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

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

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

1   INTRODUCTION

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

While an increasing body of research has been focusing on how advertising directed to children affects their food habits (e.g. Naderer, 2021; Naderer, et al., 2019), a large study among 12.041 families across six European countries argues that healthy eating practices among children is best promoted by improving their parents' dietary habits, practices and beliefs (Papamichael et al., 2021). Furthermore, especially mothers seem to have the most determining impact on their children's eating behavior. However, research on food advertising targeting adults is very limited and has a dominant focus on traditional media formats according to Nieto and colleagues (2022). Given the gatekeeping role of mothers concerning their children's food intake, better understanding on how children's food marketing within digital media affects the maternal decision-making process is needed.

In contrast to previous generations of parents who traditionally relied on family, friends and health care providers in their immediate environment for parenting advice and health information, it is remarkable that a large amount of today's mothers are increasingly finding

48   their way to social network sites (SNSs) such as Instagram for these matters (Moon et al., 2019).

49   One type of SNS users that is greatly affecting the opinions of mothers are so-called 'mom

50   influencers', which can be considered niche social media influencers (SMI). These mom

51   influencers are mothers who became micro-celebrities with an engaging follower base on social

52   media, by sharing information about their lives, children, and family (Abidin, 2015; Abidin &

53   Ots, 2015; Archer, 2019; Jorge, Marôpo, Coelho, & Novello, 2021). Similar as with other SMI,

54   these mom influencers are regularly approached by brands to advertise products or services

55   (such as food products) on their social media profiles in return for compensation (De Veirman

56   et al., 2017). The persuasive power of influencers is vast, as they share a lot of information

57   about their personal and family lives with their followers that is very relatable for them (Abidin,

58   2015). Therefore, their followers easily identify with them, and are likely to consider their

59   recommendations and opinions as more authentic as opposed to brands and traditional

60   celebrities, who are less accessible (Abidin, 2015; Senft, 2008). Although increasing countries

61   (such as the UK, Netherlands and Belgium) recently introduced new regulations requiring

62   influencers to clearly disclose sponsored content as such (Dailybits, 2022; Advertising

63   Standards Authority, 2021), a recent eye-tracking study revealed that the use of hashtags (e.g.

64   #ad or #paidad) is a popular but ineffective strategy to clearly disclose advertising content and

65   activate people's persuasion knowledge on Instagram (Boerman & Müller, 2022). The current

66   study aims to gain insights in how sponsored Instagram posts for children's food targeting other

67   mothers is affecting their assessment and decision-making process.

68   A first experimental study compares the persuasiveness of mom influencers versus

69   corporate brands promoting children's food products on Instagram, as to the best of our

70   knowledge, prior research has not yet investigated the persuasiveness of mom influencers on

71   other mothers' food assessments and decisions.

72   Further, previous research suggests that various endorser types can be distinguished,

73   among other things, depending on their level of expertise about a certain topic (Friedman,

74   Friedman, 1979). In turn, a recent study suggests that expert endorsers (compared to typical

75   non-expert endorsers) could enhance the effectiveness of healthy food promotions targeting

76   children (Binder et al., 2020). A second experimental study therefore will deepen the

77   understanding of food promotions by examining their effectiveness among mothers by

78   investigating which type of mom influencer (nutritional expert vs. typical mom influencer)

79   could be best employed to promote healthy food.

80   *1.1   Maternal decision-making for children's food*

81   A broad range of studies appoint parents to be the main influencers of children's eating habits,

82   as they serve both as role models, educators and gatekeepers (e.g. Birch & Fisher, 1998;

83   Cruwys, et al., 2015; Linde et al., 2022; Papamichael et al., 2021; Pedersen, et al., 2015; Wyse,

84   et al., 2011). Research indeed shows that 69-79% of children's food intake is provided from

85   within the home environment (Ziauddeen et al., 2018). Regardless of their great impact, the

86   dietary habits of today's young parents appear to be among the poorest of all age groups

87   (Paeratakul, et al., 2003). It is argued that their busy lives and the consequent time constraints

88   are the most common barriers for healthy eating behaviors (Pelletier & Laska, 2012). Despite

89   the observation that fathers are increasingly taking on a more active role in the household

90   (Khandpur et al., 2014), mothers still appear to be the primary caregiver related to child feeding

91   practices Rahill et al. 2020). Besides, mothers are more actively seeking parenting advice and

92   health information on social media (Duggan et al., 2015; Price et al., 2018). As maternal

93   attitudes, behaviors and also food choices for their children are highly affected by other parents

94   within their social networks (Cochran & Niego, 2002; Hogreve, et al., 2021; Swanson & Power,

95   2005), the current study aims to investigate how food promotions on Instagram affect mothers'

96   decision-making process for their children's food.

1.2 *Children's food marketing on social media*

Social media food marketing has been shown to be highly pervasive and effective among children (Coates, Hardman, Halford, Christiansen, & Boyland, 2019). In the United Kingdom (country where the study was conducted), new regulations (set to take effect in 2023) aim to ban all advertising for junk food both online (including influencer marketing) and on TV before 9 PM, in order to protect children from this junk food advertising (The Guardian, 2021). In addition, some self-regulatory initiatives have been created regarding food marketing. For example, companies participating in the EU Pledge commit themselves not to advertise food and beverages to children under 13 years (expect for products that fulfill specific nutritional criteria) in all covered media, including influencer content (EU Pledge, 2022). Nonetheless, a recent report of the European Consumer Organisation notifies that food brands have been enthusiastic adopters of influencer marketing and that many cases were rejected by the Panel of the Pledge as they did not *primarily* target children under 12 years old according to them (Calvert, 2021). Therefore, the report concludes that the rules to protect children against unhealthy food are too lax and give plenty of leeway as they are not suited for the digital marketing context and focus predominantly on advertising targeting children under 12 years old only.

Despite recent efforts to protect the consumers, research shows that the effectiveness of social media food marketing is rather worrisome, as this marketing technique is predominantly used to promote products that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt (Alruwaily et al., 2020; Bragg et al., 2020; Coates et al., 2019a; Martínez-Pastor, et al., 2021; Potvin Kent et al., 2019). Studies investigating the effectiveness of these social media marketing efforts showed that the promotion of unhealthy foods by SMI indeed led to an increase of their intake among children (Coates, Hardman, Halford, Christiansen, & Boyland, 2019b; Coates et al., 2019). Limited first

121 studies also show that influencer marketing promoting healthy food targeted at children does

122 not affect children's healthy food adoption (Coates et al., 2019b; Folkvord & de Bruijne, 2020).

123   While studies investigating food marketing targeting adults are more limited, they

124 similarly reveal a predominance of unhealthy food promotions within social media ads (Nieto

125 et al., 2022) and considered it an effective advertising strategy to change adults' attitudes and

126 habits when promoted through traditional advertising formats (e.g. Koordeman et al., 2010;

127 Boyland et al., 2017; Harris and Brownell, 2009). While some studies quantified the amount of

128 healthy vs. unhealthy food promotions on the social media profiles of child influencers

129 (Alruwaily et al., 2020; Coates et al., 2019a; Martínez-Pastor, et al., 2021; Potvin Kent et al.,

130 2019), to the best of our knowledge, no such information exists about the profiles of mom

131 influencers. Despite mothers' determining role concerning the food habits of their children and

132 their great exposure to social media content (Price et al., 2018), food marketing targeted at

133 adults is currently not regulated in Europe and the quantity and impact of social media food

134 marketing directed to mothers, to the best of our knowledge, remains unexplored.

135 ***1.3   The effectiveness of a corporate brand vs. mom influencer***

136   Previous research argues that parents respond best to nutrition messages on platforms

137 that are engaging, personalized and interactive (Zarnowiecki et al., 2020), whereby social media

138 could represent a promising format to effectively mothers with food promotions. One specific

139 type of social media users that have a strong impact on the opinions of mothers are 'mom

140 influencers' (Ouvrein, 2022). These niche influencers are mothers with kids who accumulated

141 a large following base and became micro-celebrities on their social network profiles by sharing

142 information about their lives, children and family, and often engage in sponsored partnerships

143 with brands (Abidin & Ots, 2015; Abidin, 2015; Archer, 2019; Jorge et al., 2021). Hence, they

144 are a specific type of SMI. SMI are typically characterized by their reach (i.e. having a

145 substantial number of followers) and impact (i.e. the influence they have on the decision-

146 making of others). In addition, they are perceived as highly credible among their followers

147 (Hudders et al., 2021). Previous research repeatedly suggested that SMI are perceived as more

148 likeable among their followers compared to a corporate brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe, &

149 Hudders, 2017; Myers, 2021; Taillon et al., 2020). Besides, mothers greatly value the

150 information they receive from other mothers (compared to other actors), as the mothering

151 experience creates a bond between them that may be more profound compared to other

152 relationships (Nolan et al., 2012). Therefore, we expect that the content of mom influencers will

153 be perceived as more likeable, as opposed to content posted by a corporate brand. Furthermore,

154 research argues that an endorser's perceived credibility can fluctuate, depending on his

155 attractiveness and likeability. In a variety of contexts, an endorser's likeability has been found

156 to predict the perceived credibility of the endorsed message (e.g. Teven, 2008). Therefore, we

157 hypothesize that the promotion of a snack would be more likeable and consequently perceived

158 as more credible when coming from a mom influencer compared to a brand (H1).

159   Furthermore, the source credibility model (Hovland et al., 1953) posits that increases in

160 perceived credibility of endorsers may lead to greater persuasiveness of their message. Indeed,

161 in a variety of contexts, the credibility of SMI has been repeatedly proven an important

162 antecedent of message, brand and advertising effects (e.g., Lou et al., 2019; Schouten et al.,

163 2020). We therefore expect that source credibility will further positively affect engagement with

164 the post (H2a), perceived child appropriateness of the food (H2b) and purchase intention (H2c).

1.4   Expert vs. typical mom influencer

166   While a great number of maternal decisions are affected by online information, research

167 highlights the significant lack of credible and evidence-based nutrition information with

168 interactive and collaborative features on the internet (Zarnowiecki et al., 2020). A recent trend

169 that can be identified is that more and more professional experts find their way to social media

170 platforms to spread their message as well. As such, educated professionals became SMI as well

171 by spreading their messages on their social media profiles. Scholars indeed acknowledge the

172 great diversity within the influencer landscape and distinguished three main types of

173 influencers: celebrities, typical influencers and expert influencers (Friedmann & Friedmann,

174 1979). Thus, while the concept of 'mom influencers' refers to mothers on social media that

175 monetize and narrate their family lives (Jorge et al., 2021), many differences may still occur

176 among these niche influencers. While many typical mom influencers spread nutritional

177 information without any qualification or scientific substantiation (Byrne et al., 2017), others

178 may create content based on their education and professional experience (i.e. expert

179 influencers). For example, Rolinde Opdegroei is a Belgian pediatric dietitian with 27K

180 followers on Instagram, who shares her knowledge with her followers.

181 Looking at research on maternal information gathering, this greatly aligns with two

182 different discourses that affect how mothers appeal to their social networks for information on

183 mothering (Price et al. 2018). Firstly, mothers can either rely on other mothers' opinions and

184 information, following a discourse that is called *"intuitive mothering"*. This discourse implies

185 that mothering skills are instinctive and best learned through the support of other mothers. The

186 second discourse is referred to as the *"medicalized mothering",* whereby mothers feel that they

187 need expert information and guidance from health care professionals (Price et al, 2018).

188 Therefore, through a second experimental study, we aim to investigate how the type of mom

189 influencer (typical vs. expert) affects the assessment and decision-making of mothers regarding

190 children's food.

191 *1.4.1 The credibility of an expert vs. typical mom influencer*

192 Unlike brands versus influencers, which are two completely different types of sources

193 (cf. previous hypotheses), the differences between a typical vs. expert mom influencer are much

194 more subtle. As they are both mothers and thus easy to identify with, we believe that their

195 perceived likeability will not significantly differ. In line with the match-up hypothesis (Kamins,

196   1990), however, their perceived credibility might differ. According to this theory and validated

197   within the context of Instagram, a SMI is perceived as a credible source of information when

198   the products being endorsed match with their particular domain of interest (Breves et al., 2018).

199   Besides, when evaluating persuasive messages, people often rely on simple heuristics (or

200   shortcuts), instead of cognitively and centrally processing the provided information (Chaiken,

201   1987). In the light of children's food, the study of Binder et al. (2020) refer to an 'expert

202   heuristic' and show that children's fruit intake indeed increases when it is endorsed by an expert

203   influencer, but not when it is endorsed by a typical or celebrity influencer. We believe that this

204   heuristic would equally apply to mothers. Therefore, in a second study we aim to test the

205   hypothesis that expert (vs. typical) mom influencers would be more successful in promoting

206   food, measured by the three dependent variables a) post engagement, b) child appropriateness

207   perceptions and c) purchase intention) due to their higher levels of credibility (H3).

208   *1.4.2   The perceived congruity of the endorsement by an expert vs. typical mom influencer*

209   According to the self-disclosure theory, two ways can be distinguished in which

210   influencers share information. Applied to the context of the current study, we can argue that

211   typical mom influencers predominantly engage in *personal self-disclosure* (i.e., sharing about

212   one's personal and family life), whereas expert mom influencers typically engage in

213   *professional self-disclosure* (i.e., sharing information about work-related topics) (Feng, et al.

214   2021; Kim & Song, 2016). As is the case for SMI in general, mom influencers too use various

215   tactics (e.g., host giveaways of products, receive directs payments and free products) to generate

216   an income out of their online activities (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017; Kaur & Kumar,

217   2021). Branded content is therefore almost inextricably linked to and therefore expected on the

218   profiles of typical mom influencers. For those typical mom influencers, promoting brands might

219   be perceived as part of sharing their personal beliefs and values, which is in line with their

220   personal self-disclosure style (Feng et al., 2021). The expert mom influencers (in the case of

221   this study: pediatric nutrition experts), however, follow a professional self-disclosure style, by

222   which they generally communicate about information they gathered through their main

223   professional occupation. As their influencer activities are not considered their primary job, it

224   might be less expected for them to engage in promotional partnerships and to generate an

225   income there. Summarized, given their difference in self-disclosure style, typical mom

226   influencers might be perceived as more congruent with a brand (or sponsored content in

227   general), as opposed to expert mom influencers. Further, a high congruence between an

228   influencer and a brand has previously been shown to positively affect perceptions and purchase

229   intentions among their followers (Belanche, et al., 2021). This is in line with research showing

230   that followers assess SMI content more positively if it is in line with what has been posted

231   before on their profile (Pöyry et al., 2019). Further, following the attributional theory, it is

232   suggested that in case of influencer-brand congruence, the influencer is believed to genuinely

233   like the product and to not promote it purely for extrinsic monetary reasons (Breves et al., 2019;

234   Mishra et al., 2015). Therefore, we expect that an advertisement for children's food will lead to

235   higher perceptions of influencer-brand congruence for typical (vs. expert) mom influencers,

236   which will in turn result into higher scores on the three dependent variables (H4a, b and c).

237   *1.4.3   The moderating role of healthiness of the endorsed food*

238   Given that the expert mom influencer within the current study is a pediatric nutritionist

239   who helps families and children to develop healthy eating habits, it is plausible to expect that

240   she would be perceived as more credible (compared to a typical mom influencer) when

241   endorsing healthy (vs. unhealthy) food. Therefore, hypothesis 5 posits that an expert (vs. mom)

242   influencer will be perceived as more credible when promoting a healthy (vs. unhealthy snack),

243   which will in turn enhance the three dependent variables (a, b and c).

244   However, we argued above that SMIs are more often deployed by brands to promote

245   unhealthy compared to healthy foods (e.g., Coates et al., 2019a). Research shows that mothers

246   do not appreciate the 'picture perfect' that is often portrayed by other mothers on social media.

247   In contrary, they often turn to social media to find mother-to-mother support and real

248   representations of motherhood (Archer, 2018). In the context of influencers, research indeed

249   suggests that parents often appreciate the honesty and authenticity of the life that is being

250   portrayed on the profiles of SMIs (Jun & Yi, 2020). As typical mom influencers adopt a self-

251   disclosure style and talk about their everyday life as a mother, we expect that they might get

252   away with the promotion of unhealthy food, under the guise of honest parenthood. In the context

253   of online blogs, Orton-Johnson (2017) indeed explains that content in which mom bloggers

254   show their struggles and shortcomings is more relatable for other mothers, which might help

255   them to feel better about themselves. This could imply that the endorsement of mom influencers

256   for unhealthy food is highly liked and persuasive among their followers, as it reflects realistic

257   motherhood. We therefore aim to further investigate the differential impact of expert versus

258   typical mom influencers for the promotion of healthy versus unhealthy food. We expect that,

259   while a nutritional expert (i.e., expert influencer) might be more successful in promoting healthy

260   food due to their higher perceived level of credibility related to the product category of food

261   (cf. H5), it might appear odd when they promote unhealthy food, as this product type is

262   incongruent with their expertise and image. Given the appreciation for authentic and honest

263   motherhood experiences, we hypothesize that a typical (vs. expert) mom influencer will

264   enhance perceived brand congruence when she promotes an unhealthy (vs. healthy) snack,

265   whereby the three dependent variables (a, b and c) would be positively affected in turn (H6).

266   The hypothesized effects as depicted in the conceptual model (cf. Figure 1) will be tested by

267   two experimental studies.

268

2   EXPERIMENT 1

2.1   Method

2.1.1   Design, procedure, and participants

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

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

2.1.2   Stimulus material

The respondents were either exposed to a sponsored Instagram post posted by a brand or a mom influencer. This Instagram post was the same in both conditions and presented a picture of two girls eating a lollipop of the brand Tuttifrutti, a candy brand. We used a non-existent brand in the stimuli material to exclude any confounding effects with regard to existing brand knowledge and attitudes.

293   For the brand post condition (see Figure 1), the Instagram post was posted by the brand,

294   by including the brand's logo as profile picture and the brand name Tuttifrutti as name of the

295   source of the post. The respondents were asked to imagine certain scenarios as described in

296   detail in Table 3. The manipulation of a brand post is similar as in the study of De Jans et al.

297   (2020). In particular, the advertising disclosure "Sponsored" was included below the brand

298   name as is done in real life on Instagram. In the description of the scenario, we explicitly

299   mention "You follow this influencer on Instagram". This last sentence was included to make

300   sure that the participants perceived the post as an Instagram post of an influencer that they

301   follow on Instagram. This manipulation of influencer post was also based on the manipulation

302   of an influencer post in the study of De Jans et al. (2020). Underneath the profile picture and

303   name, the standard Instagram advertising disclosure used by influencers was incorporated:

304   "Paid partnership with Tuttifrutti_uk".

305   *2.1.3   Measures*

306   All the items were measured on five-point scales. After measuring the socio-

307   demographics, post liking was measured with the item "How much do you like the Instagram

308   post you have seen from the brand Tuttifrutti/influencer Charlie?" ranging from "not at all" to

309   "I really like it" ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .98$). Further, source credibility (consisting of the dimensions

310   trustworthiness and expertise) was measured with 10 semantic differentials following Ohanian

311   (1990) ("What do you think of the brand Tuttifrutti/Charlie?", e.g. undependable – dependable;

312    $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.40$, $SD = .77$). Post engagement was gauged using three items ranging from

313   "definitely not" to "definitely" (e.g., "I would comment on this Instagram post"; $\alpha = .78$, $M =$

314   2.45, $SD = .93$). In addition, purchase intention was measured with three items such as "I can

315   imagine buying snacks from Tuttifrutti" from "totally disagree" to "totally agree" (Holzwarth

316   et al., 2006; $\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.28$, $SD = .90$). Finally, child appropriateness was also measured with

317   three items ranging from "definitely not" to "definitely" (e.g., "Do you think this Tuttifrutti

318   snack is good for your child(ren)?"; $\alpha = .85$, $M = 3.12$, $SD = .97$). For an overview of all

319   measures, see Table 1.

2.2   Results

2.2.1   Randomization

322   The sample in our experimental conditions did not differ with respect to age ($t(79) = -$

323    $.08$, $p = .937$) of the mothers, average number ($t(72) = .51$, $p = .614$), degree ($\chi(2) = 3.48$, $p =$

324    $.175$) and age ($t(72) = .21$, $p = .614$) of their child(ren), degree ($\chi(2) = 3.48$, $p = .175$), brand

325   familiarity ($\chi(1) = 2.18$, $p = .140$), hunger at the moment of the study ($t(77) = .76$, $p = .447$),

326   how much they like candy ($t(79) = .93$, $p = .357$) and Instagram involvement ($t(79) = .05$, $p =$

327    $.960$).

2.2.2   Manipulation check

329   From the respondents that saw the brand post, 78.6% indicated to have seen an

330   Instagram post posted by a brand, 14.3% by an influencer and 7.1% indicated that they did not

331   know. In addition, when the respondents saw an Instagram post by an influencer, 97.4% said

332   that they saw a post posted by an influencer and 2.6% by a brand. Hence, our manipulation of

333   the source of the sponsored post was successful.

2.2.3   The effectiveness of a corporate brand vs. mom influencer

335   See Table 2 for the main effects of source type (brand post versus mom influencer post)

336   on all mediating and dependent variables (analyzed using a MANOVA). A serial mediation

337   analysis (via Process Macro by Hayes (2017); model 6, 5000 bootstrap samples) was conducted

338   with source of the sponsored post as independent variable, post likeability and source credibility

339   as mediators, and post engagement as the dependent variable. The index of the serial mediation

340   was significant ($B = .11$, $SE = .06$, $95\%CI = [.0192, .2398]$). First, the analysis shows a main

341   effect of source of the sponsored post on post liking ($a = .54$, $SE = .21$, $t = 2.57$, $p = .012$),

342   showing that mothers like the sponsored Instagram post more when it is posted by a mom

influencer ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .82$) compared to a brand ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.05$). Post liking further positively affects source credibility ($b = .43$, $SE = .08$, $t = 5.51$, $p < .001$), which subsequently increases post engagement ($d_1 = .47$, $SE = .11$, $t = 4.10$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of source of the sponsored post on post engagement was not significant ($c'_1 = .06$, $SE = .16$, $t = .38$, $p = .709$). These results confirm H1 and H2a.

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

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

3   EXPERIMENT 2

3.1   Method

3.1.1   Design, procedure and participants

For the second study, we conducted a 2 (influencer type: expert versus typical mom influencer) by 2 (product type: unhealthy versus healthy snack) between-subjects experimental

367 design among 169 women between 19 and 58 years ($M = 30.77$, $SD = 6.95$). The respondents

368 for the second experiment were also recruited using the Prolific panel and we used to same

369 inclusion criteria. The mothers had between one and five children ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .84$), ranging

370 from zero to 29 years. Each mother had at least one child below 12 years.

371   The participants were also asked to fill in the same informed consent form. In total, 170

372 respondents were recruited from which one was excluded from the formal analysis as they failed

373 an attention check. The participants were first exposed to an Instagram profile of either a typical

374 mom influencer or an expert mom influencer (nutrition specialist) and were then exposed to a

375 sponsored Instagram post for either an unhealthy or healthy snack of that same influencer.

376 Afterwards, they filled in the same questionnaire.

377 *3.1.2   Stimulus material*

378   To manipulate influencer type, participants were first exposed to the Instagram profile

379 of either a typical mom influencer (see Figure 4) or an expert mom influencer (see Figure 5).

380 Before exposure to this Instagram profile, participants were asked to carefully read a text. These

381 final descriptions were carefully selected and optimized based on two pretests (cf. pretest 1 and

382 pretest 2). See Table 3 for how the descriptions for the manipulation of influencer type evolved

383 based on the results of the pretests. The Instagram profiles were as similar as possible: they

384 contained the same profile picture, name, number of posts, number of followers, number of

385 following and feed. However, the information in the bio differed by adding "Nutrition

386 specialist" and "Evidence based | Nutrition advise" to the profile in the expert mom influencer

387 condition compared to "Famous person" and "Celeb mom | Mom influencer" in the typical

388 mom influencer condition. This manipulation was determined based on two pretests.

389   After that, the participants saw an individual Instagram post of that same influencer. The

390 Instagram post was identical in both conditions (picture, caption, hashtags, advertising

391 disclosure, etc.), with the only difference being the promoted product (healthy or unhealthy).

392   For the unhealthy snack condition (see Figure 6), participants saw a picture of two girls eating

393   a lollipop of the brand Tuttifrutti. This was the same picture and brand as in experiment 1. In

394   addition, for the condition with the healthy snack (see Figure 7), the participants were exposed

395   to the exact same picture but now with the two girls eating a carrot.

396   *3.1.3   Pretest 1*

397   52 respondents (M_{age} = 31.25, SD = 5.60; 65.4% women) that did not participate in the

398   main experiment were recruited for the first pretest. For the manipulation of snack type, the

399   pretest showed that participants perceived the unhealthy snack as less healthy (M = 2.40, SD =

400   1.26) compared to the healthy snack (M = 4.22, SD = .75; $t(39)$ = -6.28, p < .001; "How healthy

401   do you think the snacks from the post are?"). Thus, the manipulation of snack type was

402   successful.

403   For the manipulation of influencer type, respondents were either exposed to the profile

404   of the expert mom influencer or the typical mom influencer, without a textual description about

405   that influencer. However, the results of the first pretest showed that the manipulation of

406   influencer type was not successful. In particular, there were no differences between the expert

407   influencer and mom influencer conditions on the items "Charlie's activities on Instagram

408   constitute her main job" ($t(50)$ = -1.13, p = .266), "Charlie has a degree in nutrition" ($t(50)$ = -

409   1.70, p = .095) nor on the five-point semantic differential how they would classify Charlie

410   ("Mom influencer" – "expert influencer") ($t(50)$ = -.57, p = .572). We therefore decided to

411   adjust the manipulation of influencer type by adding a description of the influencers before

412   showing the participants the Instagram profile. These descriptions were tested in the second

413   pretest.

414   *3.1.4   Pretest 2*

415   The second pretest was conducted among 52 participants (M_{age} = 32.33, SD = 6.71;

416   82.7% female) that did not participate in pretest 1 nor the main experiment. This pretest tested

the adjusted manipulation of influencer type based on pretest 1 (including the descriptions, see

Table 2) and showed that the item "Charlie's main job is pediatric nutrition specialist" scored

higher in the expert influencer condition (M = 4.24, SD = 1.23) compared to the typical mom

influencer condition (M = 2.26, SD = 1.16; t(50) = -5.96, p < .001). However, there was no

significant difference on the item "Charlie's activities on Instagram constitute her main job"

(t(50) = .16, p = .874). When asking the participants how they would mainly describe Charlie

(as a mom influencer or a nutrition specialist), 96.2% indicated as a mom influencer in the mom

influencer condition, however, only 64% indicated as a nutrition specialist in the expert

influencer condition. Based on these results, we deemed that the manipulation of influencer

type was again not sufficient. We therefore adapted the descriptions of the influencers once

more for the actual experiment (see the descriptions in the stimuli material-section).

3.1.5   Measures

Source credibility (α = .92, M = 3.86, SD = .77), post engagement (α = .78, M = 2.80,

SD = 1.06), child appropriateness (α = .90, M = 3.50, SD = 1.15) and purchase intention (α =

.93, M = 3.38, SD = 1.16) were measured using the same scales as in experiment 1. In addition,

influencer-brand congruence was gauged using three five-point semantic differentials following

Martínez-López et al. (2020) (e.g., "There is a bad fit between Charlie and the brand Tuttifrutti

– There is a good fit between Charlie and the brand Tuttifrutti"; α = .90, M = 4.22, SD = 1.03).

3.2   Results

3.2.1   Randomization

The sample in our experimental conditions did not differ regarding age (F(3, 164) = .45,

p = .717) of the mothers, average age (F(1, 146) = .534, p = .466) and number (F(1, 165) =

.613, p = .435) of children, degree (χ(6) = 3.19, p = .784), brand familiarity (χ(3) = .31, p =

.958), influencer familiarity (χ(3) = 2.86, p = .414), hunger at the moment of the study (F(3,

441 165) = 1.18, p = .318), how much they like candy (F(3, 165) = .29, p = .836), how much they

442 like carrots (F(3, 165) = .72, p = .542) and Instagram involvement (F(3, 165) = 1.02, p = .384).

443 *3.2.2 Manipulation check*

444 Participants scored higher on the item "Charlie's main job is managing her Instagram

445 profile" in the typical mom influencer condition (M = 3.83, SD = 1.02) compared to the expert

446 influencer condition (M = 2.44, SD = 1.33; t(159) = 7.62, p < .001). In addition, the item

447 "Charlie's main job is pediatric nutrition specialist" was scored higher in the expert influencer

448 (M = 4.42, SD = .96) compared to the typical mom influencer condition (M = 2.19, SD = 1.06;

449 t(164) = -14.24, p < .001). Thus, the manipulation of influencer type was successful.

450 Moreover, the snacks from the Instagram post were perceived as more healthy in the

451 healthy snack condition (M = 4.75, SD = .46) compared to the unhealthy snack condition (M =

452 3.12, SD = 1.19; t(168) = -17.50, p < .001). The manipulation of snack type also showed to be

453 successful.

454 *3.2.3 The effectiveness of an expert vs typical mom influencer*

455 See Table 4 for the main effects of influencer type (expert versus typical mom

456 influencer) on all mediating and dependent variables (analyzed using a MANOVA). First, a

457 multiple mediation analysis using Process Macro (model 4, Hayes (2017), 5000 bootstrap

458 samples) was conducted to examine how influencer type (independent variable) affects post

459 engagement (dependent variable) via source credibility[1] and influencer-brand congruence

460 (mediating variables). While there is a significant indirect effect via source credibility (B = -

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[1] Unlike for study I, the variable *post likeability* was not included as a prerequisite of credibility in study II. While prior research has repeatedly shown that social media influencers are perceived as more likeable among their followers compared to a corporate brand (e.g., De Veirman et al., 2017; Myers, 2021; Taillon et al., 2020), we did not include this construct in the second study. That is because, based on the literature review, we did not expect that the nuance between the two types of influencers (who are both mom influencers), would have a significant impact on the perceived likeability of their content, but we did expect it to directly affect their credibility instead. To verify this, we did, however, test the role of likeability within all models of study II. As expected, likeability did not have a significant driving role in the context of study two, whereas all regression models turned insignificant when including post likeability as a first mediator in the models.

461 .21, *SE* = .10, *95%CI* = [-.4227, -.0214]), the indirect effect through influencer-brand

462 congruence is not significant (*B* = .04, *SE* = .03, *95%CI* = [-.0036, .1070]). In particular, an

463 expert influencer (*M* = 3.98, *SD* = .78) is perceived as more credible than a typical mom

464 influencer (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = .74; a_1 = -.26, *SE* = .12, *t* = -2.22, *p* = .028). In addition, a typical

465 mom influencer (*M* = 4.40, *SD* = .83) is perceived as more congruent with the brand compared

466 to an expert mom influencer (*M* = 4.04, *SD* = 1.17; a_2 = .36, *SE* = .17, *t* = 2.31, *p* = .022). Source

467 credibility (b_1 = .82, *SE* = .09, *t* = 8.90, *p* < .001), but not influencer-brand congruence (b_4 =

468 .11, *SE* = .07, *t* = 1.54, *p* = .164), further enhances post engagement. Thus, H3a is confirmed,

469 but H4a cannot be confirmed.

470   Another multiple mediation analysis was conducted with the same variables, but now

471 with child appropriateness as the dependent variable. Both the indirect effects via source

472 credibility (*B* = -.12, *SE* = .06, *95%CI* = [-.2421, -.0148]) and influencer-brand congruence (*B*

473 = .17, *SE* = .08, *95%CI* = [.0307, .3362]) were significant. As indicated above, the expert

474 influencer is perceived as more credible but less congruent with the brand compared to the

475 typical mom influencer. Both source credibility (b_2 = .45, *SE* = .10, *t* = 4.35, *p* < .001) and

476 influencer-brand congruence (b_5 = .48, *SE* = .08, *t* = 6.25, *p* < .001) positively affect child

477 appropriateness. This confirms both H3b and H4b.

478   Finally, we conducted a third multiple mediation analysis (Process Macro; model 4 by

479 Hayes (2017), 5000 bootstrap samples) with purchase intention as the dependent variable.

480 Again, both the indirect effects via source credibility (*B* = -.13, *SE* = .07, *95%CI* = [-.2839, -

481 .0138]) and influencer-brand congruence (*B* = .13, *SE* = .07, *95%CI* = [.0188, .2775]) were

482 significant. Moreover, both source credibility (b_3 = .49, *SE* = .11, *t* = 4.45, *p* < .001) and

483 influencer-brand congruence positively affect purchase intention (b_6 = .37, *SE* = .08, *t* = 4.45,

484 *p* < .001), confirming both H3c and H4c.

485   *3.2.4   The moderating role of snack type*

486   Finally, we investigated the moderating role of snack type by conducting three

487   moderated mediation analyses (Process Macro; model 7; Hayes (2017), 5000 bootstrap

488   samples) with influencer type as the independent variable, snack type as moderator, source

489   credibility and influencer-brand congruence as mediators, and post engagement (analysis 1),

490   child appropriateness (analysis 2) and purchase intention (analysis 3) as the dependent

491   variables.

492   The first moderated mediation analysis with post engagement as the dependent variable

493   shows that while there is no interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on source

494   credibility ($B = -.20$, $SE = .24$, $t = -.84$, $p = .403$, cf. Figure 8), there is an interaction effect on

495   influencer-brand congruence ($B = -.82$, $SE = .30$, $t = -2.70$, $p = .008$, cf. Figure 9). The

496   conditional effects indicate that the typical mom influencer is only perceived as more congruent

497   with the brand when an unhealthy snack is promoted ($B = .76$, $SE = .21$, $t = 3.57$, $p = .001$) and

498   not when a healthy snack high is promoted ($B = -.06$, $SE = .21$, $t = -.26$, $p = .796$). However,

499   influencer-brand congruence did not affect post engagement in turn. H5a and H6a cannot be

500   confirmed.

501   The moderated mediation analysis with child appropriateness as the dependent variable

502   shows that the index of the moderated mediation is significant ($B = -.39$, $SE = .15$, $95\%CI = [-$

503    $.7112, -.1106]$). As indicated above, the interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on

504   source credibility was not significant, but the interaction effect on influencer-brand congruence

505   was. In addition, influencer-brand congruence positively affected child appropriateness. Thus,

506   when an unhealthy snack was promoted, the typical mom influencer was perceived as more

507   congruent with the brand than the expert mom influencer, resulting in more child

508   appropriateness ($B = .36$, $SE = .13$, $95\%CI = [.1269, .6396]$), confirming H6b. There was no

509   difference between the typical mom influencer and expert influencer when the healthy snack

510   was promoted (B = -.03, SE = .08, $95\%CI$ = [-.1845, .1384]). H5b cannot be confirmed.

511   Finally, similar results were found with purchase intention as the dependent variable,

512   showing a significant index of the moderated mediation (B = -.30, SE = .13, $95\%CI$ = [-.5703,

513   -.0870]). Thus, when an unhealthy snack was promoted (B = .28, SE = .11, $95\%CI$ = [.0957,

514   .5212]), but not when a healthy snack was promoted (B = -.02, SE = .06, $95\%CI$ = [-.1492,

515   .1037]), the typical mom influencer was perceived as more congruent with the brand,

516   subsequently leading to more purchase intention. While H5c cannot be confirmed, H6c is

517   confirmed. See Figure 10 for an overview of the results of experiment 2.

518   **4   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

519   This article presents the results of two experimental studies to examine the effectiveness

520   of mom influencers in promoting food to other mothers. The first experiment aimed the examine

521   whether a mom influencer post is more efficient in promoting food to other mothers compared

522   to a standard sponsored post of a brand. In addition, in the second experiment we compared the

523   effectiveness of a typical versus expert mom influencer in promoting healthy versus unhealthy

524   snacks, and whether and how the underlying mechanisms of source credibility and influencer-

525   brand congruence can explain this.

526   Given the wide range of negative short and long-term consequences of childhood

527   obesity, a broad range of research investigated this topic. While various studies aimed to

528   understand how food marketing on traditional media platforms works (Norman et al., 2016) it

529   is argued that food and beverage companies are increasingly shifting their advertising budgets

530   from broadcast to digital spaces (Powell et al., 2013). Even though today's parents are also

531   increasingly spending time and even look for health information on these digital platforms

532   nowadays (Eurostat, 2021), little is known about how those highly embedded types of

533   advertising directed to parents are operating. The current study shows that a commercial social

media post coming from a mom influencer is significantly more efficient in terms of engagement with the social media post, child appropriateness perceptions of the food and purchase intentions among mothers compared to a commercial social media post coming from a corporate brand. This is in line with previous research arguing that digital marketing and influencer marketing is strongly affecting children's and young people's attitudes and behaviors towards unhealthy commodity (Buchanan et al., 2018; Coates et al., 2019a; Coates et al., 2019b). Our study contributes to these findings by showing that influencer marketing specifically directed to parents (mothers in our study), also strongly affects their attitudes and behavioral intentions towards unhealthy food products for their children. In sum, the first experimental study of this paper thus shows that a mom influencer is more effective in promoting food compared to a brand. This is in line with previous research that showed that influencers are perceived as more likeable compared to corporate brands, and the assumption that influencers are thereby considered credible sources of information (Myers, 2021; Taillon et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that this was the promotion of an unhealthy snack, which indicates that mom influencers promoting unhealthy food may affect mothers' unhealthy food choices for their children, thereby even contributing to the unhealthy diet of children.

Therefore, the second study of this paper further investigated the moderating impact of the healthiness of the promoted snack and the differing role of a mom versus a nutrition expert influencer. On the one hand, the results of our study show that, that an expert mom influencer is perceived as more credible than a typical mom influencer, independent of the type of snack (healthy or unhealthy) that is promoted, leading to higher post engagement, child appropriateness of the food and purchase intention. Thus, experts in the field that share their content to their followers are perceived as more credible compared to mothers that do not have an education on the topic and merely share their own experiences. On the other hand, a typical mom influencer is perceived as being more congruent with the brand, which increases mothers'

23

perception of the child appropriateness of the food and their purchase intention towards the snack. However, when considering the different effects for healthy versus unhealthy snacks, our results show that typical mom influencers are mainly effective in promoting unhealthy food, while nutrition experts are more efficient in promoting healthy food on social media. Previous research investigating the impact of digital nutrition promotion towards parents drew the attention towards the fact that there is a great lack of credible evidence-based nutrition information on the internet, presented to parents in an interactive and collaborative manner (Zarnowiecki et al., 2020). Our findings suggest that social network sites might represent a promising tool for nutrition experts to communicate their message towards today's parents. Besides, our finding concerning the particular potency of typical mom influencers to promote unhealthy but not healthy food is in line with previous research showing that influencer marketing towards children was effective in promoting the food intake of unhealthy but not healthy food Coates et al., 2019b). An important take-away of the second experiment is related to the development of the experimental material. More concretely, the manipulation of expert vs. typical mom influencer had to be made very conspicuous for the respondents to actually identify the influencers as intended. We believe that especially for mom influencers (as opposed to, for example, fashion influencers), the lines between an expert and typical influencer might be particularly blurry as an ordinary mom can also be perceived as an 'expert' due to her real-life knowledge and practice with motherhood (Price et al., 2018). Future research could aim to explore which factors are used by followers to assess the expertise of a mom influencer. Together with the results of our studies, this could help practitioners to help selecting the best endorser for healthy food promotion campaigns, for example. Besides, even beyond the scope of nutrition information, it might be interesting to know which influencers are considered credible, as mothers often consult the internet for pediatric information seeking as doctor's offices are not always reachable (Bernhardt & Felter, 2004). As governments are starting to

584 collaborate with influencers to reach the public (e.g. Bolat, E. 2020), based on our results, it

585 might be interesting for governmental organizations to collaborate with expert influencers to

586 spread reliable and easily accessible information through the platforms that are commonly

587 assessed for information-seeking by today's mothers.

588   Given the large reach and persuasive power of these mom influencers, this finding also

589 raises some ethical considerations, which calls for alertness and gives rise to some important

590 recommendations for public policy and advertising practice. First, based on these results, mom

591 influencers in general could be made aware of their potential impact on other parents and

592 consequently on these children's unhealthy food intake, and asked to pay particular attention to

593 the nutritional value of the products they are considering promoting. Furthermore, while there

594 are already considerable policy concerns regarding the protection of children towards unhealthy

595 food advertising, the current study underlines the importance to look beyond the traditional

596 advertising types and focus on the category of the endorsed product (i.e. children's food) instead

597 of the age group of the targets of the advertising, as is done now in, for example, the EU Pledge

598 (Calvert, 2021). More specifically, the results of our study encourage to not only provide

599 regulations regarding food marketing directed to children, but also to their parents and to

600 accelerate the process to develop regulations for social network platforms and influencer

601 marketing in particular. Finally, our findings show that typical mom influencers were

602 significantly less credible compared to nutrition experts when promoting healthy food. Based

603 on these results, two suggestions can be made. First, organizations or institutions promoting

604 healthy food habits among children should therefore consider cooperating with expert mom

605 influencers to spread their message to the current generation of mothers. Second, future research

606 should investigate how this lack of credibility for typical mom influencers when promoting

607 healthy food can be countered.

608   To conclude, this paper also has some limitations that translate into suggestions for

609   further research. First, fictitious influencers were used for the stimulus material in both studies

610   to exclude confounding effects regarding existing influencer familiarity and attitudes. This

611   decision was made since we compared two influencer types in the second experiment whereby

612   we had to keep all influencer characteristics constant between the conditions expect for their

613   niche. Nonetheless, this has an impact on the validity of the results. It might be expected that

614   existing mom influencers, with whom their followers developed a great para-social and trust

615   relation, might exert an even greater influence on their followers. However, the fact that we

616   found abovementioned results without this bond between influencer and follower confirms the

617   influential potential of mom influencers. Further, while the attitudes and behavioral intentions

618   of mothers were measured within the current study, it might be interesting for future research

619   to adopt a more longitudinal approach and investigate whether the impact of the mom

620   influencers are further translated into the actual food intake of the children or in long-term

621   persisting food habits within the household. Also, being the first study investigating how the

622   decision-making process of caregivers regarding children's food is affected by influencer

623   marketing, we consciously chose to focus on mothers only. As explained before, they are argued

624   to have the greatest impact on the choices regarding child feeding practices (Rahill et al., 2020)

625   and are more often on the lookout for health information online (Duggan et al., 2015). However,

626   fathers are increasingly involved in today's households (Rahill et al., 2020), and were not taken

627   into account in the current study. Therefore, it might be interesting for future research to

628   investigate the decision-making process of fathers regarding children's food and what online

629   sources they rely on. To conclude, the sample of our studies existed of mothers with at least

630   one child below 12 years. This implies that many of them had multiple children, while previous

631   research argues that particularly first-time mothers are socially isolated and more likely to seek

632   for mothering information online in the period after having their firstborn (Price et al., 2018).

633   However, one might also expect that older mothers started following mom influencers earlier,

634   whereby they had more interactions with them, resulting in a stronger parasocial relationship

635   (Hartmann et al., 2008). It might be interesting for future research to investigate how the number

636   and age of their children affect the susceptibility of parents to influencers' opinions.

637

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641 **6 AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

642 [blinded for review] contributed to the original conceptualization of the study,

643 developed the stimuli, performed analyses and wrote the original draft of the theoretical part

644 and discussion of the paper.

645 [blinded for review] contributed to the original conceptualization of the study,

646 performed analyses, and wrote the original draft of the methodological part of the paper.

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649 **8 ETHICAL APPROVAL**

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

651 **9 DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST**

652 The authors certify that there are no conflicts of interest to declare. All authors have

653 reviewed and approved the final manuscript and accept full responsibility for all aspects of the

654 work described here.

655

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882 **Figures**

883 Figure 1. Brand post condition (experiment 1)
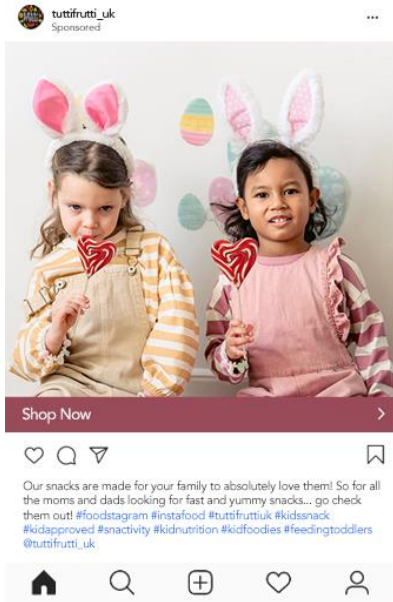
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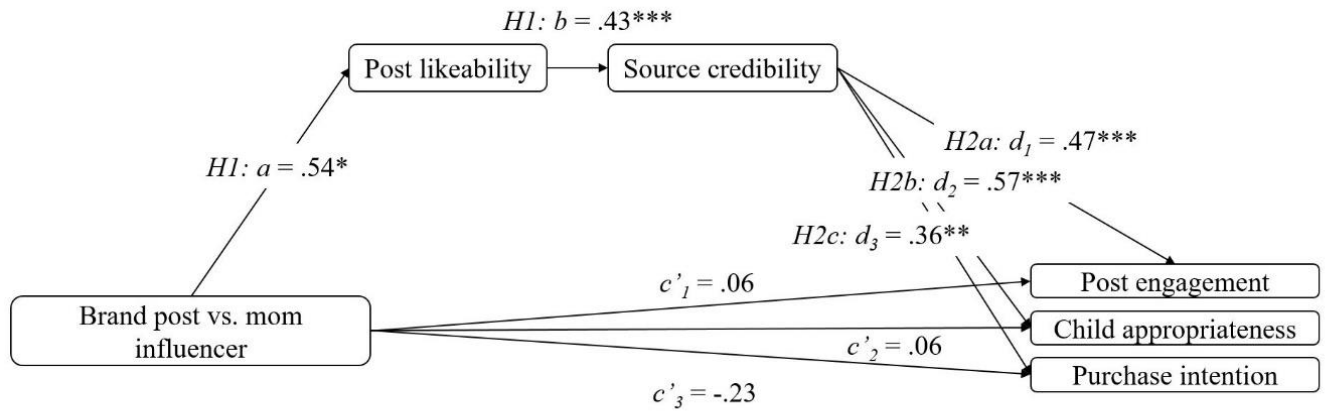886 Figure 2. Mom influencer condition (experiment 1)
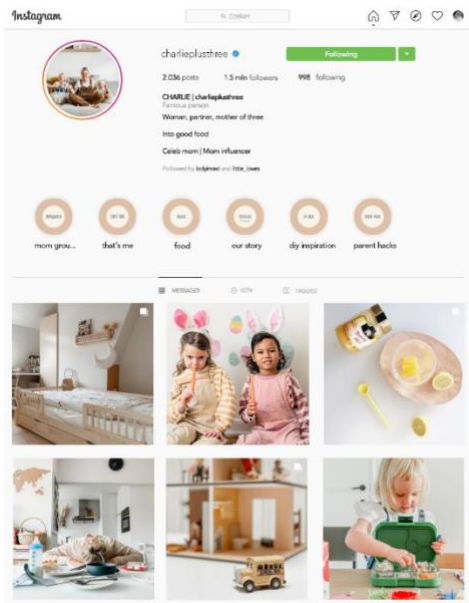

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890   Figure 3. Overview results experiment 1

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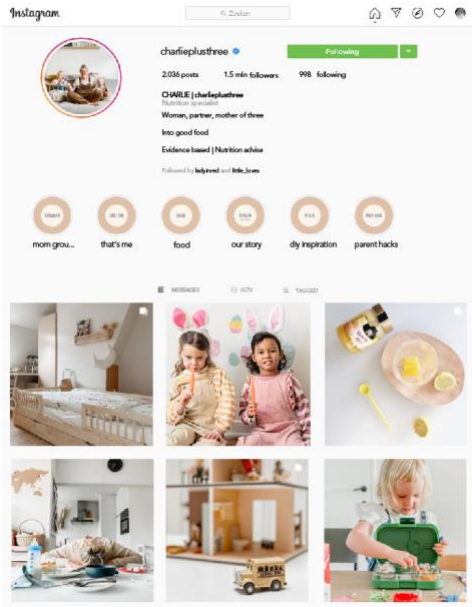

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899 Figure 5. Instagram profile of expert influencer (experiment 2)

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901 Figure 6. Unhealthy snack condition (experiment 2)

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908   Figure 7. Healthy snack condition (experiment 2)
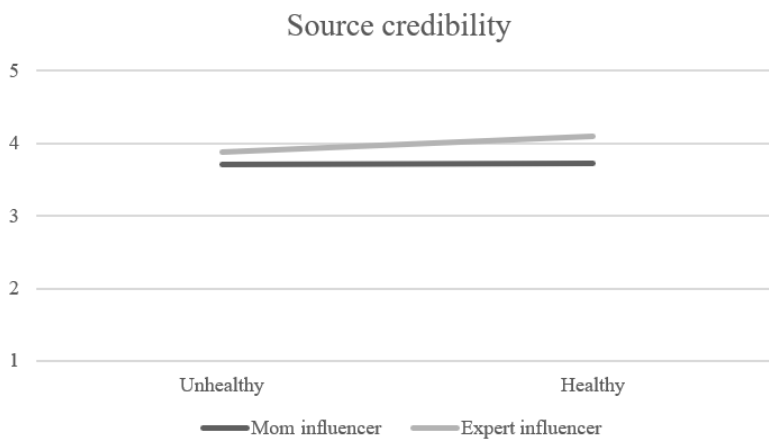
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911   Figure 8. Interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on source credibility (experiment

912   2)

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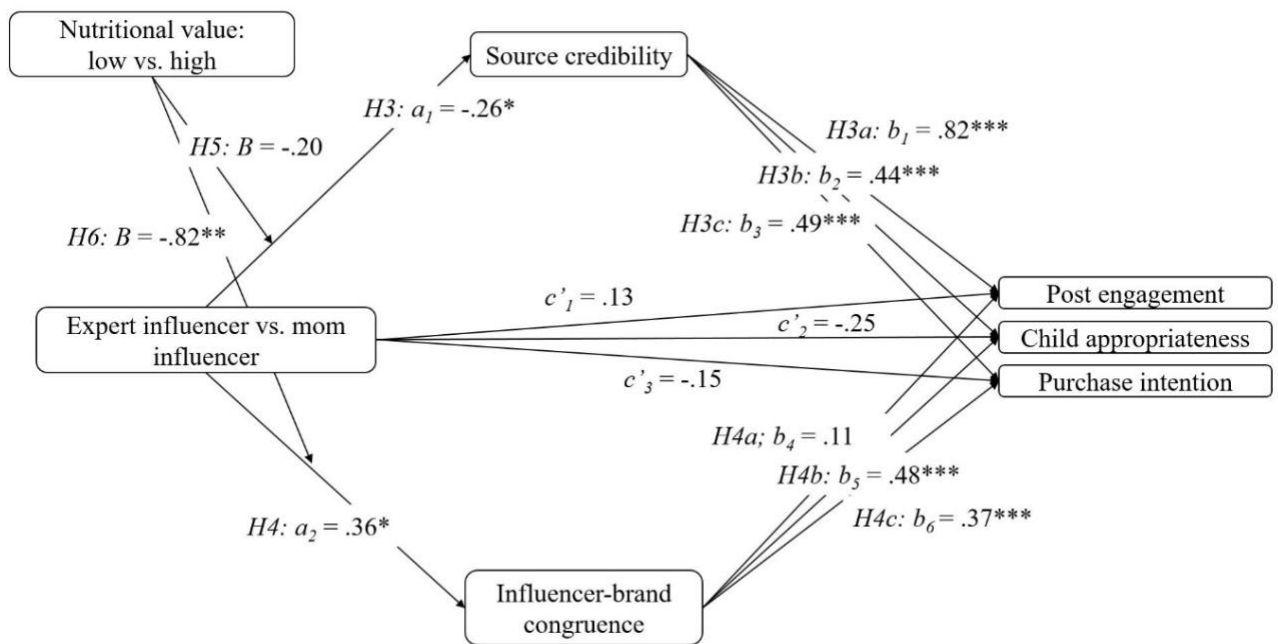914

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918   Figure 9. Interaction effect of influencer type and snack type on influencer-brand congruence

919   (experiment 2)

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922   Figure 10. Overview results experiment 2

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925   **Tables**

926   Table 1. Measurement Instrument

Measures	Iems	Response Categories	References
Post liking	*"How much do you like the Instagram post you have seen from the brand Tuttifrutti/influencer Charlie?"*	1 = "not at all, 5 = "I really like it"	
Post engagement	*"I would comment on this Instagram post"*	1 = "definitely not", 5 = "definitely"	
	"I would 'like' this Instagram post"		
	"I would share this Instagram post"		
Source credibility	*"What do you think of the brand Tuttifrutti/Charlie?"*	Undependable – dependable	Ohanian (1990)
		Dishonest – honest	
		Unreliable – reliable	
		Insincere – sincere	
		Untrustworthy –trustworthy	
		Not an expert – expert	
		Inexperienced –experienced	
		Unknowledgeable – knowledgeable	
		Unqualified – qualified	
		Unskilled – skilled	
Purchase intention	*"I can imagine buying snacks from Tuttifrutti"*	1 = "totally disagree", 5 = "totally agree"	Holzwarth et al. (2006)
	"The next time I buy snacks, I will take Tuttifrutti into consideration"		
	"I am very interested in buying snacks from Tuttifrutti"		
Child appropriateness	*"Would you buy this Tuttifrutti snack for your child(ren)?"*	1 = "definitely not", 5 = "definitely"	
	"Do you think this Tuttifrutti snack is good for your child(ren)?"		
	"Do you think this Tuttifrutti snack is appropriate for your child(ren)?"		

Influencer-brand congruence	*"With which statement do you agree most?"*	There is a bad fit between Charlie and the brand Tuttifrutti – There is a good fit between Charlie and the brand Tuttifrutti	Martinez-Lopez et al. 2020
		It is not logical for Charlie to endorse this brand – It is very logical for Charlie to endorse this brand	
		It is not appropriate for Charlie to endorse this brand – It is very appropriate for Charlie to endorse this brand	

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928 Table 2. Main effects of source type on mediating and dependent variables (experiment 1)

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

929

930 Table 3. Descriptions for manipulation of influencer type

	Typical mom influencer condition	Expert influencer condition
Description tested in pretest 1	No description was included before exposure to the Instagram profile.	No description was included before exposure to the Instagram profile.
Description tested in pretest 2	"On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. Charlie is a mom of three and is a communication specialist. She lives in London and shares her experiences and knowledge about motherhood with a large public through her Instagram profile"	"On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. Charlie is a mom of three and is a pediatric nutrition specialist. She currently works in a hospital in London and shares her experiences and knowledge with a large public through her Instagram profile"
Final description used in experiment 2	"On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. **Please imagine that you personally follow Charlie's page on Instagram.** Charlie is a mom of three living in London. **She is a fulltime mom** who shares her knowledge and experiences about motherhood with a large public through her Instagram profile"	"On the next page you will see the Instagram profile of Charlie. **Please imagine that you personally follow Charlie's page on Instagram.** Charlie is a mom of three living in London. **She works as a pediatric nutrition specialist in a hospital, and in her spare time she shares her professional** knowledge and

			experiences with a large public through her Instagram profile"

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

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

933