



ASSIGNMENT 7 - SUMMATIVE: Research Report

Title: **An Exploration of the Perceived Well-being of
Select Female Instagram Influencers**

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Strategic Brand Communication Honours degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

Most studies regarding social media impacting people's well-being seemingly focus on the consumers' perspective and discuss only the mental health aspects.

Through an interpretivist approach, this explorative study sought to gain insight into the Influencer phenomenon and the perceived overall impact that Instagram may have on Johannesburg-based female Influencers' well-being, via the respondents' subjective perceptions.

This research identified perceived effects of Instagram use from the perspective of a select group of female Millennial Influencers and determined the sentiment around whether their working Influencer brand persona was perceived as separate to, or integrated with, their personal persona.

Research was conducted through an online open-ended questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, documentation, and observation to better understand the population within a social and cultural context (Maree, 2020).

Both positive and negative perceived effects of Instagram use were ascertained. Mental health effects and emotional stability were major factors, however, physical health and social health were also concerns.

Most respondents identified themselves as brands, and viewed their Influencer brand persona as integrated with their personal persona to some degree.

Furthermore, findings prove that Influencers link their self-perception and self-image to that of their brand and their peers. Thus, Instagram use clearly has an impact on the psychological well-being of Influencers in South Africa, via browsing other Instagram profiles and one's own; imitating similar results from the Burnell, George, and Underwood study (2020).

By highlighting the importance of good well-being in Instagram Influencers, this research has profound implications for future studies regarding the Influencer phenomenon.

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- *Annexure M: Originality Report* is generated by SafeAssign through the IIE Vega Learn Platform.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Contextualisation

According to a recent McKinsey & Company survey (Callaghan, Lösch, Pione and Teichner, 2021), wellness-related trends have risen due to the impact of COVID-19, and the researchers expect a movement towards services that prioritise both physical and mental health.

Over recent years, there has been an increased concern regarding the relationship between social media use and mental health issues in particular (Burnell, George, and Underwood, 2020). However, seemingly little research could be found with a focus on overall well-being. Davis (2019) notes that well-being should be viewed holistically as encompassing emotional, physical, social, workplace, and societal well-being.

Social media has become so ingrained in current society and has led to the birth of social media careers in the form of “Influencers” (Jankowski, 2021), and interestingly, Influencers are seen to be a crucial section of the wellness market (Callaghan et al, 2021).

Instagram use has been proven to affect the overall well-being of Influencers in other parts of the world (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve, 2021). However, Burnell et al (2020) states that there is a need for more research from the Influencers’ perspective, on the Instagram application specifically. Further to this, seemingly little-to-no qualitative research has been conducted on this subject within a South African context.

With respect to this topic, most studies seemingly focus on the use of social media from the consumers’ perspective and discuss only the mental health aspects. Additionally, findings suggest there is insufficient qualitative data available on the subject matter from the perspective of Instagram Influencers specifically, in both a local and global capacity.

Therefore, Instagram was chosen as the social media platform for analysis and this study is focused on the Influencers’ perspective. Key variables explored herein are Instagram use and the perceived well-being of female Millennial Influencers. The research explores

the potential impact of Instagram use on the overall well-being of a select group of Johannesburg-based Influencers who are female Millennials.

1.2. Rationale and Relevance

Baklanov (2020) suggests that because Instagram has over one billion monthly active users globally, it should be considered not only one of the leading social networks but also the most important platform for Influencer Marketing. Tocci (2019) echoes this thought by emphasising that millions of businesses currently engage with customers through social media.

Furthermore, Baklanov reports that many marketers consider engagement as a key metric for tracking performance on social media, and South African Instagram users are proven to be more engaged in Influencer content than those in other parts of the globe.

The author states that in April 2020, Instagram users in South Africa accounted for 7.3% of South Africa's entire population, which equates to over four million users.

Notably, Baklanov affirms that women account for more than half of all Instagram Influencers in South Africa and the largest segment of Influencers in the country are females aged between 18 and 34 years old. However, there appears to be little-to-no research available which provides qualitative insight into these demographics.

In light of this, there is a definite need for research not only directly from the Instagram Influencers' perspective, but more specifically focused in the context of the Millennial segment of the South African female population. Thus, this was selected as the focus of the research.

The study is significant because over recent years there has been increased concern regarding the relationship between social media use and mental health issues (Burnell et al, 2020). Most studies concerning this topic seemingly focus on the use of social media from the consumers' perspective.

Instagram use has been proven to affect the overall well-being of Influencers in other parts of the world (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve, 2021). However, Burnell et al (2020) states that

there is a need for more research from the Influencers' perspective, on the Instagram application specifically. Furthermore, seemingly little-to-no qualitative research has been conducted on this subject within a South African context.

Findings suggest there is insufficient qualitative research data available on the subject matter from the Influencers' perspective, in both a local and global capacity. Therefore, the perceived impact of Instagram use on Influencers well-being is a valid concern that should be addressed.

This study thus focuses on the Influencers' perspective, and explores the possible perceived impact of social media use on both their mental and physical well-being.

To narrow the study, a parameter was set in terms of location. Therefore, Johannesburg was selected as the location because it is considered to be ethnically diverse and is the largest city in South Africa, housing approximately 36% of Gauteng's population and 8% of the national population (*Municipalities of South Africa*, 2021).

Additionally, the research is relevant in the following ways:

- By improving understanding of the topic at hand and supporting existing knowledge with relevant and verifiable qualitative data; the study pursues contextualisation of its findings within the global field of social media research, by contributing information that can be applied beyond this specific research setting.
- Exploring this topic in a South African context adds to the body of research on the matter, as the local qualitative research on this topic is seemingly lacking.
- Gaining an inside understanding of the Influencer phenomenon and pressures thereof can raise awareness and knowledge of Influencer culture.
- Findings may prompt marketers and society as a whole to better understand social issues regarding social media use; and support both consumers and Instagram Influencers in their efforts to maintain good digital well-being.

- Social media businesses, such as Instagram, could benefit from this research because understanding how people engage with their offerings is critical to the bettering of their products and services.
- By resonating with Influencers' well-being needs on the Instagram platform, Instagram can potentially maintain a positive public image, and thereby continue attracting new and existing customers.
- Findings may have implications for policy and future project implementation.

1.3. Problem Statement

Social media Influencers have become favourable to both local and global marketers and brands as a way to reach out to consumers via new media because Influencers apparently alter consumer decision-making (Zak and Hasprova, 2020).

Instagram use has been proven to affect the overall well-being of Influencers in other parts of the world (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve, 2021), however, seemingly little-to-no qualitative research has been conducted on this subject within a South African context.

Furthermore there is seemingly insufficient global qualitative research on this subject from the perspective of Instagram Influencers specifically.

Thus, the research focuses on the overall well-being of Instagram Influencers within a South African context, and specifically explores the potential perceived impact of Instagram use on the overall well-being of a select group of Johannesburg-based, female Millennial Influencers.

1.4. Purpose Statement

By means of an interpretivist paradigm (Maree, 2020), the purpose of this study is to seek understanding and gain in-depth insight into how and why Instagram use could possibly

affect the perceived overall well-being of female Millennial Influencers in Johannesburg, from both a mental and physical standpoint.

1.5. Research Questions

1.5.1. Main Research Question

What perceived impact does Instagram use have on the overall well-being of female Millennial Influencers in Johannesburg?

1.5.2. Secondary Research Questions

1. What insights could be gained regarding the types of psychological effects that could potentially be prompted by such use?
2. In what ways do these possible psychological effects relate to the overall use of Instagram?
3. Why do Influencers still use Instagram despite the potential negative effects on their overall well-being?

1.6. Research Objectives

Objectives of the research are:

1. To uncover perceptions regarding the possible effects of Instagram use from the perspective of a select group of female Millennial Influencers.
2. To determine the sentiment around whether their working Influencer brand persona is perceived as separate to, or integrated with, their personal persona.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualisation

As the inductive nature of the study requires a broader context of concepts to be explored (Bezuidenhout, Davis, Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:115-118), the most appropriate conceptual terms applicable to this study are deconstructed hereafter for mutual understanding. However, these are loosely defined concepts and the evolution of these definitions are further explored herein, through the utilisation of a combination of the ontological, sensitising, and hermeneutic traditions.

Key concepts explored in the research are:

- Social media (Foreman, 2017).
- Millennials (Bialik and Fry, 2019).
- Influencers (Foxwell, 2021).
- Well-being (Seligman, 2018).

2.1.1. Social Media

Social media is the widely accepted term for websites and mobile applications which people use to share digital content such as information, photos and videos with online communities (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]a).

Foreman (2017) identifies that people predominantly use social media to:

- Connect with others
- Communicate anonymously
- Share photos, videos, and other media
- Publish content online via blogging
- Share news, ideas, interests, and hobbies
- Find and review businesses
- Shop online, and trade goods and services

Foreman continues that popular social media sites include social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn; and media sharing sites such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. However, the author highlights the significance of the definitions of social networks and media sharing sites overlapping. This may explain why people seemingly use the terms social media and social networking sites (SNS) interchangeably.

Foreman (2017) considers Instagram to be a media sharing network where people find and share photos, videos, live videos, and other media online.

2.1.2. Millennials

As the study focuses on Millennials, it is relevant to assess these individuals.

Millennials, also referred to as Generation Y, are considered to be people born approximately between 1981 and 1996 (Bialik and Fry, 2019), although with reference to the term in the *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]b) dictionary, the exact threshold between Millennials and the generation prior and post-Millennials seems undecided.

2.1.3. Influencers

Foxwell (2021) states that the term Influencer is presently part of our modern language and seemingly credits Instagram for the emergence of the Influencer.

The traditional use of the term “Influencer” is generally a person who exerts influence via inspiration or guidance that can persuade action in others (*Merriam-Webster* [s.a.]c). The more recent adaption of the term is “a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media” (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]c).

From an advertising perspective, the traditional form of the Influencer can encompass anything from celebrities to content creators, employees and customers (Jaworski, Lutz, Marshall, Price, and Varadarajan, 2017). The authors state that Influencer Marketing

revolves around utilising individuals who hold influence over potential customers and drive marketing through these people to push brand messages to an audience.

Further to this, the article suggests that through Influencer marketing, a brand inspires or compensates Influencers to get the word out on their behalf.

Holienčinová and Kadekova (2018) claim Influencers are a “modern phenomenon” involving individuals from a range of sectors, but particularly “celebrities, industry experts and thought leaders, bloggers or content creators and micro-influencers.” The authors suggest that Influencer Marketing is one of the most rapidly flourishing means to communicate with new consumers through online media.

Although it seems that there is not yet a globally standardised way to measure levels of Influence. Foxwell (2021) identifies these “social media stars” within four major groups for consideration in Social Media Marketing, namely:

1. Mega Influencers: Over 1 million followers
2. Macro Influencers: 100,000 – 1 million followers
3. Micro Influencers: 10,000 – 100,000 followers
4. Nano Influencers: 10,000 followers or less

It is widely accepted that if these above conceptual indicators are present for an individual, then they can be viewed as an Influencer. The concept is further split according to whether the individual can be viewed as an Influencer on specific social media platforms. For example, if one fits the description on the Instagram platform, then one can be considered an Instagram Influencer.

The focal point of the research is primarily the recent iteration of Influencers as content creators.

2.1.4. Well-being

Although it has been suggested that a single indicator of well-being may be that it purely equates to happiness (Layard, 2006, as cited by Seligman, 2018: 1), Seligman (2018: 1-2)

theorises that well-being is composed of five key components, being “Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment” known as PERMA.

Davis (2019) agrees with Seligman to some degree by stating that well-being includes feeling “happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful”. However, she contradicts herself by first vaguely describing that well-being is “generally feeling well” but later clarifies this by stating that it emerges from one’s thoughts, actions, and experiences – implying that well-being is subjective and based on self-perception. Thus, supporting the relevance of Self-congruence Theory (Zhua et al, 2019) to the study because this theory relates to the concept of self.

Davis continues that well-being composes five significant categories and each aspect should be considered in order to ensure an overall feeling of well-being. These aspects are emotional, physical, social, workplace, and societal well-being.

Although Davis’ categorisation fits well with the accepted *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]d). definition of the word as “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous”; when considering the *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]e) definition of *wellness*, which is “the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal”, it appears as though the two terms can be used interchangeably.

In contrast to mainstream use of the term well-being as relating to health; in philosophy well-being translates to what is “ultimately good for a person” (Crisp, 2017) or overall “life-satisfaction”. This appears to be in agreement with the *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]e) definition of *wellness*; as formerly described. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the terms *well-being* and *wellness* can be used interchangeably.

Recent McKinsey & Company’s survey data (Callaghan et al, 2021) reveals consumers define wellness across six categories, which encompass better health, fitness, nutrition, appearance, sleep and mindfulness. The latter of which has been recently embraced largely due to the COVID-19 crisis, whereby global reports of mental hardship increased.

Thus, the researchers expect a movement towards services that prioritise both physical and mental health.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

Key variables explored within this study are Instagram use and well-being in Millennial Influencers. To achieve a study with thick description, a framework is necessary to gain an intensified understanding of the subject being inspected and therefore suitable key theories considered for this research study are assessed below.

Self-congruence Theory (Zhua, Tenga, Fotib, and Yuan, 2019) and Social Identity Theory (Ellemers, 2017) are integral in guiding the researcher from the Influencers' personal persona perspective. Aaker's Brand Vision Model (Meyerson, 2019a; Meyerson, 2019b) may aid the researcher in determining a greater comprehension of Influencers as brands.

According to Zhua et al (2019), Self-congruence Theory refers to the fit between an individual's concept of self and their brand personality. The authors' Chinese study revealed congruence between a brand's image and a consumer's self-image strongly impacts attitudes around the brand. The findings confirm that both the "functional brand and the symbolic brand" appeal to the consumer's actual self, as well as their ideal self.

Sirgy (as cited by Kim, 2015) introduced self-congruity as "the extent to which an individual's self-image is congruent with the typical brand-user image", however, Kim (2015) adds that it regards both "the congruence between self-image and a comprehensive brand image related to human characteristics".

Social Identity Theory (Ellemers, 2017) is the study of the link between personal and social identities, for both individual perceptions and group behaviour. This theory aims to anticipate the circumstances under which people think of themselves as individuals or as members of a group.

There is seemingly little documented evidence to prove that Influencers link their self-perception and self-image to that of their brand and their peers, however, the

researcher believes that assessing Influencers in the context of both Self-congruence Theory and Social Identity Theory may clarify this through the research study.

The primary reason for this is because Influencers can also be considered consumers, and a recent US study (Chung-Wha, Cuevas, Chong, Lim, 2020) found that people identify the Influencers they follow as aspirational human brands that they can resonate with. The secondary reason to support this is that browsing different Instagram profiles, including ones own, has proven to have an impact on psychological well-being (Burnell et al, 2020). Furthermore, Instagram use has been proven to affect the overall well-being of Influencers in other parts of the world (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve, 2021), however, seemingly little-to-no qualitative research has been conducted on this subject within a South African context and little to no global qualitative research seems to have been conducted on this subject from the perspective of Instagram Influencers specifically.

David Aaker's Brand Vision Model is a good framework for developing a brand through four key aspects, which are: a product, organisation, person, and symbol. Each of these aspects is further divided into categories that aid in defining a brand identity (Meyerson, 2019a; Meyerson, 2019b). This model can be helpful in creating a brand persona (personification of a brand), measuring market perception of the brand, and ensuring that a consistent brand image is maintained (Schmidt, 2020).

Most Influencers seem to align themselves within a niche, such as beauty, and discuss certain aspects within their niche that they themselves can resonate with, and thus content that they publish to social media can be considered their product. Through this content, they can offer functional or emotional benefits to their audience, which can be translated into product attributes.

Depending on the perceived quality of the content being shared by Influencers, in terms of imagery and value to their followers, individuals are able to decide whether their content is perceptibly good quality. The type of content indicates whether it can be found on a scale between living an affordable versus a luxurious lifestyle. Through all of these aspects,

consumers are able to distinguish what value they get from a certain Influencer and why they should follow them or consume their content.

Further to this, Influencers have proven to alter consumer decision-making (Zak and Hasprova, 2020). Hence, followers of Influencers can be considered the users of their product. Followers are therefore their customers and other Influencers can be seen as their competitors or peers.

As Influencers are usually human, they share diverse aspects of their personality on social media and people who resonate with their personality may want to follow their social media profile. Through this online recognition and engagement via social media, followers feel like they develop relationships with those that they follow, and a degree of loyalty to these individuals; which mimics a personal customer-brand relationship and brand loyalty.

The culmination of content that Influencers share with their followers on social media is a representation of who they are, and what they stand for, which creates their visual image and symbol and maintains a perception of a certain online persona.

Therefore, in consideration of the core and extended vision elements, as well as the brand essence of Aaker's model (Meyerson, 2019b), Influencers core and extended vision elements can be considered as their broader niche such as lifestyle; and their brand essence can be considered as their speciality, such as beauty.

In conclusion, when considering Influencers through this model, it is thus possible and reasonable to view Influencers as brands because these individuals are seen to symbolise a certain lifestyle, which is maintained through consistent messaging, and they seem to portray themselves with organisational and product attributes.

2.3. Academic Problem Setting

Over recent years, there has been increased concern regarding the relationship between social media use and mental health issues in particular (Burnell et al, 2020). However, seemingly little research could be found with a focus on overall well-being.

Instagram use has been proven to affect the overall well-being of Influencers in other parts of the world (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve, 2021). However, seemingly little-to-no qualitative research has been conducted on this subject within a South African context. The research set out to explore the potential impact of Instagram use on the overall well-being of a select group of Johannesburg-based Influencers who are female Millennials.

Although the scope of the research does not extend beyond Johannesburg, the scope of the review includes both national and international research in cases where parallels could be drawn.

The focal point of this research is expressly Instagram use from the Influencers' perspective. Therefore, studies regarding social media use in the general global population are not reviewed in-depth and are only mentioned where suitable.

In this document, relevant theories and literature contemplated for this research study are deliberated. The paradigm pertinent to the research study is firstly introduced, and thereafter, the theoretical foundation for the study is discussed. Critical concepts are defined as part of a thematic literature review whereby each review is grouped into an established theme.

This comprehensive thematic Literature Review is based on the themes identified that would aid the investigation of the Research Problem and assist the researcher in answering the Research Question.

Suitable theories considered for this research study are assessed within the conceptual thematic review below. Both the theory and literature aid the researcher in better understanding the impact of social media use on well-being, within the aforementioned scope.

2.4. Thematic Literature Review

2.4.1. Theme 1: Millennial Life, the Internet, and the Smartphone

Millennial Life

As the study focuses on the experiences of Millennials, it is relevant to assess who they are.

Millennials, also referred to as Generation Y, are considered to be people born approximately between 1981 and 1996 (Bialik and Fry, 2019), although with reference to the term in the *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]b) dictionary, the exact threshold between Millennials and the generation prior and post Millennials seems undecided.

The Emergence of the Smartphone

A smartphone is accepted as a cell phone with notable software functions such as the ability to access the internet (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]f).

The world's first official smartphone was invented by IBM in 1992 and sold publicly from 1994. It included advanced features such as a touchscreen and the ability to communicate via email and fax (Tocci, 2019). From 2001, smartphones could connect wirelessly to the internet, but this was generally expensive.

Apple revolutionised the concept of the smartphone in 2007 when they launched the sleek, modern iPhone, which set the standard for mobile devices around the world today (Eadicicco, 2019). The author states that this touchscreen device included many cutting edge features and influenced the trend of pocket-sized computers. Tocci (2019) suggests that a major reason for this was the user-friendly web browsing on the iPhone.

Tocci continues that smartphones have also altered the way people communicate, in turn altering their way of life, whereby instant internet access has elevated consumers' expectations and created a culture of instant gratification.

The author continues that with the evolution of the smartphone came competitors such as Android, as well as smartphone apps. Thus, currently, everything that can be accessed via the internet can be managed through a smartphone.

Tocci adds that the majority of time spent on social media is through mobile devices such as smartphones, leading to millions of businesses currently engaging with customers through social media.

ICASA (2020: 33) defines a smartphone as a mobile phone with advanced features such as Wi-Fi connectivity, web browsing capabilities, a high-resolution touchscreen display and the ability to use apps. The majority use one of the following mobile operating systems: Android, Symbian, iOS, BlackBerry OS and Windows Mobile”.

South Africa is a huge adopter of mobile technology according to GeoPoll (2020). A Cross-sectional SA online survey study of the population conducted by GeoPoll in February 2020 suggested that Instagram was the fourth most popular social media app amongst respondents and 70% access the internet mostly through a smartphone or tablet. 36% use social media apps more than four hours daily and females spend more time on both messaging apps and social media apps (GeoPoll, 2020).

The fact that this was an online survey can be a deterrent and may not be reflective of the full population.

It is important to note that Smartphone Penetration in South Africa, as of September 2019 is stated as 91.2 % of the population (ICASA, 2020: 33) and 74.6% of Gauteng households have access to the Internet (ICASA, 2020: 13). Most Gauteng households access the internet via a mobile device (ICASA, 2020: 14).

2.4.2. Theme 2: Social Media

Social media defined:

- “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos) (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]a).”
- “Biggest social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and media sharing sites (Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat)”, (Foreman, 2017).

Although people seemingly use the terms social media and social networking sites interchangeably in conversation. Although one can see why this may be when considering (Foreman, 2017) mentions that the lines between the two have blurred.

Foreman (2017) identifies the top ten types of social media as follows:

- Connect with others on social networks
- Share photos, videos, and other media on media sharing networks:
- Share news and ideas on discussion forums
- Discover, save, and share new content by bookmarking and content curation networks
- Find and review businesses on consumer review networks
- Publish content online through blogging and publishing networks
- Share interests and hobbies on interest-based networks
- Shop online on social shopping networks
- Trade goods and services through sharing economy networks
- Communicate anonymously through anonymous social networks

Foreman (2017) considers Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn as examples of social networks Which he says people use to connect online with people and brands and refers to social networks, also known as “relationship networks,” as networks hubs that transform modern

life into a social experience. He says that Instagram falls into a media sharing networks where people find and share photos, video, and other media online.

Although *Merriam-Webster* has two definitions *for social network* ([s.a.]g):

- “a network of individuals (such as friends, acquaintances, and coworkers) connected by interpersonal relationships”.
- “an online service or site through which people create and maintain interpersonal relationships”.

2.4.3. Theme 3: Influencers Defined

The traditional use of the term influencer is generally a person who exerts influence via inspiration or guidance that can persuade action in others (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]c). The more recent adaption of the term is “a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media” (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]c).

This second adaption of the term is fitting when considering that according to Zak and Hasprova (2020), social media Influencers alter consumer decision-making and have therefore become a preferable way for marketers and brands to engage with consumers.

Foxwell (2021) states that the term influencer is now part of our modern language and seemingly credits Instagram for the emergence of the Influencer.

The author identifies these “social media stars” within four major groups for consideration in social media marketing. These groups are:

1. Mega Influencers: Over 1 million followers
2. Macro Influencers: 100,000 – 1 million followers
3. Micro Influencers: 10,000 – 100,000 followers
4. Nano Influencers: 10,000 followers or less

Women as Influencers

The majority of the global Influencer community is female (Foxwell, 2021), as is the local Influencer community, as noted by Baklanov (2020). However, women still earn less than men in the field (Gesenhues, 2019) which could possibly lead to feelings of inadequacy. Further to this, Kleva (as cited by Gesenhues, 2019) who previously earned an income as a sexualised Influencer, shares her experience of the sexism towards women in the industry and the unrealistic expectations of them, saying that she fell into a “deep” hole which affected her, implying that this was a psychological effect thereof, which may have impacted her mental well-being.

Influencer Marketing

From an advertising perspective, the traditional form of the Influencer can encompass anything from celebrities to content creators, employees and customers (Jaworski, Lutz, Marshall, Price, and Varadarajan, 2017). The authors state that Influencer Marketing revolves around utilising individuals who hold influence over potential customers and drive marketing through these people to push brand messages to an audience.

Further to this, the article suggests that through Influencer Marketing, a brand inspires or compensates Influencers to get the word out on their behalf.

2.4.4. Theme 4: Influencers as Brands

Self-congruence Theory (Zhua, Tenga, Fotib, and Yuan, 2019) and Social Identity Theory (Ellemers, 2017) are integral in guiding the researcher from the Influencers’ personal persona perspective. Aaker’s Brand Vision Model (Meyerson, 2019) aids the researcher in determining a greater comprehension of Influencers as brands.

A panel for the *American Marketing Association* (Jaworski, Lutz, Marshall, Price, and Varadarajan, 2017) define a brand as: “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers” as well

as “an intangible asset” that is meant to create “distinctive images and associations in the minds of stakeholders, thereby generating economic benefit/values.”

Similarly, (*Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]h) views a brand as “a public image, reputation, or identity conceived of as something to be marketed or promoted”.

Until recently, the term brand was commonly linked to businesses and products. However, it is now frequently associated with individuals (Solomon, 2019). The author continues that this trend has evolved to the point at which brands are now also personified on social media which makes one consider that if traditional brands are being personified, then surely people can also become brands.

Further to this, Hess (2018, as cited by Solomon, 2019) states that “Anything that can be consumed is now understood as a brand – and on the internet, that’s every last bit of content.”

By drawing a parallel between the meaning of a brand versus the meaning of an influencer, referencing Aaker’s Brand Vision Model (Meyerson, 2019) may aid the researcher in determining a greater comprehension of Influencers as brands.

David Aaker’s Brand Vision Model is a good framework for developing a brand through four key aspects, which are: a product, organisation, person, and symbol. Each of these aspects is further divided into categories that aid in defining a brand identity (Meyerson, 2019). David Aaker’s Brand Vision Model can be helpful in creating a brand persona (personification of a brand), measuring market perception of the brand, and ensuring that a consistent brand image is maintained (Schmidt, 2020).

David Aaker’s Brand Vision Model is a good framework for developing a brand through four key aspects, which are: a product, organisation, person, and symbol. Each of these aspects is further divided into categories that aid in defining a brand identity (Meyerson, 2019a; Meyerson, 2019b). This model can be helpful in creating a brand persona (personification of a brand), measuring market perception of the brand, and ensuring that a consistent brand image is maintained (Schmidt, 2020).

Most Influencers seem to align themselves within a niche, such as beauty, and discuss certain aspects within their niche that they themselves can resonate with, and thus content that they publish to social media can be considered their product. Through this content, they can offer functional or emotional benefits to their audience, which can be translated into product attributes.

Depending on the perceived quality of the content being shared by Influencers, in terms of imagery and value to their followers, individuals are able to decide whether their content is perceptibly good quality. The type of content indicates whether it can be found on a scale between living an affordable versus a luxurious lifestyle. Through all of these aspects, consumers are able to distinguish what value they get from a certain Influencer and why they should follow them or consume their content.

Further to this, Influencers have proven to alter consumer decision-making (Zak and Hasprova, 2020). Hence, followers of Influencers can be considered the users of their product. Followers are therefore their customers and other Influencers can be seen as their competitors or peers.

As Influencers are usually human, they share diverse aspects of their personality on social media and people who resonate with their personality may want to follow their social media profile. Through this online recognition and engagement via social media, followers feel like they develop relationships with those that they follow, and a degree of loyalty to these individuals; which mimics a personal customer-brand relationship and brand loyalty.

The culmination of content that Influencers share with their followers on social media is a representation of who they are, and what they stand for, which creates their visual image and symbol and maintains a perception of a certain online persona.

Therefore, in consideration of the core and extended vision elements, as well as the brand essence of Aaker's model (Meyerson, 2019b), Influencers core and extended vision elements can be considered as their broader niche such as lifestyle; and their brand essence can be considered as their speciality, such as beauty.

In conclusion, when considering Influencers through this model, it is thus possible and reasonable to view Influencers as brands because these individuals are seen to symbolise a certain lifestyle, which is maintained through consistent messaging, and they seem to portray themselves with organisational and product attributes.

Further to this, a US study (Chung-Wha et al, 2020) has shown that Influencers' relationships with their followers have been strengthened through personal bonding and attachment, to the point where their followers feel positively impacted when engaging with them, and thus identify the Influencers they follow as aspirational human brands that they can resonate with.

According to Zhua, Tenga, Fotib, and Yuan (2019), Self-congruence Theory refers to the fit between an individual's concept of self and their brand personality. The authors' Chinese study revealed congruence between a brand's image and a consumer's self-image strongly impacts attitudes around the brand. The findings confirm that both the "functional brand and the symbolic brand" appeal to the consumer's actual self, as well as their ideal self.

Social Identity Theory (Ellemers, 2017) is the study of the link between personal and social identities, for both individual perceptions and group behaviour. This theory aims to anticipate the circumstances under which people think of themselves as individuals or as members of a group.

There is seemingly little documented evidence to prove that Influencers link their self-perception and self-image to that of their brand and their peers, however, the researcher believes that assessing Influencers in the context of both Self-congruence Theory and Social Identity Theory may clarify this through the research study. The primary reason for this is because Influencers can also be considered consumers and a recent US study (Chung-Wha et al, 2020) found that people identify the Influencers they follow as aspirational human brands that they can resonate with. The secondary reason to support this is that browsing different Instagram profiles, including ones own, has proven to have an impact on psychological well-being (Burnell et al, 2020).

2.4.5. Theme 5: The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Its Potential Effects on Overall Well-being

Although it has been suggested that a single indicator of well-being may be that it purely equates to happiness (Layard, 2006, as cited by Seligman, 2018: 1), Seligman (2018: 1-2) theorises that well-being is composed of five key components, being “Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment” known as PERMA.

Davis (2019) agrees with Seligman to some degree by stating that well-being includes feeling “happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful”. However, she contradicts herself by explaining vaguely that well-being is “generally feeling well” but later clarifies this by stating that it emerges from one’s thoughts, actions, and experiences – implying that well-being is subjective and based on self-perception. Thus, supporting the relevance of Self-congruence Theory (Zhua et al, 2019) to the study because this theory relates to the concept of self.

Davis continues that well-being composes five significant categories and each aspect should be considered in order to ensure an overall feeling of well-being. These aspects are emotional, physical, social, workplace, and societal well-being.

Although Davis’ categorisation fits well with the accepted *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]d). definition of the word as “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous”; when considering the *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]e) definition of *wellness*, which is “the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal”, it appears as though the two terms can be used interchangeably.

In contrast to the mainstream use of the term well-being as relating to health, in philosophy well-being translates to what is “ultimately good for a person” (Crisp, 2017) or overall “life-satisfaction”. This appears to be in agreement with the *Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]e) definition of *wellness*; as formerly described. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the terms *well-being* and *wellness* can be used interchangeably.

McKinsey & Company's value the global wellness market at over \$1.5 trillion in their recent research study (Callaghan et al, 2021) which surveyed approximately 7 500 consumers in six countries around the globe and indicates that consumers are prioritising wellness.

The study's survey data reveals that consumers define wellness across six categories, which encompass better health, fitness, nutrition, appearance, sleep and mindfulness. The latter of which has been recently embraced largely due to the COVID-19 crisis, whereby global reports of mental hardship increased.

When considering that over half of the surveyed consumers want to prioritise mindfulness moving forward, as the authors state, this clearly explains the apparent recent increased interest in meditation-focused apps and offerings as well as other wellness products and services.

Key popular consumer wellness-related trends revealed by the research are rapid digitisation due to COVID-19, Influencers driving consumer purchasing decisions globally as Influencers are seen to be a crucial section of the wellness market, and consumers embracing services that address both physical and mental health needs. Thus, the researchers expect a movement towards services that prioritise both physical and mental health.

2.5. Conclusion

On review of the literature, it is clear that an interpretivist approach is helpful in understanding Influencers' feelings when engaged with Instagram, and thereby their perceptions of its use on their well-being. The selected paradigm for the qualitative study allows participants to provide feedback and rationalise subjectively.

Connecting the paradigm with *Aaker's Brand Vision Model* (Meyerson, 2019) has allowed the researcher to determine a greater comprehension of Influencers as brands. Furthermore, assessing *Self-congruence Theory* (Zhua, Tenga, Fotib, and Yuan, 2019) and *Social Identity Theory* (Ellemers, 2017) in relation to Instagram Influencers has

provided a better understanding of the possible perceptions of Instagram Influencers' well-being, from a personal persona perspective.

Assessing Influencers in context of the theory has enabled the researcher to understand how Influencers can be perceived as brands and ultimately, how Instagram use could contribute to shaping the perceptions of Influencers' well-being.

There is seemingly much quantitative research available regarding the benefits of Influencer Marketing for marketers, as well as social media use from the perspective of the consumer. However, findings suggest that there is insufficient qualitative research data available on the subject matter from the Influencers' perspective, in both a local and global capacity.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm

An exploratory, interpretivist approach has been selected for this study because as identified by Du Plooy (as cited by Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 75), it can be helpful in acquiring fresh insights, draw attention to social needs and enable an acquaintance with unfamiliar behaviours.

3.1.1. Paradigm

The researcher has utilised an interpretivist paradigm to designate value to the subjective sentiment via an exploratory study (Maree, 2020:22-23).

An interpretivist approach suits this study because the study involves people, and people are constantly being influenced by their environment (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 27).

The cognitive interest closely related to this interpretivist study is the practical hermeneutic-phenomenological science which aims to obtain an “in-depth understanding of a phenomenon” from varied perspectives, as described by Habermas (as cited by Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 21).

Empirical research allows the study to be “confirmable through observation and experience”, as interpreted by Bezuidenhout et al (2014: 21).

3.1.2. Epistemology

This study seeks to understand the personal sentiment and human behaviour regarding Instagram use and its impact on Influencers (Maree, 2020:73-74). It does this by understanding respondents’ truth through a comprehension of their interpretation of available information, in context of their life experience (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 29).

The study utilises a phenomenology tradition, with reference to symbolic interactions (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 28). Phenomenology aids the researcher in understanding how Instagram Influencers view reality from their perspectives, and contextually identify and

interpret the perceived meaning of social media interactions, through symbolic interactions.

3.1.3. *Ontology*

This study is guided by the belief that through subjective perception, people experience reality differently based on personal circumstances, experiences, culture, and interaction (Maree, 2020:64-74).

The research aims to grasp what it is like to be an Instagram Influencer and ascertain what is meaningful to them, in an empathetic way. Thus, the study aims to ascertain perceptions of the respondents' social world and constructed realities (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 29).

3.1.4. *Axiology*

Uniqueness is of great value to research because the personal values and worldviews of both the respondents and the researcher are significant (Maree, 2020:80-91). Thus the research includes the intricate comprehension of different realities, which include the researcher's interpretations as well as the participants' (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 31).

3.1.5. *Methodology*

A qualitative, interpretivist approach has been employed to ensure that the researcher acquires an open-ended, in-depth understanding of the matter (Maree, 2020:80-91).

Data was collected through online open-ended questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, documentation, and observation, to assist in gaining an understanding of female Millennial Influencers within a social and cultural context (Maree, 2020).

From a metatheoretical perspective, the study includes a compilation of narratives rich in detail (or thick description) and depth of experience, to truly understand people involved in Influencer culture (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 30).

Thus, this study seeks to gain insight into the Influencer phenomenon and the overall impact that Instagram may have on Influencers well-being, via the respondents' subjective perceptions of their behavioural experiences (Maree, 2020).

3.2. Research Design

The design for the research combined the interactive studies of case study research, phenomenology, action research, and slight ethnography, as per Maree (2020:40).

Case study research was relevant to the study because the population was limited to a select group of female millennials, who were active Instagram Influencers located specifically in Johannesburg.

Phenomenology was relevant because the population formed part of the Influencer phenomenon (Holienčinová and Kadekova, 2018), which the study aimed to contextualise in terms of Instagram use. Further to this, ethnographic research has aided in studying the population within the relevant social and cultural context.

As the study was open-ended and explorative, action research was employed in order to gain multiple perspectives, which prompted the researcher to include additional relevant questions to the semi-structured questions asked in the interview stage. Furthermore, new questions which arose from each interview could be added to the next interview and provide further insight, promoting inductive content analysis.

3.3. Conceptual Approach

A qualitative, interpretivist approach was utilised to ensure an in-depth understanding of the topic. This was done through the implementation of an online open-ended questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, documentation, and observation within the interview stage, to assist in gaining a greater comprehension of female Millennial Influencers within a social and cultural context (Maree, 2020).

An exploratory, interpretivist approach was selected for this study because as identified by Du Plooy (as cited by Bezuidenhout, Davis, Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:75), it has definitely

been helpful in acquiring fresh insights, drawing attention to social needs and enabling an acquaintance with unfamiliar behaviours.

A qualitative methodology allowed for greater understanding of the participants' personal sentiment and human behaviour, and the interpretivist approach allowed for an exploratory study (Maree, 2020:22-23).

The online open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions were constructed to prompt meaningful answers from respondents, in order to gain relevant insight directly from Influencers. Firstly, by referencing their personal experiences of Influencer culture, and being part of the Influencer phenomenon, they could share their subjective perceptions regarding how and why using Instagram may have impacted their well-being; mental, physical, or otherwise. Secondly, they were prompted to provide their own understanding of specific terminology so that the researcher could gain a shared understanding. Thirdly, this structure of questioning allowed for an exploration into the concepts of Influencers as brands and whether this was a factor shaping their subjective experiences on the Instagram platform, and in turn, their overall well-being.

In order to ensure that the data collected could sufficiently fulfil the objectives of the research, the open-ended questionnaire involved themes derived from the findings of the literature review. This questionnaire was constructed using the Google Forms program, which was subsequently distributed online via a link shared through various mediums, such as email, social media feeds, and direct messages (DMs) within social media applications. Given the limited time frame of the study, the researcher found this form of distribution as an efficient way to reach the targeted population through the various social media tools which they may utilise, such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. In turn, it would promote ease of participation and lead to attaining respondents more easily. On account of the limited time frame for data collection, Google Forms was also a great tool to utilise for this exercise because it consolidated responses and output the data in real-time, in the form of various graphs and textual data ready for analysis. This meant that the researcher could analyse responses received when the questionnaire link was still active, and thus some responses could be analysed before others were yet to be submitted.

Answers from the questionnaire were utilised to construct a personalised semi-structured list of questions for each respondent which chose to partake in the interview.

The one-on-one interviews were administered by the researcher and utilised the semi-structured questions in order to facilitate an open-ended discussion. The researcher believed this approach would feel more personal and encourage comfort for respondents to open up and freely share their experiences. This approach indeed brought new themes and questions to the fore, which could in turn be added to each interview thereafter. The interviews were conducted online, audio recorded, and transcribed for observation thereafter in search of contextual data and full analysis of the findings. Further to this, the contextual data enabled the researcher to identify non-verbal cues such as voice loudness, inflection, and pitch, which assisted in deciphering whether the respondent was being truthful, and when they seemed more confident or hesitant when discussing certain topics.

Thus, this study sought to gain insight into the Influencer phenomenon and interpret and understand the overall impact that Instagram may have on their well-being, via the respondents' subjective perceptions of their behavioural experiences (Maree, 2020).

3.4. Population

Parameters included active Instagram users who identified as female, with profile statistics that acceptably classified them as individuals of great influence, known as Influencers (Jankowski, 2021) on the Instagram social media platform.

Notably, Baklanov (2020) affirmed women account for more than half of all Instagram Influencers in South Africa and the largest segment of Influencers in the country were females aged between 18 and 34 years old. In spite of this, there appeared to be little-to-no research available providing qualitative insight into these demographics.

Therefore, there was a definite need for research not only directly from the Instagram Influencers' perspective, but more specifically focused in the context of the Millennial segment of the South African female population. Thus, Millennials, who are individuals

born between 1981 and 1996 (Bialik and Fry, 2019) were selected as the focus of the research.

To narrow the study, a parameter was set in terms of location. Therefore, Johannesburg was selected as the location because it was considered to be ethnically diverse and reputedly the largest city in South Africa, housing approximately 36% of Gauteng's population and 8% of the national population (*Municipalities of South Africa*, 2021).

Further to this, Baklanov (2020) stated that in April 2020, Instagram users in South Africa accounted for 7.3% of its entire population, which equated to over four million users. Contextually, this number was almost the size of the entire population of the Johannesburg Metropolitan area, which was five million people respectively, according to *Municipalities of South Africa* (2021).

Therefore, the population for the study was characterised as female Millennials that were active Instagram Influencers, located in Johannesburg.

3.5. Sampling

The unit of analysis was chosen as select individuals from the aforementioned population.

Non-probability purposive sampling and snowball sampling were employed to firstly determine the target population (Maree, 2020:93-95). The selected sample size was ± 50 -100 female participants who were active social media Influencers on the Instagram application specifically. The target population was required to complete an open-ended, online questionnaire in an anonymous manner, and the accessible population was determined by the number of participants who responded to the questionnaire.

Due to limited time constraints for data collection, the questionnaire received 17 responses and thus, this number was the accessible population.

Further to this, however, at the end of the questionnaire, participants were invited to partake in a confidential, in-depth, one-on-one video call interview, conducted on a separate occasion. Non-probability convenience sampling (Maree, 2020:93-95) was

promoted in this regard, and an expectant $\pm 5-10$ self-elected respondents selected to be interviewed.

Due to the limited time frame of the research, three interviews were conducted in total. Each interview extended to approximately an hour in length and favourably, the researcher was able to gain a purposeful and meaningful understanding of the matter being explored, in addition to the insight provided through the questionnaire responses.

3.6. Data Collection Methods and Application

The data was collected through qualitative means to gain richness and depth of data within the specific social context, through subjective experience.

Qualitative data collection via textual data, and open-ended interviews (including observation), has prompted open discussion about the matter in question (Maree, 2020:95-113).

From a metatheoretical perspective, the study has included a compilation of narratives rich in detail (or thick description) and depth of experience, to truly understand people involved in Influencer culture (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014: 30).

As the timeframe for this study was limited, Maree (2020:95-113) recommended using online methods to widen potential participation to reach a greater number of individuals in a shorter period of time than conventional data collection methods may allow.

Therefore, data collection has been conducted online as a matter of convenience for all parties involved.

The researcher created the open-ended questionnaire using Google forms, which is a free online tool (Google, 2021) that was good to utilise for this study because it:

- Was user-friendly, mobile-friendly, looked professional, and was customisable.
- Allowed for unlimited questions to be created (both open-ended and closed-ended).
- Allowed information to be collected easily and efficiently, through multiple methods.

- Made it easy to access data for collection, export, and analysis because it stored feedback received.
- Timestamped responses and automated these responses into graphs where relevant.
- Allowed the online link to the questionnaire to be shared via social networks and email.

Further to this, Google Forms has allowed the researcher to capture information for real-time analysis, which meant that respondents who completed the questionnaire and elected to take part in an interview could be interviewed before others were still to participate in the questionnaire. This has allowed for time-efficient and agile data collection.

After the questionnaire was created in Google Forms, the researcher distributed the link online via email and WhatsApp, and social media sites; namely Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

Further to this, at the end of the questionnaire, participants were invited to a confidential, in-depth, one-on-one video call interview, which was conducted on a separate occasion. The researcher estimated each interview to extend to approximately 15-30 minutes in length, however, the true approximation of time converted to an hour per interview. Non-probability convenience sampling (Maree, 2020:93-95) was promoted in this regard in order to gain an expectant target population of ± 5 -10 self-elected respondents to ensure a purposeful and meaningful understanding of the matter being explored. The accessible population was seven (7) self-elected respondents and the actual population was three (3) participants.

Ethics has been upheld throughout the process, whereby participants in the online questionnaire have been ensured anonymity and have informed consent by ticking a box in order to proceed, and interview participants also had informed consent and were required to either sign a confidentiality agreement or consent via email, and reiterate consent verbally on the audio recording.

As the study has been open-ended and explorative, action research has been employed in order to gain multiple perspectives which may prompt the researcher to include additional questions to the semi-structured interview questions. An example of these questions can be viewed in Annexure F.

The interviews have begun with standardised, open-ended questions to allow for ease of analysis and comparison of opinions. However, as each interview progresses, the approach has become adaptable by evolving into a more conversational, general interview approach that has been leveraged so as to allow the interviewee greater freedom. This means that the focus of the interview can be adjusted where necessary, as questions become more specific.

Furthermore, new questions arising from each interview could be added to the next interview and provide further insight, promoting emergent coding and inductive content analysis.

The interviews were audio recorded online using a combination of tools such as Google Meet and mobile device recordings, which are easily accessible and user-friendly. This has ensured that people could participate in an environment where they felt comfortable (Maree, 2020:93-95), without the need to travel to the interview or worry about changing COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, this has lead respondents to answer truthfully.

During the interview, the interviewer conducted overt observation and listened for any hidden or underlying subtext, and documented findings. After the interview, the recorded information was transcribed for data analysis purposes.

After the data had been collected, it was reviewed via qualitative content analysis to assess findings and develop theories. Throughout the data collection process, anonymity and confidentiality was upheld where relevant and the recordings were stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer.

There has been partial participation by the researcher because they administered the interviews, but maintained some degree of objectivity, by being involved but not immersed in the study.

A qualitative, interpretivist approach has been utilised to ensure an in-depth understanding of the topic. This has been done through the implementation of an online open-ended questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, documentation, and observation within the interview stage, to assist in gaining a greater comprehension of female Millennial Influencers within a social and cultural context (Maree, 2020).

A qualitative methodology has allowed a greater understanding of the participants' personal sentiment and human behaviour, and the interpretivist approach has allowed for an exploratory study (Maree, 2020:22-23).

The online open-ended questionnaire (Annexure E) and semi-structured interview questions (Annexure F) were constructed to prompt meaningful answers from respondents, in order to gain relevant insight directly from Influencers through their personal experiences of Influencer culture, and perceptions of how and why using Instagram may have impacted their well-being.

The open-ended questionnaire involved themes derived from the findings of the literature review. This questionnaire was constructed using the Google Forms program. The questionnaire link was sent to the researcher's network via email, social media, and WhatsApp. The researcher had hoped that this form of distribution and ease of participation would lead to attaining the intended number of respondents more easily ($\pm 50-100$). However, this was a challenge, as described in detail in the 'Limitations' section of this document.

Google Forms consolidated responses and output the data in real-time, in the form of various graphs and textual data ready for analysis.

The one-on-one interviews were administered by the researcher and utilised a semi-structured list of questions in order to facilitate an open-ended discussion. This personal approach encouraged a comfortable atmosphere for respondents to open up and

freely share their experiences. This approach brought new themes and questions to the fore, which were in turn added to subsequent interview questions. The interviews were recorded on a mobile phone and transcribed (Annexures I, J, and K) for later observation in search of contextual data, as well as a full analysis of the findings.

Regarding the duration of the data collection:

- The questionnaire was live from 5 September 2021 to 17 October 2021.
- Questionnaire responses were received from 6 September 2021 to 10 October 2021.
- Confirmed interviews were conducted between 30 September 2021 and 2 October 2021.

3.7. Data Analysis Methods and Application

The researcher did not encounter any ethical issues during data analysis because best practice ethical guidelines (Maree, 2020:47-49) were complied with to ensure that ethics were upheld throughout the research process and therefore in the researcher's experience, there are no ethical issues at play.

The trustworthiness of the study has been enhanced through the reference to four essential criteria that Bezuidenhout et al (2014:258) note as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability respectively.

The use of the standard open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions has ensured a degree of consistency and transferability, so that the researcher could make comparative notes and ensure the results and analysis could be applied outside of the specific research project. Rich descriptions of the particular context and an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences have ensured that valid data is captured and credibility has been ensured through an accurate analysis of the data.

To facilitate interpretive validity and reliability, and establish the trustworthiness of the research, data has been analysed from an integrative perspective through the use of triangulation (Maree, 2020:45). This integrative approach has ensured dependable results

through quality assurance and cohesion of data collection methods, the data analysis and the theory generated from findings.

Inductive content analysis was performed by the researcher to enable further exploration of the subject to determine meaning and thick description through a narrowing of the respondents' general opinions to specific subjective experiences. This has involved textual, iterative, hermeneutic, subjective, constructed and symbolic data analysis through the use of triangulation and thematic coding to identify patterns of meaning from the data.

This has included field notes and observation to identify emerging patterns and gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon through iteration, and thorough interpretation to discover meaning in context of the participants' subjective experiences.

The online questionnaire has assisted the researcher in narrowing the respondents' general opinions to specific subjective experiences and the interview process has seemingly aided the researcher in achieving a deeper exploration of the subject matter.

Analysis of empirical research has allowed for the study to be "confirmable through observation and experience", as interpreted by Bezuidenhout et al (2014: 21).

Analysis of the ethnographic research done through overt observation as part of the interview process, has aided the researcher in better understanding the Influencer culture and Instagram Influencer subculture.

Analysis of the participants' real-life situations as case studies has enabled the researcher to understand the phenomenon within the specific circumstances surrounding their perceptions of Instagram use and well-being.

Further to this, the contextual data has enabled the researcher to identify non-verbal cues from vocal tone in the audio recordings; such as voice loudness, inflection, and pitch.

Although audio recordings could of course not allow for the assessment of visual cues such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions; the researcher was able to analyse the interviewees' nuances in speech. Thus, the researcher could decipher

whether their answers were truthful and when they seemed confident or hesitant discussing certain topics.

Thorough analysis of the data collected has enabled the researcher to identify a number of details specific to the Influencer phenomenon which have aligned to the research questions and objectives.

The contextual data derived has thus aided in answering the established issues, and findings were generated based on qualitative analysis and the interpretation thereof.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation of Findings

4.1. Presentation of Findings

The population was characterised as female Millennials that are active Instagram Influencers, located in Johannesburg. The selected sample size was ± 50 -100 female participants who are active social media Influencers on the Instagram application specifically. However, the accessible population was 17, as this was the number of questionnaire responses received. Of which, seven self-elected respondents chose to be interviewed. The duration of data collection was nonetheless a major factor influencing the ability to conduct interviews and thus, three interviews were conducted in total.

Most respondents described Instagram as a favoured social media platform because they enjoy its visual nature, searchability, versatility, and ease of use.

With regards to Instagram use, positive emotions which were frequently expressed by the participants were feeling:

- Valued
- Motivated
- Confident
- Happy
- Successful
- Excited

Further to this, the main reasons for using Instagram seem to be to educate, inform, and inspire audiences, as well as to utilise the platform for business purposes.

With regards to Instagram use, negative emotions which were frequently expressed by the participants were feeling:

- Overwhelmed
- Stressed
- Pressured

- Tired
- Anxious

Over half of respondents expressed that they felt pressured to create the perfect content for Instagram, and most respondents expressed distaste for the Instagram algorithm. All Interview participants suggested that the algorithm was ever-changing and negatively affected their engagement.

Instagram has, however, stated that it does not utilise a single algorithm but rather a “variety of algorithms, classifiers, and processes, each with its own purpose” (Mosseri, 2021).

Interview Participant A described the Instagram platform as a “memory capsule” to revisit past experiences and “a highlight reel”. She supported this thought by implying that Influencers do not want to be viewed as negative and therefore select to share primarily positive experiences on Instagram, stating “I definitely think people choose to share the good things.” This notion of social engineering was echoed by both other interview participants.

With regards to being a true reflection of life offline, Interview Participant A stated that it is “not 100% accurate” because what they choose to share online is a fraction of their lifestyle, to which the other interviewees agreed. However, Participant A continued that looking at her Instagram profile people may think her life is “more glamorous” than in reality.

Apart from receiving likes, respondents described other forms of engagement as comments, saves, shares, and direct messages. Most of the sample considered any form of engagement to be positive, except for abusive messages and cyber-bullying on the platform.

A large portion of the respondents mentioned that creating content was time-consuming and exhausting.

The majority of questionnaire respondents viewed their followers as friends, and a third viewed them as customers, as depicted below.

Figure 1: How respondents view their followers

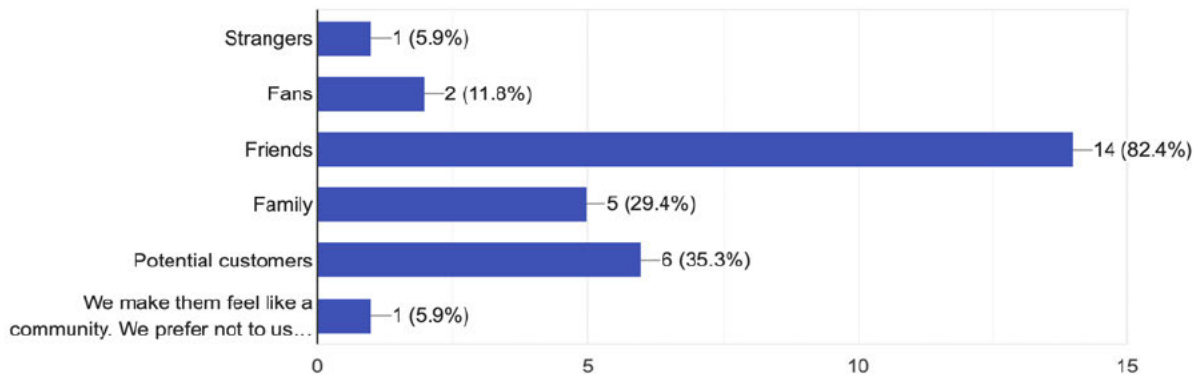


Figure 2: Considerations of Influencers as a brand

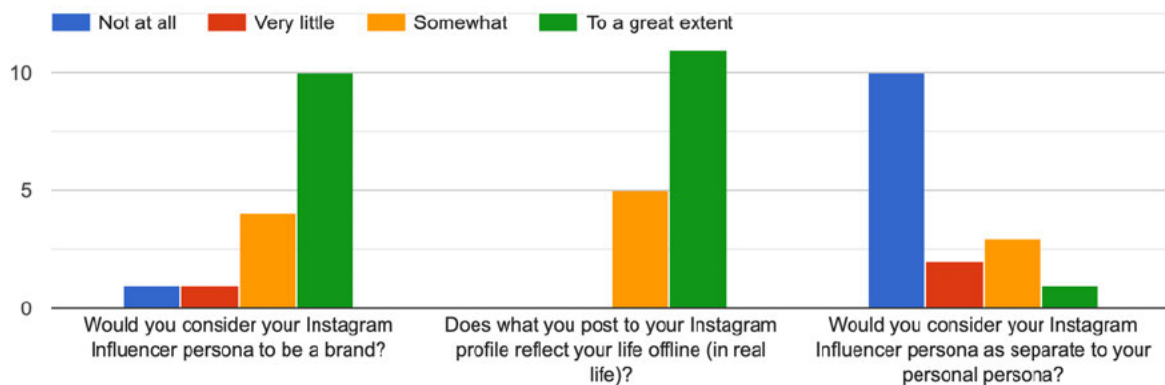
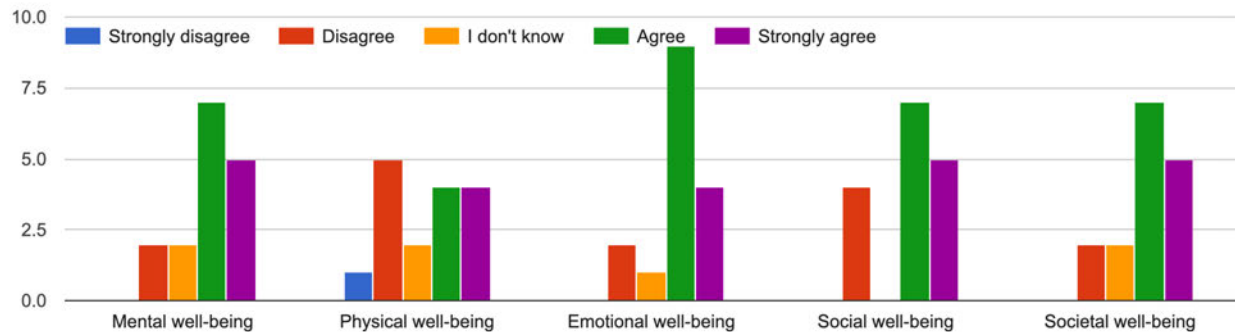


Table 1: Themes identified in the respondents' understanding of "well-being"

Theme	Frequency of theme
Overall Health	9
Mental	9
Physical	7
Happy	4
Balance	3
Emotional	3
Inner peace	1
Self-care	1
Feeling good	2

Figure 3: Belief that Instagram use impacts certain aspects of well-being



4.2. Interpretation of Findings

Instagram use has been proven to affect the overall well-being of Influencers in other parts of the world (Lowe-Calverley and Grieve, 2021), and the findings from this study confirm the same to be true in a South African context.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated a desire to connect with people, and specifically like-minded individuals, through the use of Instagram. Thus, this may be a driving factor behind why they use social media.

In relation to the research problem, findings suggest that Instagram itself; its growing number of features, and algorithm changes, both add to Influencers' frustrations and challenge them to be more creative. Interview Participant B finds this constant evolution exciting, while Participant C finds it frustrating.

Although they did not fit the criteria for this particular study, the researcher discovered that there were willing participants from both Generation X and Generation Z. This interest in the study demonstrated potential for expansion of the study to include other generations. Furthermore, the interest that the research generated locally has substantiated the need for such a study.

4.3. Findings in Context

Over recent years, there has been an increased concern in regard to the relationship between social media use and mental health issues in particular (Burnell et al, 2020) but seemingly little focus on overall well-being.

Hereafter, relevant theories and literature contemplated for this research study are discussed in relation to the findings, with critical concepts defined as part of a thematic review whereby each review is grouped into an established theme.

4.3.1. Theme 1: Millennial Life, the Internet, and the Smartphone

Millennials, also referred to as Generation Y, are considered to be people born approximately between 1981 and 1996 (Bialik and Fry, 2019).

Interview Participant A believes that an individual aged 30-35 would have a different experience on Instagram to someone at age 40 because people of similar ages generally enjoy similar things. That said, she feels that Generation Z would have a different experience to Millennial Instagram Influencers because she states that Millennials were using Instagram from ages 20-25 whereas Generation Z have “grown up with it.” They are “used to sharing everything online”, Participant B adds. Whereas, Millennials lived for a period of time before the existence of social media and therefore may understand how to better regulate their online behaviour.

Interview Participant B implies that since the internet and social media, the world has expanded because one can access vastly more, and be part of a global community.

Smartphones have also altered the way people communicate and created a culture of instant gratification (Tocci, 2019).

Interview Participant A affirms that sometimes she enjoys receiving instant gratification through Instagram likes, comments, and general positivity on the platform.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Social Media

People seemingly use the terms social media and social networking sites interchangeably in conversation which is understandable when considering Foreman (2017) mentions that the lines between the two have blurred.

Interview Participant B says that social media is “about community”, although *Merriam-Webster* has two definitions for *social network* ([s.a.]g):

- “a network of individuals (such as friends, acquaintances, and coworkers) connected by interpersonal relationships”.
- “an online service or site through which people create and maintain interpersonal relationships”.

4.3.3. Theme 3: Influencers Defined

The traditional use of the term influencer is generally a person who exerts influence via inspiration or guidance that can persuade action in others (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]c). The more recent adaption of the term is “a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media” (*Merriam-Webster*, [s.a.]c).

High frequency terms that respondents used when defining an “Instagram Influencer”, were:

- Authentic and honest
- Relatable
- An individual who has the ability to influence (directly or indirectly) consumer behaviour; and persuade individuals to buy, or try, something

Respondents also described an “Instagram Influencer” as someone who:

- Has an authoritative voice
- Is trusted or credible
- Has an active Instagram audience

- Shares beneficial and educational content
- Inspires or assists others
- Audiences resonate with
- Promotes brands or their own business

Interview Participant B feels that “the term ‘Influencer’ needs to change” because many “people try to divorce themselves from the term by calling themselves creators” because “Instagram’s calling us creators”. Interview Participant C feels that people are judgemental of the term, but she sees Influencers as digital marketers. Interview Participant A supports this view by stating that “Social Media is just another platform for advertising and marketing” and Influencer marketing is a new, authentic, relatable way to do it. Thus, she believes that being an Instagram Influencer is a viable career option because people can “monetise it” and become “full-time content creators”.

Foxwell (2021) identifies Influencers within four groups based on following size. In contrast to Foxwell, Interview Participant B states that it “doesn’t matter how many followers you have” because it is more about the engagement you receive.

4.3.4. Theme 4: Influencers as Brands

The term brand was commonly linked to businesses and products but is now frequently associated with individuals (Solomon, 2019). Interview Participant B describes a brand as “something that’s instantly recognisable to people... A brand is something, or someone, or a company, that adds value to your life because you’re interested in them”. She continued that she is a brand in that “people want to reach my audience through me.”

Similarly, (*Merriam-Webster* ([s.a.]h) views a brand as “a public image, reputation, or identity conceived of as something to be marketed or promoted”.

Interview Participant A stated that “I am my own brand,” and suggested that as an Influencer “you need to see yourself as a brand. From the way you conduct yourself to what you post online”.

Most respondents identified themselves as brands, which is understandable when assessing them in context of Aaker's Brand Vision Model (Meyerson, 2019), which can be helpful in creating a brand persona, measuring brand market perception, and ensuring a consistent brand image (Schmidt, 2020).

Most Influencers seem to align themselves within a niche, and their social media content can be considered their product, through which they offer functional or emotional benefits to their audience, and can be translated into product attributes.

Depending on the perceived quality of the content that Influencers shared, followers are able to distinguish what value they get from an Influencer and why they should follow them or consume their content. Many of the respondents consider their followers to be potential customers, and understand their followers to resonate with their content, thereby developing personal customer-brand relationships with them.

What Influencers share with followers on social media is a representation of who they are, and what they stand for, which creates their visual image and symbol, and maintains a perception of a certain online persona.

According to Zhua, Tenga, Fotib, and Yuan (2019), Self-congruence Theory refers to the fit between an individual's concept of self and their brand personality. The research findings show that South African Instagram Influencers mostly feel that their brand persona and their personal persona are integrated.

In context of Social Identity Theory (Ellemers, 2017), findings suggest that Instagram Influencers act similarly and enjoy socialising, yet occasionally have feelings of jealousy towards other Influencers, which may lead to feelings of low self-esteem.

Assessing Influencers in the context of both Self-congruence Theory and Social Identity Theory has proven that Influencers link their self-perception and self-image to that of their brand and their peers. Thus, it is clear that Instagram use has an impact on the psychological well-being of Influencers in South Africa, via browsing other Instagram profiles and one's own; imitating the Burnell et al (2020) study.

4.3.5. Theme 5: The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Its Potential Effects on Overall Well-being

Seligman (2018: 1-2) theorises that well-being is composed of five key components, being “Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment” known as PERMA.

Davis (2019) agrees with Seligman to some degree by stating that well-being includes feeling “happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful”.

Over half of the respondents in the study linked the term “well-being” to health and about a third phrased this term as overall health. Almost half included physical health, almost two thirds included mental health, and a quarter included emotional health. Other themes identified were balance, self-care, happiness, and inner peace.

McKinsey & Company’s recent research study (Callaghan et al, 2021) expects a movement towards services that prioritise both physical and mental health post COVID-19.

The survey data revealed that consumers defined wellness across six categories, which encompass better health, fitness, nutrition, appearance, sleep and mindfulness. The latter of which has been recently embraced largely due to the COVID-19 crisis, whereby global reports of mental hardship increased.

Interview Participant A stated that her average time spent on Social Media went up “exponentially during the last year and a half” during the pandemic largely due to being unable to socialise in person.

Interview Participant C recommends that people should carefully consider what content they are consuming and who they are following.

4.4. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced through the reference to four essential criteria that Bezuidenhout et al (2014:258) note as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability respectively.

To effectively evaluate the data, the researcher gathered information from a diverse range of individuals with unique subjective experiences, through the use of a combination of research methods, so as to build a believable study (Bezuidenhout et al, 2014:258).

The use of the standard open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions ensured a degree of consistency and transferability, so as to make comparative notes and ensure the results and analysis could be applied outside of the specific research project. Rich descriptions of the particular context and an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences ensured that valid data was captured and credibility could be determined through an accurate analysis of the data.

To facilitate interpretive validity and reliability, and establish the trustworthiness of the research, data was analysed from an integrative perspective through the use of triangulation (Maree, 2020:45). This integrative approach has ensured dependable results through quality assurance and cohesion of data collection methods, the data analysis and the theory generated from findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Research Question, Problem, Objectives Addressed

Key variables explored were Instagram use and perceived well-being of female Millennial Influencers, by examining the effects of social media consumption through Instagram specifically.

With respect to social media and well-being, most studies seemingly focus on the use of social media from the consumers' perspective and discuss only the mental health aspects. However, this study set out to explore the potential impact of Instagram use on overall well-being, from the Influencers' perspective.

The below proceeds to answer the secondary research questions and in turn, answer the main research question.

For ease of reference, the research questions are reiterated below.

5.1.1. Main Research Question

What perceived impact does Instagram use have on the overall well-being of female Millennial Influencers in Johannesburg?

5.1.2. Secondary Research Questions

1. What insights could be gained regarding the types of psychological effects that could potentially be prompted by such use?
2. In what ways do these possible psychological effects relate to the overall use of Instagram?
3. Why do Influencers still use Instagram despite the potential negative effects on their overall well-being?

Regarding the first secondary research question, most respondents in the study found Instagram to be a positive environment. Interview Participant A shares that "feedback is usually positive" but negative, unsolicited opinions can make her feel self-conscious.

She continues that “Instagram can be quite calculated” whereby people use many editing tools in the creation of a post, which she believes takes the joy out of sharing. This implied notion of social engineering is interestingly raised by other respondents and all interview participants. It seems to be, however, both a creative driver as well as a frustration for Influencers.

Similarly, all interview participants believe that Instagram Influencers compare themselves to each other, but are also inspired by each other.

With regards to the second secondary research question, all interview participants believe that humans generally equate receiving many likes on their content, to how well they are liked in person, and that Instagram allowing the option to hide likes may be good for self-esteem. Unfortunately, brands prefer to gauge content performance through likes, and likes can be useful for Influencers in determining what resonates with their audiences. Thus, the driving change for Influencers to feel less pressured and validated through likes, is an issue which clearly needs to be strongly addressed by brands and marketers.

Interview Participant A believes that possible psychological effects relating to the overall use of Instagram is that it can provide “a warped sense of reality” because of the augmented reality filters available on the app. She implies that it can have a major effect on self-worth. Both Participant B and C echoed similar sentiments.

Interview Participant B states that “comparing yourself with other people... is a big trap of Instagram. I’m sure I wasn’t the only one who fell into that” and implies that it definitely affected her well-being in the past.

Notably, most questionnaire respondents stated that when they earned money for their content creation, they felt more valued, however, this often brought pressure to create perfect posts. Interview Participant A believes this is what “takes away a little bit of the joy because then instead of just creating content... you’re trying to make something better than you would have just normally done”. Many questionnaire respondents have also questioned whether their content was “good enough” for brands, which suggests that Instagram use prompts negative feelings of self-worth.

With regards to the third secondary research question, most Influencers overwhelmingly stated that they simply enjoy creating content and the creative freedom that Instagram allows them, which is why they continue to use the platform despite potential negative effects of its use. Furthermore, a major reason why most of the sample continue to utilise the platform is because they seek authentic connections with others on the platform. The researcher believes that this could only be amplified by social distancing restrictions imposed by COVID-19 regulations and thus believes the answers received to be truthful.

Further to this, most respondents agree that they also use Instagram to stay updated with world events, friends, family, and trends.

Regarding the perceptions uncovered from the study, possible effects of Instagram use as both positive and negative, in various ways. Both Participant B and C stated that one's experience with Instagram depends on one's mindset at the time of interacting on the platform, suggesting that a positive mindset aids a positive experience, and vice versa.

To answer the main research question, perceived impact (both positive and negative) could be determined as mostly mental health effects and emotional stability, however, physical health and social health were also concerns. It would have been beneficial to explore deeper into the specifics of these areas, however, the sensitivity of the subject did not allow for that within the context of this specific study.

Most respondents determined themselves to be a brand and viewed their Influencer brand persona as integrated with their personal persona to some degree.

Therefore, findings have aided in achieving the research objectives, which were:

1. To uncover perceptions regarding the possible effects of Instagram use from the perspective of a select group of female Millennial Influencers.
2. To determine the sentiment around whether their working Influencer brand persona is perceived as separate to, or integrated with, their personal persona.

To facilitate interpretive validity and reliability, and establish the trustworthiness of the research, data was analysed from an integrative perspective through the use of triangulation (Maree, 2020:45).

The researcher was pleasantly surprised that there was a high ratio of individuals accepting to be interviewed. However, the researcher was frustrated that the timeframe for collecting data did not allow for more respondents to the questionnaire.

An interesting finding was the balance between the concepts of authenticity and Influencer fraud. One respondent shared that one needs “honesty in order to be considered an Instagram Influencer,” because it is “about the honest opinions and information you share with your audience”. Another respondent claimed that “So many influencers are fake” and Interview Participant C echoed this by stating there is a “huge issue” with Influencers not having real followers. The researcher thus questions where the responsibility lies regarding authenticity online, and to what degree people perceive one to be sufficiently authentic.

Additional findings were that people outside the parameters of the study showed interest in the study, many of the participants in the study were unsurprisingly not fond of the term “Instagram Influencer”, and racism appears to be somewhat of a factor in the opportunities that are presented to local Instagram Influencers.

It is possible that many Millennials were not willing to participate for possible fear of being vulnerable, and reputational concern, even though the study was confidential. The personal nature of the study and the societal stigma surrounding these topics may have been a barrier to greater participation.

5.2. Implications of Findings for Future Practices

This exploratory cross-sectional study intended to gain a deeper understanding of Influencer culture and uncover a South African perspective of human truths, insights, and descriptive information that the respondents freely shared regarding their Instagram use and overall well-being, so as to gain a deeper understanding and add to the qualitative body of knowledge on the subject.

This study was conducted only on female Millennial respondents in Johannesburg, but further studies could include members of any sex or gender, covering the whole of South Africa from a macro perspective.

Implications of findings include:

- The achieved inside understanding of what it is like to be an individual that is part of the Influencer phenomenon, and the responsibilities and pressures thereof on Instagram, may aid in raising public awareness and knowledge of Influencer culture.
- As a result of this study, marketers and society as a whole may better understand current social issues regarding social media use; and support both consumers and Instagram Influencers in their efforts to maintain perceptively healthy digital well-being.
- Social media companies, such as Instagram, can benefit from this research because understanding how people engage with their offerings is critical to the bettering of their products and services.
- By resonating with Influencers' well-being needs on the Instagram platform, Instagram can potentially maintain a positive public image, and thereby continue to attract new and existing customers.

Thus, research findings may have implications for social media policy and future social media project implementation, as well as Influencer Marketers.

5.3. Final Conclusions

5.3.1. Success of the Research

As the local qualitative research on this topic is seemingly lacking, the researcher is satisfied that the study has successfully ascertained a deeper understanding of the Influencer phenomenon as well as a uniquely South African perspective of human truths, insights, and descriptive information that the respondents freely shared regarding their Instagram use and overall well-being.

5.3.2. Value of the Study

This paper concludes seemingly one of the initial studies to explore a South African perspective of the perceived impact of Instagram use in context of the Millennial Influencer.

Additionally, it is one of the first to uncover these perceptions from females residing in the Johannesburg Metropolitan area.

It delves distinctively into the perceptions of Millennial Influencers to ascertain the possible effects that Instagram use has on their overall well-being and thus the study sufficiently adds to the qualitative body of knowledge on the subject.

5.3.3. Possible Future Actions

The study contextualises its findings within the global field of social media research, by contributing information that can be applied beyond this specific research setting.

Further qualitative research can be conducted to explore perceptions regarding overall well-being in Influencers across other genders, generations, geographic locations, and social media platforms.

Additionally, quantitative research could generate findings which could be generalised.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

Due to the researcher's involvement in conducting the qualitative research study, the researcher was actively aware of the ethical challenges posed by the research and ensured the investigation was conducted with the participants' best interests in mind.

The researcher did not encounter any ethical issues because best practice ethical guidelines (Maree, 2020:47-49) were complied with to ensure that the researcher upheld ethics throughout the research process and therefore in the researcher's experience, there were no ethical issues at play.

As per information and documentation supplied with the Research Proposal:

- To protect the respondents' rights and uphold ethical research responsibly, prior to conducting research the researcher obtained permission from the IIE Vega Campus Ethics Committee.
- To take part in the study, informed consent was obtained voluntarily from participants before proceeding. Research goals and other relevant information were communicated to them in language at a standard to which they could comprehend.
- Participants of the online questionnaire were issued the consent form as part of the Google Forms document in which the questionnaire was administered. This can be viewed in Annexures B and E.
- Interview participants were supplied a separate consent form via email (Annexure C), as well as a separate form which requested them to give permission to be audio recorded (Annexure D).

To ensure responsible research was conducted, the researcher followed strict ethical guidelines, including preserving the participants' confidentiality throughout the research study, demonstrating care in protecting participants' well-being, following standardised

procedures, informing participants about the data used, safe-keeping data, and destroying any unused data.

Anonymity and confidentiality was upheld where relevant, throughout the study as:

- Participants in the online questionnaire were ensured anonymity and had informed consent to proceed by ticking a box.
- Interview participants also had informed consent and were required to sign a confidentiality agreement, or send consent via email. Participants were reminded of the confidentiality at the start of the interview, and reiterated consent verbally. Thus, respondents of the questionnaire remained anonymous unless they divulged their details or agreed to participate in the interview, wherein the information they provided has been kept confidential.
- Participants were assured that their identities and responses will always be kept confidential and information about them will not be shared with any unauthorised third party, under any circumstances.
- Participants were guaranteed that the research compiled will not state their real names at any stage and will be substituted with codes and pseudonyms instead.
- Participants were informed about their right to withdraw at any stage should they choose not to continue in the study.

5.5. Limitations

One of the greatest challenges for the research study was access to suitable participants within the limited time frame of the research.

Obtaining sufficient suitable and willing participants to complete the questionnaire in the given time proved challenging and resulted in a lack of responses for the questionnaire, with just over a tenth of the selected sample size having participated. In contrast, however,

a great number of these respondents agreed to participate in the interview. However, the number of confirmed interviewees stagnated during this period, possibly due to time constraints.

The researcher suspects that the lack of responses from the questionnaire, as well as the number of confirmed interviewees, may be attributed to indecision to participate due to the personal nature of the study and possible reputational concern, irrespective of whether the information is kept anonymous or confidential.

Therefore, the researcher was concerned that insufficient data may be provided and results may not reflect the true population. This outcome would have been regrettable because the sample was already too small to generalise and may not be representative of the full population because the study was a cross-sectional study. However, the researcher believes that ample, rich data was provided.

In the search for participants, the researcher discovered there were willing participants from both Generation X and Generation Z. Although they did not fit the criteria for this particular study, this interest in the study definitely demonstrated potential for further expansion of the study to include other generations.

There was insufficient time available to conduct more interviews and thus, in further study, recommendations would be for the questionnaire to be active for a longer duration. Thus, encouraging potential for greater responses to achieve a larger target population of approximately 2000 respondents.

Expanding the number of interviews with a larger populous is also recommended, and the researcher could advertise participation in the study through the Instagram platform, to reach the specific target population by leveraging Instagram's features.

It would have been beneficial to further delve into the psychology behind well-being, however, the sensitivity of the subject did not allow for that within the context of this study.

To summarise, by executing the study as it was done and describing the research process thoroughly, the data has confirmed support of the findings and interpretation thereof. Thus, the researcher believes the research could be scrutinised and similar conclusions drawn by others who view the research. Through this intensive process, the study has aspired to be a credible, meaningful and worthy contribution to the body of research on the subject.

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