

The Effects and Underlying Mechanisms of Sponsorship Disclosure in eWOM

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Dedication

To my fiancée, Alejandra Díaz,

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Abstract

Using a set of two experimental studies, this dissertation's objectives were twofold. The first study examined the effects of sponsorship disclosure modes (written-only, spoken-only, and written-and-spoken disclosure) in sponsored online consumer product reviews on consumers' attention to and perceived persuasive intent of sponsored eWOM. The second study explored the level of detail (low vs. high) and extent of disclosed commercial gain (general sponsorship, free product, payment for review, or sales commission) on attitudes toward the reviewer and a brand via proposed competing mechanisms of cue-based trust and persuasion knowledge. In both studies, effects were explored for search goods and experience goods.

Study 1 found that, consistent with limited cognitive capacity theory and the Limited Cognitive Capacity Model of Mediated Message Processing, the spoken-only and written-and-spoken conditions generated incrementally higher attention when compared to written-only. However, perceived persuasive intent was not affected by disclosure mode.

Key insights from Study 2 furthermore identified that, for experience goods, high detail level disclosures led to a more favorable attitude toward the reviewer, while the level of detail did not affect attitudinal responses for search goods. The results also showed that, in terms of extent of disclosed commercial gain, only the disclosure of receipt of a free product affected persuasion knowledge, trust, and attitude toward the brand. The receipt of a free product condition emerged as the only condition that did not exhibit lower trust

and less favorable attitude toward the brand. Furthermore, persuasion knowledge, not trust, emerged as the indirect mediator facilitating extent of disclosed commercial gain effects on attitudes toward the brand and the reviewer for the disclosures of the receipt of a free product or a sales commission.

The study contributes to the understanding of limited cognitive capacity, sponsorship disclosure effects, and to persuasion knowledge model and trust literature. Practical implications for eWOM stakeholders including advertisers, content creators, and policy makers are also discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Consumers frequently rely on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), other consumers' online evaluations of products, for their purchase decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). eWOM has initially only been provided by actual or potential consumers of a product that are otherwise unrelated to the marketer of the product (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). Increasingly, eWOM has also been created by online influencers such as prominent online product reviewers, whose reviews do not emerge organically, that is to say solely out of the reviewer's own volition, but are prompted by the reviewer receiving some form of compensation from the marketer of the reviewed products. Compensation can take various forms, including receiving a free or reduced-price product, payment for a review, or a sales commission, for example. While content creators still maintain editorial control over the content, sponsorship may affect eWOM's objectivity (Carr & Hayes, 2014). Consumers may be negatively affected by a lack of impartiality of content creators. Particularly if sponsorship is not conspicuously disclosed to consumers, they may not be aware of the commercial nature of the content. This means that consumers may base their brand attitudes and purchase decisions on information they wrongfully presumed objective.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States, much like other advertising regulating bodies around the world (CAP, 2015; Die Medienanstalten, 2018), has responded to this concern by updating its guidelines, requiring online product reviewers to disclose any business relationship, including sponsorship they may have

received in exchange for reviewing or recommending a product (FTC, 2015a). These guidelines pursue the goal of consumer protection through honest disclosure of any influence an advertiser may have incurred on the content (FTC, 2015a). Aside from the requirement to disclose sponsorship, however, few guidelines exist as to how disclosure should take place. Rather, the FTC guidelines merely indicate that “reasonable consumers” should be able to recognize sponsorship as a result of the disclosure (FTC, 2013, p. 5). As reviewers receive little indication on how to adequately disclose sponsorship from FTC guidelines, the resulting sponsorship disclosures may not be immediately recognizable as such and may vary widely, from merely thanking a certain brand to disclosing the exact terms of compensation. As a result, the content of disclosures may or may not adequately inform viewers whether and how compensation was received and how this may affect objectivity. This means that current sponsorship disclosure guidelines may not adequately protect consumers from being misled by content whose commercial nature may not have been apparent to them.

Although the effects of sponsorship disclosure on viewers’ brand attitude have been examined in the context of television entertainment content, and it has been found that sponsorship disclosure frequently, though not in all circumstances, exhibited a negative effect on brand attitude (e.g., Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012; Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2012; van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013), research on sponsorship disclosure in the online context is only emerging. Sponsorship disclosure in the social media context deserves further inquiry, particularly into contextual factors such as disclosure modes and types of disclosure, namely the level of detail and the

extent to which commercial gain is disclosed, to understand outcomes of disclosure (e.g., Zainal et al., 2017) and to guide future regulatory directions.

As social media platforms facilitate a wide variety of communication formats, ranging from written text, images, and short-form and long-form videos, sponsored product reviews and sponsorship disclosures could take many different combinations. The mode in which disclosure occurs (e.g. spoken, as an on-screen text disclosure, or both) merits investigation, because disclosures in different modes would likely generate different levels of attention, processing, and recognition of persuasive intent. Furthermore, with the rapid growth of social influencer marketing, emergence of different kinds of sponsorship arrangements in the social media space, and varying levels of detail provided in sponsorship disclosure messages, it is important to examine the effects of different information content regarding the type of sponsorship and the level of detail provided in the disclosure on consumers' reactions and evaluations. Sponsorship disclosure research in the specific context of social media eWOM is important because consumer reactions to sponsorship disclosure might be different between the traditional and eWOM settings. This means that findings from previous research on the effects of sponsorship disclosure in the traditional media context might not translate directly to the eWOM context. This is because sponsored content in eWOM and sponsored content in traditional media, such as brand integration or product endorsements, differ in three specific ways. First, sponsored eWOM is user-generated rather than professionally produced. Second, traditional media and online media differ in their nature and history. Unlike traditional broadcasting media, online media offers the

possibility of interaction. Online media users have, therefore, greater control over the content to which they are exposed. Although technology advancements such as smart televisions and digital video recorders have been augmenting traditional media, content is rarely user-generated but rather controlled by broadcasters. Finally, individuals may hold different expectancies of eWOM and traditional media regarding the use of sponsorships. Brands subsidizing content through sponsorship may be expected and acceptable in different circumstances for eWOM and traditional media. Consumers may, for example, have come to expect and accept sponsorship in traditional media, for instance through product placements. As eWOM was originally non-commercial, brands sponsoring eWOM, such as brands paying for product reviews, may be received differently by consumers. If an individual, for example, were not to expect sponsorship in eWOM or not to regard it as acceptable, the exposure to such sponsorship would not conform to the individual's expectancy and conceivably lead to less favorable communication outcomes of that content (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Overall, viewers would likely engage differently with content on different media, conceivably resulting in different outcomes.

Research Purpose and Focus

Due to the unique characteristics of sponsored content on eWOM over sponsored content on traditional media, as well as the differences in the regulatory landscape, this research project aims to examine: (1) the effects of different disclosure modes on consumers' attention to and processing of the persuasive nature of the sponsored eWOM, and (2) the effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on

attitudes toward the content creator and the brand. Each of these goals were addressed with a separate study in the form of an online experiment.

To examine the effects of different disclosure modes, the limited cognitive capacity theory was applied. For the potential effects of the level of disclosed commercial gain, two alternative predictions were developed based on the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) and source trust theory. These theoretical frameworks will be discussed in the following literature review chapter.

Dissertation Chapters and Organization

This dissertation is structured into six chapters. Following the current introduction chapter, Chapter 2 presents background information and a thorough review of the existing literature on the eWOM phenomenon and sponsored product reviews, pertinent regulatory guidelines on sponsorship disclosure, and theoretical frameworks, specifically the limited cognitive capacity theory, PKM, and source trust theory. Chapter 3 presents the dissertation project's hypotheses, each with a reiteration of the applicable theoretical and/or empirical justifications. Study 1's methods, data analysis results, and discussion are covered in Chapter 4, while the second study's methods, data analysis results, and discussion are presented in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes, synthesizes, and discusses the studies' key findings and offers theoretical and practical implications of the results, limitations of the project, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter is divided into five subsections. Initially, this chapter will review (1) eWOM literature, followed by a subsection that focuses specifically on the case of (2) product reviews as eWOM. Subsequent subsections will present a review of research literature on (3) sponsorship disclosure regulation and (4) sponsorship disclosure effects. Finally, (5) the dissertation's theoretical frameworks will be reviewed, specifically limited cognitive capacity theory explaining attention and processing of sponsorship disclosure, the persuasion knowledge model and its role in eWOM, trust and its role in eWOM, and persuasion knowledge and trust explaining sponsorship disclosure effects.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM), defined as oral, person-to-person communication which is perceived as non-commercial by the receiver (Arndt, 1967), has been identified as a significant factor in consumers' brand attitudes and decision-making processes in marketing and advertising literature (Engel, Kegerreis, & Blackwell, 1969; Feick & Price, 1987; Gilly, Graham, Wolfenbarger, & Yale, 1998; Richins, 1984). Consumers more frequently base their attitudes regarding brands and their purchasing decisions on information obtained from WOM than on advertising messages, because in WOM, product information is provided by a trusted source via interpersonal communication rather than by an advertiser (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Engel, Kegerreis, & Blackwell, 1969; Feick & Price, 1987; Grewal, Cline, & Davies, 2003; Moon, Costello, & Koo, 2017). Consequently, WOM has been found to influence product adoption (Frenzen &

Nakamoto, 1993) and the rate of innovation diffusion (Mahajan, Mueller, & Srivastava, 1990) among other consumer behaviors.

The Internet's emergence, adoption, and increasing influence on consumers' daily lives has fostered the development of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), WOM's online counterpart. eWOM is defined "any positive or negative statement made by a potential, actual, or former customer about a company or product, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004, p. 39). While WOM usually takes place in face-to-face interaction, eWOM can manifest as mediated one-to-one, many-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many communication (Xia et al., 2009). This communication is facilitated by a plethora of online-platforms, including discussion forums (Fong & Burton, 2006; Steyer, Garcia-Bardidia, & Quester, 2006), blogs (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006), product review websites (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Maslowska, Malthouse, & Bernritter, 2017; Wang, Cunningham, & Eastin, 2015), online consumer communities (Hung & Li, 2007), shopping websites (Gupta & Harris, 2005; Lee, Park, & Han, 2008; Lee & Youn, 2009; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Sen & Lerman, 2007; Sher & Lee, 2009), emails (Chiu et al., 2007; Phelps et al., 2004), and social media networks (Chu & Kim, 2011; Jin & Phua, 2014). Thus, consumers can learn of strangers' opinions (Libai et al., 2010) and expose themselves to a wide variety of opinions (Purnawirawan, de Pelsmacker, & Dens, 2012) and information about product and brand choices (Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthard, 2017; Chu & Sung, 2015; Jin & Phua, 2014; Yoon, Polpanumas, & Park, 2017). At the same time, advertisers are able to closely monitor information and opinions that are propagated about their brands (Burke,

2002). Similar to WOM, eWOM is generated by fellow consumers, which constitute a more trustworthy source than advertisers as they do not inherently hold any commercial interest and consequently exert a greater influence on consumers' product evaluations (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). As a result, there has been continued academic research on eWOM in the fields of management (Dellarocas, 2003), marketing (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006), electronic commerce (Amblee & Bui, 2011), and advertising (Fong & Burton, 2006).

In early eWOM research in the advertising field, the concept of eWOM was used to explore the topic of viral advertising and viral marketing (Phelps et al., 2004; Porter & Golan, 2006). Phelps et al.'s (2004) work was one of the first to study consumer responses to email communication about brands, products, or services and what drives consumers to forward these messages. The authors found that message forwarding was driven by motivations of entertainment (e.g. for fun or enjoyment) and social relationship maintenance (e.g. to express care for others or help others). Porter and Golan (2006) similarly considered viral advertising as a form of eWOM in an early empirical study of viral advertising and defined it as "unpaid peer-to-peer communication of provocative content originating from an identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence the audience to pass-along the content to others" (p. 33). The authors found that viral advertising relied on provocative content more than traditional advertising in order to "motivate unpaid peer-to-peer communication of persuasive messages from identified sponsors" (p. 35).

Cho, Huh, and Faber's (2014) more recent definition of viral advertising as "marketer-initiated eWOM strategies that use specially crafted messages designed to be passed along or spread by consumers" (p. 100) is largely consistent with Porter and Golan's in that it specifically focuses on the peer-to-peer propagation of marketer-created messages. Cho et al.'s study found that sender trust played an important role in the three-step process ultimately leading to viral advertising effects. Specifically, Cho et al. found that high sender trust may be able to overcome low trust in an advertiser and lead to more favorable attitude toward the message content. Consistent with this finding, other research on viral advertising found that a positive relationship between the consumer and the brand increased the likelihood of viral advertising messages being passed on between consumers (Hayes & King, 2014; Shan & King, 2015).

Overall, eWOM research in the context of viral advertising considers viral advertising as a specific case of eWOM in which advertiser-created messages are passed on among consumers. Pass-along behaviors are thereby influenced by individual as well as social factors and motivations.

More recently, eWOM in social media has been a popular research topic, as social media has further reduced constraints on eWOM behavior and social networks have contributed to eWOM's effectiveness regarding consumers' purchase decisions. Social media networks have reduced eWOM's anonymity and increased the potential for eWOM to become more reliable, trustworthy, and thereby more credible and influential (Chu & Choi, 2011; Wallace, Walker, Lopez, & Jones, 2009). Social media users have been found to frequently discuss brands amongst themselves (Wolny & Mueller, 2013),

and this communication is highly influential on consumers' purchase intentions (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). In addition to conversations about brands among social media users, social media networks can also facilitate the dissemination of brand-related content by opinion leaders' profiles promoting certain brands, products, or services (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Interaction with this form of eWOM can take various forms. Social media users may share their reactions in writing, pictures, videos, and applications, or by liking or sharing content. These capabilities contribute to the propagation of eWOM, and consumers frequently use social media to obtain brand-related information (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2015; Heller, Baird, & Parasnis, 2011; Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012).

The creation of eWOM on social media can occur in various ways. Users may share their brand preferences intentionally by actively posting brand choices, a strategy often adopted by social media marketers, or unintentionally by commenting on or liking a brand profile, becoming a fan of a brand, or simply posting content that contains a brand without any advertising intent (Alboqami et al., 2015).

Product reviews as eWOM. Online product reviews are a specific form of eWOM that have become especially important to marketers, as most online consumers rely heavily on these reviews for their purchase decisions (Freedman, 2008; Park & Kim, 2008; Schlosser, 2011; Sen & Lerman, 2007). In 2010, 92% of online shoppers read online product reviews with 89% of them indicating that online reviews influenced their purchase decisions (Freedman, 2011). The average online consumer spent approximately

between 30 minutes and 1 hour reading eight to ten online product reviews prior to purchasing a product (Freedman, 2011).

Research in the fields of e-commerce, marketing, and advertising has documented the impact of online product reviews on sales (Amblee & Bui, 2011; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad, 2007) and different consumer behaviors, including information adoption decisions (Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn, 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014), product considerations and choice (Gupta & Harris, 2010; Kostyra, Reiner, Natter, & Klapper, 2015), purchase intentions (Lee & Lee, 2009; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007), and the purchase decision process (Jang, Prasad, & Ratchford, 2012).

In a study examining the influence of online product reviews, for example, Senecal and Nantel (2004) found that consumers exposed to product recommendations voiced in these reviews were more likely to select the recommended products. Similarly, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that positive product reviews increased the sales of the reviewed product.

The effectiveness of online product reviews has been shown to depend on reviewer and message characteristics, specifically message content and style (Schindler & Bickart, 2012), valence, volume, and variance (e.g., Kostyra, Reiner, Natter, & Klapper, 2015; Lee, Rodgers, & Kim, 2009; Sen & Lerman, 2007; Wang, Cunningham, & Eastin, 2015), the source of the review (Dou, Walden, Lee, & Lee, 2012; Forman, Ghose, & Wiesenfeld, 2008), source credibility (Jin & Phua, 2014), and level of detail and overall reviewer agreement (Jiménez & Mendoza, 2013).

Engagement in eWOM behavior, such as reviewing or recommending a product, and subsequent effects have been found to be motivated by a number of antecedents in communication, marketing, and advertising research. Communication and marketing literature, for example, has identified multiple factors that drive eWOM behavior among consumers. These include consumers' want for information, entertainment, creating and maintaining friendships, and trust (Lien & Cao, 2014) as well as consumers' desire for social interaction, economic gain, concern for fellow consumers, and potential approval utility (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Among the possible drivers of engaging in eWOM, economic gain, such as sponsorship, is a particularly powerful driver of engaging in eWOM behavior (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Chatterjee (2011) furthermore found that an influencer's activity on a social networking site, the source of the brand message, and the type of message recipient impact an influencer's decision to recommend a product.

As more and more online retailers incorporate product reviews into their websites, the importance of online product reviews is expected to increase (Grau, 2010). Although traditionally not commercially motivated, eWOM in the form of product reviews has seen an increasing prevalence of sponsorship (Carr & Hayes, 2014). While these sponsored reviews are still generated by a consumer who maintains editorial control, consideration is to some extent given to the sponsoring brand (Campbell, Cohen, & Ma, 2014). Considering the influence of eWOM, a major concern is that consumers may not be fully or sufficiently aware of commercial intent in the case of sponsored eWOM, which has driven research on sponsorship disclosure embedded in various forms of eWOM content and public policy debates.

The Issue of Sponsored eWOM and Related Regulation

Advertising regulatory bodies in different parts of the world (FTC, 2015a; CAP, 2015; Die Medienanstalten, 2018) have responded to the growing trend of sponsored content in eWOM by creating or updating regulatory guidelines. Generally, these guidelines now explicitly express a requirement of online product reviewers to disclose any sponsorship they received as well as any other business relationship that may exist (FTC, 2015a). The issue with many current guidelines is that apart from the requirement to disclose sponsorship overall, few guidelines exist how to most effectively inform consumers of sponsorship. The resulting sponsorship disclosures may vary widely in the way and specificity in which they are disclosed or may not be immediately recognizable as disclosures of sponsorship or the type of sponsorship. Thus, disclosures that adhere to current guidelines may or may not adequately inform viewers whether and how compensation was received and how this may affect objectivity. This means that current sponsorship disclosure guidelines may not protect consumers adequately from being misled by sponsored content that they may not have recognized as such.

Sponsored eWOM regulation in the United States. In the United States, advertising and marketing, including sponsored content, are regulated by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC is an independent federal agency with the mission of protecting consumers and promoting competition (FTC, n.d.). The FTC aims to protect consumers from unfair, deceptive, anticompetitive, or fraudulent market practices. It does so by developing rules, educating businesses and consumers, collecting complaints, communication with law enforcement agencies worldwide, conducting investigations,

and pursuing litigation of individuals and organizations (FTC, n.d.). The FTC furthermore promotes competition by challenging any practices that could result in higher prices, fewer choices, lower quality, or reduced rate of innovation in the market. This is achieved by monitoring business practices and mergers and challenging any inappropriate and illegal activity, such as anticompetitive mergers and practices that may harm consumers (FTC, n.d.).

Endorsement Guides. The FTC periodically releases guides that represent administrative interpretations of laws enforced by the FTC to aid the public in the voluntary compliance with these laws and avoid corrective action by the FTC (FTC, 2009). To govern the use of testimonials and endorsements in advertisements, the FTC has released the *Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising*, which specifically address the application of the pertinent Section 5 of the FTC Act (15 U.S.C. 45) to the use of endorsements and testimonials. Endorsements and testimonials are treated equally in the Guides and the terms refer to “any advertising message (including verbal statements, demonstrations, or depictions of the name, signature, likeness or other identifying personal characteristics of an individual or the name or seal of an organization) that consumers are likely to believe reflects the opinions, beliefs, findings, or experiences of a party other than the sponsoring advertiser, even if the views expressed by that party are identical to those of the sponsoring advertiser” (FTC, 2009, § 255.0).

Generally, the Guides indicate that endorsements must reflect truthful opinions, beliefs, findings, or experiences of the endorser and must not contain any content that

would be considered deceptive if it were made directly by an advertiser (§ 255.1). While an endorsement may be paraphrased, it may not be changed in such a way as to distort the actual experience of an endorser (§ 255.1). Furthermore, an ad may only represent the endorser as a user of a product if the endorser truly is a user of said product (§ 255.1). Statements made in an endorsement must also be representative of outcomes consumers may expect from the product or services in general use conditions (§ 255.1). Should an endorser's experience differ significantly from what a consumer can generally expect from a product or service, a prominent and clear disclosure of the non-typicality is required (§ 255.2). When endorsers are claimed or implied to be general consumers (§ 255.2), experts (§ 255.3), or expert organizations (§ 255.4), the endorser's background and qualifications must match this claim or implication. Advertisers and endorsers may be liable for any false or unsubstantiated statement made or for failure to disclose any material connections between the advertiser and the endorser (§ 255.5). This is particularly important when the connection might affect the weight or credibility of such endorsement, for example when a material connection may not be expected by an audience. In this case, the advertiser should clearly and conspicuously disclose any compensation that was provided or promised prior to the endorsement. To provide additional guidance, the Guides include a set of scenarios to illustrate how disclosure may take place in a variety of situations. The Guides were updated in 2009 to adapt some examples and wording to the context of bloggers reviewing or endorsing products, services, companies, or industries.

Disclosures in sponsored content. To address the trend of sponsored online product reviews and to maintain honesty in advertising, the FTC has released a plain language document of its product endorsement guidelines in 2013, which emphasizes that the FTC Act's prohibition of unfair or deceptive acts or practices, which was discussed in the previous section, applies to all forms of marketing regardless of the medium (FTC, 2013).

The current FTC guidelines require sponsorship disclosure to be clear and conspicuous enough to be noticed by reasonably acting consumers (FTC, 2012), meaning it should be stated in unambiguous language that is easily understood (Casale, 2015). To determine a disclosure's clarity and conspicuousness, it should be evaluated along several characteristics, most notably based on its proximity to the claim to which it pertains, its prominence, its unavoidability, and whether it is clearly visible, audible, and understandable (FTC, 2012). Generally, any disclosure should be comparable in prominence to the message's marketing claims (FTC, 2012). While the FTC does not require standardized wording for sponsorship disclosure, it recommends disclosing the connection between the endorser and the advertiser, for example "ABC Company gave me this product to try and here's what I think" (FTC, 2012).

Despite these guidelines, disclosure has not always been clear and conspicuous. Companies that have been subject to corrective action include Machinima, a YouTube gaming network, who was fined in September 2015 for recruiting YouTube content creators to provide positive reviews of the then newly released Xbox One gaming console (FTC, 2016). The YouTubers had been paid by Machinima, who had been contracted by

Microsoft, and were instructed to endorse the console while keeping the business relationship with Machinima confidential. Following a complaint, the FTC ruled this conduct deceptive as the videos were ostensibly “reflect[ing] the independent opinions of impartial video game enthusiasts,” (FTC, 2015b, p. 5) and neglected to disclose that they were part of a “global advertising campaign.” The FTC settled the charges with Machinima by imposing strict orders for as long as the following 20 years (FTC, 2016). These orders included requirements that Machinima submit to a complete FTC review and the assurance that future sponsored videos feature clear and conspicuous disclosures.

While no influencers have been fined yet in the United States, the FTC has recently contacted more than 90 content creators to remind them that any form of commercial gain needed to be clearly disclosed (FTC, 2017). The FTC specifically discouraged vague disclosures that merely thanked a brand, only disclosed a “partnership” (FTC, 2017, p. 1), or provided disclosure in links or hashtags only. Instead, the FTC recommended content creators disclose the specific nature of the commercial relationship, such as a “business or family relationship, monetary payment, or the gift of a free product” (FTC, 2017, p. 1).

Sponsored eWOM regulation in other countries. Many other countries’ regulating bodies, particularly in Europe, have also implemented guidelines, although they may be enforced differently, and some approaches offer more specific guidance than others in terms of wording and format of disclosures. Given this research project’s scope, the aim of this subsection is not to provide a thorough review of regulatory approaches across the world. Rather, this subsection provides a point of reference by highlighting

two European countries' approaches to regulating sponsorship disclosure that are notable in their similarities to and differences from the FTC's regulation of sponsorship disclosures.

In the *United Kingdom*, for example, advertising regulation is not undertaken by a government agency, like in the United States, but by two independent agencies, which provide and enforce guidelines that are similar to the FTC's, albeit slightly more detailed in their sponsorship disclosure requirements. In the UK, the regulation of advertising, including sponsored online content, falls under the responsibilities of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) (ASA/CAP, 2018a). CAP is responsible for writing Advertising Codes, while the ASA monitors advertising and issues rulings (ASA/CAP, 2018a). The sister agencies are non-governmental agencies that were implemented by the UK advertising industry as a form of industry-funded self-regulation (ASA/CAP, 2018a). The Advertising Codes (ASA/CAP, 2018b) are based on UK laws pertaining to advertising standards and misleading advertising. These codes include the BCAP code, which governs broadcast advertising, and the CAP code, which regulates non-broadcast advertising. The code that applies to sponsored online content is the CAP Code, which states in Section 2 that "marketing communications must be obviously identifiable as such," (2.1) must "make clear their commercial intent, if that is not obvious from the context," (2.3), i.e. "must not falsely claim or imply that the marketer is acting as a consumer..." (2.3) and "must make clear that advertorials are marketing communications" (2.4).

The UK law was derived from the EU's Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, which was created to prohibit unfair trading practices (ASA/CAP, 2018a). The Advertising Codes and the national law are not usually enforced by the courts; rather, the ASA is the "established means" of enforcing both pieces of legislature (ASA/CAP, 2018b). Should advertisers not comply with Advertisings Codes and ASA rulings, the agency can refer cases to other government bodies for further action (ASA/CAP, 2018b).

A recent ASA ruling (ASA, 2014) ordered Mondelez UK to take down their Oreo Lick Race video series, which sponsored five prominent YouTubers to participate in such race but did not clearly disclose commercial intent. The videos merely thanked Oreo for making the videos possible. The ASA ruling further required Mondelez UK to ensure that any future videos clearly disclose any sponsorship in accordance with the CAP rules.

The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), like the FTC, have also released a set of guidelines which includes guidance on how to create appropriate sponsorship disclosure in general and for various scenarios a content creator may encounter (CAP, 2015). The CAP guide advises content creators to make the commercial nature of the sponsored content obvious to a consumer prior to engaging with it (for example, in the title or a thumbnail preview of a video), and to additionally disclose sponsorship in the actual content rather than in a video description box, which would be less likely to be viewed, particularly if the video is embedded in another website. The guidelines furthermore include recommended wording for disclosures, such as declaring the content as an "ad", "advertisement feature", or "advertorial" (CAP, 2015). The term "sponsored", on the other hand, is discouraged as an advertiser's influence over the content may not be

sufficiently apparent to consumers. The regulatory system in the UK is notable as it is based upon self-regulation rather than regulation by a governmental organization as in the United States. The de facto authority of these organizations allows them in most cases to respond to issues or complaints without moving through the court system. Additionally, unlike the FTC's guides, the CAP guidelines include some detail in how sponsorship disclosures should be worded to reduce ambiguity of how sponsorship should be disclosed.

In *Germany*, sponsorship disclosure is regulated by the Landesmedienanstalten (State Media Authorities), a set of 14 governmental state institutions that regulate private broadcasting by invoking laws pertaining to covert advertising (Die Medienanstalten, 2018a). There are three core laws guiding advertising regulation: the Rundfunkstaatsvertrag (RStV; Interstate Treaty on Broadcasting in Unified Germany), the Telemediengesetz (TMG; Tele Media Act) and the Gesetz gegen unlauteren Wettbewerb (UWG; Act Against Unfair Competition) (Die Medienanstalten, 2018b). The aforementioned laws strictly prohibit disguising advertising intent, and they all contain language that specifically requires to clearly identify commercial content on social media as such. The RStV and TMG are aimed at influencers, while the UWG expresses that corporations are also liable for any failure to identify commercial content on social media (Die Medienanstalten, 2018b).

In response to the trend of sponsored content in online media, the State Media Authorities have released detailed guidelines for influencers on the accurate disclosure of business relationships in online content (Die Medienanstalten, n.d.). Unlike the FTC and

CAP guides, these guidelines provide specific instructions on how to disclose sponsorship, and disclosure requirements differ greatly based on the type of sponsorship received and the type and goal of the content (Die Medienanstalten, n.d.). The review of a product that was provided to a reviewer by a company for free, for example, only requires disclosure if the company provided the product under the stipulation that it be featured in a video or provided guidelines on how the product should be reviewed and if the goal of the review is the promotion of a product. In this case, the term “Werbung” (advertisement) or “Unterstützt durch [brand name]” (supported by [brand name]) need to be displayed while the product is displayed or discussed in the content (Die Medienanstalten, n.d.). If, however, the featuring or review of a free product in a video occurred out of the content creator’s own volition and only states an objective opinion, no disclosure is necessary. If free products are used in editorial content as part of a plot, the sponsorship in form of product placement only needs to be disclosed if the product cost more than 1000 Euros (Die Medienanstalten, n.d.). Yet other requirements exist if a content creator is paid to review or feature a product in content (Die Medienanstalten, n.d.). Though this sponsorship always needs to be disclosed, the wording differs significantly, identifying the content either as an advertisement, an infomercial, or supported by product placement. Finally, any links to advertisers must be disclosed as well. Failure to comply with regulations and covert advertising laws may result in warnings, cease and desist orders, bans, and fines for both advertisers and influencers.

Most notably, an influencer was recently fined for failing to disclose sponsorship. In June 2017, the Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein chapter of the Media Authorities fined

the YouTuber Flying Uwe for neglecting to disclose commercial intent in three sponsored product reviews despite multiple warnings from the Authorities (Medienanstalt Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein, 2017). With this, the YouTuber had repeatedly violated aspects (§7, subparagraph 5, and §58, subparagraph 3) of the RStV and was fined 10.500 Euros (Medienanstalt Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein, 2017). German regulatory guidelines are notable as they, unlike the FTC guidelines, specifically call for on-screen written disclosure in video content and prescribe specific wording for different sponsorship deals and intentions of the content.

The EU Parliament has released a draft of a legislative resolution aimed at a more comprehensive regulation of traditional media and online advertising, sponsored content, and the disclosure of sponsorship (European Parliament, 2017). This legislative resolution would require social media platforms to facilitate clear disclosure and includes a specific focus on reducing sponsorship of content aimed at children (European Parliament, 2017). If implemented, regulatory guidelines across Europe may be adapted to adhere to the overarching EU parliament legislation.

In general, regulation of sponsored content follows a similar goal and displays the commonality of requiring disclosure of sponsorship in many circumstances. The most notable differences between the discussed regulatory approaches are the means used to achieve the end of transparent disclosure of business relationships. While the FTC relies the most on a common-sense approach to judge whether disclosure is needed based on evaluating whether viewers would generally be aware of sponsorship as a result of the disclosure, CAP regulations include details on circumstances in which disclosure is

necessary and encourages certain wording. The German State Media Authorities provide the most detailed and most restrictive guidelines, requiring specific disclosure wording for different circumstances. In both European countries, disclosure is not required, however, when a free product was given by a company without the stated condition of being included in a review or other video content. The FTC regulations, on the other hand, require disclosure in this specific scenario.

Research on Sponsored eWOM and Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure

Sponsorship disclosure has predominantly been examined in the television context, although research on sponsorship disclosure online is garnering increasing attention from researchers. A majority of previous studies has found effects of sponsorship disclosure negatively affecting consumers' attitude toward the featured brand. For example, Campbell, Mohr, and Verlegh (2012) found that sponsorship disclosure during television entertainment content negatively affected brand attitude and brand recall if disclosure occurred before the sponsored content but only negatively affected recall if displayed after the sponsored content. Boerman, Reijmersdal, and Neijens' (2012, 2013, 2014) research supports the finding that sponsorship disclosure during television programs negatively impacted viewers' brand attitude. However, some studies have found no significant effects of sponsorship disclosure (e.g., Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). For example, Dekker and van Reijmersdal (2013) conducted a study evaluating different disclosure types but found no significant relationship between disclosure and attitudes.

Some of the more recent sponsorship disclosure research has been focusing on the effects of disclosure message characteristics. Boerman and her colleagues (2015) found that, compared with a lack of disclosure, disclosure prior to or concurrent with sponsored content was associated with higher levels of persuasion knowledge as well as more negative brand attitude. They also identified that longer exposure to disclosure had no significant effect on brand memory but increased persuasion knowledge and subsequently led to less favorable brand attitude. Finally, Boerman et al. (2015) identified disclosures that included both text and a logo to be most effective at enhancing recognition of advertising intent, with text-only disclosures being less effective and logo-only disclosures least effective. In the context of native advertising, Wojdyski and Evans (2016) concluded in a set of experimental studies that central or bottom placement of disclosure as well as using the wording “advertising” or “sponsored” in sponsored online newspaper stories led to increased recognition of commercial intent over alternative placement and wording and usually to less favorable responses in terms of credibility, news story quality, and intention to share the news story.

A set of two experimental studies by Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2013) examined online consumers’ knowledge about whether online product reviews could be manipulated and found that consumers with such knowledge were less likely to be influenced by reviews, specifically by negative reviews. Carr and Hayes (2014) explored the effect of perceptions of advertiser influence on bloggers’ credibility and message effectiveness in an experimental study drawing on the theory of two-step flow. The authors found that explicit disclosure of sponsorship significantly increased perceived

credibility of the blogger, which positively affected the bloggers' influence on attitudes toward the reviewed product and consumers' intent to purchase it.

Hwang and Jeong (2016) conducted an experimental study, which showed that a sponsored blogger's perceived credibility and consumers' attitude toward the blogger depended on how sponsorship disclosure took place. While a blogger who simply provided the information that his or her review was sponsored was perceived more negatively and less credible by consumers compared to a blogger who did not disclose sponsorship, this negative effect vanished for bloggers who disclosed sponsorship but insisted that their opinions were their own. This effect was especially pronounced for consumers who indicated high skepticism toward sponsored product review blog posts in general.

Findings regarding sponsorship disclosure effects have differed regarding disclosure effects on attitudes and brand awareness. In terms of attitudes, some studies claimed a negative effect of sponsorship disclosure (e.g. Boerman et al., 2012, 2013, 2015), while others found a non-significant (e.g. Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014) or a positive effect (Carr and Hayes, 2014). Regarding brand awareness, most experimental studies found a positive effect exerted by disclosure of sponsorship in the form of product placement on television (e.g. Boerman et al., 2012, 2014; van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013); yet, one study found a negative effect of such disclosure (Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2012). It appears, however, that sponsorship disclosure exerts an effect on the consumers' attitudes, brand awareness, and purchase intent among other outcomes.

Recent research illustrates the role of contextual factors and thereby the merit for continued inquiry into the effects of sponsorship disclosure. While disclosure message design has been a focus of recent sponsorship disclosure research, the effects of different forms of disclosure have not been sufficiently examined. In the online context, sponsorship can be disclosed in various modes, be it spoken, in the form of text, or both, and FTC guidelines do not require video content creators to adhere to a specific disclosure mode (FTC, 2013). Different modes of disclosure could affect how conspicuous the disclosure would appear to consumers and how much cognitive interference consumers would likely experience in processing the disclosure message, which would eventually impact consumers' recognition and understanding of the persuasive commercial intent behind sponsored eWOM. Limited cognitive capacity theory offers a theoretical framework for exploring this potential effect.

Limited Cognitive Capacity Explaining Attention and Processing of Sponsorship Disclosure

Limited cognitive capacity theory posits that individuals' attention and cognitive capacity is limited, and the allocation of this capacity affects the processing and subsequently the outcomes of perceived stimuli (Kahneman, 1973). Cognitive capacity may be split into capacity allocated to a primary task and remaining capacity available to a secondary task. This is to say that attention directed at a primary task detracts from attention that can be spent on a secondary task (Huh et al., 2015; Kahneman, 1973; Lee & Faber, 2007, Segijn et al., 2016). For this reason, individuals are particularly limited in the amount of resources they can allocate to concurrent tasks (Lang, 2000). The

phenomenon of two concurrent information sources competing for cognitive capacity is known as capacity interference (Kahneman, 1973). The concept of limited cognitive capacity and capacity interference has given rise to a data-driven model, the Limited Capacity Model of Mediated Message Processing, which addresses specific components of individuals' media message processing and subsequent communication outcomes.

The Limited Capacity Model of Mediated Message Processing. The Limited Capacity Model of Mediated Message Processing (LCMP) is a data-driven model based on the concept of individuals' limited cognitive capacity and attention capacity and describes how individuals process media information (Lang, 2000). The LCMP posits three sub-processes of media message processing, encoding, storage, and retrieval, each of which requires cognitive capacity to operate (Lang 2000, 2006; Lang & Yegiyan, 2009). The amount of information that can move through these sub-processes is constrained by the cognitive system's limited capacity (Lang, 2000).

Encoding describes the process of using one's senses to perceive a stimulus and creating a mental representation of said image in one's working memory. This process is continuous as one's senses constantly take in information; however, it is also inexact and idiosyncratic (Lang, 2000). The process is inexact because the mental representation is selective and therefore merely an approximation of the actual information. Once information is perceived, it makes it to a type of sensory store automatically. These sensory stores only hold information for a brief time (Coltheart, 1975; Holding, 1975) and hold more information than an individual can attend to and process. Whichever information that is not attended to and selected for processing is overwritten by the

continuous influx of newly perceived information. The encoding process is also idiosyncratic, which means that encoding is shaped not only by environmental factors but also individual factors (Lang, 2000). Factors that may affect which information individuals attend to and encode include unconscious support of certain goals of an individual (Lang, 2000), but may also be based on orienting responses (Lang, 1990). Orienting responses cause automatic allocation of cognitive resources and may be elicited by information that is new or signals importance, such as camera changes on TV (Lang, 1990), or animations or warnings on the Internet (Diao & Sundar, 2004; Lang, Borse, Wise, & Davis, 2002). This means that certain information or parts of information will be encoded by only a few people while other information is encoded by individuals almost universally. The selection of information for encoding can occur either unintentionally, usually prompted by characteristics of the information, or intentionally, by actively deciding to process a piece of information (Lang, 2000).

Storage. As an individual thinks about the mental representation, the representation may be moved from the working memory for longer term storage. The LMCP argues that memory works through the creation of mental associations with existing memories (Lang, 2000). The more links are created in the associative network between the new information and existing memories, the more thoroughly the information is stored. Depending on the resources allocated to this sub-process, the information may be processed more or less thoroughly and, in turn, more or less links will be created in the associative network between new information and existing memories.

Retrieval. The associative network may be searched for later retrieval of stored information. Retrieval describes the process of moving information from storage into the working memory (Lang, 2000). In general, the more links have been created during the storage process, the more readily retrievable the information will be. Retrieval often happens concurrently with storage in order to make sense of incoming information using previously stored information.

In fact, all aforementioned sub-processes of encoding, storage, and retrieval do not need to occur linearly. While newly incoming information must undergo previous encoding and storage to be remembered, individuals may simultaneously encode new information, retrieve previously stored information, and link new and old information (Lang, 2000). If any of these sub-processes require more cognitive resources than an individual has available or chooses to allocate, the message may not be fully processed, potentially leading to information loss.

Application of the LCMP. The LCMP was originally devised to explain the processing of television content. Since then, it has been applied in multiple media contexts to explain the influence of limited cognitive resources on information processing, particularly in situations where a primary task is utilizing cognitive resources, potentially leaving insufficient resources to process a secondary task (Lee & Faber, 2007). Research on in-game advertising, for example, has shown that gamers are less likely to process an in-game ad the more cognitive resources they allocate to the game's task (Terlutter & Capella, 2013). Similarly, multitasking during media consumption (Christensen et al., 2015) and multi-screening (Segijn et al., 2016) can influence the

allocation of cognitive resources and the likelihood of full information processing. The likelihood of information processing has also been shown to be dependent on the complexity of the content as well as the redundancy of different modes of content (Lee & Lang, 2015). This is because more cognitive resources are required to process content if it contains multiple structural features such as multiple voices or sound effects, but also camera changes or movement. Information conveyed by media content was also found to be more likely to be processed fully when audio and video were redundant than when audio and video were unrelated (Lee & Lang, 2015).

The insights from limited cognitive capacity theory and the LCMP may have implications for attending to and processing sponsorship disclosures of different modalities. Different disclosure modes may compete for cognitive resources to different extents and may introduce capacity interference. This, in turn, may influence attention allocation and processing of the sponsorship disclosure, affecting to which extent consumers notice the content creator's persuasive intent. The study, therefore, assesses allocated attention as the mechanism facilitating the effects of sponsorship disclosure mode on perceived persuasive intent. For the effects of different levels of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal responses, on the other hand, alternative mechanisms of the persuasion knowledge and trust are proposed.

Persuasion Knowledge Model and Trust Explaining the Sponsorship Disclosure Effects

As reviewed earlier, previous research literature on sponsorship disclosure effects on consumers' reactions to and evaluation of the featured brands offers some differing

findings. A number studies have examined the effect of sponsorship disclosure in the context of product placement on television, demonstrating a negative impact of sponsorship disclosure (e.g., Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012, 2013, 2014), while another found no significant impact for disclosures of sponsorship in the form of celebrity endorsements (e.g., Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013), and yet others identified instances of positive impact of sponsorship disclosures in the context of sponsored blog posts, depending on the disclosure message factors that influence consumers' perceptions of the content creator (e.g., Carr & Hayes, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2016).

With increasingly prevalent and diversifying sponsorship deals in social media eWOM, the level of details and the extent of commercial gains disclosed in sponsorship disclosure messages would likely impact consumers' reactions to and evaluations of the sponsored review creator and the featured brand in two different ways. On the one hand, the more detailed information about commercial gains might trigger more negative reactions through the mechanism of the persuasion knowledge model. On the other hand, the more detailed information about commercial gains might make the consumers trust the message creator more, resulting in more positive impact of the review on brand attitude. In the following section, the persuasion knowledge model and the concept of trust are reviewed, followed by this study's hypotheses development.

The Persuasion Knowledge Model. Friestad and Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) describes the persuasion process as an interplay between the parties of persuasion agent, the designer of the persuasion attempt, and persuasion target, the party at whom the persuasion is aimed, each attempting to achieve a desired

persuasion outcome. For the target, the desired outcome constitutes effective coping with a persuasion attempt, while the persuasion agent pursues effective persuasion.

The PKM proposes three types of knowledge, which help targets to recognize, interpret, evaluate, and cope with persuasion: persuasion knowledge, topic knowledge, and agent knowledge. Persuasion knowledge is comprised of beliefs about the persuasive intent, effectiveness, and appropriateness of an encountered persuasion attempt and strategies of dealing with it. Topic knowledge comprises beliefs about the topic of the message. Finally, agent knowledge denotes beliefs about the goals, characteristics, and competencies of the persuasion agent, the advertiser. In concert, these types of knowledge inform and influence persuasion targets' coping strategies when faced with a persuasion attempt (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Among these three types of knowledge, persuasion knowledge (PK) has been the focus of most scholarly research (e.g., Rozendaal, Slot, van Reijmersdal, & Buijzen, 2013). The PKM posits that when PK is activated, a change of meaning may occur that can result in a persuasion message's deviation from the marketers' originally intended meaning (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Consistent with this claim, advertising research has found that the activation of PK leads to more critical scrutiny of an advertising message and subsequent more negative evaluations of the advertised product (e.g., Rose, Merchant, & Bakir, 2012; Waiguny, Nelson, & Terlutter, 2014). Waiguny, Nelson, and Terlutter (2014), for example, found in an experimental study that children who showed higher levels of persuasion knowledge were more likely to identify commercial content in a video game and less likely to be influenced by it. Similarly, Rose, Merchant, and Bakir

(2012) found in a qualitative content analysis of children's responses to food advertising that high levels of persuasion knowledge were associated with negative evaluations of an ad. It is important to note, however, that, under certain conditions, PK may have no impact (van Reijmersdal, Rozendaal, & Buijzen, 2012) or even positive effects on consumers' attitude toward the advertised product (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978; Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008). Reijmersdal, Rozendaal, and Buijzen (2012), for instance, found in an experiment examining children's responses to advergames that their persuasion knowledge did not affect their brand attitude; rather, it was involvement in the game that was a predictor of brand attitude. However, Wei, Fischer, and Main (2008) conducted a series of experimental studies, which identified that, in instances of high brand familiarity and perceived appropriateness, the activation of persuasion knowledge may bring about positive effects on consumers' attitudinal responses. This finding is consistent with Eagly, Wood, and Chaiken's (1978) experimental research showing that unexpected disclosures of persuasive intent, such as disclosures of covert marketing, may bring about more favorable brand evaluations.

Although research on persuasion knowledge in advertising has largely been conducted on television advertising (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), there is a growing body of research on emerging advertising formats that blur the boundaries of editorial and commercial content and their effects on consumers' persuasion knowledge activation and subsequent responses (van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2005). Because of the Internet's constantly evolving nature, its resemblance of different forms of media, as well as its lack of regulatory structure, it is more difficult for consumers to amass knowledge

about how to evaluate the intent and credibility of information on the Internet compared to traditional media (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Additionally, many online advertising formats attempt to conceal their persuasive intent by embedding commercial content into editorial content, games, or social network posts (Cauberghe & de Pelsmacker, 2010; Wouters & de Pelsmacker, 2011). Consistent with these claims, an experimental study by Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012) found that sponsored content was less likely than banner advertisements to trigger persuasion knowledge and led to lower skepticism toward the sponsored content.

PK research has examined several subdimensions of PK, including the recognition and understanding of persuasion agents' persuasive intents and tactics, perceived persuasion effectiveness as well as appropriateness, and persuasion coping strategies (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Friestad & Wright, 1994). While the subdimension of recognition of persuasion attempts has received much scholarly attention (e.g., Panic, Cauberghe, & De Pelsmacker, 2013), only limited research has been conducted on the other subdimensions. Additionally, perceived appropriateness of a persuasion attempt has sometimes been conceptualized as a factor independent from PK (e.g., Wei et al., 2008; Yoo, 2009). Wei et al. (2008), for example, found in a series of experiments that PK activation was associated with negative evaluations of brands embedded in covert marketing; however, these effects were attenuated by perceived appropriateness. This finding is consistent with Yoo (2009), who found in an experimental study that the negative effects of PK were moderated by perceived fairness. Only a few studies have addressed multiple subdimensions of PK at the same time (e.g.,

Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Hibbert et al. (2007) conducted a survey, which showed that both perceived manipulative intent and skepticism helped individuals cope with persuasion tactics of charities and that both aspects of PK were negatively related to guilt arousal, although increased perceived manipulative intent was also associated with higher intent to donate. Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012) conducted an experiment assessing the role of multiple persuasion knowledge subdimensions in the effect of sponsored content and banner ads on consumers' attitude toward such ads. This study identified that ad recognition, ad irritation, and ad understanding were positively correlated with the likelihood of identifying the content as an ad, indicating higher perceived persuasive intent. However, aspects of persuasion knowledge worked differently for the different content types. Sponsored content was perceived as more informative, amusing, and less irritating than banner ads.

While many studies show negative effects of PK on consumer attitudes (e.g., Rose, Merchant, & Bakir, 2012; Waiguny, Nelson, & Terlutter, 2014), Friestad and Wright's (1994) original conceptualization of PK highlights that activation of PK does not invariably lead to negative attitudes because it is comprised of a set of beliefs that also include perceptions of effectiveness and appropriateness of a persuasion attempt. Perceived effectiveness describes consumers' perception of the psychological effects of a marketer's actions on consumers (Friestad & Wright, 1994), while perceived appropriateness denotes the beliefs that "have to do with whether the marketer's tactics seem to be moral or normatively acceptable" (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 10). Consumer

attitudes may be shaped by consumers' perception of how easily and strongly marketers may produce psychological effects and whether a marketer is "attempting to persuade by inappropriate, unfair, or manipulative means" (Campbell, 1995, p. 227). The current study addresses multiple subdimensions of PK as a potential mechanism of the effect of different levels of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on eWOM outcomes. Trust will be assessed as an alternative potential mechanism of the effect of levels of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal outcomes.

Trust and its role in eWOM and viral advertising.

Conceptualization of trust. The concept of trust has been extensively studied in the fields of social psychology (e.g., Deutsch 1973; Rotter 1971), sociology (e.g., Lewis & Weigert, 2012; Simmel 1950), and marketing (Ganesan, 1994) and has been identified as a significant factor in creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships, commercial transactions, and online communication, particularly in risky or uncertain situations (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Grabner-Kräuter, & Kaluscha, 2003; Lewis & Weigert, 2012; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002). Trust can generally be defined as the belief that others can be relied upon in different types of contexts and relationships (Deutsch, 1973; Rotter, 1971; Simmel, 1950) and the perception that a trustee is benevolent (i.e. is honest and competent in providing information) and credible to a truster (Ganesan 1994; McKnight & Chervani, 2001). Definitions of trust, however, have differed slightly in a variety of academic fields and contexts.

Mishra (1996), for example, applied the concept of trust in the context of organizational responses to crises and defined trust as “one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is 1) competent, 2) open, 3) concerned, and 4) reliable” (p. 5). Mishra posited that the four separate trust dimensions combine into an overall concept of trust. The author argued that this combination occurred multiplicatively, leading to an overall degree of trust in which a low level of trust in any of the four dimensions would offset high levels of trust in the other dimensions. Similarly, McKnight and Chervany (2001) defined trust to be comprised of trusting belief, which is the belief that the other party is benevolent, competent, and honest, and trusting intention, which is the will to depend or rely on the other party in a situation and accepting vulnerability (McKnight & Chervany, 2001).

In the advertising context, Soh, Reid, and King (2009) applied the trust concept not in an interpersonal setting but in the relationship between consumers and advertising. They defined trust in advertising as the “confidence that advertising is a reliable source of product/service information and willingness to act on the basis of information conveyed by advertising” (p. 86).

The consensus in all these definitions is that trust describes a belief that allows action in the presence of risk, uncertainty, and vulnerability. This is to say that, in the presence of trust, individuals are able to act despite the risk of incurring harm, while the absence of trust would make it difficult for individuals to take action when there is risk, uncertainty, or vulnerability. In the current study's context of sponsored product reviews, trust can be aptly conceptualized based on marketing research as “the willingness of a

party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the truster, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 172). Mayer et al.’s (1995) concept is based on two antecedents of trust, the propensity to trust and three subdimensions of trust, namely another person’s expertise, benevolence, and integrity. Given the context of product reviews, the three subdimensions of trust, expertise, benevolence, and particularly integrity, become essential for consumers as they determine whether or not to trust a reviewer.

While trust is frequently conceptualized as being based on experience from cumulative interpersonal relationships (Wang, 2001), this study’s context calls for a different conceptualization. Online, consumers frequently need to form judgments about others based on initial impressions without opportunity of significant personal interactions (Wang, 2001). Consumers must then derive trust based on information cues. This cue-based trust is defined as a truster’s level of confidence in a trustee based on information cues provided by or associated with the trustee (Wang, 2001).

Although research on cue-based trust is not extensive, the concept has been explored in the context of trust in websites. When encountering an unfamiliar website, for example, consumers cannot rely on their experience and must base their determination whether or not to trust the website on its characteristics that function as signals or heuristic cues (Mayer, Huh, & Cude, 2005). Huh and Shin (2014), for example, conducted a study examining the effects of website trust cues on consumers’ perceived trust in direct-to-consumer (DTC) prescription drug brand websites. They found that the

number of present trust cues, such as navigational tools, warnings, third party endorsements, etc., affected trust in the DTC prescription drug brand website and, in turn, attitude toward the site and the intention to revisit the site. The findings of this study are consistent with earlier research on this topic in that consumers may use a number of heuristic website cues to form trust when facing an unfamiliar website, with more cues leading to higher perceived trust, although effects can differ depending on the type and amount of cues present, as well as situational factors (Aiken & Boush, 2006; Cook & Luo, 2003; Mayer et al., 2005; Rifon, LaRose, & Choi, 2005).

Trust in eWom and viral advertising. Trust is a significant influencing factor in the effects of eWOM on attitude and behavior change. Trust in the source of eWOM has been associated with higher credibility of the message and a higher likelihood of following the eWOM message's recommendation (Xu, 2014). Similarly, Zainal et al. (2017) showed belief in honesty, competence, and benevolence of eWOM led to more favorable attitudes toward the recommendation and the intention of heeding it.

Trust has also been identified as an important factor in viral advertising, in which advertising messages are shared through interpersonal connections between consumers (Cho, Huh, & Faber, 2014). Viral advertising, much like sponsored online product reviews, is based on consumer-to-consumer connections and on platforms that facilitate these connections (Cho, Huh, & Faber, 2014; Huang et al., 2013). For this reason, insights regarding the role of trust in viral advertising may be relevant for sponsored eWOM research. Viral advertising, however, also differs from sponsored consumer product reviews as the content in viral advertising stems directly from the advertiser and

is forwarded by a fellow consumer, rather than being created by the sender of the message, as is the case in online consumer product reviews. Viral advertising also differs from traditional advertising since it does not rely on communication between an advertiser and a consumer. Rather, it uses social connections that are voluntary, low cost, and offer the opportunity for further interaction with the message (Southgate, Westoby, & Page, 2010). Given these advantages, many advertisers have adopted viral advertising strategies as part of their marketing strategies (Dobele et al., 2007). The nature of viral advertising, however, has also changed how consumers engage with advertising messages and brands. Consumers are able to engage with the advertising message and brand by taking action, such as following or sharing brand messages (Dobele et al., 2007), and benefit from the existing trust between them and the sender of the viral message (Roy et al., 2017).

Although research on the role of trust in eWOM and in the field of advertising in general remains limited, the construct of source trust has been recently examined in the context of viral advertising (Cho, Huh, & Faber, 2014), social advertising (Roy et al., 2017), and personalized online advertising (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015). Although these forms of advertising differ from eWOM because, in eWOM, message senders are the creators of a message, source trust research findings would nonetheless hold valuable implications for the eWOM context.

Cho et al. (2014) proposed two components of source trust as important influences on viral advertising effects, namely advertiser trust and sender trust, or trust in the originator of an and the disseminator of the ad message, respectively. Their study

showed that a viral ad with high sender trust was able to overcome low advertiser trust and led to more favorable consumer attitudes toward the ad and the brand in a multi-step process. High sender trust furthermore increased consumer attention and likelihood of voluntary exposure to the ad message (Cho, Huh, & Faber, 2014). A study by Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015) also identified that high source trust in a retailer made its personalized online ads appear more useful and decreased the likelihood of reactance and privacy concerns. Their study also found that click-through rates were significantly increased by trust.

Other studies on viral ads disseminated via email found that the social tie strength between the message sender and message recipient positively affected the likelihood of opening the email containing the ad message (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Tie strength describes the “combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361) and is a concept that is related to trust. The likelihood of a viral ad being forwarded was also found to be higher when the ad had been sent by someone with whom the recipient shared a close relationship (Chiu et al. 2007; De Bruyn and Lilien 2008).

Previous research on the effects of trust on responses to viral ads found that these effects were sometimes weak or not statistically significant and varied depending on the type of consumer response. De Bruyn and Lilien (2008), for example, found that high trust positively affected consumers’ attention to and awareness of the message content, while there was no significant effect of trust on final decision-making. Cho, Huh, and

Faber (2014) further identified that while sender trust directly influenced consumer attention to the e-mail's viral ad message and perceptions of the message prior to exposure, there was only a weak and indirect effect of sender trust on voluntary exposure to the ad message and attitudes toward the ad message and the brand.

Despite the relatively low volume of research in the advertising field and the mixed findings regarding the role of source trust in advertising, the existing body of literature suggests that the construct of trust may be an important factor to consider in consumer interactions with and responses to different forms of online advertising. While trust in a source may not necessarily lead to consumers' acceptance of a message, it appears that trust in the source of a message is able to at least let consumers engage with a brand message despite the presence of risks. This paper, therefore, argues that trust may be a significant factor in the effectiveness of eWOM, and particularly sponsored eWOM.

CHAPTER 3

HYPOTHESES

Effect of Disclosure Mode on Attention to Disclosure and Perceived Persuasive

Intent

For sponsorship disclosure to have any effect, consumers must attend and process the information. This study draws upon limited cognitive capacity theory (Kahneman, 1973) and the LCMP (Lang, 2000), which posit that cognitive resources to attend and process information are finite. If information is to be processed fully, it must be allocated sufficient cognitive resources to be encoded and stored for later retrieval (Lang, 2000). Devoting insufficient cognitive resources to a stimulus reduces its likelihood of undergoing all three steps of processing – encoding, storage, and retrieval, likely resulting in information loss.

Insufficient cognitive resources may, for example, be allocated when resources are already being expended to process a primary stimulus, leaving less than the required amount of resources for processing a secondary stimulus (Kahneman, 1973; Lee & Faber, 2007). This is because if capacity is being used on a primary activity, it is no longer available to a secondary activity (Lee & Faber, 2007).

Consistent with the limited capacity theory and related research findings, sponsorship disclosure research has identified that consumers' persuasion knowledge after exposure to sponsorship disclosure differed depending on whether they remembered seeing the disclosure (Boerman et al., 2012). Further research (Boerman et al., 2015) focusing on product placement on television identified that the mode in which sponsorship disclosure took place, for example in the form of text or a logo, affected the

attention consumers paid to the disclosure. Boerman et al.'s (2015) study found that sponsorship disclosure resulted in activation of persuasion knowledge in consumers only when they paid attention to the disclosure. Boerman and her colleagues (2015) specifically focused on visual attention, as the focus of the study was on product placement on television, which usually features visual disclosures, if any.

eWOM in today's social media platforms takes many different forms and offers the possibility of disclosing sponsorship in the same or different mode than the original product review content. For example, in the case of video reviews, sponsorship disclosure can be placed in written-only, spoken-only, or both written and spoken modes, and the FTC indicates that different modes of disclosure may be acceptable for product endorsements or claims made in video content (FTC, 2013).

Consistent with limited cognitive capacity theory (Kahneman, 1973), in the video eWOM context, sponsorship disclosed via on-screen text only is expected to receive the lowest amount of attention. This is because attending on-screen text disclosure represents a task separate from paying attention to the product endorsement, introducing capacity interference. As the main content, the product endorsement, is likely to constitute the primary task, less cognitive resources are available to the text disclosure, reducing the attention it receives. Sponsorship disclosure spoken by the reviewer is expected to receive more attention than on-screen text disclosure, because it seamlessly integrates into the product endorsement and, therefore, does not introduce capacity interference. Finally, consistent with LCMP research (e.g. Lee & Lang, 2015), disclosure in both written and spoken form is most likely to be processed as the spoken disclosure is part of

the primary task as well as redundant to the displayed disclosure text. The study, therefore, posits the following hypotheses.

H1: Sponsorship disclosure mode will affect consumers' attention to the sponsorship disclosure. The mode that introduces disclosure as a secondary task (written-only disclosure) will generate less attention than the modes in which disclosure constitutes part of the primary task (spoken-only disclosure and written-and-spoken disclosure). Among primary task modes, the mode that conveys sponsorship in redundant streams (written-and-spoken disclosure) will create more attention than the mode that does not disclose in redundant streams (spoken-only disclosure).

The attention a sponsorship disclosure message receives serves as the mechanism of sponsorship disclosure mode affecting perceived persuasive intent. This is to say that, because of the differing levels of attention the different disclosure modes are predicted to receive, consumers' likelihood of processing the message informing them of persuasive intent would vary as well. Consequently, the disclosure mode predicted to generate the least amount of attention due to capacity interference (written-only disclosure) would, therefore, likely lead to the lowest perceived persuasive intent, while the disclosure mode which does not introduce capacity interference (spoken-only disclosure) would lead to higher perceived persuasive intent. Finally, the mode disclosing sponsorship in redundant streams (written-and-spoken disclosure) would be associated with the highest perceived persuasive intent.

H2: Sponsorship disclosure mode will affect perceived persuasive intent.

The mode that introduces disclosure as a secondary task (written-only disclosure) will lead to lower perceived persuasive intent than the modes in which disclosure constitutes part of the primary task (spoken-only disclosure and written-and-spoken disclosure). Among primary task modes, the mode that conveys sponsorship in redundant streams (written-and-spoken disclosure) will generate higher perceived persuasive intent than the mode that does not disclose in redundant streams (spoken-only disclosure).

Once disclosures receive sufficient attention and are processed, consumer attitudes toward the reviewer and brand may be affected by the disclosures of sponsorship. The study proposed two sets of competing hypotheses based on alternative theoretical frameworks, the persuasion knowledge model and trust theory.

Effects of Disclosure on Attitudinal Outcomes

Alternative prediction 1: Negative effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain. Increased persuasion knowledge in advertising has been linked to a less favorable evaluation of the advertising message and the advertised brand (e.g. Rose, Merchant, & Bakir, 2012; Wentzel, Tomczak, & Herrmann, 2010). These negative associations have been shown to be particularly pronounced when individuals are exposed to a prime making them aware of persuasive intent (Cowley & Barron, 2008). This is because individuals who are aware of the persuasive attempt in an

advertisement may scrutinize the ad's message more critically and become more resistant to it (Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008). Consistent with these findings, this study predicts that sponsorship disclosure in eWOM would serve as a prime of persuasive intent, and disclosures with higher levels of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain will, therefore, lead to less favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the sponsoring brand.

This prediction is explained by the PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994). As sponsorship disclosure reveals commercial gain for the sponsored reviewer, it is likely to trigger a consumer's persuasion knowledge activation. In fact, Boerman et al. (2012) identified persuasion knowledge as the main mechanism of sponsorship disclosure effects on brand attitude and brand memory. Building on the previous PKM research, the current study tests the effects of sponsorship disclosure on consumers' persuasion knowledge in three specific subdimensions of persuasion knowledge: perceived persuasive intent, perceived appropriateness, and perceived effectiveness (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain is expected to be associated with the level to which persuasion knowledge activation is triggered.

With activation of persuasion knowledge, consumers will develop judgments of effectiveness and appropriateness of the encountered message. As higher levels of detail and extent of commercial gain in disclosures are likely to alert consumers of a stronger persuasion attempt, their perception of how easily and strongly a content creator may bring about psychological effects in the audience is predicted to decrease. As higher levels of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain may also signal reduced objectivity of a product review, consumers are also predicted to perceive the review as a

marketer's attempt to manipulate them, leading to lower perceived appropriateness of a review.

Following the persuasion knowledge activation and related perceptual responses, consumers may then deploy strategies to cope with the persuasion attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Depending on the extent to which persuasion knowledge is activated, consumers would be more or less likely to scrutinize the product review message critically and resist the persuasion attempt by the reviewer and sponsoring brand (Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008). Viewers may, therefore, develop less favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand when increasing levels of detail and extent of commercial gain are disclosed to them. Thus, the following hypotheses are posed regarding the effects of sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal outcomes.

H3: The level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain will have (a) positive impact on perceived persuasive intent, and negative impact on (b) perceived appropriateness and (c) perceived effectiveness of the sponsored review.

H4: The level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain will have a negative impact on attitudes toward (a) the reviewer and (b) the brand.

H5: (a) Perceived persuasive intent, (b) perceived appropriateness, and (c) perceived effectiveness will mediate the relationship between the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain and attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand.

Alternative prediction 2: Positive effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain. The posited effects in hypotheses 3-5 are based on mechanisms identified in the persuasion knowledge and advertising research literature, which have been extensively used to assess advertising effects. Whether such research literature can be directly applicable to the eWOM situation is a legitimate question given the significant differences between conventional advertising and eWOM, even sponsored eWOM. While a sponsoring brand may influence the valence of eWOM, the content is still generated by a user, not an advertiser. Due to this key difference, it is conceivable that viewers may perceive higher levels of disclosed commercial gain as an indicator of integrity of the content creator and, therefore, would trust the content creator more and have more favorable attitudes. Addressing this possibility, a set of alternative hypotheses were developed based on the idea that the effects of disclosure in sponsored eWOM content would occur via cue-based trust rather than persuasion knowledge (Wang, 2001).

Consumers may see sponsorship disclosure as an information cue of the content creator's integrity, a subdimension of trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Swan, Bowers, & Richardson, 1999). If that is indeed the case, based on the cue-based trust research literature (Wang, 2001), more detailed disclosure of commercial gain would likely be considered as a sign of a content creator following a set of ethical principles to keep consumers informed, leading to higher trust in the content creator and more favorable attitude toward the content creator and the featured brand as a result. Thus, the following hypotheses are posed:

H6: The level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain will have positive impact on trust in the reviewer, especially in terms of the perceived integrity and perceived benevolence dimensions of trust.

H7: The level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain will have positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward (a) the reviewer, and (b) the brand.

H8: Trust in the reviewer will mediate the relationship between the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain and attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand.

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, two separate experimental studies were conducted. Study 1 examined the effects of sponsorship disclosure mode on consumers' attention to the disclosure and on consumers' perceived persuasive intent, testing hypotheses 1 and 2. The findings from Study 1 also informed experimental stimuli development for Study 2, which tested two sets of alternative hypotheses regarding the effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal outcomes (hypotheses 3 through 8). The following chapter presents the research method and results of Study 1.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY 1

As explained earlier, the purpose of Study 1 is twofold. First, this study examines the effects of different sponsorship disclosure modes, namely disclosures made in written-only, spoken-only, or written-and-spoken form, on consumers' attention to and processing of the disclosure message (H1) and subsequently on perceived persuasive intent (H2). Second, the results of this study inform the stimulus creation for Study 2. Knowing which mode of sponsorship disclosure is most likely to receive attention and be fully processed by consumers and result in consumers' perception of persuasive intent is essential for successful manipulation when examining the effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain in Study 2.

Experimental Design and Stimuli

To examine the effects of sponsorship disclosure mode on attention toward the disclosure and perceived persuasive intent, an online experiment was conducted with fictitious online video product reviews created for this study. First, Pilot Study 1 was conducted to select appropriate products for stimuli development. After the stimuli development, Pilot Study 2 tested the experimental stimuli and measurement instrument. Then, the main study was conducted to test hypotheses 1 and 2.

Pilot Study 1: Product selection for stimuli development. The primary concern for selecting products in this study was to ensure robust testing of the hypothesized effects while keeping reasonably good internal and external validity. Thus, three specific selection criteria were used: (1) the products should be those commonly reviewed and

viewed online by consumers; (2) significantly different product types, in terms of differential eWOM effects, should be represented; and (3) there should not be significant differences between products in terms of general product involvement and attitude toward the product.

To satisfy the first criterion, Google Trends data were analyzed to determine types of products frequently reviewed and viewed by consumers. On February 3, 2018, Google trends indicated that, for the keywords “review(s),” “product(s),” and “service review(s),” the following product categories were among the top 20 searches for each of these terms within the previous 12 months: wearable technology, air fryer, vacuum cleaner, Bluetooth speaker/headphones, movie, skin care, car maintenance, home maintenance, and dietary supplements. Other searches among the top 20 for each keyword were either redundant product categories or search terms that did not pertain to products or services.

To further narrow down the product selection, the second criterion was applied based on relevant prior research on the influence of product types on eWOM effects. In the advertising and marketing literature, the influence of product type on communication effects has been well documented. Products have been classified in different ways, including based on tangibility (goods vs. services) (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985), product attribute evaluation (search goods vs. experience goods vs. credence goods) (Darby and Karni, 1974; Nelson, 1970, 1974), evaluation standards (objective vs. subjective) (Lee, & Shin, 2011), or their utility (utilitarian vs. hedonic) (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Among the different product classification approaches, the classification of products in terms of how their attributes may be evaluated (search goods

vs. experience goods vs. credence goods) has been most frequently used in prior eWOM research and proven to have significant impact on eWOM effects.

The framework of classifying goods and services along their attribute evaluation is based on seminal works by Nelson (1970) and Darby and Karni (1973). Nelson introduced the idea of distinguishing between products' search qualities, those attributes that consumers can easily discern prior to experience with the product, and experience qualities, those attributes that can only be determined after purchase and experience with the product. Search qualities are such attributes as price, smell, color, fit, or feel (Zeithaml, 1981). Experience qualities, on the other hand, include characteristics such as taste, purchase satisfaction, or wearability (Zeithaml, 1981). Some goods, often referred to as search goods, are characterized by being high in search qualities, which can easily be determined without use of the product. Experience goods, on the other hand, are characterized by experience qualities, which can only be evaluated after purchase.

Product type effects in the eWOM context have been explored in the fields of marketing and management (Jiménez & Mendoza, 2013), business (Park & Lee, 2009), e-commerce (Tsao & Hsieh, 2015), psychology (Lee & Shin, 2014), and advertising (De Pelsmacker, Dens, & Kolomiiets, 2018). In the literature, product type has been shown to affect brand attitude and brand awareness (Ansary, & Nik Hashim, 2017), eWOM persuasiveness (Park & Lee, 2009; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015), credibility (Tsao & Hsieh, 2015), trust (Lim & Chung, 2011), and helpfulness (Chua & Banerjee, 2016), as well as purchase intentions (Jiménez & Mendoza, 2013; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015; Lee & Shin, 2014). In particular, eWOM regarding experience goods (Park & Lee, 2009) and credence goods

(Tsao & Hsieh, 2015) were found more influential than those regarding search goods. This is likely because consumers tend to rely more on eWOM (Tsao & Hsieh, 2015), consider it more helpful (Chua & Banerjee, 2016), and trust it more (Lim & Chung, 2011) when the quality of a product is difficult to evaluate prior to purchase.

Based on the research on product type and eWOM effects, in order to have products representing search goods and experience goods respectively, the product categories selected from the Google Trends top 20 list were subjected to a small-scale online survey to empirically measure the search or experience attribute of each of the selected products. The survey was conducted on February 23, 2018, with a sample of 71 Amazon Mechanical Turk users from the United States. After providing consent to participate in the study, participants were asked questions pertaining to the difficulty of evaluating the quality of each of the given products prior to purchase and after purchase. Finally, the participants were given a code, with which they could obtain their compensation. Participants were given \$1.25 for their time. Given that participants took on average 8 minutes to complete the study, the compensation corresponded to an average hourly wage of approximately \$9.38, which is substantially higher than the United States national minimum wage of \$7.25.

The difficulty of evaluating a product prior to or after purchase was measured on 7-point semantic differential scales (1 – extremely easy, 7 – extremely difficult) indicating possible responses to the statements “Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of [product] prior to purchase” and “Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of [product] after purchase.” This measure served to determine

product type. Search goods can be easily evaluated prior to and after purchase, and would, therefore, score low (below 4 out of 7) on both the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to or after purchase. Experience goods, on the other hand, are difficult to evaluate prior to purchase because they require using the product to determine its quality, after which they can be evaluated more easily. Experience goods would, therefore, be expected to score higher (above 4 out of 7) on the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to purchase and low (below 4 out of 7) on the difficulty of evaluating a product after purchase.

Means scores for each product's difficulty of evaluation prior to and after purchase are presented below in Table 1. Nine t-tests were conducted comparing mean scores of product's difficulty of evaluation against the middle-point value of 4. The results identified the air fryer, car maintenance, skin care, and home maintenance as experience goods, as they scored significantly higher than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to purchase and significantly lower than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product after purchase. The t-tests did not identify any search products, as no products scored significantly below 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to purchase.

Table 1

Pilot Study 1, Survey 1: Mean scores for difficulty of product evaluation (listed in order of difficulty of evaluation prior to purchase)

	<i>N</i>	Difficulty of Evaluation Prior to Purchase <i>M (SD)</i>	Difficulty of Evaluation After Purchase <i>M (SD)</i>
Movie	71	3.70 (1.77)	1.28* (.83)
Bluetooth Speaker/Headphones	71	4.03 (1.70)	1.87* (1.04)
Vacuum Cleaner	71	4.17 (1.93)	1.62* (.95)
Wearable Technology	71	4.24 (1.78)	2.06* (1.13)
Air Fryer	71	4.59* (1.64)	2.41* (1.47)
Car Maintenance	71	4.79* (1.72)	2.89* (1.50)
Skin care	71	4.97* (1.67)	2.38* (1.50)
Home Maintenance	71	5.23* (1.37)	2.45* (1.32)
Dietary Supplements	71	5.35* (1.79)	3.58 (1.83)

* The mean score is significantly different from the middle-point 4 at $p < .05$

The initial product selection based on Google Trends data did not produce acceptable products as representatives for the search good product type. This may have occurred for two reasons. First, Google Trends top product types would unlikely include search goods if consumers do not frequently search for reviews for many search goods. Consumers indeed may not feel the need to search for reviews of search goods on Google, since these products are easily evaluated based on product specifications or descriptions alone. Second, survey statements measuring the difficulty of evaluating products may have been imprecise in terms of which type of information participants could access to evaluate a product. These issues were addressed by a second-round

survey, which included different products and adjusted the questionnaire wording (See Appendix C).

The second survey for identifying products was conducted on March 1, 2018, with a sample of 70 Amazon Mechanical Turk users from the United States. Based on product categories mentioned in the previous literature (Nelson, 1970; Pham, Geuens, De Pelsmacker, 2013; Weathers, Sharma, & Wood, 2007), a microwave, laser printer, and luggage were included as possible candidates in lieu of the wearable technology, air fryer, and vacuum cleaner. Participants were again compensated through MTurk with \$1.25 for their time. Given that participants took less than 8.5 minutes on average to complete the study, the compensation corresponded to an average hourly wage of approximately \$8.85.

The same measurement as the first-round survey was used for measuring the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to or after purchase. However, the statements were modified slightly to make their wording more precise. The changed statements read: “Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of a [product] prior to purchase solely based on information available in advertisements or the description of the product” and “Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of a [product] after purchase.”

Additionally, prior experience with product reviews and product involvement were measured. Participants were asked to indicate whether they had previously searched for or used product reviews for each product category, to which they could respond “yes,” “no,” or “I don’t know.” General product involvement was measured by

Zaichkowski's (1994) 10-item product involvement scale on 7-point semantic differential scales (Important – Unimportant, Boring – Interesting, Relevant – Irrelevant, Exciting – Unexciting, Means nothing – Means a lot to me, Appealing – Unappealing, Fascinating – Mundane, Worthless – Valuable, Involving – Uninvolving, Not needed – Needed).

Product Involvement Index scores were computed by adding individual item scores.

Scores of 10 – 29 indicate low involvement, while 30 – 50 signify medium involvement, and 51 – 70 denote high involvement. This measure showed good reliability for all nine products for which it was measured (Cronbach's α ranging from .83 to .96).

Nine t-tests were conducted using the middle-point 4 as the test value and the results identified laser printer, Bluetooth speaker/headphones, home maintenance, dietary supplements, and car maintenance as experience goods to potentially be included in the study, as they scored significantly higher than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to purchase and significantly lower than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product after purchase. The t-tests did not identify any products that scored significantly lower than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to purchase. However, the microwave, suitcase, and movie did not score significantly higher than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product prior to purchase and scored significantly lower than 4 on the difficulty of evaluating a product after purchase. These products were, therefore, considered for inclusion in the study as search goods because they were relatively less difficult to evaluate prior to purchase than the other products. Mean scores for the products' difficulty of evaluation prior to and after purchase are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Pilot Study 1, Survey 2: Mean scores for difficulty of product evaluation (listed in order of difficulty of evaluation prior to purchase)

	<i>N</i>	Difficulty of Evaluation Prior to Purchase <i>M (SD)</i>	Difficulty of Evaluation After Purchase <i>M (SD)</i>
Suitcase	70	3.71 (1.59)	1.76* (1.01)
Movie	70	3.73 (1.81)	1.37* (.84)
Microwave	70	3.93 (1.55)	1.97* (1.27)
Laser Printer	70	4.41* (1.72)	2.17* (1.10)
Bluetooth Speaker/Headphones	70	4.47* (1.60)	2.07* (1.28)
Home Maintenance	70	4.51* (1.82)	2.20* (1.41)
Dietary Supplements	70	4.80* (1.79)	3.30* (1.64)
Car Maintenance	70	4.90* (1.52)	2.69* (1.42)
Skin care	70	5.23* (1.46)	2.57* (1.37)

* The mean score is significantly different from the middle-point 4 at $p < .05$

A chi-square test showed a significant difference between products in consumers' past searches for and use of online consumer product reviews ($\chi^2 (16, 630) = 62.81; p < .001$). Post-hoc testing identifying observed cell counts that significantly differed from expected cell counts after the Bonferroni correction found that consumers had significantly more often searched for and used an online consumer review for a movie in the past ($p < .00185$) than other products. No other products showed a significant difference.

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA found significant differences between products in terms of product involvement ($F (8, 621) = 4.99, p < .001$). Post-hoc tests using Tukey

(results presented in Table 3) showed some significant differences between a movie and other products, and between car maintenance and a suitcase. For the previously mentioned four products selected for stimuli development, however, no statistically significant differences were found regarding product involvement.

Table 3

Pilot Study 1, Survey 2: Mean scores and post-hoc multiple comparison analyses of product involvement

Product	Comparison Product	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Microwave (<i>M</i> = 42.14, <i>SD</i> = 10.95)	Printer	-.39	1.00
	Suitcase	1.99	.99
	BT Speaker	-3.43	.73
	Movie	-8.89*	.00
	Skin care	-3.71	.64
	Dietary supplements	-2.20	.97
	Car maintenance	-4.99	.23
	Home maintenance	-3.13	.82
Printer (<i>M</i> = 42.53, <i>SD</i> = 10.45)	Microwave	.39	1.00
	Suitcase	2.37	.96
	BT Speaker	-3.04	.84
	Movie	-8.50*	.00
	Skin care	-3.33	.76
	Dietary supplements	-1.81	.99
	Car maintenance	-4.60	.33
	Home maintenance	-2.74	.91

Product	Comparison Product	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Suitcase (<i>M</i> = 40.16, <i>SD</i> = 11.18)	Microwave	-1.99	.99
	Printer	-2.37	.96
	BT Speaker	-5.41	.14
	Movie	-10.87*	.00
	Skin care	-5.70	.10
	Dietary supplements	-4.19	.47
	Car maintenance	-6.97*	.01
	Home maintenance	-5.11	.20
BT Speaker (<i>M</i> = 45.57, <i>SD</i> = 13.16)	Microwave	3.43	.73
	Printer	3.04	.84
	Suitcase	5.41	.14
	Movie	-5.46	.13
	Skin care	-.29	1.00
	Dietary supplements	1.23	1.00
	Car maintenance	-1.56	1.00
	Home maintenance	.30	1.00
Movie (<i>M</i> = 51.03, <i>SD</i> = 10.25)	Microwave	8.89*	.00
	Printer	8.50*	.00
	Suitcase	10.87*	.00
	BT Speaker	5.46	.13
	Skin care	5.17	.19
	Dietary supplements	6.69*	.02
	Car maintenance	3.90	.57
	Home maintenance	5.76	.09

Product	Comparison Product	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Skin care (<i>M</i> = 45.86, <i>SD</i> = 14.34)	Microwave	3.71	.64
	Printer	3.33	.76
	Suitcase	5.70	.10
	BT Speaker	.29	1.00
	Movie	-5.17	.19
	Dietary supplements	1.51	1.00
	Car maintenance	-1.27	1.00
	Home maintenance	.59	1.00
Dietary supplements (<i>M</i> = 44.34, <i>SD</i> = 14.56)	Microwave	2.20	.97
	Printer	1.81	.99
	Suitcase	4.19	.47
	BT Speaker	-1.23	1.00
	Movie	-6.69*	.02
	Skin care	-1.51	1.00
	Car maintenance	-2.79	.90
	Home maintenance	-.93	1.00
Car maintenance (<i>M</i> = 47.13, <i>SD</i> = 9.89)	Microwave	4.99	.23
	Printer	4.60	.33
	Suitcase	6.97*	.01
	BT Speaker	1.56	1.00
	Movie	-3.90	.57
	Skin care	1.27	1.00
	Dietary supplements	2.79	.90
	Home maintenance	1.86	.99

Product	Comparison Product	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
(M = 45.27, SD = 9.82)	Microwave	3.13	.82
	Printer	2.74	.91
	Suitcase	5.11	.20
	BT Speaker	-.30	1.00
	Movie	-5.76	.09
	Skin care	-.59	1.00
	Dietary supplements	.93	1.00
	Car maintenance	-1.86	.99

* The mean difference is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Ultimately, the microwave and suitcase were selected as search goods for the upcoming studies. The decision not to include the movie as a search good in the study was made for three specific reasons. First, as presented in Table 3, the level of product involvement in a movie was significantly higher than in a microwave, suitcase, or dietary supplement. In addition, the movie differed from other products in terms of consumers' past searches for and use of online consumer product reviews. Finally, a movie review might structurally differ from product reviews of tangible products, as the reviewer would interact with these products differently. These differences could introduce confounding factors and validity issues.

Furthermore, a skin care product (e.g., facial moisturizer) and dietary supplements (e.g., multivitamin pills) were selected as representatives of experience goods, as they had some of the highest scores for difficulty of evaluation prior to purchase. While car maintenance services also showed a high score for difficulty of evaluation prior to purchase (higher than dietary supplements) and a low score for difficulty of evaluation

after purchase, reviews of services versus reviews of tangible products would have been likely to differ in various ways and introduce confounding factors. Car maintenance services were, therefore, not chosen to be included in the stimuli.

Experimental stimuli development. The experimental design of Study 1 was a 2 (product type: search vs. experience goods) x 4 (disclosure mode: written-only, spoken-only, and written-spoken, plus control condition with no disclosure) between-group design. As each product type was represented by two example products, a total of 16 mock online consumer product review videos of the selected products were created. The selected products were given fictitious brand names: Cuisiner 1200i (microwave), Voyager Carry-On (suitcase), Daily Dose Super B-Complex (multivitamin pills), and dermatologie Ultimate Moisture (facial moisturizer). These fictitious products were reviewed by an actress posing as a YouTuber reviewing products on her channel. The choice of an actress reviewing fictitious brands was made to avoid participants having preexisting attitudes toward or trust in the reviewer, the brand, or the product. The review videos were made to look like real product review videos often found on YouTube or other social media platforms.

The reviews were filmed in a professional studio environment and designed to be as consistent as possible in their wording, length, environment, lighting, camera angles, etc. by using the same actress and by following strict storyboards (see Appendix A) and scripts (See Appendix B). The only differences across reviews were product-related information and disclosure modes following the experimental design. Figure 1 features screen shots of examples of the different reviews created.

Figure 1

Screenshots of the four example product reviews



Each review opened with the reviewer introducing herself and welcoming viewers to her channel. She subsequently introduced the product with a brief description. The disclosures for the sponsorship disclosure treatment conditions were made using similar verbiage solely differing in the sponsoring brand disclosed: “I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video and making this review possible.” The disclosure occurred in the disclosure mode corresponding with each treatment condition while the review for the control conditions forewent such disclosures and seamlessly continued to the review of product attributes. Each review included 4 positive attributes, including an attribute distinguishing it from competitors, and a negative attribute. Finally, an overall positive

verdict of the product was voiced, and the reviewer concluded the review by expressing her hope that the review was helpful. The inclusion of both positive and negative attributes but an overall positive skew of the reviews was chosen to create reviews that could conceivably but may not necessarily have been sponsored. This ensured that they could be used for both the control and sponsorship disclosure conditions.

In total, 16 stimuli were created for use in Study 1; for each of the four brands, there were three sponsorship disclosure mode conditions and a control condition with no sponsorship disclosure. The written-only disclosure mode condition showed a product review with an on-screen written disclosure of sponsorship as the product was introduced. In the spoken-only condition sponsorship was disclosed in a spoken form prior to providing the endorsement for the product. Finally, the written-and-spoken condition showed the same review and spoken disclosure as the second stimulus with an added written disclosure appearing simultaneously with the spoken disclosure. All disclosures, regardless of their mode, thanked the brand for their sponsorship and for making the review possible and lasted an equal amount of time of approximately 7 seconds. The control condition was shown the same review devoid of any form of sponsorship disclosure.

Pilot Study 2: Pilot testing of the stimuli and measurement instrument. A pilot test of the created stimuli and measurement instrument was conducted from April 16th to April 23rd, 2018, in the form of an online experiment prior to launching the main study.

Participants and Stimuli. A total of 168 adult participants were recruited from the University of Minnesota's Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication (HSJMC) undergraduate student subject pool. Participants were offered extra course credit for their participation. To test the manipulation of the disclosure mode, product reviews created for one of the four product types, dietary supplements with the fictitious brand name, Daily Dose Super B-Complex, was chosen at random. Since the disclosure mode manipulation was made the same for all product types, it was deemed sufficient to test the disclosure mode manipulation on a single product type.

Procedure. Upon providing consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the disclosure mode conditions including the written-only (n = 42), spoken-only (n = 42), or written-and-spoken disclosure (n = 41), or the control condition (n = 43), which featured no disclosure. Subsequently, participants were asked to "please watch the following product review carefully." The assigned product review corresponded to their assigned condition. Participants were unable to skip to the subsequent questionnaire until enough time had elapsed for the video to play in its entirety. Depending on the assigned condition, exposure times ranged from 1 minute and 11 seconds to 1 minute and 18 seconds. Participants were not able to access playback controls, so they would be exposed to the stimulus and all parts of the video for the same amount of time. After the exposure, participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire evaluating their attention to the disclosure. Finally, participants were debriefed, informing them of the fictitious nature of the product reviews and the reviewed brand. Upon completion of the study,

participants were given extra course credit in an eligible course through the University of Minnesota's HSJMC subject pool system.

The Attention Measure. The study's dependent variable, attention to the sponsorship disclosure was assessed based on Lang's (2000) recommendations to measure cognitive attention using participants' ability to recall without or with aid or to recognize information to which they were exposed.

The process of attending to content is a precursor to the process of encoding, storage, and the subsequent ability to retrieve this information. Cognitive attention, which is therefore a determining factor of whether and to what extent information will be processed, can be measured using recall and recognition measures. Cognitive attention facilitates the processing of information, and the extent to which information has been attended to and processed determines the extent to which information has been linked in one's associative network and ease with which said information may be retrieved. A high level of attention to the sponsorship disclosure, for example, would allow for recall of the disclosed sponsorship information without any external aid, while a moderate level of attention may require some aid to be able to recall that information. If only a low level of attention was spent on the sponsorship disclosure, one may not be able to recall the disclosure information freely but only recognize it once presented with it. If no attention was paid, an individual would be unable to recall or recognize the disclosure. Therefore, attention was measured using the following three questions:

1. Unaided recall of the sponsorship disclosure: "What do you remember about the video you just watched? Please list all things

(e.g., any words, images, objects, information) you recall from the video.” Participants were asked to give an open-ended response to this question.

2. Aided recall of the sponsorship disclosure: “As far as you can remember, did the video you just watched disclose whether it was sponsored?” Response choices included “yes,” “no,” or “I cannot remember.”
3. Recognition of the sponsorship disclosure: “Which of the following types of sponsorship matches the compensation the reviewer disclosed?” Response options were “none”, “general sponsorship,” “received product at no or reduced cost,” “received payment for the review,” “received sales commission,” or “I cannot remember.”

These questions were designed to identify four levels of attention to the sponsorship disclosure: (1) high if sponsorship disclosure is mentioned in the unaided recall question; (2) moderate if no sponsorship disclosure is mentioned in the unaided recall question but sponsorship disclosure is recalled in the aided recall question; (3) low if no mention of sponsorship disclosure is mentioned in the unaided recall question, no recognition of sponsorship disclosure in the aided recall question, but recognition of some type of sponsorship disclosure is reported in the third recognition question; and (4) no attention if none of the three questions yield correct answers.

Data analysis and results. First, participants’ open-ended unaided recall responses were dummy-coded for the absence (0) or presence (1) of a mention of

sponsorship. Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for the dummy-coded unaided recall variable. The written-and-spoken mode condition generated higher percentage of sponsorship recall than either the written-only or spoken-only conditions, with over 24% of participants recalling it. A chi-square test was conducted to compare percentages of unaided recall across the three disclosure mode conditions and the results showed that observed differences in unaided recall of sponsorship among the treatment conditions were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 (2, 125) = .48; p = .79$).

Table 4

Study 1 Pilot Study 2: Descriptive statistics of unaided recall

	Control n (%)	Written- only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	Total n (%)
Sponsorship mentioned	2 (4.7%)	8 (19.0%)	8 (19.0%)	10 (24.4%)	140 (83.3%)
No mention of sponsorship	41 (95.3%)	34 (81.0%)	34 (81.0%)	31 (75.6 %)	28 (16.7%)
Total	43 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)	168 (100.0%)

Second, the aided recall variable was analyzed by frequency and percentages of correct answers. The correct answer for the disclosure conditions was “yes.” The remaining answers “no” and “I cannot remember” were incorrect. Consequently, responses were dummy-coded into correct (1) and incorrect (0) aided recall of the sponsorship disclosure. The written-and-spoken mode condition generated higher percentage of aided recall than either the written-only or spoken-only conditions, with

over 80% of the participants indicating they saw/heard sponsorship disclosure. As in the case of the unaided recall variable, however, chi-square test results showed no statistically significant difference in aided recall across the treatment conditions ($\chi^2 (2, 168) = 4.94; p = .09$). Cross-tabulated responses are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Study 1 Pilot Study 2: Descriptive statistics of aided recall

	Control n (%)	Written- only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	Total n (%)
Correct	42 (97.7%)	25 (59.5%)	26 (61.9%)	33 (80.5%)	126 (75.0%)
Incorrect	1 (2.3%)	17 (40.5%)	16 (38.1%)	8 (19.5%)	42 (25.0%)
Total	43 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)	168 (100.0%)

Finally, the recognition variable was analyzed, and the results are presented in Table 6. Responses were dummy-coded into correct (1) and incorrect (0) recognition of the type of sponsorship disclosed. The correct response for the treatment conditions was a “general sponsorship” and “none” for the control condition. About 39% of the participants in the written-and-spoken condition were able to correctly recognize the specific type of sponsorship arrangement disclosed, while about 36% of the written-only group and about 29% of the spoken-only group made correct recognition. A subsequent chi-square test showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the

pilot test's treatment conditions ($\chi^2(2, 125) = 1.05; p = .59$) in terms of correct recognition of the type of sponsorship disclosed.

Table 6

Study 1 Pilot Study 2: Descriptive statistics of recognition

	Control n (%)	Written- only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	Total n (%)
Correct	22 (51.2%)	15 (35.7%)	12 (28.6%)	16 (39.0%)	65 (38.7%)
Incorrect	21 (48.2%)	27 (64.3%)	30 (71.4%)	25 (61.0%)	103 (61.3%)
Total	43 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)	168 (100.0%)

Although the pilot test did not show statistically significant differences across disclosure mode treatment conditions, the results showed that the stimuli were working as intended and the descriptive statistics showed some interesting differences. The test furthermore identified that the proposed four attention level measurement system was impractical. Although Lang (2000) presents unaided recall, aided recall, and recognition as processes requiring decreasing amounts of attention and information processing, unaided recall, aided recall, and recognition were not strictly representative of higher or lower levels of attention in the case of this study. For example, being able to recall whether or not there was sponsorship disclosure may actually require less attention than being able to recognize which specific type of sponsorship was disclosed. This became evident as participants who correctly recalled seeing a disclosure did not always correctly

recognize the type of sponsorship they had seen. As a result, the recall and recognition measures were considered independently of each other in the main study. The following section presents main study procedure and results.

Main Study

Participants. A sample of 462 adults residing in the United States was purchased from Qualtrics Panel Service and the participants received Qualtrics credit for their participation in this study. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the 8 conditions. Sample distribution across conditions are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Study 1: Sample distribution across conditions

	Search good				Experience good				Total
	Control	Written-only	Spoken-only	Written-and-Spoken	Control	Written-only	Spoken-only	Written-and-Spoken	
<i>N</i>	58	59	54	60	57	55	58	61	462

Procedure. Upon providing consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the 8 conditions. Participants were then asked to answer a questionnaire (See Appendix C) administering demographic questions and potential confounding factor measurements, including attitude toward and involvement in the product category the assigned product review addressed, any existing brand loyalty within that product category, skepticism toward online consumer product reviews, and brand familiarity of the reviewed brand. Subsequently, participants were asked to carefully watch the product review corresponding to their randomly assigned condition. Participants were not able to

skip the video until enough time had elapsed for the video to play in its entirety, and they were not able to access playback controls, so they would be exposed to the stimulus and all parts of the video for the same amount of time. Depending on the assigned condition, exact exposure times ranged from 1 minutes and 11 seconds to 1 minute and 29 seconds. Following the exposure to the stimulus, participants completed a questionnaire assessing their cognitive attention to the sponsorship disclosure and perceived persuasive intent. Finally, participants were debriefed thanking them for their participation and informing them that the review and brand they saw were of a fictitious nature.

Measures.

Attention to the sponsorship disclosure was assessed using the same three-question measure as in the pilot test assessing attention based on Lang's (2000) recommendations for measuring cognitive attention on the basis of unaided recall, aided recall, and recognition. However, based on insights from the pilot study, unaided recall and aided recall of the sponsorship disclosure as well as recognition of the type of sponsorship were not used to identify a level of attention but were considered separate proxy measures of attention, all of which should be affected by the sponsorship disclosure.

Perceived persuasive intent was measured using Rozendaal et al.'s (2010) 4-item 7-point Likert scale measurement. Two items were used to measure understanding of selling intent: "The aim of this video is to sell products"; "The aim of this video is to stimulate the sales of products." Additional two items measured understanding of persuasive intent: "The aim of this video is to influence your opinion"; "The aim of this

video is to make people like certain products” (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). This measure showed good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$).

Demographic information was asked from all participants. They were asked about their age (“What is your age in years?”), sex (“What is your sex?”), race and ethnicity (“Please specify your race,” and “Do you identify your origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish?”), household income (“Please indicate your family’s annual household income range before tax.”), and education (“Please indicate your highest level of education attained.”). These variables were used to determine randomization of the study subjects across experimental conditions in terms of their demographic characteristics.

Potential confounding variables. This study also measured five potential confounding factors: attitude toward the product category, product involvement, brand loyalty, brand familiarity, as well as skepticism of online product reviews.

Attitude toward the product category was measured using 3-item 7-point semantic differential scales (“bad/good,” “negative/positive,” and “unfavorable/favorable”) (Boerman et al., 2012; Campbell, 1995; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). This measure was found to be reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$).

Product involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky’s (1994) reduced Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), which consisted of 10 semantic differential scale items scored on a 7-point scale (“Important – Unimportant,” “Boring – Interesting,” “Relevant – Irrelevant,” “Exciting – Unexciting,” “Means nothing – Means a lot to me,” “Appealing – Unappealing,” “Fascinating – Mundane,” “Worthless – Valuable,” “Involving –

Uninvolving,” “Not needed – Needed”). This measure showed good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$).

Brand loyalty within the product category was measured using 3-item 7-point Likert scales based on the measurement from Beatty and Kahle (1988): “I consider myself to be highly loyal to one brand of [product category],” “If my preferred brand of [product category] were not available, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand,” and “When another brand of [product category] is on sale, I will purchase it rather than my usual brand.” (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). This measure showed unacceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .40$). As the first item, “I consider myself to be highly loyal to one brand of [product category],” showed the lowest correlation ($<.01$ and $.03$) among the scale items, it was dropped to achieve higher internal consistency of the scale. The resulting two-item scale showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .69$).

Brand familiarity was measured using a single-item 7-point semantic differential scale with 1 indicating “Not at all familiar” and 7 indicating “Very familiar.”

Skepticism of online product reviews was measured using a 9-item 7-point Likert scale measurement based on Obermiller and Spangenberg’s ADTRUST Scale (1998). The statements included: “We can depend on getting the truth in most online consumer product reviews,” “Online consumer product reviews’ aim is to inform the consumer,” “I believe online consumer product reviews are informative”, “Online consumer product reviews are generally truthful,” “Online consumer product reviews are a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products,” “Online consumer

product reviews are truth well told,” “In general, online consumer product reviews present a true picture of a product,” “I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most online consumer product reviews,” and “Most online consumer product reviews provide consumers with essential information”. This measure was found to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$).

Data analysis and results.

Participant characteristics and randomization check. The sample's age ranged from 18 to 81 years, with the average age of 46.22 years ($SD = 16.21$). In terms of biological sex, 214 (46.3%) participants were male and 248 (53.7%) were female. Overall, 258 (55.8%) participants were White, 66 (14.3%) Black/African American, 106 (22.9%) American Indian or Alaska Native, 23 (5.0%) Asian, and 2 (0.4%) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Seven participants identified their race as “Other.” Of the sample, 68 (14.7%) participants disclosed to be of Hispanic ethnicity while 394 (85.3%) were non-Hispanic. The majority of participants had completed at least some college and earned an annual family household income of less than \$50,000 before tax. Descriptive statistics for participants' demographic variables in each condition and for the whole sample are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Study 1: Descriptive statistics of participant demographics

		Search good				Experience good				Total
		Control	Written- only	Spoken- only	Written- and- Spoken	Control	Written- only	Spoken- only	Written- and- Spoken	
<i>N</i>		58	59	54	60	57	55	58	61	462
Age <i>M (SD)</i>		44.60 (15.62)	49.08 (17.48)	45.59 (16.56)	45.92 (15.90)	46.67 (16.14)	44.18 (15.20)	48.50 (17.16)	45.11 (15.77)	46.22 (16.21)
Biological sex <i>n</i> (%)	Male	29 (50.0%)	29 (49.2%)	27 (50.0%)	30 (50.0%)	26 (45.6%)	22 (40.0%)	27 (46.6%)	24 (39.3%)	214 (46.3%)
	Female	29 (50.0%)	30 (50.8%)	27 (50.0%)	30 (50.0%)	31 (54.4%)	33 (60.0%)	31 (53.4%)	37 (60.7%)	248 (53.7%)
Race <i>N</i> (%)	White	35 (60.3%)	30 (50.8%)	28 (51.9%)	29 (48.3%)	36 (63.2%)	32 (58.2%)	35 (60.3%)	33 (54.1%)	258 (55.8%)
	Black or African American	8 (13.8%)	9 (15.3%)	6 (11.1%)	12 (20.0%)	6 (10.5%)	8 (14.5%)	4 (6.9%)	13 (21.3%)	66 (14.3%)
	American Indian or Alaska Native	13 (22.4%)	15 (25.4%)	17 (31.5%)	16 (26.7%)	11 (19.3%)	11 (20.0%)	13 (22.4%)	10 (16.4%)	106 (22.9%)
	Asian	1 (1.7%)	4 (6.8%)	2 (3.7%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (5.3%)	3 (5.5%)	5 (8.6%)	3 (4.9%)	23 (5.0%)
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.4%)
	Other	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.3%)	7 (1.5%)

		Search good				Experience good				Total
		Control	Written-only	Spoken-only	Written-and-Spoken	Control	Written-only	Spoken-only	Written-and-Spoken	
Ethnicity <i>n</i> (%)	Hispanic	10 (17.2%)	4 (6.8%)	9 (16.7%)	11 (18.3%)	9 (15.8%)	10 (18.2%)	3 (5.2%)	12 (19.7%)	68 (14.7%)
	Non-Hispanic	48 (82.8%)	55 (93.2%)	45 (83.3%)	49 (81.7%)	48 (84.2%)	45 (81.8%)	55 (94.8%)	49 (80.3%)	394 (85.3%)
Education level <i>n</i> (%)	Less than high school degree	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.7%)	3 (5.0%)	7 (12.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.4%)	5 (8.2%)	21 (4.5%)
	High school degree or equivalent	17 (29.3%)	18 (30.5%)	6 (11.1%)	14 (23.3%)	8 (14.0%)	12 (21.8%)	12 (20.7%)	13 (21.3%)	100 (21.6%)
	Some college	14 (24.1%)	10 (16.9%)	14 (25.9%)	18 (30.0%)	19 (33.3%)	12 (21.8%)	21 (36.2%)	16 (26.2%)	124 (26.8%)
	Associate's degree	8 (13.8%)	10 (16.0%)	9 (16.7%)	8 (13.3%)	4 (7.0%)	10 (18.2%)	10 (17.2%)	7 (11.5%)	66 (14.3%)
	Bachelor's degree	11 (19.0%)	13 (22.0%)	19 (35.2%)	12 (20.0%)	14 (24.6%)	9 (16.4%)	10 (17.2%)	14 (23.0%)	102 (22.1%)
	Graduate degree	7 (12.1%)	7 (11.9%)	4 (7.4%)	5 (8.3%)	5 (8.8%)	12 (21.8%)	3 (5.2%)	6 (9.8%)	49 (10.6%)

		Search good				Experience good				
		Control	Written- only	Spoken- only	Written- and- Spoken	Control	Written- only	Spoken- only	Written- and- Spoken	Total
Household income	Less than \$20,000	10 (17.2%)	9 (15.3%)	11 (20.4%)	15 (25.0%)	17 (29.8%)	12 (21.8%)	9 (15.5%)	10 (16.4%)	93 (20.1%)
<i>n</i>	\$20,000 to \$34,999	14 (24.1%)	13 (22.0%)	8 (14.8%)	16 (26.7%)	10 (17.5%)	8 (14.5%)	9 (15.5%)	15 (24.6%)	93 (20.1%)
	\$35,000 to \$49,999	15 (25.9%)	9 (15.3%)	6 (11.1%)	7 (11.7%)	10 (17.5%)	6 (10.9%)	15 (25.9%)	15 (24.6%)	83 (18.0%)
	\$50,000 to \$74,999	5 (8.6%)	12 (20.3%)	10 (28.5%)	8 (13.3%)	8 (14.0%)	9 (16.4%)	10 (17.2%)	9 (14.8%)	71 (15.4%)
	\$75,000 to \$99,999	6 (10.3%)	9 (15.3%)	8 (14.8%)	8 (13.3%)	3 (5.3%)	8 (14.5%)	7 (12.1%)	5 (8.2%)	54 (11.7%)
	\$100,000 to \$149,999	2 (3.4%)	5 (8.5%)	5 (9.3%)	4 (6.7%)	6 (10.5%)	9 (16.4%)	5 (8.6%)	6 (9.8%)	42 (9.1%)
	\$150,000 to \$199,999	3 (5.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.9%)
	\$200,000 or more	2 (3.4%)	1 (1.7%)	3 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.6%)	8 (1.7%)
	I don't know	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	3 (5.6%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (5.3%)	2 (3.6%)	2 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (3.0%)

For randomization checking, an ANOVA was conducted for age, and chi-square tests were conducted for gender, race, education, and income. The ANOVA results showed no significant between-group difference in terms of age ($F(7, 454) = .69, p = .68$). For chi-square testing, some demographic variables, which would have shown a large number of cells with expected cell counts below 5, were collapsed: the race variable was collapsed into “White” (258, 55.8%) and “Non-white” (204, 44.2%), for education, the responses for less than high school degree and high school degree or equivalent as well as associate’s degree and some college were combined into “High school degree or less” and “Associate’s degree or some college,” respectively. Finally, for annual family household income, the highest three income categories and the “I don’t know” responses were combined into “Other or I don’t know.” Chi-square testing results also showed no significant differences in the demographic makeup of the study’s conditions regarding the variables of biological sex ($\chi^2(7, 462) = 3.22; p = .86$), race ($\chi^2(7, 462) = 4.71; p = .70$), ethnicity ($\chi^2(7, 462) = 10.03; p = .19$), education level ($\chi^2(21, 462) = 23.74; p = .31$), and household income ($\chi^2(35, 462) = 32.93; p = .57$). Randomization in terms of demographics was, therefore, considered successful.

Further randomization checks were conducted on the potential confounding variables of attitude toward the product category, product involvement, brand loyalty, skepticism of online product reviews, and brand familiarity. Descriptive statistics for these variables are reported in Table 9. A series of ANOVAs was conducted to test between-group differences in these variables. The results showed no statistically significant differences across conditions regarding attitude toward the product category

($F(7, 454) = 1.61, p = .13$), product involvement ($F(7, 454) = .51, p = .59$), skepticism of online product reviews ($F(7, 454) = 1.27, p = .27$), and brand familiarity ($F(7, 454) = .89, p = .51$). However, a significant difference was found in brand loyalty ($F(7, 454) = 2.35, p = .02$). Overall, the between-group difference testing for the five demographic variables and five potential confounding variables showed that randomization was generally successful, with one exception of brand loyalty, which was controlled for in hypothesis testing.

Table 9

Study 1: Descriptive statistics of potential confounding variables by condition

	Search good				Experience good				Total <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
	Control <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Spoken- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- and- Spoken <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Control <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Spoken- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- and- Spoken <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	
Attitude toward product category	5.55 (1.29)	5.45 (1.51)	5.49 (1.52)	6.06 (1.19)	5.30 (1.60)	5.38 (1.72)	5.66 (1.24)	5.36 (1.64)	5.53 (1.48)
Product involvement	48.71 (11.82)	48.93 (12.64)	49.67 (10.59)	52.50 (11.77)	49.68 (13.63)	49.58 (13.91)	50.66 (11.43)	49.92 (16.09)	49.97 (12.82)
Brand loyalty	3.62 (1.51)	3.23 (1.69)	3.28 (1.39)	3.67 (1.74)	4.01 (1.69)	3.64 (1.53)	3.75 (1.59)	4.20 (1.83)	3.67 (1.65)
Skepticism of OPRs	3.21 (1.40)	3.10 (1.35)	3.27 (1.26)	3.30 (1.63)	3.65 (1.53)	3.60 (1.42)	3.61 (1.20)	3.25 (1.55)	3.37 (1.43)
Brand familiarity	3.09 (2.09)	3.25 (2.24)	3.37 (2.15)	2.98 (2.06)	2.91 (1.98)	3.16 (2.19)	2.59 (2.01)	2.74 (2.10)	3.01 (2.10)

Hypothesis testing.

H1: Effects of sponsorship disclosure mode on attention. This hypothesis was tested using three recall and recognition variables. First, in order to assess unaided recall of the sponsorship disclosure, participants' open-ended unaided recall responses were dummy-coded for absence (0) or presence (1) of the mention of sponsorship.

When assessing the descriptive statistics for unaided recall (Table 10), it became evident that very few participants in each condition were able to recall the sponsorship without being asked about it. No notable differences between conditions were apparent from the descriptive statistics, although the spoken-only and written-and-spoken mode conditions tended to show slightly higher unaided recall rates than the written-only condition.

Table 10

Study 1: Descriptive statistics for unaided recall

	Search good				Experience good				Total
	Control	Written- only	Spoken- only	Written -and- Spoken	Control	Written- only	Spoken- only	Written- and- Spoken	
Mentioned sponsorship	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.4%)	3 (5.6%)	3 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	2 (3.4%)	2 (3.3%)	13 (2.8%)
No mention of sponsorship	58 (100%)	57 (96.6%)	51 (94.4%)	57 (95.0%)	57 (100.0%)	54 (98.2%)	56 (96.6%)	59 (96.7%)	449 (97.2%)

In order to test the effects of the disclosure mode on attention, a binomial logistic regression analysis was conducted. Unaided recall was regressed on the disclosure mode and product type independent variables as well as the brand loyalty confounding variable. To conduct the logistic regression, two disclosure modes of spoken-only and written-and-spoken disclosure were entered as dummy coded variables, with “0” indicating the absence and “1” indicating the presence of each condition. Written-only disclosure served as the reference category by coding it as the absence of the other disclosure mode conditions (“0” for both spoken-only and written-and-spoken disclosure modes). Product type was also entered as a dummy coded variable (0 = search good; 1 = experience good). The logistic regression model was not significant ($\chi^2(4) = 1.54; p = .82$). The analysis, therefore, showed that neither the written-only ($p = .75$), spoken-only ($p = .45$), written-and-spoken ($p = .62$) disclosure mode, nor the product type ($p = .30$) significantly contributed to the model predicting the probability of unaided recall of the sponsorship disclosure occurring. The logistic regression results suggest that the disclosure mode did not affect participants’ ability to recall sponsorship without aid. The logistic regression table is provided in Table 11.

Table 11

Study 1: Logistic regression analysis testing the effects of disclosure mode and product type on unaided recall

	B	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
Product type	-.61	.59	1.07	.30	.54
Spoken-only disclosure	.56	.75	.57	.45	1.75
Written-and-spoken disclosure	.38	.75	.25	.62	1.46
Brand loyalty	.20	.18	1.35	.25	1.23

Second, aided recall was tested. Descriptive statistics (Table 12) indicated that, among the treatment conditions, the highest proportion of correct aided recall occurred in the written-and-spoken disclosure condition, regardless of product type. Frequencies of correct aided recall appeared to be consistent with the hypothesis that disclosure in redundant streams would be most effective at generating attention.

Table 12

Study 1: Descriptive statistics for aided recall

	Search good				Experience good				Total n (%)
	Control n (%)	Written- only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	Control n (%)	Written- only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	
Correct	47 (81.0%)	28 (47.5%)	34 (63.0%)	42 (70.0%)	45 (78.9%)	16 (29.1%)	39 (67.2%)	43 (70.5%)	294 (63.6%)
Incorrect	11 (19.0%)	31 (52.5%)	20 (37.0%)	18 (30.0%)	12 (21.1%)	39 (70.9%)	19 (32.8%)	18 (29.5%)	168 (36.4%)

A logistic regression analysis was conducted in the same manner as the test for unaided recall, with the written-only disclosure mode as reference category for the spoken-and-written and spoken-only disclosure modes, to assess whether disclosure mode and product type would be able to predict the probability of aided recall to occur when controlling for brand loyalty. The logistic regression model was significant ($\chi^2(4) = 28.98; p < .001$) and predicted 10.8% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the observed variance in aided recall and correctly classified 65.7% of cases. While product type ($p = .45$) was not a significant predictor of aided recall, written-only disclosure ($p < .001$), spoken-only disclosure ($p < .001$), and written-and-spoken disclosure ($p < .001$) significantly contributed to the model predicting the probability of aided recall to happen. Specifically, the aided recall was three times as probable to occur in the spoken-only disclosure mode condition and four times as probable to occur in the written-and-spoken disclosure mode condition when compared to the written-only disclosure mode. The logistic regression result is shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Study 1: Logistic regression analysis testing the effects of disclosure mode and product type on aided recall

	B	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
Product type	-.17	.23	.56	.45	.84
Spoken-only disclosure	1.11	.28	15.94	<.001	3.03
Written-and-spoken disclosure	1.36	.28	23.58	<.001	3.91
Brand loyalty	-.06	.07	.71	.40	.84

Finally, recognition of type of sponsorship disclosure was tested by comparing percentages of correct recognition of “General sponsorship” across the disclosure mode treatment conditions. Responses were dummy-coded into correct (1) and incorrect (0) responses. Correct recognition appears to be most probable in the spoken-only disclosure mode for search goods and the written-and-spoken disclosure mode for experience goods. Descriptive statistics shown in Table 14 appeared to be only partially aligned with the hypothesis, that is to say only for the experience good condition.

Table 14

Study 1: Descriptive statistics for correct recognition

	Search good				Experience good				Total n (%)
	Control n (%)	Written- only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	Control n (%)	Written -only n (%)	Spoken- only n (%)	Written- and- Spoken n (%)	
Correct	42 (72.4%)	13 (22.0%)	23 (42.6%)	25 (41.7%)	43 (75.4%)	13 (23.6%)	25 (43.1%)	34 (55.7%)	218 (47.2%)
Incorrect	16 (27.6%)	46 (78.0%)	31 (57.4%)	35 (58.3%)	14 (24.6%)	42 (76.4%)	33 (56.9%)	27 (44.3%)	244 (58.2%)

Sponsorship disclosure mode's and product type's effect on participants' recognition of the sponsorship disclosure was evaluated using a logistic regression in the same manner as for the previous two analyses. The logistic regression model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(4) = 20.58; p < .001$), predicted 7.8% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in the dependent variable, and was able to correctly classify 63.7% of the cases. When controlling for brand loyalty, the written-only ($p < .001$), spoken-only ($p < .01$), and the written-and-spoken ($p < .001$) disclosure modes emerged as significant predictors of the probability of sponsorship disclosure recognition taking place. Specifically, when compared to the written-only disclosure mode condition recognition was over 2.5 times as probable to occur in the spoken-only disclosure mode condition and over 3 times as probable in the written-and-spoken disclosure. The logistic regression result is shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Study 1: Logistic regression analysis testing the effects of disclosure mode and product type on recognition.

	B	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
Product type	.28	.23	1.50	.22	1.33
Spoken-only disclosure	.93	.30	10.02	<.01	2.54
Written-and-spoken disclosure	1.20	.29	17.02	<.001	3.33
Brand loyalty	-.06	.07	.84	.36	.94

In sum, although the different disclosure modes did not significantly affect the likelihood of unaided recall to occur, the logistic regression results showed that spoken-only and written-and-spoken disclosure modes led to incrementally higher probability of

aided recall and recognition of sponsorship disclosure to occur. In concert, these results indicate, as hypothesized, that the sponsorship disclosure mode had significant effects on the level of attention to the sponsorship disclosure. Therefore, H1 was supported.

H2: Effects of sponsorship disclosure mode on perceived persuasive intent. Mean scores for perceived persuasive intent (presented in Table 16) among the treatment conditions showed that, in the experience good conditions, perceived persuasive intent was slightly higher in the written-and-spoken condition than in the other conditions. For search goods, however, the written-only condition seemed to generate higher perceived persuasive intent than the other conditions. Overall, regardless of the disclosure mode conditions or product types, the study participants tended to have moderately high levels of perceived persuasive intent (mean scores higher than 5 on a 7-point scale).

Table 16

Study 1: Perceived persuasive intent mean scores across conditions

	Search good				Experience good			
	Control <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Spoken- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- and- Spoken <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Control <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Spoken- only <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Written- and- Spoken <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Perceived persuasive intent	4.74 (1.34)	5.51 (1.28)	5.28 (1.32)	5.37 (1.47)	5.31 (1.56)	5.21 (1.15)	5.31 (1.14)	5.36 (1.54)

In order to test hypothesis 2, a two-way ANCOVA was conducted to assess the effects of sponsorship disclosure mode and product type on perceived persuasive intent when controlling for brand loyalty. The ANCOVA results did not show a statistically significant effect of disclosure mode ($F(2, 340) = .13, p = .88$) or product type ($F(1, 340) = .22, p = .64$). H2 was therefore not supported.

Discussion. Study 1 set out to test the effects of sponsorship disclosure mode and product type on participants' attention to the disclosure and their perceived persuasive intent of the review. The study hypothesized that (H1) disclosure mode would affect consumers' attention to the sponsorship disclosure. This hypothesis predicted that the mode that introduced disclosure as a secondary task (written-only disclosure) would generate less attention than the modes in which disclosure constituted part of the primary task (spoken-only disclosure and written-and-spoken disclosure). Among the primary task modes, the mode that conveyed sponsorship in redundant streams (written-and-spoken disclosure) was predicted to generate more attention than the mode that did not disclose in redundant streams (spoken-only disclosure). The study furthermore posited that (H2) sponsorship disclosure mode would affect perceived persuasive intent. Specifically, it expected that the mode that introduced disclosure as a secondary task (written-only disclosure) would lead to lower perceived persuasive intent than the modes in which disclosure constituted part of the primary task (spoken-only disclosure and written-and-spoken disclosure). Among those primary task modes, the mode that conveyed sponsorship in redundant streams (written-and-spoken disclosure) was posited

to generate higher perceived persuasive intent than the mode that did not disclose in redundant streams (spoken-only disclosure).

The analysis results provided support for H1: Although sponsorship disclosure mode did not affect the likelihood of participants' ability to freely recall the sponsorship disclosure, the mode that introduced disclosure as a secondary task, namely the written-only disclosure mode, was found to generate the least attention as evidenced by the lowest probability of aided recall or recognition of the sponsorship disclosure to occur. Furthermore, as predicted, the spoken-only disclosure mode led to a higher level of attention to the disclosure with a higher probability of participants recalling or recognizing the sponsorship disclosure they had seen than those in the written-only disclosure condition. Finally, the sponsorship disclosure which disclosed sponsorship in redundant streams, that is to say in written-and-spoken form, generated the highest level of attention, as indicated by the highest likelihood of aided recall or recognition of the sponsorship disclosure. These effects held true for both product types featured in the reviews, search goods and experience goods, as product type did not affect the probability of unaided or aided recall as well as recognition of the sponsorship disclosure to take place.

The study did not, however, find any support for H2. This means that sponsorship disclosure mode and product type did not affect the participants' perception of the review's intent to persuade viewers. In fact, all participants indicated that they perceived moderately high persuasive intent regardless of their sponsorship disclosure mode condition. Regardless of whether participants saw a disclosure and in which mode

disclosure took place, participants already expected the review to attempt to persuade them to like and buy the product.

Implications for Study 2. Based on the results of the H1 testing in this study, it can be concluded that the written-and-spoken disclosure mode generally generated highest levels of aided recall of the sponsorship disclosure and correct recognition of the type of sponsorship disclosed. Overall, the study provided reasonable evidence that sponsorship disclosure mode has a significant effect on attention to the sponsorship disclosure. In the dissertation's second study, the written-and-spoken disclosure mode will be used to test the effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on persuasion knowledge and trust and subsequent attitudinal responses. The study design and method of Study 2 and data analysis results are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

STUDY 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to examine the effects of the level of detail and disclosed commercial gain on attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand. The study tested two sets of alternative hypotheses, with effects on participants' attitudes either occurring via persuasion knowledge (H3 – H5) or trust in the reviewer (H6 – H8). Hypotheses 3 through 5 posited that the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would lead to less favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand via the mechanism of persuasion knowledge. Hypotheses 6 through 8 predicted an alternative outcome and explanation, namely that the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would lead to more favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand via the mechanism of trust. To test these hypotheses, an online experiment was conducted.

This study aimed to examine the effects of sponsorship disclosures in sponsored eWOM on consumers' attitudinal responses. Knowing how these disclosures affect consumers is of value to researchers who study media effects but also to advertisers, reviewers, and regulators. Additionally, the study's goal was to shed light on the mechanisms that facilitate these effects. Furthermore, knowing whether sponsorship disclosures serve to increase consumers' persuasion knowledge or trust constitutes a potentially important contribution to trust theory as well as persuasion knowledge research.

Experimental Design and Stimuli

The experimental design of Study 2 was a 2 (product type: search vs. experience goods) x 5 (extent of disclosed commercial gain: general sponsorship, received free product, received payment for review, received sales commission, plus control condition with no disclosure) between-group design. The level of detail variable was later created by recoding the extent of disclosed commercial gain variable into low-level detail (the general sponsorship disclosure) and high-level detail (combining disclosures disclosing that the reviewer received a free product, received payment for review, and received sales commission).

The same four products as in Study 1 were used for the stimuli and a total of 20 mock online consumer product review videos were created. The selected products were given the same fictitious brand names as in Study 1: the Cuisiner 1200i (microwave), the Voyager Carry-On (suitcase), the Daily Dose Super B-Complex (multivitamin pills), and the dermatologie Ultimate Moisture (facial moisturizer). These fictitious products were reviewed by an actress posing as a YouTuber reviewing products on her channel. The choice of an actress reviewing fictitious brands was made to avoid participants having preexisting attitudes toward or trust in the reviewer, the brand, or the product. The review videos were made to look like real product review videos often found on YouTube or other social media platforms.

The reviews were filmed in a professional studio environment and designed to be as consistent as possible in their wording, length, environment, lighting, camera angles, etc. by using the same actress and by following strict storyboards (see Appendix A) and

scripts (See Appendix B). The only differences across reviews were product-related information and disclosure message type following the experimental design.

All reviews opened with the reviewer introducing herself, welcoming viewers to her channel, and introducing the product. The disclosures were all made in a written-and-spoken disclosure mode as per Study 1's insights but differed in terms of their level of detail (low vs. high) and extent of disclosed commercial gain (none, general sponsorship, received a free product for review, received payment for review, received a sales commission). Correspondingly, one of the following sponsorship disclosures was included in each of the treatment conditions:

1. "I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video and making this review possible."
2. "I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video by sending me this free product for review."
3. "I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video by paying me to provide a review."
4. "I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video by giving me a sales commission for each product sold as a result of this review."

The control conditions forewent any disclosures and seamlessly continued to the review of product attributes. As in Study 1, each review included four positive attributes, including the attribute distinguishing it from competitors and a negative attribute. The reviewer concluded the review with an overall positive verdict and by expressing her hope that the review was helpful.

Pilot Testing of the Stimuli. As a pilot test of the created stimuli, an online experiment was conducted on May 21st, 2018, prior to launching the main study. The purpose of this pilot test was to check manipulation by assessing participants' recognition of the types of sponsorship disclosed in the various stimuli. This manipulation check was conducted to identify any potential issues with the stimuli and any changes necessary prior to launch of the main study. For the pilot test, the Dermatology Ultimate Moisture facial moisturizer was chosen randomly as the stimulus. This was more efficient than testing manipulation for every stimulus since manipulation would be similar for all stimuli in Study 2.

Participants. To conduct the pilot test, 200 adult participants from the United States were sampled via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants were offered \$.90 for their time. Given that participants took, on average, less than 4.5 minutes to complete the pilot test, the compensation corresponded to an average hourly wage of approximately \$12.19, which is higher than the United States' national minimum wage of \$7.25.

Procedure. After providing consent to participate in the study, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the disclosure conditions, namely disclosure of either a general sponsorship ($n = 39$), receipt of a free product ($n = 41$), receipt of payment for the review ($n = 41$), or receipt of sales commission ($n = 40$), or the control condition ($n = 39$), which featured no disclosure. The participants were then asked to carefully watch a product review which corresponded to their assigned condition. Participants could not move on until enough time had elapsed on a timer for the assigned product review video

to be played entirely. Exact exposure times ranged from 1 minute and 16 seconds to 1 minute and 23 seconds, depending on the assigned condition, and timers were set accordingly. Also, participants were prevented from accessing the video player controls during playback to ensure consistent exposure times. Participants were subsequently asked to respond to a questionnaire evaluating their recognition of the type of sponsorship disclosed. Following the recognition question, participants were debriefed; they were informed of the fictitious nature of the review and brand and that no evaluations or opinions pertained to an existing brand. Finally, participants who completed the questionnaire were given a code, which entitled them to their compensation through MTurk.

Measures. Recognition of the type of sponsorship disclosed was measured with a single question sourced from the attention measure used in Study 1: “Which of the following options matches the compensation the reviewer disclosed? Response options were “none”, “general sponsorship,” “received product at no or reduced cost,” “received payment for the review,” “received sales commission,” or “I cannot remember.” Participants’ responses were recoded to reflect whether they had correctly identified the response which matched their assigned condition (e.g. “none” for the control condition, “general sponsorship” for the general sponsorship condition, “received product at no or reduced cost” for the received free product condition, etc.). For incorrect answers, a “0” was assigned, while correct answers were assigned a “1”.

Results. The frequency table presented in Table 17 shows that the majority of participants correctly recognized the type of sponsorship in all but one treatment

conditions. The only condition in which less than the majority of participants correctly recognized the type of sponsorship they had seen was the general sponsorship condition. In the general sponsorship condition, which did not provide extensive information about the type of sponsorship the reviewer had received, only 25.6% of the participants correctly recognized the sponsorship type. Due to the ambiguity about sponsorship terms presented in this condition, the lower percentage of correct recognition of the type of sponsorship was expected and is acceptable for this specific condition. The stimuli, therefore, appeared to be working as intended and were used in Study 2's main study.

Table 17

Study 2 pilot test: Frequency of recognition of sponsorship type responses

	Control n (%)	General sponsorship n (%)	Received free product n (%)	Received payment for review n (%)	Received sales commission n (%)	Total n (%)
Correct	22 (56.4%)	10 (25.6%)	33 (80.5%)	27 (65.9%)	34 (85.0%)	126 (63%)
Incorrect	17 (43.6%)	29 (74.4%)	8 (19.5%)	14 (34.1%)	6 (15.0%)	74 (47.0%)
Total	39 (100.0%)	39 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)	40 (100.0%)	200 (100.0%)

Main Study

Participants. For the main study, a sample of 703 adult participants from the United States was purchased from the Qualtrics online panels service. Participants received Qualtrics credit with which they would be compensated for their time.

Procedure. After giving consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the study's 10 conditions (2 product types x 5 extents of disclosed commercial gain). Sample distribution across the extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions for search and experience goods are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Study 2: Sample distribution across extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions

	Control SG / EG	General sponsorship SG / EG	Received free product SG / EG	Received payment SG / EG	Received sales commission SG / EG	Total
N	77/67	68/66	76/70	70/65	74/70	703

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

First, participants were asked to answer demographic questions and questions about their attitude toward, involvement in, and brand loyalty within the product category featured in the randomly assigned product review. They were also asked about their brand familiarity of the reviewed brand and their skepticism toward online consumer product reviews. Subsequently, participants were instructed to carefully watch the product review corresponding to their assigned condition. They were not able to skip to the following questionnaire until sufficient time had elapsed on a timer for the assigned product review video to be played entirely. Depending on the assigned condition, exposure times ranged from 1 minute and 11 seconds to 1 minute and 33 seconds and the timers were set accordingly. Participants were also prevented from accessing the video player controls during playback to ensure consistent exposure times. Following the exposure to the stimulus, participants completed a questionnaire assessing their perceived persuasive intent, perceived effectiveness and perceived appropriateness, perceived integrity and perceived benevolence of the reviewer, attitude toward the reviewer, and attitude toward the reviewed brand. Finally, participants were debriefed by thanking them for their time and informing them that the review and brand they saw were fictitious and that any evaluations and opinions did not pertain to any existing brand.

Measures.

Demographic information was captured by asking the participants about their age (“What is your age in years?”), sex (“What is your sex?”), race and ethnicity (“Please specify your race,” “Do you identify your origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish?”),

household income (“Please indicate your family’s annual household income range before tax.”), and education (“Please indicate your highest level of education attained.”)

Perceived persuasive intent was measured using Rozendaal et al.’s (2010) 4-item 7-point Likert scale measurement (selling intent and persuasive intent). Two items were used to measure understanding of selling intent: “The aim of this video is to sell products”; “The aim of this video is to stimulate the sales of products.” An additional two items measured understanding of persuasive intent: “The aim of this video is to influence your opinion”; “The aim of this video is to make people like certain products” (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The perceived persuasive intent scale showed good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$).

Perceived effectiveness was measured using a 4-item 7-point Likert scale measure (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) developed by Celsi and Gilly (2010). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: “I believe this review will increase sales of the reviewed product,” “I believe that the review will be well-liked by viewers,” “The review effectively raises visibility of the product,” “The review is effective at positively influencing viewers' opinions about the product.” This measure showed good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$).

Perceived appropriateness was measured using 6-item 7-point Likert scales (1 – Strongly disagree, 7 – Strongly agree). This measure was modified from Campbell’s (1995) Manipulative Intent Scale. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: “The way this review informs people seems acceptable to me,” “The reviewer tried to manipulate the audience in ways that I don’t

like,” “I was annoyed by this review because the reviewer seemed to be trying to inappropriately manage or control the viewer,” “I didn’t mind this review; the reviewer was not manipulative,” “This review was fair in what was said and shown,” “ I think that this review is fair.” This measure showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .81$).

Perceived integrity of the reviewer was assessed using a set of four 7-point Likert scales. This measure was derived from Moorman et al.’s Leader Integrity Scale (2012). Participants were asked to disclose their level of agreement to the following statements: “The reviewer is guided by a clear moral compass,” “The reviewer shows respect to others,” “The reviewer is fair,” “The reviewer is honest.” This measure was reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$).

Perceived benevolence of the reviewer was measured based on a 5-item 7-point Likert scale measure (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement to a set of statements ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” These statements were: “The reviewer is very concerned about the viewers’ welfare,” “The viewers’ needs and desires are very important to the reviewer,” “The reviewer would not knowingly do anything to hurt her viewers,” “The reviewer really looks out for what is important to her viewers,” “The reviewer will go out of her way to help her viewers.” This measure showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$).

Attitude toward the reviewer was measured by asking participants to rate their feelings toward the reviewer on a set of four 7-point semantic differential scales. Response anchors were “She doesn’t seem like a nice person - She seems like a nice person,” “I find the person extremely unfavorable - I find the person extremely

favorable,” “She is very unpleasant - She is very pleasant,” “I very much dislike the person - I very much like the person.” This measure was also found to be reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$).

Attitude toward the reviewed brand was evaluated on six 7-item semantic differential scales (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). Participants were asked to disclose their feelings toward the reviewed brand and product on these scales with the following response anchors: “Bad – Good,” “Dislikable – Likable,” “Unfavorable – Favorable,” “Unpleasant – Pleasant,” “Negative – Positive,” “Poor quality – High quality.” The scale showed good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .97$).

Additionally, this study also measured five potential confounding variables: attitude toward the product category, product involvement, brand loyalty, brand familiarity, as well as skepticism of online product reviews.

Attitude toward the product category was measured using 3-item 7-point semantic differential scales (“bad/good,” “negative/positive,” and “unfavorable/favorable”) (Boerman et al., 2012; Campbell, 1995; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). This scale was reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$).

Product involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky’s (1994) reduced Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), which consisted of 10 semantic differential items scored on a 7-point scale (Important – Unimportant, Boring – Interesting, Relevant – Irrelevant, Exciting – Unexciting, Means nothing – Means a lot to me, Appealing – Unappealing, Fascinating – Mundane, Worthless – Valuable, Involving – Uninvolving, Not needed –

Needed). The product involvement measure showed good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

Brand loyalty generally within the product category was measured using 3-item 7-point Likert scales based on Beatty and Kahle (1988): "I consider myself to be highly loyal to one brand of [product category]"; "If my preferred brand of [product category] were not available, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand"; "When another brand of [product category] is on sale, I will purchase it rather than my usual brand." (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). This scale had unacceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .31$). In the interest of increasing the reliability of this scale, the item "I consider myself to be highly loyal to one brand of [product category]" was dropped because it showed weak correlation with the other two items (-.05, -.15). Upon removal of this scale item, the resulting 2-item scale exhibited acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

Brand familiarity was measured using a single-item 7-point semantic differential scale. Possible responses ranged from "Not at all familiar" to "Very familiar."

Skepticism of online product reviews was measured using a 9-item measurement based on Obermiller and Spangenberg's ADTRUST Scale (1998) (e.g. "We can depend on getting the truth in most online consumer product reviews," "Online consumer product reviews' aim is to inform the consumer," "I believe online consumer product reviews are informative", "Online consumer product reviews are generally truthful," "Online consumer product reviews are a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products," "Online consumer product reviews are truth well told," "In

general, online consumer product reviews present a true picture of a product,” “I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most online consumer product reviews,” “Most online consumer product reviews provide consumers with essential information”).

Participants indicated their agreement with each statement on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). This measure was reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$).

Data analysis and results.

Participant characteristics and randomization check. The sample's age ranged from 18 to 92 years of age. Three hundred forty-two (48.6%) participants were male and 361 (53.7%) were female. Overall, 498 (70.8%) participants were White, 111 (15.8%) Black/African American, 17 (2.4%) American Indian or Alaska Native, 36 (5.1%) Asian, and 2 (0.3%) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Thirty-nine participants identified their race as “Other.” Of the sample, 122 (17.4%) participants disclosed to be of Hispanic ethnicity while 581 (82.6%) were non-Hispanic. The majority of participants had completed at least some college and earned an annual family household income of less than \$75,000 before tax. Descriptive statistics for participants' demographic variables in each condition and for the whole sample are listed in Table 19.

Table 19

Study 2: Descriptive statistics of participant demographics by extent of disclosed commercial gain

		Control SG / EG	General sponsorship SG / EG	Received free product SG / EG	Received payment SG / EG	Received sales commission SG / EG	Total
Age <i>M (SD)</i>		47.45 (18.06) / 44.51 (17.20)	40.84 (16.79) / 43.58 (15.88)	45.74 (17.89) / 47.50 (17.56)	50.81 (18.14) / 49.66 (17.40)	46.74 (16.37) / 45.37 (16.26)	46.22 (16.21)
Sex n (%)	Male	34 (44.2%) / 31 (46.3%)	36 (52.9%) / 36 (54.5%)	32 (42.1%) / 32 (45.7%)	38 (54.3%) / 29 (44.6%)	34 (45.9%) / 40 (57.1%)	342 (48.6%)
	Female	43 (55.8%) / 36 (53.7%)	32 (47.1%) / 30 (45.5%)	44 (57.9%) / 38 (54.3%)	32 (45.7%) / 36 (55.4%)	40 (54.1%) / 30 (42.9%)	361 (51.4%)
Race n (%)	Non-white	20 (26.0%) / 26 (38.8%)	24 (35.3%) / 19 (28.8%)	23 (30.3%) / 20 (28.6%)	28 (25.7%) / 21 (32.3%)	17 (23.0%) / 17 (24.3%)	205 (29.2%)
	White	57 (74.0%) / 41 (61.2%)	44 (64.7%) / 47 (71.2%)	53 (69.7%) / 50 (71.4%)	52 (74.3%) / 44 (67.7%)	54 (77.0%) / 53 (75.7%)	498 (70.8%)
Ethnicity n (%)	Hispanic	12 (15.6%) / 15 (22.4%)	10 (14.7%) / 6 (9.1%)	16 (21.1%) / 11 (15.7%)	13 (18.6%) / 9 (13.8%)	16 (21.6%) / 14 (20.0%)	122 (17.4%)
	Non- Hispanic	65 (84.4%) / 52 (77.6%)	58 (85.3%) / 60 (90.9%)	60 (78.9%) / 59 (84.3%)	57 (81.4%) / 56 (86.2%)	58 (78.4%) / 56 (80.0%)	581 (82.6%)

		Control SG / EG	General sponsorship SG / EG	Received free product SG / EG	Received payment SG / EG	Received sales commission SG / EG	Total
Education n (%)	High school degree or less	21 (27.3%) / 15 (22.4%)	14 (20.6%) / 15 (22.7%)	24 (31.6%) / 18 (25.7%)	24 (34.3%) / 16 (24.6%)	12 (16.2%) / 16 (22.9%)	175 (24.9%)
	Associate's degree or some college	25 (32.5%) / 20 (30.3%)	23 (33.8%) / 20 (30.3%)	26 (34.2%) / 27 (38.6%)	22 (31.4%) / 22 (33.8%)	26 (35.1%) / 26 (37.1%)	242 (34.4%)
	Bachelor's degree	18 (23.4%) / 16 (23.9%)	22 (32.4%) / 22 (33.3%)	20 (26.3%) / 11 (15.7%)	20 (28.6%) / 15 (23.1%)	22 (29.7%) / 16 (22.9%)	182 (25.9%)
	Graduate degree	13 (16.9%) / 11 (16.4%)	9 (13.2%) / 9 (13.6%)	6 (7.9%) / 14 (20.0%)	4 (5.7%) / 12 (18.5%)	14 (18.9%) / 12 (17.1%)	104 (14.8%)

		Control SG / EG	General sponsorship SG / EG	Received free product SG / EG	Received payment SG / EG	Received sales commission SG / EG	Total
Household income n (%)	Less than \$20,000	15 (19.5%) / 10 (14.9%)	7 (10.3%) / 15 (21.2%)	12 (15.8%) / 11 (15.7%)	13 (18.6%) / 4 (6.2%)	12 (16.2%) / 5 (7.1%)	103 (14.7%)
	\$20,000 to \$34,999	13 (16.9%) / 8 (11.9%)	8 (11.8%) / 9 (13.6%)	17 (22.4%) / 12 (17.1%)	11 (15.7%) / 10 (15.4%)	7 (9.5%) / 17 (14.3%)	112 (15.9%)
	\$35,000 to \$49,999	13 (16.9%) / 13 (19.4%)	19 (27.9%) / 6 (9.1%)	14 (18.4%) / 9 (12.9%)	14 (20.0%) / 12 (18.5%)	13 (17.6%) / 13 (18.6%)	126 (17.9%)
	\$50,000 to \$74,999	10 (13.0%) / 11 (16.4%)	15 (22.1%) / 13 (19.7%)	9 (11.8%) / 12 (17.1%)	13 (18.6%) / 19 (29.2%)	12 (16.2%) / 11 (15.7%)	125 (17.8%)
	\$75,000 to \$99,999	10 (13.0%) / 9 (13.4%)	4 (5.9%) / 8 (12.1%)	8 (10.5%) / 7 (10.0%)	6 (8.6%) / 7 (10.8%)	11 (14.9%) / 9 (12.9%)	79 (11.2%)
	\$100,000 to \$149,999	8 (10.4%) / 9 (13.4%)	9 (13.2%) / 10 (15.2%)	12 (15.8%) / 9 (12.9%)	9 (12.9%) / 7 (10.8%)	11 (14.9%) / 7 (10.0%)	91 (12.9%)
	Other or I don't know	8 (10.4%) / 7 (10.4%)	6 (8.8%) / 6 (9.1%)	4 (5.3%) / 10 (14.3%)	4 (5.7%) / 6 (9.2%)	8 (10.8%) / 8 (11.4%)	67 (9.5%)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

For randomization checking, a one-way ANOVA and a series of chi-square tests were performed with the demographic variables. The ANOVA results for age showed a statistically significant difference in the ages of participants across the 10 conditions of extent of disclosed commercial gain ($F(9, 693) = 1.98, p = .04$). Before conducting chi-square tests, some of the categorical variables were recoded to ensure sufficiently large expected counts per cell. Race response categories were collapsed to “White” (498, 70.8%) and “Non-white” (205, 29.2%). Response categories for education and household income were also collapsed (see Table 19). Chi-square tests of participants’ sex, race, ethnicity, education, and income showed no significant differences across the conditions of disclosed commercial gain: Sex ($\chi^2(9, 703) = 7.29; p = .61$); race ($\chi^2(9, 703) = 7.59; p = .58$); ethnicity ($\chi^2(9, 703) = 7.59; p = .58$); education ($\chi^2(27, 703) = 25.00; p = .58$); and household income ($\chi^2(54, 703) = 46.89; p = .74$). Based on these results, randomization was successful in terms of demographics, except for age.

Further randomization checks were conducted on the potential confounding variables of attitude toward the product category, product involvement, brand loyalty, skepticism of online product reviews, and brand familiarity. Mean scores for these variables are reported in Table 20. A series of ANOVA results did not find statistically significant differences in product involvement ($F(9, 693) = 1.00, p = .44$) and skepticism of online consumer product reviews ($F(9, 693) = 1.14, p = .33$) across the conditions of the extent of disclosed commercial gain. The ANOVA results, however, identified significant differences in attitude toward the product category ($F(9, 693) = 2.07, p =$

.03), brand loyalty ($F(9, 693) = 3.10, p = .001$), and brand familiarity ($F(9, 693) = 2.05, p = .03$).

Table 20

Study 2: Mean scores and standard deviations for control variables by level of detail

	Control SG / EG <i>M (SD)</i>	General sponsorship SG / EG <i>M (SD)</i>	Received free product SG / EG <i>M (SD)</i>	Received payment SG / EG <i>M (SD)</i>	Received sales commission SG / EG <i>M (SD)</i>
Attitude toward product category	6.12 (1.01) / 5.66 (1.41)	6.08 (1.03) / 5.63 (1.38)	5.86 (1.09) / 5.70 (1.50)	5.98 (1.17) / 5.62 (1.39)	6.05 (1.21) / 5.53 (1.62)
Product involvement	54.35 (11.39) / 52.40 (12.70)	55.79 (11.03) / 51.45 (10.93)	52.47 (11.61) / 50.37 (16.02)	53.30 (12.75) / 52.60 (12.32)	52.30 (11.79) / 51.74 (15.79)
Brand loyalty	3.33 (1.75) / 3.35 (1.57)	3.28 (1.44) / 3.62 (1.77)	2.99 (1.45) / 3.86 (1.74)	3.51 (1.62) / 4.06 (1.79)	3.02 (1.66) / 3.73 (1.80)
Skepticism of OPRs	5.24 (1.22) / 4.89 (1.48)	5.09 (1.17) / 4.67 (1.40)	4.97 (1.48) / 4.90 (1.36)	4.75 (1.39) / 5.08 (1.24)	4.86 (1.25) / 5.00 (1.27)
Brand familiarity	3.40 (2.24) / 3.30 (2.49)	4.43 (2.16) / 3.50 (2.29)	3.59 (2.25) / 2.99 (2.39)	3.47 (2.32) / 2.97 (2.28)	3.46 (2.33) / 3.43 (2.36)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

Overall, analyses of variance and chi square testing of participant demographics and potential confounding variables showed generally successful randomization of the study subjects but revealed a few variables with significant between-group differences in terms of participant age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity. These four variables, therefore, were controlled for when appropriate in hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis testing.

H3: Effects of level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on persuasion knowledge. This hypothesis was tested in two separate analyses: First with the level of disclosure detail variable (recoded from the original IV) and with the extent of disclosed commercial gain variable. Mean scores for the three persuasion knowledge subdimensions by the level of detail are presented in Table 21. In terms of between-group differences, particularly for experience goods, the low detail condition showed slightly lower mean scores for all three subdimensions of persuasion knowledge than those of the high detail condition. However, such a pattern did not emerge for the search goods.

Table 21

Study 2: Mean scores for persuasion knowledge subdimensions by level of detail and product type

	Control SG / EG M (SD)	Low detail SG / EG M (SD)	High detail SG / EG M (SD)
Perceived persuasive intent	5.72 (1.26) / 5.75 (1.13)	5.61 (1.09) / 5.42 (1.39)	5.78 (1.12) / 5.73 (1.24)
Perceived effectiveness	5.53 (1.13) / 5.32 (1.30)	5.09 (1.54) / 5.01 (1.52)	4.99 (1.42) / 5.12 (1.46)
Perceived appropriateness	5.57 (1.11) / 5.42 (1.02)	5.18 (1.16) / 4.99 (1.06)	5.16 (1.37) / 5.32 (1.22)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

The effects of level of detail on persuasion knowledge were tested using three two-way ANCOVAs, one for each of three persuasion knowledge subdimension variables. Participants' age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity were entered as control variables. The results found significant differences between the level of detail conditions for perceived effectiveness ($F(2, 693) = 4.41, p = .01$) and perceived appropriateness ($F(2, 693) = 3.44, p = .03$), but not for perceived persuasive intent ($F(2, 693) = 1.44, p = .24$) when controlling for age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity. Neither the product type variable nor the (level of detail x product type) interaction term showed a statistically significant relationship to perceived persuasive intent ($F(1, 693) = .40, p = .53, F(2, 693) = .47, p = .63$), perceived effectiveness ($F(1, 693) = 3.04, p = .08, F(2, 693) = 1.33, p = .27$), or perceived appropriateness ($F(1, 693) = .05, p = .82, F(2, 693) = 1.55, p = .21$).

To further examine significant between-group differences for perceived effectiveness and perceived appropriateness across the level of detail conditions, post-hoc pairwise comparisons were performed using a Tukey method. The results showed that the two treatment conditions, low ($p < .01$ for perceived effectiveness; $p = .02$ for perceived appropriateness) and high level of detail ($p < .01$ for perceived effectiveness; $p = .02$ for perceived appropriateness), had significantly lower mean scores than those in the control condition, but the low and high-detail conditions did not show significant differences in perceived effectiveness ($p = .48$) or perceived appropriateness ($p = .63$). Detailed ANCOVA results are illustrated in Table 22. The results indicate that the presence of disclosure itself had a significant effect on perceived effectiveness and perceived appropriateness, leading to lower levels of perceived effectiveness and appropriateness, but no significant difference was found between differing levels of disclosure detail.

Table 22

Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA results for level of detail effects on persuasion knowledge subdimensions

DV	Factor	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η²</i>
Perceived persuasive intent (<i>Adjusted R² = .21</i>)	Level of detail	2	1.44	.24	.00
	Product type	1	.40	.53	.00
	Level of detail x product type	2	.47	.63	.00
Perceived effectiveness (<i>Adjusted R² = .22</i>)	Level of detail	2	4.41	.01	.01
	Product type	1	3.04	.08	.00
	Level of detail x product type	2	1.33	.27	.00
Perceived appropriateness (<i>Adjusted R² = .15</i>)	Level of detail	2	3.44	.03	.01
	Product type	1	.05	.82	.00
	Level of detail x product type	2	1.55	.21	.00

Next, the same hypothesis was tested with the extent of disclosed commercial gain variable. As presented in Table 23, the descriptive statistics across experimental conditions seem to suggest some interesting differences across the conditions, with the condition where the reviewer disclosed receiving a sales commission showing the highest perceived persuasive intent and lower perceived effectiveness and appropriateness than other conditions. Additionally, there seem to be some differences in effects between experience goods and search goods.

Table 23

Study 2: Mean scores for persuasion knowledge subdimensions by extent of disclosed commercial gain and product type

	Control SG / EG M (SD)	General sponsorship SG / EG M (SD)	Received free product SG / EG M (SD)	Received payment SG / EG M (SD)	Received sales commission SG / EG M (SD)
Perceived persuasive intent	5.72 (1.26) / 5.75 (1.13)	5.61 (1.09) / 5.42 (1.39)	5.71 (1.14) / 5.70 (1.28)	5.71 (1.14) / 5.55 (1.40)	5.93 (1.06) / 5.92 (.99)
Perceived effectiveness	5.53 (1.13) / 5.32 (1.30)	5.09 (1.54) / 5.01 (1.52)	5.24 (1.44) / 5.31 (1.44)	4.94 (1.45) / 5.00 (1.47)	4.78 (1.35) / 5.05 (1.47)
Perceived appropriateness	5.57 (1.11) / 5.42 (1.02)	5.18 (1.16) / 4.99 (1.06)	5.18 (1.39) / 5.40 (1.23)	5.30 (1.29) / 5.42 (1.22)	5.02 (1.42) / 5.16 (1.22)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

Three additional ANCOVAs tested the effects of extent of disclosed commercial gain on the three persuasion knowledge subdimensions while controlling for age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity. The ANCOVA results showed significant differences across the extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions in perceived effectiveness ($F(4, 689) = 4.13, p < .01$) but not for perceived persuasive intent ($F(4, 689) = 2.26, p = .06$) or perceived appropriateness ($F(4, 689) = 2.32, p = .05$). Post-hoc pairwise comparison tests using Tukey revealed that all treatment conditions except for the “received a free product” condition showed significantly lower perceived effectiveness (general sponsorship: $p < .01$; received payment: $p = .01$; received sales commission: $p = .001$) than the control condition. The “received a free product” condition showed significantly higher perceived effectiveness than the general sponsorship condition ($p = .04$) and the “received sales commission” condition ($p < .01$),

but it was marginally significantly different from the “received payment” condition ($p = .05$).

Product type showed a significant effect on perceived effectiveness ($F(1, 689) = 7.61, p < .01$) with higher perceived effectiveness for experience goods than for search goods, but did not show any effect on perceived persuasive intent ($F(1, 689) = .66, p = .42$) or perceived appropriateness ($F(1, 689) = 1.33, p = .25$). The interaction term was not significantly linked to any of the dependent variables: perceived persuasive intent ($F(4, 689) = .35, p = .84$), perceived effectiveness ($F(4, 689) = .88, p = .47$), or perceived appropriateness ($F(4, 689) = .83, p = .51$). The ANCOVA results are presented in Table 24.

Table 24

Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA results for extent of disclosed commercial gain on persuasion knowledge subdimensions

DV	Factor	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η²</i>
Perceived persuasive intent <i>(Adjusted R² = .12)</i>	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	2.26	.06	.01
	Product type	1	.66	.42	.00
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	.35	.84	.00
Perceived effectiveness <i>(Adjusted R² = .22)</i>	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	4.13	<.01	.02
	Product type	1	7.61	<.01	.01
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	.88	.47	.01
Perceived appropriateness <i>(Adjusted R² = .15)</i>	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	2.33	.05	.01
	Product type	1	1.33	.25	.00
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	.83	.51	.01

Overall, the tests found partial support for H3. While the level of detail variable did not show any significant effect on persuasion knowledge subdimensions for either product type, the extent of disclosed commercial gain variable had some significant effects on perceived effectiveness. Specifically, when the reviewer disclosed receiving a free product, consumers' perceived effectiveness of the product review tended to be significantly higher than situations where general sponsorship disclosure was offered or the reviewer received a payment or sales commission. Particularly noteworthy is that perceived effectiveness in the situation when the reviewer received a free product was statistically equal to product reviews with no sponsorship disclosure.

H4: Effects of level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudes.

Similar to H3 testing, this hypothesis was tested in two separate analyses: First with the level of disclosure detail variable, then with the extent of disclosed commercial gain variable. The mean scores for attitudinal responses by the level of detail are presented in Table 25. The descriptive statistics appear to suggest interesting interaction effects of level of detail and product type: For search goods, attitude mean scores were lower when more detail about the sponsorship was disclosed; but for experience goods, attitude mean scores were higher when more detail about the sponsorship was divulged.

Table 25

Study 2: Mean scores for attitudinal responses by level of detail and product type

	Control SG / EG M (SD)	Low detail SG / EG M (SD)	High detail SG / EG M (SD)
Attitude toward the reviewer	6.16 (.91) / 6.03 (.88)	5.96 (1.00) / 5.57 (1.37)	5.85 (1.16) / 5.95 (1.19)
Attitude toward the brand	5.98 (1.06) / 5.73 (1.15)	5.72 (1.15) / 5.48 (1.38)	5.53 (1.39) / 5.60 (1.37)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

To test the effects of the level of detail on participants' attitudes toward the reviewer and the reviewed brand with consideration of product type, two two-way ANCOVAs were conducted. Participants' age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity were entered as control variables. First, as presented in Table 26, the ANCOVA results regarding attitude toward the reviewer showed no significant effects of level of detail ($F(2, 693) = 2.78, p = .06$) or product type ($F(1, 693) = .14, p = .71$). However, the interaction of these factors was significant ($F(2, 693)$

= 3.36, $p = .04$). For search goods, high-detail disclosures led to a less favorable attitude toward the reviewer than low-detail disclosures. For experience goods, this effect was reversed, with high-detail disclosures leading to more favorable attitudes toward the reviewer than low-detail disclosures. Post-hoc split-sample analyses of the level of detail effect on attitude toward the reviewer for each product type, however, identified that the level of detail significantly predicted the attitude toward the reviewer only for experience goods ($F(2, 331) = 3.19, p = .04$) but not for search goods ($F(2, 358) = 2.41, p = .09$). Pairwise comparisons identified that, for experience products, the high-detail condition showed a significantly more favorable attitude toward the reviewer ($p = .03$) than the low-detail condition.

The second two-way ANCOVA testing the effects of level of detail on attitude toward the brand showed a significant difference between the level of detail conditions ($F(2, 693) = 3.33, p = .04$) while there was no significant difference between product type conditions ($F(1, 693) = 1.11, p = .29$) or the (level of detail x product type) interaction term ($F(2, 693) = 1.21, p = .30$). Post-hoc pairwise tests using Tukey showed that the significant difference in the level of detail conditions occurred between the control condition and the low ($p = .04$) and high detail ($p = .01$) conditions, but not between the two treatment conditions ($p = .94$). In other words, the presence of a disclosure in the product reviews negatively affected attitude toward the reviewed brand, but the level of detail of the disclosures did not generate a different attitudinal outcome.

Table 26

Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA results for level of detail on attitudinal responses

DV	Factor	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η²</i>
Attitude toward the reviewer (<i>Adjusted R² = .24</i>)	Level of detail	2	2.78	.06	.01
	Product type	1	.14	.71	.00
	Level of detail x product type	2	3.36	.04	.01
Attitude toward the brand (<i>Adjusted R² = .27</i>)	Level of detail	2	3.33	.04	.01
	Product type	1	1.11	.29	.00
	Level of detail x product type	2	1.21	.30	.00

Next, the effects of the extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal responses were examined. As presented in Table 27, the descriptive statistics showed some differences across the extent of commercial gain conditions with possibility of product type interaction effects. For search goods, attitude toward the reviewer mean scores appeared to be lower when the reviewer disclosed receiving sales commission compared to other conditions, while, for experience goods, the opposite pattern seems to emerge. When it comes to attitude toward the brand for both search and experience goods, attitudes toward the brand mean scores appear to be lower when the reviewer disclosed receiving sales commission compared to other conditions.

Table 27

Study 2: Mean scores for attitudinal responses by extent of disclosed commercial gain and product type

	Control SG / EG M (SD)	General sponsorship SG / EG M (SD)	Received free product SG / EG M (SD)	Received payment SG / EG M (SD)	Received sales commission SG / EG M (SD)
Attitude toward the reviewer	6.16 (.91) / 6.03 (.88)	5.96 (1.00) / 5.57 (1.37)	5.83 (1.30) / 5.95 (1.09)	5.96 (1.05) / 5.91 (1.30)	5.74 (1.10) / 6.00 (1.21)
Attitude toward the brand	5.98 (1.06) / 5.73 (1.15)	5.72 (1.15) / 5.48 (1.38)	5.69 (1.40) / 5.71 (1.32)	5.56 (1.35) / 5.56 (1.30)	5.33 (1.41) / 5.51 (1.49)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

To test for differences in attitudes toward the reviewer and brand across the extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions, two two-way ANCOVAs were conducted. In terms of attitude toward the reviewer, the tests found no statistically significant effect of the extent of disclosed commercial gain ($F(4, 689) = 1.39, p = .23$), product type conditions ($F(1, 689) = 2.56, p = .11$), or the (extent of disclosed commercial gain x product type) interaction term ($F(4, 689) = 2.37, p = .05$).

For attitude toward the brand, the extent of disclosed commercial gain showed a significant effect ($F(4, 689) = 2.98, p = .02$) as did product type ($F(1, 689) = 4.16, p = .04$); however, there was no significant effect for the (extent of disclosed commercial gain x product type) interaction ($F(4, 689) = .90, p = .46$). Post-hoc pairwise tests using Tukey identified a significantly ($p = .02$) less favorable attitude toward the brand in the “received sales commission” condition compared to the “received a free product” condition. Furthermore, all extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions but the “received a free product” ($p = .40$) condition exhibited significantly less favorable

attitudes toward the brand than the control condition (general sponsorship: $p = .04$; received payment: $p = .04$; received sales commission: $p < .01$). The ANCOVA results are presented in Table 28.

Table 28

Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA results for extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal responses

DV	Factor	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η^2</i>
Attitude toward the reviewer (<i>Adjusted R² = .24</i>)	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	1.39	.23	.01
	Product type	1	2.56	.11	.00
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	2.37	.05	.01
Attitude toward the brand (<i>Adjusted R² = .28</i>)	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	2.98	.02	.00
	Product type	1	4.16	.04	.01
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	.90	.46	.01

Overall, the test results did not support H4. Regarding attitude toward the reviewer, while no significant effect was found for the extent of commercial gain, a significant interaction effect was found for the level of detail and product type. For experience goods, higher detail in sponsorship disclosure led to more favorable attitude toward the reviewer, while the level of detail in disclosure had no significant effect on attitude toward the reviewer for search goods. The tests also identified a significant effect of the extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitude toward the brand; the “received a free product” condition was the only condition that did not show less favorable attitudes

toward the brand than the control condition and exhibited more favorable attitudes toward the brand when compared to the “received a sales commission” condition.

H5: Persuasion knowledge as mediator. To test the proposed mediating effect of the persuasion knowledge subdimensions of perceived persuasive intent, perceived effectiveness, and perceived appropriateness, regression analyses were conducted consistent with Baron and Kenny’s four-step mediation analysis (1986; Hayes, 2013) with dummy-coded independent variables (Hayes & Preacher, 2014) and dummy-coded product type variable and control variables.

Level of detail (high = 1, low = 0) was not a significant predictor of the mediators, persuasive intent ($b = .18, p = .11$), perceived effectiveness ($b = .09, p = .50$), and perceived appropriateness ($b = .06, p = .58$). The independent variable’s lack of predictiveness of the mediator variables means that mediation was not supported for the level of detail variable.

For extent of disclosed commercial gain, each treatment condition was entered as a dummy-coded variable (with presence = 1 or absence = 0 of each condition) with exception of the general sponsorship condition, which, therefore, served as the reference condition. The “received a free product” condition ($b = .13, p = .31$) and “received payment for review” condition ($b = .03, p = .82$) did not significantly predict persuasive intent. The “received payment for review” and the “received sales commission” conditions also did not significantly predict perceived effectiveness. Finally, none of the treatment conditions significantly predicted perceived appropriateness. However, the “received a free product” condition significantly predicted perceived effectiveness ($b =$

.32, $p < .05$), and the “received sales commission” condition was a significant predictor of perceived persuasive intent ($b = .35, p < .01$). Additionally, perceived effectiveness ($b = .25, p < .001$) and perceived persuasive intent ($b = .17, p < .001$) significantly predicted attitude toward the reviewer, suggesting a possible indirect mediation.

The indirect mediation effects were further tested using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples with replacement. The results indicated significant indirect coefficients for the “received sales commission” condition affecting attitude toward the reviewer via persuasive intent ($b = .06, 95\% \text{ CI} = .01, .13$) and for the “received a free product” condition affecting attitude toward the reviewer via perceived effectiveness ($b = .08, 95\% \text{ CI} = <.01, .16$).

When testing for mediation of the relationship between the extent of disclosed commercial gain and the attitude toward the brand, none of the independent variables, “received a free product” ($b = .18, p = .19$), “received payment” ($b = -.01, p = .97$), or “received sales commission” ($b = -.13, p = .36$), directly predicted attitude toward the brand. However, as mentioned in the previous regression analysis, the “received commission” condition emerged as a significant predictor of the mediator perceived persuasive intent, and the “received a free product” condition significantly predicted the mediator perceived effectiveness. Both mediators, perceived persuasive intent ($b = .28, p < .001$) and perceived effectiveness ($b = .45, p < .001$), furthermore significantly predicted attitude toward the brand, indicating a possible indirect mediation.

Indirect effects were tested with a bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples, revealing significant indirect coefficients for the “received sales commission”

condition affecting attitude toward the brand via persuasive intent ($b = .04$, 95% CI = $.01$, $.08$) and for the “received a free product” affecting attitude toward the brand via perceived effectiveness ($b = .15$, 95% CI = $<.01$, $.29$).

Ultimately, four cases of indirect mediation were identified by the regression analyses. The “received a free product” condition predicted perceived effectiveness, which led to a more favorable attitude toward the reviewer and the brand. Although indirect mediation was found, the effect did not follow the hypothesized negative direction.

Furthermore, the “received sales commission” condition predicted an increase in perceived persuasive intent, which also increased attitude toward the reviewer and the brand. Although the higher extent of disclosed commercial gain increased perceived persuasive intent over the general sponsorship condition as hypothesized, the increase in perceived persuasive intent did not lead to less favorable attitudes as posited by H5. The mediation analysis, therefore, did not find support for H5.

H6: Effects of level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on trust.

As an alternative hypothesis to H3, this hypothesis predicted that the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would have a significant effect on the subdimensions of trust. This hypothesis was tested using two subdimensions of reviewer trust (perceived integrity and perceived benevolence) as dependent variables and the level of detail and the extent of commercial gains as two independent variables, just the same as the hypothesis testing done earlier.

First, the hypothesized effects of the level of detail on trust in the reviewer were tested and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 29. Trust subdimension mean scores appear to show that perceived integrity and perceived benevolence appear to be different with some possibility of product type interaction effects. For example, for search goods, the mean scores were lower in the treatment (disclosure) conditions than the control (no disclosure) condition, and lower when higher details were revealed. However, for experience goods, while the mean scores tend to show a similar pattern between the treatment and control conditions, the mean scores were higher in the high detail condition than in the lower detail condition.

Table 29

Study 2: Mean scores for trust subdimensions by level of detail and product type

	Control SG / EG M (SD)	Low detail SG / EG M (SD)	High detail SG / EG M (SD)
Perceived integrity	5.72 (1.06) / 5.59 (1.14)	5.44 (1.33) / 5.23 (1.36)	5.18 (1.43) / 5.35 (1.39)
Perceived benevolence	5.46 (1.12) / 5.35 (1.19)	5.15 (1.31) / 4.86 (1.41)	4.70 (1.55) / 5.06 (1.47)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

The effects of level of detail on subdimensions of trust, perceived integrity and perceived benevolence, for search and experience goods were tested using two two-way ANCOVAs (see Table 30). The results showed significant effects of the level of detail on both perceived integrity ($F(2, 693) = 4.82, p < .01$) and perceived benevolence ($F(2, 693) = 8.55, p < .001$) when controlling for age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity.

Post-hoc pairwise comparison tests using Tukey showed significantly higher perceived integrity and benevolence in the control condition than in the low-detail ($p = .02$; $p < .01$) and high-detail ($p < .01$; $p < .001$) conditions; however, there was no significant difference in perceived integrity or perceived benevolence ($p = .96$; $p = .86$) between the high and low levels of detail treatment conditions.

The ANCOVAs did not find any significant main effects of product type ($F(1, 693) = 2.30$, $p = .13$) or interaction effect ($F(2, 693) = 1.45$, $p = .24$) on perceived integrity. When it comes to perceived benevolence, however, a significant main effect of product type ($F(1, 693) = 4.89$, $p = .03$) and significant (level of detail x product type) interaction effect ($F(2, 693) = 4.14$, $p = .02$) was found. Subsequent split-sample analysis identified the level of detail as a significant predictor of perceived benevolence for search goods ($F(2, 358) = 10.11$, $p < .001$) but not for experience goods ($F(2, 331) = 2.70$, $p = .07$). Specifically, high-detail disclosures led to significantly lower perceived benevolence in search good reviews and but did not significantly affect perceived benevolence for experience goods.

Table 30

Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA results for level of detail on trust subdimensions

DV	Factor	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial η²</i>
Perceived integrity (<i>Adjusted R² = .21</i>)	Level of detail	2	4.82	<.01	.01
	Product type	1	2.30	.13	.00
	Level of detail x product type	2	1.45	.24	.00
Perceived benevolence (<i>Adjusted R² = .26</i>)	Level of detail	2	8.55	<.001	.02
	Product type	1	4.89	.03	.01
	Level of detail x product type	2	4.14	.02	.01

Next, the hypothesis was tested with the extent of commercial gain variable as the independent variable. Trust subdimension mean scores for the extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions are presented in Table 31 and show that, for search goods, perceived integrity and perceived benevolence mean scores were lower when a greater extent of commercial gain was disclosed. However, no such trend emerged for experience goods.

Table 31

Study 2: Mean scores for trust subdimensions by extent of disclosed commercial gain and product type

	Control SG / EG M (SD)	General sponsorship SG / EG M (SD)	Received free product SG / EG M (SD)	Received payment SG / EG M (SD)	Received sales commission SG / EG M (SD)
Perceived integrity	5.72 (1.06) / 5.59 (1.14)	5.44 (1.33) / 5.23 (1.36)	5.32 (1.46) / 5.48 (1.33)	5.20 (1.41) / 5.19 (1.48)	5.03 (1.42) / 5.36 (1.35)
Perceived benevolence	5.46 (1.12) / 5.35 (1.19)	5.15 (1.31) / 4.86 (1.41)	4.85 (1.66) / 5.18 (1.47)	4.70 (1.51) / 4.92 (1.50)	4.55 (1.46) / 5.07 (1.46)

Note: SG = Search good; EG = Experience good

Two additional ANCOVAs (presented in Table 32) tested the effects of extent of disclosed commercial gain and product type on the trust subdimensions while controlling for participant age, attitude toward the product category, brand loyalty, and brand familiarity. The ANCOVA results showed significant effects of the extent of disclosed commercial gain on perceived integrity ($F(4, 689) = 3.18, p = .01$) and perceived benevolence ($F(4, 689) = 5.02, p = .001$). Post-hoc tests using Tukey identified that all disclosure of commercial gain conditions, except for the “received a free product” condition ($p = .14$), showed significantly lower perceived integrity than the control condition (general sponsorship: $p = .02$; received payment: $p < .01$; received sales commission: $p < .01$) and that all disclosure of commercial gain conditions showed significantly lower perceived benevolence than the control condition (general sponsorship: $p < .01$; received a free product: $p = .02$; received payment: $p < .001$; received sales commission: $p < .001$). There were, however, no statistically significant

differences among the disclosure of commercial gain conditions for both perceived integrity and perceived benevolence.

The ANCOVAs furthermore identified a significant main effect of product type, with the search goods condition showing significantly lower perceived integrity ($F(1, 689) = 6.89, p < .01$) and perceived benevolence ($F(1, 689) = 16.40, p < .001$) ($M = 4.82$ vs. $M = 5.21$) than the experience goods condition. The interaction term was not significant for perceived integrity ($F(4, 689) = 1.14, p = .34$) and perceived benevolence ($F(4, 689) = 2.31, p = .06$).

Table 32

Study 2: Two-way ANCOVA results for extent of disclosed commercial gain on trust subdimensions

DV	Factor	df	F	p	Partial η^2
Perceived integrity (Adjusted $R^2 = .21$)	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	3.18	.01	.02
	Product type	1	6.89	<.01	.01
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	1.14	.34	.01
Perceived benevolence (Adjusted $R^2 = .26$)	Extent of disclosed comm. gain	4	5.02	.001	.03
	Product type	1	16.40	<.001	.02
	Extent of disclosed comm. gain x product type	4	2.31	.06	.01

Data analysis results for H6 provided no support for the hypothesis: Neither the level of detail nor the extent of commercial gain had significant effects on perceived integrity or perceived benevolence of the reviewer. A notable finding from the results is a significant difference between the control and treatment groups: All extent of disclosed

commercial gain conditions but the “received a free product” condition showed significantly lower perceived integrity than the review without disclosure and that all extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions showed lower benevolence than a review without disclosure. Additionally, perceived integrity and benevolence were significantly lower for search goods than for experience goods.

H7: Effects of level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudes.

As an alternative hypothesis to H4, this hypothesis posited that a higher level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would lead to significantly more favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand. As seen in testing for H4, hypothesis testing found no significant main effects of the level of detail or the extent of commercial gain on attitudes. The only significant effect was found for the (level of detail x product type) interaction on attitude toward the reviewer. For search goods, the high-detail disclosure led to less favorable attitude toward the reviewer and, for experience goods, to more favorable attitude toward the reviewer. Regarding attitude toward the brand, significant differences were only found between the control and treatment groups, and no significant effects of the level of detail or the extent of commercial gain were found. H7 was therefore not supported.

H8: Trust as mediator. To test the proposed mediating effect of trust in the relationships between the level of detail or extent of disclosed commercial gain and consumers’ attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand, a mediation analysis was conducted (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2013) with dummy-coded independent

variable categories (Hayes & Preacher, 2014) and dummy-coded product type and control variables as covariates.

Level of detail (high = 1, low = 0) was not a significant predictor of the mediators, perceived integrity ($b = .01, p = .96$) or perceived benevolence ($b = -.01, p = .91$). Since the independent variable did not significantly predict the proposed mediator variables, mediation was not supported for the level of detail variable.

To test mediation of the effect of extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal outcomes, each treatment condition was entered as a dummy-coded variable (with presence = 1 or absence = 0 of each condition) with exception of the “general sponsorship condition”, which served as the reference condition. The “received a free product” ($b = .15, p = .33$), “received payment for review” ($b = -.05, p = .74$), and “received sales commission” ($b = -.08, p = .58$) conditions did not significantly predict perceived integrity. The “received a free product” ($b = .02, p = .82$), “received payment for review,” ($b = .09, p = .39$) and “received sales commission” ($b = .12, p = .24$) conditions also did not significantly predict perceived benevolence.

The lack of effect of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions on the mediator variables indicates that perceived integrity or perceived benevolence do not mediate the relationship between the level of detail or extend of disclosed commercial gain and attitudes toward the reviewer and brand. The mediation analysis did not find support for H8.

Discussion. Study 2 set out to test the effect of the level of detail and disclosed commercial gain on attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand via proposed

mechanisms of either persuasion knowledge or trust. The study tested two sets of alternative hypotheses: H3 through H5 proposed effects on attitudes which would occur via persuasion knowledge while H6 through H8 predicted opposite effects facilitated by trust. Hypotheses 3 through 5 predicted that the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would lead to less favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand via the mechanism of persuasion knowledge. Hypotheses 6 through 8 predicted an alternative outcome and mechanism, namely that the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would lead to more favorable attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand via the mechanism of trust.

Hypothesis testing for H3 found partial support for H3. The level of detail of a sponsorship disclosure did not affect persuasion knowledge subdimensions; rather it was the presence of a disclosure in general that predicted lower perceived effectiveness and appropriateness over a review without disclosure. The high and low-detail conditions did not significantly differ from each other in terms of perceived effectiveness and appropriateness. The extent of disclosed commercial gain of the sponsorship, however, showed some limited but noteworthy effects. When the reviewer disclosed receiving a free product, consumers' perceived effectiveness of the product review was significantly higher than when a general sponsorship disclosure was offered or when the reviewer disclosed having received a payment or sales commission. Most notably, when the reviewer received a free product, the perceived effectiveness did not statistically differ from the condition where no sponsorship disclosure took place.

In terms of H4, which predicted that higher level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain would lead to less favorable attitudes toward the reviewer, the hypothesis testing did not find support. The level of detail of a sponsorship disclosure was only found to affect attitude toward the reviewer for experience goods, not for search goods. Specifically, high-detail disclosures generated more favorable attitudes toward the reviewer than low-detail disclosures, not less favorable attitudes as hypothesized. Attitude toward the brand was not affected by the level of detail. The extent of disclosed commercial gain, on the other hand, did not have any significant effect on attitude toward the reviewer. When it comes to the extent of commercial gain, all reviews disclosing commercial gain but the “received a free product” condition exhibited less favorable attitudes toward the brand when compared to a review without disclosure. The review disclosing the receipt of a free product, on the other hand, did not differ from the review without disclosure and showed a significantly higher attitude toward the brand when compared to the review disclosing sales commission.

The study also did not find support for H5, which posited a mediating effect of persuasion knowledge on the relationship between the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal outcomes. While there was no mediation by persuasion knowledge for level of detail conditions, relationships between the “received a free product” condition and attitude toward the reviewer and the brand were indirectly mediated by the persuasion knowledge subdimension of perceived effectiveness. The “received sales commission” condition’s effect on attitude toward the reviewer and brand was furthermore indirectly mediated by the persuasion knowledge subdimension of

perceived persuasive intent. However, the conditions predicted more favorable attitudes via their respective persuasion knowledge subdimensions rather than less favorable attitudes as posited.

For H6, which posited effects of level of detail and disclosed commercial gain on trust, no support was found. Hypothesis testing for H6 found that perceived integrity and benevolence did not differ between the high and low levels of detail, but both high-detail and low-detail reviews showed a significantly lower perceived integrity and benevolence than the review without disclosure. The tests also found a significant interaction effect for perceived benevolence, which identified that high-detail disclosures led to lower perceived benevolence in search good reviews while no significant effect on perceived benevolence for experience good reviews could be seen. All extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions but the “received a free product” condition showed significantly lower perceived integrity than the review without disclosure, and all extent of disclosed commercial gain conditions showed lower benevolence than a review without disclosure. Furthermore, perceived integrity and benevolence were significantly lower for search goods than for experience goods. In other words, consumers generally trust reviewers evaluating experience goods more. When disclosing sponsorship, the only condition that did not negatively affect perceived integrity when compared to a review without disclosure was the review that disclosed receipt of a free product.

Hypothesis 7 provided an alternative prediction to H4 regarding the effects of the level of detail and extent of commercial gain in sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal responses but was generally not supported. It posited that more favorable attitudes would

result from high-detail disclosures and higher extent of disclosed commercial gain. As summarized in H4 test results, no significant main effect was found for the level of detail in disclosure or the extent of commercial gain on attitude toward the reviewer. Regarding attitude toward the brand, the only significant difference was observed between the control and treatment groups, but not among the different treatment conditions.

Finally, the study did not find any support for H8 which posited a mediating effect of trust subdimensions on the relationship between the level of detail or extent of disclosed commercial gain and attitudinal outcomes. As the level of detail as well as the extent of commercial gain in a review did not influence the trust mediators of perceived integrity and benevolence, no mediating effect was found.

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The growth of social influencer marketing has brought forth different kinds of sponsorship arrangements in the social media space and has resulted in a wide variety of ways such business relationships are disclosed, be it via different modes of disclosure or with different levels of detail or extent of commercial gain featured in sponsorship disclosure messages. Although previous research has examined the effects of sponsorship disclosure on viewers' brand attitude, this research most often focused within the context of television content. The studies found that sponsorship disclosure frequently, though not universally, exhibited a negative effect on brand attitude (e.g., Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012; Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2012; van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013).

Research on sponsorship disclosure in the online context, however, is still emerging and this study aimed to contribute by focusing on sponsorship disclosure in the social media context and particularly on contextual factors such as disclosure modes and types of disclosure, namely the level of detail and the extent to which commercial gain is disclosed. The study did so to understand outcomes of disclosures and to guide reviewers and future regulatory directions but also to contribute to the body of knowledge of persuasion knowledge model, limited cognitive capacity theory, and trust theory.

Summary of Findings

In this dissertation, a set of studies was conducted to evaluate (1) the effect of the sponsorship disclosure mode on consumers' attention to the sponsorship disclosure and

on perceived persuasive intent as well as (2) the effect of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on attitudinal outcomes via persuasion knowledge or trust. The studies revealed a number of noteworthy insights that may hold implications for theory and practice of sponsored content and advertising.

Study 1. The first study revealed that disclosure mode affected consumers' attention to the disclosure but not their perceived persuasive intent of the review. The disclosure mode that informed about sponsorship in written-only form while a product was being reviewed was likely to introduce capacity interference and generate less attention than the spoken-only disclosure mode or the written-and-spoken disclosure mode, which did not cause capacity interference. Furthermore, among the modes that did not introduce capacity interference, namely spoken-only as well as written-and-spoken disclosure, the mode that informed about sponsorship in redundant streams, that is to say in both written and spoken form, generated the most attention. In other words, a disclosure that informs of sponsorship in redundant streams is more likely to be processed than modes that do not disclose in redundant streams as well as modes that introduce capacity interference. Regardless of the disclosure mode, consumers did not indicate any differences in perceived persuasiveness of the review.

Study 2. The second study also provided several important findings. In terms of sponsorship disclosure effects on persuasion knowledge, the extent of disclosed commercial gain was shown to affect the persuasion knowledge subdimension of perceived effectiveness. Specifically, the review that disclosed having received a free product was seen as more effective than reviews that disclosed a general sponsorship,

having received a payment, or having received a sales commission. Additionally, disclosure of having received a free product did not reduce effectiveness compared to the reviews without disclosures. Reviews of experience goods were also generally seen as more effective than reviews of search goods.

Attitudes were also affected by aspects of sponsorship disclosures. The level of detail in disclosures was shown to affect attitudes, with high detail disclosures leading to a more favorable attitude toward the reviewer for experience goods. For search goods, on the other hand, the level of detail did not affect attitude toward the reviewer. Attitude toward the brand was not affected by the level of detail but rather was less favorable for any presence of disclosure.

The extent of disclosed commercial gain did not affect attitudes toward the reviewer. When compared to a review without any disclosure, attitudes toward the brand were significantly lower for all reviews disclosing commercial gain except for the review that disclosed receiving a free product. The review disclosing receipt of a free product also led to a more favorable attitude toward the brand than the review disclosing a sales commission. Four instances of indirect mediation via subdimensions of persuasion knowledge were found. Effects of the review that disclosed receipt of a free product on attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand occurred via perceived effectiveness. Effects of the review that disclosed a sales commission on the same attitudinal outcomes occurred via perceived persuasive intent.

Trust in terms of perceived benevolence was affected differently depending on the product type. Specifically, high-detail disclosures led to significantly lower perceived

benevolence in search good reviews but did not significantly affect perceived benevolence for experience goods. Most reviews disclosing different extents of commercial gain showed lower perceived integrity than the review without disclosure, with the exception of the review disclosing the receipt of a free product. All reviews disclosing commercial gain, however, showed lower perceived benevolence than a review without disclosure.

These findings hold valuable implications for eWOM literature, the persuasion knowledge model and trust theory. They also hold the potential to provide practical implications and guidance for various stakeholders in sponsored product reviews, such as product reviewers, brands, and regulators.

Discussion of Findings

The aforementioned findings contribute to the understanding of eWOM by expanding on the literature on the effects of sponsorship disclosure modes. Specifically, this study contributes the insight that, consistent with the limited cognitive capacity theory and LCMP (Kahneman, 1973; Lang 2000), sponsorship disclosure mode impacts the attention consumers dedicate to the sponsorship disclosure and the extent to which the disclosure is processed. This study's findings are in line with the limited cognitive capacity theory in that when sponsorship disclosure is introduced in written-only form as a secondary task to the viewing of the product review, these two tasks may compete for cognitive resources. In this case, the secondary task may not be allotted sufficient cognitive resources to be processed and stored for later retrieval. When sponsorship is disclosed in spoken-only or written-and-spoken form as part of the primary task,

however, there is no capacity interference, the disclosure receives more attention, and is more likely to be processed and remembered later. Among the two modes that make disclosure part of the primary task, the written-and-spoken disclosure mode discloses sponsorship in two redundant streams, which increases the attention to the disclosure and the likelihood of it being processed.

This finding is particularly noteworthy for two reasons. First, this study applied and tested the LCMP in a novel context, namely that of sponsored eWOM. It contributes to the understanding of how different modalities of sponsorship disclosure are processed and which types of sponsorship disclosure in eWOM may be most effective at generating attention to the disclosure. Second, the LCMP was tested using stimuli which combined a primary and a secondary task in a single stimulus rather than by using two strictly separate tasks as is frequently done in LCMP research (Lang, 2000). This indicates that capacity interference may occur in a single stimulus when multiple messages are presented concurrently but in different modalities, such as in a product review with a concurrent sponsorship disclosure in a different modality than the review.

The studies' findings also provide insights relevant to the study of persuasion. In past studies, sponsorship disclosure has been considered an indicator for diminished objectivity and a trigger for persuasion knowledge that would increase perceived persuasive intent (Boerman et al., 2012, 2015; Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). While it stands to reason that consumers would perceive the review as more persuasive after a sponsorship disclosure and the more attention they dedicate to such disclosure, it is important to note that persuasion knowledge is a construct which is based on experience

with persuasion episodes (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Since product reviews are frequently persuasive, it is possible that consumers have, over time, come to expect these reviews to attempt to persuade them and consequently regard product reviews as holding persuasive intent in general. This experience with relevant persuasion episodes may have a greater effect on consumers' perceived persuasive intent of an online consumer product review than a single exposure to a sponsorship disclosure.

Empirical findings on the effects of the level of detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain on persuasion knowledge subdimensions hold some interesting insights for the understanding of eWOM effects and the role of the persuasion knowledge model as well as trust theory. As most studies focus on perceived persuasive intent and the additional subdimensions have seldom been addressed on their own and rarely in a single study (Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), findings on the role of persuasion knowledge, particularly in terms of perceived effectiveness and appropriateness, constitute a notable contribution to persuasion knowledge and eWOM literature.

In terms of persuasion knowledge, most reviews with disclosure only differed when compared to the review without disclosure. Specifically, reviews without disclosure were perceived to be more effective and appropriate when compared to reviews with either low-detail or high-detail disclosures. Similarly, reviews without disclosure were perceived to be more effective when compared to reviews disclosing different extents of commercial gain. This means that differences in persuasion knowledge were due to the presence or absence of a disclosure, not differences in the type of disclosure. A notable

exception was the review which disclosed having received a free product. Consistent with PKM (Friestad & Wright 1994), one would expect that effectiveness be lower when more commercial gain is disclosed, as the disclosure of commercial gain could be seen as a cue for reduced objectivity. However, this effect did not occur for the review disclosing the receipt of a free product. The review disclosing the receipt of a free product did not differ from the review without disclosure in terms of perceived effectiveness. It was also significantly more effective than a review disclosing a general sponsorship, having received a payment (difference is marginally significant at $p = .05$), or having received a sales commission. It is possible that the circumstance of a free product as the commercial gain may not lead consumers to scrutinize the review message as critically as reviews that do not provide information about the type of sponsorship or reviews that disclose greater extents of commercial gain. The disclosure of receipt of a free product may be uniquely positioned to benefit from reducing ambiguity over the general sponsorship disclosure, while also benefitting from being seen as a lesser commercial gain than remaining disclosure conditions. While this is an interesting case from the perspective of persuasion knowledge, it may also have intriguing practical implications, which are discussed in the following subsection of this discussion.

Trust enables consumers to engage in a situation even in the presence of risk (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Grabner-Kräuter, & Kaluscha, 2003; Lewis & Weigert, 2012; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002). As forming attitudes and eventually making purchase decisions involves a certain level of risk, trust in reviewers allows consumers to use product information conveyed in a

product review to ease product-related decisions (Grabner-Kräuter, & Kaluscha, 2003). In the study, trust was assessed in terms of perceived integrity and perceived benevolence. Perceived integrity was lower than in reviews without disclosure for all high and low-detail disclosure reviews. Similarly, all reviews disclosing commercial gain except for the disclosure of receipt of a free product were also lower in perceived integrity than the review without any disclosure. For trust in terms of perceived benevolence, outcomes differed depending on the reviewed product's product type. High-detail disclosures led to significantly lower benevolence for search goods, while perceived benevolence remained unaffected by differences in the level of detail of disclosures for experience goods. All reviews disclosing commercial gain, however, showed lower perceived benevolence than a review without disclosure. Consumers learning about a search good in a review are likely less dependent on information from a product review since they can get product-relevant information easily from other sources. They may therefore be less motivated to maintain trust in the reviewer as the utility of the trust may not outweigh the risk of vulnerability. While trust was affected by types of sponsorship disclosure, it did not mediate the relationship between types of disclosure and attitudinal outcomes.

Attitudes toward the reviewer and the brand were affected in a variety of ways by different disclosure types. For experience goods, for example, high-detail disclosures resulted in a significantly more favorable attitude toward the reviewer than low-detail disclosures while there was no difference for search goods. Attitude toward the brand, on the other hand, did not differ based on high- or low-detail disclosures. Rather, attitude

was generally less favorable when either a high- or low-detail disclosure was present. As mentioned previously, the review disclosing the receipt of a free product was perceived to be equally effective as a review without disclosure and was significantly more effective than a review disclosing a general sponsorship, having received a payment ($p = .05$), or having received a sales commission.

These findings hold valuable implications for eWOM literature, persuasion knowledge theory, and trust theory. Outcomes of sponsorship disclosure are difficult to generalize as they can be affected by various factors, such as product type or the type of sponsorship deal disclosed and the way it is disclosed. Study insights nonetheless hold the potential to provide practical implications and guidance for various stakeholders in sponsored product reviews, such as product reviewers, brands, and regulators.

Practical implications

The key insight that sponsorship disclosure modes affect consumers' attention to disclosures may be of value to multiple stakeholders in online consumer product reviews. It may for instance be of help for product reviewers. Particularly in light of the finding that disclosure modes did not affect consumers' perception of the review's persuasive intent, reviewers may want to be transparent and inform their viewers of any sponsorship or business relationships in the least uncertain terms. In addition, the insight that sponsorship disclosure mode affects attention to the disclosure may be of interest to advertising regulating bodies, as these organizations pursue the mission of transparency and consumer protection and would likely be invested in reviewers disclosing business relationships in ways that are noticed by consumers.

The FTC, for example, does not require a specific disclosure mode, and the current FTC recommendation for videos is a spoken disclosure (FTC, 2012). Actively discouraging written-only disclosures or changing the recommended or even required disclosure to a written-and-spoken format holds the potential to increase consumer attention to these sponsorship disclosures and the likelihood of disclosures to be processed. As the FTC pursues consumer protection through consumer information, recommending or requiring a written-and-spoken disclosure represents a potentially exciting opportunity to inform and protect consumers.

Although the effects of sponsorship disclosure mode were tested in the US context, the tested effects of sponsorship disclosure mode may translate into other national and cultural contexts as the effect on attention is based on the psychological concepts of capacity interference and redundancy (Kahneman, 1973; Lee & Lang, 2015). If so, the insights could be valuable for other media markets, such as Germany, where written disclosure is required (Die Medienanstalten, n.d.). It is possible that changing these requirements would increase the attention generated by them and better inform and protect consumers.

Level of disclosure detail and extent of disclosed commercial gain effects, on the other hand, may provide helpful guidance to reviewers and marketers. In order to maintain their audience, reviewers may be interested in accepting sponsorship deals and engaging in disclosure of these sponsorships that have as little negative impact on viewers' attitudes toward them and trust in them. Marketers, on the other hand, would be motivated to enter sponsorship deals that result in effective reviews that do not negatively

affect attitude toward their brand. Based on the current study's insights, reviewers may find it preferable to seek a sponsorship of a free product for review as the disclosure of this type of sponsorship did not negatively impact attitudes toward or perceived integrity of the reviewer. Marketers may similarly benefit from this sponsorship deal, as reviews disclosing this type of sponsorship were perceived as most effective and did not negatively affect attitude toward the reviewed brand.

For advertising regulating bodies to update regulatory guidelines, as well as for marketers and reviewers to change their current practices, however, a larger body of research which consistently shows the effect of disclosure modes on attention may be required. This study therefore recommends additional research on the effects of aspects of sponsorship disclosure on message processing and attitudinal and behavioral responses. Finally, online consumer review platforms may also be stakeholders to whom insights on sponsorship disclosure mode effects are important. Particularly in the European context, where social networks may be required to facilitate effective sponsorship disclosures, an understanding of how to disclose in a way that is most likely to be noticed by consumers may be valuable.

Limitations

The studies exhibited some methodological limitations that should be considered when contemplating the studies' results. The studies employed volunteer samples, which are unlikely to be representative of a general consumer population that would watch online consumer product reviews. This limits the generalizability of the findings. It would

be worthwhile to conduct a similar study with a sample that closely resembles that of a large social media platform.

More notably, however, the studies were two online experiments, which attempted to approximate the experience of watching an online consumer product review. They did so by allowing participants to take the online questionnaire at a time and place of their convenience on their own device. The stimuli were furthermore filmed to closely resemble product review videos that one might encounter on social media and video sharing sites. The experimental setting fell short of a simulating a genuine online consumer product review exposure, however, in few key aspects. First, participants were randomly assigned a product review. This presents a threat to ecological validity, as consumers usually seek out product reviews when they are motivated to watch them. Although participants could opt out of the study at any time, they had not chosen to watch the stimulus product review out of interest in a product. Since they were aware that they were part of a study, they may have also scrutinized the product review more closely than they would have in a natural setting. Thus, it is possible that attention to the review was affected.

The product review itself has some external validity issues, as it aimed to control for external influences as much as possible. Thus, the reviews for all conditions followed a script and reviewed fictitious products. It is possible that the resulting reviews were less engaging than actual product reviews which first and foremost aim to inform and entertain. Attitudes toward the reviewer and the reviewed brand could have been affected by this.

Finally, the attention measure exhibited measurement issues. Based on message processing literature (Lang, 2000) aided recall was hypothesized to be more difficult to achieve than recognition. In the context of Study 1, however, it appears that recalling whether a disclosure occurred may have been less demanding than recognizing the exact terms of the sponsorship presented. This did not present a validity issue in the present study as significant differences between conditions were found for both outcomes. It would be worthwhile, however, to revise and refine the attention measure for future studies that seek to discern between attention levels based on successful recall or recognition.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies may want to examine sponsorship disclosure effects in a more natural environment. This can be achieved by working with actual content creators to create stimuli that are more representative of online sponsored content. This collaboration would also provide additional insights about the terms of a variety of sponsorship deals. To allow viewers to watch videos in a natural setting, consequences of sponsorship disclosures such as trust could also be assessed using YouTube analytics by examining subscription and commenting habits rather than by using a questionnaire.

Other worthwhile avenues include longitudinal studies that could evaluate whether any effects of sponsorship disclosure practices compound over time. As the current study only included a single exposure, it is possible that certain effects were not observable, be it because of statistical power issues or because certain effects may take time to cultivate.

Finally, this study wishes to encourage researchers to examine a wider variety of outcomes to sponsorship disclosure, additional factors that may affect or confound sponsorship disclosure effects, and factors that may mediate or moderate relationships. Future studies may, for example, want to examine whether the product reviewer's persona and social group membership affect outcomes. It stands to reason, for example, that the sponsorship deals a reviewer accepts affect whether that reviewer is seen as an ingroup or outgroup member by consumers. Whether the reviewer is seen as a fellow consumer or a marketer could in turn affect attitudes, trust, and behavioral intentions. Similarly, individual factors of the audience member, such as identity, may moderate sponsorship disclosure effects. Consumers may seek out information from product reviewers because they perceive themselves as rational consumers, who come to these content creators for objective information. If consumers, however, expose themselves to eWOM content and are subsequently shown a sponsorship disclosure, which could indicate subjectivity, their behavior may be perceived as at odds with their attitudes and concept of self. Consistent with cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), consumers may be likely to mitigate this dissonance by either changing or rationalizing their behavior. This may have strong applications for sponsored eWOM, as some consumers may choose to stop exposing themselves to the content, trust the content less, or scrutinizing the message more critically.

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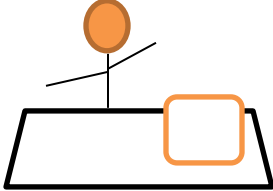
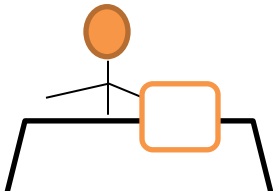
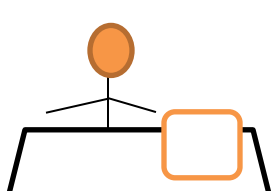

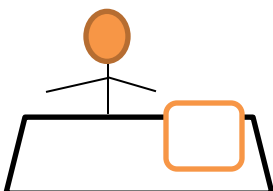
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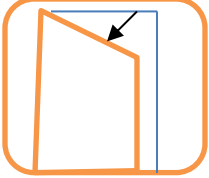
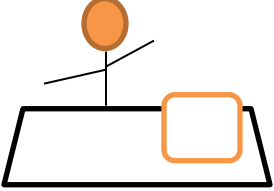
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Appendix A

Storyboard

	Video	Script	Duration
1		Medium shot of reviewer introducing herself and the product. Audio: “Hi guys, I am Ale, and today, I will be reviewing ...”	0:15
2		Fade to Medium shot of reviewer disclosing sponsorship [Only in treatment conditions]. Audio: “I would like to thank ...”	0:07
3		Fade to Medium shot of reviewer reviewing the product. Audio: “I particularly like...”	0:05
4		Medium close-up of product.	0:05
5		Medium shot of reviewer reviewing the product. Audio: “The most unique feature ...”	0:15

6	 An icon showing a rounded rectangle with an orange border. Inside, a blue rectangle is partially open, with a black arrow pointing to the top edge of the opening.	Medium close-up of interaction with product (e.g. opening product)	0:10
7	 An icon showing a stick figure with an orange head sitting at a desk. A computer monitor is on the desk, and a square orange box highlights a portion of the screen.	Medium shot of reviewer reviewing the product. Audio: “It may require some trial and error ...”	0:20

Appendix B Scripts

Microwave Review

Hi guys; welcome back to my channel! I am Ale, and today, I will be reviewing the Cuisiner 1200i microwave oven. It is a midrange stainless steel microwave, which offers a 1 square foot capacity, which is a reasonable size for most households. [DISCLOSURE] I particularly like the look of this microwave, as it looks sleek and high-end. I also appreciate that the buttons are well laid-out and intuitive to use. The most unique feature is the inverter technology, which works by maintaining a steady medium power level. This feature allows the microwave to cook evenly, which is rare among competitors. The Cuisiner 1200i also has a sensor, which detects the doneness of your food and allows for cooking and defrosting without setting a specific time. This sensor, however, was not always easy to use as it sometimes underestimated the time required for a meal to cook or defrost. It may require some trial and error on your part. Overall, though, I feel that the Cuisiner 1200i's look, ease of use, and features make it a great fit for most people. I hope this review was helpful for all of you and thanks for watching!

Suitcase Review

Hi guys; welcome back to my channel! I am Ale, and today, I will be reviewing the Voyager carry-on suitcase. It is a carry-on size soft-shell suitcase, which offers a 14 by 14 inch size, which is a reasonable size for a short weekend trip. [DISCLOSURE] I particularly like the look of this suitcase as it looks sleek and high-end. I also appreciate that all mechanisms work smoothly and are intuitive to use. The most unique feature is its square dimensions, which gives the suitcase a low center of gravity and makes it easy to maneuver on its 4 wheels. This feature allows for a personal item to be attached to the suitcase, which is rare among competitors. The Voyager Carryon also has a TSA approved lock sensor, which lets you lock your suitcase even when using it as checked baggage. This lock, however, was not always easy to use and as it requires you to hold the zippers in place while locking the suitcase. It may require some trial and error on your part. Overall, though, I feel that the Voyager Carryon's look, ease of use, and features make it a great fit for most people. I hope this review was helpful for all of you and thanks for watching!

Dietary Supplements Review

Hi guys; welcome back to my channel! I am Ale, and today, I will be reviewing the Daily Dose Super B-Complex. It is a vitamin dietary supplement, which offers 250 vitamin pills, which is more than sufficient for an eight-month supply. [DISCLOSURE] I

particularly like size of the capsules, as they are smooth and fairly small, making them easy to take every day. I also appreciate that the formula is a multi-vitamin that would likely be beneficial for most people. The most unique feature is a detailed description of each active ingredient and its usefulness. This feature makes it possible for people who are new to dietary supplements to judge whether this product may be right for them, which is rare among competitors. The Daily Dose Super B-Complex also has packaging that protects the supplements from light and air and keeps them from breaking down. This packaging, however, was not always easy to use, as it has a locking mechanism that can be cumbersome to deal with every day. It may require some trial and error on your part. Overall, though, I feel that the Daily Dose Super B-Complex's size, ingredients, and useful information make it a great fit for most people. I hope this review was helpful for all of you and thanks for watching!

Skincare Review

Hi guys; welcome back to my channel! I am Ale, and today, I will be reviewing the dermatologic Ultimate Moisture daily moisturizer. It is a daily facial moisturizer. [DISCLOSURE] I particularly like that it is a soy bean based product, so it is completely natural, safe to use daily, and unlikely to irritate your skin. I also appreciate that it is specifically formulated for sensitive skin and would likely be beneficial for many skin types. The most unique feature is that this moisturizer is not heavily fragranced. This makes it a great fit for all genders, which is rare among competitors. The dermatologic Ultimate Moisture also has a very high essential oil content, which makes it great for use in winter or with dry skin. The high moisture content, however, may make this moisturizer unsuitable for oily skin types. It may require some trial and error on your part. Overall, though, I feel that the dermatologic Ultimate Moisture's formulation, ingredients, and light fragrance make it a great fit for most people. I hope this review was helpful for you all and thanks for watching!

Disclosures (by treatment condition)

General sponsorship: I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video and making this review possible.

Received free product: I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video by sending me this free product for review.

Received payment: I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video by paying me to provide a review.

Received sales commission: I would like to thank [brand] for sponsoring this video by providing me a sales commission for every product sold as a result of this review.

Appendix C

Questionnaires

Pilot Study 1 – Survey 1

Title of Research Study: Survey of Consumer Perceptions of Product Types

Investigator Team Contact Information:

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Investigator Name: Jisu Huh

Investigator Departmental Affiliation: Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Phone Number: 612-626-5527

Email Address: jhuh@umn.edu

Student Investigator Name: Alexander Pfeuffer

Phone Number: 612-625-9824

Email Address: pfeuf003@umn.edu

Key Information About This Research Study

The following is a short summary to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this research study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form. In this questionnaire, you will be asked a set of questions regarding your perceptions about several products.

What is research?

- The goal of research is to learn new things in order to help people in the future. Investigators learn things by following the same plan with a number of participants, so they do not usually make changes to the plan for individual research participants. You, as an individual, may or may not be helped by volunteering for a research study.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are part of the Qualtrics online panel pool.

What should I know about a research study?

- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The study aims to examine consumers' general perceptions about different product types.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 10 minutes.

What will I need to do to participate?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your perceptions regarding a list of products.

More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under “What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?”

Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?

There are minimal foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no immediate benefits to you from your taking part in this research.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You do not have to participate in this research.

Detailed Information About This Research Study

The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 100 people will be in this research study.

What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”?

Upon providing consent, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 minutes.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible for completing a set of questions regarding your perceptions about different products.

What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research study at any time and no one will be upset by your decision.

If you decide to leave the research study, your responses may not be included in the study.

Choosing not to be in this study or to stop being in this study will not result in any penalty to you or loss of benefit to which you are entitled.

Will it cost me anything to participate in this research study?

Taking part in this research study will not lead to any costs to you.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the committee that provides ethical and regulatory oversight of research, and other representatives of this institution, including those that have responsibilities for monitoring or ensuring compliance.

If we learn about current or ongoing child [or vulnerable adult] abuse or neglect, we may be required or permitted by law or policy to report this information to authorities.

Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to <https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?

The HRPP may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous.

If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the HRPP. See the "Investigator Contact Information" of this form for study team contact information and "Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?" of this form for HRPP contact information.

Can I be removed from the research?

The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include incomplete responses to the questionnaire.

- Yes, I want to be in this research.
- No, I do not want to be in this research.

The following set of questions will ask you about your perceptions regarding **[product]**. Please read each question or statement carefully and select the applicable response.

Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of [product] **prior to purchase**.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely difficult

Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of [product] **after purchase**.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely difficult

Have you ever searched for or used an online consumer product review for [product]?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
-

Pilot Study 1 - Survey 2

Title of Research Study: Survey of Consumer Perceptions of Product Types

Investigator Team Contact Information:

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Investigator Name: Jisu Huh

Investigator Departmental Affiliation: Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Phone Number: 612-626-5527

Email Address: jhuh@umn.edu

Student Investigator Name: Alexander Pfeuffer

Phone Number: 612-625-9824

Email Address: pfeuf003@umn.edu

Key Information About This Research Study

The following is a short summary to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this research study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form. In this questionnaire, you will be asked a set of questions regarding your perceptions about several products.

What is research?

- The goal of research is to learn new things in order to help people in the future. Investigators learn things by following the same plan with a number of participants, so they do not usually make changes to the plan for individual research participants. You, as an individual, may or may not be helped by volunteering for a research study.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are part of the Qualtrics online panel pool.

What should I know about a research study?

- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The study aims to examine consumers' general perceptions about different product types.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 10 minutes.

What will I need to do to participate?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your perceptions regarding a list of

products.

More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under “What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?”

Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?

There are minimal foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no immediate benefits to you from your taking part in this research.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You do not have to participate in this research.

Detailed Information About This Research Study

The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

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What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

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What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research study at any time and no one will be upset by your decision.

If you decide to leave the research study, your responses may not be included in the study.

Choosing not to be in this study or to stop being in this study will not result in any penalty to you or loss of benefit to which you are entitled.

Will it cost me anything to participate in this research study?

Taking part in this research study will not lead to any costs to you.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the committee that provides ethical and regulatory oversight of research, and other representatives of this institution, including those that have responsibilities for monitoring or ensuring compliance.

If we learn about current or ongoing child [or vulnerable adult] abuse or neglect, we may be required or permitted by law or policy to report this information to authorities.

Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants’ Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to

<https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?

The HRPP may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous.

If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the HRPP. See the “Investigator Contact Information” of this form for study team contact information and “Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?” of this form for HRPP contact information.

Can I be removed from the research?

The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include incomplete responses to the questionnaire.

- Yes, I want to be in this research.
- No, I do not want to be in this research.

The following set of questions will ask you about your perceptions regarding **[product]**. Please read each question or statement carefully and select the applicable response.

Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of a [product] **prior to purchase** solely based on **information available in advertisements or the description of the product**.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely difficult

Please indicate how difficult it is to evaluate the quality of a [product] **after purchase** based on **your experience with the product.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely difficult

Have you ever searched for or used an online consumer product review for a [product]?

- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
-

Study 1 Pilot Test

Title of Research Study: Perceptions of Online Consumer Product Reviews

Investigator Team Contact Information:

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Investigator Name: Jisu Huh

Investigator Departmental Affiliation: Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Phone Number: 612-626-5527

Email Address: jhuh@umn.edu

Student Investigator Name:

Alexander Pfeuffer

Phone Number: 612-625-9824

Email Address: pfeuf003@umn.edu

Supported By: This research is supported by the Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Key Information About This Research Study

The following is a short summary to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this research study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form. In this questionnaire, you will be asked a set of questions regarding your perceptions about an online consumer product review.

What is research?

- The goal of research is to learn new things in order to help people in the future. Investigators learn things by following the same plan with a number of participants, so they do not usually make changes to the plan for individual research participants. You, as an individual, may or may not be helped by volunteering for a research study.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are part of the Qualtrics online panels service or because you are enrolled in the HSJMC research subject pool.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The study aims to learn about your perceptions of an online consumer product review.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 10 minutes.

What will I need to do to participate?

You will be asked to view an online consumer product review and answer related questions.

More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under “What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?”

Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?

There are minimal foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You do not have to participate in this research. Instead of being in this research study, your choices may include not participating in research studies or participation in other research studies. If you are a HSJMC subject pool participant, you may also contact your instructor for alternative means of obtaining extra course credit.

Detailed Information About This Research Study

The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 1300 people will be in this research study.

What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”?

Upon providing consent, you will be asked to view an online consumer product review and complete an online questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 minutes.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible for completing a set of questions regarding an online consumer product review.

What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research study at any time and no one will be upset by your decision.

If you decide to leave the research study, your responses may not be included in the study and you may not be compensated.

Choosing not to be in this study or to stop being in this study will not result in any penalty to you or loss of benefit to which you are entitled.

Will it cost me anything to participate in this research study?

Taking part in this research study will not lead to any costs to you.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

No personal information will be recorded. The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. We will not ask you about child [or vulnerable adult] abuse, but if you tell us about child [or vulnerable adult] abuse or neglect, we may be required or permitted by law or policy to report to authorities.

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- Yes, I would like to participate in this research.
 - No, I would not like to participate in this research.
-

Please watch the following product review carefully.

[STIMULUS]

What do you remember about the video you just watched? Please list all things (e.g., any words, images, objects, information) you recall from the video.

As far as you can remember, did the video you just watched disclose whether it was sponsored?

- Yes
 - No
 - I cannot remember
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Which of the following types of sponsorship matches the compensation the reviewer disclosed?

- None
- General sponsorship
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- Yes, I would like to participate in this research.
- No, I would not like to participate in this research.

What is your age in years?

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Please specify your race/ethnicity.

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other

Please specify your race.

Do you identify your origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish?

Yes

No

Please indicate your highest level of education attained.

Less than high school degree

High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree

Please indicate your family's annual household income range before tax.

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more
- I don't know

Please indicate how you feel about the product category of [product category] in general.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Good
Negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positive
Unfavorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Favorable

Please rate your feelings toward [product category].

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unimportant
Boring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Interesting
Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Irrelevant
Exciting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unexciting
Means nothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Means a lot to me
Appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unappealing
Fascinating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mundane
Worthless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Valuable
Involving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Uninvolving
Not needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Needed

Please look at each of following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree with it.

[Brand] is a [product category] brand. Please indicate how familiar you are with the [Brand] brand.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

Please watch the following product review carefully.

[STIMULUS]

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Please look at each of following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree with it.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
The aim of this video is to sell the reviewed product.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The aim of this video is to stimulate the sales of the reviewed product.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The aim of this video is to influence your opinion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The aim of this video is to make people like the reviewed product.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for participating in this research.

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Study 2 Pilot Test

Title of Research Study: Perceptions of Online Consumer Product Reviews

Investigator Team Contact Information:

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Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?

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What is your age in years?

What is your sex?

Male

Female

Please specify your race/ethnicity.

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other

Please specify your race.

Do you identify your origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish?

Yes

No

Please indicate your highest level of education attained.

Less than high school degree

High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree

Please indicate your family's annual household income range before tax.

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more
- I don't know

Please indicate how you feel about the product category of [product category] in general.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Good
Negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positive
Unfavorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Favorable

Please rate your feelings toward [product category].

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unimportant
Boring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Interesting
Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Irrelevant
Exciting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unexciting
Means nothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Means a lot to me
Appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unappealing
Fascinating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mundane
Worthless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Valuable
Involving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Uninvolving
Not needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Needed

Please look at each of following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree with it.

[Brand] is a [product category] brand. Please indicate how familiar you are with the [Brand] brand.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

Please watch the following product review carefully.

[STIMULUS]

Please think about the reviewer who appeared in the video you just saw. For each set of statements below, please select an option on the scale that best reflects what you think or feel about this person.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
She doesn't seem like a nice person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	She seems like a nice person
I find the person extremely unfavorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I find the person extremely favorable
She is very unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	She is very pleasant
I very much dislike the person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I very much like the person

Please look at each of following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree with it.

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
The way this review informs people seems acceptable to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The reviewer tried to manipulate the audience in ways that I don't like.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was annoyed by this review because the reviewer seemed to be trying to inappropriately manage or control the viewer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I didn't mind this review; the reviewer was not manipulative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This review was fair in what was said and shown.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that this review is fair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for participating in this research.

The brand and review displayed in this research was of a fictitious nature. Any opinions and evaluations voiced during the review do not pertain to any existing brand.