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Trusting Information on YouTube

**A quantitative survey on how viewers trust YouTubers
within fitness, health, and nutrition**

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The aim of this master thesis is to determine how YouTube users trust the information on the platform concerning fitness, health, and nutrition. The followers of two YouTubers, *Sarah's Day* and *Lose it like Lauren*, were asked to participate in a quantitative survey. This method was chosen in order to gain information from a wide variety of sources about what influences trust, and to what degree people trust certain sources for information on fitness, health, and nutrition. The survey was completed by 145 participants; 102 of Sarah's followers and 43 of Lauren's. The study indicates that trust can be influenced by factors such as age, education, and culture, and that level of trust varies according to subject matter. The participants trust Sarah and Lauren with recommendations concerning fitness and nutrition, but are less trusting when it comes to health. The study gives an insight into how people view social media influencers as an information source.

Målet for denne masteroppgaven er å undersøke i hvilken grad YouTube-seere har tillit til informasjonen de finner på plattformen når det gjelder trening, helse og ernæring. Følgere av to YouTubere, *Sarah's Day* og *Lose it like Lauren*, ble spurt om å delta i en kvantitativ undersøkelse. Denne metoden ble valgt for å innhente informasjon fra en rekke ulike kilder om hva som påvirker tillit, og i hvilken grad folk stoler på gitte kilder for informasjon om trening, helse og ernæring. Undersøkelsen ble besvart av 145 deltakere; 102 av Sarahs følgere og 43 av Laurens. Studien indikerer at tillit kan bli påvirket av faktorer som alder, utdanning og kultur, og at graden av tillit er ulik for de forskjellige fagområdene. Deltakerne stoler på Sarah og Lauren når det gjelder anbefalinger innen trening og ernæring, men er mindre tillitsfulle når det gjelder helse. Studien gir et innblikk i hvordan folk ser på "social media influencers" som en informasjonskilde.

Dedication

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ragnar Audunson, for giving me good advice and steering me in the right direction during the writing of my master thesis. Being able to study an area that greatly interests me has been extremely giving and informational.

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Introduction

Information seeking online has been an area of research within information science ever since the internet was created in the 1990s. In the last decade, social media has become an active source for information sharing online. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have become extremely popular. Some people can make a living by posting on social media, having a large following and receiving sponsorships.

The goal of the thesis is to determine how viewers of YouTube videos trust the information from YouTubers concerning health, fitness and nutrition. The paper looks at the followers from two YouTubers: *Sarah's Day* and *Lose it like Lauren*. As Sarah is from Australia and Lauren is from The United Kingdom, the geographical locations of the survey participants is important to see if there are cultural differences in how viewers trust the YouTubers. Is there a YouTube culture when it comes to trust or do YouTube viewers have the same generalized trust as previous research shows? It is important to note that this thesis does *not* analyze if the information Sarah or Lauren shares in videos are correct or incorrect. Instead it investigates if their followers trust the information they share in YouTube videos and on social media.

Motivation

The inspiration for this paper came from becoming a member of a Facebook group where the members asked for help concerning fitness, health, and nutrition on a daily basis. Most members of the group do not seem to have a professional background in these areas. As people continuously asked for advice it became clear that trusting information online and looking for other people's opinions is an important factor for the members. As more and more people go to the internet for help in their daily lives, social media and mass media can become their most readily available sources of information. Finding information about health on the internet can be problematic because any person with internet access can post online, even if they do not have the right competence within a subject. It can therefore be challenging to distinguish between trustworthy and non-trustworthy sources. It will be helpful to see how people trust information that is found on the internet and YouTube. Research has been done to see how people use social media to find information (Lin, Zhang, Song, & Omori, 2016) and also on how people trust others (Uslaner, 2002). Cultural differences create differences in the amount of trust given to some people compared to others.

There is not a lot of previous research on how YouTube users' trust the information on the social media site. YouTube research consists of studying the videos, the comments and the videos content. This thesis will look at how people trust information from YouTubers concerning fitness, health, and nutrition in order to close the gap in knowledge.

Main research question

Trust on social media has been researched in different areas but looking at how YouTube viewers trust information is an area that has not yet been thoroughly explored. Research into YouTube has been conducted but most of these studies concern the contents of the videos and how YouTube is used by viewers. This thesis aims to look at how the information presented by YouTubers can affect trust and if the participants trust the information specific YouTubers give. The main research question is as follows:

To what extent do viewers of two YouTubers trust the information they are given in videos concerning fitness, health, and nutrition?

Other research questions have also been chosen to give a more in-depth view of trust. These questions will be presented at the end of the next section.

Theoretical Framework and Basic Concepts

This section will present an introduction to social media, introduce conditions of trust, and present earlier research into trusting information concerning health, culture and social media.

Social Media

Social media has become increasingly more popular in the worldwide population. In 2017, 2.46 billion people used social media, according to Statista – The Statistics Portal (2018a). They have estimated that the number will increase to 2.62 billion in 2018. This is a large increase from 0.97 billion people in 2010. They do not have statistics for previous years in social media usage. According to Statista (2018b), the number one most used social media platform is Facebook, with approximately 2.2 billion users as of April 2018. YouTube and WhatsApp are the second most used with 1.5 billion users. Instagram is rated at number 6 with 813 million users and Twitter is in 12th place with 330 million users (Statista, 2018b).

Within social media there are people who have created their career around one or several social media platforms. The title of these people can be content creators, bloggers, YouTubers or influencers. The two relevant concepts for this thesis are YouTuber and influencers. A YouTuber is someone that “uploads, produces, or appears in videos on the video-sharing website YouTube” (YouTuber, undated). In other words, a YouTuber creates videos for their viewers on YouTube. Some YouTubers can earn a living from being a video creator with, for example, sponsorships from brands. Having a large following on YouTube can create opportunities with different brands or even creating merchandise that is relevant for the YouTuber’s audience. An influencer on the other hand is defined as “an individual who has the power to affect purchase decisions of others because of his/her authority, knowledge, position or relationship with his/her audience” (Influencer Marketing Hub, undated). An influencer can impact people’s opinions and decisions due to their following being large and by being a public figure.

An influencer is not confined to one social media platform but can use different platforms to interact with their audience. Being an influencer is something that the public eye perceives someone as rather than the person saying they are an influencer. It is a broad term that has come to be very relevant due to the rise of social media and marketing on social media.

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing platform created in the United States of America in February 2005. Today YouTube content is created by private persons and corporations. Users can “upload, view, rate, share, add to favorites, report, comment on videos, and subscribe to other users” (YouTube, 2018). With 1.5 billion users, YouTube is one of the most used social media platforms to date and the website gets approximately 30 million visitors every day. According to a statistic estimate by the website Sidekick, there are around 50 million YouTube channels (Sidekick, 2017). Since there are 1.5 billion users of YouTube, this means there are more viewers than content creators. YouTube has content that is broadcast in 76 languages, and 88 countries have localized versions of YouTube (MerchDope, 2018). Even though YouTube was created in the United States, between 70-80% of all visitors come from outside the USA. According to Statista, the leading country of YouTube users is the USA with 167.4 million users (2018c). There is a huge gap with the second leading country, which is Brazil with 69.5 million users. The social media platform seems to be very popular in the United States compared to other countries in the world. However, it is important to note that this data does not take into consideration the entire population of each country. Understandably, Norway is not on the list due to the fact that the lowest number of users on the graph is Spain with 18.7 million users, while Norway has a grand total population of 5 million people (Statista, 2018c). Even though the USA has the largest audience on YouTube it does not mean it has the largest percentage of the population using YouTube.

Pew Research Center in the USA does not have any data available on how popular YouTube was before 2018 (Smith and Anderson, 2018). However, according to their current data, YouTube is the most used social media platform in the United States with 73% of the population using it. Facebook is the second most used social media platform with 68% of the population using it in the early stages of 2018. The younger generation is embracing other types of social media. “A majority of Americans use Facebook and YouTube, but young adults are especially heavy users of Snapchat and Instagram (p. 2)”. Even so, YouTube is “used by nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults and 94% of 18- to 24-year-olds” (p. 3). Between 80-90% of 25- to 49-year-olds use YouTube, though the social media platform is slightly more popular with the age group 25 to 29. Only 56% of 50+ year-olds use YouTube in the USA (p. 4). Interestingly, 81% of YouTube users also use Facebook, while only 45% of YouTube users are also using Instagram (p. 6). These statistics show that YouTube is a popular social media platform, especially with a younger demographic. As these statistics are

solely from the U.S., it is important to note that there may be variations and differences with the global usage of the social media platform.

YouTubers often get sponsored by different brands in order for the brand to get more Public Relations (PR) through their viewers. For instance, a YouTuber can promote products, procedures or weight loss advice to promote a specific brand. Viewers then need to be able to decide if they trust the YouTuber's view of the product as genuine or not. If a viewer tries a specific product, for example a protein bar that a YouTuber has recommended in a video, they are trusting that the YouTuber was genuine in their recommendation of the protein bar. In this example a terrible tasting protein bar could lead the viewer to having less trust in the YouTuber or be more skeptical of future products. Being aware of the fact that YouTube is a large area for product placement and promotions is important when considering the trust viewers have to YouTubers within nutrition, health, and fitness. Brand sponsorships and promotions can affect the amount of trust a person has to YouTubers, which will be discussed later in the paper.

Defining Trust

Defining trust is vital in order to have a full understanding of what variables can affect the followers' trust in Sarah and Lauren. In this chapter several definitions will be presented in order to give an overview of how people trust information and other people, and what can affect this trust. Additionally, earlier research concerning trust within health, cultural differences, and everyday life information seeking will be presented.

Conditions of Trust

A central work around defining trust is Eric Uslaner's book *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (2002). Uslaner states that the conventional wisdom about trust is that we can trust people we know well and that we know a lot about. Uslaner also argues "that we can and do trust strangers" (p. 4). Trust of strangers can be rooted in human values, characteristics and faith in others. "Trust in other people is based upon a fundamental ethical assumption: that other people share your fundamental values" (p. 2). He writes that there are two distinctions of trust; generalized trust and particularized trust. Generalized trust is the belief that most people can be trusted. "A sense of optimism and control over the world is more important than experience for generalized trust" (p. 21). Uslaner writes that we can learn or fail to learn generalized trust from our parents which will affect us later in life. Particularized trust, on the

other hand, is only having faith in your own kind and relying on your own experiences. Particularized trustees "... assume that people unlike themselves are not part of their moral community and thus may have values that are hostile to their own" (p. 27). Uslander explains that we often seek out people with the same experiences. He claims that optimism, such as having a supportive community, a positive outlook on the future, belief that life is under control and personal well-being, will affect how trustworthy people are. Having a common bond can increase trust between strangers (p. 4). Uslander writes "overall, optimists are about 12 percent more likely to trust others than are pessimists" (p. 100). Uslander demonstrates that differences in culture can affect the amount of trust people have for one another, which will be presented more later on.

Helen Nissenbaum (2001) writes that trust in the online world will enhance benefits to humanity by "its potential to enhance community, enliven politics, hasten scientific discovery, energise commerce, and more" (p. 102). Her background is from an information security perspective where this study and her other studies are concerning cybersecurity. Her 2001 paper focuses on *Securing Trust Online*. Understanding the general conditions of trust that do not include online trust is important. She explains the different conditions of trust (not online): *history and reputation, inferences based on person characteristics, relationship: mutuality and reciprocity, role fulfilment and contextual factors*. Defining these conditions of trust will be vital in order to see the areas of trust for influencers and their audience.

Nissenbaum characterizes the *history and reputation* of a person to be defining for whether another person will trust them. "If they have behaved well in the past, protected our interests, have not cheated or betrayed us, and, in general, have acted in a trustworthy manner, they are likely to elicit trust in the future" (p. 110). Similarly, if they have not shown trust in the past then it is more likely that we in turn do not trust them in the future. Nissenbaum also writes that if we do not know the person, we rely on what other people say in order to make the decision of whether we want to trust them or not.

For *Inferences based on personal characteristics* Nissenbaum writes that similar past experiences may make another person more trustworthy. This could be "a common religious background, high school, neighbourhood, or traumatic experience (e.g., having fought in the same war)" (p. 110). These experiences can affect how we predict how trustworthy another person is and "how inclined we are to rely on them" (p. 110).

When explaining how *relationships* can affect trust, Nissenbaum makes two differentiations: *mutuality* and *reciprocity*. Mutuality comes from being in the same situation as another person. Nissenbaum's example is getting on a plane and trusting the pilot because

their fates are entwined while they fly together. The small differentiation with reciprocity is that “we trust others not because we have common ends, but because each of us holds the fate of others in our hands in a manner of tit-for-tat” (p. 111). The explanation is that we trust because roles can be reversed in the future. Nissenbaum writes as an example: “I might donate money to the Cancer Foundation hoping that when I become ill, these funds will somehow help me” (p. 111). Reciprocity means helping people in need now and trusting that when you are in need, others will help you (p. 111).

Role fulfilment is trust based on the framework of a familiar system. She goes back to explaining that the pilot in her previous example may not trust her, even though they have a mutual interest during their flight. However, Nissenbaum trusts the pilot because she knows the framework around how the pilot has become a pilot. The training and numerous requirements including the status of the airlines (p. 111). The trust between her and the pilot is affected by the framework and social setting that they are in.

The last condition of trust is *contextual factors*. The setting we are present in can affect how we trust. Publicity can help to ensure trust because people’s deeds, and misdeeds, can be publicly shown. Reward and punishment can also ensure trust because rewards and sanctions can follow trustworthiness and betrayal respectively. There is also trust through the norms that we are raised in, the local lore, educations, songs and fables, etc. (p. 112).

The conditions of trust that Nissenbaum explains are relevant to understand trusting people online. She also explains a few characteristics that can hinder trust online, but as the article is from 2001 a lot of aspects have changed since then. Some are relevant, like missing identities, personal characteristics and inscrutable contexts. She mentions that people can hide behind their personas online and that the solution to distrust in online media is security. Online forums and online information in general need to have access control to ensure that not just anyone can find personal information online (p. 116-117). These conditions of trust that Nissenbaum explains are trust examples not specifically online, but for everyday life. These different conditions of trust will be helpful for the research of this thesis as they can explain how viewers of YouTube videos trust the different YouTubers that they watch.

Earlier Research

This paper is focused on examining if the followers of Sarah and Lauren trust them and to examine if there are different variables in the followers’ background that can affect trust. In order to see which factors can affect trust, earlier research has been examined to determine if the results of this thesis coincide with the results from earlier research. The thesis is under the

large scope of Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS). It focuses on what information sources YouTube viewers trust instead of only focusing on where they search for information. The scope of the thesis is under ELIS because if someone is seeking information in a source it indicates that they trust the source. If they did not trust the source they would seek information elsewhere. Since the thesis looks at the differences of fitness, health and nutrition, earlier research will also include information seeking within health. Earlier research concerning variables that can affect trust is also presented, such as age, gender, cultural differences, educational background and social media influencers.

Everyday Life Information Seeking

Reijo Savolainen has been a leading researcher into an area called ELIS. The introduction of the internet in the 1990s brought changes to people's everyday information seeking processes. He has researched many different aspects within ELIS such as seeking and sharing information on blogs (2011), information seeking for environmental activists, prospective home buyers and unemployed people (2008) and the role of emotions in online information seeking (2015). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Savolainen researched how the internet could affect people's everyday information seeking processes (Savolainen, 1999, 2001; Savolainen and Kari, 2004):

Taken as a whole, these studies confirmed the ELIS model's assumptions about the importance of social and economic factors in information seeking. Somewhat unsurprisingly, however, it appeared that the internet had not replaced traditional sources but rather complemented them (Savolainen, 2017, p. 54).

Savolainen's book (2008) also indicates that people's information seeking practices are affected by their habits. "Everyday information seeking practices tend to change quite slowly" (p. 54). Savolainen's earlier research into social media and ELIS "indicate that the forums of social media can provide useful information and emotional support to people with diverse everyday projects such as slimming, coping with depression and travel planning" (2017, p. 54). Savolainen's research is important to be aware of, but because it focuses on information seeking rather than trust it will not be the main focus in the earlier research to be presented. Instead, factors that can affect trust will be reviewed.

Age and Trust

An exploratory study by Matthias Sutter and Martin Kocher (2007) had the goal of seeing if age affects trust and trustworthiness. They created a game that involved fake money and how

the participants would trust fictitious persons with their money. There was a total of 662 participants, ranging from 8 to 68-year-olds. The age groups were 8-year-old second graders from primary school, 12-year-old sixth graders, 16-year-old tenth graders, students with an average age of 22, working professionals with an average age of 32, and retired persons with an average age of 68. Their study revealed that the younger demographic was the least trusting. Early childhood and preteens showed less trust, but it peaked entering into adulthood and the student and working professional groups had the highest and same amount of trust. They concluded that “trustworthiness is prevailing in all age groups, but its degree seems to increase with age” (p. 378). On the other hand, retired participants were less trusting than the student and the working professionals. It is important to note that this is an exploratory study and it has some limitations. There is no age group with an average age of those between 40 and 60, which would be an interesting factor, instead it does look at the different stages in life; childhood, teenage years, student life, working life and retirement. Even though the study and game were about trusting strangers with money and does not focus on social media trust, it valuable as it indicates that there may be differences in age that can affect trust.

Health and Trust

Research has been conducted to determine how internet users search for and trust information concerning health on the internet. An article by Sally Wyatt, Flis Henwood, Angie Hart and Julie Smith (2002) presented their study of what affects the digital divide in search for health information in everyday life. The digital divide is a concept that captures people’s “unequal access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) at global and local levels” (p. 200). Even though the research is from 2002 and the technology field has greatly improved and developed, the research and their results are still valuable. Wyatt et al. did an empirical study with qualitative interviews to study “the role of the internet in people’s efforts to inform themselves about menopause and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in the case of women, and erectile dysfunction and Viagra in the case of men” (p. 199). Though their goal was to look at the digital divide in the participants and their access to the internet, some of their findings are relevant to this thesis. One of their findings from the interviews with 32 women and 15 men was that both men and women stated that their family doctor was their most important source of information for health issues. Next most mentioned were family members, friends, pharmacies and alternative practitioners. They also used different types of

mass media, including magazines, television, the World Wide Web, self-help books, newspapers and leaflets from pharmaceutical companies (p. 206).

It is important to note that the article does not indicate how much these sources from the mass media were used compared to family doctor, family members, friends, pharmacies and alternative practitioners. The research also showed that there was a difference between men and women when it came to whom they would go to for help concerning their health. Women tended to “have much more diffuse social networks, including family, friends, neighbors and colleagues, which they draw upon to talk about their health, whereas men talk primarily with their doctors and sexual partners.” (Wyatt et al., 2002, p. 206). They found there was a difference to whom the women and men would go to for help with their health issues. One participant, called Sue in the article, mentioned that she wished to find more “English medical knowledge” instead of finding American information. Wyatt et al. conclude that this could suggest that people want health information that is relevant to themselves and their situation and that trust can be influenced by contextual factors (p. 210-211). This can perhaps also be a result of wishing to have information that is more relatable because it is from the same country as Sue, and therefore the same culture, compared to the American culture. However, several participants wanted health information that was relevant for them and that caters to their needs instead of general health information (p. 212). The research article also shows that people with internet access may have other factors that limit their usage of the internet such as obscure complexities of domestic relationships (p. 213). As the article is from 2002, stationary computers in the home or at work were most common. Nowadays, with smartphones and laptops, more people have access to the internet on a continual basis, but there may still be factors that limit internet usage.

Stephan Ek’s doctor dissertation titled in English *On Information, Media and Health in a Societal Context* (2005) pays special attention to people’s use of the media and health information. There are a few findings that are especially interesting from the study. Sense of coherence (SOC) is a term that Ek uses, and explains that from an information science perspective, having a strong sense of coherence is the same as being information literate;

A strong sense of coherence is thus determined by the extent to (1) which a person is linked to structures (2) from which information is received, (3) and the extent to which a person is capable of integrating it (4) and transmitting information to the structures, (5) which provide appropriate feedback (p. 2).

Ek claims that “the respondents with a strong SOC have an improved capacity to manage the media’s information flood, transform it into comprehensible and meaningful form for themselves in their own context” (p. 8). The study was completed in Finland, which may have

different outcomes due to their culture compared to other countries. “Finnish citizens use the daily press, news and factual-documentary programs on the radio and television as their principal sources of gathering health information” (p. 7). The daily media is the dominating source for their health information. However, the daily media are given a skeptical eye as “most respondents said that the media was ‘only’ fairly reliable” but “a very small portion of the respondents claim that the daily media is unreliable or extremely unreliable” (p. 8). Education can be a dividing factor for how people seek health information, but that was not the case for Ek’s study. Interest in and search for health information is not influenced by education, but those with higher education have a higher usage frequency of the health information than those with less schooling. In addition, “those with higher education trust official health information more than those with lower education, whereas this is the inverse when the source is the family” (p. 8). When it comes to the reliability of health information sources, direct contact with medical professionals is the most trusted source, with other highly trusted sources also including books, encyclopedias and official health information. When it comes to gender, women are more interested in health-related information while men are passive receivers of health information. The study showed that women trust official health information sources more than men (p. 8). Ek’s findings show many different aspects of trust within health information that can give good insight into the followers of Sarah and Lauren.

Culture and Trust

Cultural differences need to be taken into account when it comes to trust. Different areas of the world have different ways of trusting people. Eric Uslaner (2002) shows that there are cultural differences within the mentality of “people can be trusted” (p. 231). He gives a few reasons for this. According to Uslaner, economic equality increases trust between citizens. “The more equitable the distribution of wealth in a country, the more trusting its people will be” (p. 230). In addition, Uslaner sees a correlation between optimism and trust. The data he uses to determine optimism in a population is whether people can count on success. However, there are only 26 countries with data available for this that do not have a legacy of communism. Greater economic equality can be a result of great trust between people in a few countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Anglophone Canadians and Australia. In places such as Turkey, South Africa and most Latin American countries people are less likely to trust other people (p. 231). The aspect of cultural differences within trust in strangers can play a key role in how different areas in the world

trust information they find on social media. However, trusting strangers can also depend on the background of the person giving information about a subject.

In more recent years it has become more important to research trusting information online, as the internet is widely used by different people. One study done by Wan-Ying Lin, Zinzi Zhang, Hayeon Song and Kikuto Omori (2016) examined health information seeking on the Web. They looked at how self-disclosure of health information online is associated with trusting social media and trying to reduce uncertainties from information from health professionals. Their quantitative questionnaire was sent out to college students in the U.S.A., South Korea and Hong Kong. These three societies were selected because they are the regions with high internet usage and gives the possibility of an East-West comparison. The participants' age ranged from 17 to 33 and the average was 21. Their first hypothesis is that "trust in social media is positively associated with self-disclosure online" (p. 290). Their first hypothesis was supported by their results as there was "a positive link between trust in social media and self-disclosure [...] in the U.S. and South Korean sub-samples, but not in the Hong Kong sample" (p. 292). They do not state why there would be a negative association between trust in social media and self-disclosure online in Hong Kong compared to South Korea and the U.S., however, the overall sample shows a positive association. The second hypothesis is "uncertainty reduction actions are positively associated with self-disclosure online" (p. 291). The results support the second hypothesis as well. The "youths in Hong Kong were significantly more likely to disclose personal health issues with peers online" compared to the participants from the U.S. and South Korea. When it came to trusting health information on social media, the highest level of trust was shown from Hong Kong, South Korea as a runner-up and follow by the United States. They write that health professionals still have a large role in finding health information, however, their uncertainty towards the health professional's advice can be reduced by disclosing information about oneself online. There were three main findings from the study. Firstly, that information seeking and self-disclosure can help to lessen real-world uncertainties. Secondly, social media trust can influence users to look at other sources for more health-related information. Finally, respondents from Hong Kong and South Korea had a higher score for online self-disclosure compared to the U.S (p. 293).

Another study was done by Hayeon Song et al. (2016) which shows distinct similarities to the study just mentioned. However, they have different goals. Song et al. wished to "investigate cultural differences in trust of online health information" in the United States, Korea and Hong Kong. They did not look at the self-disclosure of the information online as the previous study did, instead they focused on the trust of health information

online. The same regions were used; U.S., South Korea and Hong Kong, and the survey was sent out to college students in these areas. It is unclear if the respondents from the first survey and this one are the same, but as the number of participants is different between the studies it can be inferred that not all the respondents are the same. They received 826 responses from the three different regions. A similar method was used, as the one mentioned above. Song et al. wanted to discover whether there is a difference between Eastern and Western cultures when it comes to trusting experience- and expertise-based information online. The study had many different hypotheses that included which culture would be more likely to trust expertise-based and experience-based information as well as a hypothesis that Koreans and Hongkongers are more likely to search for health information online on behalf of a family member compared to Americans. The results “suggested significant cultural differences between analytic and holistic cultures [...] indicating Americans searched expertise-based health information [...] significantly more often than participants from Hong Kong [...] and Korea” (2016). They also found that Hongkongers and Koreans trusted experience-based health information sources more than Americans. The American respondents showed a stronger preference to expertise-based information sources; “Americans consulted health care providers to a significantly greater extent than Koreans and Hongkongers” (2016). Their last hypothesis concerning searching for health information on behalf of a family member was supported. Hongkongers and Koreans, compared to Americans, were more likely to search for health information on behalf of a family member because it is “an important family responsibility” (2016). The study indicates that there are cultural differences between the Americans and Asian cultures when it comes to what type of information they seek on health online.

Luis Fernandez-Luque, Randi Karlsen and Genevieve B. Melton (2011) presented a study at the 20th ACM international conference on how they created a more trustworthy result list when it came to searching for health information on YouTube. They mention how a YouTube video about diabetes could be highly ranked by YouTube’s algorithm using the search terms and key words the creator of the video has added to the video. These could be key words that are only there to attract viewers. Fernandez-Luque et al. write “relevant health videos in YouTube can be ‘buried’ under highly popular videos that are not health related at all” (p. 1918). In their view, a celebrity with diabetes is likely to be ranked higher than an informational video concerning diabetes. To improve the search for health information on YouTube the study created a search algorithm that they called HealthTrust. Their data set was the top 20 relevant diabetes channels from a YouTube search and the top 20 from the

HealthTrust algorithm. Some channels overlapped, meaning the list ended up containing 34 channels. Two health care professionals were given an alphabetical list of the results and they determined if they would recommend the YouTube channels to their patients with diabetes. The study's quality control was therefore the two professionals. A high-quality channel would be a channel the professionals would recommend to patients while a low-quality channel would not be recommended. The results from the health professionals showed that "18 channels were recommended by [the health care professionals], 6 by half of them and 10 by none of them" (p. 1919). The study indicated that the highly ranked videos on YouTube were of low quality and could contain bad information about diabetes. Their created algorithm, HealthTrust, performed well according to their health care professionals, as it successfully filtered out low quality YouTube channels (p. 1920). The study indicates that finding health information on YouTube can be challenging. Highly ranked videos from YouTube's algorithm can be at the top of the recommendations because of tags and popular YouTube channels instead of relevant or correct information. Though their study does have some limitations, such as only using two health care professionals to find high and low quality channels, the HealthTrust algorithm makes it easier to find more trustworthy information sources by eliminating the low quality channels.

Social Media Influencers

Social media was in 2017 being used actively by 2.46 billion people (Statista, 2018a). The importance of social media is becoming more noticeable. This has brought about social media influencers (SMIs). An SMI will usually have a large following on social media and a specific area of expertise. Social media influencers can be celebrities, industry experts, bloggers, content creators and micro bloggers (Influencer Marketing Hub, undated).

An exploratory and preliminary study done by Karen Freberg, Kristin Graham, Karen McGaughey and Laurea A. Freberg (2011) researched how the public perceives the personalities of SMIs. They used the California Q-sort (CAQ) method created by Jack Block in 1961 which has 100 characteristics for a persona that can be made comparable with different studies. Their results about SMIs were compared to the characteristics of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) "[b]ecause CEOs and other internal leaders often play the role of official spokespersons for their organizations" (p. 91), just like SMIs are spokespersons for their own brand. Each participant in the study was shown a YouTube video and given a fact sheet on the social media influencer. The participants were 32 undergraduate students who

each completed the CAQ for one of the four SMIs. “The California Q-sort (CAQ) gives a participant a series of 100 attributes to rank order depending on how well the attribute describes the target” (p. 91). There were some similarities in the results. Both CEOs and SMIs “were perceived as smart, ambitious, productive, poised, power-oriented, candid, and dependable”. They were both also “perceived as NOT being victimized, likely to give up, self-defeating, lacking meaning in life, doubting adequacy, submission, fearful, anxious, and thin-skinned” (p. 91). However, there were some characteristics that distinguished CEOs from SMIs. “CEOs were viewed as more critical, skeptical, and difficult to impress than SMIs. SMIs were viewed as more likely to be sought out for advice and reassurance and more likely to give advice than CEOs” (p. 91). Though the study was centered on the characteristics of SMIs, the results can indicate that SMIs seem more trustworthy with certain characteristics than CEOs. This observation is mainly due to the differences in the characteristics. The participants were more likely to go to an SMI than a CEO for advice and reassurance. It could be that SMIs seem more relatable than CEOs. Furthermore, the common and uncommon characteristics between CEOs and SMIs also indicates that the participants put the SMIs on a pedestal when it comes to having life “figured out” and that they do not lack meaning in life. It is unknown what other characteristics were reviewed and what the scores were, as the characteristics mentioned above are all the characteristics Freberg et al.’s article mentions.

In 2015 Stephanie Fred conducted a study for her dissertation to examine endorsement and viewership effects on the source credibility of YouTubers. The study was conducted with participation from 316 women. The video was chosen from a popular YouTuber and the video was a brand endorsed makeup tutorial only using the brand endorsed products. Each participant was shown a video and some of the statistics around the video (i.e. number of subscribers, number of video views and thumbs-up and thumbs-down ratings). The video was manipulated to create two different videos and the number of views was manipulated two times. This ended up creating four different scenarios: (1) a video with brand endorsement and high viewership, (2) a video with brand endorsement and low viewership, (3) a video with no brand endorsement and high viewership, and (4) a video had no brand endorsement and low viewership. Each participant was only exposed to one scenario. Out of the 316 female participants, “93 females [were] exposed to the *non-brand endorsed-low viewership* stimulus, 72 females exposed to *non-brand endorsed-high viewership* stimulus, 81 females exposed to *brand endorsed-high viewership stimulus*, and 70 females exposed to *brand endorsed-low viewership* stimulus” (p. 19). In this way it would be possible to see how number of views and brand endorsement would affect the YouTuber’s trustworthiness and

perceived expertise. In terms of trustworthiness, the results showed that “non-brand endorsed conditions resulted in higher-rated trustworthiness [...] than brand-endorsed conditions” (p. 23). A YouTuber with a brand endorsement is considered *less* trustworthy than a YouTuber without a brand endorsement. In addition, low viewership has a higher-rated trustworthiness than high viewership (p. 23). Perceived expertise was another factor considered in the study. Having “low viewership conditions resulted in higher-rated expertise than high viewership conditions” (p. 27). Likewise, having no brand endorsement resulted in higher-rated expertise than having a brand endorsement. Fred explains that the findings from the study suggest that there is greater trustworthiness to a YouTuber with no brand endorsements than one with brand endorsements. The effect of the number of viewership did not make a difference to the perceived expertise, however, a YouTuber’s trustworthiness was higher when the video has a lower viewership (p. 27). This study indicates that YouTubers and influencers can have a great impact on their followers with a small and large viewership.

Other research questions

All these aspects of trust and information seeking raise more questions that need to be addressed in the thesis. There are numerous research questions that can be associated with the main research question due to the different aspects of trust. The research presented will be linked to the research questions for a more detailed analysis of information seeking and what affects trust. These aspects are appointed to the questions below.

Demographic Factors

Uslaner (2002) writes that the economic state of people can affect how they trust strangers, therefore the demographic factors need to be considered. The participant’s age could affect trust, as well as their educational background (Sutter and Kocher, 2007). It is theorized that participants with an educated background within fitness, health or nutrition will be less trusting of Sarah and Lauren than someone without that educated background (Ek, 2005). The research question to encompass this subject is as follows:

- ★ What is the relationship between demographic factors (age, gender, education) and trust?

One of the demographic factors, namely gender, was not possible to evaluate as all but one of the participants were women. This indicates that the forums and areas for selection of participants are highly populated by women. Because of this, gender will not be discussed in the analysis but could be an interesting aspect for future research.

Environment

The earlier research from Wyatt et al. (2002) and Stephan Ek (2005) demonstrates how a person's environment can affect where they seek health information. There is little research done on the specific areas of fitness and nutrition, but since the papers are focused on health this can also be considered to cover fitness and nutrition. One example of this is the research paper by Fernandez-Luque et al. (2011) that looked at diabetes, which can belong in both a health and nutrition category.

★ Where do the participants seek information within fitness, health and nutrition?

Knowing where participants seek information for fitness, health and nutrition helped get an overview of how trusting they are of different environments in their lives; friends, family, mass media, YouTube, other social media and research papers. One area that was not added as an option was asking their doctor, which limits the results and should be added to future research.

YouTubers

At the beginning of the project, the plan was to ask 12 different YouTubers to distribute the survey via their social media. Even if some of the YouTubers did not reply, there would still have been enough participants. However, information overload was feared. First, only the followers of *Sarah's Day* were asked to take part in the survey, but there were not enough responses. Therefore, the followers of *Lose it like Lauren* were also asked to participate. Sarah is 25 years old, from Australia, has been on YouTube for four years and has gotten a large following (650,000 subscriber on YouTube) in the last years. Lauren is 32 years old, from the United Kingdom, has been on YouTube for 8 years and has a smaller following (71,000 subscribers on YouTube) than Sarah. In order to see if there is a difference between how much participants trust Sarah and Lauren, looking at their responses will be important. Sarah makes many brand recommendations and has a high viewership, while Lauren rarely makes brand recommendations and has a lower viewership.

★ What are the differences and similarities of the respondents' trust of *Sarah's Day* and *Lose it like Lauren's* channels?

Culture and Trust

Earlier research shows that culture can play a role in how much people trust others (Song et al., 2016; Uslaner, 2002), and since Sarah and Lauren are from different countries and

continents it is vital to look at where their viewers are from. Differences in the respondent's culture could affect how they trust Sarah and Lauren. There could be a YouTube culture, meaning that the users of YouTube have the same morals and values, hence, the same level of trust towards Sarah and Lauren.

★ How does the participant's culture affect trust and is there a YouTube culture?

The survey resulted in having no participants from South America, only three from South Africa and two from different countries in Asia. Therefore, the results about culture are mainly of Western culture, with participants from North America, all over Europe and Oceania. To answer this question, I have looked at the three regions with the most respondents and whether there are differences in their trust of Sarah and Lauren. More detail about where participants are from will be given later in the paper.

Time and Trust

Nissenbaum's research (2001) raises many different questions, one of which is how *history and reputation* can affect trust. Figuring out if the amount of time a participant has followed Sarah or Lauren affects their trust of them will be significant.

★ How does the amount of time a respondent has followed a YouTuber affect trust?

These research questions will help to get a better understanding of the different aspects of trust with information on YouTube. Having numerous research questions will help to get a better understanding of the level of trust which the followers have towards Sarah and Lauren. As the participants of the survey may not be fully aware of their trust towards a YouTuber, they will not directly be asked if they trust them. Instead questions on how they respond to recommendations will be asked to determine their level of trust towards Sarah or Lauren with regards to product recommendations, fitness, health, nutrition and lifestyle.

Method

Before looking at the specific methods used for this thesis, background information concerning the two YouTubers will be presented. This is to give a better understanding of the followers and their comments for the reader. The YouTuber's backgrounds may influence the way their followers trust them depending on their qualifications and more. Afterwards the methods used for data collection and how the questionnaire was created will be presented.

YouTuber Backgrounds

In order to get a better understanding of the influencers and their followers some background information about them will be necessary to go through. The respondents to the survey are people who are viewers of the two influencers described below. Having background information about the YouTubers gives an insight into the survey responses for those people that have not heard of either YouTuber.

Sarah's Day

The first YouTuber is Australian Sarah Stevenson, better known on social media as *Sarah's Day* (undated). Sarah started her YouTube channel to inform and help other people who had hormonal acne. Four or five years later her channel has grown and changed into a fitness, lifestyle and health related channel. She currently has approximately 650,000 subscribers on YouTube and her Instagram following consists of 448,000 followers. Her subscriber count on YouTube has grown exponentially after she became a full time YouTuber in January 2017. At the beginning of 2017 she had around 150,000 subscribers. Her upload schedule is pretty consistent, with uploads being every three days. Sarah still talks about hormonal acne and skin problems on her social media channels, but the focus has become more centered on living a healthy lifestyle in later years. She is gluten and lactose intolerant, meaning she has a specific diet that she follows. In May 2017 she released her first e-book which is an 8-week workout program for an active lifestyle. Her second e-book was launched May 2018 and is a continuation of her first e-book (Sarah's Day, 2018). The workouts in her e-books are checked by her boyfriend, who is a certified personal trainer, as Sarah does not have an educated background for this. After the release of her first e-book, Sarah created a Facebook group called the Sezzy Squad (a play on her nickname Sez or Sezzy). Sarah tries to promote living a healthy lifestyle that works for you. Following what someone else is doing and trying

to force yourself to do it is not how she lives her life anymore. She used to restrict herself with what she could and could not eat, while now she advocates for her followers to “listen to your body” and give it what it wants, whether that be a certain food or giving it a rest from the gym. Her videos on YouTube and her content on Instagram include many brands, where she does not clearly state what is sponsored and what isn’t. When Sarah started her YouTube channel she was studying to become a primary school teacher at university, but she stopped in order to do what she loved; create YouTube videos for her viewers. She does not have an educated background within health, fitness, or nutrition. She is not a health professional, as she herself often points out. She is just showing her followers what works for her and her body.

Lose it like Lauren

The second influencer is from the United Kingdom and is called Lauren Mae, better known as *Lose it like Lauren* (undated). Her username on social media refers to her weight loss journey, which is the background for her YouTube channel. She started the channel around 10 years ago to document her weight loss journey. From the beginning until October 2016 she gained quite a few subscribers on YouTube over time. However, in the last two years her subscriber count has risen from 57,000 in 2016 to 67,000 in July 2017 and the subscriber count currently sits at 71,000. This may be due to some months’ absent from her YouTube channel and inconsistent uploading times. She currently uploads a video every Wednesday and Sunday. Lauren managed to lose in total 147 pounds. To lose the weight she had a very restrictive relationship with food where she got to the point of being scared of eating carbohydrates. Lauren had an operation to get rid of the loose skin around her stomach and she recorded her experience of the surgery on her channel. In the last two years she gained a lot of weight due to mental health problems and an eating disorder. She is currently trying to lose weight again and is documenting her journey for her followers, but also give tips and advice for how to become healthier. She frequently reminds her viewers to drink enough water and do what works for them. Her videos often contain tips for weight loss and how to create good habits for weight loss. She does not do sponsored videos, instead she has a Patreon where people can pledge a monthly sum to her in order for her to make a living off YouTube (Patreon, 2018). She also has another part-time job as she does not yet earn enough money from creating social media content. She has a personal trainer qualification but does not show her workouts or give specific routines to follow. Instead she gives advice such as to go for a walk, do what makes

you happy, and exercise in a way that your body lets you. This is an important distinction as many of her followers could be on weight loss journeys where moving and walking can be difficult.

Finding a Method

During the initial stages of the project, different research methods were considered. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were the most reasonable methods to consider. A qualitative research method is used to get a better insight into the people involved in the groups for the research. This can include observations of the situations or group that is being researched or interviews with the people involved in the research area (Johannessen, Tufte and Christoffersen, 2010, p. 100). Interviews can be done with individuals through focused, structured or semi-structured interviews. It is also possible to do group interviews. Each research method for the interviews will affect the answers of the recipients. For example, in an individual interview the respondent may be more prone to speak truthfully than in a larger group. However, a larger group can remind respondents of their own experiences if another respondent gives examples from their lives. Qualitative research methods are better suited if the researcher wants the opinion of a few respondents. This compared to a quantitative research method that collects data from a large quantity of people in order to generalize the results. It is important to note that a quantitative survey does not necessarily give a better overview of reality compared to qualitative interviews. A quantitative survey may give generalized information about what a lot of people do or don't do, but it may not give the reasoning behind those actions, such as a qualitative interview could prove (p. 260).

For this thesis, a quantitative research method has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the results from a quantitative survey will give a larger understanding of the different cultures around the world. Interviewing fewer people would not suffice as their opinions would be considered personal opinions and not that of their culture. Secondly, due to the different locations of the interviewees, conducting qualitative interviews are not possible within the capacity or time constraint of the thesis. Video calls could be an option, but the connection between the researcher and the respondents would be more challenging to analyze. Lastly, people's demographic factors and their background can affect trust, therefore getting more answers from a large group, such as from Sarah and Lauren's followers, can prove to be better suited than qualitative in-depth interviews.

A study done by Peter J. Moor, Ard Heuvelman and Ria Verleur researched the reasons for *Flaming on YouTube* (2010). They define the term flaming as behavior that is

different in online communication compared to what a person would say when face-to-face with someone else. Their study comprised of collecting data from YouTube users that were either sending or receiving flaming comments. Each participant was contacted via their YouTube account and sent a private message asking them to participate in the online survey. They used a Likert Scale for their survey questions. This means the majority of their questions were statements where the participants could say how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The Likert Scale is as follows:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Using these numbers, it is possible to create an average to see what the average of the participants felt about the statements. This study is relevant to this paper because the method is related to the research within YouTube. Though this paper and the Flaming research are different subjects, the method of collecting data is similar. A challenge is to get in contact with people on YouTube as it is not possible to just create a post for all the users on the site. However, Moor et al. solved this by sending private messages with different links to users on YouTube. Taking the Likert Scale as a starting point, it can be possible and valuable to use a Likert-type scale in parts of this thesis. The Likert-type scale will give data on what the average is for different statements concerning trust of information on YouTube.

Participant selection

In the beginning stages of the project, I wanted to contact 12 different YouTubers to distribute the survey to their followers. The list consisting of 12 YouTubers was thought to be too large and would result in data overload. I would also be dependent on the YouTubers posting my survey to their followers. Of course, not all 12 would be willing to do this, and it was uncertain who would and who wouldn't share the survey. Instead, *Sarah's Day* and her followers were selected due to the Sezzy Squad Facebook group. The name comes from Sezzy (and also Sez) being a nickname for the name "Sarah" in Australia. This group, with around 20,000 members, gave me the chance to not be dependent on the YouTuber's to post my survey as I could write and post about them myself. I had seen some others do this as well on the Facebook group and it was well received. From other posts in the group I expected to

have around 200 answers from the Sezzy Squad, however, there only ended up being 102 answers from the Sezzy Squad. Therefore, Lauren was asked to help reach her followers by posting the survey on her Instagram Story. The survey was originally made specifically for questions about Sarah but was modified slightly to fit for Lauren. I will touch more on this later. It may seem counter-intuitive to post on a Facebook group about YouTube, however, the Sezzy Squad was created by Sarah in order to connect her viewers and Lauren herself sent out the survey link to her viewers via Instagram.

Survey Limitations

The results from the quantitative survey will not be possible to generalize for several reasons. First of all, only the members of the Sezzy Squad Facebook page and *Lose it like Lauren's* Instagram followers will be asked to join the survey. Secondly, the members of the Sezzy Squad and Lauren's Instagram are only one portion of Sarah and Lauren's subscribers on YouTube. The survey will give an overview of the views of some of their subscribers, but they cannot be considered a representative population of their YouTube subscribers. It is theorized that the members of the Sezzy Squad are subscribers that enjoy her videos, want help with their fitness, health or nutrition, or want to be surrounded by like-minded people. As for Lauren, the followers that check her Instagram Story could also be very interested in her message as a YouTuber. Lastly, the respondents of the survey will not be a representative population of users of YouTube in general. It will not be possible to generalize the results from this survey due to these limitations in the method. However, the survey still has value as it will give insight into how much followers of YouTubers trust two very specific YouTubers within fitness, health and nutrition. The survey results from this thesis can be a stepping stone for future research into how YouTubers and social media influencers are perceived and trusted with information.

Survey Design

The complete questionnaires can be found in Attachment 1 and 2. The questionnaire and research method were approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) in January 2018 (see attachment 3). In order to create a Facebook or Instagram account, a user has to be 13 or older (Facebook, 2018; Instagram, 2018). Therefore, respondents from the Sezzy Squad and Lauren's followers could be in their early teens (13-14). I wanted to include the youngest members as well, however the NSD were concerned with this age group as they

are not old enough to give consent to participate for surveys like this themselves. The 13-14 year-olds would need to have their parents' consent in order to participate in the survey. Due to the geographically diverse locations of the participants² and the use of social media, it would be too difficult to receive consent from the parents of participants in this age group. Therefore, this age group was excluded from the survey. Losing the participants in this age group was disappointing as their trust of the YouTubers could be quite different from older people. This is definitely an aspect that could be interesting to do further research on. In addition, 15-17-year-olds needed to give specific consent to participating in the survey. At first, I tried to give specific consent information to this age group, however this was not possible with the survey design website I was using, Nettskjema (Universitetet i Oslo, undated). All participants needed to give specific consent, instead of just having information about the survey in the introduction.

Keeping the research questions in mind, the questions for the survey were created. For the most part, closed-ended questions were used because it makes it easier for the participant to answer and it is easier to analyze (Hank, Jordan and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 258). Open-ended questions would give participants a chance to answer vaguer questions with textual answers. In comparison, closed-ended questions give the participants with a limited number of predetermined responses. However, open-ended questions can have more natural answers from the respondents as they can freely write what they mean instead of answer within a perimeter. The creator of a survey with closed-ended may unknowingly exclude an option, but can instead add an answer with "other". If a participant chooses this option they can give a written answer instead (p. 258). The survey for this thesis uses closed-ended questions with an option for "other" on some questions and a text section at the very end of the survey where the participant could write a comment about the survey or additional information about their thoughts on the topic.

Methodological literature indicates that surveys should start with easy questions for the participants to answer, together with information on the survey (Hank, Jordan and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 258; Ringdal, 2001, p. 276). Easing the participant into the survey will make them more likely to want to complete the survey to the end (Ringdal, 2001, p. 276). The second section is the heart of the survey. Related questions are grouped together and sensitive questions should be put at the end of the section (Hank, Jordan and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 258). The last section can be demographic factors, though these can also be in the first section. The important aspect of the last part is to round off the survey (Ringdal, 2001, p. 276-277). The thesis survey has been divided up into the three different sections such as recommended by

Hank, Jordan and Wildemuth, and Ringdal. The first section concerns receiving background information on participants, such as demographic factors. The second section includes the heart of the survey and has been divided into two sub-section: information seeking behaviors and specific questions concerning Sarah, Lauren and YouTube. The last section is the conclusion of the survey with a text box for further comments or concerns.

The first part of the survey concentrated on receiving background information about the participants; age, nationality and gender. Next, they are asked about their occupation, and depending on their answer they would be directed to different questions. With these questions they were also asked if they study or work within fitness, health or nutrition. After this the participant's environment for information seeking was taken into question. They were asked where and how often they seek information concerning fitness being able to choose *often*, *sometimes*, *seldom* and *never*. The different options were friends, family, mass media, YouTube, other social media and research papers. Another option that should have been added was their family doctor or other professionals, however, it was not included in the survey. This same question was asked three times but changing the subject: fitness, health or nutrition. It was important to keep the answers for these separate in order to see if there were differences in where the participants seek information for each subject. There were also separate questions for which factors influence their decision to follow a YouTuber within fitness, health, and nutrition. In hindsight, this question could have been made into one, and just see what influences their decision to follow a YouTuber within fitness, health and nutrition.

The second part focused solely on YouTube. The first questions were focused on determining how much they use YouTube by asking how often they go on YouTube and how many YouTubers they are subscribed to. The questionnaire then focused on the specific YouTubers: *Sarah's Day* and *Lose it like Lauren*. The followers of each YouTuber were sent a survey for the specific YouTuber they follow. Lauren's followers were asked about Lauren and Sarah's followers were asked about Sarah. The first questions focused on whether they follow the YouTuber, and if yes, where on social media they follow them and how long they have been following them. Here the surveys are a bit different, as Lauren has more social media platforms than Sarah. As mentioned earlier, to determine if the participants trust Sarah and Lauren, they were never directly asked if they trust them, but rather if they follow their recommendations. Therefore, the question is quite straight forward: do the participants follow their recommendations? The ones that answered *often* or *once or a few times* were given follow up questions about following recommendations, while those that answered *never* were

simply asked why and sent to the end of the survey. For the ones that have followed a recommendation were asked how much they agree or disagree with different statements concerning products, fitness, health, nutrition and lifestyle. Here the Likert scale was used as a starting point where the respondents could choose from strongly disagree to strongly agree. They were also asked about how they proceeded the last time they followed a recommendation from Sarah or Lauren in order to determine how their environment affects their information seeking process. At the very end of the survey, all participants were given an opportunity to ask questions or write a comment before being thanked for participating in the study.

Creating the questions to be added to the survey can present several challenges. Hank, Jordan and Wildemuth (2009) have created a list of aspects to guide in the creation of the survey instrument. The questions in the survey should only be questions that are relevant to the research question and that can be answered. Diminishing the risk of misinterpretation can be solved by only asking questions in complete sentences. The word choices for the questions need to be carefully considered to not seem biased, negative or offensive. Making sure that each question is only answering one aspect, and not asking two different aspects is also important. Having one question with two different aspects or questions within it can lead to confusion in the respondent's answers. Their last point is that the participation of the survey is voluntary, therefore, a respondent should not be forced to answer all questions before they can continue with the survey (p. 257-258). These guidelines will help to manage and create the questions for the thesis.

Pilot Survey

A pilot survey was sent out in January 2018 to several different friends from different educational, social and cultural backgrounds, however, all were from within Europe and have university degrees from different universities. The pilot survey was the survey which concerned *Sarah's Day*. None of the pilot survey respondents follow Sarah and were therefore neutral in the survey. Using people from the Sezzy Squad for the pilot survey could have been possible, but in order to not use up the respondents from the group, friends were asked to participate instead. Most comments about the survey were therefore concerning the way questions and answered were worded. The bigger questions and the outline of the survey was kept very similar from the pilot survey to the final product. The pilot survey showed that the

participants took around 2-5 minutes to complete the survey, which was shorter than I first thought due to the longer questions in the survey.

Releasing Survey

The survey was posted on the Sezzy Squad Facebook group four times. The first time was at the beginning of February 2018 and the first post generated 56 responses. The second post was added two weeks later and generated around 14 responses making the total 70 responses. A week later the survey was posted again, and the total count went up to 93 responses. By this point, it became clear that posting more on the Facebook group would not help receive many more responses. At the end of February, the survey was posted one last time and there were 9 responses, taking the final number to 102.

Due to the low response rate, the survey was modified so that it could be sent out to the followers of another YouTuber: *Lose it like Lauren*. The first part of the survey was kept the same as it does not concern the specific YouTuber, but rather information seeking, social media, and background information of the participants. The last part of the survey was modified so that it said Lauren instead of Sarah in the questions. Lauren does not have a Facebook group such as Sarah does, and she has a smaller YouTube channel. Lauren was kind enough to post the link to the survey on her Instagram Story. This means mostly her followers would see it and it was only available to be seen for 24 hours. The survey was available for 24 hours between February 27th and 28th. In total, the survey from Lauren received 43 responses.

Social Media Text Analysis

Due to the low number of respondents on the quantitative survey from both Sarah and Lauren, posts from the Sezzy Squad will be analyzed as supplementing data. Barbara Wildemuth explains that using existing artifacts or documents as data is a method that should be used together with other methods (2009, p. 158), such as being supplementary data to this study. Documents and artifacts can be a source of data to interpret people's information behavior. Wildemuth writes "...the process of data collection will not influence their content in the same way that more intrusive methods (such as interviewing someone or directly observing her) have an effect on the information behaviors being studied" (p. 158). Analyzing documents or artifacts can show a more accurate representation of reality because the creators of the documents were "not aware that the behavior will be object of study in the future" (p.

158). These documents can show information behaviors that are more natural and use a nonreactive approach. Analyzing the data can be done by qualitative content analysis. Zhang and Wildemtuh give an overview of the process of qualitative content analysis which ranges from preparing the data to reporting the findings (2009, p. 308). They mention that it is possible for the steps within the process of content analysis may vary depending on the dataset (p. 310). An important aspect of qualitative content analysis is being consistent in extraction of the coding. The consistency of the coding should be revised several times in order to ensure that the data sets are correct (p. 312). The coding scheme for the study of the Sezzy Squad consisted of when users mention trust in Sarah as well as sponsorships, where each post or comment was assigned a category. The data analysis of the Sezzy Squad will be presented later with findings concerning trust and sponsorships.

Data Processing and Analysis

The quantitative data from the survey was analyzed through the standardized report created in Nettskjema, but also through an MS Excel file to get better insight into the background of the participants. The variables from the numerous research questions were taken into consideration. In this way the data could be analyzed based on different factors to see what can affect trust, such as culture, age, education, etc. The Likert-type scale was used in the survey and was therefore used for the data analysis as well (Carnegie Mellon University, undated). The Likert-scale gave a better overview of the participant's opinions concerning recommendations than when a table or chart was created. This is because the Likert-scale uses the averages of the answers, meaning that the extremities are lost, but one can see the correlation between the variables more clearly. The qualitative text analysis of the Sezzy Squad was coded to find underlying themes within the Facebook posts.

Results

For this thesis, I used a quantitative approach with an online survey. The survey was sent out to the followers of two YouTubers: Sarah and Lauren. When the survey was released Sarah had 586,000 subscribers on YouTube and 403,000 followers on Instagram. Lauren had 70,000 subscribers on YouTube and 66,000 followers on Instagram. The survey was posted four times on The Sezzy Squad, with 20,000 members, as well as being posted once on Lauren's Instagram story for 24 hours. This resulted in 145 responses; 102 from the Sezzy Squad and 43 from Lauren's followers.

Sarah's followers

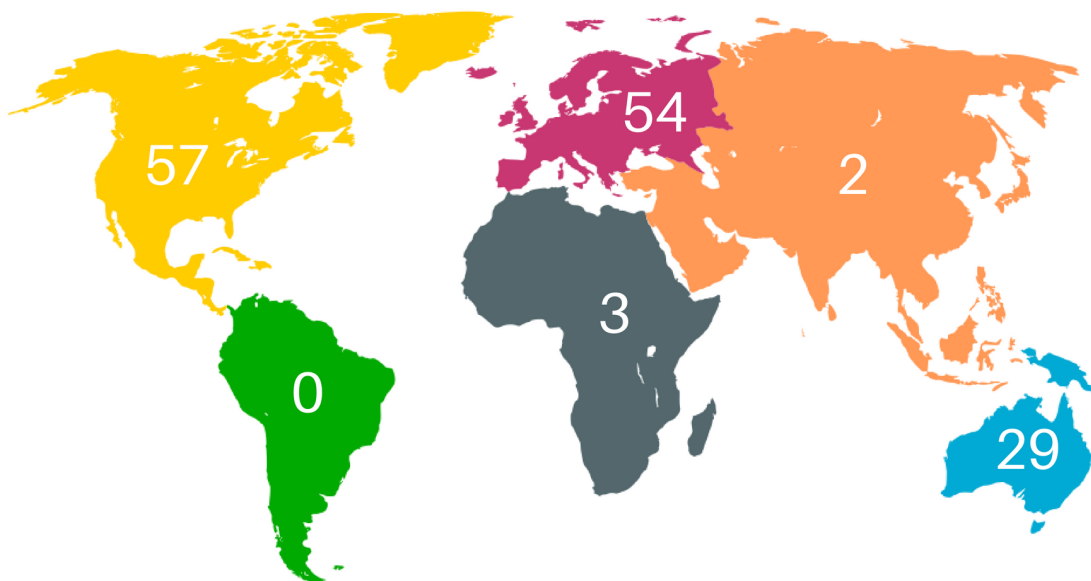
The respondents from Sarah were all between the ages of 15 and 34 years old and the average age was 22. The 102 respondents were all female. The respondents from Sarah were mostly students (62.7%), while 28.4% are employed and the remaining 8.8% chose the option "other". Out of the 64 respondents that are studying, only 25% study something within health, fitness and nutrition. The respondents could choose multiple answers to what they were studying within health, fitness and nutrition. The most popular area of study was health with 13.7%, nutrition came second with 6.9% and fitness has 3.9%. Out of the employed respondents, only 10.3% work within health, fitness and nutrition. No one worked within fitness, only one worked within nutrition and three work within health. From the rest of the respondents, three were unemployed, two are on leave and one is on a gap year. The other three were either disabled or stay-at-home-moms.

Lauren's followers

The respondents from Lauren were between 16 and 62 years old with an average age of 32. Out of the 43 responses from Lauren's followers, 42 were female and one was male. Lauren's followers were mostly employed (46.5%) while 27.9% are students and 25.6% chose "other". Out of all the students, 50% were studying something within health, fitness or nutrition. One respondent was studying fitness, another one nutrition and four of the respondents were studying health. With the employed respondents, 20% were working within health, fitness or nutrition. None of the employed respondents were working within fitness, one was working with nutrition while three work within health. From the "other" category, 27.3% are unemployed, 9.1% are on leave and no one is on a gap year. The remaining 63.6% that chose "other" are either retired, stay-at-home-moms, self-employed, babysitter or homemaker.

Locations

The 145 respondents had nationalities from 29 different countries around the world. These countries have been divided into 5 different regions in order to make analysis simpler. As can be seen in figure 1, there were no participants from South America, and from North America there were respondents from the British Virgin Islands, (n=1) Canada (n=12) and the United States of America (n=44). The region will be labeled as America. Europe had respondents from Albania (n=1), Austria (n=2), Belgium (n=3), Croatia (n=1), Czech Republic (n=2), Denmark (n=4), France (n=1), Germany (n=4), Great Britain (n=12), Hungary (n=2), Iceland (n=1), Ireland (n=1), Italy (n=1), Lithuania (n=3), Malta (n=1), The Netherlands (n=2), Norway (n=7), Poland (n=1), Slovenia (n=3), Spain (n=1) and Switzerland (n=1). Since there are so many different respondents with a small amount of people the entire continent will become one region; Europe. The respondents from Africa were all three from South Africa, and they will therefore be categorized as South Africa because there were no other participants within the continent. The Asian participants were from Singapore (n=1) and Iraq (n=1). The Oceanic region consists of participants from Australia (n=26) and New Zealand (n=3). It is very important to note that grouping the different countries within a continent into regions can make a generalized image that could not be the culture for the individual countries.



*Figure 1 – Total amount of participants divided into regions
(Picture from Wikipedia, modified by me (Continents by total wealth [picture], 2017))*

Different countries have different cultures and it is therefore difficult to say that Europe has one culture, when there are numerous different countries within Europe. Same with the Asian region, Iraq and Singapore are different countries from different locations within the continent. The results from this thesis will have a Western culture as most participants are from North America, Europe and Oceania.

Information Seeking

In order to determine where and how often participants tend to search for information concerning fitness, health or nutrition, a scale of *often*, *sometimes*, *seldom* and *never* was used. Table 1 shows the results from the question *Where and how often do you seek information concerning fitness, health and nutrition?* The results have been created into average numeric values where 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes and 4 = often and where (n=x) represents the number of respondents to the question. It is important to note that here a 4-point-scale is used and later a 5-point-scale is used. Consistency with this was not completed when creating the survey and needs to be kept in mind when reviewing the results.

**Table 1 – Where participants find information on fitness, health and nutrition and the average amount of time they use them (n=145)
(1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often)**

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Mass Media</i>	<i>YouTube</i>	<i>Other Social Media</i>	<i>Research Papers</i>
Fitness	2,4	2,3	2,6	3,5	3,1	2,4
Health	2,6	2,9	2,4	2,7	2,4	2,7
Nutrition	2,3	2,5	2,6	3,2	2,8	2,7
Total	2,4	2,6	2,5	3,1	2,8	2,6

All survey participants answered this question. Table 1 indicates that the participants use YouTube to find information concerning fitness more often than any other option, with other social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) being just a little less popular. The *seldom* used information sources was family, friends and research papers, followed closely by the mass media. When it comes to health, most information sources were used between seldom and sometimes, though the option with the highest number was family, followed by YouTube and research papers. For nutrition the most used is also YouTube, however, all of the options are on a very similar level. Friends and family are the least used and other social media and research papers are close to being used *sometimes*. The results from the table indicates that the participants are more likely to go to different medias and research papers to find information

on nutrition than to ask friends and family. This may indicate that the participants trust information that is backed by science instead of following advice from friends and family.

The average of all the options was calculated in order to see how often the participants used the different sources in total. YouTube is again the most used source, and this can indicate that it is the most trusted source for information within subjects such as fitness, health, and nutrition. Other social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. are also used sometimes for these subject areas. In addition, these are used more than the other options except for YouTube. As YouTube is a social media platform, it is possible to conclude that the participants use social media more often to find information on fitness, health and nutrition than the other options given to them. Mass media such as newspapers and magazines are right in between being used seldom and sometimes. It would be interesting to see if the participants actively look for information there concerning fitness, health and nutrition, or if the participants read mass medias separate from that and find relevant information serendipitously. Family is seldom to sometimes used, and further research to see if age would affect how much the participants trust their families within the different subjects could be necessary. This would also be fascinating to look at with friends, as friends in total are the least used out of all the options. Even looking at the cultural differences could be interesting as it could show if some cultures trust their family's and friend's opinions higher than others within fitness, health and nutrition. Research papers are in total also seldom to sometimes used. Seeing if the educational background could affect the trust of research papers would be possible for future research. Perhaps people with a higher education background are more likely to read, and therefore trust, research papers than those without a higher education. In addition, maybe those with higher education are more likely to look for research papers because they are used to reading them, while those without higher education might not seek research papers for information as they are not as familiar with them.

Later in the survey the participants were asked how they proceeded when they last followed Sarah or Lauren's recommendations. In Table 2 below we can see their answers in both number of responses and in percentage. It is important to note that 133 people answered this question because 12 people either don't follow the YouTubers on social media or they have never followed their recommendations. In addition, the Sezzy Squad is a Facebook group specifically for Sarah's followers, therefore Lauren's followers were not given this option (hence the Not Applicable (N/A) insertion).

Table 2 – How participants proceeded the last time they followed Sarah or Lauren’s recommendation (*n*=133)

Options	Sarah’s followers (<i>n</i>=93)		Lauren’s followers (<i>n</i>=40)	
	Number of responses	Percentage (%)	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
Immediately took the recommendation to use	7	7.5	12	30.0
Researched the recommendation online	79	85.0	23	57.5
Asked friends or family for their opinions	7	7.5	4	10.0
Wrote a post on Sezzy Squad asking for their advice	0	0.0	N/A	N/A
Other	0	0.0	1	2.5

From the table it is possible to see that the information seeking needs are rarely taken directly to use, with only 7.5% of Sarah’s followers and 30% of Lauren’s taking it immediately to use. The most used for both groups of followers was researching the recommendation online. Asking friends and family was the least chosen option for Lauren’s followers, except for the option “other”. One person chose other, and they were given a chance to write a comment which reads: “Used my own experience with [Lauren’s recommendation] to make it work better”. The least used option for Sarah’s followers was asking on the Sezzy Squad, which is surprising, considering that the survey was posted on the Sezzy Squad Facebook group which is very active. The results indicate that researching recommendations online is the most frequently used, and therefore the most trusted.

Following a YouTube channel

The participants of the survey were also asked what influences their decisions to subscribe to a channel on YouTube. There were three separate questions to determine if there were differences in fitness, health and nutrition. Therefore, this question and the results are very specific to fitness, health, and nutrition, and results might have been different if there was a question of what influences their decision to follow any YouTuber. Figure 2 on the next page implies that the most important characteristic in all three categories is the YouTuber’s expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.). This is also the only option that has a higher percentage of importance with health compared to the other two categories; fitness and nutrition. The authenticity of the YouTuber also influences 70-82% of the respondents. The entertainment value of the videos is an influencing factor more within fitness and nutrition, however, within health it is less important, with only 25% choosing this

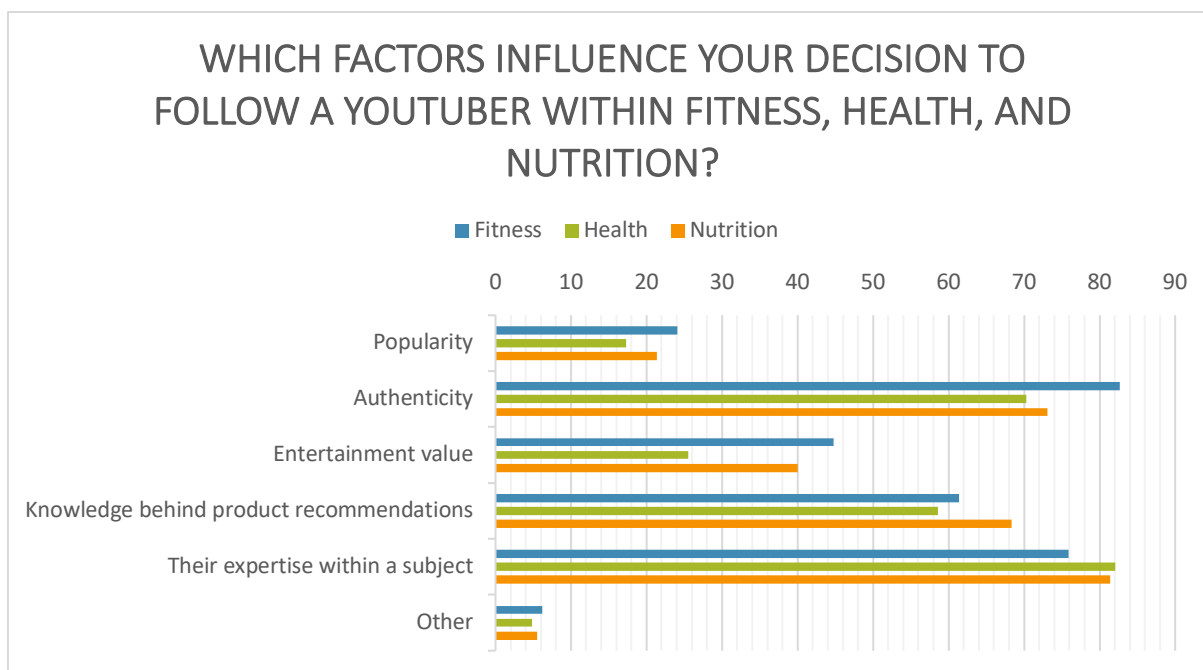


Figure 2 – Factors that influence followers to subscribe to a YouTube channel within fitness, health and nutrition.

option. Popularity only influences 17-24% of the respondents to follow a YouTuber. This implies that it is the least important factor when it comes to subscribing to a YouTuber.

Interestingly, the responses show that the factors that are important within nutrition and fitness are not as important when it comes to health. Even though all the values for the YouTuber's expertise within a subject are similar for fitness, health and nutrition, all the other factors are lower for health than the other categories. This can indicate that videos within health should be more serious and concrete compared to the fitness and nutrition videos.

For each question they were also given an option of *other* and then a text box in which to explain their preferences. This option was used a few times and there are differences between the extra comments for fitness, health and nutrition. Comments concerning fitness mention that the YouTuber should have a good personality or "vibe", positivity, seem relatable or that the viewer can aspire to be like them. In addition, two comments write that they like to follow fitness YouTubers that back up their recommendations with scientific papers and reliable sources. One person comments that they don't follow YouTubers that are fake or too gym crazy. Overall, personality, aspiration and showing research determines whether they follow a fitness YouTube channel or not.

Concerning following a YouTuber within health there weren't as many comments. These comments are centered on professional recommendations, such as the YouTuber backing up their recommendations or information with scientific research. Two comment that

they don't seek or follow health advice from online sources, and one comments that they follow YouTubers that their medical team recommends. Two people mention personality and having a good vibe. These comments indicate that following a health YouTuber is affected by if the YouTuber backs up their information with scientific information.

For nutrition, the comments are similar but distinct as well. Again, research papers are mentioned, as in they need the YouTuber to explain why they eat or recommend certain foods. Following recommendations from personal trainers or other people is also a factor. In addition, if the food looks appetizing, one commenter is more likely to follow the recipe and the YouTuber. One person comments that the YouTuber's recipes may inspire them to make one dish, but not change their whole diet based on the YouTuber's. The last comment writes that she will follow the YouTuber if she wants to look like them. Following a YouTuber with nutritional information is not as affected by personality, rather by scientific support on the subject, recommendations from others and if the recipes a YouTuber shares seem appetizing.

YouTube Usage

To be able to determine how often the users use YouTube, they were all asked how often they go on the social media site. The results are not that surprising, as the survey was sent out to people who follow YouTubers, and are users of other social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, where the surveys were released. According to their own views, 51% of the respondents go on YouTube several times a day, 21-23% go once a day or several times a week, and only 2% go once a week or several times a month. The respondents use YouTube quite often and check the website frequently. The survey participants are on YouTube between several times a day and several times a month, which indicates that they are active YouTube users.

The participants were also asked how many YouTubers they are subscribed to. The respondents are on average subscribed to 33 YouTube channels, with the lowest number being 0 and the highest number being 300. These numbers are only approximations from the respondents' behalf. This question was designed to get an understanding of how the participants use YouTube and if they subscribe to many channels or are picky in who they follow. The last part of the survey were specific questions regarding the two YouTubers.

From Sarah there were 102 respondents, who all found the survey via the Sezzy

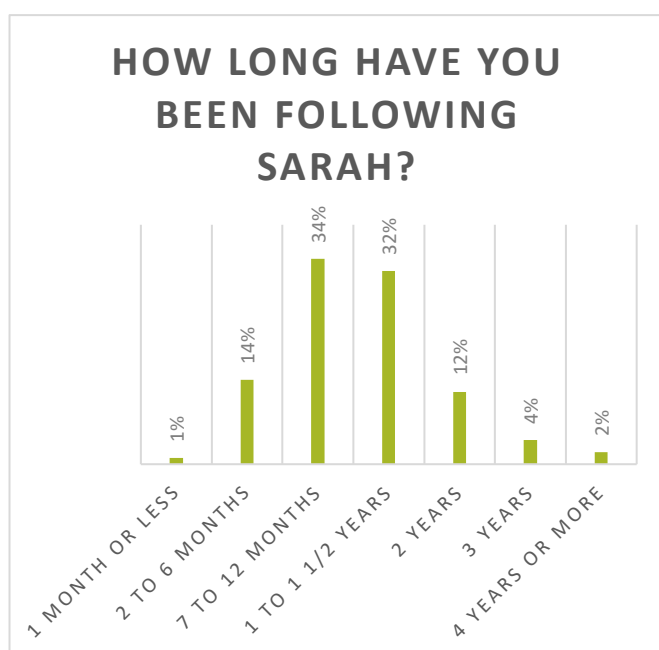


Figure 3 – How long the respondents have followed Sarah shown in percentage

followed her for 1 month or less and the remaining 14% of respondents have followed her for 2 to 6 months.

From Lauren's Instagram story post, 43 people responded to the survey, and all of them follow Lauren. Compared to Sarah, Lauren has a few more social media platforms;

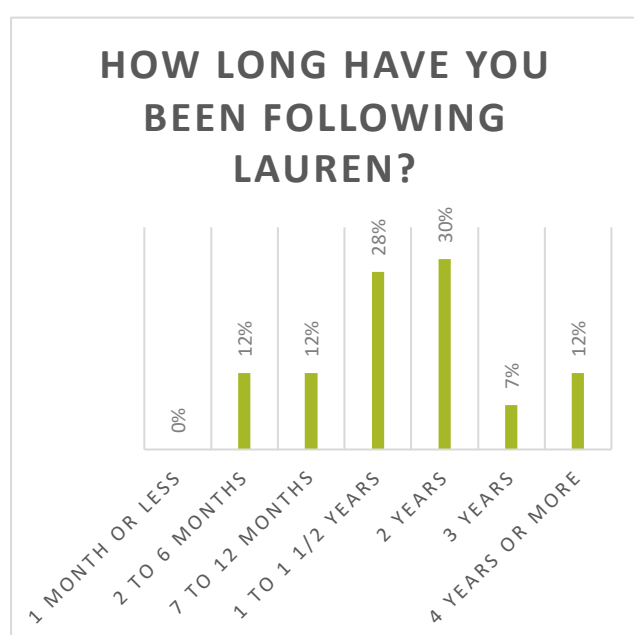


Figure 4 – How long the respondents have followed Lauren shown in percentage

Squad. Out of the respondents, 99 follow Sarah, either on Instagram or YouTube. The three that did not follow Sarah were automatically sent to the end of the survey. These three could have received some different questions on why they are in the Sezzy Squad but do not follow Sarah, but it was not added in the survey. 95 or the participants follow Sarah on both YouTube and Instagram, but two participants only follow her on Instagram, and two others follow her only on YouTube. As seen in figure 4, the respondents of the survey have been following her for varying amounts of time. 18% have followed her for more than 2 years, while 66% have followed her between 7 and 18 months. Only 1% has

followed her for 1 month or less and the remaining 14% of respondents have followed her for 2 to 6 months.

YouTube, Instagram, Patreon and Facebook. Patreon is a platform where a creator can receive pledges and money on a monthly basis from their patrons. Patreon was created because YouTube does not pay YouTubers very much for their content and another solution was needed for YouTubers to earn money. The content of the Patreon page is only available to those who pledge money to the Patreon (Patreon, 2018). With Lauren, 97.7% of the respondents follow her on Instagram, 90.7% follow her on YouTube, 25.6% follow her on Facebook and 2.3% follow her on Patreon. As seen in figure 4 there are no new followers

within the last month, while 24% have started following Lauren in the last 2 to 12 months. Most of the respondents have followed her for 1 or 2 years and only 7% have followed for 3 years. The remaining 12% of the respondents have followed her for four years or more.

Trust and recommendations

The next section of the survey concerns how the respondents follow Sarah and Lauren's recommendations. Out of the 99 responses from Sarah's followers, 6 people *never* follow her recommendation, 73 people follow her recommendations *once or a few times*, and the remaining 20 follow her recommendations *often*. Out of the 43 responses from Lauren's followers, 3 people *never* follow her recommendations, 26 people follow her recommendations *once or a few times*, and the remaining 14 follow her recommendations *often*. The nine that never follow their recommendations were given an opportunity to explain why they do not follow their recommendations. The respondents could choose multiple answers from six different options, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Why Sarah and Lauren's followers do not follow their recommendations, a multiple-choice question ($n=9$)

Options	Sarah's followers	Lauren's followers	Total
I am a new follower	1	0	1
I watch her for entertainment	4	3	7
I do not trust her recommendations	1	1	2
I cannot find her recommendations in my country	3	0	3
I do not believe her recommendations are genuine	1	0	0
Other	0	0	0

The most chosen option was "I watch her for entertainment" with 7 out of the 9 respondents choosing this option. Two respondents genuinely do not trust Sarah or Lauren's recommendations while one believes that Sarah's recommendations are not genuine. No one chose the other option, therefore no comments concerning this aspect was written.

During the survey the respondents were not asked directly whether they trust the YouTubers. Since people can have different views of the concept of trust, different questions were asked instead. Trusting a YouTuber was indicated by whether or not the respondents followed their recommendations. People seek information in places that they trust. If they trust a recommendation they are trusting the person giving the recommendation. Only the ones that answered *often* or *once or a few times* were asked further questions about statements concerning recommendations from Sarah and Lauren. Keep in mind that the ones that have followed a recommendation from Sarah or Lauren previously can be affected by past

experiences on whether they trust them or not. As Nissenbaum writes, the history and reputation of a person can affect if a person deems them as trustworthy in the future (2001, p. 110). The participants that answered that they *never* follow their recommendations were not asked the same questions as the others. Instead they were asked why they do not follow Sarah or Lauren's recommendations. There were 9 participants that chose the option *never*, meaning that 133 participants answered the follow-up statements about trusting recommendations within fitness, health and nutrition.

In the survey the participants were given some definitions for fitness, health and nutrition to eliminate confusion. Fitness was defined as "information concerning workouts and exercise", health was defined as "information related to sickness, injuries and wellbeing" and nutrition was defined as "information concerning food and diets". There was no definition of lifestyle, but it has been added here to give a clear idea of the concept for later discussion. Dictionary.com defines lifestyle as "the habits, attitudes, tastes, moral standards, economic level, etc., that together constitute the mode of living of an individual or group" (Lifestyle, undated). These categories, as well as product recommendations, were included to determine the overall trust of Sarah and Lauren.

Trusting Sarah and Lauren on recommendations

An important aspect with table 4 is that the total amount of all the participants in the survey is an average from all the scores, and not the average between the scores from Sarah and Lauren's followers. The average has been calculated from the total number of participants in this part of the survey, which is 133 people. The total number will mostly be used for comparison of the data with different variables to answer the research questions later on in the analysis. It is also important to note that there are more participants answering from Sarah

Table 4: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements ($n=133$) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices
Sarah ($n=93$)	2.7	3.3	2.9	2.8	3.5
Lauren ($n=40$)	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.8
Total ($n=133$)	2.7	3.3	3.0	2.9	3.6

than from Lauren, and therefore if more participants were to take the survey the results could become quite different. Product recommendations seem to be a statement that the followers for both YouTubers are neutral or in disagreement with. Participants were also asked about following recommendations from Sarah and Lauren concerning fitness, health and nutrition. The participants are more likely to follow fitness advice than health or nutrition advice from both YouTubers, as can be seen by the participants giving a 3.3 meaning between neutral and agreement. For health and nutrition there is a difference between the participants following Lauren and Sarah. Lauren's followers were more in agreement with following recommendations about health and nutrition while Sarah's followers were slightly more on the disagreement side. However, the highest numbers for the YouTubers concern following advice from Sarah and Lauren concerning lifestyle choices. It is interesting to see that Lauren's followers on average have a slightly higher agreement to the statements than Sarah's followers. It seems as if Lauren's followers trust her more than Sarah's followers trust her. A reason for this can be because Lauren is a qualified personal trainer (PT) while Sarah is not. Perhaps the followers trust Lauren's background knowledge compared to Sarah who doesn't have an official qualification. It is interesting to see that both YouTubers have the same number for fitness recommendations, considering that Lauren has a PT qualification and Sarah does not. However, Sarah has released two workout e-books and that could help with the view of Sarah and her knowledge on the subject as the guides give workouts to follow step by step, and she has many videos on YouTube with "real time" follow-along workouts.

How trust can be affected by how long participants have followed YouTubers

In table 5 below we can see that the amount of time a participant has followed a YouTuber does not greatly affect their trust of the YouTuber. The results are quite varied, in part due to the fact that there are varied numbers within how many participants have followed Sarah and Lauren in each time frame. The lowest number comes from participants that have followed the YouTubers for 6 months or less when it comes to product recommendations, with 2.6. There is also a small increase in trust, though it is still under the disagreement portion of the scale, for product recommendations. Those that have followed the longest are the most likely to follow a product recommendation. For most of the categories, the ones that have followed Sarah and Lauren between one year and a year and a half are the least trusting of their recommendations as a whole. The most willing to follow and trust recommendations on a whole are those that have followed for three years or more, and between 7 and 12 months. There are differences in the amount of time the participants have followed a YouTuber, though the differences are minimal.

Table 5: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements ($n=133$) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

How long participants have followed Sarah and Lauren ($n=133$)	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices
6 months or less ($n=19$)	2,6	3,3	2,7	2,9	3,7
7 to 12 months ($n=36$)	2,8	3,4	2,9	2,9	3,6
1 to 1.5 years ($n=40$)	2,8	3,0	3,1	2,8	3,4
2 years ($n=25$)	2,7	3,6	3,2	3,2	3,7
3 years or more ($n=13$)	2,9	3,2	3,0	3,0	3,5

How does the respondent's culture affect trust and is there a YouTube culture?

From the 133 that participated in this part of the survey, five regions were located. Most participants were from North America, Oceania and Europe. Only five participants were from other regions; three from South Africa and two from Asia. This may be due to the fact that both YouTubers are English speaking and from a western culture. Due to the low number of participants from Asia and Africa, only the regions with a higher number of participants will be analyzed to see if culture affects trust.

Table 6 indicates that there is not a YouTube culture, but that the background culture of the participants can affect trust. The table indicates that there is some difference in trust depending on the participant's culture and background, but it does not change their trust of the YouTuber drastically. The Oceanic region has a lower trust of Sarah and Lauren when it comes to fitness, health and nutrition. Though another interesting indication from the table is following lifestyle choices has more agreement from the Oceanic region than the other regions. It is however, important to note that half the American and European region follows each YouTuber, while Lauren only has two followers from Oceania and the rest are Sarah's followers. Therefore, following the lifestyle choices from Sarah may be easier for participants from Oceania because Sarah is from the region herself. For the most part the regions with the most participants, The Americas, Europe and Oceania are quite similar in their average numbers, all being around 3, which is neutral. We can see that following fitness recommendations is more popular than health and nutrition.

Table 6: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements (n=133) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Region	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices
America (n=55)	2.8	3.3	3.0	2.9	3.5
Europe (n=49)	2.7	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.5
Oceania (n=25)	2.8	3.1	2.8	2.8	3.8

Additionally, since there are cultural differences between the YouTubers and their audiences it was important to see whether the nationality and culture of the YouTuber and viewer affected trust, as can be seen in Table 7 below. The table indicates Lauren's followers from the United Kingdom are more likely to trust her than her followers that are not from the U.K. On all the statements participants from the U.K. are more likely to follow a recommendation from Lauren than those outside of the U.K. With Sarah it's a little different. Within fitness, health, and nutrition her followers from all regions are quite equal in their trust of her. The division between Australia and the rest of the world comes instead within lifestyle choices and product recommendations. Australians are more likely than others to trust her lifestyle choices but are less likely to trust her product recommendations. This indicates that there are some cultural differences, however, as the number of participants from each region shown in table 5 vary in number the results can be inconsistent compared to if the numbers were more even.

Table 7: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements (n=133) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Participants (n=133)	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices
Sarah's followers from Australia (n=21)	2,6	3,3	2,8	2,8	3,8
Sarah's followers from other locations (n=72)	2,8	3,3	2,9	2,8	3,4
Lauren's followers from the UK (n=6)	3,3	3,8	4,0	4,0	4,0
Lauren's followers from other locations (n=34)	2,7	3,1	3,1	3,1	3,7

Demographic Factors and Trust

How does the respondents' educational background affect trust?

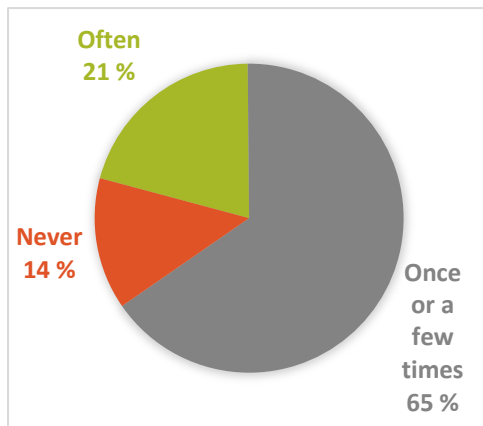


Figure 5 – How many percent of the people with a background in health, fitness or nutrition follow their YouTuber's recommendations.

In order to see if education can affect trust, respondents were asked about their educational and occupational background. Since the scope of this thesis concerns information about health, fitness and nutrition the respondents were asked if they were studying or working within those subjects. Out of the total 145 participants, 29 are either currently studying or working within health, fitness or nutrition. Most of these participants, 65% or 19 out of 29, follow their YouTuber's recommendations *once or a few times*.

Figure 5 shows that four of them (14%) chose *never* and six (21%) chose *often*. This can indicate that the background knowledge for these participants makes them warier to trusting the recommendations from the YouTuber they follow.

When it came to following the specific recommendations for each subject, the people with an educated background had varying degrees of trust. The total amount of participants with a fitness, health or nutritional background that followed the YouTuber's recommendations at least once was 25. Out of these 25 participants, 20 work or study within health, 8 within nutrition and 5 within fitness. Some of them were working or studying within multiple subject areas and they have therefore been grouped together in Table 8 as people with a background in fitness, health, or nutrition. Table 8 shows that when it comes to recommendations from Sarah and Lauren concerning products, fitness, health or nutrition, those with a background in the subject areas are less likely to follow a recommendation than

Table 8: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements according to the participant's background ($n=133$) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Background in fitness, health or nutrition	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices
Yes ($n=25$)	2,6	3,1	2,8	2,7	3,7
No ($n=108$)	2,8	3,3	3,0	3,0	3,5

those without. However, when it comes to lifestyle the ones with a background in fitness, health or nutrition are more likely to follow Sarah and Lauren's recommendations. There aren't large gaps between the numbers of those with and without a background within the subjects, but there is a clear indication that their background knowledge affects who they trust. It is important to note that there were only 25 out of the 133 who answered this question that have a background in fitness, health or nutrition. There is a large discrepancy in the number of participants with and without background knowledge on the subject areas.

Additionally, I divided up those with and without a higher education to see if there was a difference in the amount of education that the participants have received as seen in Table 9 below. One limitation of this table is that the participants that chose "other" under occupation were only asked what they were doing and not what their completed level of schooling was. Therefore, these participants have not been taken into account for this evaluation. Those that are included in secondary education are those that are currently in High School or where their highest completed schooling is High School. This also includes the two participants that have completed a certificate of apprenticeship. The higher education group contains participants that have completed their higher education and those that are currently studying at universities or colleges. The higher education participants all range from completed to currently studying within bachelor, master and PhD/doctorate degrees.

Table 9: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements according to the participant's background ($n=113$) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Education background	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices
Higher education ($n=72$)	2,6	3,3	2,9	2,8	3,4
Secondary education ($n=41$)	2,9	3,1	3,1	2,8	3,8

An interesting finding when creating the table above, none of the participants with a secondary education chose the option “never” when asked if they follow Sarah or Lauren’s recommendations. This compares to the 9 with a higher education that answered that they never follow their recommendations. Even this small finding indicates that those with a higher education do not trust Sarah or Lauren when it comes to following their recommendations.

Table 9 does indicate that there is a difference between the participants with higher and secondary education. When it comes to lifestyle, health and product recommendations, those with a secondary education are more likely to follow Sarah or Lauren’s advice. Concerning fitness, the participants with higher education are more likely to follow their recommendations than those with a secondary education. The agreement to the statement on nutrition is the same. These results do indicate that there is less trust towards Sarah and Lauren with those that have higher education than those with a secondary education.

How does the respondents’ age affect trust?

There are many factors that can affect trust and age is one of them. Most participants were quite young, though the oldest was 62. Table 10 shows the averages of agreement to the statements divided into age “groups”. Due to the range of 35-62, with only two participants over 50, these two participants were eliminated from the table. All participants aged over 35 follow only Lauren. The table shows only those within the age of 15-48. The groups have been divided up into age groups depending on the amount of people to make the groups more comparable. This is because many of the participants are between the age of 15 and 29.

Table 10: The average agreement on how much participants agree or disagree with the following statements (n=131) (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

Age	When Sarah/Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning fitness	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning health	I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah/Lauren concerning nutrition	I follow Sarah/Lauren’s advice concerning lifestyle choices
15-19 (n=36)	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.6
20-21 (n=21)	2.7	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.6
22-24 (n=31)	2.5	3.4	2.7	2.7	3.5
25-29 (n=18)	2.8	3.5	2.9	3.0	3.3
30-34 (n=10)	2.4	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.6
35-48 (n=15)	3,0	3,3	3,5	3,4	3,9

It is interesting to see that the youngest participants are the most neutral about product recommendations while the groups of 30-34-year-olds has a score of 2.4, which indicates disagreement with the statement. Again, lifestyle choices has the most agreement from the followers. Those in the older age bracket have a higher degree of agreement than the younger ones, though the differences are very small. When it comes to fitness, the most agreement with the statements come from the age groups 20-29 and 35-48 and the other two age groups are completely neutral. For health there is more variation in the level of agreement. The highest score for following recommendations concerning health are from 20-21 and 35-48, while the most disagreement are from 30-34. For nutrition the level of agreement is similar, though the 35-48 group shows more agreement than the others with an average number of 3.4. Even though there are differences between the age groups, there are no large differences. It was initially theorized that the younger followers would be more likely to follow recommendations while the older followers were less likely. The results indicate that age doesn't affect trust that much, but the oldest group is more in agreement with the statements than the younger groups. One person from the oldest age group did make a comment that she uses her "own experiences with [Lauren's recommendation] to make it work better". This may indicate that the oldest group agrees more with the statements because they feel they have enough knowledge of their own to make a correct adjustment to Lauren and Sarah's recommendations. This could be an interesting factor to look at in future research.

The Sezzzy Squad

The Sezzzy Squad is an active Facebook group with a little over 20,000 members. I will first present a specific day in January where I analyze all the posts from that day concerning trust. Then I will show what a search on sponsorships indicates from the Sezzzy Squad encompasses with the top rated results from the Facebook group search algorithm.

In January 2018 there were numerous posts concerning Sarah, who created the group. On January 17th 2018 a total of 62 posts were made in the Facebook group. Most posts could be categorized into sections such as sharing recipes, fashion questions and asking for advice or recommendations on health, fitness and nutrition. Out of the 62 posts from that day, two posts contained concern about Sarah's trustworthiness, whether it be in the actual post, or in the comments to a post. All the names of the people posting have been changed to keep anonymity of the posters.

The first post starts with asking for advice regarding sponsored videos on YouTube and how to best be honest and open with one's subscribers. Tatiana states that she is posting

on the Sezzy Squad page because “after seeing the backlash on this page regarding some of Sarah's sponsorships, I have been thinking about the best way to go about approaching sponsored videos.” Tatiana presents her dilemma by describing how she is planning on showing the sponsored videos. She explains that she would never recommend any product that she didn't genuinely love and use in her daily life. Her approach to total transparency includes explaining how she became sponsored by the brand and what it entails (except for the amount of money she is earning from the sponsorship). The post received 47 comments including replies to other comments. Out of all the comments and replies, 34 were giving advice on sponsorships and 13 did not mention sponsorships. The 13 other comments were mostly asking for Tatiana's YouTube channel name and Tatiana saying thank you for all the replies. Some of the comments where people gave their opinion on sponsorships mentioned Sarah and her approach to sponsorships. Sarah does not state in her videos whether a product or video is sponsored. Numerous comments on Tatiana's post on the Facebook group mention their dislike towards Sarah's way of disclosing sponsored posts or videos. Seven comments, out of the 34 mentioning sponsorships, mention Sarah by name. A reason behind the mentions of Sarah could be Tatiana's post mentioning that Sarah has gotten criticism for her sponsored videos. None of the posts or replies mention trust or mistrust directly. One comment states that viewers don't like being lied to. The commenters recommend that if a product in a YouTube video is sponsored, the YouTuber should state it openly. The comments on Tatiana's post, and the criticism that Sarah has received for her way of not openly disclosing sponsored products, shows that it can create a distrust with the viewers of the videos. If the viewers do not know what is sponsored it may be more difficult to know which of Sarah's opinions are genuine and which are not.

Another post on the Sezzy Squad asks if Blue Dinosaur bars are still relevant. Blue Dinosaur is a company that states that they create snacks and bars that only contain “whole food ingredients” and “never contain gluten, soy, dairy, preservatives, added sugars, colours, stabilisers, flavours, or anything artificial” (Blue Dinosaur, undated). Sarah was sponsored by them earlier and would mention them often in her social media platforms. “Catrina” posted a short entry onto the Sezzy Squad page that reads as follows:

Hey guys!

Are blue dinosaur bars still relevant? Sez used to have them all the time but now she never talks about them. Are they not healthy? Why would she stop having them? I really want to buy some but now I'm wondering if it's worth it :/

First of all, her post indicates that she is unsure if she should trust Sarah's recommendation as she is asking for opinions on if they are healthy in the Sezzy Squad group. The post obtained

53 comments including replies to the comments. The beginning of the comments mention having some doubt as to trusting Sarah's recommendation because she isn't promoting the bars anymore. The original poster, Catrina, even comments that by Sarah not promoting Blue Dinosaur bars anymore it makes her question other things as well because she tried a hair mask that Sarah used to promote and didn't like it. Out of the 53 comments and replies, four mention a form of mistrust to Sarah because she has stopped promoting the bars. Four comments suggested that Sarah just might not be sponsored by Blue Dinosaur anymore and therefore does not promote them anymore on her channel. The majority of the comments and replies, 18 in total talk about the Blue Dinosaur bars, whether that be people's personal experiences with them or where to buy them. Also, 11 replies were not relevant as they only stated agreement or contained emoticons. However, as more people got engaged in the post, Sarah also added some comments. She tried to explain why she doesn't show Blue Dinosaur bars anymore. Her main reasoning is that she has created her own protein balls and therefore prefers to eat them now compared to Blue Dinosaur as a snack. In addition, she writes that she tries to be an authentic role model and she knows she has a responsibility of what she promotes. After the comments that Sarah made, the other commenters that had shown distrust towards her before seemed to change their minds because of her explanation. In total there were 8 comments that mention trust in some factor, either directly or indirectly. Lastly, two comments mention that the other girls need to do their own research into the product, like asking for opinions on the Sezzy Squad, but also using other sources. "You gotta do your own research into foods you want in your body, not just eat what someone on YouTube enjoys" one girl comments. This can indicate that yes, they trust Sarah, however, other sources need to be taken into consideration to see if they are personally good for other people.

There are quite a few discussions in the Sezzy Squad Facebook group that concern sponsorships and trusting YouTubers. Because this was a reoccurring theme in the previous posts, a search was completed in the Sezzy Squad that resulted in a long list with the search term: sponsored. The result list is extremely long, but the first three posts and the top rated posts by the Facebook search algorithm are relevant for the survey. The first result is actually the post from January by Tatiana. The other two posts are both from June. The second result directly concerns trust and sponsored material, while the third post starts off with a comment on an Instagram Story post by Sarah.

The second post from the search is not related to Sarah or her sponsorships. Instead it is asking for make-up advice. Part of the original post by Nina is as follows: "[...] I'm so overwhelmed by all [these] gurus on YouTube and kind of skeptical if they recommend

certain things because they love it or just because they are sponsored. [...]” There were 20 comments and replies to the post, six of which were by the original poster, Nina, saying thank you or responding to other questions. From the 15 other comments, most were about recommendations for either YouTubers or make-up. But three comments actually mention sponsorship, probably indicating why the post was high on the results list. One of the two YouTubers is recommended because she never does sponsorships, while the other comments mention that the ones with sponsorships are still genuine and open about what is sponsored. Even though this post is not directly linked to Sarah, it is still relevant. The post indicates that YouTubers need to be open about their sponsorships or not have sponsorships in order to gain the complete trust of their followers. Just the original post by Nina demonstrates that she is unsure who to trust on make-up recommendations due to sponsorships.

An Instagram Story was screenshotted and posted on the Sezzy Squad Facebook page by Maria. The picture contained packs of tuna cans and the post has the caption “Damn Sezzy! Guuuurrrll! [You’re] serious about your tuna!” In total, this post received 65 comments and replies, 44 of which discuss sponsorships. Two of the comments that mention sponsorships also mention trust. The discussion from the post center around whether or not Sarah is sponsored by the tuna company. As mentioned earlier, Sarah does not explicitly explain what items are sponsored and which are not. The discussion goes a lot of back and forth concerning the potential sponsorship from the tuna company. The two comments that mention trust show concern towards knowing when to trust Sarah’s product recommendations. The first comment is as follows:

I guess I would like to see more transparency as a follower. To know that [Sarah] is sponsored would help me make my own opinion and whether I want to trust her or not. All she has to do is put #sponsored. That is not hard to do. Hope she’s reading this.

The second comment that mentions trust is in reply to the comment above:

Agreed. Grace Fit UK for instance is absolutely transparent about her sponsorships or commissioned links and as a result I still trust her opinions when she recommends things which are not sponsored. I appreciate Sarah’s channel but it’s quite rude to her subscribers to trick them like that.

Overall, the comments from this discussion point to the conclusion that Sarah’s method of not informing her viewers of what products are sponsored and not sponsored creates distrust to her. If her viewers do not know which products are sponsored it can be difficult to trust her recommendations. This does not just concern the product recommendations as they can give an idea of what her other recommendations might be tainted as well. One person points out that she may have been gifted the tuna, or just bought a lot of it herself. However, it is clear

from the discussion that the fact that it is difficult to know when Sarah is sponsored or not creates a level of distrust with some of her followers. There is no proof that she is or isn't sponsored by the tuna company, but not disclosing the information to her viewers creates a conflict in whether or not they can believe and trust her.

Participant's comments

The last thing the participants were asked before ending the survey is whether they had any last thoughts, comments or concerns. This was not an obligatory question to answer, and most comments are just participants answering "no". Most comments concern the trust of a YouTuber. The participants that follow Lauren wrote two comments concerning trust or adding something. The first comment is that the participant loves the spirit that Lauren has, while the second comment explains why she trusts Lauren and similar YouTubers. The participant writes: "I think the reason behind me following [YouTubers] like Lauren and trusting them is because they document and show us their results and that makes me believe their advice." The last comment can be very specific to Lauren though, as she is on a weight loss journey, though this is not written directly by the participant. This comment indicates that YouTubers that document their lives and show their results become more trustworthy, though this seems to be a bit difficult to know, because a YouTube video is only a small portion of someone's life.

There were quite a few more comments from the participants from the Sezzy Squad. Four of the comments concern the participant's views on trust. One person directly indicates that she does not trust Sarah because she doesn't give enough information and background for why she is doing something, like eating certain foods. The participant points out that she would rather follow someone that has a qualification within the subject areas they promote on social media and that fitness inspiration YouTubers "shouldn't be allowed to promote certain lifestyles with no qualifications." She also criticizes Sarah for not eating enough calories and expresses worry that other girls are copying Sarah's eating habits. It is apparent that the participant has a low level of trust towards Sarah and other YouTubers that do not have qualifications.

Another participant also comments on Sarah's lack of qualification and information in her social media posts. The participant writes:

"[...] coming from a science background and having good scientific literacy I would never take health advice from [Sarah] as she doesn't back up her information with any scientific studies and without having an understanding of research I don't believe she understands how to read and understand research."

She also writes that she follows Sarah for lifestyle inspiration rather than health advice. Instead she goes to other YouTubers that give more scientific information around their recommendations. This comment indicates that health related advice on social media is not as trusted as other options, but also that having an educational background can alter where participants search for information concerning health and what information they trust.

The third comment writes that Sarah tells her followers to do what works for them, and if people are blindly trusting Sarah's recommendations then they are not listening to the message Sarah intends to send. This comment seems to indicate that the participant does trust Sarah greatly, but will try to fit the recommendations into her own life.

The last comment concerns finding information online and being unsure about online sources due to sponsorships. She writes:

[...] basically I take everything online about health and fitness (that comes from bloggers and social media anyway) with a grain of salt because although their advice may be sound, it can come from a sponsored post and could only work for them.

The comment indicates that she trusts other information online, but is wary of information from social media and social media influencers. Again, sponsorships are mentioned in a way that indicates less trust towards a YouTuber or social media influencer because the participant doesn't know what is genuine and what isn't.

The comments from the end of the survey give additional information into how the participants think and reason when it comes to trusting YouTubers, and specifically Sarah and Lauren. A lot of the same aspects are mentioned several times throughout the survey, Sezzzy Squad and in the comments.

Discussion

In the following section I will begin by discussing the limitations of the thesis. I will then discuss the results from the survey in light of the research presented previously, and how they answer the research questions.

Limitations

The limitations for this thesis are numerous due to the scope of the thesis. As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, it will not be possible to gain any knowledge on how gender affects trust as only one man answered the survey. This was an unforeseen limitation as I hoped to receive answers from both men and women. If we can use this thesis as a starting point concerning female YouTubers and that most participants were female, it may be possible that more men would have answered if the YouTubers were male. Wyatt et al.'s research (2002) indicated that men would talk primarily with their sexual partners and doctors, while women had more diverse social networks and would use family, friends, neighbors and colleagues to seek information concerning health (p. 206). Ek's dissertation (2005) also states that women are more interested in seeking health information while men are passive receivers of health information (p. 8). This could explain why the Sezzy Squad has such a large female population, as women are more prone to actively seeking health information. Therefore, the results from this study are greatly influenced by the fact that there are nearly only female participants. In order to have a more general understanding of people's information seeking and trust of YouTubers, male participants would be needed for future research.

The participants' answers may also have been influenced by them not wanting to shine a bad light on Sarah or Lauren, or even on themselves. For example, when it comes to what influences the participants on their decision to follow a YouTuber, a participant may not want to say they only follow them because of their subscriber count. If this is the case, they may choose the "knowledge" option instead because they believe this is the expected answer. In addition, since all of the participants that came from the Sezzy Squad are a member of the Facebook group, it could indicate that they are fans of Sarah because they want to be a part of the Sezzy Squad community. This can affect the way in which they answer the questions in the survey.

In addition, the low response rate from Europe limits the results because it was not possible to create a distinction between countries with high and low economic states, which

could have affected the trust towards Sarah and Lauren's recommendations. As Uslaner (2002) indicates, there can be a difference between Scandinavian countries and other European countries when it comes to trusting strangers. Future research into the differences between areas within Europe could be interesting.

When it came to creating the question for where and how often participants seeking information concerning fitness, health, and nutrition, the option of "doctor" or "health care professional" was not added. This limits the results because the trust for a doctor concerning health would most likely be higher than all the other sources, as some participants also mentioned in their comments.

Trust

Conditions of trust are aspects that Uslaner (2002) and Nissenbaum (2001) made central in their research, because trusting other people can be beneficial for numerous reasons. Uslaner (2002) points out that people trust persons that are similar to themselves (p. 2), something that can indicate that Sarah and Lauren's followers show them a certain degree of trust because they have similar values. Out of all the conditions of trust that Nissenbaum explains and which were presented earlier (2001), there are several which can be considered relevant for the trust between YouTubers and their followers. Trust can be obtained through having common interests, similar educational background or lifestyle views. Role fulfillment can also be a relevant aspect, as the YouTuber is fulfilling the role as a social media influencer by sharing information with their followers. This can also be relevant in the different backgrounds of Sarah and Lauren, where Lauren has a personal trainer degree and Sarah doesn't.

History and reputation is one of Nissenbaum's (2001) conditions of trust, and is possibly the most important for the YouTuber-follower-relationship. This can be seen in many different ways. For example, if a follower tries a recommendation from a YouTuber and is unhappy with the result or product, they may be less likely to trust the YouTuber in the future. Similarly, if they *are* happy with the product, the level of trust is likely to increase. This was one aspect that was mentioned in a comment in the Sezzy Squad, because she had tried a product recommendation from Sarah and hated it. This affected the commenter's trust towards other recommendations from Sarah.

In addition to this, YouTube channels and content can be shared by many different people; therefore a person who is new to a YouTube channel may trust the YouTuber because they know someone who trusts them. Trusting someone due to their reputation based on other

sources is a way to create initial trust, which can then also be broken. The research that Nissenbaum (2001) presents does not specifically include the YouTuber-follower-relationship, but it nevertheless gives a good understanding of how trust can be created due to the different conditions of trust we have towards strangers.

The amount of time someone has followed a YouTuber did not have an influence on how much they trusted them, as was originally hypothesized due to Nissenbaum's (2001) conditions of trust. The results from the survey indicated that time and trust did not have a correlation, and may indicate that other factors, such as history and reputation may influence the level of trust to a YouTuber more than time. Future research into this area could be vital to understand how trust of social media influencers is affected over time.

Seeking information

The results from the survey indicate that the participants seek information concerning fitness and nutrition on YouTube sometimes and often, while they seek health information on YouTube between seldom and sometimes. Wyatt et al.'s research (2002) into health information seeking indicated that the most used source of information was the family doctor (p. 206). As the results from the thesis survey did not include seeking information with a doctor or other professional help, this limits the results for fitness, health, and nutrition. However, several participants chose to comment on this and write that they seek information from their doctors or health care professionals. Wyatt et al. also indicated that family, friends, pharmacies and alternative practitioners were the second most used source of information concerning health and mass media such as magazines, television, the internet, self-help books and newspapers were the least used (p. 206). When it comes to health, the results from the thesis survey coincide with the results from Wyatt et al. in this respect. The most used source for information within health was family; however, they were closely followed by YouTube, research papers and friends.

Fernandez-Luque et al.'s (2011) study demonstrates that finding health information on YouTube can be very challenging, and that creating a new algorithm for YouTube to find health related information might be more reliable. Therefore, because the YouTube algorithm chooses a result list and recommendations differently than the HealthTrust algorithm from Fernandez-Luque et al., it becomes even more important for YouTube users to be wary of the information on the social media platform. Even though YouTube is a social media platform, it is used more for information seeking than mass media and other social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). It is important to note that all the health results were

under 3 (sometimes) while both fitness and nutrition went over 3 for some points, indicating more usage. Within fitness and nutrition, the most used source was YouTube and the least used was family for fitness and friends for nutrition. Even though the survey has similar results as Wyatt et al. (2002) concerning information seeking within health, the results differed for nutrition and fitness. This indicates that there are different aspects of the social media sites that are considered more trustworthy within different subjects.

Cultural differences and trust

One of the research questions concerns if there is a YouTube culture. However, the results from the survey indicate that the participants are affected by the culture from their nationality. Further research with a more diverse participant pool could prove to have different results or have the same results; that there are cultural differences with YouTube users.

Earlier research indicates that there can be differences in culture depending on economic differences (Uslaner, 2002) and differences in information seeking within health (Lin et al, 2016; Hayeon et al. 2016). Uslaner (2002) writes that cultural differences can greatly affect trust in many different ways, such as experiences, ethical assumptions, economic states and optimism. When it comes to trusting people in general, and not within specific subjects such as fitness, health, and nutrition, the economy of the state can affect trust. Uslaner shows that optimism and having a positive outlook on one's future affects trust of strangers. His study indicates that Scandinavians, as well as Dutch people, Anglophone Canadians and Australians are more trusting than people from other countries. The least trusting peoples are Latin Americans, South African and Turks (p. 231). As there were too few participants from South America, Asia and Africa, the cultural results are more specifically of Western culture. This indicates that Uslaner's theory that people trust strangers with a similar moral foundation and traits as themselves is true. On the other hand, trust could also be affected by language barriers between the YouTubers and their followers with different mother tongues. Out of the 145 participants in the survey, 102 are from a country where English is the official language, though some countries may have more than one official language. In addition, those that are able to watch YouTuber can be thought to have a better economic state and therefore have the luxury to watch videos.

Wyatt et al.'s research (2005) indicates that participants want to find information that is specific for their situation, but also have information from their own culture(s). As previously mentioned, one woman from England did not want health information from the U.S. because it wasn't relevant for her (p. 210-211). This can also be the case when it comes

to the YouTubers, as Sarah is from Australia and Lauren is from the U.K. Lauren's followers that were also from the UK were more trusting of her with recommendations than those from outside of the UK, which supports the research from Wyatt et al. Sarah's followers, on the other hand, were not divided by culture when it came to recommendations concerning fitness, health, and nutrition. They were divided on product recommendations and lifestyle choices. Sarah's Australian followers were more likely to trust her for lifestyle choices but not for product recommendations. This can indicate that the similarity in culture makes them trust her lifestyle choices but maybe they have other views of her product recommendations. On the other hand, there are other factors that can be influencing the follower's level of trust to Sarah and Lauren, as will now be discussed.

East vs. West

Lin et al.'s study (2016) into online disclosure showed that there was a difference between participants from the United States, South Korea, and Hong Kong. Their study showed that younger people in Hong Kong were more likely to disclose health information about themselves online, compared to the U.S. and South Korea (p. 293). The American participants were least likely to disclose information about themselves on social media. If we can take this as an indication of trust towards other social media users, the results from Lin et al.'s study can be used to see if the participants in this thesis have the same reservations towards self-disclosure online.

In addition, Song et al. (2016) did a similar study to determine if there were cultural differences between South Korea, Hong Kong and the U.S. Their study indicates that the South Korean and Hong Kong participants were more likely to trust experience-based health information, meaning information from other people and not professionals. The American participants instead consulted health care professionals to a greater extent than the participants from South Korea and Hong Kong, indicating a preference for expertise-based health information (2016). Unfortunately, the thesis survey did not receive many participants from Asia, and it is not possible to determine if there are cultural differences between Asia and the U.S. Instead I will look at whether the America, Europe and Oceania regions that participated in the thesis are similar to the Asian or American cultures found in Lin et al. (2016) and Song et al.'s (2016) studies.

When it comes to self-disclosure online, the participants from the Sezzy Squad seem reluctant to use social media sites to ask for help. None of the participants chose the option to

ask for help from the Sezzy Squad when researching a recommendation from Sarah. This can indicate that the thesis participants coincide with the findings from Lin et al. (2016), though the circumstances for the survey are quite different which limits the findings. Another factor is that most participants seek information for fitness and nutrition on YouTube, which can indicate trust towards experience-based information. The participants, even with a Western culture, are similar to the Eastern culture found in Song et al.'s study (2016) when it comes to fitness and nutrition. However, when it concerns health, the thesis participants were less trusting towards YouTube and social media, which indicates that the participants are close to Song et al.'s findings about Western culture. Though there are limitations, these findings still give value to the fact that there can be differences between information seeking within cultures and with regards to fitness, health and nutrition.

Sarah vs. Lauren

Trusting a social media influencer (SMI) has many different aspects and conditions. As Freberg et al.'s study (2011) showed, SMIs and CEOs have many similar traits as leaders and spokespersons for their brands, but SMIs appear more relatable and are more sought out for advice than CEOs (p. 91). This may of course be due to the dynamic of a CEO having employees that can be hesitant towards asking for the CEO's help, while the SMIs the relationship with their viewers is different. According to the results of the survey, YouTubers do seem to be trusted by their followers when it comes to fitness and nutrition, and social media users actively seek information on social media platforms. This indicates that the research completed by Freberg et al. is equivalent to the thesis results since Sarah and Lauren's followers seek and trust information from SMIs. On the other hand, there are differences in what subjects they trust recommendations on from each YouTuber.

As mentioned earlier, Sarah and Lauren are quite different, both in age, nationality and education. This may influence how they are perceived by their followers. The results indicate that Lauren's followers trust her more when it comes to following recommendations than Sarah's followers. This coincides with Stephanie Fred's dissertation (2015) on how endorsement videos affect trustworthiness and viewed expertise. Fred found that having no brand-endorsement resulted in higher-rated perceived expertise and trustworthiness while viewership made no difference to perceived expertise, but low viewership resulted in higher trustworthiness (p. 27). This corresponds well with the results from this thesis paper, as Lauren has lower viewership and no brand endorsement and is more trusted with recommendations than Sarah.

In addition, Sarah and Lauren's difference in background can also affect trust. Lauren has a personal trainer qualification that Sarah does not have. This can influence the level of trust that their followers have of them. Interestingly, Sarah and Lauren have similar levels of trust from their followers when it comes to fitness, but it differs instead in the other subjects. However, this could be affected by many aspects, such as the participants' own educational background.

Another aspect that was not directly added to the options of the survey, and which is the limitation of a closed-ended questionnaire, was following a YouTuber due to their personality or "vibe". A few comments were made that the participants follow YouTubers if they bring positivity or have a good personality. The most popular option from the closed-ended question in the survey was "authenticity" and "their expertise within a subject". This indicates that there can be many different factors that can influence whether or not someone follows Sarah or Lauren, or any YouTuber for that matter. It is dependent on what the YouTube viewer wants, as some may seek information and others just want to watch for entertainment.

Age

Another factor that can affect trust is age. Sutter and Kocher's study (2007) showed that the older a person is the more trusting they are. Children around 8 years old were less trusting than those over 60, and when entering adulthood trust seemed to even out and stay high until retirement (p. 378). Even though the participants of the thesis survey were between 15 and 62 years old, these findings are relevant. The results presented earlier show that the oldest group of participants (those over 35 years old) was the most trusting when it came to recommendations from Sarah and Lauren concerning health, nutrition and lifestyle choices. This coincides with the earlier research; however, the least trusting age group was 30-34 in most areas. There is no clear age gap that shows when people start trusting Sarah and Lauren, but this is not surprising considering that only 17 of the 133 participants to answer the question were 35 or older and all of those 17 follow Lauren and not Sarah.

Participant's background

The background of the participants was first assessed by whether or not they are studying or working within fitness, health or nutrition. The results showed that the participants with a background in these subjects were less trusting of Sarah and Lauren when it came to

recommendations on products, fitness, health and nutrition. The only aspect that was higher for those with a subject background was lifestyle choices, indicating that their background knowledge on fitness, health, or nutrition influences their trust of Sarah and Lauren.

Second, the level of education was assessed to see if there was a difference between participants with higher education and secondary education. The results indicated that those with higher education are less trusting of Sarah and Lauren in all aspects except for fitness. Stephan Ek's study (2005) showed that participants with a higher education seek health information from official channels more than those with a secondary education. Even though Ek's study focuses on information seeking, it can also be relevant for trust, because people seek information with sources that they trust. This could indicate that those with an education within fitness, health and nutrition do not trust Sarah and Lauren as much as those without, due to their background knowledge and that they would rather seek information through official channels. In addition, those with a higher education may seek information in other areas and sources than social media because of their educational background. They may be more used to reading research papers and looking at earlier studies. This is also mentioned by one of the commenters on the survey. The commenter comes from an educated background and doesn't believe that Sarah can understand previous research and therefore doesn't share earlier studies with her viewers. The commenter also writes that she will follow other YouTubers who give advice based on scientific research that they share with their viewers. The level of education from the participants seems to affect their level of trust towards Sarah and Lauren.

Sponsorships and trust

A theme that was not added to the actual survey was the aspect of sponsorships and YouTubers. The only small indication towards sponsorships in the survey was whether or not the participants followed product recommendations from Sarah or Lauren, but it did not explicitly say sponsored product recommendations. However, sponsorships were an aspect that the participants brought up quite often during the survey, and on the Sezzy Squad Facebook page. Stephanie Fred's dissertation (2015) indicates that showing brand endorsements on YouTube and having a large viewership creates less trust of a YouTuber. The discussions in the posts in the Sezzy Squad indicate that Fred's finding coincide with the opinions some of members of the Sezzy Squad. Direct posts and comments about trusting Sarah were made, but also mistrust in other YouTubers with sponsored videos. When Sarah stopped promoting Blue Dinosaur bars on her social media platforms, one of her viewers

became unsure about why Sarah had stopped promoting them. In addition, self-disclosure about sponsorships was discussed as many of the commenters in the Sezzy Squad do not like how Sarah isn't completely open with what videos or products are sponsored. Having sponsorships affects the level of trust that a viewer has towards a YouTuber, but maybe even more when what is and isn't sponsored isn't easily identifiable. Many Sezzy Squad members commented that they wouldn't rely on the opinions of YouTubers when they have sponsored posts. Sarah's habit of not openly stating that videos or products are sponsored creates distrust with her viewers as they don't know what is genuinely her opinion, and what is a promotion for the product. Future research into how brand endorsements and sponsorships affect trust of information on social media could be very interesting for future information seeking needs.

Conclusion

This thesis gives an overview of how followers for two YouTubers within a specific subject area trust the information they give and indicates that there are many factors that can affect trust. The main research question in this thesis was:

- To what extent do viewers of two YouTubers trust the information they are given in videos concerning fitness, health, and nutrition?

The discussion indicates that earlier research concerning trust and the findings in this thesis had similar results. Trust can be affected by previous experiences with a person, such as following a recommendation from a YouTuber. Information on fitness and nutrition is mostly sought on YouTube, while all the survey options for health were rarely used. Culture also affects trust in different ways. The results indicate that there is a correlation with the YouTuber's culture and that of the viewer. Having the same culture as a YouTuber may strengthen the trust between them.

For three aspects it was difficult to determine if there was a difference in trust; gender, age and time. There were not enough difference in gender to be able to analyze the results by looking at gender. There also wasn't a visible correlation between trust and age. The amount of time a participant has followed a YouTuber didn't have a noticeable effect on trust either. A participants' background, on the other hand, seems to affect the level of trust greatly. Those with a background in fitness, health or nutrition were less trusting of Sarah and Lauren and the participants with higher education were also less trusting. This indicates that people's experiences and knowledge may affect their trust of other people. Another aspect was disclosure about sponsorships where Sarah was concerned. Many of the Sezzy Squad members voiced concern and uncertainty for trusting Sarah's recommendations because they do not know what is and isn't sponsored.

There are a lot of factors that can affect trust, as was just mentioned. Some participants mentioned that they follow YouTubers due to their positivity, "vibe" and personality. This indicates that lifestyle choices are most trusted because it is an aspiration for their followers to live like Sarah or Lauren. The least trusted recommendations were for products and health. These findings are not surprising, considering the participants' views on sponsorships and health care professionals. Overall, the participants in this survey were more likely to follow advice from Sarah and Lauren concerning lifestyle choices, fitness and nutrition.

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Attachment 1 – Sarah’s Day Questionnaire

6/8/2018

Trusting Information on YouTube – Vis - Nettskjema

Trusting Information on YouTube - Sarah's Day

Side 1

Trust and Information on YouTube

The goal of this survey is to determine how YouTube users trust information that they find there relating to fitness, health and nutrition. The study is part of a master thesis at Oslo Metropolitan University in Norway.

This survey forms the basis for data collection for the master thesis. There are no requirements beyond participation in the survey. **Your answers will be anonymous, and will not be recognisable in the thesis paper.** The project will be finalised in June 2018.

Answering is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time.

The survey should take around 5-10 minutes to complete.

Consent *

By answering the survey you give consent to participating in the study.

You understand that the participation is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time.

- ☐ I understand
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in this survey

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Side 2

Introduction

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

How old are you? *

Velg ... ▾

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where are you from? *

Velg ... ▾

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Gender *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

What is your current occupation? *

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Student

At what level are you currently studying? *

- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Certificate of apprenticeship
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ PhD or doctorate degree

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Student

Are you studying something within health, fitness or nutrition?

<https://nettskjema.uio.no/user/form/preview.html?id=92763>

1/6

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Are you studying something within health, fitness or nutrition?»: Yes

What field are you studying? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Health
☐ Fitness
☐ Nutrition

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Employed

What is your highest completed schooling? *

- ☐ Middle School
☐ High School
☐ Certificate of apprenticeship
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's degree
☐ PhD or doctorate degree

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Employed

Do you work within health, fitness or nutrition? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you work within health, fitness or nutrition?»: Yes

What field are you working within? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Health
☐ Fitness
☐ Nutrition

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Other

Please specify your occupation *

- ☐ Gap year
☐ Unemployed
☐ On leave
☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Please specify your occupation»: Other

Other *

Sideskift

Side 3

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Fitness

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where and how often do you seek information concerning fitness?

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand
With the term fitness, we mean information concerning workouts and exercise

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	I don't want to say
Friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Papers *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within fitness? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Popularity
- ☐ Authenticity
- ☐ Entertainment value
- ☐ Knowledge behind product recommendations
- ☐ Their expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.)
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within fitness?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Side 4

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Health

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where and how often do you seek information concerning health?

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand
With the term health, we mean information related to sickness, injuries and wellbeing

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	I don't want to say
Friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Papers *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within health? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Popularity
- ☐ Authenticity
- ☐ Entertainment value
- ☐ Knowledge behind product recommendations

- ☐ Their expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.)
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within health?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Side 5

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Nutrition

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where and how often do you seek information concerning nutrition?

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand
With the term nutrition, we mean information concerning food and diets

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	I don't want to say
Friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Papers *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within nutrition? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Popularity
- ☐ Authenticity
- ☐ Entertainment value
- ☐ Knowledge behind product recommendations
- ☐ Their expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.)
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within nutrition?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Side 6

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

YouTube

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

How often do you go on YouTube? *

- ☐ Several times a day
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ Several times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Several times a month
- ☐ Once a month

- ☐ Several times a year
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ More seldom
- ☐ Never

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Approximately how many YouTubers are you subscribed to? *

Side 7

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Sarah's Day

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Do you follow Sarah's Day? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day?»: Yes

Where do you follow Sarah's Day? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Instagram

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day?»: Yes

How long have you been following Sarah's Day? *

- ☐ 1 month or less
- ☐ 2 to 6 months
- ☐ 7 to 12 months
- ☐ 1 to 1 1/2 years
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years or more

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day?»: Yes

Do you follow Sarah's Day's recommendations? *

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Once or a few times
- ☐ Never

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day's recommendations?»: Often, Once or a few times

Please answer how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day's recommendations?»: Often, Once or a few times

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When Sarah recommends a product I immediately want to try it. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah concerning fitness. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah concerning health *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am likely to follow a recommendation from Sarah concerning nutrition. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow Sarah's advice concerning lifestyle choices. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day's recommendations?»: Often, Once or a few times

Think of the last time you followed Sarah's Day's recommendation. How did you proceed? *

"Sezzy Squad" is a Facebook group created by Sarah for her followers.

- ☐ Immediately took the recommendation to use
- ☐ Researched the recommendation online
- ☐ Asked friends or family for their opinions
- ☐ Wrote a post on Sezzy Squad asking for their advice
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Think of the last time you followed Sarah's Day's recommendation. How did you proceed?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Sarah's Day's recommendations?»: Never

Why do you not follow Sarah's Day recommendations? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ I am a new follower
- ☐ I watch her for entertainment
- ☐ I do not trust her recommendations
- ☐ I cannot find her product recommendations in my country
- ☐ I do not believe her recommendations are genuine
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Why do you not follow Sarah's Day recommendations?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above

Sideskift

Side 8

Last thoughts

Do you have any questions or comments concerning this survey?

Sideskift

Side 9

Thank you!

Thank you so much for participating in this survey! All answers are completely anonymous and will help to get a better understanding of how people trust information found on YouTube and social media.

Se nylige endringer i Nettskjema (v385_1rc1)

Attachment 2 – Lose it like Lauren Questionnaire

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Trusting Information on YouTube - Lose it like Lauren

Side 1

Trust and Information on YouTube

The goal of this survey is to determine how YouTube users trust information that they find there relating to fitness, health and nutrition. The study is part of a master thesis at Oslo Metropolitan University in Norway.

This survey forms the basis for data collection for the master thesis. There are no requirements beyond participation in the survey. **Your answers will be anonymous, and will not be recognisable in the thesis paper.** The project will be finalised in June 2018.

Answering is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time.

The survey should take around 5-10 minutes to complete.

Consent *

By answering the survey you give consent to participating in the study.

You understand that the participation is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time.

- ☐ I understand
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in this survey

Side 2

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Introduction

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

How old are you? *

Velg ... ▼

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where are you from? *

Velg ... ▼

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Gender *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

What is your current occupation? *

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Student

At what level are you currently studying? *

- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Certificate of apprenticeship
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ PhD or doctorate degree

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Student

Are you studying something within health, fitness or nutrition?

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- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Are you studying something within health, fitness or nutrition?»: Yes

What field are you studying? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Health
☐ Fitness
☐ Nutrition

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Employed

What is your highest completed schooling? *

- ☐ Middle School
☐ High School
☐ Certificate of apprenticeship
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's degree
☐ PhD or doctorate degree

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Employed

Do you work within health, fitness or nutrition? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you work within health, fitness or nutrition?»: Yes

What field are you working within? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Health
☐ Fitness
☐ Nutrition

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «What is your current occupation?»: Other

Please specify your occupation *

- ☐ Gap year
☐ Unemployed
☐ On leave
☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Please specify your occupation»: Other

Other *

Sideskift

Side 3

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Fitness

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where and how often do you seek information concerning fitness?

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand
With the term fitness, we mean information concerning workouts and exercise

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

<https://nettskjema.uio.no/user/form/preview.html?id=94698>

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	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	I don't want to say
Friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Papers *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within fitness? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Popularity
- ☐ Authenticity
- ☐ Entertainment value
- ☐ Knowledge behind product recommendations
- ☐ Their expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.)
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within fitness?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Side 4

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Health

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where and how often do you seek information concerning health?

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand
With the term health, we mean information related to sickness, injuries and wellbeing

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	I don't want to say
Friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Papers *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within health? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Popularity
- ☐ Authenticity
- ☐ Entertainment value
- ☐ Knowledge behind product recommendations

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- ☐ Their expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.)
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within health?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Side 5

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Nutrition

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Where and how often do you seek information concerning nutrition?

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand
With the term nutrition, we mean information concerning food and diets

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	I don't want to say
Friends *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mass media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Papers *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within nutrition? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ Popularity
- ☐ Authenticity
- ☐ Entertainment value
- ☐ Knowledge behind product recommendations
- ☐ Their expertise within a subject (education, work experience, etc.)
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Which factors influence your decision to follow a YouTuber within nutrition?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Side 6

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

YouTube

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

How often do you go on YouTube? *

- ☐ Several times a day
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ Several times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Several times a month
- ☐ Once a month

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- ☐ Several times a year
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ More seldom
- ☐ Never

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Approximately how many YouTubers are you subscribed to? *

Side 7

Sideskift

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Lose it like Lauren

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Consent»: I understand

Do you follow Lose it like Lauren? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren?»: Yes

Where do you follow Lose it like Lauren? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Patreon
- ☐ Facebook

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren?»: Yes

How long have you been following Lose it like Lauren? *

- ☐ 1 month or less
- ☐ 2 to 6 months
- ☐ 7 to 12 months
- ☐ 1 to 1 1/2 years
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years or more

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren?»: Yes

Do you follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations? *

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Once or a few times
- ☐ Never

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations?»: Often, Once or a few times

Please answer how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations?»: Often, Once or a few times

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When Lauren recommends a product I immediately want to try it. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am likely to follow a recommendation from Lauren concerning fitness. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<https://nettskjema.uio.no/user/form/preview.html?id=94698>

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	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am likely to follow a recommendation from Lauren concerning health. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am likely to follow a recommendation from Lauren concerning nutrition. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow Lauren's advice concerning lifestyle choices. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations?»: Often, Once or a few times

Think of the last time you followed Lose it like Lauren's recommendation. How did you proceed? *

- ☐ Immediately took the recommendation to use
- ☐ Researched the recommendation online
- ☐ Asked friends or family for their opinions
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Think of the last time you followed Lose it like Lauren's recommendation. How did you proceed?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above *

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Do you follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations?»: Never

Why do you not follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations? *

You may choose multiple answers

- ☐ I am a new follower
- ☐ I watch her for entertainment
- ☐ I do not trust her recommendations
- ☐ I cannot find her product recommendations in my country
- ☐ I do not believe her recommendations are genuine
- ☐ Other

Dette elementet vises dersom et av følgende alternativer er valgt på spørsmål «Why do you not follow Lose it like Lauren's recommendations?»: Other

Please explain why you chose "Other" above

Sideskift

Side 8

Last thoughts

Do you have any questions or comments concerning this survey?

Sideskift

Side 9

Thank you!

Thank you so much for participating in this survey! All answers are completely anonymous and will help to get a better understanding of how people trust information found on YouTube and social media.

Se nylige endringer i Nettskjema (v385_1rc1)

Attachment 3 – Receipt from The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD)



Ragnar Andreas Audunson
Pilestredet 48
0167 OSLO

Vår dato: 22.12.2017

Vår ref: 57542 / 3 / TAL

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

Vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 31

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 03.12.2017 for prosjektet:

57542	<i>Trust of information on YouTube</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Ragnar Andreas Audunson</i>
Student	<i>Runa Marie Tjøland</i>

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er meldepliktig og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av personopplysningsloven § 31. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Vi forutsetter at du ikke innhenter sensitive personopplysninger.

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 30.06.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Trine Anikken Larsen

Kontaktperson: Trine Anikken Larsen tlf: 55 58 83 97 / Trine.Larsen@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Runa Marie Tjøland, runamarie@gmail.com



INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

Personvernombudet vurderer at ungdommer som har fylt 15 år kan samtykke selv til å delta i dette prosjektet, så lenge de får tilpasset informasjon om prosjektet, og at det sørges for at de forstår at deltakelse er frivillig og at de når som helst kan trekke seg dersom de ønsker det. Foresatte samtykker for sine barn som er under 15 år. Selv om barnets foresatte samtykker til barnets deltakelse i prosjektet, må også barnet gi sin aksept til å delta.

Vår vurdering er at informasjonsskrivet til utvalget er mangelfullt utformet, og vi ber deg om å endre/tilføye følgende:

- Hva som skjer med informasjon om deltakeren (hvem som har tilgang til opplysninger, hvordan personopplysninger lagres, om deltakerne vil kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon eller ikke)
- Hva som skjer med informasjon om deltakeren når prosjektet er avsluttet
- Kontaktinformasjon til daglig ansvarlig/veileder

Vi ber deg om å sende det reviderte informasjonsskrivet til personvernombudet@nsd.no. Husk å oppgi prosjektnummer. Prosjektet kan deretter starte.

DATASIKKERHET

Personvernombudet forutsetter at du behandler alle data i tråd med Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus sine retningslinjer for datahåndtering og informasjonssikkerhet. Vi legger til grunn at bruk av privat pc er i samsvar med institusjonens retningslinjer.

PROSJEKTSLUTT

Prosjektslutt er oppgitt til 30.06.2018. Det fremgår av meldeskjema at du vil anonymisere datamaterialet ved prosjektslutt. Anonymisering innebærer vanligvis å:

- slette direkte identifiserbare opplysninger som navn, fødselsnummer, koblingsnøkkel
- slette eller omskrive/gruppere indirekte identifiserbare opplysninger som bosted/arbeidssted, alder, kjønn

For en utdypende beskrivelse av anonymisering av personopplysninger, se Datatilsynets veileder:

<https://www.datatilsynet.no/globalassets/global/regelverk-skjema/veiledere/anonymisering-veileder-041115.pdf>