuasive forces of influencer marketing.

Literature Review

Introduction

Social media has provided individuals with a launchpad for fame never before achievable. Online media personalities, commonly referred to as "influencers", post relatable content such as blog posts or videos that provide audiences a window into their daily lives (Hughes, Swaminathan, Brooks, 2019). Presenting themselves as ordinary, relatable, and authentic, the status and success of an influencer appears more commonly achievable than the fame of mainstream celebrities (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). As a result of the seeming relatability of an influencer, influencer audiences, known as "followers", often demonstrate a greater desire to emulate and achieve the status of these "micro-celebrities," in comparison to a typical A-list celebrity, in a process termed *wishful identification*. Wishful identification is demonstrated so strongly amongst teenagers, influencers are granted the power to influence societal trends and behaviors, hence the derivation of their name.

As a result of the high wishful identification a follower dedicates towards their preferred influencers, seemingly interpersonal relationships are formulated between influencers and their followers, fostering a greater sense of overall trust and credibility to micro-celebrities in comparison mainstream celebrities (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Brands have taken advantage of the uniqueness of the influencer-follower relationship, turning to influencers as a method of advertisement through product promotion. As a result of this unique peer-like relationship, significant purchasing intention is demonstrated by teens; followers trust the influencer's purchasing advice more

greatly than they do a mainstream celebrity as a result of this friend-like bond formed as a result of wishful identification connections. Teens also wish to emulate these individuals as they are widely accepted amongst teen society. Therefore, followers are more likely to purchase products marketed by influencers in an effort to replicate their behavior.

Oftentimes advertisements are subtly integrated into an influencer's typical content, leaving teens unaware of their vulnerability to persuasive advertising. *Situational advertising literacy*, the degree of purchasing persuadability expressed by an individual based on their initial skepticism expressed when first introduced to advertising content, exists in a stage of ongoing and incomplete development in adolescents (van Dam & van Reijmersdal, 2019). Not only is an adolescent's ability to recognize that they are being subjected to persuasive material compromised due to their ongoing cognitive development, but this advertising literacy is further compromised as a result of wishful identification connections towards the online personality (van Dam & van Reijmersdal, 2019) as micro-celebrities appear more relatable and popular (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020).

Social Comparison Theory

Teens have a fundamental need to be liked amongst a community of peers (Kühne & Opree, 2019) and to evaluate a status amongst these peers (Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004) as a result of the *Social Comparison Theory*. As social media has become integrated into everyday routines, material possessions have consequently become the measure for discerning social status, acceptability, and popularity (Chu, Windels, & Kamal, 2016) amongst this young population, in a ceaseless effort for individuals to rank themselves amongst the rest. The more an individual conforms to the social trends and behaviors established by influencers –who arguably satisfy the highest rank on the social hierarchy- the more highly you will rank in comparison to your peers. The potential for greatness provided by social media's ability to achieve global interconnectedness is often overshadowed by the users' drive towards the attainment of an unachievable picture of perfection defined by models, money, and materials. This ingrains into the minds of teenagers that money leads to acceptance, status-growth, or popularity and this monetary success is the ultimate fuel for end-all happiness, thus promoting the value of material consumption, fostering the development of a materialistic mindset, and giving influencers extreme powers of persuasion when it comes to the teenage marketplace.

As teens form wishful identification connections and seemingly interpersonal relationships with influencer personalities, influencers gain a larger audience and platform. Seeking to take advantage of this platform, influencers are presented with endorsement opportunities where they glorify products in return for generous financial compliments. Being constantly subjected to influencer content, influencers and their associative brands are granted the power to pre-formulate the drive of today's teens towards material demonstration and monetary affluence as a result of wishful identification, underdeveloped advertising literacy, and social comparison theory. As a consequence of a need for status approval, the happiness of today's digitally-dependent teen becomes dependent on materials - a dependence that is increasingly more difficult to satisfy, potentially leading to problems with life satisfaction in the future.

Data Profiling & Ad-Targeting

While individuals scroll, click, and view, data collection software generates a data profile: stored information on the user's age, sex, gender, and interests based on the sites they frequently visit and the media content they most regularly interact (Amer & Noujaim, 2019). These data profiles are then sold to marketing teams to categorize individuals into interest-specific cohorts; the individual, following their respective interest cohort, are presented with filtered advertisements targeting their newly defined interests and demographic classifications, attempting to exploit maximum consumer persuadability per advertisement in a process called, **ad-targeting** (Boerman, Krikemeier, & Zuiderveen, 2017).

Research Gap

It is known that influencer advertising is extremely effective as situational advertising is not triggered and teens formulate wishful identification relationships with influencers. Additionally, it is known that consumers are slowly losing their autonomy in the decision-making process as data profiles are sold to advertisers to shape advertisements towards specific cohorts of individuals (Svoboda, 2018). There is no research, however, discerning how influencer advertisements specifically utilize user data information (age, race, sex, interests, etc.) to best persuade targeted follower audiences. As influencer advertising becomes more widespread, more teens are to be potentially subjected to the long-term and ongoing consequences of this hedonic treadmill as they turn to material consumption for happiness due to minimal advertising awareness as a result of underdeveloped situational advertising and strongly expressed wishful identification.

Exploring the potential for effectiveness of data collection processes on ad targeting maximizing influencer advertising persuadability, it is known how significantly micro-celebrities can influence teen purchasing behavior, however, it is not known how the two persuasive advertising powerhouses –influencer and targeted advertising– may work together to boost teen purchasing inclination.

Question: How successful are ad targeting methods on influencing suburban teen purchasing intention through microcelebrity advertising?

Method

Research Method

In an effort to test the effectiveness of ad-targeting on formulating new wishful identification connects to maximize the purchasing persuadability of influencer advertisements I used a quantitative, quasi-experimental method in order to explore how effective ad-targeting methods are at establishing strong wishful identification connections that spur the influences of influencer marketing. Use of a quasi-experimental method was the most logical as it allowed me to test the degree of advertising success on teen individuals specifically, where other methods may be prone to bias and interfering external factors. All experimentation was done after getting signed informed consent with parent permission for teen participation under 18. I also excluded males from experimentation due to minimal interest in the beauty market - a social media facet with significant demonstration of product endorsement.

Data Profiling Replication

To replicate the data profiling process, since I did not have the time, access, or expertise to the multitude of data collection systems my subjects use on a day-to-day basis, I turned to the personality evaluation derived from the academic journal Between Facet and Domains: 10 Aspects of the Big Five from the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology by Colin DeYoung of Yale University, Jordan Peterson of the University of Toronto, and Lena Quilty of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, to categorize subjects into respective cohorts based on their personality and interests in a way that learned on preexisting, credible personality research. Although a few questions were edited and combined to reduce both the time needed to take the personality evaluation as well as the potential for confusion for subjects, the test presented to subjects leaned heavily on existing personality data and a known experimental method. *(See Appendix A for the full-length The DeYoung, Peterson, and Quilty test.)*

Scoring the Personality Test

Using a Likert scale, the subject answered the personality questions either strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. The question was then numerically scored based on what the subject answered: strongly agree earned a 5, agree a 4, neutral a 3, etc. unless the question was reverse-scored, otherwise strongly disagree earned a 5, disagree a 4, etc. When all the answers in a category were given a numerical score, the total points earned for the personality category were summed and then divided by the total number of available points for the category. The closer the subject's score was to one, the more expressed that personality category was.

Sample Scores from Subject F5: *(member of success cohort)*
Table showcases a snapshot of a subject's (F5) expressed personality responses quantified as well as the interpretation of the expression of that personality trait.

Neuroticism Domain	0.55	mid-low
Volatility Facet	0.49	low
Withdrawal Facet	0.60	mid-low
Agreeableness Domain	0.94	very high
Compassion Facet	0.90	high
Politeness Facet	1.00	very high
Conscientiousness Domain	0.75	medium
Industriousness Facet	0.78	mid-high
Orderliness Facet	0.71	medium
Extraversion Domain	0.91	very high
Enthusiasm Facet	1.00	very high
Assertiveness Facet	0.80	high
Openness/Intellect Domain	0.79	mid-high
Intellect Facet	0.68	medium
Openness Facet	0.90	high

F5 would receive a personality definition consisting of very high extraversion, very high agreeableness, mild conscientiousness, high openness/intellect, and low neuroticism based on her evaluation scores.

Personality Resonation & Assigning Influencer Stimulus

To be a successful influencer, individuals must be energetic, likable, and confident to gain a following; as a result, the fundamental traits shared by almost all of the most popular internet personalities are high extraversion and high agreeableness. Introverted traits- openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism- deviate influencer to influencer in order to create differentiation and uniqueness in similar content categories. Thus, to categorize and profile my subjects into the best fitting cohort, I relied heavily on the numeric scores of the introverted traits as this allowed me to differentiate

influencers seeing as, in order to support a large platform, most influencers demonstrate fairly high extraversion and agreeableness.

After the personality test was scored and the results numerically quantified, the individual was presented with an advertisement stimulus where the presenting influencer expressed similar personality characteristics to the subject in an effort to establish strong wishful identification connections.

Defined Influencer Stimulus Personalities:
** - represents the notable trait used most often for stimulus assignment

Influencer (product brand)	Discerning Traits
Emma Chamberlain (Curology)	High extroversion** High agreeableness** Mid-High Openness Mid-low conscientiousness Mild Neuroticism
Emma Chamberlain (Bliss/Bad Habit)	Mild extroversion** High Agreeableness Mid-High Openness**
James Charles (Ole Henriksen)	High Extroversion Mid-High Agreeableness Medium Neuroticism**
Dolan Twins (Curology)	Mild extroversion High Agreeableness Medium Neuroticism Mild Conscientiousness**
Larray (Curology)	High extroversion Medium Neuroticism High Agreeableness**
Bretman Rock (Ole Henriksen)	High Extroversion High openness**

Table presents the personality definitions determined for each influencer stimulus used in the experiment.

For example, F5 was assigned Emma Chamberlain (Curology) for her fit stimulus match and James Charles for the non-fit match because Emma Chamberlain aligned with both her introverted and extroverted characteristics but only extroverted characteristics with C Charles.

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Post-Fit Survey

After presenting the subject with their influencer stimulus of best fit, I assigned subjects a survey of my design evaluating the degree of accomplished persuadability achieved by watching an influencer who was reasonably similar to the subject. The survey measured prior familiarity to both the influencer and the product being advertised, allowing me to determine whether or not outside factors interfered with persuadability if the experiment was unsuccessful. The survey also asked subjects if they would watch more of the influencer, to rank their approval of the influencer on a scale of 1 to 5, and whether or not they enjoyed the influencer to gauge the match of the influencer to the interests and preferences of the subject. The subject was then asked specifically what they liked and/or did not like about the influencer to confirm whether or not what the subject valued about the stimulus corresponded or did not correspond with their personality profile. This determination was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the personality test in identifying the subject's most valued and relatable personality traits.

Non-Fit Comparison

After collecting the results from the influencer of best-fit, I presented individuals with advertising stimuli that reflected personality values the subject did not align with according to their initial evaluation. This would test to see if the ad targeting was beneficial in persuading consumers to buy the products as a direct result of the influencer marketing strategy. If the subject expressed the same likeness of the fit and the non-fit influencer stimulus, or if the subject liked the non-fit influencer more than the fit influencer, the result was deemed a non-success. The subjects were then presented the same post-survey as before, and the results from the two surveys were compared. In comparing the results of the two stimulus post surveys, I identified trends in reasons why the test was unsuccessful for some and successful for others.

Fit and Non-Fit Post Survey Comparison Example

F5	Fit	Not Fit
Video Watched	Emma Chamberlain: Curology	James Charles
In the market for new skincare product	Yes	Yes
Ranking of enjoyment	4	3
Familiarity with the influencer	Familiar	Familiar
Influencer inclined watcher to review product	Yes	Yes
Consider more content created by this influencer	Yes	Yes
Enjoyment of the influencer	Greatly enjoyed	Somewhat enjoyed
Things enjoyed about the influencer	Personality, humor, knowledge on product, positive, passionate	Personality, humor, positive
Things that were not enjoyed about the influencer	N/a	Not knowledgeable

Familiarity with the product	No	No
How did you hear about the product	N/a	N/a
Consider purchasing	Yes	No
Why purchase	Enjoy and trust expertise	N/a
Why not purchase	N/a	Not interested but enjoyed

Table showcases a comparison between a subject's (F5) survey responses after watching both the fit and the not fit stimulus. The row on the left overviews the question that was asked; the middle row showcases the responses after watching the fit stimulus; and the rightmost row showcases the responses given after watching the nonfit stimulus.

By comparing the data from the fit and non-fit responses, it is clear that F5 was able to establish a greater wishful identification connection with the fit stimulus as a result of her personality relating more greatly with the personality of the presenting influencer of the fit video over the non-fit video; this is corroborated by the fact she identified elements of the influencer video that aligned with her previously determined personality definition. Notably, F5 still enjoyed the non-fit video as she expressed very high extroverted characteristics which ultimately align with the personality of the James Charles Stimulus, however, this relation was not great enough to give the advertisement influence on her purchasing decision.

Results

Summary

My findings suggest that individuals with personality scores that matched with an influencer's personality were able to establish sufficient enough wishful identification connections to spur an inclination to purchase the advertised product whether or not the subject was in the market for the product; individuals that scored highly in "extroverted" personality categories - extroversion and agreeableness - expressed an overarching personality similar to the typical mainstream influencer, allowing them to often find the influencer relatable, thus leaving the individual more inclined to want to purchase the product being advertised based on their trust and enjoyment of the influencer directly (the intended response of the experiment indicating wishful identification formation). The data showed the same results for individuals who had distinctly defined personality scores in introverted categories (where some categories were superiorly high and others were moderately low). This score deviation allowed for a clear personality definition to be made and a successful influencer stimulus presentation matched with that individual's newly defined personality. Individuals where introverted personality scores were all very similar in value - expressing similar values for each of the five categories - a clear personality definition was difficult to discern; in these cases, the test was often not successful as the personality match was not significant enough and the individual would consequently not find the influencer presented to them to be relatable meaning vital wishful identification connections were not established. The test was especially unsuccessful when individuals had mid-range scores in extroverted categories suggesting they did not resonate with the typical influencer personality and thus did not generate the significant wishful identification connection to spur interest in the product as a direct result of the advertisement.

Extroverted vs. Introverted Personality Score Comparison

	Test was successful in spurring purchasing inclination	Test was unsuccessful in spurring purchasing inclination
extroverted Personality Traits Average Score (%)	84	78
Introverted Personality Traits Average Score (%)	64	69

Table showcases a comparison between the average % score of the extroverted characteristics (extraversion and agreeableness) and the average % score of the introverted characteristics (neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness/intellect) for the success population and the non-success population of the experiment. The green box indicates the score was higher for that population comparatively; the success cohort expressed generally higher scores for extraversion characteristics but comparatively lower scores for introversion characteristics.

Extroverted Factor

According to the table above, the success cohort scored on average 6% higher than the nonsuccess group in extroverted personality traits, but 6% lower in introverted personality categories. This would suggest that the success group expressed extroverted traits more strongly in comparison to the nonsuccess group, meaning they resonated more with the typical personality of and were able to establish stronger wishful identification connections with the presenting influencer in comparison to the non-success group. As much as introverted personality traits provide differentiation between influencers, all of the mainstream influencers that were used in this experiment expressed high extraversion and high agreeableness as a fundamental aspect of their personality. The non-success individuals deviated from this threshold of extroverted personality traits, meaning they did not relate to the influencer in the two respective categories, making it so that the stimulus did not incline the subject to want to purchase the product as a direct result of their interest and enjoyment of the influencer.

Post-Survey Response

Non-Success Fit and Non-Fit Stimulus Persuasion Results Comparison:

Nonsuccess Subjects	Buy Fit?	Reason	Buy Nonfit?	Reason
F2	no	Not interested in the product but enjoyed the advertisement	yes	trust and expertise
F7	no	Not interested in the product but enjoyed the advertisement	yes	prior familiarity
F10	yes	Enjoyment of the video	yes	enjoyment of the video
F20	yes	Prior familiarity	yes	Prior familiarity

F21	no	Not interested in the product but enjoyed the advertisement	no	Not interested in the product but enjoyed the advertisement
F24	no	Do not trust expertise of the advertiser	no	Not interested in the product but enjoyed the advertisement
F23	no	Not in market but enjoyed ad	no	Not in market but enjoyed ad

Table showcases the responses to the purchasing intention question and the subjects perceived reasoning for their intention response for both the post-viewing surveys of both the fit and non-fit stimuli for each individual in the non-success population of the experiment. The left of the table showcases the responses for the fit stimulus, and, for most subjects, their purchasing decision was not influenced by the stimulus, and the right of the table showcases the responses for the non-fit stimulus, which subjects were either influenced or not influenced by the non-fit stimulus.

Based on responses from the non-success group, my findings are corroborated by the fact that, in several cases, the subject enjoyed the ad but would not purchase the product, meaning there was some degree of likeability formed by the subject towards the influencer, based on some degree of baseline personality resonation, but not to the degree where a wishful identification connection was formed; the subject was not persuaded to buy the product as a direct result of her trust and enjoyment of the influencer, like the existence of a wishful identification connection would suggest. If the aforementioned response was not provided by the subject, the subject would either buy the fit product based on familiarity or would not buy the product based on their ultimate dislike of the influencer.

It is additionally notable how, in several cases, when the fit and non-fit stimulus results were compared, the subject did not respond favorably to the fit influencer but did respond favorably to the non-fit influencer. This disparity corroborates the idea that a clear and distinct personality definition at the personality evaluation stage is essential to the success of ad-targeting.

Success Fit and Non-Fit Stimulus Persuasion Results Comparison:

Success Subjects	Buy Fit?	Reason	Buy Non-fit?	Reason
F5	Yes	Trust and enjoyment of the influencer	no	Not interested but enjoyed
F10	No	Not in market but would strongly consider if I was	no	not interested and did not enjoy
F12	Yes	Trust and enjoyment of the influencer	no	not interested but enjoyed
F13	Yes	Intrigue with the Influencer	Yes	Prior familiarity
F14	yes	Trust and enjoyment of the influencer	yes	Prior familiarity
F24	no	Not in market but would strongly consider if I was	no	not interested and did not enjoy

Table showcases the responses to the purchasing intention question and the subjects perceived reasoning for their intention response for both the post-viewing surveys of both the fit and non-fit stimuli for each individual in the success population of the experiment. The left of the table showcases the responses for the fit stimulus, and the right of the table showcases the responses for the non-fit stimulus.

In the success subject cohort, when comparing the survey responses for the post fit and non-fit stimuli viewing, the fit influencer played a direct role in the subject's inclination to buy the product, and, in most cases, the subject was either disapproving of the non-fit influencer, or the subject expressed enjoying the video, but not to the degree where they would consider buying the product. This suggests, in the same way, the non-success cohort was not interested but enjoyed the video in many cases, that there was some degree of established relation from the subject towards the influencer, but not to the degree where a wishful identification connection could be formed.

Diversity in Scores

Personality Score Average Standard Deviation Comparison Between the Success and Non-Success Subject Cohorts:

Success individuals	Non Success Individuals
0.36	0.13
0.09	0.05
0.18	0.08
0.09	0.17
0.29	0.11
0.13	0.09
----	0.17
Average Success Deviation	Average Non-Success Deviation
0.19	0.10

Table showcases a comparison in the deviation of overall scores between the success and non-success populations. The first 8 rows showcase the deviation per individual in that population and the 10th row shows the average deviation for that population. The success deviation was greater than the nonsuccess, hence why the box is green because deviation is a positive factor of successful ad-targeting.

When a subject had introverted scores that were not diverse - with minimal deviation - being widely uniform from personality category to category, it was difficult to discern the subject's personality definition making it impossible to provide an accurate influencer match for the subject. Individuals who expressed very high extraversion and agreeableness as well as all around high introverted scores were not deemed "non-successes" because there was not enough variation in the numerical scores of introverted categories to clearly define the subject's personality resulting in the intended response (purchasing persuasion as a direct result of their trust and enjoyment of the provided influencer) for both the fit and the not fit advertising stimulus, meaning the ad targeting did not aid in increasing marketing persuadability even though the influencer marketing did. The success cohort of subjects saw a .08 increase in overall personality score deviation. To find this, per subject, I found the standard deviation using their numeric score from each of the five personality categories. The greater the variation was, the easier it was to make a personality definition for the subject making it more likely the subject was matched with an influencer stimulus that would proficiently

affect their decision to purchase the product as a direct result of the subject's trust and enjoyment of the influencer and not an alternative, outside factor such as prior familiarity of the product.

It is known that influencer marketing positively affects most teens decision making autonomy when it comes to product consumption if there is a wishful identification connection made, however, it is not known if ad targeting methods would be successful in connecting teen consumers with an influencer with whom they can establish these wishful identification connections and be persuaded to buy or consider buying the product as a direct result of their enjoyment and newfound trust for the influencer. When a personality definition could not be made because scores were mostly uniform for the subject, it was more difficult for the ad-targeting process to be replicated using this method, and, as a result, the subject was less likely to establish these wishful identification connections and the influencer marketing was not notably successful in persuading the subject to spark interest in wanting to buy the product.

When a subject's personality results showed one or two introverted categories that scored very highly and one or two introverted categories that scored lower (high introverted score deviation) and both of the extroverted characteristic traits were relatively high, a personality definition could be made, making it very easy to match the individual with an influencer with whom they could establish a wishful identification connection due to the subject and the influencer's personality commonality, and the subject was, in most cases, influenced to purchase the product as a direct result of this wishful identification connection. Building on that, the effect of ad targeting was corroborated when the subject with personality score deviation was shown an influencer stimulus that did not align with their clear personality definition, and the subject did not want to purchase the product as a direct result of their trust and enjoyment for the influencer.

Discussion

New Findings

My results showcase how ad targeting efforts are effective at generating new wishful identification connections, boosting advertising persuadability potential as a direct result of an individual's expressed trust and enjoyment of the influencer; however, this is only the case when individuals exhibit personality similarities that resonate with the personality characteristics of the influencer. The popular influencers used in this experiment had universally high extroverted personalities. Teens formulate unique and seemingly interpersonal relationships with influencers since the status and lifestyle of an influencer is more relatable to the everyday teen, the problems and routines of influencers more generally reflect their own, and influencers are often well-liked amongst online audiences. Similarly, teens have a fundamental need to be liked and accepted amongst their peers and equals, constantly comparing themselves to others to find their rank on the social hierarchy according to the Social Comparison Theory (Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004) and often turning to material items and conformity to popular social trends to define this placement (Kühne & Opree, 2019); the culmination of factors that contribute to the connection result in teens wanting to both emulate the behavior of as well as support the brand of their friend-like online personality (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). According to Mangleburg and his team of researchers, social influence was found to have the most prominent effect on teen spending behavior. Teens often rely on the evaluations and recommendations made by their friends, as these relationships are characterized by inherently trust and relatability. As a result of the wishful identification phenomenon as defined by Schouten combined with the power of peer influence in teen decision making as defined by Mangleburg, the and commonality of influencers gives them superior as well as friend-like authority over teen's marketing decision process, an overwhelming degree of authority that causes for the marginalization of teen situational advertising literacy and exaggerates their valuation of material goods. The power of the combination of these influences over teen decision-making autonomy was found to be strong when a teen was subjected to advertising facilitated by an influencer they supported. The goal of my research was to ultimately see if ad targeting strategies helped categorize teens into interest groups where they would be matched to specific influencers whose respective marketing efforts aligned with

the categorized interests defined through ad targeting and if the strength of these already proven marketing strategies (influencer marketing) still prominently affected purchasing persuadability by establishing new wishful identification connections as a result of the ad-targeting effort. My research was found to be successful in connecting these two marketing strategies. The personality evaluation identified the likes and interests of the subject allowing me to match them with a friend-like influencer creating wishful identification efforts that sponsored the persuasive effects of the Social Comparison Theory.

Both Mangleburg and Kuhne suggest that material items have a unique role in the teen environment and influence teen spending behavior because the items are used to establish status, belonging, and to affirm social be-longing, a belonging in which teens have a fundamental need to have satisfied according to the social comparison theory. My findings suggest that, as a result of the unique, peer-like connections an individual establishes with an influencer as a result of interpersonal relationships formulated via wishful identification connections, influencers have the same if not a more powerful influence over teen individuals both because of the relatability of their content estab-lishes a degree of significant trust as well as the status and the exceptional social acceptance demonstrated by the influencer's following leaves the individual susceptible to persuasion and influence as they look to emulate the socially approved online personality. Influencer marketing works because the everyday, relatable attitudes of the influencer make them appear more common and thus relatable to the individual and because influencers are highly received especially in teenage society, teens look to resemble and emulate influencer attitudes and appearances to achieve the same societal acceptance. My research finds, however, that this influencer friend-like connection that needs to be established to influence consumer decision making autonomy was made when the personalities of the influencer and the subject were very similar meaning the subject expressed notably high extroverted personality characteristics - extraversion and agreeableness - and they had uniquely standout introverted traits, meaning a one or two introverted personality traits had uniquely high scores and the others had uniquely low scores. These values were not uniform so that a clear and distinct personality definition could be made for the subject and then easily matched with a particular influencer. Some subjects achieved the needed high-value scores for extroverted traits but then did not clear the equally essential second hurdle where they had varied scores for the discerning introverted traits. If an individual had very high scores all around, scoring highly in both extroverted and introverted categories, the personality data did not clearly define a personality match with a particular influencer, and the noted "fit" stimulus and the "non-fit" stimulus had the same effect on purchasing persuadability on the subject meaning ad targeting was not found to affect increasing the marketing effects of influencer marketing on teens. The same was true for subjects that scored low in extroverted personality categories as they were consequently unable to establish wishful identification connections with their matched influencer because their personalities did not align so friend-like trust and idolization would not have been formed. When individuals achieved both high personality scores in extroverted categories and had clear and distinct variation between their scores in introverted categories, an accurate and unique personality definition could be made and an effective influencer stimulus matched that increased persuadability of the advertisement as a direct result of their trust and enjoyment of the influencer. This finding was corroborated when an influencer stimulus with a con-trasting personality definition, meaning the influencer had high personality scores in categories the subject scored low in, was presented to the subject and in almost all cases the subject enjoyed the video, due to the aligning extroverted personality match, but stated they either would not buy the product or they would buy their product due to some defined prior familiarity of the product and not their trust and enjoyment of the influencer presenting the product.

Implications

In many of the successful cases, the subject was either not familiar or only somewhat familiar with the presenting influencer meaning their involvement in the study introduced the subject to new entertainment sources that they liked to a significant enough degree to where the subject was able to establish a wishful identification connection to the influencer. Ultimately as ad targeting and data collection services become more widespread and more widely used in the marketing and advertising setting, ad targeting efforts will often prove beneficial in connecting influenceable

consumers to an effective advertisement through the platform's built-in recommendation services, connecting teens to new influencers that will be able to interfere with the teen's decision-making autonomy in the consumer process.

These ad-targeting efforts and data collection methods can also be useful in maximizing the persuadability of future marketing efforts. In partnership with introducing new teen consumers to a likely influencer personality match as described above, marketers can continue to build the data profiles of an influencer's following pool to better define the connected and likely similar following pool's likes and interests to structure influencer content ingrained product promotions in a way that maximizes the population's potential for persuasion. If the influencer is notably conscientious, for example, and their follower population is highly industrious, as defined by data profiling, then brands can push their promoter to structure the advertisement for their product in a way that emphasizes hard work, decision making, and meticulousness, because these are characteristics the follower population overwhelmingly values and the influencer already has the advantage of wishful identification connections, in most cases, to build on the potential persuadability created by ad-targeting.

The most consequential implication is the potential effects increased ad-targeting efforts have on teen happiness as a result of increased materialism. According to Jingyi Duan of the marketing division of The College of New Jersey, materialistic behavior initiates purchase-evoked happiness: happiness for which materialists fundamentally define their sense of self (Duan, 2020). According to Duan, materialism is the importance a consumer places on the acquisition and ownership of objects, and materialists are those who place high importance on these goods or objects in evaluating their individually perceived self-image and life success. As a result of habitual behavior, highly materialistic consumers are driven to pursue happiness through acquiring goods; however, as the coinciding purchase-evoked happiness is a proven short-term emotion, the pursuit is indefinitely ongoing (Duan, 2020). Though experiential purchases are proven to generate more happiness compared to material purchases, high materialistic consumers cannot reap this satisfaction due to experiences' lack of visually associative "coolness." Materialistic behavior is overwhelmingly associated with negative well-being. Characterized by loneliness, depression, and low self-esteem, these consequences of materialistic habits are all behaviors that adversely heighten one's inclination towards materialism. To counteract and compensate for the inevitable poor well-being, materialists pursue the temporary purchase-evoked happiness, ultimately sparking an unbreakable cycle of exponentially increasing materialism and thus insatiable happiness. Teens, the most persuasively vulnerable online population due to the combination of influences wishful identification connections, compromised situational advertising literacy, and the loyalty they express towards the social comparison theory, are likely to be consistently exposed to the increasingly refined and persuasive ad-targeting methods, entrapping them in a cycle of ever-increasing material need, leading to potentially detrimental consequences on teen mental health and their definition of success.

Limitations, Potential Changes, and Future Directions

First, I used a highly researched personality test as a backbone to the fulfillment of my method. Although this personality test is both widely used and widely researched to be effective and useful in discerning an individual's most prominent personality traits, there is persistent skepticism and agreement amongst researchers in marketing and neurology regarding the test's reliability, usability, and accuracy. Data collection is a continuous process; the personality evaluation used in this experiment involves a one-time, catch-all data collecting effort proving a limitation to my experiment. Subjects with less deviated introverted personality scores proved harder to assign personality definitions. In reality, software would collect and analyze more data points on these subject individuals until an accurate identification could be made. In the future, I would add a secondary stage of introverted questioning to circumvent this issue.

Additionally, I created the post-stimulus survey used to measure the success of the ad-targeting on influencer marketing instead of using a pre-existing, highly researched survey. Due to the relative newness of influencer marketing, ad targeting, and social media altogether, a previous survey would not have been a useful fit for my experiment. If I had the opportunity to conduct this experiment again, however, there are some changes that I would make to measure just how accurate and complete the personality test was in discerning the subject's likes and interests.

Lastly, in my experimentation, I used the most mainstream influencers having a personality constant across all influencers of high extraversion and high agreeableness. The unsuccessful cases were most often failures due to the misalignment of personality between the subject and the presenting influencer. If I had more time to conduct research, I would try to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer marketing using more introverted online personalities. Popular influencers have high expressed extroverted and agreeableness. The subjects that were not increasingly persuaded by influencer marketing often had lower extraversion scores than the success cohort. Experimental failure -ad-targeting efforts were not successful in sponsoring the formation of strong enough wishful identification connections to spur influencer marketing techniques - occurred as a result of failure for the subject to derive strong enough wishful identification connections to be influenced by the social comparison theory. If I was able to conduct more research and spend more time watching advertisements, I would have attempted to identify influencers with less exaggerated extroverted characteristics and tested to see if these influencers were more proficient in persuading the purchasing decisions of the non-success group. In seeing whether or not these more introverted influencers were more successful in influencing more introverted subjects, this would be a significant finding as a major implication of ad targeting is introducing new potential sources of entertainment to the social media user. If the data profile identified the individual user as more introverted, ad targeting marketers would know that recommending this more introverted influencer would be more proficient at maximizing the persuadability of the advertisement than would a mainstream, more commonly extroverted, influencer.

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