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THE INS AND OUTS OF CELEBRITY SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CELEBRITY AD DISCLOSURE ON INSTAGRAM

A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of the Communication Division

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Feyisayo Jazmyne Adeneye

April 2018

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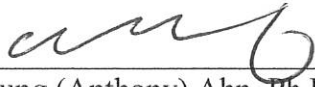
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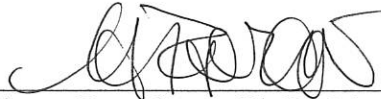
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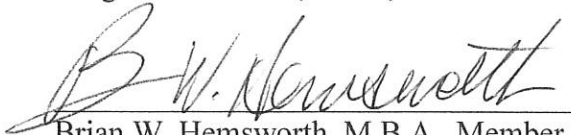
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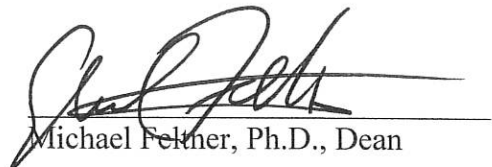
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April 2018

Hoyoung (Anthony) Ahn, Ph.D., Chairperson

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study focuses on the ad disclosure techniques used by celebrity endorsers on Instagram. The goal of this research is to create a website that can serve as an educational resource that social media users can consult to learn more about celebrity paid endorsements on Instagram, along with providing a resource for agencies and other related organizations in the marketing and advertising industry to consult when planning social media campaigns revolving around celebrity endorsers. A content analysis of the top 20 most followed celebrity Instagram profiles was conducted for the month of July 2016. Analysis of 835 Instagram posts revealed that organic disclosure, in which an endorser does not disclose the paid nature of a post, was the most utilized endorsement technique amongst celebrities. The results also showed that singers and athletes were the celebrities with the highest frequency of endorsements and entertainment products were the most frequently endorsed category of products.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The ensuing project details a strategic plan for a website that will provide social media users and advertising practitioners with a better understanding on the role of celebrity social media endorsements and its effects on consumers, especially regarding Instagram. The goal for this non-thesis project is to become a resource that social media users can consult to learn more about celebrity paid endorsements on Instagram. In addition, the project will also serve as a resource that agencies and other related organizations in the marketing and advertising industry can consult when planning social media campaigns revolving around celebrity endorsers.

The recommendations and resources in this website plan are derived from a content analysis study on the current ad disclosure techniques used by celebrities through their social media endorsements on Instagram. The results demonstrate the connection between the frequency of celebrity endorsement posts on Instagram and the most common type of ad disclosure utilized in these endorsement posts. This website plan is in reaction to the increasing presence of celebrity paid advertisements on social media platforms such as Twitter, Snapchat, and the focus of this project, Instagram (Lueck, 2012). The proposed website plan will essentially be a resource that social media users can access in order to gain a deeper understanding about the nuances of celebrity endorsement posts on Instagram.

This project is valuable because it will provide a research basis for the current practice of paid celebrity social media advertising. In addition to providing a foundation

for this practice, the results from this research and project could possibly be utilized by marketing and advertising agencies, especially Instagram, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in order to revise the guidelines that are presently in place. Currently, the FTC has a list of advertising requirements on their site, but it is difficult to read, hard to find, and not consistently enforced. This website plan differs from the FTC's current guidelines because it provides suggestions through user-friendly explanations, on the proper usage of ad disclosures in videos, images, and other user-generated content. It is my hope that this website plan will lead to the creation of an engaging and easily accessible resource that social media users can utilize to learn more about paid endorsement posts, while agencies and other related organizations in the marketing and advertising industry can consult it when planning social media campaigns that are celebrity endorsed. I also hope that both Instagram and the FTC can use this website plan as a basis for creating and changing their future endorsement or sponsorship guidelines.

Throughout this project, primary and secondary research will be used to examine the practice of celebrity social media endorsements and the ad disclosure techniques used by these celebrities in their social media posts. These analyses will be implemented to create a strategic website plan and explain the significance of the site to its targeted audiences.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

To explain the foundations of this proposed study, the ensuing sections will examine relevant theories and studies in the topics of celebrity influence, social media, and ad disclosure including parasocial interaction theory then transition into discussing current Instagram practices and FTC guidelines regarding celebrity social media endorsements.

#### *Celebrity Influence*

The most commonly referenced definition of a celebrity originates from social historian, Daniel J. Boorstin (1962), who defined a celebrity as “a person that is well-known for his well-knownness.” While Boorstin’s definition is partially accurate, the decades-old phrasing fails to express the immense power and influence that celebrities have today. Modern celebrities vary from award-winning actors and musicians, to politicians and overnight viral sensations (Euromonitor International, 2014). While the origins of their fame might be significantly different, studies have shown that celebrities play a significant role in influencing modern culture (Brown & Basil, 1995; Euromonitor, 2014; McGwire, 1974; Giles, 2002).

Celebrity influence begins when audiences show interest in learning about a celebrity. But for many individuals, a cursory interest in a celebrity can change. For example, when their levels of interest increase, so does the amount of influence that the chosen celebrity has on individuals (Giles, 2002). Researchers have classified this interest as “celebrity worship.” Celebrity worship is described as a process “whereby persons



with assumed intact identities become virtually obsessed with one or more celebrities—similar to an erotomanic type of delusional disorder” (Maltby, Houran, & McCutcheon, 2003). The worship aspect relates to the attachments that individuals develop regarding celebrities that they come across in the media (Erikson, 1963). Erikson describes these attachments as “secondary attachments” which are defined by the highly idealized and imagined relationships that the individuals create themselves (Fromme, 1967). As the intensity of celebrity worship grows within an individual, they become more solicitous about staying current with their “idol” and feel as if they need to know everything about the idol’s work and personality (Chia & Poo, 2009). Studies have shown that the bonds fans develop with a celebrity have a significant influence on the fan’s lifestyle, as they often begin to imitate the celebrity, discuss the celebrity with others, and take on the celebrity’s values (Fraser & Brown, 2002; Giles, 2002). After studying celebrity worship theory and celebrity culture, Spitzberg and Cupach (2008) determined that celebrities are aware of this worship and bolster the “celebrity industry” in an attempt to maintain their large fan bases and use the for-profit potential. Studies have already shown a positive correlation between the celebrities that an individual chooses to worship and that individual’s health and purchase behaviors (Brown & Basil, 1995; McGwire, 1974)

The concept of celebrity worship has been defined and broken into three stages: 1) entertainment social celebrity worship, 2) intense personal celebrity worship, and 3) borderline pathological celebrity worship (McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2002). This scale begins with the lowest level, entertainment social worship, being a normal amount of interest in the life of a certain celebrity, and it progresses to the highest level,

borderline pathological worship, which is a more extreme type of behavior that demonstrates obsessive patterns and could even lead to stalking a celebrity (Maltby et al., 2003). No matter what a fan's location on this scale is, they have in some way idealized the celebrity and engaged in "pseudo-social" interactions as if they are personally involved with the celebrity (Caughey, 1984). These "pseudo-social" interactions have been further studied and classified as parasocial interactions.

### *Parasocial Interaction Theory*

The theory of parasocial interaction was created by sociologists, Horton and Wohl (1956), who together defined the theory as "a conversational give and take" of mass media messages between senders and receivers. This definition was later expanded to include the idea that while parasocial interaction seemingly has the traits of being personal, immediate, and reciprocal, these traits are imaginary and are most likely not mutual (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Horton & Strauss, 1957). The core of this theory lies in the way in which individuals interact with and develop relationships with celebrities (Lueck, 2012). These relationships develop as individuals create a bond and sense of intimacy with a celebrity, usually one that leads to the individuals becoming similar to the celebrity in attitude, appearance, or background (Lueck, 2012; Turner, 1993). One of the main aspects of parasocial interaction theory is that the interactions are one-sided with the audiences knowing a significant amount of information about the other side, generally the celebrity (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010). Although these relationships are one-sided, the imaginary aspect of this parasocial interaction creates the effect of real social relationships in the mind of the non-celebrity individual (Gleich,

1997; Lueck, 2012). The pivotal difference between parasocial and real social relationships is that the former category lacks reciprocity (Gleich, 1997).

It is important to note that while celebrities may not actually perceive parasocial relationships with their audiences as real social relationships, treating them as if they are real gives the celebrity social capital and influence over those audiences (Kosenko, K. A., Binder, A. R., & Hurley, R., 2016). Based on this idea, celebrities who place high value on their audiences' parasocial relationships can become a model for said audiences (Cohen, 2017). For instance, Kim Kardashian has been known to strategically use parasocial interactions with her fans to promote her brand. She does this by using terms of endearment such as, "Hey Dolls," to address her audiences, and she creates posts on social media that provide her followers with information about her everyday life. Since she presents the illusion of a relationships with her audience through interactive posts and personal information, Kim Kardashian's fans become consumed with her everyday behaviors, view her as an idol, and attempt to emulate her lifestyle and purchase the brands that she uses or promotes (Lueck, 2012). This attention from her fans has led Kim Kardashian to build a brand around her glamorous lifestyle which includes her reality tv shows, clothing lines, fragrances, workout DVDs, a shoe website, and a cosmetics company, in addition to her endorsements for outside products.

Parasocial interaction is evolving with the rise of popular social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat whose platforms allow audiences an inside look at the lives of the celebrities (Lueck, 2012; Kassing & Sanderson, 2009). Despite the powerful combination of this theory and the rise of social media platforms, researchers

and advertising professionals have yet to analyze whether parasocial interaction can be considered as an advertising vehicle (Lueck, 2012). Despite this knowledge gap, current research has shown that parasocial relationships can be linked to behavioral response outcomes such as purchasing certain products and engaging in prosocial behaviors (Grant, A. E., Guthrie, K. K., & Ball-rokeach, S. J., 1991; Bae, H., Brown, W. J., & Kang, S., 2010). Overall, the effect that parasocial interactions have on audiences leads researchers to believe that it is important for advertisers to implement celebrity endorser strategies on social networking sites (Lueck, 2012). This framework serves as an important foundation for this study because celebrities attempt to use these parasocial relationships to promote products, brands, and their own public images (Labrecque, 2014). This is important because the ability to like and comment on content through social media allows celebrities to maintain parasocial relationships by creating a sense of intimacy between themselves and their followers.

The parasocial interaction theory has been empirically explored. Lueck (2012) attempted to explore how Kim Kardashian used parasocial interactions on her Facebook page and analyzed how her audience reacted to its presence. The results of this project's study showed that the interactions that Kim Kardashian engaged in with her audience created the illusion of a personal relationship with the celebrity as she endorsed and sold her products. While similar to the purpose of this study, Lueck's findings were limited because the study focused on a single celebrity and excluded other social media platforms. Additionally, it focused on the celebrity-follower relationship, and was limited in its analysis of Kim Kardashian's audience's reactions. Four years later, Ward (2016)

conducted a similar study to explore the styles of content that celebrities put forth on their Instagram profiles, and which of those styles encouraged fans to develop parasocial interactions with the celebrity. The results showed that celebrity posts fell into four categories: career, personal, celebrity interaction, and fan interaction. Although Lueck's and Ward's studies focus on categorizing celebrity post types, Ward's findings are limited because her study focused specifically on three celebrity music artists, so the results cannot be generalized. This project will bridge the current knowledge gap by expanding the research to include Instagram posts and celebrities, from a variety of occupations.

### *Social Media Advertising*

According to Wright (2015), social media are “computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks.” Social media has steadily been on the rise since 2002 when early social networking sites like Myspace and Facebook emerged and gradually changed the way we communicate with one another and the world. In recent years, social media platforms have become increasingly present in the everyday lives of millions of people around the world. According to Business Wire, almost 20% of the time that users spend online is on social media platforms (Adler, 2016).

Why is it that these platforms have dominated users' attention? How does communicating through social media differ from online communication? What differentiates social media networks from other communications is that they allow users to create personal connections online by engaging in “peer-to-peer contact,” and it is

these connections that incentivize users to return to the to the platforms to maintain their online relationships (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009). These platforms also create an opportunity for users to engage in two-way interactive feedback with individuals they normally would not physically come into contact with, especially celebrities.

With this rapid growth of social media and the opportunity for online interaction, word-of-mouth marketing, also known as influencer advertising, has become recognized as a dynamic marketing strategy utilizing social influence to reach audiences in a new way. Essentially, word-of-mouth marketing aims to use social interactions to reach potential consumers and attract attention (Li, Y., Lai, C., & Chen, C., 2011). Unlike traditional marketing strategies, word-of-mouth marketing allows information to be disseminated more quickly and easily. Research has also shown that marketing campaigns based on social media resulted in a reduction of promotion costs and a significant increase in sales (Li et. al, 2011). In addition to this, statistics show that 92% of consumers worldwide claimed that they had the most faith in word-of-mouth recommendations from trusted influential peers. This number is significantly higher than any other form of marketing (Nielsen, 2012). Organizations have taken note of the significant impact that influencers have on the decision-making process for consumers which has led to the birth of the influencer advertising industry. According to Dana Kombol, founder of Everywhere Agency, an influencer marketing agency, “Influencer marketing is really no different than word-of-mouth marketing. It just so happens to be taking place in a digital space” (Pophal, 2016). Unlike traditional forms of marketing, influencer marketing focusses its efforts on key leaders to drive a brand’s message as

opposed to directly targeting the intended audience (Pophal, 2016). Social media provides these influencers with a platform to share their views, opinions, and experiences with other online users.

Currently there are two ways that an organization can utilize influencers, through a paid endorsement, or gaining the influencer's support organically (Pophal, 2016). Paid influencer endorsements take place when an individual is paid by an organization to use their brand or influence to promote a product or service to consumers. When utilizing paid promotions, marketers must adhere to certain regulations set by the Federal Trade Commission to ensure that the posts do not mislead consumers (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a; Pophal, 2016). Organizations can also choose to gain influencer support organically by gifting the influencer with a product or service and asking them to give consumers their honest opinion about the product, in the hopes that they will promote it positively. This trend of utilizing influencers has not been limited to any one type of product or industry, as influencer advertising has been found promoting everything from teeth whitening products to bass fishing (Agrawal, 2016). According to *Forbes*, 84% of marketers plan on executing at least one influencer marketing campaign in 2017 (2016). It is also important to note that 47% of online consumers now use ad blockers which gives organizations more of an incentive to seek influencer advertising to continue to reach consumers online because their traditional displayed ads can now be blocked, and made to be basically nonexistent (Agrawal, 2016). In addition to providing organizations with an alternative method of advertising to consumers, influencer advertising also allows marketers to receive targeted exposure to their chosen consumer

(Agrawal, 2016). Overall, organizations are beginning to recognize the impact that influencers have on the social media landscape. The following sections will cover how this influencer impact has led to changes in how celebrities use social media, celebrity ad disclosure, and how the FTC is evolving to accommodate these new marketing techniques.

### *Social Media & Celebrities*

Studies have shown that the emergence and popularity growth of social media platforms have changed the relationships that celebrities can have with their fans (Lueck, 2012; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Wright, 2015). The variety of social media platforms today provide a more personal and unfiltered alternative to the traditional media outlets, such as television and magazines, that celebrities previously utilized to communicate messages to their fans (Kim & Song, 2016). Through social media, fans have the opportunity to follow celebrities and be aware of their everyday lives, as well as interact with these celebrities with the possibility of an immediate and reciprocate response. It is this interactivity and engagement with celebrities that leads to the formation of the parasocial relationships that were discussed earlier. Celebrities are aware that social media platforms assist in building and maintaining their fan base. Armed with this knowledge, many celebrities have been known to use their social media platforms to encourage their fans and followers to be in contact with them. For example, singer, Lady Gaga, often participates in online conversations with her fans, “likes” their photos, responds to the comments they leave her, and even encourages them to help her with upcoming projects. This is a prime example of how celebrities cultivate the parasocial



relationships that they have with their audiences. The interactivity aspect of social media is relevant to this study because it involves analyzing the manner in which celebrities interact with their audiences.

Celebrities are not the only ones who notice the benefits that social media's interactivity features can bring. Marketers and advertisers also notice the positive effects, which have led to social media becoming a favored tool for advertising and marketing practices (Lueck, 2012). In just a short period of time, social media advertising has grown to become a multi-billion-dollar industry in its own right, as organizations are choosing to allocate a majority of their advertising budgets to social media advertising, as opposed to online banners, the traditional form of online advertising that is now experiencing a major decline in usage (Ganguly, 2015; Frier & Townsend, 2016). With this evolution of social media advertising, companies are able to reach consumers in a non-disruptive manner by advertising to them through the celebrities that they follow on social media. This is evidenced in the now-frequent product placements that appear on a user's feed when a celebrity is endorsing a product.

This is shown when a user decides to follow a celebrity on a social media platform. The user is most likely expecting to get a glimpse of that celebrity's everyday life, but as celebrity social media endorsements are becoming more prevalent, users are finding their newsfeeds full of product promotions. Oftentimes, celebrities will use a testimonial style social media post to recommend a certain product to their followers by praising the benefits of the sponsored product. Unbeknownst to many followers, this celebrity has been paid to promote this product and may or may not have actually used

the product themselves. Celebrities are now getting paid to promote certain products on their social media profiles, but in these product placement posts there is hardly any information that clearly indicates to the users that the post is in fact a paid endorsement instead of an organic recommendation from the celebrity (Brown, 2016). Although this strategy is not illegal, it has begun to raise some eyebrows, as companies and celebrities alike are beginning to be accused of misleading consumers. A prime example involves reality TV star, Khloe Kardashian, who posted a photo of herself with a weight loss tea, claiming that it was the reason for her weight loss. What she failed to mention to her followers was that she exercises almost every day for 2 hours a day, which is more likely to be the reason for her weight loss, than simply using an herbal tea. While this may seem like an issue of little importance, many people have brought up the issue of transparency in social media endorsements and are accusing both the celebrities and organizations of deception due to the lack of transparency in the way that the celebrities present the paid endorsements (Brown, 2016).

On the other hand, some celebrities don't even attempt to disguise their paid promotions and simply place the endorsements on their social media profile. Reality TV star, Scott Disick, falls into this category of celebrity endorsers, as he frequently endorses products on his social media. In his case, not integrating sponsored content backfired when he mistakenly posted a photo for a paid promotion with the caption still containing the brand's instructions, word-for-word for the sponsored content. This mishap resulted in many users ridiculing Disick and questioning his ability to credibly represent the product if he is not giving his true opinion of the product.

*FTC Guidelines and Practices on Sponsorship Disclosure*

Although influencer advertising has extended and changed the way brands and organizations reach consumers, all advertisers, both on and offline, are required to abide by the legal principles concerning deceptive advertising that are enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a). The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is a bipartisan federal agency whose mission is to protect consumers and promote competition by stopping unfair, deceptive, or fraudulent practices in the marketplace and help ensure that U.S. markets are open and free. For decades, the FTC has held the belief that advertising messages are considered deceptive when the message is not clearly identified as an advertisement and companies incorrectly lead consumers to believe that the message is not from the sponsoring advertiser (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a). This form of deceptive advertising can take place in any medium, but the purpose of this research will be focusing on celebrity endorsements, more specifically, celebrity endorsements on social media.

It is important to note that the terms “organic” and “transparent” were created and defined by the Federal Trade Commission (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a). During its early days, advertisers used sponsorship as a way to gain recognition for their contributions, so their involvement was always clearly stated, which meant there were no concerns about misleading consumers (Feinman, 2011). But as the media landscape continued to evolve and consumers’ attention spans changed, advertisers needed innovative ways to incorporate celebrities into their campaigns (Feinman, 2011). These persuasive messages from influencers about their sponsored products have become more

integrated in content and are often unrecognizable as advertisements. Because of this, policy makers and consumer organizations have referred to the practice as misleading (Cain, 2011).

In 2009, the FTC released the *Endorsement Guides*, a set of guidelines that stated the proper practices when utilizing endorsements for the purpose of advertising. At their most basic level, the rules outlined in the guides communicate the truth-in-advertising principle that an endorsement must reflect the honest opinions of the endorsing individual and cannot make any false claims (Federal Trade Commission, 2017b). For example, in the case of advertising disclosure, the guides state that when a connection exists between an endorser and an advertiser that could affect how consumers view the endorsement, the connection should be disclosed, especially when the endorser has been paid or given a product in exchange for the endorsement (Federal Trade Commission, 2017b).

The Federal Trade Commission defines an endorsement as:

Any advertising message (including verbal statements, demonstrations, or depictions of the name, signature, likeness or other identifying personal characteristics of an individual or the name or seal of an organization) that consumers are likely to believe reflects the opinions, beliefs, findings, or experiences of a party other than the sponsoring advertiser, even if the views expressed by that party are identical to those of the sponsoring advertiser.

Because this study is concerned with advertising disclosure on social media, it is important to note that the FTC has adapted their guidelines so that they are also applicable to current popular social media networks.

According to FTC guidelines, advertisers should use “clear and unambiguous language” to ensure that the disclosures stand out. In addition to this, disclosures should not be hidden or buried in large blocks of text that make them hard to find or understand (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a). According to Feuer, an FTC official, research has shown that currently over 70% of Americans look to online sources before making a purchase (2016). With consumers increasingly relying on online sources to make their purchasing decisions, it is important that the proper precautions are being taken to ensure that those online sources are providing them with honest information.

In an effort to enforce the aforementioned guidelines and continue its mission of protecting consumers, the FTC staff recently sent out over 90 letters to influencers and marketers reminding them about the importance of clearly and conspicuously disclosing their relationships to consumers (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a). The letters repeated a few of the rules included in the FTC *Endorsement Guidelines*, as well as addressing the use of specific disclosures such as “#sponsored,” “Thanks [Brand],” or “partner” that do not accurately make the relationship clear. The letters also addressed a point specific to endorsement posts on Instagram, stating that because only the first three lines of a lengthy post are initially seen by consumers, any endorsement disclosures should be included before the “more” button (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a). This action was in response to a petition filed by Public Citizen and other affiliated organizations and it marks the first time that the FTC has ever directly contacted social media influencers themselves to educate them on guidelines (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a). In June 2017, a few months after the FTC sent out the influencer letters, the social media

platform, Instagram, announced plans to introduce a “paid partnership with” feature for Instagram posts and stories (O’Brien, 2017). Instagram realized that the issue of transparency with paid sponsorships from celebrities and influencers had made it increasingly difficult for users to recognize paid content, so this feature was created as an attempt to simplify the ad disclosure process (Buxton, 2017). In addition to simplifying ad disclosure, this new feature also gives influencers access to performance metrics for their sponsored posts (Buxton, 2017). To date, this feature has only been made available to a select group of influencers and businesses, but an official policy and enforcement guide will soon follow (Cohen, 2017).

#### *Ad Disclosure Among Celebrity Endorsers*

With the increasing presence of sponsored content on social media platforms, the lines between clear advertisements and organic endorsements are becoming more and more blurred. According to the FTC, an endorsement is considered organic when an individual attempts to disguise the paid nature of a post using inconspicuous language that does not clearly demonstrate the nature of the sponsored post. For example, the use of language like “in partnership with” and “thanks for the gift” does not clearly demonstrate that the post is an advertisement. (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a). This is a consequence of advertisers progressively integrating brands, products, and persuasive messages into nontraditional vehicles like video games, television programs, and most recently, social media content, to reach consumers (Boerman, S. C., Van Reijmersdal, E. A., & Neijens, P. C. 2012).

As this practice of omitting disclosures has continued to increase, researchers have further analyzed the various disclosures that advertisers and celebrities are now utilizing. Dekker and Van Reijmersdal (2013) examined in-program celebrity endorsements and the effects that the credibility, of a celebrity and types of disclosure have on brand attitudes and product claim acceptance. This study concluded that disclosure of celebrity endorsements may conflict with the audience's perception of the celebrity's credibility, undermining the intent of the endorsement. For example, if a viewer perceived the celebrity endorser to be credible, but the content disclosed its advertising intent, as opposed to being an unpaid endorsement, the viewer would be more likely to resist the disclosure (Dekker & Van Reijmersdal, 2013). Similarly, Boerman et al. (2013) investigated viewers' appreciation of sponsored content and sponsorship disclosure in television programs, and found that while viewers did not mind the presence of sponsored content, they did appreciate a disclosure at the beginning of the content that informed them about the sponsored content. Studies have also found that the presence of sponsor disclosures in celebrity endorsements can have negative effects on brand attitudes, ad recall, persuasion knowledge, and even source credibility (Boerman et al., 2012; Boerman et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2013; Hwang & Jeong, 2016). Despite this research revealing the possible negative effects of celebrity endorsements, the practice continues because consumers still place more trust in word-of-mouth and recommendations than traditional advertisements. Additionally, this form of marketing has been proven to be effective in increasing online purchases in spite of documented negative effects (Pophal, 2016). So far, many researchers have studied the topic of

disclosure in celebrity/influencer advertisements and the effects that disclosure has on consumers, but a knowledge gap remains in the area of celebrity advertising disclosures on imagery-based social media platforms and how that information has been presented. Currently, there is a lack of content analysis studies in the area of disclosure studies on social media platforms such as Instagram.



## CHAPTER 3

### Research Questions

The topic of celebrity social media endorsements is one that covers many categories of research. From celebrity influence and parasocial interactions to social media advertising and ad disclosure, this topic is one that has provided researchers with the opportunity to examine the topic from several different viewpoints. Previously, studies have shown that celebrities play a significant role in influencing modern culture and this influence has continued to grow with the social media landscape (Brown & Basil, 1995; Euromonitor, 2014; McGwire, 1974; Giles, 2002; Pophal, 2016). Prior research has also examined how celebrities utilize parasocial interactions to increase their brand, as well as influencing the purchase decisions of their audiences. However, this study aims to go a step further by combining all of these topics and focusing their foundations on the various elements of celebrity endorsements and ad disclosure techniques on Instagram, and using the research to create a deliverable that can be implemented and released to the public. A content analysis of current celebrity endorsement practices was conducted on the social media platform, Instagram.

RQ 1: What is the frequency of celebrity paid endorsements on Instagram?

With traditional celebrity endorsements, consumers are typically immediately aware that they are being advertised to. However, because celebrity social media endorsements are often not clearly expressed as advertisements it is difficult for consumers to differentiate real behaviors and statements from manufactured activities (Brown, 2016). This trend of utilizing celebrities and influencers to advertise to use their

social media platforms to advertise to consumers has been steadily increasing and has become the leading alternative method used by advertisers to directly target their consumers (Agrawal, 2016; Pophal, 2016). With this in mind, it is important to know the frequency of celebrity paid endorsements on Instagram to gain a more detailed understanding of just how prevalent this practice is and how best to analyze it. In addition to determining the frequency of these endorsements it is also important understand the typed of ads that are being presented. This study will focus on two ad types, transparent and organic. An organic ad is when an endorser attempts to disguise the paid nature of a post by using inconspicuous language that does not clearly demonstrate the nature of the sponsored post (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a). A transparent ad takes place when an endorser uses clear language to disclose the paid nature of a post.

RQ 2: Which celebrity occupation has the highest frequency of paid endorsement posts?

Previously, Ward (2016) analyzed celebrities' Instagram activity to find out what posts engaged fans and to what extent they were used to promote “a community conducive to the development of parasocial interaction,” but the study’s results were limited because the analysis focused solely on three celebrities, who were all music artists, so the results were not able to be generalized. While Ward’s research was not specific to the topic of celebrity endorsements, it did raise the question of whether occupation could be a factor in a celebrity’s frequency of social media endorsement posts, or the advertising strategy they choose to employ in their paid endorsement posts. The present study will seek to provide further understanding of this topic by classifying which occupation has more frequent celebrity endorsements.

RQ 3: What is the most common type of products advertised by celebrities on Instagram?

While understanding frequency and occupation are useful, they say nothing about which products and services are most frequently endorsed by celebrities on Instagram. Currently many trade and industry organizations such as *AdWeek*, *AdAge*, and Statista provide insights into the most frequently advertised products online and on social media platforms. However, these organizations lack the scholarly framework necessary to provide a scholarly foundation for their results. This information is important because it can provide advertising practitioners with an understanding of which markets and industries may be oversaturated with celebrity social media endorsements and which products still have opportunities for celebrity endorsements.

RQ 4: When a paid endorsement is present, which advertising strategy is utilized most frequently?

Due to the fact that the celebrity social media endorsement industry is still relatively new, there is currently very little research available that analyzes the way in which celebrities portray paid endorsements on their social media profiles, more specifically, on Instagram. The research that does exist in relation to this topic has examined the celebrities' use of parasocial relationships in their online interactions with fans (Lueck, 2012; Ward, 2016) and how celebrities utilize parasocial interactions with fans on Facebook to promote products. While studies have examined how celebrities use various techniques to relate to their audiences there is a currently a lack of research examining how these same techniques are utilized to advertise on their social media profiles. This study will focus on three main ad disclosure strategies: embedding the

product in a personal story, purely informational, and call for action (when a celebrity's endorsement involves an element that elicits a participatory response from an audience).

This research question looks to determine the most prevalent advertising strategy to provide a foundation for further analysis into the techniques celebrities use when promoting paid endorsement posts.

## CHAPTER 4

### Method

For this study, content analysis was used to describe the frequency of paid endorsements on celebrity Instagram profiles, as well as examining the increasing presence of paid advertisements on celebrity Instagram profiles. Content analysis is defined as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2016, p. 1). Essentially content analysis is a way of analyzing large amounts of data (text, audio, imagery, etc.) into smaller categories based on rules of coding by focusing on the content of the message itself (Berelson, 1952; GAO, 1996). This process allows researchers to make conjectures from data that can later be validated using other methods of data collection (Krippendorff, 2004). For over 60 years, content analysis has been used as a research method in communication, journalism, psychology, business, and many other disciplines (Neuendorf, 2016). In recent years, the research method has been used to study social media transparency amongst communication professionals, the value of social media in the practice of public relations, the impact of cultural orientation in the social media sphere, and how brands employ social media and much more (DiStaso & Bortree, 2012; Shen & Bissell, 2013; Taylor & Kent, 2012; Water & Lo, 2012). It has also been used to analyze the type of communication that occurs on social media between celebrity endorsers and their audiences on Facebook (Lueck, 2012). But a knowledge gap remains on the effects of celebrity ad disclosure on imagery-based social media sites like Instagram, which this study aims to fill.

### *Sample*

The content of interest for this study was celebrity Instagram pages, and the content being analyzed was the posts on each celebrity's Instagram page for the month of July 2016. The *Social Blade* is a statistics website that allows users to track the statistics of their online profiles and measure their growth across multiple social media platforms including YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. *Social Blade*'s "Top 100 Most Followed Instagram Profiles" list was used to identify celebrity profiles and to select the study sample of the top 20 most followed celebrities on Instagram (See Table 1.) The celebrity profiles being analyzed were available to the public, so accessing this information only required searching each celebrity's Instagram handle. A total of 835 posts were coded across the 20 celebrity profiles for the month of July 2016. The content was analyzed by two student coders, one graduate and one undergraduate, at Pepperdine University.

Table 1.

#### *List of Coded Celebrity Profiles*

Celebrity	Instagram Handle	Number of Followers	Number of Posts Coded
Selena Gomez	@selenagomez	132,200,218	13
Cristiano Ronaldo	@cristiano	118,427,290	81
Ariana Grande	@arianagrande	116,532,531	43
Beyonce	@beyonce	110,020,783	18
Kim Kardashian West	@kimkardashian	106,199,967	37
Kylie Jenner	@kyliejenner	100,676,462	72
Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson	@therock	98,703,610	73

Justin Bieber	@justinbieber	96,069,313	118
Neymar Jr.	@neymarjr	87,319,507	32
Kendall Jenner	@kendalljenner	86,291,493	18
Nicki Minaj	@nickiminaj	85,349,087	7
Miley Cyrus	@mileycyrus	73,896,293	31
Khloe Kardashian	@khloekardashian	71,754,248	34
Jennifer Lopez	@jlo	71,359,331	32
Katy Perry	@katyperry	68,416,885	7
Demi Lovato	@ddlovato	64,665,415	24
Kourtney Kardashian	@kourtneykardash	60,135,121	61
Rihanna	@badgalriri	59,462,248	39
Kevin Hart	@kevinhart4real	56,355,247	75
Zendaya	@zendaya	46,804,324	20

### *Code Categories*

Codes were divided into multiple coding categories. Coding categories previously used by Lueck (2015) were adapted for this content analysis study and include the type of ad disclosure, type of advertising strategy, type of media used, type of product, how the audience is addressed, and the types of responses and comments received. Lueck's categories were used because the study was similar to this research and its categories utilized social media and endorsement terminology relevant to this specific study. The type of media used and type of post are defined as whether the post features a photo or video and what the celebrity is showcasing in said post. The type of product refers to product industry the celebrity is endorsing. How the audience is addressed refers to the whether or not the celebrity addresses the audience in a personal manner like they would a close friend. Lastly, the type of responses refers to whether the audience's comments on the celebrity's post were positive, negative, or neutral.

### *Measures*

Prior to the data collection process, a codebook was drafted for the study's coders to utilize as a guide when analyzing the chosen sample content. This codebook included a description of the following categorical measures that were used to evaluate the data.

Each measure details a specific element of a celebrity's post that is a significant factor in the analysis post's content. These measures are listed below along with a sample of what a coded post would look like.

Table 2

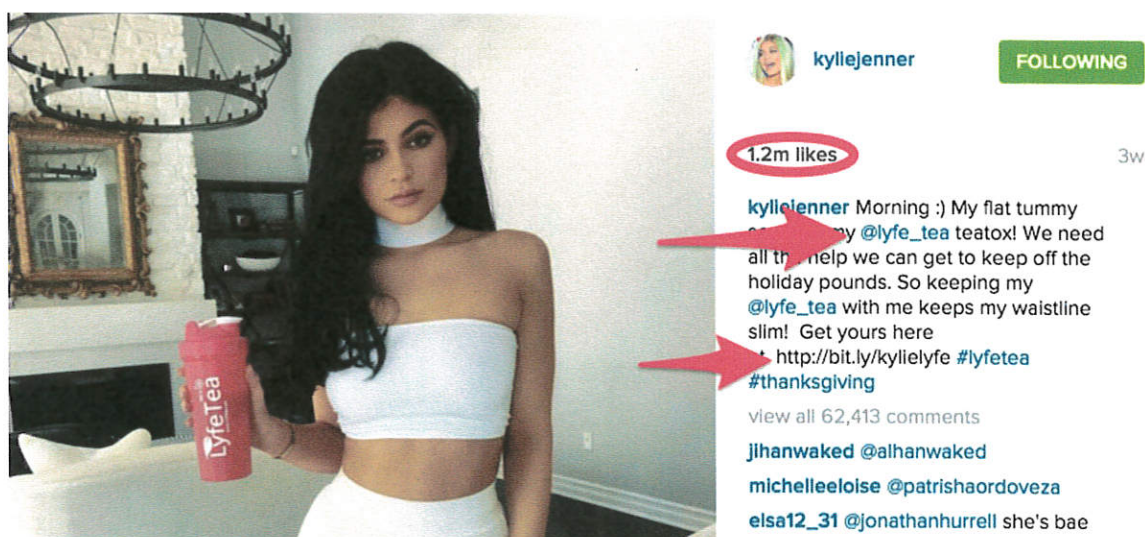
#### *Codebook Measures*

Measure	Description
Type of Advertising Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The manner in which the celebrity presents the endorsement product to their audience.</li> <li>Example: Personal testimonial, purely informational, or a call to action (elicits a response from audience),</li> </ul>
Type of Media Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether the post features photo content, video content, or both.</li> </ul>
Type of Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The type of product or service being advertised in the post.</li> </ul>
How the Audience is Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The manner in which the celebrity addresses the audience in relation to the post (i.e., level of familiarity with followers that is expressed).</li> </ul>
Number of Likes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of likes the post received</li> </ul>
Number of Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The total number of comments the post receives</li> </ul>
Types of Responses/Comments Received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived valence of followers' responses to the post. Positive, negative, or neutral?</li> </ul>



How the Product/Brand is Advertised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The manner in which the celebrity endorses the product or brand to their audience.</li> <li>• Transparent: The celebrity uses clear and conspicuous language which demonstrates a relationship with the brand or product in the post</li> <li>• Organic: The celebrity attempts to disguise the paid nature of the post using inconspicuous language that does not clearly demonstrate the nature of the sponsored post.</li> </ul>
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Figure 1. Sample of Endorsement Post (Protheroe, 2016).



### Coders Training

Two Pepperdine University students, one graduate and one undergraduate, volunteered to serve as coders for this study. To establish intercoder reliability, both coders were trained by the primary researcher of the study to serve as coders and analyze the content of the selected sample. Before proceeding with the analysis of the selected sample, training took place during a two-hour training session using one month not

included in the selected timeframe (June 2016) of a Demi Lovato Instagram page. During this training, the coders were given an overview of the study, an explanation of the measures and coding categories, taught how to access the celebrity profiles, how to screenshot the content, and how to record their data in their notebook. Prior to beginning the official coding process, both coders took part in a pre-test which coded one month of a celebrity profile outside of the sample. The results from this pre-test were used to test for inter-coder reliability using Cronbach's Alpha measure of internal consistency during the pre-test. The assumption of the test was that the coding was internally consistent because the data had an internal consistency of .937 and .967 when standardized across posts in the pre-test.

### *Coding Procedure*

The coding process began with each coder receiving a list of 10 celebrities from the top 20 list. After receiving their lists, each coder proceeded to code the Instagram profiles that they have been assigned. This began with the coder going to the celebrity's Instagram page (using a computer for efficiency) and screenshotting the profile as a whole to capture the celebrity's number of posts and followers. Each coder then captured each celebrity's posts respectively. Next the coder scrolled through the profile until they reached the celebrity's first post in July of 2016. Upon reaching that post, the coder referred to the codebook and coded each post based on the categories provided. A screenshot of each post that was coded was taken as well. The coding categories for each measure are detailed in Table 2 on the previous pages. Upon reaching the celebrities' first post in September 2016, the coders stopped coding. As the coders progressed through the

analysis, they recorded all of the data in a notebook that was provided at the start of their training.

## CHAPTER 5

### Results

The following paragraphs present the results of the data collected during the coding process of this study. This information is organized by research question and provides an analysis of the data with accompanying tables in order to present a broad perspective on the data.

*RQ 1: What is the frequency of celebrity paid endorsements on Instagram?*

Research question 1 sought to identify the frequency of celebrity paid endorsements in a sample of 835 Instagram posts. Descriptive statistics demonstrated that only 6.6% of the total sampled celebrity Instagram posts could be classified as paid endorsements. For example, within the category of paid endorsements, 85% of the endorsements were “organic” endorsements, which did not include the celebrity’s use of conspicuous language such as “#ad” that would clearly demonstrate the paid nature of the endorsement posts as per FTC regulations. A paid endorsement post is classified as any post where an individual is paid by an organization to use their brand or influence to promote a product or service to consumers (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a). For example, singer Demi Lovato posted an image featuring herself and a companion on a private jet with the post’s caption thanking a company for providing her with a private jet during her tour. However, Lovato failed to include any conspicuous language such as #ad that would explain to her followers that she had been paid to create the post. This study intended to include an analysis of the perceived valence of comments in response to the

presence of endorsements, but no significant correlations between the two could be determined due to inconsistencies in the data.

Table 3

*Frequency of Celebrity Endorsements on Instagram.*

Type of Ad	Frequency	Percent
Transparent	8	14.5 %
Organic	47	85.4 %
Total	55	99.9 %

*RQ 2: Which celebrity occupation has the highest frequency of paid endorsement posts?*

For research question 2, descriptive statistics were run to cross tabulate between two coding categories: “occupation of celebrity” and “type of ad/how the product/brand is advertised.” The results showed that singers and athletes are the celebrities with the highest frequencies of paid endorsements on Instagram. Singers had the highest frequency, with 29.09% of all paid endorsements in the study’s sample. Athletes followed with 21.08% of all sample paid endorsement post on Instagram. On the lower end of the data, comedians and models had the lowest frequency of the sample’s paid endorsements with 10% and 1.18% respectively.

Table 4

*Endorsement Frequency by Celebrity Occupation*

Celebrity Occupation	Transparent	Organic
Singer	0	16
Athlete	1	11
Actor/Actress	2	8
Reality TV	5	5
Comedian	0	6
Model	0	1
Total	8	47

*RQ 3: What is the most common category of products advertised by celebrities on Instagram?*

Results for Research Question 3 revealed which category of product was most commonly advertised by celebrities through paid endorsements on Instagram. Descriptive statistics were run and showed that the most common category being advertised is “Entertainment and leisure” with 31.74% of the sample. This category, entertainment and leisure, includes movies, television, video games, music, and mobile applications. The next most common category of the sample was “Fashion” with 26.9% of the sample. This category includes any product that can be worn by consumers which can be anything from clothing to accessories, shoes, or jewelry. On the lower end of the data were “services” and “food/beverages” which represented 3.17% and 1.58% respectively. The service category requires consumers to sign up for a service such as Fab Fit Fin’s

subscription boxes or NetJet's private jet program. While the food and beverage sector included restaurant chains like Burger King as well as beverage products like Casamigos tequila.

Table 5

*Categories of Products Advertised*

Products	Frequency	Percent
Entertainment/Leisure	20	31.74 %
Fashion	17	26.9 %
Magazine App//Web page	14	22.2 %
Body/Nutrition/Fitness	5	7.93 %
Beauty	4	6.34 %
Service	2	3.17 %
Food or Beverage	1	1.58 %
Total	63	99.86 %

*RQ 4: When a paid endorsement is present, which advertising strategy is utilized most?*

To answer research question 4 about the most frequently utilized advertising strategy, descriptive statistics and cross tabulations were run between type of ad/how is the product/brand advertised and ad strategy. The results revealed that when a paid endorsement is present, 61.8% of the sampled celebrity Instagram posts utilized embedding the product in a personal story as an advertising strategy. For example, when advertising a weight loss shake, reality tv star Kourtney Kardashian told audiences that she loved the product because it was a quick and easy way for her to lose weight with her busy schedule. The call for action strategy was utilized the least by celebrities with 18.18% of the study's sampled endorsement posts. The call for action strategy is evident

when a celebrity's endorsement involves an element that elicits a participatory response from an audience. These results demonstrate a majority presence of organic posts were not surprising because as previously mentioned in RQ 1, 85% of all the post sampled in this study were "organic" celebrity endorsements.

Table 6

*Most Utilized Advertising Strategy*

Ad Strategy	Transparent	Organic
Embedding in Personal Story	9.09 %	52.7 %
Transparent/Pure Information	3.63 %	16.3 %
Call for Action	1.8 %	16.3 %
Total		99.82 %



## CHAPTER 6

### Discussion

The purpose of this non-thesis project was to create a strategic plan for a website that agencies and other related organizations in the marketing and advertising industry could consult when planning social media campaigns revolving around celebrity endorsers. In reaching this goal, this study provided insights into the current landscape of ad disclosure in celebrity endorsements on Instagram. This included research on the most frequently endorsed category of products, the celebrity occupations with the highest presence of endorsements, the most utilized ad strategy, and the frequency of celebrity endorsements on Instagram. Creating this research foundation begins with analyzing this study's data and identifying key findings that can be used in implementation.

Overall, there were four major findings with this research. The most significant discovery was that a vast majority of celebrity paid endorsements on Instagram utilize an “organic” form of ad disclosure, which does not use conspicuous language that clearly demonstrates the paid nature of the endorsement posts as per FTC regulations. These results could demonstrate that “organic” or disguised paid endorsements are the most often used form of paid endorsements that celebrities utilize on Instagram. This is relevant because the usage of inconspicuous language such as “in partnership with” and “thanks for the gift” in place of more transparent disclosures such as “#ad” or “#sponsored” often makes it difficult for social media users to clearly differentiate paid celebrity endorsements from a celebrity's everyday posts. Since prior research has shown that influencers have a significant impact on consumers' decision-making process, it is

important that they have the ability to understand the advertising messages that are being targeted towards them (Li et. al, 2011). Currently, the FTC is aware that many celebrities and influencers have been violating its guidelines about properly disclosing the paid nature of their endorsements on social media platforms. While the FTC attempted to resolve this issue by issuing warning letters to the offenders, this project's research provides data and a method for how an organization can ascertain an accurate measure of the frequency of the violation of these regulations, in order for the FTC to be able to fully enforce them (Federal Trade Commission, 2017a). This study is one of the first to provide an in-depth analysis of the lack of ad disclosure on Instagram and the low frequency at which these disclosures are utilized by celebrity endorsers. From a practical standpoint, this project's website plan can offer a solution to this problem by including a webpage that is aimed at social media users, by designing a feature that is easy to understand. It will explain what a paid endorsement is, and the various categories by which endorsements can be classified (organic or transparent). This should include a section that provides examples of various paid celebrity endorsements and keywords often used in paid endorsements to disguise the paid nature of those posts. The site will serve as an educational resource for users looking to learn more about the presence of celebrity endorsement posts on Instagram.

The second significant finding is that celebrity occupations with the largest presence of paid endorsements on Instagram are singers and athletes. This finding extends current knowledge about the current trends in choice of celebrities for paid endorsements on social media by providing insights specifically tailored to the Instagram

platform (Ward, 2016). This information can not only be used to inform Instagram users, but also to provide advertising practitioners with suggestions about which celebrities they should be utilizing in their social media campaigns centered around paid endorsements. While this study tested the frequency of paid endorsements by celebrity occupation, a generalized assumption cannot be made for all celebrities due to the purely descriptive nature of these results. However, for the purpose of this project and the accompanying website plan, these results will be used to draft a “Top 5 List to Watch” of celebrity occupations with the highest frequency of endorsement posts, which will be featured on the previously mentioned educational resource page. This list will include the following celebrity occupations: singers, athletes, actors and actresses, reality tv stars, and comedians.

A third major finding was that the most frequently advertised category of celebrity endorsed products is “Entertainment and Leisure” which includes movies, television, video games, music, and mobile applications. This finding provides advertising practitioners with valuable information about the product categories with the highest presence on Instagram, which can in turn be used in the planning of future social media campaigns featuring celebrities. For instance, since food and beverage products were amongst the lowest advertised endorsement products on Instagram, a food-centered brand like McDonald’s can take advantage of this unsaturated market and implement more social media endorsement campaigns. For practical implications, the findings from this data will be present in the previously mentioned webpage which will serve as an educational resource for social media users. On this page there will be a small interactive

poll which will ask users to guess which category is the most often advertised by celebrities. Upon guessing, they will be shown the correct answer as well as the results from this research question. This will allow users to be more engaged in the information on the website. Research has shown that the amount of interactivity on a website can be related to the strength of credibility manipulations being made (Taylor, Johnson, Ault, Griffith, Rozzell, Connelly, et. al, 2015). Essentially, when there is more interaction, a website is more believable.

A fourth significant finding showed that the advertising strategy most frequently used by celebrities in their paid endorsements is embedding the product in a personal story. These results may be linked to celebrities attempting to hide the paid nature of their posts. Previous research has shown that celebrities often use the inclusion of personal stories or acknowledgements to mask the paid nature of a social media post (Lueck, 2012). This research has important implications for both Instagram users and FTC officials as it provides the FTC with information about celebrity ad disclosure avoidance techniques that can be examined and implemented in order to evaluate current and create future endorsement guidelines. This information is also beneficial to Instagram users who have an interest in understanding the current disclosure avoidance techniques that celebrities are using in their endorsements posts on the social media platform. As previously mentioned, the website will feature a page that includes examples of various paid celebrity endorsements and keywords often used in paid endorsements to disguise the paid nature of those posts. In addition to those features, the results from RQ 4 can be utilized in a section that outlines the advertising strategies celebrities employ most often

in their paid endorsement posts on Instagram. This will be shown through examples of celebrity endorsement posts and keywords often in these endorsements.

### *Limitations and Future Studies*

This study has several limitations. The first limitation was the sample size of the coded data. After the sampled content had been coded and analyzed, the data showed that the volume of paid endorsements was not significant enough for the researcher to be able to draw significant results from the tests that were originally run. Due to the study's small sample size, the study's results cannot be generalized to larger populations. A larger sample size could include increasing the number of celebrities and expanding the number of months coded for each celebrity. With a larger sample, future researchers can conduct similar studies from which conclusions can be drawn and generalized for broader populations.

It is also important to note that because the study focused solely on Instagram, the results cannot be generalized to celebrity endorsement posts on other social media platforms. This leaves room for potential future studies to expand the content analysis to celebrity endorsements on other social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat. When it comes to reaching the younger generations of consumers, it could be interesting to see if future researchers will analyze whether traditional display ads or social media ads will be the most competitive. In addition to this, researchers can also focus future studies on whether the method users choose to access social media platforms (mobile vs. desktop), affects how they interpret various celebrity social endorsements.

Another limitation lies with the constantly changing features and updates that social media platforms add to their applications. During the coding process, the coders noticed that a few celebrity posts did not feature any comments from followers, which is a result of Instagram introducing a feature that allows users to turn off their comments to prevent negativity or hateful slurs. Users' comments could be important because their responses to an endorsement post could serve as another form of data for researchers to analyze about consumer's attitudes towards celebrity Instagram endorsements. This study intended to include an analysis of the perceived valence of comments in response to the presence of endorsements, but no significant correlations between the two could be determined due to inconsistencies in the data. Another Instagram feature that serves as a possible limitation is Instagram's Story feature which, similarly to Snapchat, allows users post temporary content that is only visible for 24 hours. This serves as a limitation because celebrities are increasingly utilizing this feature as an alternative for paid endorsements. This could have contributed to the low presence of paid celebrity endorsements. The final limitation of this study was the lack of depth analysis. Future researchers can take this study's approach and use it to go deeper and create more scholarly data analysis. An in-depth scholarly and theoretically-driven analysis fell outside the scope of this project, but if pursued this information could create opportunities for more scholarly and theoretically-focused research surrounding social media ad disclosure. Despite these limitations, this website and data has the opportunity to serve not only as a starting point for further exploration and deeper research, but also as a new beginning for a more transparent and honest form of advertising.

## CHAPTER 7

### Website Plan

Keeping in mind that the goal of this website is to serve as an educational resource for social media users, advertising practitioners, and FTC officials, it is important that the site is designed in a way that is focused and easy to navigate. The website will be titled “*Ins & Outs*” because it provides site visitors with an inside look at the world of celebrity endorsements on Instagram. The website will also be responsive, so that users can continue to easily access the content whether they are on their desktops, mobiles phones, or tablets.

#### *Target Audience*

In order for this website to be successful and ensure that it reaches the intended audience, it is important to clearly define who that audience is and what they are looking for. Since this website focuses on celebrity advertising techniques on Instagram, the target audience will be Instagram users, FTC officials, and advertising practitioners. According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of Instagram users are men and women between the ages of 18 and 29 (2018). According to Forbes, this age demographic currently holds over 200 billion dollars in spending power and is projected to have the most spending power of any age demographic (2017). These same insights mention that social media has played a huge role in this increase of buying power with 62% of consumers in this demographic claiming that they are more likely to be loyal to a brand if the said brand engages with them on social media in some manner (Schroeder, 2017). This demonstrates that these consumers consider social media to be a large factor in the

purchase behaviors, so a website such as this one will be a valuable resource to ensure that they are making informed purchase decisions. Based on this information, this website will primarily be targeting Instagram users in the U.S between the ages of 18 and 29. The U.S. was chosen geographically because FTC regulations are limited to the United States.

### *Design*

Design-wise the website will employ a minimalist design to ensure that users can easily navigate through the site (Stevens, 2016). Because of this minimalist design, users will be able to focus on the website's content instead of being distracted by an attention-grabbing design or layout. The primary colors selected to use on the website are blue, gray, and white. The color blue is often associated with calmness, trust, dependability, and loyalty (Precision Intermedia n.d.; Help Scout n.d.). Gray is a classic color that is communicates strength, longevity, and sturdiness because of its presence in hard objects such as rock and steel (Stout, n.d.; Kissmetrics, n.d.). This color will mainly function as a background and accent color to add dimension to the website (Help Scout, n.d.). The website will combine common serif and sans serif fonts to ensure that the website's content and the website itself are clear, easy to read, and easy to navigate.

### *Content Planning*

From a content perspective, the website will be designed to be an educational resource that visitors can look to for a better understanding about the current state of celebrity endorsement posts on Instagram. Functionally, there will be four main tabs that users can visit throughout the site: Homepage, an Endorsement Guide, Do's and Don'ts, and Industry Articles.



The homepage will be the central hub of the site where users can get a quick overview of the site's content (Figure 2). The page will feature small sections that each represent a different tab on the website. Users will be able to access each page by clicking on the appropriate tab, or the corresponding section present on the homepage.

The next page, the Endorsement Guide, is the page that will house most of the content supported by the research conducted during this project (Figure 3). This page will be broken into multiple sections with each page covering a different aspect of celebrity endorsement posts on Instagram. There will be a section that features an easy-to-understand explanation of what a celebrity paid endorsement is, and how the various categories of endorsements can be classified (organic or transparent), the various advertising strategies utilized, and the keywords often used to disguise the paid nature of these posts. To further this explanation, examples of popular celebrity Instagram posts will be included in this section so that users can have visual examples of the posts being described. This section could serve as a resource for both social media users and FTC officials looking to gain more information about the various advertising strategies that celebrities are using and whether they are in line with, or bending the regulations set forth by the FTC. Another section will feature a "Top 5 List to Watch" of celebrity occupations with the highest frequency of endorsement posts. This will serve as another way to explain important insights of the celebrity Instagram endorsement industry to users as well as valuable information for advertising practitioners to use when creating their own social media campaigns utilizing celebrity endorsements. The Endorsement Guide will also include an element of interactivity that will allow site visitors to become involved

through an interactive poll which will ask users to guess which category of products is most often advertised by celebrities. Upon guessing, they will be shown the correct answer as well as the results from this research question. This will allow users to be more engaged in the information on the website while also testing their understanding of the topic (Poonam, n.d.).

The third page, the Do's and Don'ts, is the page which will outline the FTC's current key guidelines and restrictions on paid social media endorsements. This page will feature easy-to-understand versions of the FTC's Endorsement Guidelines so that once visitors learn what an endorsement is, and what to look for, they can also understand the endorsement behaviors that are prohibited, and essentially illegal, by FTC standards. There will also be a section that outlines Instagram's current regulations and restrictions on paid or sponsored posts on social platforms.

The final tab on the website will be centered around the celebrity endorsement industry as a whole. It will feature a full archive of current and past articles about celebrity endorsements or social media advertising, industry updates, and blogs about the world of celebrity social media endorsements, selected through keywords and search engine optimization. (See Table 7 below for article examples). This page will be important for users because it gives them alternative resources to look at for further information, while also giving advertising professionals a place to stay up to date on current trends and information that pertains to celebrity endorsement posts.

Table 7

*Sample Article Links*

Article Title	Link
Instagram Just Added a Tag to Make Sponsored Content More Transparent	<a href="http://www.adweek.com/digital/instagram-paid-partnership-with/">http://www.adweek.com/digital/instagram-paid-partnership-with/</a>
How to Do Instagram Influencer Marketing	<a href="https://www.oberlo.com/blog/instagram-influencer-marketing">https://www.oberlo.com/blog/instagram-influencer-marketing</a>
The Influencer Marketing Trends That Will Dominate 2018	<a href="https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomward/2017/12/01/the-influencer-marketing-trends-that-will-dominate-2018/#1b0343cf5398">https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomward/2017/12/01/the-influencer-marketing-trends-that-will-dominate-2018/#1b0343cf5398</a>
Social media "influencers" add a new twist to advertising	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-media-influencers-brand-advertising/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-media-influencers-brand-advertising/</a>

*Website Launch Timeline*

In order to ensure that the “*Ins & Outs*” website is successfully published and disseminated to its targeted audiences, it is important to provide a descriptive timeline of the steps required to properly launch the site. This process should take approximately five months and can be broken up into three major stages.

The first stage of the website launch process revolves around the design and layout of the website. The process begins with choosing a web-based development platform such as Wix or Squarespace to host the website. Next, wireframes will be created using the previously collected content and copy to plan the placement and layout of the website’s various elements. Following this process, the website will then be built in accordance with the design direction previously described; the website plan will be

utilizing blue, gray, and white as site's signature colors. This stage should take no longer than one month to complete and should take place during June 2018.

The second stage, content gathering and copywriting, begins with gathering the information that is needed for the site, outside of the information derived from the study's results. This information includes a further exploration of both the Federal Trade Commission's and Instagram's current endorsement guidelines to be utilized on the "Do's and Don'ts" tab of the website. The copywriting will come into play when this information is later rewritten in language and terms that are straightforward and easy for the everyday user to understand. In addition to this information, current and past articles relevant to the social media advertising industry as well as the endorsement landscape will also need to be gathered for use on the "Industry News" tab of the website. This page will also include a feature that utilizes keyword optimization to automatically aggregate and upload relevant articles to the page upon launch of the website. Once this information has been gathered, this stage will conclude after the copy has been written for the sectional blurbs on the site's homepage, which outline each of the website's tabs, and provide a brief overview of the site's content. To ensure that all of the gathered information is accurate, outside contractors would be hired to fact check and copy edit all of the website's written content. This stage should require no more than two months to complete and should take place during from July1, 2018-August 31, 2018.

The third and final stage of this process is the launch and ensuing marketing of the website to ensure that it is disseminated to its targeted audiences. The website itself will be launched in October of 2018 to provide adequate time, after the design has been

finalized, to establish that the website is fully functional. Between the testing of the site and its official launch, press releases will be sent out to major industry trade publications and business organizations such as AdWeek, the Interactive Advertising Bureau, AdAge, Ogilvy & Mather, etc., notifying them of the website's purpose, content, and its upcoming launch. This will assist in gaining awareness from advertising practitioners who stay up to date on current industry trends. Press releases will also be sent out to the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection as well as Instagram's Press Team to notify them of the website's content and launch.

Table 8

*Website Launch Schedule*

Stage/Dates	Activity
Stage 1: June 1, 2018 – June 30, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website construction (Design &amp; Layout begin)</li> </ul>
Stage 2: July 1, 2018 - August 31, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content gathering</li> <li>Copywriting for website content</li> </ul>
Stage 3: September 1, 2018 - September 30, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website testing</li> <li>Marketing efforts</li> </ul>
Stage 4: October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website Launch</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Mock-up of Website Homepage





Figure 3. Mock-up of Endorsement Guide page

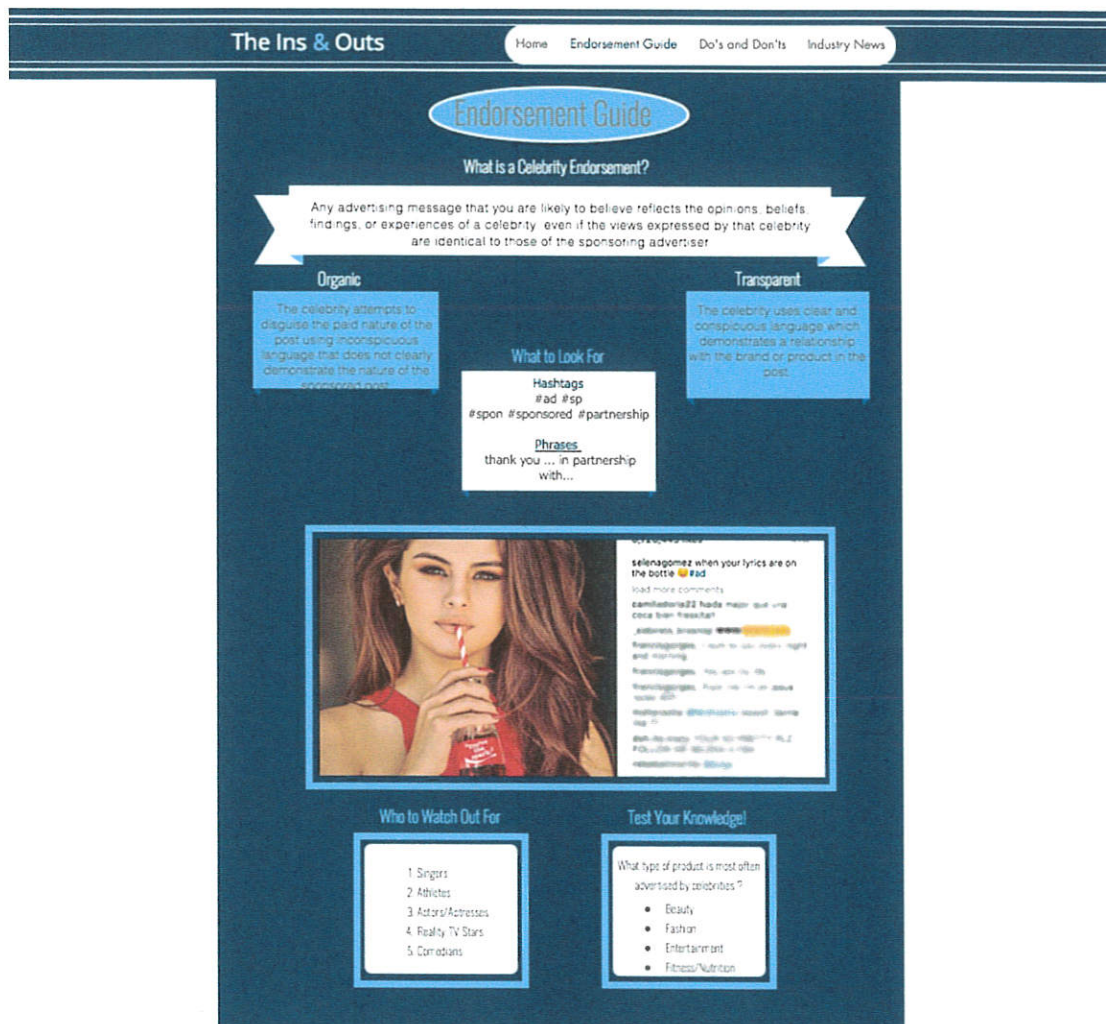


Figure 4. Mock-up #1 of Mobile Endorsement Guide

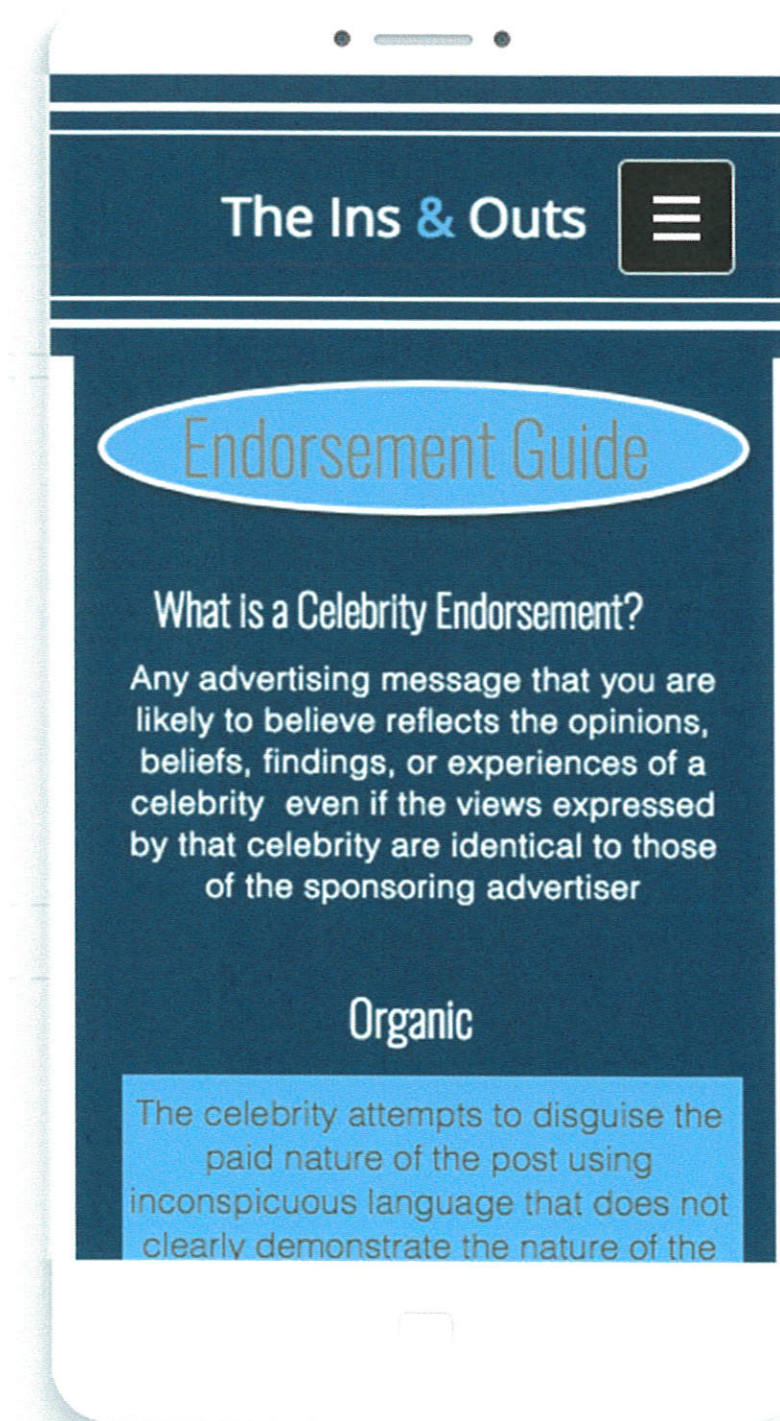
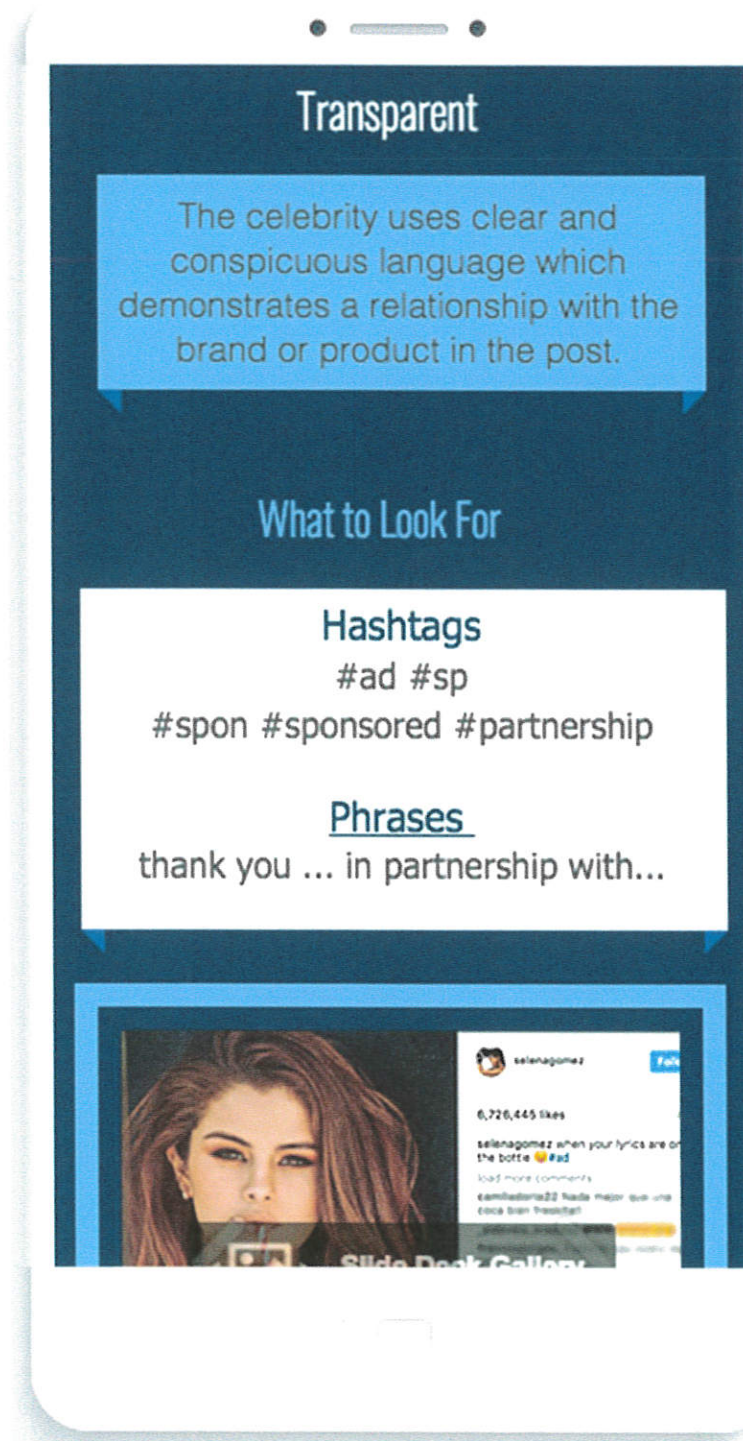




Figure 5. Mock-up #2 of Mobile Endorsement Guide



## CHAPTER 8

### Conclusion

As this digital age marches on, an age that places emphasis on staying connected and ever-evolving technology, our media consumption continues to increase. This increase in consumption requires many industries, such as advertising and social media, to adjust and look for new methods to reach consumers without crossing or blurring ethical lines. This study and project examined the presence of ad disclosure in celebrity endorsements on Instagram and how this data can be translated into educate through a website. Overall, the analysis revealed that there is currently a low frequency of ad disclosure in celebrity endorsements, and celebrities are choosing to “organically” integrate their endorsements into their profiles in an attempt to disguise the paid nature of these posts. While brands and advertising practitioners cannot solely be held accountable for these practices, it is important that industry professionals are aware of the deceptive nature of these practices, and how unethical practices can eventually have adverse effects on their advertising efforts, should users become aware of the deception. On the basis of these results, the FTC could work to create and enforce stricter guidelines that would require advertisers and brands to make sure that their celebrity endorsers are properly disclosing ads. It could be interesting to further explore what advertisers and brands would prefer social media endorsement policies to include, if they had the ability to give input. In summary, the insights gained from this study culminated in a strategic plan for “*The Ins & Outs*” website presented in this project. Hopefully this website and its features will serve as an educational resource

for social media users, the FTC, and advertising practitioners as well as a launching pad for future research.

## CHAPTER 9

### Reflection

I intend for this project to demonstrate that I have mastered the applied strategic communication skills that I have gained through Pepperdine's Master of Arts in Strategic Communication program. This project will be a culmination of the many skills that I have acquired through the strategic skills concentration, which include critical thinking, strategic analysis, consumer research, digital strategy, communication research, and basic design principles. I also believe that my previous experiences in influencer advertising, digital media marketing, and advertising-related internships have molded my perspective and provided me with insight about how to approach this project. Through these work experiences, I was given a behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of the celebrity and influencer endorsement industry which provided me with the background knowledge needed for this project.

This project was designed to be a merging of my research interests and my career goals. Coming into graduate school, my main interest was figuring out how I could combine research and theoretical concepts with an area of communications that I was passionate about. When it came to selecting a topic for this non-thesis project, I struggled with finding my niche, until a simple conversation about a celebrity media post sparked my interest. As a millennial, I have grown up with social media and as a result I have seen the effects that it has, not only on how our generation communicates, but also on our decision-making processes. This has led to an internal fascination with the power of social media, and the many ways in which it can be utilized in advertising campaigns.

Throughout the years, my interest in social media's role in the communication industry has grown, and resulted in multiple internships in the influencer advertising landscape. While I enjoy working in this industry and understand its effectiveness, I also believe that there are many issues, mainly ethical, with advertising practitioners' current practices. It is my hope that this website plan is something I can offer as a resource to create social media marketing campaigns that are effective, dynamic, and most importantly, ethical. This project will be instrumental in helping me obtain a position at a top advertising or media marketing agency upon graduation from this program.

## APPENDICES

## Codebook

1. **What is the celebrity's gender?**

- 1 = Male
- 2 = Female
- 3 = Transgender
- 4 = Other

2. **Occupation of celebrity**

- 1 = Singer
- 2 = Actor/Actress
- 3 = Reality TV Star
- 4 = Athlete
- 5 = Model
- 6 = Comedian
- 7 = Other/ multiple (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

3. **Total Number of Followers**

\*Based on screen shots taken at beginning of coding process, official date TBD

4. **Type of media**

What media does the post contain?

- 1 = Photo only
- 2 = Video only
- 3 = Multiple media (Photo and video)
- 4 = Text only
- 5 = Other

5. **How is the product/brand advertised?**

- 1 = Transparent

The celebrity uses clear and conspicuous language which demonstrates a

relationship with the brand or product in the post.

Example: the use of hashtags such as “#sponsored”, “#ad”, or “#spon”. (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a).

- 2 = Organic

The celebrity attempts to disguise the paid nature of the post using inconspicuous language that does not clearly demonstrate the nature of the sponsored post. Example: the

use of language like “in partnership with” or “thanks for the gift” does not clearly demonstrate that the post is an advertisement (Federal Trade Commission, 2015a).

- 3 = No product/brand advertised
- 9 = Can't Tell

**6. Advertising Strategy: The manner in which the celebrity presents the endorsement product to their audience (Lueck, 2012)**

- 1 = Product is embedded into personal story (emotional/transformational/testimonial) (Organic)
- 2 = Pure information (Informational message about the product) (Transparent)
- 3 = Call for action/ interactive advertising (solicits a response from audience/ Asks audience to participate in some way) (Organic)
- 9 = None/ Not an endorsement post

**7. Type of product/brand advertised (Lueck, 2012)**

If no product or brand is advertised, select ‘none’; if a product is advertised but does not fit into any of the listed categories, choose ‘other.’

- 1 = Beauty (cosmetics/products for the hair and body)
- 2 = Body/Nutrition/ Fitness (workout plans, health conscious foods & beverages, etc.)
- 3 = Entertainment/ Leisure (movies, TV shows, music, games)
- 4 = Fashion (clothing brands, clothing stores, accessories, etc.)
- 5 = Service (a monthly subscription service, etc.)
- 6 = Food or beverage
- 7 = Magazine/ App/ Web page (a specific publication online or offline, a mobile application that can be downloaded, a site that can be visited, etc.)
- 8 = Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)
- 9 = None

**1.8 How is the audience being addressed? (Lueck, 2012)**

- 1 = Personal (the audience is addressed in a way that insinuates closeness or a friendship. For example, “Hey dolls”)
- 2 = Non-personal (audience not addressed in a way that would insinuate a relationship is present)
- 3 = Audience is not addressed
- 9 = Can't Tell

**1.9 Number of likes to post**

\*Based on screen shots taken at beginning of coding process, official date TBD

**1.10 Number of responses to post**

\*Based on screen shots taken at beginning of coding process, official date TBD

**11. Type of Response (Lueck, 2012)**

Perceived valence of followers' responses to the post

1 = Positive (support/admiration product being advertised, or the post itself).

2 = Negative (disapproval or criticisms of the product being advertised or the post itself, etc.)

3 = Neutral (comment is either about the celebrity themselves or features no clear disapproval or approval of the product being advertised or the post itself, etc.)

9 = Can't tell



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