My Mom Got Influenced by Yours: The Persuasiveness of Mom Influencers in Relation to Mothers’ Food Assessments and Decisions

While childhood obesity is a worldwide health problem with a range of short- and long-term health and social consequences, the World Health Organization argues that this epidemic is both preventable and reversible. The biggest dietary gatekeepers of children are their parents and more specifically mothers, whose attitudes and consumption choices are nowadays often affected by the opinions of influencers on social network sites. Using two experimental studies, the current paper investigates how mothers’ food assessments and decisions for their children are affected by sponsored posts on social media. In the first study, a two-level between-subjects experiment (N= 81) was adopted, which showed that mothers like sponsored Instagram posts better when they are posted by a mom influencer (i.e. a mother who accumulated a large following on social media and often engages in sponsored partnerships with brands) compared to a brand. This consequently positively affected source credibility, post engagement, purchase intention and the child appropriateness of the food. In the second experiment, a two-by-two between-subjects design (N= 169) showed that while a typical mom influencer is perceived as less effective in promoting food compared to an expert (i.e. a pediatric nutritionist) mom influencer due to lower credibility, a typical mom influencer is more efficient in promoting unhealthy foods through higher influencer-brand congruence.

Keywords: Mom influencers; influencer marketing; food marketing; healthy food; children; social media
1 INTRODUCTION

The numbers of obesity among children are rapidly growing worldwide (Raziani & Raziani, 2020). Besides negatively affecting children’s quality of life and longevity, it also has a significant impact on the prevalence of transgenerational obesity, making it a severe and long-term public health issue (Cheng, 2020). However, it is argued that childhood obesity is a reversible problem (World Health Organization, 2021), which calls for knowledge on how to halt the rise of this epidemic (Spinelli et al., 2019). Importantly, optimal nutritional intake is especially critical throughout the first years of a child’s life, as it further promotes healthy growth, child development and habits that will be translated to more advanced ages (Garrido-Miguel et al., 2019; Usheva et al., 2021a; Usheva, et al., 2021b). Therefore, recent academic research is calling for early interventions to promote the development of healthy lifestyles among children (Rimal, 2003; Tugault-Lafleur et al., 2021; Yee, et al., 2021).

While an increasing body of research has been focusing on how advertising directed to children affects their food habits (e.g. Naderer, 2021; Naderer, et al., 2019), a large study among 12,041 families across six European countries argues that healthy eating practices among children is best promoted by improving their parents’ dietary habits, practices and beliefs (Papamichael et al., 2021). Furthermore, especially mothers seem to have the most determining impact on their children’s eating behavior. However, research on food advertising targeting adults is very limited and has a dominant focus on traditional media formats according to Nieto and colleagues (2022). Given the gatekeeping role of mothers concerning their children’s food intake, better understanding on how children’s food marketing within digital media affects the maternal decision-making process is needed.

In contrast to previous generations of parents who traditionally relied on family, friends and health care providers in their immediate environment for parenting advice and health information, it is remarkable that a large amount of today’s mothers are increasingly finding
their way to social network sites (SNSs) such as Instagram for these matters (Moon et al., 2019).

One type of SNS users that is greatly affecting the opinions of mothers are so-called ‘mom influencers’, which can be considered niche social media influencers (SMI). These mom influencers are mothers who became micro-celebrities with an engaging follower base on social media, by sharing information about their lives, children, and family (Abidin, 2015; Abidin & Ots, 2015; Archer, 2019; Jorge, Marôpo, Coelho, & Novello, 2021). Similar as with other SMI, these mom influencers are regularly approached by brands to advertise products or services (such as food products) on their social media profiles in return for compensation (De Veirman et al., 2017). The persuasive power of influencers is vast, as they share a lot of information about their personal and family lives with their followers that is very relatable for them (Abidin, 2015). Therefore, their followers easily identify with them, and are likely to consider their recommendations and opinions as more authentic as opposed to brands and traditional celebrities, who are less accessible (Abidin, 2015; Senft, 2008). Although increasing countries (such as the UK, Netherlands and Belgium) recently introduced new regulations requiring influencers to clearly disclose sponsored content as such (Dailybits, 2022; Advertising Standards Authority, 2021), a recent eye-tracking study revealed that the use of hashtags (e.g. #ad or #paidad) is a popular but ineffective strategy to clearly disclose advertising content and activate people’s persuasion knowledge on Instagram (Boerman & Müller, 2022). The current study aims to gain insights in how sponsored Instagram posts for children’s food targeting other mothers is affecting their assessment and decision-making process.

A first experimental study compares the persuasiveness of mom influencers versus corporate brands promoting children’s food products on Instagram, as to the best of our knowledge, prior research has not yet investigated the persuasiveness of mom influencers on other mothers’ food assessments and decisions.
Further, previous research suggests that various endorser types can be distinguished, among other things, depending on their level of expertise about a certain topic (Friedman, Friedman, 1979). In turn, a recent study suggests that expert endorsers (compared to typical non-expert endorsers) could enhance the effectiveness of healthy food promotions targeting children (Binder et al., 2020). A second experimental study therefore will deepen the understanding of food promotions by examining their effectiveness among mothers by investigating which type of mom influencer (nutritional expert vs. typical mom influencer) could be best employed to promote healthy food.

1.1 Maternal decision-making for children’s food

A broad range of studies appoint parents to be the main influencers of children’s eating habits, as they serve both as role models, educators and gatekeepers (e.g. Birch & Fisher, 1998; Cruwys, et al., 2015; Linde et al., 2022; Papamicheal et al., 2021; Pedersen, et al., 2015; Wyse, et al., 2011). Research indeed shows that 69-79% of children’s food intake is provided from within the home environment (Ziauddeen et al., 2018). Regardless of their great impact, the dietary habits of today’s young parents appear to be among the poorest of all age groups (Paeratakul, et al., 2003). It is argued that their busy lives and the consequent time constraints are the most common barriers for healthy eating behaviors (Pelletier & Laska, 2012). Despite the observation that fathers are increasingly taking on a more active role in the household (Khandpur et al., 2014), mothers still appear to be the primary caregiver related to child feeding practices Rahill et al. 2020). Besides, mothers are more actively seeking parenting advice and health information on social media (Duggan et al., 2015; Price et al., 2018). As maternal attitudes, behaviors and also food choices for their children are highly affected by other parents within their social networks (Cochran & Niego, 2002; Hogreve, et al., 2021; Swanson & Power, 2005), the current study aims to investigate how food promotions on Instagram affect mothers’ decision-making process for their children’s food.
1.2 Children’s food marketing on social media

Social media food marketing has been shown to be highly pervasive and effective among children (Coates, Hardman, Halford, Christiansen, & Boyland, 2019). In the United Kingdom (country where the study was conducted), new regulations (set to take effect in 2023) aim to ban all advertising for junk food both online (including influencer marketing) and on TV before 9 PM, in order to protect children from this junk food advertising (The Guardian, 2021).

In addition, some self-regulatory initiatives have been created regarding food marketing. For example, companies participating in the EU Pledge commit themselves not to advertise food and beverages to children under 13 years (expect for products that fulfill specific nutritional criteria) in all covered media, including influencer content (EU Pledge, 2022). Nonetheless, a recent report of the European Consumer Organisation notifies that food brands have been enthusiastic adopters of influencer marketing and that many cases were rejected by the Panel of the Pledge as they did not primarily target children under 12 years old according to them (Calvert, 2021). Therefore, the report concludes that the rules to protect children against unhealthy food are too lax and give plenty of leeway as they are not suited for the digital marketing context and focus predominantly on advertising targeting children under 12 years old only.

Despite recent efforts to protect the consumers, research shows that the effectiveness of social media food marketing is rather worrisome, as this marketing technique is predominantly used to promote products that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt (Alruwaily et al., 2020; Bragg et al., 2020; Coates et al., 2019a; Martínez-Pastor, et al., 2021; Potvin Kent et al., 2019). Studies investigating the effectiveness of these social media marketing efforts showed that the promotion of unhealthy foods by SMI indeed led to an increase of their intake among children (Coates, Hardman, Halford, Christiansen, & Boyland, 2019b; Coates et al., 2019). Limited first
studies also show that influencer marketing promoting healthy food targeted at children does not affect children’s healthy food adoption (Coates et al., 2019b; Folkvord & de Bruijne, 2020).

While studies investigating food marketing targeting adults are more limited, they similarly reveal a predominance of unhealthy food promotions within social media ads (Nieto et al., 2022) and considered it an effective advertising strategy to change adults’ attitudes and habits when promoted through traditional advertising formats (e.g. Koordeman et al., 2010; Boyland et al., 2017; Harris and Brownell, 2009). While some studies quantified the amount of healthy vs. unhealthy food promotions on the social media profiles of child influencers (Alruwaily et al., 2020; Coates et al., 2019a; Martínez-Pastor, et al., 2021; Potvin Kent et al., 2019), to the best of our knowledge, no such information exists about the profiles of mom influencers. Despite mothers’ determining role concerning the food habits of their children and their great exposure to social media content (Price et al., 2018), food marketing targeted at adults is currently not regulated in Europe and the quantity and impact of social media food marketing directed to mothers, to the best of our knowledge, remains unexplored.

1.3 The effectiveness of a corporate brand vs. mom influencer

Previous research argues that parents respond best to nutrition messages on platforms that are engaging, personalized and interactive (Zarnowiecki et al., 2020), whereby social media could represent a promising format to effectively mothers with food promotions. One specific type of social media users that have a strong impact on the opinions of mothers are ‘mom influencers’ (Ouvrein, 2022). These niche influencers are mothers with kids who accumulated a large following base and became micro-celebrities on their social network profiles by sharing information about their lives, children and family, and often engage in sponsored partnerships with brands (Abidin & Ots, 2015; Abidin, 2015; Archer, 2019; Jorge et al., 2021). Hence, they are a specific type of SMI. SMI are typically characterized by their reach (i.e. having a substantial number of followers) and impact (i.e. the influence they have on the decision-
makings of others). In addition, they are perceived as highly credible among their followers (Hudders et al., 2021). Previous research repeatedly suggested that SMI are perceived as more likeable among their followers compared to a corporate brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Myers, 2021; Taillon et al., 2020). Besides, mothers greatly value the information they receive from other mothers (compared to other actors), as the mothering experience creates a bond between them that may be more profound compared to other relationships (Nolan et al., 2012). Therefore, we expect that the content of mom influencers will be perceived as more likeable, as opposed to content posted by a corporate brand. Furthermore, research argues that an endorser’s perceived credibility can fluctuate, depending on his attractiveness and likeability. In a variety of contexts, an endorser’s likeability has been found to predict the perceived credibility of the endorsed message (e.g. Teven, 2008). Therefore, we hypothesize that the promotion of a snack would be more likeable and consequently perceived as more credible when coming from a mom influencer compared to a brand (H1).

Furthermore, the source credibility model (Hovland et al., 1953) posits that increases in perceived credibility of endorsers may lead to greater persuasiveness of their message. Indeed, in a variety of contexts, the credibility of SMI has been repeatedly proven an important antecedent of message, brand and advertising effects (e.g., Lou et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2020). We therefore expect that source credibility will further positively affect engagement with the post (H2a), perceived child appropriateness of the food (H2b) and purchase intention (H2c).

1.4 Expert vs. typical mom influencer

While a great number of maternal decisions are affected by online information, research highlights the significant lack of credible and evidence-based nutrition information with interactive and collaborative features on the internet (Zarnowiecki et al., 2020). A recent trend that can be identified is that more and more professional experts find their way to social media platforms to spread their message as well. As such, educated professionals became SMI as well
by spreading their messages on their social media profiles. Scholars indeed acknowledge the
great diversity within the influencer landscape and distinguished three main types of
influencers: celebrities, typical influencers and expert influencers (Friedmann & Friedmann,
1979). Thus, while the concept of ‘mom influencers’ refers to mothers on social media that
monetize and narrate their family lives (Jorge et al., 2021), many differences may still occur
among these niche influencers. While many typical mom influencers spread nutritional
information without any qualification or scientific substantiation (Byrne et al., 2017), others
may create content based on their education and professional experience (i.e. expert
influencers). For example, Rolinde Opdegroei is a Belgian pediatric dietitian with 27K
followers on Instagram, who shares her knowledge with her followers.

Looking at research on maternal information gathering, this greatly aligns with two
different discourses that affect how mothers appeal to their social networks for information on
mothering (Price et al. 2018). Firstly, mothers can either rely on other mothers’ opinions and
information, following a discourse that is called “intuitive mothering”. This discourse implies
that mothering skills are instinctive and best learned through the support of other mothers. The
second discourse is referred to as the “medicalized mothering”, whereby mothers feel that they
need expert information and guidance from health care professionals (Price et al, 2018).
Therefore, through a second experimental study, we aim to investigate how the type of mom
influencer (typical vs. expert) affects the assessment and decision-making of mothers regarding
children’s food.

1.4.1 The credibility of an expert vs. typical mom influencer

Unlike brands versus influencers, which are two completely different types of sources
(cf. previous hypotheses), the differences between a typical vs. expert mom influencer are much
more subtle. As they are both mothers and thus easy to identify with, we believe that their
perceived likeability will not significantly differ. In line with the match-up hypothesis (Kamins,
According to this theory and validated within the context of Instagram, a SMI is perceived as a credible source of information when the products being endorsed match with their particular domain of interest (Breves et al., 2018). Besides, when evaluating persuasive messages, people often rely on simple heuristics (or shortcuts), instead of cognitively and centrally processing the provided information (Chaiken, 1987). In the light of children’s food, the study of Binder et al. (2020) refer to an ‘expert heuristic’ and show that children’s fruit intake indeed increases when it is endorsed by an expert influencer, but not when it is endorsed by a typical or celebrity influencer. We believe that this heuristic would equally apply to mothers. Therefore, in a second study we aim to test the hypothesis that expert (vs. typical) mom influencers would be more successful in promoting food, measured by the three dependent variables a) post engagement, b) child appropriateness perceptions and c) purchase intention) due to their higher levels of credibility (H3).

1.4.2 The perceived congruity of the endorsement by an expert vs. typical mom influencer

According to the self-disclosure theory, two ways can be distinguished in which influencers share information. Applied to the context of the current study, we can argue that typical mom influencers predominantly engage in personal self-disclosure (i.e., sharing about one’s personal and family life), whereas expert mom influencers typically engage in professional self-disclosure (i.e., sharing information about work-related topics) (Feng, et al. 2021; Kim & Song, 2016). As is the case for SMI in general, mom influencers too use various tactics (e.g., host giveaways of products, receive directs payments and free products) to generate an income out of their online activities (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017; Kaur & Kumar, 2021). Branded content is therefore almost inextricably linked to and therefore expected on the profiles of typical mom influencers. For those typical mom influencers, promoting brands might be perceived as part of sharing their personal beliefs and values, which is in line with their personal self-disclosure style (Feng et al., 2021). The expert mom influencers (in the case of
this study: pediatric nutrition experts), however, follow a professional self-disclosure style, by which they generally communicate about information they gathered through their main professional occupation. As their influencer activities are not considered their primary job, it might be less expected for them to engage in promotional partnerships and to generate an income there. Summarized, given their difference in self-disclosure style, typical mom influencers might be perceived as more congruent with a brand (or sponsored content in general), as opposed to expert mom influencers. Further, a high congruence between an influencer and a brand has previously been shown to positively affect perceptions and purchase intentions among their followers (Belanche, et al., 2021). This is in line with research showing that followers assess SMI content more positively if it is in line with what has been posted before on their profile (Pöyry et al., 2019). Further, following the attributional theory, it is suggested that in case of influencer-brand congruence, the influencer is believed to genuinely like the product and to not promote it purely for extrinsic monetary reasons (Breves et al., 2019; Mishra et al., 2015). Therefore, we expect that an advertisement for children’s food will lead to higher perceptions of influencer-brand congruence for typical (vs. expert) mom influencers, which will in turn result into higher scores on the three dependent variables (H4a, b and c).

1.4.3 The moderating role of healthiness of the endorsed food

Given that the expert mom influencer within the current study is a pediatric nutritionist who helps families and children to develop healthy eating habits, it is plausible to expect that she would be perceived as more credible (compared to a typical mom influencer) when endorsing healthy (vs. unhealthy) food. Therefore, hypothesis 5 posits that an expert (vs. mom) influencer will be perceived as more credible when promoting a healthy (vs. unhealthy snack), which will in turn enhance the three dependent variables (a, b and c).

However, we argued above that SMIs are more often deployed by brands to promote unhealthy compared to healthy foods (e.g., Coates et al., 2019a). Research shows that mothers
do not appreciate the ‘picture perfect’ that is often portrayed by other mothers on social media. In contrary, they often turn to social media to find mother-to-mother support and real representations of motherhood (Archer, 2018). In the context of influencers, research indeed suggests that parents often appreciate the honesty and authenticity of the life that is being portrayed on the profiles of SMIs (Jun & Yi, 2020). As typical mom influencers adopt a self-disclosure style and talk about their everyday life as a mother, we expect that they might get away with the promotion of unhealthy food, under the guise of honest parenthood. In the context of online blogs, Orton-Johnson (2017) indeed explains that content in which mom bloggers show their struggles and shortcomings is more relatable for other mothers, which might help them to feel better about themselves. This could imply that the endorsement of mom influencers for unhealthy food is highly liked and persuasive among their followers, as it reflects realistic motherhood. We therefore aim to further investigate the differential impact of expert versus typical mom influencers for the promotion of healthy versus unhealthy food. We expect that, while a nutritional expert (i.e., expert influencer) might be more successful in promoting healthy food due to their higher perceived level of credibility related to the product category of food (cf. H5), it might appear odd when they promote unhealthy food, as this product type is incongruent with their expertise and image. Given the appreciation for authentic and honest motherhood experiences, we hypothesize that a typical (vs. expert) mom influencer will enhance perceived brand congruence when she promotes an unhealthy (vs. healthy) snack, whereby the three dependent variables (a, b and c) would be positively affected in turn (H6). The hypothesized effects as depicted in the conceptual model (cf. Figure 1) will be tested by two experimental studies.
2 EXPERIMENT 1

2.1 Method

2.1.1 Design, procedure, and participants

A 2-level between-subjects online experiment (brand post versus mom influencer post) was conducted among 81 mothers between 19 and 53 years ($M = 30.6$, $SD = 6.10$). The respondents were recruited through the Prolific panel, and we had three criteria to participate in the study: respondents had to be female, have at least one child below 12 years and have an Instagram account. The mothers had between one and five children ($M = 1.51$, $SD = .73$), and these children had an age ranging from zero to 28 years (with each mother having at least one child below 12 years).

Before participation in the study, participants had to fill in an informed consent form that informed them of the approximate duration of the study, the fact that all data are collected and processed anonymously and that they can opt out at any moment during the study. In total, 100 respondents were recruited for the study, but 19 respondents were removed for the formal analyses because they did not meet one or more of the criteria or because they failed an attention check. One group of respondents was exposed to a sponsored Instagram post (promoting an unhealthy snack) posted by a brand, while the other group was exposed to the same post posted by a mom influencer. Afterwards, respondents filled in the same questionnaire.

2.1.2 Stimulus material

The respondents were either exposed to a sponsored Instagram post posted by a brand or a mom influencer. This Instagram post was the same in both conditions and presented a picture of two girls eating a lollipop of the brand Tuttifruti, a candy brand. We used a non-existent brand in the stimuli material to exclude any confounding effects with regard to existing brand knowledge and attitudes.
For the brand post condition (see Figure 1), the Instagram post was posted by the brand, by including the brand’s logo as profile picture and the brand name Tuttifrutti as name of the source of the post. The respondents were asked to imagine certain scenarios as described in detail in Table 3. The manipulation of a brand post is similar as in the study of De Jans et al. (2020). In particular, the advertising disclosure “Sponsored” was included below the brand name as is done in real life on Instagram. In the description of the scenario, we explicitly mention “You follow this influencer on Instagram”. This last sentence was included to make sure that the participants perceived the post as an Instagram post of an influencer that they follow on Instagram. This manipulation of influencer post was also based on the manipulation of an influencer post in the study of De Jans et al. (2020). Underneath the profile picture and name, the standard Instagram advertising disclosure used by influencers was incorporated: “Paid partnership with Tuttifrutti_uk”.

2.1.3 Measures

All the items were measured on five-point scales. After measuring the socio-demographics, post liking was measured with the item “How much do you like the Instagram post you have seen from the brand Tuttifrutti/influencer Charlie?” ranging from “not at all” to “I really like it” ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .98$). Further, source credibility (consisting of the dimensions trustworthiness and expertise) was measured with 10 semantic differentials following Ohanian (1990) (“What do you think of the brand Tuttifrutti/Charlie?”, e.g. undependable – dependable; $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.40$, $SD = .77$). Post engagement was gauged using three items ranging from “definitely not” to “definitely” (e.g., “I would comment on this Instagram post”; $\alpha = .78$, $M = 2.45$, $SD = .93$). In addition, purchase intention was measured with three items such as “I can imagine buying snacks from Tuttifrutti” from “totally disagree” to “totally agree” (Holzwarth et al., 2006; $\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.28$, $SD = .90$). Finally, child appropriateness was also measured with three items ranging from “definitely not” to “definitely” (e.g., “Do you think this Tuttifrutti
snack is good for your child(ren)?’”; \( \alpha = .85, M = 3.12, SD = .97 \). For an overview of all measures, see Table 1.

2.2 Results

2.2.1 Randomization

The sample in our experimental conditions did not differ with respect to age (\( t(79) = \alpha \), \( p = .937 \)) of the mothers, average number (\( t(72) = .51, p = .614 \)), degree (\( \chi(2) = 3.48, p = .175 \)), brand familiarity (\( \chi(1) = 2.18, p = .140 \)), hunger at the moment of the study (\( t(77) = .76, p = .447 \)), how much they like candy (\( t(79) = .93, p = .357 \)) and Instagram involvement (\( t(79) = .05, p = .960 \)).

2.2.2 Manipulation check

From the respondents that saw the brand post, 78.6% indicated to have seen an Instagram post posted by a brand, 14.3% by an influencer and 7.1% indicated that they did not know. In addition, when the respondents saw an Instagram post by an influencer, 97.4% said that they saw a post posted by an influencer and 2.6% by a brand. Hence, our manipulation of the source of the sponsored post was successful.

2.2.3 The effectiveness of a corporate brand vs. mom influencer

See Table 2 for the main effects of source type (brand post versus mom influencer post) on all mediating and dependent variables (analyzed using a MANOVA). A serial mediation analysis (via Process Macro by Hayes (2017); model 6, 5000 bootstrap samples) was conducted with source of the sponsored post as independent variable, post likeability and source credibility as mediators, and post engagement as the dependent variable. The index of the serial mediation was significant (\( B = .11, SE = .06, 95\% CI = [.0192, .2398] \)). First, the analysis shows a main effect of source of the sponsored post on post liking (\( a = .54, SE = .21, t = 2.57, p = .012 \)), showing that mothers like the sponsored Instagram post more when it is posted by a mom.
influencer ($M = 3.56, SD = .82$) compared to a brand ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.05$). Post liking further positively affects source credibility ($b = .43, SE = .08, t = 5.51, p < .001$), which subsequently increases post engagement ($d_1 = .47, SE = .11, t = 4.10, p < .001$). The direct effect of source of the sponsored post on post engagement was not significant ($c'_1 = .06, SE = .16, t = .38, p = .709$). These results confirm H1 and H2a.

We conducted another serial mediation analysis (PROCESS; model 6 by Hayes (2017); 5000 bootstrap samples) with the same independent and mediating variables, but now with child appropriateness of the food as the dependent variable. The index of the serial mediation was also significant ($B = .13, SE = .07, 95\% CI = [.0270, .2910]$). As indicated above, exposure to a mom influencer post resulted in more post liking compared to a brand post, which increases source credibility, and further child appropriateness ($d_2 = .57, SE = .14, t = 4.12, p < .001$). The direct effect was not significant ($c'_2 = .06, SE = .19, t = .33, p = .744$). H2b is confirmed.

Finally, a third serial mediation analysis with purchase intention as the dependent variable showed similar results, with mothers liking the mom influencer post more than the brand post, resulting in higher source credibility and subsequently higher purchase intentions ($d_3 = .36, SE = .13, t = 2.72, p = .008; B = .08, SE = .05, 95\% CI = [.0073, .2037]$). The direct effect was also not significant ($c'_3 = -.23, SE = .18, t = -1.25, p = .215$). These results also confirm H2c. See Figure 3 for an overview of the results.

3 EXPERIMENT 2

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Design, procedure and participants

For the second study, we conducted a 2 (influencer type: expert versus typical mom influencer) by 2 (product type: unhealthy versus healthy snack) between-subjects experimental
design among 169 women between 19 and 58 years ($M = 30.77$, $SD = 6.95$). The respondents for the second experiment were also recruited using the Prolific panel and we used to same inclusion criteria. The mothers had between one and five children ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .84$), ranging from zero to 29 years. Each mother had at least one child below 12 years.

The participants were also asked to fill in the same informed consent form. In total, 170 respondents were recruited from which one was excluded from the formal analysis as they failed an attention check. The participants were first exposed to an Instagram profile of either a typical mom influencer or an expert mom influencer (nutrition specialist) and were then exposed to a sponsored Instagram post for either an unhealthy or healthy snack of that same influencer. Afterwards, they filled in the same questionnaire.

### 3.1.2 Stimulus material

To manipulate influencer type, participants were first exposed to the Instagram profile of either a typical mom influencer (see Figure 4) or an expert mom influencer (see Figure 5). Before exposure to this Instagram profile, participants were asked to carefully read a text. These final descriptions were carefully selected and optimized based on two pretests (cf. pretest 1 and pretest 2). See Table 3 for how the descriptions for the manipulation of influencer type evolved based on the results of the pretests. The Instagram profiles were as similar as possible: they contained the same profile picture, name, number of posts, number of followers, number of following and feed. However, the information in the bio differed by adding “Nutrition specialist” and “Evidence based | Nutrition advise” to the profile in the expert mom influencer condition compared to “Famous person” and “Celeb mom | Mom influencer” in the typical mom influencer condition. This manipulation was determined based on two pretests.

After that, the participants saw an individual Instagram post of that same influencer. The Instagram post was identical in both conditions (picture, caption, hashtags, advertising disclosure, etc.), with the only difference being the promoted product (healthy or unhealthy).
For the unhealthy snack condition (see Figure 6), participants saw a picture of two girls eating a lollipop of the brand Tuttifrutti. This was the same picture and brand as in experiment 1. In addition, for the condition with the healthy snack (see Figure 7), the participants were exposed to the exact same picture but now with the two girls eating a carrot.

### Pretest 1

52 respondents ($M_{age} = 31.25, SD = 5.60; 65.4\%$ women) that did not participate in the main experiment were recruited for the first pretest. For the manipulation of snack type, the pretest showed that participants perceived the unhealthy snack as less healthy ($M = 2.40, SD = 1.26$) compared to the healthy snack ($M = 4.22, SD = .75; t(39) = -6.28, p < .001$; “How healthy do you think the snacks from the post are?”). Thus, the manipulation of snack type was successful.

For the manipulation of influencer type, respondents were either exposed to the profile of the expert mom influencer or the typical mom influencer, without a textual description about that influencer. However, the results of the first pretest showed that the manipulation of influencer type was not successful. In particular, there were no differences between the expert influencer and mom influencer conditions on the items “Charlie’s activities on Instagram constitute her main job” ($t(50) = -1.13, p = .266$), “Charlie has a degree in nutrition” ($t(50) = -1.70, p = .095$) nor on the five-point semantic differential how they would classify Charlie (“Mom influencer” – “expert influencer”) ($t(50) = -.57, p = .572$). We therefore decided to adjust the manipulation of influencer type by adding a description of the influencers before showing the participants the Instagram profile. These descriptions were tested in the second pretest.

### Pretest 2

The second pretest was conducted among 52 participants ($M_{age} = 32.33, SD = 6.71; 82.7\%$ female) that did not participate in pretest 1 nor the main experiment. This pretest tested
the adjusted manipulation of influencer type based on pretest 1 (including the descriptions, see Table 2) and showed that the item “Charlie’s main job is pediatric nutrition specialist” scored higher in the expert influencer condition (M = 4.24, SD = 1.23) compared to the typical mom influencer condition (M = 2.26, SD = 1.16; t(50) = -5.96, p < .001). However, there was no significant difference on the item “Charlie’s activities on Instagram constitute her main job” (t(50) = .16, p = .874). When asking the participants how they would mainly describe Charlie (as a mom influencer or a nutrition specialist), 96.2% indicated as a mom influencer in the mom influencer condition, however, only 64% indicated as a nutrition specialist in the expert influencer condition. Based on these results, we deemed that the manipulation of influencer type was again not sufficient. We therefore adapted the descriptions of the influencers once more for the actual experiment (see the descriptions in the stimuli material-section).

3.1.5 Measures

Source credibility (α = .92, M = 3.86, SD = .77), post engagement (α = .78, M = 2.80, SD = 1.06), child appropriateness (α = .90, M = 3.50, SD = 1.15) and purchase intention (α = .93, M = 3.38, SD = 1.16) were measured using the same scales as in experiment 1. In addition, influencer-brand congruence was gauged using three five-point semantic differentials following Martínez-López et al. (2020) (e.g., “There is a bad fit between Charlie and the brand Tuttifrutti – There is a good fit between Charlie and the brand Tuttifrutti”; α = .90, M = 4.22, SD = 1.03).

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Randomization

The sample in our experimental conditions did not differ regarding age (F(3, 164) = .45, p = .717) of the mothers, average age (F(1, 146) = .534, p = .466) and number (F(1, 165) = .613, p = .435) of children, degree (χ²(6) = 3.19, p = .784), brand familiarity (χ²(3) = .31, p = .958), influencer familiarity (χ²(3) = 2.86, p = .414), hunger at the moment of the study (F(3,
165) = 1.18, \( p = .318 \), how much they like candy \((F(3, 165) = .29, p = .836)\), how much they like carrots \((F(3, 165) = .72, p = .542)\) and Instagram involvement \((F(3, 165) = 1.02, p = .384)\).

3.2.2 Manipulation check

Participants scored higher on the item “Charlie’s main job is managing her Instagram profile” in the typical mom influencer condition \((M = 3.83, SD = 1.02)\) compared to the expert influencer condition \((M = 2.44, SD = 1.33; t(159) = 7.62, p < .001)\). In addition, the item “Charlie’s main job is pediatric nutrition specialist” was scored higher in the expert influencer \((M = 4.42, SD = .96)\) compared to the typical mom influencer condition \((M = 2.19, SD = 1.06; t(164) = -14.24, p < .001)\). Thus, the manipulation of influencer type was successful.

Moreover, the snacks from the Instagram post were perceived as more healthy in the healthy snack condition \((M = 4.75, SD = .46)\) compared to the unhealthy snack condition \((M = 3.12, SD = 1.19; t(168) = -17.50, p < .001)\). The manipulation of snack type also showed to be successful.

3.2.3 The effectiveness of an expert vs typical mom influencer

See Table 4 for the main effects of influencer type (expert versus typical mom influencer) on all mediating and dependent variables (analyzed using a MANOVA). First, a multiple mediation analysis using Process Macro (model 4, Hayes (2017), 5000 bootstrap samples) was conducted to examine how influencer type (independent variable) affects post engagement (dependent variable) via source credibility\(^1\) and influencer-brand congruence (mediating variables). While there is a significant indirect effect via source credibility \((B = -

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\(^1\) Unlike for study I, the variable post likeability was not included as a prerequisite of credibility in study II. While prior research has repeatedly shown that social media influencers are perceived as more likeable among their followers compared to a corporate brand (e.g., De Veirman et al., 2017; Myers, 2021; Taillon et al., 2020), we did not include this construct in the second study. That is because, based on the literature review, we did not expect that the nuance between the two types of influencers (who are both mom influencers), would have a significant impact on the perceived likeability of their content, but we did expect it to directly affect their credibility instead. To verify this, we did, however, test the role of likeability within all models of study II. As expected, likeability did not have a significant driving role in the context of study two, whereas all regression models turned insignificant when including post likeability as a first mediator in the models.
.21, $SE = .10$, $95\% CI = [-.4227, -.0214]$), the indirect effect through influencer-brand congruence is not significant ($B = .04$, $SE = .03$, $95\% CI = [-.0036, .1070]$). In particular, an expert influencer ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .78$) is perceived as more credible than a typical mom influencer ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .74$; $a_1 = -.26$, $SE = .12$, $t = -2.22$, $p = .028$). In addition, a typical mom influencer ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .83$) is perceived as more congruent with the brand compared to an expert mom influencer ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.17$; $a_2 = .36$, $SE = .17$, $t = 2.31$, $p = .022$). Source credibility ($b_1 = .82$, $SE = .09$, $t = 8.90$, $p < .001$), but not influencer-brand congruence ($b_4 = .11$, $SE = .07$, $t = 1.54$, $p = .164$), further enhances post engagement. Thus, H3a is confirmed, but H4a cannot be confirmed.

Another multiple mediation analysis was conducted with the same variables, but now with child appropriateness as the dependent variable. Both the indirect effects via source credibility ($B = -.12$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [-.2421, -.0148]$) and influencer-brand congruence ($B = .17$, $SE = .08$, $95\% CI = [.0307, .3362]$) were significant. As indicated above, the expert influencer is perceived as more credible but less congruent with the brand compared to the typical mom influencer. Both source credibility ($b_2 = .45$, $SE = .10$, $t = 4.35$, $p < .001$) and influencer-brand congruence ($b_5 = .48$, $SE = .08$, $t = 6.25$, $p < .001$) positively affect child appropriateness. This confirms both H3b and H4b.

Finally, we conducted a third multiple mediation analysis (Process Macro; model 4 by Hayes (2017), 5000 bootstrap samples) with purchase intention as the dependent variable. Again, both the indirect effects via source credibility ($B = -.13$, $SE = .07$, $95\% CI = [-.2839, -.0138]$) and influencer-brand congruence ($B = .13$, $SE = .07$, $95\% CI = [.0188, .2775]$) were significant. Moreover, both source credibility ($b_3 = .49$, $SE = .11$, $t = 4.45$, $p < .001$) and influencer-brand congruence positively affect purchase intention ($b_6 = .37$, $SE = .08$, $t = 4.45$, $p < .001$), confirming both H3c and H4c.
3.2.4 The moderating role of snack type

Finally, we investigated the moderating role of snack type by conducting three moderated mediation analyses (Process Macro; model 7; Hayes (2017), 5000 bootstrap samples) with influencer type as the independent variable, snack type as moderator, source credibility and influencer-brand congruence as mediators, and post engagement (analysis 1), child appropriateness (analysis 2) and purchase intention (analysis 3) as the dependent variables.

The first moderated mediation analysis with post engagement as the dependent variable shows that while there is no interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on source credibility ($B = -.20, SE = .24, t = -.84, p = .403$, cf. Figure 8), there is an interaction effect on influencer-brand congruence ($B = -.82, SE = .30, t = -2.70, p = .008$, cf. Figure 9). The conditional effects indicate that the typical mom influencer is only perceived as more congruent with the brand when an unhealthy snack is promoted ($B = .76, SE = .21, t = 3.57, p = .001$) and not when a healthy snack is promoted ($B = -.06, SE = .21, t = -.26, p = .796$). However, influencer-brand congruence did not affect post engagement in turn. H5a and H6a cannot be confirmed.

The moderated mediation analysis with child appropriateness as the dependent variable shows that the index of the moderated mediation is significant ($B = -.39, SE = .15, 95\%CI = [-.71, -.1106]$). As indicated above, the interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on source credibility was not significant, but the interaction effect on influencer-brand congruence was. In addition, influencer-brand congruence positively affected child appropriateness. Thus, when an unhealthy snack was promoted, the typical mom influencer was perceived as more congruent with the brand than the expert mom influencer, resulting in more child appropriateness ($B = .36, SE = .13, 95\%CI = [.126, .6396]$), confirming H6b. There was no
difference between the typical mom influencer and expert influencer when the healthy snack was promoted ($B = -.03$, $SE = .08$, $95\% CI = [-.1845, .1384]$). H5b cannot be confirmed.

Finally, similar results were found with purchase intention as the dependent variable, showing a significant index of the moderated mediation ($B = -.30$, $SE = .13$, $95\% CI = [-.5703, -.0870]$). Thus, when an unhealthy snack was promoted ($B = .28$, $SE = .11$, $95\% CI = [.0957, .5212]$), but not when a healthy snack was promoted ($B = -.02$, $SE = .06$, $95\% CI = [-.1492, .1037]$), the typical mom influencer was perceived as more congruent with the brand, subsequently leading to more purchase intention. While H5c cannot be confirmed, H6c is confirmed. See Figure 10 for an overview of the results of experiment 2.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article presents the results of two experimental studies to examine the effectiveness of mom influencers in promoting food to other mothers. The first experiment aimed the examine whether a mom influencer post is more efficient in promoting food to other mothers compared to a standard sponsored post of a brand. In addition, in the second experiment we compared the effectiveness of a typical versus expert mom influencer in promoting healthy versus unhealthy snacks, and whether and how the underlying mechanisms of source credibility and influencer-brand congruence can explain this.

Given the wide range of negative short and long-term consequences of childhood obesity, a broad range of research investigated this topic. While various studies aimed to understand how food marketing on traditional media platforms works (Norman et al., 2016) it is argued that food and beverage companies are increasingly shifting their advertising budgets from broadcast to digital spaces (Powell et al., 2013). Even though today’s parents are also increasingly spending time and even look for health information on these digital platforms nowadays (Eurostat, 2021), little is known about how those highly embedded types of advertising directed to parents are operating. The current study shows that a commercial social
media post coming from a mom influencer is significantly more efficient in terms of engagement with the social media post, child appropriateness perceptions of the food and purchase intentions among mothers compared to a commercial social media post coming from a corporate brand. This is in line with previous research arguing that digital marketing and influencer marketing is strongly affecting children’s and young people’s attitudes and behaviors towards unhealthy commodity (Buchanan et al., 2018; Coates et al., 2019a; Coates et al., 2019b). Our study contributes to these findings by showing that influencer marketing specifically directed to parents (mothers in our study), also strongly affects their attitudes and behavioral intentions towards unhealthy food products for their children. In sum, the first experimental study of this paper thus shows that a mom influencer is more effective in promoting food compared to a brand. This is in line with previous research that showed that influencers are perceived as more likeable compared to corporate brands, and the assumption that influencers are thereby considered credible sources of information (Myers, 2021; Taillon et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that this was the promotion of an unhealthy snack, which indicates that mom influencers promoting unhealthy food may affect mothers’ unhealthy food choices for their children, thereby even contributing to the unhealthy diet of children.

Therefore, the second study of this paper further investigated the moderating impact of the healthiness of the promoted snack and the differing role of a mom versus a nutrition expert influencer. On the one hand, the results of our study show that, that an expert mom influencer is perceived as more credible than a typical mom influencer, independent of the type of snack (healthy or unhealthy) that is promoted, leading to higher post engagement, child appropriateness of the food and purchase intention. Thus, experts in the field that share their content to their followers are perceived as more credible compared to mothers that do not have an education on the topic and merely share their own experiences. On the other hand, a typical mom influencer is perceived as being more congruent with the brand, which increases mothers’
perception of the child appropriateness of the food and their purchase intention towards the
snack. However, when considering the different effects for healthy versus unhealthy snacks,
our results show that typical mom influencers are mainly effective in promoting unhealthy food,
while nutrition experts are more efficient in promoting healthy food on social media. Previous
research investigating the impact of digital nutrition promotion towards parents drew the
attention towards the fact that there is a great lack of credible evidence-based nutrition
information on the internet, presented to parents in an interactive and collaborative manner
(Zarnowiecki et al., 2020). Our findings suggest that social network sites might represent a
promising tool for nutrition experts to communicate their message towards today’s parents.
Besides, our finding concerning the particular potency of typical mom influencers to promote
unhealthy but not healthy food is in line with previous research showing that influencer
marketing towards children was effective in promoting the food intake of unhealthy but not
healthy food (Coates et al., 2019b). An important take-away of the second experiment is related
to the development of the experimental material. More concretely, the manipulation of expert
vs. typical mom influencer had to be made very conspicuous for the respondents to actually
identify the influencers as intended. We believe that especially for mom influencers (as opposed
to, for example, fashion influencers), the lines between an expert and typical influencer might
be particularly blurry as an ordinary mom can also be perceived as an ‘expert’ due to her real-
life knowledge and practice with motherhood (Price et al., 2018). Future research could aim to
explore which factors are used by followers to assess the expertise of a mom influencer.
Together with the results of our studies, this could help practitioners to help selecting the best
endorser for healthy food promotion campaigns, for example. Besides, even beyond the scope
of nutrition information, it might be interesting to know which influencers are considered
credible, as mothers often consult the internet for pediatric information seeking as doctor’s
offices are not always reachable (Bernhardt & Felter, 2004). As governments are starting to
collaborate with influencers to reach the public (e.g. Bolat, E. 2020), based on our results, it
might be interesting for governmental organizations to collaborate with expert influencers to
spread reliable and easily accessible information through the platforms that are commonly
assessed for information-seeking by today’s mothers.

Given the large reach and persuasive power of these mom influencers, this finding also
raises some ethical considerations, which calls for alertness and gives rise to some important
recommendations for public policy and advertising practice. First, based on these results, mom
influencers in general could be made aware of their potential impact on other parents and
consequently on these children’s unhealthy food intake, and asked to pay particular attention to
the nutritional value of the products they are considering promoting. Furthermore, while there
are already considerable policy concerns regarding the protection of children towards unhealthy
food advertising, the current study underlines the importance to look beyond the traditional
advertising types and focus on the category of the endorsed product (i.e. children’s food) instead
of the age group of the targets of the advertising, as is done now in, for example, the EU Pledge
(Calvert, 2021). More specifically, the results of our study encourage to not only provide
regulations regarding food marketing directed to children, but also to their parents and to
accelerate the process to develop regulations for social network platforms and influencer
marketing in particular. Finally, our findings show that typical mom influencers were
significantly less credible compared to nutrition experts when promoting healthy food. Based
on these results, two suggestions can be made. First, organizations or institutions promoting
healthy food habits among children should therefore consider cooperating with expert mom
influencers to spread their message to the current generation of mothers. Second, future research
should investigate how this lack of credibility for typical mom influencers when promoting
healthy food can be countered.
To conclude, this paper also has some limitations that translate into suggestions for further research. First, fictitious influencers were used for the stimulus material in both studies to exclude confounding effects regarding existing influencer familiarity and attitudes. This decision was made since we compared two influencer types in the second experiment whereby we had to keep all influencer characteristics constant between the conditions except for their niche. Nonetheless, this has an impact on the validity of the results. It might be expected that existing mom influencers, with whom their followers developed a great para-social and trust relation, might exert an even greater influence on their followers. However, the fact that we found abovementioned results without this bond between influencer and follower confirms the influential potential of mom influencers. Further, while the attitudes and behavioral intentions of mothers were measured within the current study, it might be interesting for future research to adopt a more longitudinal approach and investigate whether the impact of the mom influencers are further translated into the actual food intake of the children or in long-term persisting food habits within the household. Also, being the first study investigating how the decision-making process of caregivers regarding children’s food is affected by influencer marketing, we consciously chose to focus on mothers only. As explained before, they are argued to have the greatest impact on the choices regarding child feeding practices (Rahill et al., 2020) and are more often on the lookout for health information online (Duggan et al., 2015). However, fathers are increasingly involved in today’s households (Rahill et al., 2020), and were not taken into account in the current study. Therefore, it might be interesting for future research to investigate the decision-making process of fathers regarding children’s food and what online sources they rely on. To conclude, the sample of our studies existed of mothers with at least one child below 12 years. This implies that many of them had multiple children, while previous research argues that particularly first-time mothers are socially isolated and more likely to seek for mothering information online in the period after having their firstborn (Price et al., 2018).
However, one might also expect that older mothers started following mom influencers earlier, whereby they had more interactions with them, resulting in a stronger parasocial relationship (Hartmann et al., 2008). It might be interesting for future research to investigate how the number and age of their children affect the susceptibility of parents to influencers’ opinions.
5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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6 AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

[blinded for review] contributed to the original conceptualization of the study, developed the stimuli, performed analyses and wrote the original draft of the theoretical part and discussion of the paper.

[blinded for review] contributed to the original conceptualization of the study, performed analyses, and wrote the original draft of the methodological part of the paper.

7 FUNDING

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8 ETHICAL APPROVAL

All research activities were approved by the University of [blinded for review].

9 DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors certify that there are no conflicts of interest to declare. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript and accept full responsibility for all aspects of the work described here.
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Figures

Figure 1. Brand post condition (experiment 1)

Figure 2. Mom influencer condition (experiment 1)
Figure 3. Overview results experiment 1

\[ H1: a = .54^* \]
\[ H1: b = .43^{***} \]
\[ H2a: d_1 = .47^{***} \]
\[ H2b: d_2 = .57^{***} \]
\[ H2c: d_3 = .36^{**} \]
\[ c'_1 = .06 \]
\[ c'_2 = .06 \]
\[ c'_3 = -.23 \]

Figure 4. Instagram profile of mom influencer (experiment 2)
Figure 5. Instagram profile of expert influencer (experiment 2)

Figure 6. Unhealthy snack condition (experiment 2)
Figure 7. Healthy snack condition (experiment 2)

Figure 8. Interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on source credibility (experiment 2)
Figure 9. Interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on influencer-brand congruence (experiment 2)

![Interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on influencer-brand congruence](image)

Figure 10. Overview results experiment 2

![Overview results experiment 2](image)

Tables

Table 1. Measurement Instrument
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post liking</td>
<td>“How much do you like the Instagram post you have seen from the brand Tuttifrutti/influencer Charlie?”</td>
<td>1 = “not at all”, 5 = “I really like it”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post engagement</td>
<td>“I would comment on this Instagram post”</td>
<td>1 = “definitely not”, 5 = “definitely”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would ‘like’ this Instagram post”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I would share this Instagram post”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dishonest – honest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unreliable – reliable</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insincere – sincere</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Untrustworthy – trustworthy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not an expert – expert</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inexperienced – experienced</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknowledgeable – knowledgeable</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unqualified – qualified</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unskilled – skilled</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>“I can imagine buying snacks from Tuttifrutti”</td>
<td>1 = “totally disagree”, 5 = “totally agree”</td>
<td>Holzwarth et al. (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The next time I buy snacks, I will take Tuttifrutti into consideration”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I am very interested in buying snacks from Tuttifrutti”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child appropriateness</td>
<td>“Would you buy this Tuttifrutti snack for your child(ren)?”</td>
<td>1 = “definitely not”, 5 = “definitely”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you think this Tuttifrutti snack is good for your child(ren)?”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you think this Tuttifrutti snack is appropriate for your child(ren)?”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Main effects of source type on mediating and dependent variables (experiment 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brand post</th>
<th>Mom influencer post</th>
<th>Source credibility</th>
<th>Post likeability</th>
<th>Post engagement</th>
<th>Child appropriateness</th>
<th>Purchase intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand post</strong></td>
<td>$M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.05$</td>
<td>$M = 3.56$, $SD = .82$</td>
<td>$F(1) = 6.61, p = .012$</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mom influencer post</strong></td>
<td>$M = 3.38$, $SD = .82$</td>
<td>$M = 3.41$, $SD = .71$</td>
<td>$F(1) = .02, p = .888$</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post likeability</strong></td>
<td>$M = 2.31$, $SD = .99$</td>
<td>$M = 2.60$, $SD = .84$</td>
<td>$F(1) = 1.98, p = .163$</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Source credibility</strong></td>
<td>$M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.04$</td>
<td>$M = 3.21$, $SD = .88$</td>
<td>$F(1) = .65, p = .422$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child appropriateness</strong></td>
<td>$SD = 3.30$, $SD = .89$</td>
<td>$M = 3.25$, $SD = .93$</td>
<td>$F(1) = .07, p = .790$</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Descriptions for manipulation of influencer type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description tested in pretest 1</th>
<th>Typical mom influencer condition</th>
<th>Expert influencer condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No description was included before exposure to the Instagram profile.</td>
<td>“On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. Charlie is a mom of three and is a communication specialist. She lives in London and shares her experiences and knowledge about motherhood with a large public through her Instagram profile”</td>
<td>“On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. Charlie is a mom of three and is a pediatric nutrition specialist. She currently works in a hospital in London and shares her experiences and knowledge with a large public through her Instagram profile”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. Please imagine that you personally follow Charlie’s page on Instagram. Charlie is a mom of three living in London. She is a fulltime mom who shares her knowledge and experiences about motherhood with a large public through her Instagram profile”</td>
<td>“On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. Please imagine that you personally follow Charlie’s page on Instagram. Charlie is a mom of three living in London. She works as a pediatric nutrition specialist in a hospital, and in her spare time she shares her professional knowledge and...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
experiences with a large public through her Instagram profile.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expert influencer</th>
<th>Typical influencer</th>
<th>F(1)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility</td>
<td>$M = 3.98$, $SD = .78$</td>
<td>$M = 3.72$, $SD = .74$</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencer-brand congruence</td>
<td>$M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.17$</td>
<td>$M = 4.40$, $SD = .83$</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post engagement</td>
<td>$M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.02$</td>
<td>$M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.11$</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child appropriateness</td>
<td>$M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.23$</td>
<td>$M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.05$</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>$SD = 3.45$, $SD = 1.23$</td>
<td>$M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.09$</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Main effects of influencer type on mediating and dependent variables (experiment 2)