UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM SPONSORED ADS: MESSAGE EXPLICITNESS AND MODERATING FACTORS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This experimental study aims to explore how Instagram sponsored advertisements impact consumer perception and behaviors, focusing on the overarching Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) theory. The study consists of two distinct experiments, each examining different moderators while maintaining a central emphasis on message explicitness and its interaction with other variables.

In Study 1, participants were exposed to Instagram sponsored ads featuring different levels of message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) and varying product types (utilitarian vs. hedonic). The main outcome variable assessed was immediate purchase intent. The mediators, persuasion knowledge, and perceived deceptiveness, were also analyzed to understand their impact on the correlation between message explicitness, product type, and purchase intent. The results supported the impact of perceived deceptiveness on immediate purchase intent.

In Study 2, the focus remained on message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit), but the moderator shifted to ad skepticism, a continuous variable. Like the first study, the analysis included mediation by persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness. The findings revealed a noteworthy difference between explicit and implicit messages concerning perceived deceptiveness.

Both studies employed random participant assignment to distinct experimental conditions to ensure unbiased outcomes. Data collection occurred through online surveys, and a total of 298 participants took part in the study. The discoveries from this dissertation furnish valuable insights into the efficacy of Instagram sponsored ads and

illuminate the significance of message explicitness and moderating factors in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. The findings of the study enhance our understanding of PKM in the realm of social media sponsored advertising, providing meaningful guidance to marketers and advertisers in crafting more impactful and targeted ad campaigns across Instagram and other social platforms. Ultimately, this research aids in advancing knowledge within the realm of sponsored advertising on social media and its impact on consumer behavior.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Focusing on Instagram advertising, this dissertation investigates the effect of message explicitness levels (i.e., explicit vs. implicit) on consumer perception of an ad (ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge) and consumers' intentional behaviors (i.e., click "Shop Now" intention and purchase intention). The opening chapter of this dissertation comprises several sections, including: (1) Background, (2) Statement of Study Gaps, (3) Study Goals, (4) Study's Significance, (5) Definitions of Key Terminology, and (6) Outline and Synopsis of the Dissertation.

Background

Social Media Marketing

Social media includes an array of internet platforms that enable viewers to create and distribute their unique content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Individuals utilizing social media have the capacity to generate personal profiles, blogs, and connect with friends through features such as profile searching, instant messaging, sharing, and commenting. Among the widely favored social media networks used by marketers for product launches is Instagram, which is utilized by 48% of marketers around the world, according to a study by Hootsuite (2021). This statistic makes Instagram ranks as the second most widely used social media platform for product launches, following Facebook. The use of Instagram by companies for product launches highlights the increasing importance of social media as a means for establishing brands and fostering interaction. Utilizing social media platforms enables marketers to reach more consumers

(Bhattacharya, 2022). Between the years 2021 and 2022, there was a notable growth of over 10% in the number of users of social media (Schaffer, 2022). In absolute figures, this surge accounted for over 376 million fresh users joined, resulting in global social media's outreach extends to approximately 4.62 billion individuals. This remarkable statistic corresponds to just over 50% of the worldwide population and makes up around 93.4% of those with online access. Professionals anticipate that within the next five years, the number of people on social media will increase to 4.4 billion. Furthermore, it is projected that internet users will spend more than 33% of their overall internet usage duration is spent on social media platforms.

Furthermore, specific attributes of social media aid marketers in interacting with their intended audience and fostering brand recognition (Bhattacharya, 2022). Research by Bhattacharya in 2022 has conclusively demonstrated that social media effectively boosts brand awareness by amplifying engagement levels. Social engagement encompasses activities such as comments, likes, shares, reposts, and saves, as indicated by Baker in the same year. Moreover, social media plays a crucial role in directing traffic directly to brand websites, with marketers achieving this by incorporating direct links to their websites in their profiles, bios, and posts (Baker, 2022).

Additionally, social media serves as a convenient platform for sharing information and knowledge, as evidenced by Muyingo (2017)'s research. The online environment provided by social platforms facilitates interpersonal communication, leading to an increase in the volume of interactions between individuals, as highlighted in the study by Eginli and Tas (2018). Notably, the rise of social media has completely

transformed how businesses engage in communication with their customers. It significantly influences consumer behavior across various stages, including awareness, information gathering, idea formation, attitude development, purchase decisions, communication after a purchase, and assessment (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Similar to how television used to influence consumer prior decisions, social media has now grown to be an important influencer of consumer choices. A significant number of individuals depend on social media for making buying choices, underscoring the crucial role of social media marketing in the realm of digital marketing. Moreover, customer service is increasingly being conducted through social networking sites. This shift is partially attributed to people's preference for brands that are well-liked by others and responsive to consumers (Schaffer, 2022).

The influence of social media on consumer actions is apparent from statistics, with a high percentage of online shoppers accessing social media within the previous month. For nearly 50% of internet users, social media functions as a significant provider of knowledge for making purchasing decisions. Efforts in social media marketing have demonstrated their effectiveness in introducing novel products to consumers, regardless of the specific type of content utilized. Notably, among consumers aged 18 to 29, almost half acknowledge making purchases in response to social media advertisements. Statista Research Department (2022)'s data also reveals a rapid growth in the acceptance of social media marketing campaigns among American enterprises, with over 92% of them utilizing this strategy (Figure 1.1).

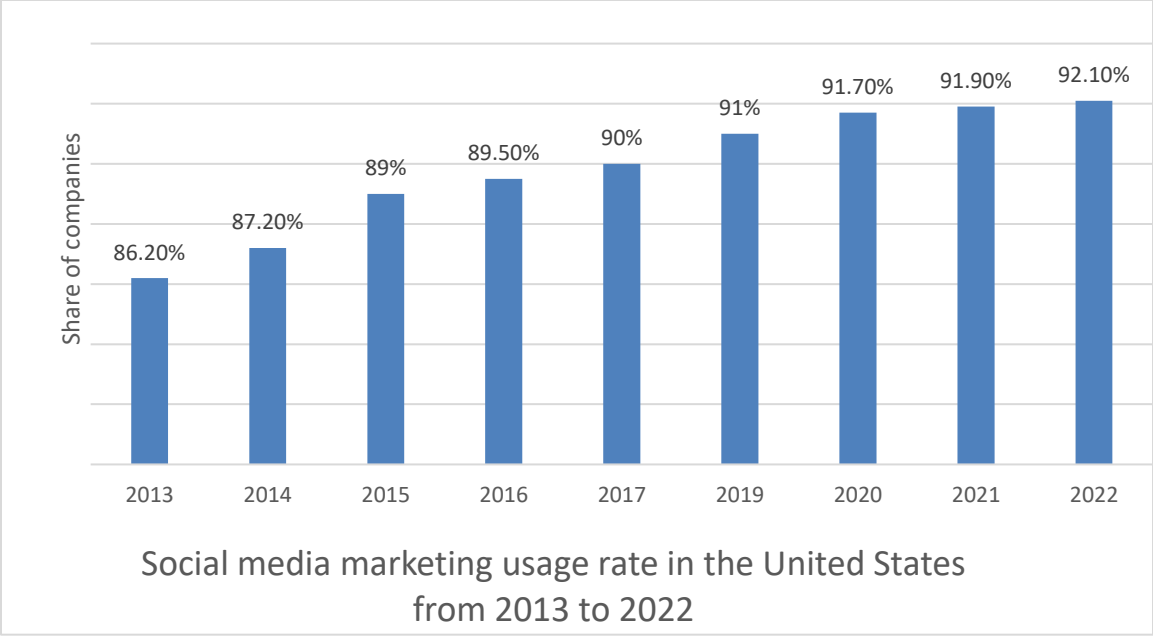

Figure 1.1. Rate of Usage of Social Media Marketing in the US. From Statista Research Department. (2022, February 23). *U.S. Social Media Marketing Reach 2022*. Statista. Retrieved May 5, 2022, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/203513/usage-trands-of-social-media-platforms-in-marketing/

Given that the most favored social networks originated in the US, which houses the world's largest economy, it has become imperative for brands to strategically position themselves to enhance their social media presence, as emphasized by Schaffer (2022). In the marketing context, social media serves as platforms where individuals establish networks and exchange feelings or information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The distinctive characteristics of social media, characterized as a "dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian, and interactive entity" (Peters et al., 2013), have brought about three significant changes within the business landscape. Firstly, social media facilitates connections between companies and customers that were not feasible in the past. This connectivity is made possible by diverse platforms like social networking sites (e.g., Instagram and Facebook), content-sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube), and microblogging sites (e.g., Twitter). These platforms foster the creation of shared values and interests within social networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In previous research, the notion of "social connectedness" has been investigated, also known as "social ties" (e.g., Muller & Peres, 2019; Quinton & Wilson, 2016). The intensity and depth of these social connections ascertain whether they are categorized as weak or strong, a concept elucidated by Granovetter (1973). Prior studies have highlighted the significant influence of the strength of social connectedness in shaping consumer referral behaviors (Verlegh et al., 2013).

The second fundamental shift brought about by social media pertains to the transformation in how businesses and consumers influence and interact with each other. Social interaction encompasses various behaviors, including communication or passive

observations, which hold the power to impact on the decisions and consumption patterns of others, as highlighted by Chen et al. (2011). Such social interactions have been labeled by Nair et al. (2010) as the WOM effect or contagion effects. Social interactions are significantly influenced by the structure of social networks and provide measurable value to businesses, often referred to as "social equity (Muller & Peres, 2019)." In the area of social media study, researchers have realized the significance of social impact on shaping customer decisions. Research has further shown that the patterns of connection among individuals and the strong social connections can serve as an indicator of the depth of social engagements (Aral & Walker, 2014; Katona et al., 2011).

The third significant shift brought about by social media is the remarkable surge amount of social media data, enabling companies to improve customer relationship management and refine decision-making within the market (Libai et al., 2010). Social media data, along with other digital information, exhibits the traits of variety, velocity, and volume. These mean the enormous data available, the diverse sources from which the data originates, and the real-time nature of the data (Alharthi et al., 2017). The extensive social media data from various platforms, such as blogs, social networks, and forums, and presented in different forms, including video, text, and images, can be readily extracted and effectively harnessed through modern information technologies (Moe & Schweidel, 2017).

While the literature suggests that social media holds significance as a tool for marketers to establish brand awareness, interact with their intended audience, and launch new products, there are still several gaps in our understanding of social media on

consumer behavior and brand performance. There is a significant research gap in understanding the efficiency of various social media platforms in attaining diverse marketing goals (Bhattacharya, 2022). For instance, although the capability of social media to enhance brand recognition is acknowledged, there is a scarcity of comprehensive research focusing on the specific features of various social media platforms that are most effective at achieving this objective.

Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media Marketing

Instagram has emerged as a significant factor influencing consumer decision-making, with studies by Pentina et al. (2018) and Rodgers and Thorson (2018) indicating its association with improved long-term relationships between brand and customer and positive engagement with companies. While individuals invest time on Instagram, they actively participate in advertising communication, engaging in the collaborative generation of value alongside companies (Voorveld et al., 2018). Simultaneously, companies leverage this platform to develop brand narratives and implement successful storytelling strategies, aiming to captivate and entertain consumers. The effectiveness of such brand storytelling has been linked to increased profits and sales (Pentina et al., 2018; Xiang et al., 2016).

Marketers and retailers can leverage consumer engagement on social media, encompassing activities like obtaining and sharing information, learning new trends, and checking for new goods from favored brands. This engagement, as demonstrated in studies by Fulgoni (2015) and Rapp et al. (2013), allows marketers and retailers to establish brand associations and enhance overall brand performance. Furthermore, this

positive impact on brand engagement can influence buying decisions and boost profits (Kumar et al., 2016; Pentina et al., 2018). Additionally, Instagram's influence extends to stimulating impulse purchases, leading consumers to bypass the assessment step of choice (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Xiang et al., 2016).

Additionally, social networks have transformed consumers' role and consumers have become like active users who interact directly with brands (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021). Instagram assumes a crucial function in facilitating connections between brands and customer relationship management, communication, advertising, and the cultivation of loyalty (Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018; Rodgers & Thorson, 2018). Consumers actively attribute brand narrative, advertising, and brand story through sharing their emotions and experiences on social networks like Instagram (Voorveld et al., 2018). The platform is particularly favored by consumers for brands' communication and advertising, especially among Generation Y and Z (Vitelar, 2019). Instagram is understood as the most enjoyable platform, often utilized during free moments. Instagram's potential lies in building co-created engagement between customer and brand, where brand actions are collaboratively created (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016).

While social media usage holds attraction for individuals, it has the potential to negatively affect the psychological well-being of engaged users. Spending time on social media has been associated with unfavorable moods (Fardouly et al., 2015), psychological well-being issue, such as depression and loneliness (Hunt et al., 2018), eating disorders (Holland & Tiggemann, 2017), and unattractive body image (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018). For instance, a study focusing on adolescents in India and conducted by Dhir et al.

(2018) discovered that the extensive utilization of social media platforms can lead to social media tiredness, resulting in increased depression and anxiety.

The use of Instagram for consumer decision making and brand engagement has been extensively studied; however, there are still some major gaps in our understanding of the topic. Limited research on the effectiveness of Instagram advertising is one such gap. While there is evidence that consumers enjoy brand advertising and communication on Instagram (Voorveld et al., 2018), further studies are required to determine the actual impact and efficacy of such advertising in driving purchase decisions.

Function and Use

Regarding the purpose and utilization of social media, attributes encompass unrestricted availability across time and space, user-friendly operation, interactive elements, and incorporation of content generated by users (Kircova et al., 2015). Another noteworthy characteristic of social media is its visually captivating nature (10 Top Features of Social Media Apps, 2021). Kietzmann et al. (2011) contend that social media has introduced a new era of communication characterized by highly interactive platforms that facilitate sharing and co-creation among consumers. In order to elucidate the various functionalities of social media, the authors propose a honeycomb-shaped classification with seven key titles: identity, presence, sharing, relationships, conversations, groups, and reputation (Figure 1.2). These titles encompass the different features utilized by social media users. Identity represents how users present themselves, conversations refer to

users' interactions with others, sharing involves the exchange and distribution of content, and relationships encompass users' connections with one another.

Instagram Sponsored Ads

Instagram-sponsored ads have gained growing popularity as a marketing tool for enterprises seeking to showcase their offerings and services on the platform. Recent research has indicated the efficacy of Instagram sponsored ads in boosting brand recognition, interaction, and sales. For example, Amoroso et al. (2021) found that sponsored ads on Instagram can positively influence consumer attitudes toward a brand and their intention to make a purchase. Additionally, a study by Hmoud et al. (2022) showed that sponsored ads on Instagram can effectively promote their brands and increase sales.

Despite the positive outcomes, there are also concerns about the potential negative effects of sponsored ads on Instagram. Some research has suggested that influencers' sponsored ads may lead to consumer fatigue and a lack of trust in brands (Ki et al., 2022). Nonetheless, there remains a research gap concerning the influence of Instagram sponsored advertisements on consumer behavior and the efficacy of this marketing approach.

Message Explicitness Levels (Explicit vs. Implicit)

Persuasive advertising can take on two forms of message explicitness, explicit and implicit. Explicit message claims refer to claims that are demonstrated with exaggeration (Gardner & David, 1975; Jacoby et al., 1972). On the other hand, previous research

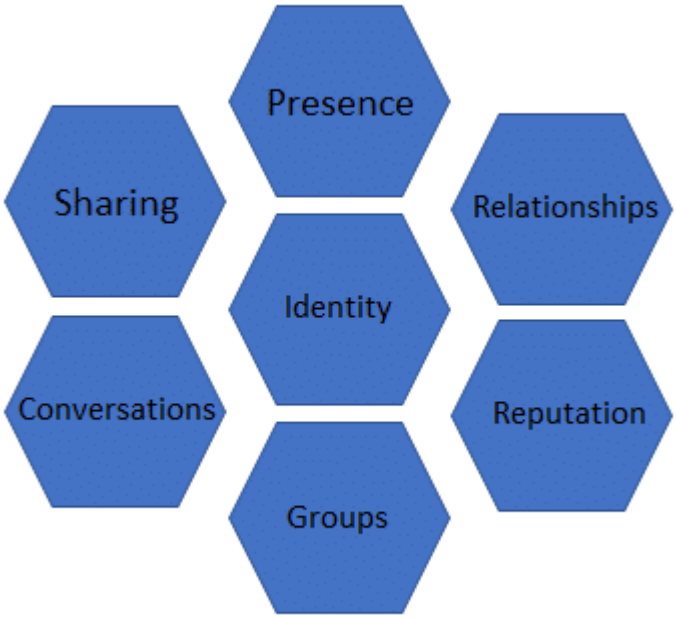

Figure 1.2. Honeycomb Model of Social Media Functionality. From Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business horizons*, *54*(3), 241-251.

(Harris, 1977; Hastak & Mazis, 2011) has shown that implicit message claims can be technically true while still subtly misleading the audience. These implied claims often require more effortful processing for pragmatic inferences (Harris, 1977; McKoon & Ratcliff, 1989), and individuals deeply engaged with the subject matter are inclined to deduce the intended significance (Johar, 1995). While implicit message assertions may be more challenging to identify, they have been observed to impact judgment and decision-making (Xie & Boush, 2011). Nonetheless, a research void exists concerning the identification of implicit messages in the impact of social media advertisements on consumer behavior. Further studies are needed to explore the impact of both explicit and implicit messages in Instagram sponsored ads on consumer behavior.

Moderator: Utilitarian vs. Hedonic Product

Research has classified products into two categories: utilitarian and hedonic, according to their features (Botti & McGill, 2011; Drolet et al., 2007; Kronrod & Danziger, 2013). The difference between utilitarian and hedonic products holds significant due to its relevance to the multicomponent theory of attitude, which proposes that customers typically favor ad appeals that align with the product's inherent characteristics (Drolet & Aaker, 2002). Hedonic products are described as inherently exiting and enjoyable to consume (Botti & McGill, 2011; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). On the other hand, utilitarian products are valued for their functional nature, offering practical benefits, and fulfilling instrumental needs (Motoki et al., 2019). Utilitarian products' purchase is often justified based on their convenience, usefulness, and functionality, rather than their emotional or affective characteristics.

Based on the literature, one major gap in research is the potential impact of utilitarian and hedonic products on consumer response to advertising with different levels of message explicitness. While previous study has established that ad viewers generally prefer ads that align with the product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) (Drolet & Aaker, 2002), there is a need to investigate how this preference might affect their response to message explicitness levels. It is possible that consumers might be more forgiving of explicit messages for hedonic products that are primarily purchased for their enjoyable nature, compared to utilitarian products that are purchased for their functional benefits. However, this hypothesis remains untested in the literature.

Another gap in research is the need to investigate how consumers might respond to different levels of message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) for different product types (utilitarian vs. hedonic). While previous studies have examined how consumers respond to explicit and implicit messages separately, there is a need to investigate whether the product type might moderate the effectiveness of these messages. For example, consumers might be more likely to detect explicit claims for utilitarian products but might be more influenced by implicit claims for hedonic products.

Moderator: Ad Skepticism

Researchers have suggested that customers employee their advertising comprehension to assess the persuasiveness and efficiency of advertisements, a concept known as persuasion knowledge model (PKM) (Ham et al., 2015). Consumers' awareness of persuasion can be categorized as either situational or dispositional. Situational persuasion knowledge refers to the particular evaluations and responses that

consumers employ when they encounter persuasive communication or advertisements (Wojdynski et al., 2018). On the other hand, dispositional persuasion knowledge encompasses consumers' general understanding, skills, familiarity with, and exposure to advertising and persuasion.

Previous studies have explored ad skepticism within the realms of both situational persuasion knowledge and dispositional persuasion knowledge. For instance, skepticism towards TV advertising in general is an example of dispositional persuasion knowledge, while skepticism towards online advertising is an example of situational persuasion knowledge (Tutaj & Van Reijmersdal, 2012). When it comes to native advertising, customers utilize either their inherent skepticism towards ad, referred to as dispositional persuasion knowledge, or their skeptical viewpoints triggered by the ad itself (for instance, "I doubt this is an ad"), known as situational persuasion knowledge, during the viewing of native advertising (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016).

Despite the growing interest in understanding how customers use persuasion knowledge to process advertising, there are still several gaps in the literature, specifically in terms of how persuasion knowledge influences the effectiveness and persuasiveness of sponsored advertising on Instagram. Further studies are needed to examine the underlying processes involved in how consumers evaluate and respond to Instagram sponsored advertising messages, as well as the potential moderating factors that may impact this relationship (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016).

Statement of Study Gaps

Despite marketing promotional messages in social media can be efficient at impacting on consumers' perception regarding product image and cause consumption behaviors, there is scarce research about the message explicitness levels (i.e., explicit vs. implicit) of social media marketing messages and how it impacts consumers' responses.

Previous studies have examined various forms of ad message explicitness, including explicit and implicit claims, through different media such as television and print and online display advertising (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Yan et al., 2012). Still, the impact of message explicitness in social media advertising has received limited attention (Lee & Watkins, 2016), despite the increasing numbers of advertisements being promoted through social media compared to traditional media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, television, or websites). While many brands and marketers have shifted their advertising focus to social media, limited studies have explored the varying degrees of message explicitness in Instagram ads. Recent study on explicit vs. implicit messages has focused on website advertising (Betts et al., 2021). Thus, there is a clear need to investigate the levels of message explicitness within the social media context.

Secondly, while Instagram users frequently encounter sponsored ads unexpectedly after clicking followers' account stories, there is little research within the context of unexpected-sponsored ads. Some research has been done that focuses on influencers' sponsored ads (Boerman, 2020; Jacobson et al., 2022; Kim, 2022), but little research that has examined sponsored ads within the context of Instagram stories. A more comprehensive understanding of the unexpected-sponsored ads could offer greater

knowledge of current practices within social media brand marketing. Specifically, by examining the effectiveness of unexpected-sponsored ads on Instagram, this study can contribute to the improvement of more efficient and effective social media brand marketing strategies.

Thirdly, despite previous research suggesting that customers prefer ad that matches the product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) (Drolet & Aaker, 2002), little is known about how this preference might vary across different types of products within the realm of social networking sites (SNS). Specifically, it is unclear whether consumers may be more tolerant of explicit advertising messages for hedonic products compared to utilitarian products on SNS. Further investigation is needed to examine how product type and advertising message explicitness interact in influencing consumer responses to SNS advertising.

Fourthly, recent research has highlighted a need for studies to investigate the demographic characteristics of participants in previous research on advertising message explicitness. A majority of studies have employed a general sample of participants, without focusing on specific user groups of social media platforms like Instagram. However, given that females aged 18-34 years old represent a large user group of Instagram, there is a research gap in investigating the impact of message explicitness on this specific group of Instagram users.

The last research gap is concerned with the dependent variable (click “Shop Now” intention), which is the outcome variable. While some researchers have used the behavioral intention as their outcome variable in various contexts of Instagram (Casaló et

al., 2020; Chung & Yang, 2021; Phua & Lim, 2023), there is little to no research which used the click “Shop Now” intention variable. Investigating social media marketing strategies on consumers’ click “Shop Now” intention is important as a practical variable when studying Instagram sponsored ads. This is especially important given that every sponsored ad has the “Shop Now” button and this button leads customers to the brand website directly.

Study Goals

There are four major objectives to this study that will guide the research on current advertising social media practices. The PKM serves as an overarching theory for all four objectives. Persuasion knowledge empowers individuals to employ the most appropriate coping strategy in responses to persuasion attempts. The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of different message categories on viewers' perceptions of ad and their adoption of effective coping strategies.

The First objective is to understand the impact of levels of message explicitness on Instagram users’ advertising perceptions and behavioral intentions. Rhetoric theory is used to explain the division of explicit and implicit claims as persuasive messages in advertising. This study aims to investigate the influence of varying levels of message explicitness (i.e., explicit vs. implicit) on Instagram users’ advertising perceptions, including ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge. Additionally, the present study investigates how message explicitness affects user behavioral intentions. including click “Shop Now” intention and purchase intention.

Another aim of the present study is to investigate how consumers' perception of ads (i.e., ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge) impact behavior intentions (i.e., click "Shop Now" intention and purchase intention). PKM posits that individuals can effectively respond to persuasion attempts by utilizing their knowledge about persuasion, allowing them to employ the most suitable coping strategies. In this context, consumers' perception of ads, including ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge, can influence their behavioral intentions, including the intention to click "Shop Now" and the intention to make a purchase.

The third objective is to analyze how the type of product (utilitarian vs. hedonic) affects the connection between the levels of message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) and consumers' perception of ads (ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge) and subsequent behavioral intentions. Consumers' perceptions and responses to advertisements for utilitarian and hedonic products are influenced by their distinct characteristics. For utilitarian products, consumers are less concerned with exaggerated or promotional messaging, whereas for hedonic products, such messaging may have a greater impact on their perceptions and responses.

The fourth objective of the present study is to investigate how ad skepticism moderates the relationship between different levels of message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) and consumer perception of ad (ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge) and subsequent behavioral intentions. People have their own perceptions about advertisement from their previous experiences. Based on PKM, when

customers have positive/negative views about advertisements in general, their ad skepticism affects information processing and decision making.

Study's Significance

The results of the present study will provide valuable insights for both industry and academics experts. With the growing trend of ads on social media, this study will enhance our comprehension of the most effective brand strategy for Instagram sponsored ads.

By exploring the PKM in the realm of Instagram, the current research will contribute to theoretical advancements and provide a contemporary outlook that aligns with current advertising practices. It aims to bridge the gap in academic research while offering practical insights for brand managers.

Additionally, this research aims to address the existing gap in scholarly literature and provide strong utility for brand managers since there is little research to investigate the level of explicitness of Instagram sponsored ad messages and "Shop Now" intention as customers behaviors after seeing the sponsored ads on Instagram.

Moreover, by offering the most favorable results of the sponsored Instagram ad including the integration of the levels of explicitness of ad messages (i.e., explicit, or implicit) and product type (utilitarian, or hedonic) and ad skepticism, this research will enrich brand managers' understanding of which factors are effective on consumers perception of ad and lead to click "Shop Now" button and purchase behavior.

Definitions of Key Terminology

- Instagram Sponsored Ads: Sponsored posts on Instagram can be categorized as a type of native ad, which means paid ad that adopts the feel and look of the platform's editorial content (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016).
- Explicit Message: Explicit claims are statements that can be clearly proven to be untrue. It is anticipated that such explicitly false claims will lead to greater awareness and recognition among consumers (Harris, 1977; Hastak & Mazis, 2011; Hyman, 1990).
- Implicit Message: Implicit claims are statements that may be factually accurate, yet they have the potential to mislead the audience in a more subtle manner (Harris, 1977; Hastak & Mazis, 2011; Hyman, 1990).
- Ad Credibility: An assessment of the degree to which an advertisement accurately conveys the truth (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).
- Perceived Deceptiveness: Perceived deceptiveness can lead to the perception of manipulativeness (Lee & Watkins, 2016), where consumers infer that the advertiser is attempting to influence through improper, manipulative, or unfair methods (Campbell, 1995, p. 228).
- Persuasion Knowledge: Persuasion knowledge means the comprehension that individuals develop about attempts at persuasion and their subsequent reactions to them (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 1).
- Click “Shop Now” Intention: An individual’s intention or plan to click on a “Shop Now” button on the Instagram sponsored ads (Manoharan et al., 2021).

- Purchase Intention: Purchase intention means the deliberate choice of an individual to acquire a particular brand or the intention to make the purchase (Goyal, 2014; Spears & Singh, 2004).
- Utilitarian Products: Utilitarian products are characterized by their practicality and functionality, serving as tools to help users accomplish specific tasks or goals (Stelmaszewska et al., 2004).
- Hedonic Products: Hedonic goods are products that offer consumers an emotional and sensory experience, providing sensual or aesthetic fantasy, pleasure, and enjoyment during consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).
- Ad skepticism: Ad skepticism is a personal difference variable that represents an individual's overall inclination to question or doubt the claims made in advertising messages. It reflects a general tendency to be skeptical about the information presented in ads (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998).

Outline and Synopsis of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 functions as an introductory section to the research investigation. It includes research topic's background, identifies existing gaps in prior literature, outlines the research purposes and study goals, and highlights the implications that this research makes to the field. Additionally, key terms used throughout the study are defined in this chapter. Moving on to Chapter II, an extensive examination of the theoretical underpinnings and pertinent literature connected to the study's aim is presented. Chapter III is dedicated to formulating the hypotheses, Chapter IV offers an in-depth explanation of the research's chosen methodology and its implementation.

CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter is structured into two primary sections, each covering essential aspects of the study. The first section establishes the theoretical groundwork on which the research is constructed, offering a comprehensive exploration of the fundamental principles and ideas, the subsequent section presents an extensive analysis of the relevant literature pertaining to the key concepts employed in the research.

Theoretical Foundation

In this portion, the theoretical foundation of the dissertation is discussed, encompassing various theories that are relevant to the study. Theories explored include: (1) Persuasion Knowledge Model and (2) Rhetoric Theory. Persuasion Knowledge Model is the overarching theory for the research model and rhetoric theory explains message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit).

Persuasion Knowledge Model

Persuasion Knowledge, as described by Friestad and Wright (1994), pertains to the understanding that consumers acquire regarding persuasion techniques used in advertising and sales presentations. This understanding evolves through ongoing exposure to persuasion efforts and reflects consumers' confidence in interpreting marketing tactics (Bearden et al., 2001).

The PKM introduced by Friestad and Wright (1994) provides a framework for comprehending how consumers perceive and respond to efforts at persuasion. Consumers' processing and response to information are influenced by their prior

experiences, leading to the accumulation of "persuasion expertise" over time (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). When confronted with a persuasive effort, consumers tap into their persuasion know-how and utilize coping tactics rooted in this understanding (Figure 2.1). Research shows that the identification of a persuasion motive prompts the engagement of persuasion knowledge, especially when there is a noticeable underlying intention to persuade (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Panic et al., 2013).

Furthermore, persuasion knowledge plays a role in shaping both emotional and behavioral reactions towards advertisements. Studies indicate that consumers employ persuasion knowledge as a defensive strategy in evaluating advertisements (Robinson et al., 2001). Upon detecting a persuasive endeavor, consumers tend to critically analyze the advertising message and exhibit adverse responses towards the advertisements (Friestad & Wright, 1994, 1995). Research has demonstrated that being aware of persuasive motives results in diminished trust in the advertisement, unfavorable perceptions of both the ad and the brand, reduced inclination to share ad content, and decreased intent to purchase the promoted product (Nelson et al., 2009; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2015; Wojdynski & Evans 2016).

Rhetoric Theory

Rhetoric theory, which delves into the art of persuasion, highlights how language can be strategically employed to influence listeners or readers towards specific beliefs or social action (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990; Gill & Whedbee, 1997). In the realm of advertising, achieving persuasion goals can involve employing different messaging strategies. Some advertisers opt for clear and explicit messages, conveying key benefits

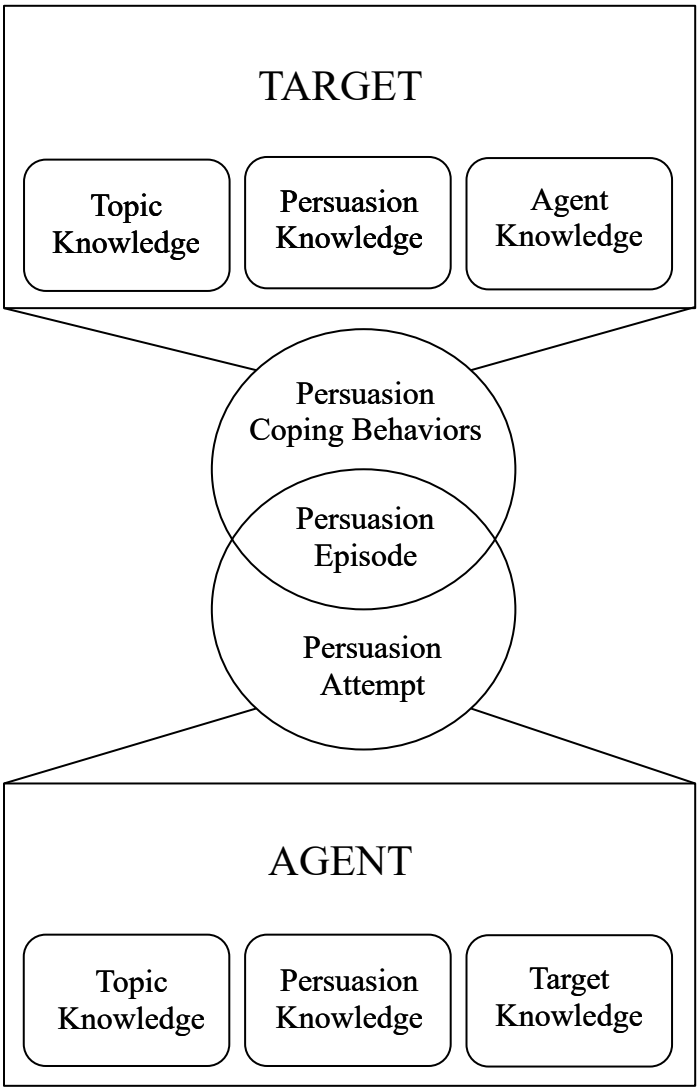

Figure 2.1. The Persuasion Knowledge Model. From Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of consumer research*, *21*(1), 1-31.

straightforwardly to the audience (Martin et al., 2003). On the other hand, some advertisers may prefer to remain more ambiguous, relying on implicit messages that leave room for interpretation (Ahearne et al., 2000; Yan et al., 2012).

The explicit use of messages designed to persuade in advertising involves clearly outlining product benefits, which requires less cognitive effort for processing (Kao, 2007). In contrast, implicit messages are more ambiguous and subject to diverse interpretations based on individual perspectives (Hidalgo-Baz et al., 2017). These varying rhetorical approaches in advertising can significantly impact how consumers perceive and respond to sponsored ads on platforms like Instagram.

Examination of Key Concepts in the Literature

In this segment, the central notions employed in this study are introduced, providing a succinct summary of past research pertaining to these subjects. The initial segment of this section will focus on native advertising on social media, explicitness of ad messages, product types, and ad skepticism. The subsequent portion of this section will delve into studies concerning persuasion knowledge, perceived deceptiveness, ad credibility, click “Shop Now” intention, and purchase intention.

Native Advertising on Social Media

Since its inception in 2011, native advertising has gained considerable attention from marketers due to its unique approach (Matteo & Dal Zotto, 2015). Unlike traditional persuasive techniques, native advertising seamlessly blends into the nonpaid content provided by the platform, making it appear more organic to consumers. For instance, native advertisements are present across diverse platforms, including social media, where

they are integrated into users' feeds alongside regular social posts, ensuring sufficient ad exposure (Lee et al., 2016). Additionally, native advertising tends to generate active user interactions, such as likes and shares.

However, despite its appeal as a marketing strategy, native advertising also comes with potential risks, particularly regarding misrepresentation (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016). Despite the presence of sponsored labels, many consumers struggle to differentiate between native ads and nonpaid content. Research has shown that a significant portion of consumers are unable to identify native advertising as paid content on platforms like Twitter and online news websites (Boerman & Kruikemeier, 2016; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016). This lack of awareness raises concerns about the efficacy of native advertising, as a considerable portion of its effectiveness relies on consumers' unawareness of its paid nature.

Message Explicitness Levels (Explicit vs. Implicit)

Explicit claims are statements that can be clearly proven to be false, and they are expected to be more easily detected by consumers (Harris, 1977; Hastak & Mazis, 2011; Hyman, 1990). On the other hand, implicit claims may be factually true but still mislead the audience in a more subtle manner (Harris, 1977; Hastak & Mazis, 2011; Hyman, 1990).

According to Kardes et al. (1994), explicit messages within advertising could be deemed as a "hard sell" since they leave minimal space for interpretation, which could potentially result in diminished brand assessment and trust. In contrast, implicit messages are purposely vague, steering consumers towards the desired inference and bolstering the

credibility of the advertisement (Kardes et al., 1994). However, implicit messages also carry the risk of misperception (Ahearne et al., 2000).

Research findings have consistently shown that consumers are more likely to detect deceptive content when presented with explicit claims in advertising compared to no deception and implicit claims (Betts et al., 2021). Xiang (2020) also found that direct claims are generally more persuasive than subtle claims across various scenarios. However, when both formats are effective, subtle claims may be more advantageous to the firm as consumers may have less incentive to verify the claims. Since the previous research about message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) has done for general marketing communication and health communication, it might be helpful to know how message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) work in the specific context, for example, Instagram advertising which is the most common way to advertise. Therefore, it would be meaningful to examine viewers' perception of message explicitness levels in the context of Instagram because viewers' perception of messages might/might not be different from other advertising methods. Thus, the results will give the best advertising strategy of Instagram for marketers.

Moderator: Utilitarian vs. Hedonic Product

Products can be categorized into two main categories: utilitarian and hedonic products, based on their specific features and characteristics (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Utilitarian products, such as hair dryers, washing machines, and lawn mowers, are primarily driven by cognitive factors and serve practical, functional tasks (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). On the other hand, hedonic products, like jewelry, perfumes, and

massages, are associated with emotional experiences, aesthetic pleasure, and sensory enjoyment (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000, p.61). Research has shown that hedonic products, including luxury items like sports cars, designer apparel, and high-end watches can evoke innate hedonic signals and elicit emotional reactions, leading to favorable responses to advertisements featuring these commodities (Shao & Li, 2021; Siani et al., 2021).

While informative native advertising is generally anticipated to outperform engaging native advertising, the impact of content style on consumer reactions could depend on the characteristics of the advertised product. Previous studies within the online domain product evaluations have revealed that the product category can moderate consumer information searching behavior, online shopping decisions, the word-of-mouth impact, and perceived review utility (Luan et al., 2016; Park & Lee, 2009; Huang et al., 2013).

Moderator: Ad Skepticism

Consumer research has delineated skepticism as an enduring trait that engenders suspicion and disbelief among consumers toward marketing communications (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). Specifically, ad skepticism is characterized as a general inclination to question the validity of advertising assertions and is gauged as a trait that varies among individuals (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). This skepticism has been noted to have a negative impact on consumers' attitudes and assessments of advertising messages and brand motivations (Obermiller et al., 2005). As per the PKM advanced by Friestad and Wright (1994), consumers gather information about marketers' persuasive

techniques, which they subsequently use to counter persuasive endeavors. Therefore, heightened skepticism in an individual is linked to an increased likelihood of rebuffing the underlying persuasive intent in advertising (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Prior studies have established that individuals' understanding of persuasion, which encompasses elements like ad skepticism, is inversely linked to the efficacy of advertising (Boerman et al., 2012; Wei et al., 2008). Consumers with stronger persuasion knowledge tend to be less responsive to search ads and are less likely to suggest brands to others (Yoo, 2009; Eisend, 2015). Ad skepticism has also been identified as a pivotal factor shaping consumers' reactions to advertisements. Individuals exhibiting heightened levels of ad skepticism tend to exhibit less inclination to respond positively to ads, while demonstrating more favorable attitudes and increased intentions to make purchases regarding advertisements, in contrast to individuals with lower levels of skepticism towards ads (Callister & Stern, 2007; Amyx & Lumpkin, 2016).

Ad skepticism is associated with a range of unfavorable responses towards advertising, including unfavorable perceptions of ads, diminished trust in ad assertions and effectiveness, heightened counterarguments against assertions, and an increased likelihood of recognizing advertising assertions as deceptive or inaccurate (Obermiller et al., 2005; Charlton & Cornwell, 2019). Furthermore, ad skepticism has the potential to moderate the persuasive influence of diverse advertising strategies, encompassing concealed product placements, sustainability assertions, and native advertising, social cause advertising, manipulative attention-getting tactics, and brand extension appeals

(Chan, 2020; Cho & Taylor, 2020; Chung & Kim, 2021; Yang & Mundel, 2021; Germelmann et al., 2020; Hernandez et al., 2019).

Mediator: Persuasion Knowledge

Persuasion knowledge encompasses the information consumers gather regarding the techniques employed in persuasion endeavors, including advertising and sales presentations (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The PKM suggests that individuals' personal assessments of marketers' strategies shape their responses and actions towards advertising (Friestad & Wright, 1994). When consumers identify the persuasive purpose of an advertiser, they tend to analyze the assertions more critically and display reduced engagement with the communication. Elevated persuasion knowledge results in heightened skepticism towards the message, and consumers might even opt to steer clear of it altogether (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000).

Regarding native advertising, if consumers identify it as advertising that promotes sponsored brands favorably due to financial incentives for publishers, they may react differently than if they view it as content created by the ad distributor. In line with Bok's (1978) view on deception if customers believe that advertisers and distributors are attempting to deceive them about the source of native advertising material and its recognition of persuasive techniques could result in heightened unfavorable responses. Such reactions may include resentment, suspicion, and negative responses not only towards advertisers but also towards media, publishers, and sponsors or advertisers themselves if perceived as deceptive.

Mediator: Perceived Deceptiveness

Throughout history, moral philosophers and theologians have consistently expressed criticism of lying and deception. Aristotle emphasized the nobility of truth and the unworthiness of falsehoods (Aristotle, 1934). Augustine believed that lying is forbidden by God and poses a threat to one's eternal soul (Bok, 1978). Kant adopted an absolute position, asserting that truthfulness is an obligation and lying is a breach of human dignity (Kant, 1787). Deception and lies are seen as coercive acts that deprive the deceived of information, alternatives, and choices, leading to feelings of resentment, disappointment, and suspicion (Bok, 1978). The act of lying can erode personal integrity and credibility, even affecting the liars themselves. Paradoxically, liars desire honesty from others while reserving the right to deceive themselves.

Aligned with the ethical considerations of moral philosophers and theologians, regulatory authorities like the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have taken strong measures against deceptive advertising practices disguised as editorial content. The FTC's aim is to guarantee that consumers are empowered to make informed choices by clearly distinguishing between advertising and other forms of content (FTC, 2013). As part of their efforts, in 2015, the FTC released a policy statement, emphasizing that native ads must be clearly labeled as sponsored content (FTC, 2015). Self-regulatory bodies, including the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and the Public Relations Society of America, have also stressed the importance of full and unequivocal disclosure in native advertising (IAB, 2013; Public Relations Society of America, 2014).

Despite these regulatory efforts, the difference between native ad and editorial material stays ambiguous, and consumers often struggle to identify sponsored articles as advertisements (Ponkivar, 2014). Studies have shown that consumers frequently overlook or misunderstand disclosure information in native ads (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016; Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2016). The inconspicuous use of sponsor marks and brand logos further complicates consumers' capacity to identify native ads. As a result, consumers' capacity to identify native ads as ads play an essential role in shaping their responses to such content (Wojdynsk, 2016).

Mediator: Ad Credibility

Ad credibility, as defined by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989), pertains to how the intended audience perceives the authenticity and dependability of an advertisement. This encapsulates the audience's confidence in the advertiser's integrity and the perceived coherence of the claims presented in the ad, which are common gauges of ad credibility in research. Nevertheless, Soh (2006) suggests that ad credibility also encompasses aspects reflecting the caliber of information offered in the ad, encompassing attributes like truthfulness, accuracy, precision, and comprehensiveness. Furthermore, the credibility facet entails consumers' assessments of the ethical principles underlying advertising, which encompass candor, dependability, and the overall quality of information conveyed. In essence, ad credibility entails evaluating ethical benchmarks and the precision of information conveyed in advertising.

Several factors can impact the credibility of advertisements, involving the trustworthiness of both the advertiser and the message conduit holding notable

significance (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Choi & Rifon, 2002). The perception of the advertiser or seller as a trustworthy information source directly influences the trustworthiness of the advertisement (Wu et al., 2016). A credible advertiser has the capacity to cultivate consumer trust in the brand's standing, honesty, and positive image. The dependability of advertising is assessed based on the material presented within the advertisement (Choi & Rifon, 2002).

Click "Shop Now" Intention

Media and communication tools are undergoing significant transformations due to economic shifts and digitization (Pierson & Heyman, 2011). Amidst these transformations, social media is steadily gaining prominence within advertising budgets, particularly when targeting the younger demographic and shaping their buying choices. It has evolved into an essential conduit for global marketing communication, captivating the interest of corporations, executives, and scholars alike (Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

Social media platforms present interactive data, content generated by users, and cooperative functionalities. They are segmented based on social presence and self-revelation (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010). With consumers dedicating more time to social media, their purchase determinations are notably impacted by engagements on these platforms. Consequently, enterprises are placing heightened emphasis on marketing tactics that harness two-way communication avenues to connect with online consumers (Song & Yoo, 2016).

A substantial portion of businesses are currently leveraging social media for marketing and customer support functions (Ma et al., 2015), rendering it a captivating

resource for marketers and managers. Social media has become a preferred medium worldwide, profoundly impacting consumer behavior (Prasad et al., 2017). Its widespread accessibility via electronic devices like computers and mobile phones enables individuals from various locations can engage with companies at their convenience (Zhang & Mao, 2012).

Electronic gadgets have demonstrated their efficacy in engaging with ads and facilitating instant purchases. As the internet continues to evolve, online advertising empowers companies to effectively engage, interact with, and influence online users to align with their brand. This personalized approach helps promote consumer awareness and preference while reducing the time required to make a purchasing decision (Hanafizadeh, 2012). Especially, in Instagram, companies' advertising has "Shop Now" button to click, and customers may consider purchasing after clicking the "Shop Now" button and seeing the website of the product. Schaffer (2022) found that approximately 13% of social media users indicated that the presence of a "buy" button on the platform would increase their likelihood of making a purchase through that platform.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention signifies an individual's intentional decision to acquire a specific brand or product, coupled with their intent to follow through with the purchase (Spears & Singh, 2004; Goyal, 2014). The effects of advertising attributes put forth by marketers hold substantial sway over an individual's choices in making purchases (Hausman & Siekpe, 2009). Consumers typically engage in information gathering by considering their past experiences, preferences, and recommendations from others. This

process leads to an evaluation of available alternatives, culminating in the formation of purchase intentions (Chi et al., 2011).

Moreover, purchase intention serves as a gauge of actual purchasing actions and is utilized to assess consumers' actions (Lee et al., 2015; Pavlou, 2003). Research has demonstrated that consumers' expressed intention to purchase has a substantial influence on their real buying behavior (Lisichkova & Othman, 2017). Businesses have recognized the significance of purchase intention, as it can drive product and service sales, leading to increased profits (Hosein, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE
HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT
Study 1 and Study 2

Addressing multiple gaps in ad message explicitness research, the design of Study 1 and Study 2 aims to explore the impacts of ad message explicitness levels (i.e., explicit vs. implicit) on consumers' perception of the ad (ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge) and subsequent behavioral intentions (click "Shop Now" intention and purchase intention). The main purpose of Study 1 is to examine how the product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) interacts with message explicitness levels and affects consumers' perception of the ad (ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge). The primary objective of Study 2 is to investigate the influence of ad skepticism on the correlation between message explicitness levels and consumers' perception of the ad (ad credibility, perceived deceptiveness, and persuasion knowledge). Figure 3.1 shows the conceptual framework.

The Effect of Message Explicitness Levels on Consumers' Perception of Ad (Persuasion Knowledge, Perceived Deceptiveness and Ad Credibility)

Given that sponsored advertisements on Instagram resemble user-generated posts and viewers may not carefully observe them, it becomes challenging for viewers to discern whether a post is a sponsored ad. In this context, the role of ad messages becomes crucial as they can influence viewers' perception of whether the post is an ad or not, depending on the levels of ad message explicitness.

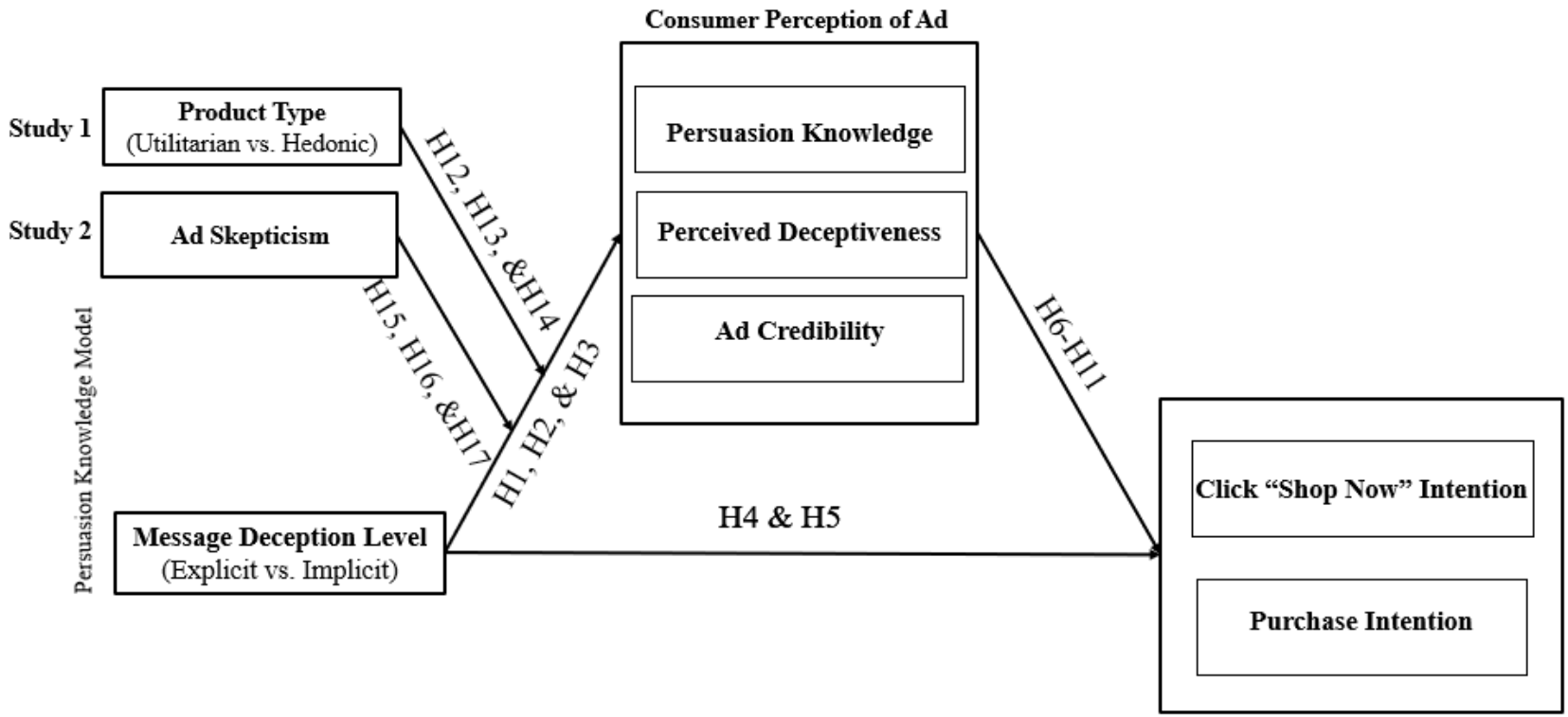

Figure 3.1. Conceptual Framework.

Previous studies have indicated that identifying the genuine nature of native advertising can result in a range of adverse outcomes, encompassing diminished ad credibility, less positive perceptions of the endorsing brand, and a decreased inclination to distribute the advertisement (Wu et al., 2016). This implies that revealing the nature of the advertisement could lead consumers to recognize the inherent persuasive intent of the native ad, leading them to exercise greater prudence in their reactions (Quinn & Wood, 2004).

Furthermore, research on misinformation implies that overtly false assertions are more likely to raise suspicion in comparison to subtler claims (Loftus, 1979). When individuals discern deceitful persuasive strategies, they may adopt a more vigilant approach to comprehending the information being presented. As the frequency of explicit assertions and tactics grows, individuals may become increasingly attuned to efforts to deceive them. According to Johnson et al. (1993), as the level of deception increases, individuals are more prone to identifying it. Betts (2021) discovered that a certain threshold exists, beyond which deception in the promotion of prescription drugs often leads to the recognition or dismissal of claims among both consumers and primary care physicians regarding prescription drug promotion on a website. Previous research on drug promotion in website ads has highlighted the significance of ad message explicitness in shaping viewers' perceptions of whether a post is an advertisement or not. Similar to the previous findings, our study seeks to explore how the level of explicitness in ad messages influences viewers' ability to recognize sponsored ads on Instagram, particularly in the context of personal-care products (hedonic vs. utilitarian).

Unlike drug promotion on websites, where the distinction between sponsored ads and user-generated content may not be immediately evident, sponsored ads on Instagram can closely resemble authentic posts, making it essential to understand how ad message explicitness influences viewers' awareness. Previous studies have demonstrated that heightened awareness of native ads can lead to reduced ad credibility and less favorable attitudes toward the sponsoring brand. Our research will build on these insights by examining the specific effects of varying degrees of ad message explicitness within the context of personal-care products. Drawing upon the considerations and literature, we put forth the following hypotheses:

H1: Persuasion knowledge will be higher in the ad messages with an explicit claim than an implicit claim.

H2: Perceived deceptiveness will be higher in the ad messages with an explicit claim than an implicit claim.

H3: Ad credibility will be higher in the ad messages with an implicit claim than an explicit claim.

The Effect of Message Explicitness Levels on Behavioral Intentions (Click "Shop Now" Intention and Purchase Intention)

In the realm of our study, which focuses on Instagram sponsored ads for personal-care products (hedonic vs. utilitarian), we explore the impact of message explicitness and product type on viewers' recognition and subsequent behavioral responses to these ads. Drawing on prior research by Wu et al. (2016), which highlighted that viewers are less likely to share a native ad when they recognize it as an advertising message, we

investigate how message recognition influences intentions to share and purchase the advertised product.

Building on the outcomes observed in the studies conducted by Evans et al. (2017) and Van Reijmersdal et al. (2016), which demonstrated significant effects of advertising disclosure on purchase intention, we broaden our understanding to the specific context of Instagram sponsored ads. We hypothesize that viewers who recognize an Instagram sponsored ad as an advertising message, rather than a genuine user-generated post, will exhibit reduced intentions to engage with the ad and make purchase decisions. Consequently, Instagram users may be less likely to click the "Shop Now" button and purchase the featured product if they realize that they are being presented with a deceptive ad.

We predict that click "Shop Now" intention will be higher for ad messages with an implicit claim compared to those with an explicit claim. As implicit claims in ads tend to be more subtle and less overtly promotional, viewers may perceive them as less advertising-focused, leading to increased intentions to explore further and potentially purchase the product. Additionally, we anticipate that purchase intention will be higher for ad messages with an implicit claim compared to those with an explicit claim. When viewers perceive an ad as more discreet and less overtly persuasive, they might develop a more favorable perception of the product, leading to an increased willingness to contemplate making a purchase.

H4: Click "Shop Now" intention will be higher in the ad messages with an implicit claim than an explicit claim.

H5: Purchase intention will be higher in the ad messages with an implicit claim than an explicit claim.

The Effect of Persuasion Knowledge on Behavioral Intentions (Click "Shop Now" Intention and Purchase Intention)

Considering the growing prominence of Instagram as a prominent social media platform for advertising, it is essential to understand how viewers' recognition of persuasion attempts may impact their responses to sponsored content. By examining how persuasion knowledge influences emotional and behavioral reactions to such advertisements, our objective is to offer valuable insights to the field of social media advertising, thereby providing a deeper understanding of consumer reactions to Instagram sponsored ads for personal-care products.

Drawing on previous research by Robinson et al. (2001) and Friestad & Wright (1994), we investigate how viewers' awareness of persuasive intentions can act as a defensive mechanism when they evaluate advertisements on social media platforms. Persuasion knowledge exerts a notable influence on shaping affective and behavioral reactions to advertising. Prior research in the field of ad has consistently shown that persuasion knowledge serves as a defense mechanism during the evaluation of ads (Robinson et al., 2001). As individuals recognize the underlying persuasive motive within an advertisement, they typically engage in a rigorous assessment of the ad's message and respond unfavorably to it (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Multiple research endeavors have indicated that when consumers are cognizant of the persuasive intent, they tend to place less trust in the advertisement, cultivate adverse sentiments toward both the ad itself and

the associated brand, and display reduced inclinations to acquire the promoted product (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006; Nelson et al., 2009; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016).

We propose that increased persuasion knowledge will be linked to more crucial processing of Instagram sponsored ads. When viewers are aware of the persuasive purpose of an ad, they are more prone to engage in a deeper evaluation of the ad message, leading to more scrutinized responses and, potentially, a negative attitude towards the ad. Extending the conclusions drawn by Livingstone and Helsper (2006) and Nelson et al. (2016), we anticipate that increased awareness of persuasion techniques will be correlated with diminished trust in the advertisement, negative perceptions of both the advertisement and the brand, and a decreased intention to make a purchase. When viewers recognize the persuasive nature of an Instagram sponsored ad, they may become more skeptical about the content and develop less favorable perceptions of both the ad itself and the brand behind it. Consequently, we put forth the following hypotheses for consideration:

H6: Persuasion knowledge will negatively influence click “Shop Now” intention.

H7: Persuasion knowledge will negatively influence purchase intention.

The Effect of Perceived Deceptiveness on Behavioral Intentions (Click “Shop Now” Intention and Purchase Intention)

In the realm of our study on Instagram sponsored ads for personal care products (hedonic vs. utilitarian), we draw on the theory of deception by Johnson and colleagues, which elucidates intentional deception from both the deceiver’s and the target’s perspectives. According to this theory, a deceiver manipulates the environment to

mislead a target and make them believe certain misrepresented facts are true. The target's capability to identify deception depends on their knowledge and past experiences in the relevant domain. If the target is unable to recognize the deception, the deceiver may succeed in influencing their perceptions and behavior.

By examining the role of perceived deceptiveness in shaping viewers' click "Shop Now" intention and purchase intention in Instagram sponsored ads, our goal is to illuminate the impact of deceptive advertising practices on consumer behavior. We predict that perceived deceptiveness in Instagram sponsored ads will negatively impact viewers' click "Shop Now" intention. When viewers perceive the ad as deceptive or misleading, they are likely to be cautious and hesitant to click on the "Shop Now" button, as they may have doubts about the authenticity of the product or the ad's claims. Building on the theory of deception, we further propose that perceived deceptiveness will adversely affect viewers' purchase intention. When viewers suspect deception in the sponsored ad, their trust in the content of the ad is likely to diminish and may consequently refrain from making a purchase. As a result, the subsequent hypotheses are developed:

H8: Perceived deceptiveness will negatively influence click "Shop Now" intention.

H9: Perceived deceptiveness will negatively influence purchase intention.

The Effect of Ad Credibility on Behavioral Intentions (Click "Shop Now" Intention and Purchase Intention)

As highlighted by MacKenzie et al. (1986), advertising credibility is associated with favorable attitudes towards advertising. When viewers perceive the sponsored ad as

credible, it is more likely to be positively evaluated, leading to a more positive perception of the ad. Thus, we proposed that higher ad credibility will be linked to more positive attitudes towards the sponsored ad.

Studies by Aghdaie et al. (2012) suggest that users associate ad credibility with the trustworthiness of the advertising source. When the advertiser has a reputable and trustworthy image, the sponsored ad is perceived as more credible and effective. Consequently, we hypothesize that viewers are more prone to engage with the sponsored ad and demonstrate positive behavioral intentions when they perceive it as credible.

In the realm of our study, which centers on Instagram sponsored ads for personal-care products, we aim to explore the link between ad credibility and viewers' behavioral intentions towards these ads. Building upon prior research in the realm of social media advertising, my research delves into the dynamics of ad credibility, which is shaped by the reputation of the advertiser and the perceived trustworthiness of the ad source, can shape consumers' responses to sponsored content on Instagram.

H10: Ad credibility will positively influence click "Shop Now" intention.

H11: Ad credibility will positively influence purchase intention.

The Influence of Product Type on Consumers' Perception of Ad (Persuasion Knowledge, Perceived Deceptiveness, and Ad Credibility)

In the realm of our study, we delved into the impact of product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) on consumers' reactions to sponsored ads on social media, with a specific center

on Instagram. We specifically examine the concept of puffery in advertising and how it affects consumers' perceptions and emotional responses.

Social media platforms, including Instagram, have evolved into prominent channels for advertising, where brands often use sponsored ads to reach their target audience. Prior studies have emphasized the importance of product type in shaping consumers' attitudes and responses (Chitturi et al., 2008). However, in the realm of social media, where the presentation of ads is more integrated with user-generated content, the influence of product type on consumers' reactions may be further nuanced.

We explore the idea that a high level of message explicitness in sponsored ads may trigger consumers' persuasion knowledge, which refers to their awareness of being persuaded (Wei et al., 2008). The unique environment of social media, where content is often created and shared by users themselves, can influence how consumers perceive sponsored ads. Users are more accustomed to authentic, user-generated content and may be less receptive to overtly explicit adverting messages.

For consumers browsing Instagram for utilitarian products, which save practical needs, they may prioritize information about characteristics of product and performance. As a result, exaggerated claims or puffery in sponsored ads may have a milder impact on their responses, as they focus on the product's functionality rather than the promotional messaging. Moreover, in the realm of social media, where users are seeking authenticity and relatability, explicit messaging may be perceived as incongruent with the organic content they typically encounter. In contrast, consumers exploring Instagram for hedonic products, which provide emotional or sensory benefits, may be more attuned to the

emotional appeal of advertising messages. Puffery in sponsored ads for hedonic products can evoke stronger emotional responses, as customers might feel that the ads are attempting to manipulate their emotions. The immersive nature of social media and the blending of sponsored ads with content created by users may heighten consumers' emotional involvement and sensitivity to promotional messaging.

Our study seeks to investigate how consumers' reactions to sponsored ads on Instagram are impacted according to the product category being promoted and the utilization of exaggerated claims in the advertisements. Our objective is to enhance our comprehension of the influence exerted by the category of the product, explicit messaging, and emotional responses interact within the social media environment. The insights we gather from this research will be valuable for advertisers and marketers in devising successful and authentic advertising strategies for Instagram and other social media platforms.

H12: The interaction effect of the message explicitness levels and product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) on behavioral responses (click "Shop Now" intention and purchase intention) is indirect and mediated by persuasion knowledge.

For utilitarian products, consumers are less responsive to the degree of puffery, and therefore, perceived deceptiveness may have less of an impact on their responses. On the other hand, for hedonic products, customers are more responsive to puffery, and higher perceived deceptiveness may lead to stronger negative emotional responses.

H13: The interaction effect of the message explicitness levels and product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) on behavioral responses (click “Shop Now” intention and purchase intention) is indirect and mediated by perceived deceptiveness.

For utilitarian products, consumers may be less concerned with the degree of puffery and more focused on the credibility of the ad, leading to weaker responses to explicit messaging. For hedonic products, higher levels of puffery may lower the credibility of the ad, leading to stronger negative emotional responses.

H14: The interaction effect of the message explicitness levels and product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) on behavioral responses (click “Shop Now” intention and purchase intention) is indirect and mediated by ad credibility.

The Influence of Ad Skepticism on Consumers’ Perception of Ad (Persuasion Knowledge, Perceived Deceptiveness, and Ad Credibility)

Previous research has explored the influence of ad skepticism and ads on consumer responses. For instance, Wu (2009) revealed that ad skepticism interacts with the PKM, and the researcher investigated how ad skepticism acts as a moderating factor pertaining to the correlation between incongruence in ad imagery and consumers' application of persuasion knowledge. Moreover, Tutaj and Van Reijmersdal (2012) showcased a robust connection between ad skepticism and the perception of advertising value, indicating that persuasion knowledge contributes to the assessment of both subtle and conspicuous online advertising formats.

In the context of our study on sponsored ads on Instagram, consumers who harbor skepticism toward advertising are likely to be more discerning in recognizing explicit

messages in ads. Consequently, they may develop a stronger sense of persuasion knowledge. Moreover, as found by Tutaj and Van Reijmersdal (2012), ad skepticism might influence the extent to which consumers trust subtle and prominent online advertising. By contextualizing these findings within the social media environment, we aim to achieve a thorough understanding of how ad skepticism and explicit advertising interact to shape consumers' perceptions and behaviors on Instagram along with various other social media platforms.

H15: The positive effect of explicit message on persuasion knowledge will be moderated by ad skepticism, such that the relationship will be stronger for high ad skepticism than low ad skepticism.

Ad skepticism assumes a moderating role in the influence of explicit messages, albeit in a distinct manner. To be precise, it suggests that individuals harboring greater skepticism towards advertising are prone to regarding explicit messages as misleading, potentially leading to unfavorable perceptions of the promoted product or brand.

H16: The positive effect of explicit message on perceived deceptiveness will be moderated by ad skepticism, such that the relationship will be stronger for high ad skepticism than low ad skepticism.

Implicit messages are more subtle and indirect than explicit messages. It posits that individuals who show reduced levels of skepticism towards advertisements might be inclined to perceive implicit messages as trustworthy. While this discovery might appear counterintuitive, it implies that consumers with lower ad skepticism could be more prone

to either disregarding or justifying inconspicuous deceptive indicators within advertising messages.

H17: The positive effect of implicit message on ad credibility will be moderated by ad skepticism such that the relationship will be stronger for low ad skepticism than high ad skepticism.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODS

This chapter delineates the fundamental constituents of the experimental structures, encompassing the subsequent segments: (1) Preliminary Test, (2) Data Collection, (3) Stimulus Materials, (4) Measurement, (5) Protocol, and (6) Analysis.

Preliminary Test

The preliminary assessment aims to ensure internal validity and verify that the treatment manipulations yield the intended impacts on the dependent variables, as indicated by Malhotra et al. (2020). For this study, two product types, one utilitarian and one hedonic, need to be selected. To achieve this, a pre-test was conducted involving 30 participants from Prolific workers. This sample size is considered appropriate for a product selection pre-test (Riley et al., 2013). In accordance with the guidelines of Riley et al. (2013), the researcher compiled a roaster of utilitarian and hedonic products by examining various examples of each type.

After nineteen utilitarian products and twenty hedonic products were identified, respondents assessed the utilitarian or hedonic products measured on semantic differential scales (1=hedonic, 7=utilitarian). Two products were selected. One item demonstrates the highest mean score (soap), while another exhibits the lowest mean score (bath bomb).

Data Collection

Sample Characteristics

Respondents in the current study are US females whose age is between 18-34. This population is chosen because they are the most prominent group who is using Instagram (Statista, 2022a; Statista, 2022b). Nearly 40% of US internet users aged 18-34 have made purchases directly from social media platforms. Additionally, a considerable majority, amounting to 95% of internet users within the same age group, follow at least one brand on social media. Among US internet users, Instagram usage is more prevalent among women, with 44% of women reporting usage compared to 36% of men. The choice to include female participants in the study is influenced by the perception that shopping is often associated with women, and research has shown that women tend to dedicate more time to shopping compared to men (Otnes & McGrath, 2001; Noble et al., 2006). For the age range, 71% of ages 18-29 uses Instagram and the second largest group is ages 30-49 (48%) (Pew Research Center, 2022).

Sample Recruitment

Prolific sample purchased directly from and recruited and incentivized by Prolific. The panel company recruits through e-mail invitations to its panel groups, as researchers only pay for approach and never see the e-mail addresses which are the possession of the panel vendor.

The recommended sample size for each group in experimental research is 30, which is a common practice in studies (Hair et al., 2019; Berger & Ward, 2010). Therefore, for studies with four groups like Study 1 and Study 2, the total sample size is

ideally 120. However, the current study has a larger total sample size of 300, following Cohen's (1988) emphasis on the importance of sample size for statistical power and smaller standard errors. Maintaining equal sample sizes per group is crucial for the effectiveness of the analysis, and researchers ensured this by randomly and equally assigning participants to each experimental group.

Data Collection Mode

In this research, an online experimental framework is employed, wherein participants are assigned randomly to various experimental scenarios. The use of online surveys is a common and effective approach, as demonstrated in similar studies (Beckert et al., 2021; Saternus et al., 2022). There are several advantages to utilizing the online channel. Firstly, it offers cost-effectiveness and quick data collection (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). Within this investigation, the online platform facilitated the utilization of random sampling while maintaining uniform group sizes (attained through pre-programmed random and equitable group allocation), thereby ensuring the distinct visibility of the stimuli. Additionally, social media users are familiar with the online platform.

Stimulus Materials

The sponsored content is designed to mimic a genuine social media sponsored ad, showcasing utilitarian and hedonic products with a story format. Companies are increasingly leveraging Social Network Services (SNS) for promoting their products, with a particular focus on Instagram stories, a cost-effective advertising format (Ayres, 2021). With over 500 million daily users (Bagadiya, 2023), Instagram stories have become a popular channel for brand advertising. Two chosen products from the

preliminary assessment are seamlessly included in the content to emulate the sponsored post. The current study exclusively encompasses favorable product details with the aim of endorsing the brand. Explicit/implicit advertising description is included in the sponsored post.

Based on the pre-test, utilitarian and hedonic products were selected. Utilitarian products are soap and hedonic products are bath bombs. Two different levels of message explicitness are manipulated by showing the Instagram sponsored ad. The explicit ad message states "I want to persuade you to try this SOAP/BATH BOMB! You will absolutely fall in love with it! Get glowing and healthy skin just by using this perfect and revolutionary Soap/Bath Bomb!" The implicit ad message states "Try this SOAP/BATH BOMB! You will like it! Get bright and healthy skin by using this Soap/Bath Bomb!" based on previous research about explicit/implicit messages (Betts et al., 2021). Specifically, *persuade, just,* and *revolutionary* added for highlighting explicit ad messages (Betts et al., 2021; Toncar & Munch, 2003). The brand name, SkinDay is a fictitious brand name not to give the biased view (Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2008). To make sure to have difference between explicit message and implicit message, we used *absolutely* and *perfect* for the explicit message (Amyx & Lumpkin, 2016). Please consult Appendix A and Appendix B for the advertising stimulus materials.

Measurement

The independent variable and product type moderator were based on the manipulation of message explicitness (explicit/ implicit) and product type (utilitarian product/hedonic product). For Study 1 and Study 2, independent variables were explicit

message/implicit message and moderators were product type (utilitarian/hedonic) and ad skepticism. Ad skepticism is measured (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). The difference between Study 1 and 2 is the moderator. Product type is a moderator for Study 1 and ad skepticism is a moderator for Study 2.

The metrics for the mediators, dependent variables, and manipulation checks were chosen from well-established scholarly sources and relied upon established measurement scales with proven reliability and validity (see Table 4.1). All items were evaluated using seven-point Likert scales. The mediators employed for both studies were i) persuasion knowledge (Rozendaal et al., 2010), ii) perceived deceptiveness (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007), and iii) ad credibility (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). The outcome variables used for the two studies were i) click "Shop Now" intention (Lee & Ma, 2012) and ii) purchase intention (Duffett, 2015).

Demographic Details

Demographic information of participants, including gender, age, ethnicity, education, and household income, was collected. Categorical scales were utilized for all measures, except for age, while age was quantified using a continuous scale.

Study 1

Outcome: Immediate Purchase Intention

Immediate Purchase Intent was operationalized by combining six items from the Click "Shop Now" Intention and Purchase Intention scales. The Click "Shop Now" Intention scale, adapted from Lee and Ma (2012), consisted of three items and the Purchase Intention scale, adapted from Duffett (2015), consisted of three items.

Table 4.1. Assessment of Variables and Manipulation Checks.

Variables	Used in Study	Number of Items	Scale Items & Scale Used	Source
Dependent Variables				
Click "Shop Now" Intention	1, 2	3	I will be considering to click “Shop Now” of the advertisement.	Lee & Ma (2012)
			I will be intending to click “Shop Now” of the advertisement.	
			I will likely click “Shop Now” of the advertisement.	
			(1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)	
Purchase Intention	1, 2	4	I will buy the cosmetic product that are advertised on Instagram Story.	Duffett (2015)
			I desire to buy the cosmetic product that are promoted on the advertisement on Instagram Story.	
			I am likely to buy the cosmetic product that are promoted on Instagram Story.	
			I plan to purchase the cosmetic product that are promoted on Instagram Story.	
			(1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)	
Persuasion Knowledge	1, 2	6	This advertisement is meant to sell the skincare product.	Rozendaal et al. (2010)
			This advertisement stimulates the sales of the skincare product.	
			This advertisement influences opinions about the skincare product.	
			This advertisement makes people like the skincare product.	
			This advertisement provides information about the skincare product.	
			This advertisement lets people know more about the skincare product.	
			(1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)	
			(1=functional, 2=not functional)	

Table 4.1. continued

Variables	Used in Study	Number of Items	Scale Items & Scale Used	Source
Perceived Deceptiveness	1, 2	6	The fact of sponsorship is concealed.	Kirmani & Zhu (2007)
			Product praise is exaggerated to mislead viewers.	
			Product weaknesses are not discussed.	
			Things are made up to deceive viewers in some way.	
			Information is distorted to deceive viewers.	
			Viewers aren't told important information that they need to know.	
			(1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)	
Ad Credibility	1, 2	3	Based on the above advertisement, it seems unconvincing/convincing	MacKenzie & Lutz (1989)
			Based on the above advertisement, it seems unbelievable/believable	
			Based on the above advertisement, it seems biased/unbiased	
			(1=unconvincing, unbelievable, biased; 7=convincing, believable, unbiased)	
Moderator				
Ad Skepticism	2	9	We can depend on getting the truth in most advertisement	Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998)
			Advertising's aim is to inform consumers	
			I believe advertising is informative	
			Advertising is generally truthful	
			Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products	
			Advertising is truth well told	
			In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised	
			I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements	
			Most advertising provides consumers with essential information	
			(1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)	

Table 4.1. continued

Variables	Used in Study	Number of Items	Scale Items & Scale Used	Source
Manipulation Checks				
Ad Message Explicitness	1, 2	2	I think the ad message is persuading me (1=subtly, 7=assertively).	Okazaki et al. (2010)
			I think the ad message is persuading me (1=indirectly, 7=directly).	
			I think the ad message is persuading me (1=implicitly, 7=explicitly).	
Product Type	1	2	We'd like to ask how you see the product in the post. I think the product category in the post is: (1=unenjoyable, 2=enjoyable)	Motoki et al. (2019)

These scales were modified to adjust the hypothetical situation employed in the current study.

Prior to amalgamating the items, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to explore the fundamental factor arrangement. The EFA results revealed that all six items demonstrated significant loading on a single factor, indicating that they measure a common construct. Additionally, the factor loadings for each item were .919, .964, .951, .914, .936, and .931 (Table 4.2) which were above the recommended threshold of 0.3, further supporting the validity of the combined variable.

To create the combined variable for Immediate Purchase Intent, the responses to all six items were aggregated. The combined variable exhibited a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.979, signifying a strong level of internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Participants were requested to express their degree of agreement using a 7-point Likert scale, spanning from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with regard to their level of concurrence with the subsequent statements: "I will be considering to click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.", "I will be intending to click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.", "I will likely click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.", "I desire to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.", "I am likely to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.", "I plan to purchase the product that is promoted on Instagram Story."

Mediator: Persuasion Knowledge

In the study's preliminary phase, persuasion knowledge was gauged using a six-item scale derived from Rozendaal et al. (2010). Nevertheless, in order to enhance the measurement instrument's precision and validate its psychometric attributes, an EFA was conducted. The EFA revealed that two items demonstrated weaker associations with the underlying construct of Persuasion Knowledge. Consequently, after excluding these two items, a refined scale with four items was obtained for further analysis.

The factor loadings obtained from the EFA for the remaining four items were examined, revealing significant associations with the Persuasion Knowledge construct. Specifically, the factor loadings were .637, .764, .811, and .773 (Table 4.2), indicating moderate to strong relationships between each item and the construct.

The scale items included statements such as “This advertisement is meant to sell the skincare product”, and “This advertisement stimulates the sales of the skincare product. Participants provided their assessments of each item on a 7-point Likert scale, spanning from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

To evaluate the enhanced scale's internal consistency and reliability, the computation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient resulted in a commendable value of .753. This indicates that the four items comprising the Persuasion Knowledge scale are internally consistent in measuring individuals’ understanding of persuasive elements in advertisements.

Mediator: Perceived Deceptiveness

To evaluate perceived deceptiveness, a six-item scale derived from Kirmani and Zhu (2007) was employed. Sample items included assertions like "The sponsorship is not openly disclosed" and "Product features are overstated to deceive viewers." Participants indicated their level of concurrence with each statement using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

EFA was conducted to explore the fundamental factor arrangement within the perceived deceptiveness scale. The factor loadings obtained from the EFA were as follows: .825, .901, and .888 (Table 4.2), indicating a moderate to strong association between each remaining item and underlying construct of perceived deceptiveness.

The scale's internal consistency reliability was evaluated through the calculation of Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a value of .857. This indicates a satisfactory level of reliability, suggesting that the three remaining items of the perceived deceptiveness scale are internally consistent in measuring the intended construct.

Study 2

Outcome: Immediate Purchase Intention

Immediate Purchase Intent was measured by combining six items from the Click “Shop Now” Intention and Purchase Intention scales. The Click “Shop Now” Intention scale, adapted from Lee and Ma (2012), consisted of three items, while the Purchase Intention scale, adapted from Duffett (2015), consisted of four items. These scales were modified to suit the hypothetical scenario employed in the current study.

To confirm the validity of the combined variable, an EFA was performed to investigate the underlying factor structure. The results of the EFA indicated that the six items strongly loaded onto a single factor, suggesting that they assess a common construct. The factor loadings for each item were .928, .962, .964, .942, .952, and .923 (Table 4.2), all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.3, further supporting the validity of the combined variable.

The responses to all six items were aggregated to create the combined variable for Immediate Purchase Intent. The merged variable's internal consistency and reliability were assessed by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a strong value of .973. This suggests a substantial degree of internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Participants were requested to assess their degree of agreement with statements using 7-point Likert scale, spanning from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), regarding expressions such as “I will be considering to click “Shop Now” of the advertisement.”, “I will be intending to click “Shop Now” of the advertisement.”, “I will likely click “Shop Now” of the advertisement.”, “I desire to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.”, “I am likely to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.”, “I plan to purchase the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.”

Mediator: Persuasion Knowledge

Persuasion knowledge was initially assessed using a six-item scale adapted from Rozendaal et al. (2010). However, to refine the measurement instrument and ensure its psychometric properties, an EFA was conducted. The EFA revealed that two items

exhibited weaker associations with the underlying construct of Persuasion Knowledge. As a result, these two items were removed from further analysis, resulting in a more refined scale comprising four items. The remaining four items demonstrated significant factor loadings, indicating substantial associations with the Persuasion Knowledge construct. The factor loadings were .604, .830, .799, and .687 (Table 4.2), suggesting moderate to strong relationships between each item and the construct.

The scale items included statements such as “This advertisement is meant to sell the skincare product”, and “This advertisement stimulates the sales of the skincare product.” Respondents rated their agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

To evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the refined scale, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated, yielding a satisfactory value of .725. This indicates that the four items comprising the Persuasion Knowledge scale are internally consistent in measuring individuals’ understanding of persuasive elements in advertisements.

Mediator: Perceived Deceptiveness

Perceived deceptiveness was evaluated utilizing a six-item scale adapted from the work of Kirmani and Zhu (2007). The scale items encompassed statements like "The sponsorship details are hidden" and "Product endorsements are magnified to misguide viewers." Participants provided their assessments of agreement for each item using a 7-point Likert scale, varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

An EFA was performed to delve into the fundamental factor arrangement within the Perceived Deceptiveness scale. The factor loadings obtained from the EFA were .827,

.932, and .919 (Table 4.2), indicating a moderate to strong associations between each remaining item and the underlying construct of Perceived Deceptiveness.

The internal reliability of the scale was evaluated through the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, resulting in value of .880. This suggests a satisfactory level of reliability, indicating that the three remaining items of the Perceived Deceptiveness scale are internally consistent in measuring the intended construct.

Moderator: Ad Skepticism

The level of ad skepticism was assessed using a nine-item scale (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). The scale aimed to gauge participants' degree of skepticism towards advertising. Participants were prompted to express their degree of agreement with statements such as "We can depend on getting the truth in most advertisements" and "Advertising's aim is to inform consumers." All items were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To evaluate the Ad Skepticism scale's reliability, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated, resulting in a value of .934. This high Cronbach's alpha suggests strong internal coherence and reliability within the measurement scale, indicating that the nine items effectively measure individuals' skepticism towards advertising.

Revised Conceptual Framework

Based on the EFA findings, the initial conceptual model was refined to incorporate the identified factors. The revised conceptual model (Figure 4.1) illustrates the relationships among product type, message explicitness, ad skepticism and consumers' perceptions and intent to purchase sponsored advertisements on Instagram.

Table 4.2. Item Descriptives for Scales after Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Variables	Used in Study	Number of Items	Scale Items & Scale Used	Estimate (Study 1 & 2)	
Outcome Variable					
Immediate Purchase Intention	1, 2	6	I will be considering to click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.	.919	.928
			I will be intending to click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.	.964	.962
			I will likely click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.	.951	.964
			I desire to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.	.914	.942
			I am likely to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.	.936	.952
			I plan to purchase the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.	.931	.923
Mediators					
Persuasion Knowledge	1, 2	4	This advertisement is meant to sell the skincare product.	.637	.604
			This advertisement stimulates the sales of the skincare product.	.764	.687
			This advertisement influences opinions about the skincare product.	.773	.799
			This advertisement makes people like the skincare product.	.811	.830
Perceived Deceptiveness	1, 2	3	Product praise is exaggerated to mislead viewers.	.825	.827
			Things are made up to deceive viewers in some way.	.901	.932
			Information is distorted to deceive viewers.	.888	.919

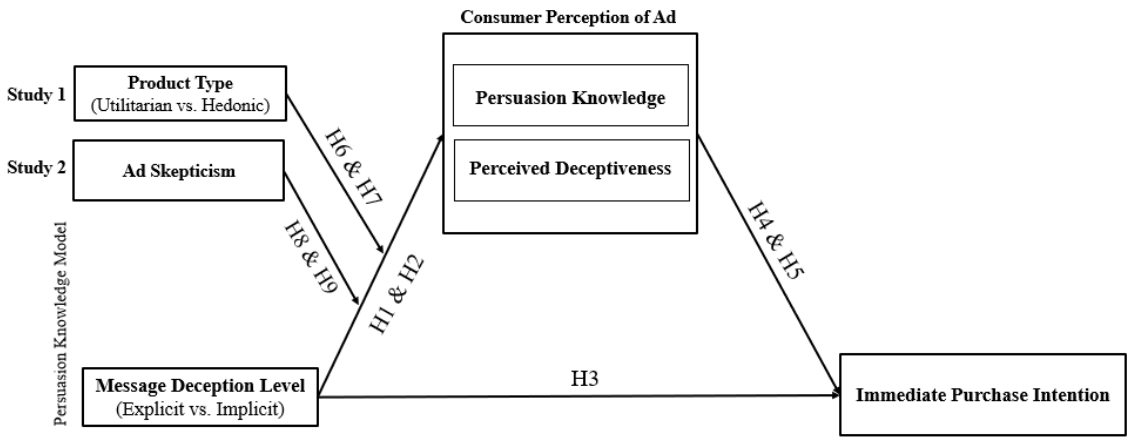

Figure 4.1. Revised Conceptual Framework

Protocol

Instagram was chosen as the ideal setting for our research for several compelling factors, setting it apart from other social media platforms. Firstly, with more than a billion active users, Instagram stands out as one of the most widely used platforms. Secondly, Instagram's visually oriented nature makes it a perfect environment for advertising personal-care products that heavily rely on appealing visuals to attract consumers. Lastly, Instagram's visually immersive interface fosters authenticity and personal connection, blurring the line between sponsored ads and content generated by users. This unique characteristic presents an opportunity to explore how different messaging strategies impact consumers' perceptions and responses, considering the platform's visually compelling content.

To access the questionnaire, participants were provided with an electronic link through Prolific. After accessing the link, participants encountered a cover letter that outlined the research's objectives and emphasized voluntary involvement, confidentiality, and anonymity of their information. The cover letter also explained the research's nature. Participants granted their informed consent after progressing beyond the cover page. After passing the cover page, participants were directed to the main section of the questionnaire.

To make sure reaching out to targeted participants, they first answered for the question, "Do you have an Instagram account?" and then answered for gender and age. Following exposure to the experimental stimulus, 54 participants were excluded from the analysis, leaving 298 usable responses. Out of these, 195 responses were considered

usable for the first study, and 103 responses were considered usable for the second study. After being exposed to the stimuli (examples of which can be found in Appendix A), participants provided their responses to the perceived deceptiveness measures adapted from Kirmani and Zhu (2007), persuasion knowledge (Rozendaal et al., 2010), ad skepticism (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998), click “Shop Now” intention (Lee & Ma, 2012), ad credibility (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989), purchase intention (Duffett, 2015), and manipulation checks. Overall, the questionnaire can be completed in under 10 minutes.

Analysis

For Study 1, a moderated mediation analysis was performed using the Process Macro Model 7 to explore the relationships among the independent variable (message explicitness levels), mediators (persuasion knowledge, perceived deceptiveness, ad credibility), dependent variables (click "Shop Now" intention and purchase intention), and moderator (product type). The two types of products (utilitarian and hedonic) served as the moderator in this study.

The analysis plan was adapted from Hayes' (2013) guidelines and executed using the Process Macro Model 7 for a moderated mediation analysis. The five steps in the analysis plan were as follows:

The proposed analysis plan for Study 1 and Study 2 involves several steps. Firstly, normality and outliers were assessed using graphical techniques and numerical tests such as the Shapiro-Wilk test. Descriptive statistics and correlations were then computed to assess the relationships among the variables. A basic mediation model was run to examine both direct and indirect effects of message explicitness levels on click

"Shop Now" intention and purchase intention through the mediators, using Preacher and the bootstrapping method proposed by Hayes (2004) was employed to calculate bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects. A moderated mediation model was employed to examine how product type moderates the indirect effect, investigating the interplay between message explicitness levels, product type, and the dependent variables. Finally, the results were interpreted, and the interaction between message explicitness levels and product type were plotted to aid in the interpretation of the findings. For Study 2, the same set of variables were used, except that the moderator was ad skepticism. The analysis plan for Study 2 closely mirrored that of Study 1, apart from incorporating the interaction between message explicitness levels and ad skepticism. The proposed analysis plan was based on guidelines by Hayes (2017) for conducting mediation and moderated mediation analyses employing the Process Macro Model 7.

Table 4.3. Overview of Experimental Methods

Study	Manipulated Variable	Design	Manipulation Text	Stimuli	Moderator	Testing Hypotheses	Sample Size	Analysis
1	Explicit Message Implicit Message Product Type (Utilitarian/ Hedonic)	Between Subjects	"I want to persuade you to try this <Product>! You will absolutely fall in love with it! Get glowing and healthy skin just by using this perfect and revolutionary <Product>!". "Try this <Product>! You will like it! Get bright and healthy skin by using this <Product>!". Products based on pretest	Instagram sponsored ad with written text and utilitarian/ hedonic product	Product Type	H1: Explicitness Levels → Persuasion Knowledge H2: Explicitness Levels → Perceived Deceptiveness H3: Explicitness Levels→ Ad Credibility H4: Explicitness Levels → Click "Shop Now" Intention H5: Explicitness Levels → Purchase Intention H6: ↓Persuasion Knowledge → Click "Shop Now" Intention H7: ↓Persuasion Knowledge → Purchase Intention H8: ↓Perceived Deceptiveness → Click "Shop Now" Intention H9: ↓Perceived Deceptiveness → Purchase Intention H10: ↑Ad Credibility → Click "Shop Now" Intention H11: ↑Ad Credibility → Purchase Intention	195	PROCESS Macro Model 7
2	Explicit Message Implicit Message	Between Subjects	"I want to persuade you to try this <Product>! You will absolutely fall in love with it! Get glowing and healthy skin just by using this perfect and revolutionary <Product>!". "Try this <Product>! You will like it! Get bright and healthy skin by using this <Product>!".	Instagram sponsored ad with written text and utilitarian/ hedonic product	Ad Skepticism	H12: Explicitness Levels*Product Type → Persuasion Knowledge H13: Explicitness Levels*Product Type → Perceived Deceptiveness H14: Explicitness Levels*Product Type → Ad Credibility H15: Explicitness Levels*Ad Skepticism→ Persuasion Knowledge H16: Explicitness Levels*Ad Skepticism→ Perceived Deceptiveness H17: Explicitness Levels*Ad Skepticism→ Ad Credibility	103	PROCESS Macro Model 7

CHAPTER FIVE

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter is structured into the subsequent sections: (1) Analysis and Findings of the Pre-test, (2) Participant Characteristics Overview, (3) Preliminary Analysis, (4) Manipulation Checks, and (5) Testing of Hypotheses.

Analysis and Findings of the Pre-test

A pre-test was carried out to choose the utilitarian and hedonic products employed in the current study's stimuli. The researcher compiled a list of utilitarian and hedonic products based on an examination of such products, following the guidelines provided by Riley et al. (2013). A pre-test involved 30 participants who were asked to express their perceptions of different products, specifically whether they perceived the product as more utilitarian (practical or functional) or hedonic (pleasure or enjoyment-oriented). The complete pre-test details can be found in Appendix B.

To select one utilitarian and one hedonic product for the study, it was necessary for these two products to demonstrate a significant difference in their utilitarian/hedonic measure. Following the instructions of Riley et al. (2013), Several t-tests were conducted to compare the utilitarian and hedonic products and to identify which products exhibited a significant difference in their utilitarian or hedonic characteristics. According to the results, a comparison of means was conducted to assess the utilitarian/hedonic measures of different products. The mean score for bath bomb (M=1.53) suggests that it is a hedonic product, while the mean score for soap (M=6.50) suggests it is an utilitarian product. Bath bomb is close to 1, indicating a hedonic product; however, soap is close to 7, indicating an

utilitarian product. Among the other products, comic books had the lowest mean (=1.47), and bath bomb has the second lowest mean (=1.53), while water had the highest mean (=6.94), and soap had the second highest mean. To create a matched pair of utilitarian/hedonic products, bath bomb (hedonic) and soap (utilitarian) products were chosen based on their respective mean scores.

Participant Characteristics Overview

The study involved the participation of 298 individuals. Some instances of incomplete responses were noted, primarily attributed to participants accessing the online questionnaire to view the questions without actively engaging in the current study. To maintain data validity, each respondent was assigned a unique identification based on their Prolific account to prevent multiple submissions. After checking for duplication, no instances of respondents taking the questionnaire more than once were found.

Among the 298 collected responses, 195 responses were considered valid and applicable for Study 1, while 103 responses were deemed usable for Study 2. The distribution of participation was balanced across the different experimental conditions, with an average of 50 participants remaining for analysis in each condition. This number of participants per condition aligns with the appropriate sample size for experimental research, as suggested Hair et al. (2019).

Table 5.1 presents the characteristics of the participants. The mean age of the total respondents (n=298) was 26.98. Most respondents self-identified as White/Caucasian (66.4%), followed by Hispanic (11.4%), African American (11.1%), Asian or Pacific Islander (8.1%), Other (2.0%), and Naïve American (1.0%). Regarding education, most

respondents reported having a bachelor's degree (39.7%), followed by high school or less (34.3%), and associate degree (16.3%).

Preliminary Analysis

Missing Data

The dataset's missing data were managed through the expectation maximization method. Various criteria exist to handle missing values, with a common approach being to consider missing values as random when they constitute less than 20% of a scale's total. In both Study 1 and Study 2, the percentages of missing values for all variables remained within the range of 0% to 1%, falling below the 20% threshold. Consequently, all missing items were treated as random occurrences. Subsequently, a missing-value analysis was conducted, and any missing data points across all scales were addressed at the item level using the mean substitution method. This method involves replacing missing values with the mean value of the respective item. By using this approach, the dataset was made complete, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the collected data.

Outliers

Data was subjected to a rigorous screening process to identify outliers. Visual inspection using box plots revealed the presence of outliers in the dataset. Specifically, several outliers were identified for the variables Persuasion Knowledge, Perceived Deceptiveness, and Immediate Purchase Intent. These outliers represented observations with values that deviated significantly from the overall distribution. To further investigate the impact of these outliers, additional analyses were conducted.

Table 5.1. Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency/Percentage (n=298)	
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	198	66.4%
African American	33	11.1%
Asian	24	8.1%
Hispanic	34	11.4%
Native American	3	1.0%
Other	6	2.0%
Education		
High school or less	103	34.6%
Associate degree	49	16.4%
Bachelor's degree	119	39.9%
Master's degree	24	8.1%
PhD degree or more	3	1.0%
Income		
Less than $20,000	40	13.4%
$20,000-$39,999	53	17.8%
$40,000-$59,999	58	19.5%
$60,000-$79,999	58	19.5%
$80,000-$99,999	35	11.7%
$100,000-$119,999	22	7.4%
$120,000-$139,999	7	2.3%
$140,000-$159,999	9	3.0%
$160,000-$179,999	4	1.3%
$180,000-$199,999	1	.3%
$200,000 or more	11	3.7%
Spending Time on Instagram per day		
None	3	1.0%
Less than 30 minutes	93	31.2%
30 minutes to less than 60 minutes	110	36.9%
1-2 hours	73	24.5%
More than 2 hours	19	6.4%

However, it is noteworthy that even with the presence of outliers, the results remained consistent and did not significantly influence the overall findings. Therefore, it was determined that the outliers would not substantially affect the interpretation and conclusion of the study. Considering the potential insights that these outliers may provide and to avoid the potential loss of valuable information, the decision was made to retain the outliers in the dataset. By including them in the analysis, a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among the variables could be obtained.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Study 1

To assess the measurement of traits of the conceptual model introduced in Study 1, a CFA which is a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted. The objective of the CFA was to evaluate how well the observed data align with the proposed model. The sample consisted of 197 participants who completed the questionnaire measuring the latent constructs of interest. The findings of the CFA illustrated a favorable alignment of the model with the data. The SRMR was .079, indicating a satisfactory fit. Furthermore, the GFI displayed a score of .880, signifying an acceptable correspondence between the observed data and the model. The NFI yielded .926, the TLI stood at .935, and the CFI reached .949, all of which indicated a reasonably strong model fit in comparison to the independence model. However, it is crucial to consider the value of the RMSEA value, which was found to be .104. The RMSEA value, although slightly higher than the commonly accepted threshold of .08, does not substantially deviate from the desired range.

Study 2

To evaluate the measurement properties of proposed model of Study 2, we conducted CFA using data from 103 participants who completed the questionnaire measuring the latent constructs of interest. Overall, the CFA outcomes suggested a reasonably strong fit of the model with the data based on several fit indices. Specifically, the SRMR suggested a reasonably strong fit with a value of .073. The NFI, TLI, and CFI all indicated a reasonably strong model fit compared to the independence model with values of .865, .865, and .893, respectively. These indices all indicate that the model fits reasonably well compared to the independence model. However, it is important to consider the RMSEA value, which was found to be .146. While the RMSEA is lightly higher than the commonly accepted threshold of .08, the discrepancy might be influenced by the comparatively small sample size. In the context of CFA, larger sample sizes are generally preferred to obtain more reliable fit indices, including the RMSEA. Given the strengths of the other fit indices and the theoretical basis of our model, we cautiously interpret the results as indicative of a reasonable model fit, except for the RMSEA, which could be influenced by the sample size.

Evaluation of the Measures

Before conducting hypothesis testing, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the reliability of multi-item scales. Cronbach's alpha is a frequently employed technique for assessing the consistency of psychometrically constructed scales, with higher values indicating greater reliability. A Cronbach's alpha score exceeding 0.7 is often considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, all measures used in the research were deemed

dependable, as evidenced by the calculated Cronbach's alpha values (Table 5.2). The reliability measures for the scales ranged from .725 to .979, which falls within the acceptable range, demonstrating the validity of the measurements employed in the present study (Hair et al., 2019). These reliable measures ensured that the data collected from the scales were consistent and dependable, allowing for more robust and accurate hypothesis testing.

Table 5.3 presents the descriptive statistics and Pearson's product relationships for the variables employed in testing hypotheses for Study 1. Data normality was evaluated by analyzing the skewness and kurtosis values for each measured variable. The outcomes revealed that all variables demonstrated skewness and kurtosis values that fell within acceptable thresholds (skewness < 2, kurtosis < 7), indicating satisfactory normality. To assess multicollinearity among predictor variables, collinearity statistics, such as tolerance and VIF, were computed. Tolerance quantifies the amount of variance in a predictor variable that cannot be predicted from other predictors in the model, while VIF provides the reciprocal of the tolerance value. In this analysis, a VIF of 1 indicates no collinearity among the predictors, ensuring that each variable contributes unique information to the regression model. The correlations between the measures employed in the study varied from -.321 to .284, falling below the threshold of .90 that is indicative of potential multicollinearity, as outlined by Hair et al. (2019). This indicates that there is no substantial collinearity among the predictor variables, and each variable can be considered as an independent predictor in the regression model.

Table 5.2. Measurements Reliability

Measure	Number of Items	Reliability (Cronbach's α)	
		Study 1	Study 2
Ad Skepticism	9	--	.934
Persuasion Knowledge	4	.753	.725
Perceived Deceptiveness	3	.857	.880
Immediate Purchase Intention	6	.979	.973

Additionally, the means of the measured variables varied, ranging from 2.153 to 5.076, with standard deviation values varying between 1.000 to 1.462. These descriptive statistics provide important insights into the distribution and variability of the variables employed in the current study. Overall, the data exhibited satisfactory normality and collinearity diagnostics indicated no issues with multicollinearity among predictor variables, ensuring the reliability and validity of the data for testing hypotheses in Study 1.

The statistical summaries and associations for the variables employed in hypothesis testing for Study 2 are presented (Table 5.4). The assessment of data normality involved the examination of skewness and kurtosis measurements for the measured variables, as shown in Table 5.4. The findings demonstrated that all measured variables displayed skewness and kurtosis measurements that were within the satisfactory ranges, indicating a satisfactory level of normality. Hence, no data transformations were conducted to achieve normality in the dataset. The correlations between the variables ranged from -.204 to .435, indicating a moderate level of association. These correlation coefficients are below the threshold of .90, which is commonly linked to the possibility of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2019). The means of the variables ranged from 1.646 to 5.083, indicating variation in the responses, while the standard deviations varied between 1.031 to 1.309, indicating the dispersion of the data around the mean.

Table 5.3. Study 1 - Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Measures Employed in Hypothesis Testing, including Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Pearson Product Correlations.

					Correlations		
Variables	**Mean**	**SD**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**1**	**2**	**3**
1. Persuasion Knowledge	5.076	1.000	-.353	.164	1.00	-.005	.284**
2. Perceived Deceptiveness	4.330	1.312	-.401	-.028		1.00	-.321**
3. Immediate Purchase Intention	2.153	1.462	1.375	1.023			1.00

**p<.01; **p<.001

Table 5.4. Study 2 - Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Measures Employed in Hypothesis Testing, including Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Pearson Product Correlations.

					Correlations			
Variables	**Mean**	**SD**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1. Ad Skepticism	3.109	1.110	.132	-.596	1.00	.039	-.204*	.435**
2. Persuasion Knowledge	5.083	1.031	-.563	.556		1.00	.110	.342**
3. Perceived Deceptiveness	4.450	1.309	-.194	-.054			1.00	-.177
4. Immediate Purchase Intention	1.646	1.054	1.478	1.952				1.00

**p<.01; **p<.001

Manipulation Checks

To confirm that participants correctly detected the manipulated variables employed in this research, manipulation checks were conducted. An overview of the means of the manipulation variables is shown in Table 5.4, with each manipulation check rated using a 7-point Likert scale. In both studies, the manipulated variables were examined (e.g., message explicitness levels, product type) were assessed.

In Study 1 and Study 2, message explicitness levels (explicit/ implicit) were manipulated. Three different items (assertively, directly, and explicitly) were used for manipulation checks of message explicitness levels. The findings of the ANOVA propose that there are significant variations in means for assertiveness, directness, and explicitness between the two independent samples being compared. Specifically, for assertiveness, the F-value is 13.323 ($p < .001$), indicating that the between-groups variation is greater than the within-groups variation (Field, 2013). For directness, the F-value is 7.881 ($p = .005$), also indicating a notable difference in means among the two groups. For explicitness, the F-value is 5.755 ($p = .017$), further indicating a notable difference in means among the two groups (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

Overall, the ANOVA results suggest that the manipulation of the independent variable has resulted in a significant effect on the dependent variables of assertiveness, directness, and explicitness. These results can be used as manipulation checks to ensure that the independent variable was manipulated successfully, and the groups being compared were indeed different in the intended ways (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

Testing of Hypotheses

Study 1

Tests examining the moderating effects of Product Type can be found in Table 5.5, moderation model summaries can be found in Table 5.6. Additionally, Table 5.7 displays the outcomes of the mediation analysis conducted to explore the connection between the Message Explicitness Levels and Immediate Purchase Intention, along with the potential mediating role of Persuasion Knowledge and Perceived Deceptiveness.

Testing Hypothesis 1 and 2: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

In study 1, message explicitness levels (explicit vs. implicit) was manipulated and it was anticipated that persuasion knowledge (Hypothesis 1) and perceived deceptiveness (Hypothesis 2) will be higher in ad messages with explicit claim than implicit claim. The outcomes derived from the implementation of Process Macro Model 7 indicate that the effect of the message explicitness levels (explicit vs. implicit) on persuasion knowledge (H1) and perceived deceptiveness (H2) did not achieve significance at the 0.05 level. Specifically, the outcomes show that the message explicitness levels were not a statistically significant predictor of persuasion knowledge, $b = .137$, $t (189) = .288$, $p =.774$ and perceived deceptiveness, $b = .626$, $t (189) = 1.204$, $p = .230$. Therefore, there is no evidence to support H1 and H2.

Testing Hypothesis 3: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

Based on Hypothesis 3, it is predicted that the intention to click “shop now” and purchase intention will be higher in ad message with implicit claim than explicit claim. This implies that a lower level of message explicitness will make viewers want to click the

“shop now” button on the ad and purchase. The coefficient for the message explicitness level has a coefficient of .252, which is statistically insignificant with a p-value of .131. As a result, hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Testing Hypothesis 4: The Effect of Persuasion Knowledge

Hypothesis 4 predicted that there would be a negative relationship between persuasion knowledge and the click ‘shop now’ intention, meaning that viewers who are aware that they are being persuaded by an ad would be less likely to click the ‘shop now’ button. The results indicate that Hypothesis 4 was not supported, as persuasion knowledge was observed to have a statistically significant positive impact on immediate purchase intention ($\beta = .183$, SE = .087, $t = 2.110$, $p = .036$). This suggests that viewers who were aware they perceived persuasive attempts were more inclined to click ‘shop now’ on the ad and make a purchase.

Testing Hypothesis 5: The Effect of Perceived Deceptiveness

Hypothesis 5 predicted that perceived deceptiveness will negatively influence immediate purchase intention, meaning that viewers who perceive deceptiveness of an ad would be less likely to click the ‘shop now’ button and purchase. Based on the output of Process Macro Model 7, the coefficient for perceived deceptiveness is -.169, with a corresponding p-value of .032. Since the p-value is below .05, there is sufficient evidence indicating that perceived deceptiveness has a noteworthy and negative impact on immediate purchase intention.

Table 5.5. Study 1: Tests of the Moderating Effects of Ad Message Explicitness

Model	Persuasion Knowledge			Perceived Deceptiveness		
	B	**df**	**t**	**B**	**df**	**T**
Constant	4.036	189	9.937**	5.403	189	12.513**
Message Explicitness Levels	.137	189	.288	.626	189	1.204
Product Type	.192	189	.945	-.165	189	-.647
(Control Variable)	.162	189	4.098**	-.268	189	-4.495**
Attitude toward Product Interaction	.063	189	.225	-.138	189	-.392

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01

Table 5.6. Study 1: Moderation Model Summaries

Persuasion Knowledge			Perceived Deceptiveness		
R^2	**df**	**F**	**R^2**	**df**	**F**
.100	186	5.719**	.144	186	9.292**

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01

Table 5.7. Study 1: Mediation Analysis Involving a Binary Independent Variable and Its Impact on Immediate Purchase Intention

	Immediate Purchase Intention		
	B	**df**	**T**
Constant	-.125	186	-.265
Message Explicitness Levels	.252	186	1.518
Persuasion Knowledge	.183	186	2.110*
Perceived Deceptiveness	-.169	186	-2.158*
(Control Variable)	.504	186	8.760**
Attitude toward Product			

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01

Testing Hypothesis 6 and 7: The Moderating Effect of Product Type

Two hypotheses regarding the indirect effects of message explicitness levels and product type on immediate purchase intention, mediated by different variables. Hypothesis 6 predicted that the indirect effect would be mediated by persuasion knowledge and Hypothesis 7 predicted mediation by perceived deceptiveness.

Analysis showed that the interaction effect between message explicitness levels and product type did not yield a significant indirect effect on immediate purchase intention through persuasion knowledge (H6) or perceived deceptiveness (H7), with p-values of .822 and .695, respectively. Therefore, both hypothesis 6 and hypothesis 7 were not substantiated.

Study 2

Tests of the moderating effects of Ad Skepticism can be found in Table 5.8. The summaries of the moderation models can be in Table 5.9. Additionally, Table 5.10 provides the outcomes of the mediation investigation performed to explore the association between Message Explicitness Levels and Immediate Purchase Intention, along with the potential mediating influence of Persuasion Knowledge and Perceived Deceptiveness.

Testing Hypothesis 1 and 2: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

In study 2, the researcher manipulated the degree of message explicitness (explicit vs. implicit) and expected that persuasion knowledge (Hypothesis 1) and perceived deceptiveness (Hypothesis 2) would be higher in explicit ad message compared to implicit ad message. The results of the investigation employing the Process Macro Model 7 indicated that the impact of message explicitness levels on perceived deceptiveness (H2)

was statistically significant. However, persuasion knowledge (H1) did not reach statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Specifically, the results showed that the message explicitness levels did not have a significant predictive effect on persuasion knowledge ($b = -.072$, $t(133) = -.758$, $p = .450$) but the message explicitness levels did significantly predict perceived deceptiveness ($b = .656$, $t(133) = 4.837$, $p = .000$). As a result, Hypothesis 1 was not corroborated but Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Testing Hypothesis 3: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

Based on Hypothesis 3 it was predicted that immediate purchase intention would be higher in implicit ad message compared to explicit ad message. The coefficient for the message explicitness level was -.075, which was not statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of .4611. This suggests that explicit ad messages have a positive effect on intention to click "shop now" compared to implicit ad messages, not supporting Hypothesis 3.

Testing Hypothesis 4: The Effect of Persuasion Knowledge

Hypothesis 4 predicted that persuasion knowledge would negatively impact on immediate purchase intention, meaning that viewers who are aware that they are being persuaded by an ad would be less likely to click the "shop now" button and purchase the product. The findings revealed a positive correlation between persuasion knowledge and immediate purchase intention ($\beta = .229$, $SE = .064$, $t = 3.553$, $p = .001$), not supporting Hypothesis 4.

Table 5.8. Study 2: Tests of the Moderating Effects of Ad Message Explicitness

Model	Persuasion Knowledge			Perceived Deceptiveness		
	B	**df**	**t**	**B**	**df**	**T**
Constant	5.102	135	61.542**	4.202	135	40.222**
Message Explicitness Levels	-.072	135	-.758	.656	135	4.837**
Ad Skepticism	.001	135	.007	-.257	135	-2.513
Interaction	.015	135	.168	-.102	135	-.898

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01

Testing Hypothesis 5: The Effect of Perceived Deceptiveness

Hypothesis 5 predicted that perceived deceptiveness would negatively influence immediate purchase intention, meaning that viewers who perceive an ad to be deceptive would be less likely to click the "shop now" button and purchase the product. However, the examination utilizing the Process Macro Model 7 found that the coefficient for perceived deceptiveness was -.052 with a p-value of .231, indicating that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that perceived deceptiveness exerted a notable adverse impact on immediate purchase intention, leading to the non-support of Hypothesis 5.

Testing Hypothesis 8 and 9: The Moderating Effect of Ad Skepticism

Hypothesis 8 posited that the positive impact of an explicit message on persuasion knowledge would be influenced by ad skepticism, resulting in a strong relationship for individuals with high ad skepticism than low ad skepticism. The findings indicated that the relationship between explicit message and persuasion knowledge was influenced by ad skepticism, with a more pronounced effect observed among individuals with high levels of ad skepticism compared to those with low skepticism (interaction effect: B = .015, SE = .092, t = .168, p = .867). Thus, hypothesis 8 was not supported.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that the positive impact of explicit message on perceived deceptiveness will be influenced by ad skepticism, such that the relationship will be stronger for high ad skepticism than low ad skepticism. Ad skepticism did not influence the relationship between explicit message and perceived deceptiveness (interaction effect: B = -.102, SE = .114, t = -.898, p = .371). Thus, hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Table 5.9. Study 2: Moderation Model Summaries

Persuasion Knowledge			Perceived Deceptiveness		
R^2	**df**	**F**	**R^2**	**df**	**F**
.003	133	.192	.182	133	10.630**

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01

Table 5.10. Study 2: Mediation Analysis with a Binary Independent Variable on Immediate Purchase Intention

	Immediate Purchase Intention		
	B	**df**	**T**
Constant	.694	133	1.863
Message Explicitness Levels	-.075	133	-.739
Persuasion Knowledge	.229	133	3.553**
Perceived Deceptiveness	-.052	133	-1.203

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01

The Johnson-Neyman technique was used to examine if ad skepticism influences the relationship between message explicitness levels and immediate purchase intention in a sample of 103 participants ($p>0.05$). This means that the impact of message explicitness levels on immediate purchase intention remains consistent across different levels of ad skepticism.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

To sum up, Hypothesis 5 in Study 1 and Hypothesis 2 in Study 2 were confirmed. Although Hypothesis 4 in both Study 1 and Study 2 yielded significant outcomes, they did not align with the researcher's expectations and thus were not upheld. The outcomes of the testing hypotheses are outlined in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11. Summary of Results

Hypotheses	Study 1	Study 2
H1: Explicitness Levels → Persuasion Knowledge	Not supported	Not supported
H2: Explicitness Levels → Perceived Deceptiveness	Not supported	Supported
H3: Explicitness Levels→ Immediate Purchase Intention	Not supported	Not supported
H4: Persuasion Knowledge → Immediate Purchase Intention	Significant (but different direction)	Significant (but different direction)
H5: Perceived Deceptiveness → Immediate Purchase Intention	Supported	Not supported
H6: Explicitness Levels*Product Type → Persuasion Knowledge	Not supported	N/A
H7: Explicitness Levels*Product Type → Perceived Deceptiveness	Not supported	N/A
H8: Explicitness Levels*Ad Skepticism → Persuasion Knowledge	N/A	Not supported
H9: Explicitness Levels*Ad Skepticism → Perceived Deceptiveness	N/A	Not supported

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Study 1

Hypothesis 1 and 2: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

The findings of study 1 suggest that the manipulation of message explicitness levels (explicit vs. implicit) did not have a notable effect on participants' persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness. The results indicate that participants did not differentiate between explicit ad message or implicit ad message in terms of their level of persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness. These outcomes suggest that consumers might not always be able to detect deception in advertising, regardless of its level of explicitness.

The lack of significant effects on persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness contradicts prior research that has proposed that explicit messages are more prone to be detected by consumers and perceived as more deceptive compared to implicit message. These findings suggest that Instagram users may not always be actively looking for advertising message explicitness, and therefore may not be sensitive to the level of explicitness. Additionally, even if Instagram users are aware of the possibility of deception in advertising, they may not be able to accurately identify and differentiate between explicit and implicit forms of message because they might be not sensitive about the message explicitness levels.

Prior research has explored the impacts of message explicitness levels on persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness, but with mixed outcomes. For

instance, research has found that explicit message leads to higher levels of persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness compared to implicit message (e.g., Briñol & Petty, 2003), while others have found no significant difference (e.g., Pettigrew, 2015; Sela & Berger, 2012). The findings of previous studies have varied, with research supporting the hypotheses that explicit message leads to higher levels of persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness, while others finding no significant difference between explicit and implicit messages.

Hypothesis 3: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

The findings of the study 1 reveal interesting understandings into the impacts of message explicitness levels on viewer responses to social media advertisements. The researcher hypothesized that implicit ad message would elicit higher intention to click "Shop now" and purchase intention than explicit ad message. However, the results did not support these hypotheses, with no significant differences found between the two explicitness levels for the combined variable, immediate purchase.

The outcomes of hypotheses 3 shed light on how message explicitness levels influence click and purchase intentions in social media advertising. The outcomes indicate that the extent of message explicitness might not exert a noteworthy influence on click and purchase intention.

The outcomes of the current study could be interpreted in a few ways. Firstly, it may suggest that viewers of social media are less affected by message explicitness than previously thought. The fact that message explicitness levels did not significantly influence click and purchase intentions may imply that viewers are more centered on other elements

such as the product itself, the visuals, or the brand, rather than the level of message explicitness. Another potential interpretation of the results is that viewers are becoming more skeptical of social media in general, and thus are less swayed by the level of message explicitness.

Hypothesis 4: The Effect of Persuasion Knowledge

The findings of the present study shed light on the impacts of persuasion knowledge on immediate purchase intention in online advertising. Hypotheses 4 predicted that persuasion knowledge would adversely influence immediate purchase intention, but the results showed that these hypotheses were not supported. Instead, persuasion knowledge had a notable positive impact on immediate purchase intention, suggesting that viewers who were aware they were being persuaded were more prone to click the “shop now” button on the ad and to purchase the product.

These findings propose that persuasion knowledge does not necessarily have a negative impact on viewers’ responses to social media advertising. Instead, awareness of persuasion may increase viewers’ motivation to interact with and buy the advertised product. It is possible that ad viewers with high persuasion knowledge may be more prone to click "Shop Now" if they perceive the ad to be highly relevant to their interests and needs. They may be more informed about the product and its benefits, which could increase their intention to make a purchase.

Hypothesis 5: The Effect of Perceived Deceptiveness

The study's findings affirm the validity of Hypothesis 5, which proposed a negative association between perceived deceptiveness and the intention to click on the "Shop Now"

option. The findings suggest that viewers' perception of deceptiveness significantly affected their purchase intention the promoted product.

Earlier studies have also explored the connection between perceived deceptiveness and consumer actions. For instance, a study conducted by Lee and his associates (2017) revealed that perceived deception was linked to unfavorable brand attitudes and reduced purchase intentions. Conversely, a different study conducted by Wang and his team (2015) indicated that perceived deceptiveness did not exert a notable impact on purchase intention; instead, it was the value that consumers perceived in the product that played a pivotal role in influencing purchase intentions.

According to the results of Study 1 uncovered a notable negative correlation between perceived deceptiveness and immediate purchase intention. This implies that when viewers perceive an ad to be deceptive, their intention to make an immediate purchase is adversely affected. Several reasons might explain why perceived deceptiveness had a notable negative influence on immediate purchase intention. Firstly, consumers are becoming increasingly cautious and critical of advertising messages in the digital age. With a plethora of information and options available online, viewers may be more vigilant in detecting potential deception in sponsored ads. As a result, when they detect any signs of deception, such as exaggerated claims or misleading information, they are less inclined to trust the ad and may hesitate to make a purchase. Secondly, trust plays a crucial role in consumer behavior, particularly within the realm of sponsored ads. If viewers perceive an ad as deceptive, it erodes their trust in the advertiser or brand. The loss of trust can significantly influence their purchase intentions, as customers are more prone to prefer

brands and products they notice as trustworthy and reliable. Lastly, the study participants may have prior experience with deceptive advertising, which could make them more sensitive to detecting deception in ads. Past encounters with misleading or deceptive ads may lead to a more cautious and skeptical approach when evaluating sponsored content, resulting in lower immediate purchase intention when perceived deceptiveness is detected.

Hypothesis 6 and 7: The Moderating Effect of Product Type

The present study explored the indirect influences of message explicitness level and product type on immediate purchase intention, mediated by different variables. Hypothesis 6 predicted that the indirect effect would be mediated by persuasion knowledge, and the analysis did not support this hypothesis. This discovery contrasts with prior research that has underscored the significance of persuasion knowledge in influencing consumer reactions to advertising content. For instance, previous research conducted by Friestad and Wright (1994) demonstrated that people possessing greater degrees of persuasion knowledge were less inclined to be influenced by advertising messages.

Similarly, Hypothesis 7 expected that perceived deceptiveness serves as a mediator in the relationship between message explicitness levels, product type, and immediate purchase intention. However, the analysis did not support this hypothesis. This finding is somewhat surprising, as previous research has suggested that perceived deceptiveness can have a significant impact on consumer responses to advertising messages. As an illustration, a study conducted by Boush and Loken (1991) revealed that

perceived deceptiveness had an adverse impact on customer attitudes towards advertising content.

The outcomes suggest that regardless of whether the product is utilitarian or hedonic, the level of message explicitness does not significantly affect immediate purchase intention through any of the proposed mediating variables (persuasion knowledge and perceived deceptiveness). These results suggest that for both hedonic and utilitarian products, other factors might have a more substantial influence on shaping consumer behavior, rather than the level of message explicitness.

Study 2

Hypothesis 1 and 2: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

The outcomes of hypothesis 1 for both Study 1 and Study 2 are the same but the results of hypothesis 2 are different. H2 can be considered as supported in Study 2, but not in Study 1. In Study 2, the findings showed that perceived deceptiveness was indeed higher in the ads containing an explicit claim compared to those featuring an implicit claim. This suggests that the presence of ad skepticism influenced participants' perceptions of deceptiveness differently depending on whether the ad message was explicit or implicit.

Hypothesis 3: The Effect of Ad Message Explicitness

In Study 2, the same hypothesis was tested with a different moderator, ad skepticism of viewers. The results did not support the hypotheses as they expected implicit message to positively impact click intention and purchase intention. The result is the same as H3 of Study 1.

Hypothesis 4: The Effect of Persuasion Knowledge

The findings of the present study shed light on the influences of persuasion knowledge on immediate purchase intention in online advertising. Hypotheses 4 predicted that persuasion knowledge would adversely influence immediate purchase intention, but the findings indicated that these hypotheses did not receive support. Instead, the results demonstrated a notable positive impact of persuasion knowledge on immediate purchase intention, suggesting that individuals who recognized the persuasive intent were more inclined to click the "shop now" button and make a purchase.

These findings propose that persuasion knowledge may not always result in a negative influence on viewers' responses to social media advertising. However, the recognition of persuasion might elevate the viewer's drive to interact with and acquire the promoted item. It's conceivable that individuals possessing extensive persuasion knowledge could exhibit a greater propensity to select "Shop Now" when they interpret the advertisement as closely aligned with their preferences and requirements. They may be more informed about the product and its benefits, which could increase their intention to make a purchase.

Hypothesis 5: The Effect of Perceived Deceptiveness

The outcomes of the research confirm the validation of Hypothesis 5 (H5) in Study 1, affirming the anticipated negative link between perceived deceptiveness and immediate purchase intention. This suggests that in the context of Study 1, how viewers perceived deceptiveness significantly influenced their intent to buy the promoted product.

However, the results from Study 2 portray a distinct scenario, as H5 did not receive support. In contrast to Study 1, perceived deceptiveness did not hold a notable effect on immediate purchase intention in Study 2.

These divergent findings observed between Study 1 and Study 2 underscore the intricate nature of the association between perceived deceptiveness and consumer behavior. Prior research has similarly yielded mixed outcomes, with certain studies highlighting the adverse effect of perceived deceptiveness on purchase intention, while others underline the significance of additional factors such as perceived product value.

Hypothesis 8 and 9: The Moderating Effect of Ad Skepticism

The findings of the research do not uphold the idea that ad skepticism functions as a moderator in the connection between message explicitness levels and persuasion knowledge. The outcomes suggest that ad skepticism does not significantly influence how consumers react to misleading advertising messages. Moreover, ad skepticism did not exert moderation over the link between explicit messages and perceived deceptiveness. This indicates that the impacts of varying degrees of message explicitness on consumers' perceptions are not exclusively contingent on the extent of ad skepticism.

One possible explanation for the outcomes is that the effects of explicit message on persuasion knowledge may be more salient to individuals with high degrees of ad skepticism because they are more prone to be vigilant and attentive to advertising messages. On the other hand, implicit messages may be more difficult for individuals to detect, regardless of their levels of ad skepticism, as they are often presented in a more subtle and indirect manner.

Another perspective to consider for the lack of moderation effects of ad skepticism on perceived deceptiveness and ad credibility is that these constructs may be less directly related to skepticism. While skepticism may lead individuals to be more discerning about advertising messages and more likely to detect explicit message, it may not necessarily impact their overall perception of the credibility of the ad or the perceived deceptiveness of implicit messages. Other factors, like the perceived product quality, the perceived reliability of the information presented in the ad, and prior experiences with similar products or ads, might play a larger role in shaping consumers' perceptions of these constructs. Additionally, it is possible that other individual differences, such as cognitive processing style or personality traits, may be more relevant to understanding the effects of perceived deceptiveness and ad credibility.

Implications

Study 1 and Study 2 investigate how different levels of message explicitness impact viewers' reactions to social media advertising. The significance of these studies can be analyzed in relation to both theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the current study provides a theoretical contribution to the existing literature on sponsored social media advertising by examining the applicability of the PKM to Instagram sponsored ads. While some of the hypotheses were not supported, the results suggest that social media users recognize the persuasive purpose behind sponsored posts, and this recognition affects their attitudes and behavioral intentions toward these ads. These findings align with previous research on PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994) and

support the idea that consumers have developed a sophisticated understanding of the persuasive tactics used by advertisers in social media (Campbell & Park, 2008). Interestingly, some of the findings contradict prior research on PKM, highlighting the importance of considering the specific platform and context in which advertising occurs. For example, while prior studies have suggested that consumer reacts to advertising depend on the extent of their persuasion knowledge (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000), this study revealed that persuasion knowledge had a statistically significant but relatively small impact on consumers' attitudes toward sponsored posts on Instagram. This suggests that factors other than persuasion knowledge may play a more prominent role in shaping consumer reactions to sponsored content on social media.

Importantly, this research also emphasizes the value of unexpected or negative results in advancing our understanding of a phenomenon. The fact that some of the hypotheses were not supported provides insight into the limitations of existing theoretical frameworks and suggests avenues for future research. By exploring the nuances of social media advertising and the factors that influence users' responses to sponsored content, the present study contributes to a deeper and more comprehensive comprehension of the complex interplay between advertising and consumer behavior in the digital age.

Secondly, the present study significantly enhances the existing literature by delving into the effectiveness of explicit ad message and the influence of product type on consumer behavior within sponsored social media advertising. Contrary to prior research, the results suggest that explicit ad messages positively impact consumers' behavioral intentions, as evidenced by their increased likelihood to click "shop now" and purchase

the promoted products. Moreover, the outcomes indicate that the product type (utilitarian versus hedonic) does not significantly influence consumers' responses to sponsored ads. The unexpected nature of these results is particularly noteworthy and underscores the importance of continually testing and refining existing theoretical frameworks. This study challenges prior assumptions regarding the efficacy of explicit advertising messages and highlights the need for further investigation into the factors that drive consumers' responses to sponsored social media ads. By shedding light on these important issues, the present study adds depth and nuance to our understanding of the complex interplay between advertising messages, product types, and consumer behavior in the realm of sponsored social media advertising.

Practical Implications

Firstly, the findings of this research suggest that viewers are becoming more skeptical of social media in general, and thus are less swayed by the level of message explicitness. Therefore, advertisers should increase the level of explicitness. Brand managers can consider being more explicit in their sponsored ad messages to improve consumer attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, including clear messages about the brand's intentions and the promotional nature of the post has the potential to evoke a more favorable or positive response from users. This approach may be more effective in motivating viewers to act than using implicit messages.

Secondly, advertisers should be aware that using implicit messages in advertising could be risky as consumers may not be able to detect them easily, even if they are generally skeptical of advertising. Therefore, when using implicit messages, advertisers

should consider the cognitive processing style and personality traits of their target audience. For example, research has shown that individuals with a strong desire for cognitive engagement, who derive satisfaction from processing information thoroughly, are more likely to detect deceptive advertising messages (Cacioppo et al., 1984). On the other hand, people with a low need for cognition may rely more on surface-level cues and could be more susceptible to implicit messages (Petty et al., 1986). Therefore, advertisers should tailor their advertising messages based on the cognitive processing style of their specific audience to enhance the probability that consumers will detect implicit messages. Additionally, advertisers should consider other individual differences, such as personality traits like openness to experience or conscientiousness, when developing advertising messages that rely on implicit ad message (Goldberg, 1993; John & Srivastava, 1999). By considering these factors, advertisers can create more effective advertising messages that connect with their intended audience.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

According to the results of the present study and the implications discussed, numerous opportunities exist for future research in various directions. One possible avenue for further study would be to examine the effectiveness of various types of explicit and implicit advertising messages across different product categories and target audiences other than self-care products and female users. This could help advertisers better understand how to craft persuasive messages that resonate with their target audience.

In addition, while our study focused on differentiating between explicit and implicit messaging, it is important to acknowledge that consumers' interpretations of implicit messages may still vary, leading to potential discrepancies in perceived explicitness. Future research could delve deeper into understanding the factors influencing consumers' perceptions of implicit messages and explore how individual differences and contextual elements could potentially influence the shaping of these perceptions.

Furthermore, one limitation of the research was the utilization of still images to depict Instagram sponsored ads. Future research could incorporate dynamic content, such as videos or interactive ads, to better capture the immersive and engaging nature of Instagram advertising. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' responses to different ad formats and messaging strategies.

The present study examined consumer responses to sponsored ads in a controlled online survey setting. However, in a more natural Instagram environment, where users encounter a blend of sponsored and organic content, consumer perceptions and responses may differ. Future research could conduct experiments within the Instagram platform itself to gain insights into how consumers interact with sponsored ads in their regular browsing experience.

Although the sample size in our study was suitable for the conducted analysis, future studies could gain advantages from a larger sample size, especially when utilizing intricate statistical methodologies like Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). A larger sample would enhance the statistical power and generalizability of the findings.

To address gaps, researchers could collect additional data using larger and more diverse samples, as well as different experimental designs and measures. Researchers could also consider incorporating other theoretical frameworks, such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model, to better understand the mechanisms underlying consumers' responses to advertising messages. Consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty et al., 1986), individuals engage in processing persuasive messages through two cognitive avenues: the central route and the peripheral route. The central route entails extensive cognitive processing, where the individual actively thinks about and evaluates the message arguments. Conversely, the peripheral route involves lower levels of cognitive processing, where the individual relies on surface-level cues, such as the message source or the use of emotional appeals, to make judgments about the message. In the context of Instagram sponsored advertisements, the level of message explicitness may influence the cognitive processing route that viewers take, which can ultimately impact their responses to the ad.

To enhance the comprehension of Instagram sponsored ads, forthcoming research endeavors could adopt a mixed-methods approach by combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. This approach would allow for a more thorough analysis of viewers' responses to sponsored ads on Instagram, including their perceptions of the ad content, the cognitive processing route they took, and the factors that influenced their response. Qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide in-dept insights into viewers' attitudes and beliefs about sponsored ads,

while quantitative data collection methods, such as survey or experiments, could provide empirical evidence to support these insights.

Lastly, the study focused on sponsored ads for different product types. However, it could be valuable for future research to explore how consumers respond differently to sponsored ads based on whether they are endorsed by brands or influencers. Exploring the impacts of brand versus influencer advertising on the perceptions of consumers perceptions and behavioral intentions could provide valuable insights to marketers and advertisers aiming to enhance their strategies in influencer marketing.

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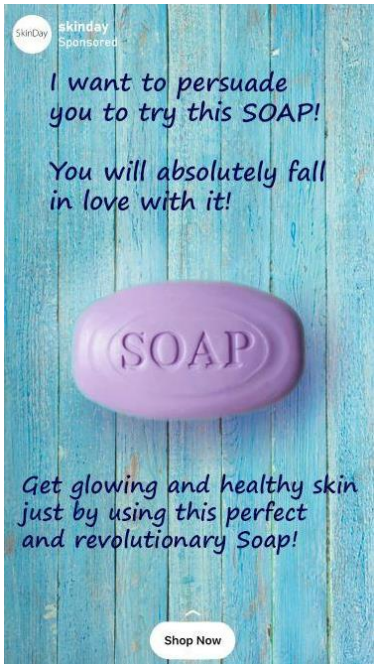
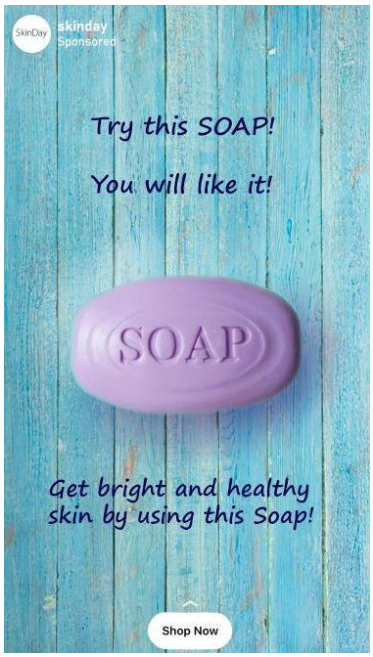
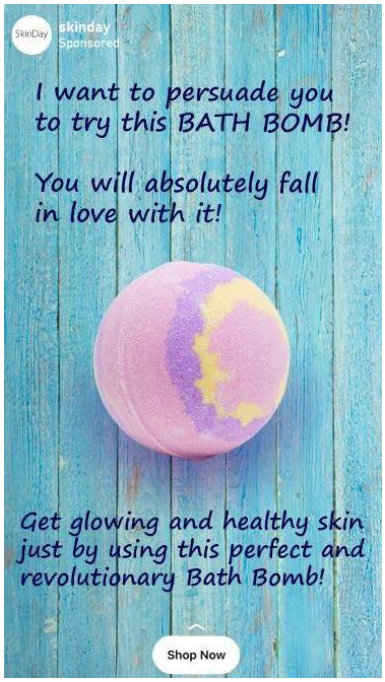
APPENDIX

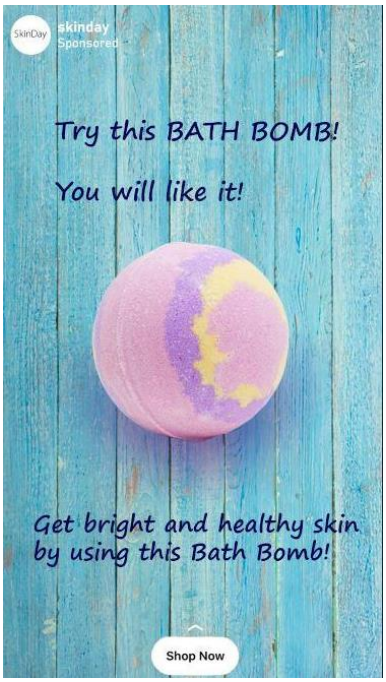
Appendix A

Note: Left is an Instagram ad with explicit message and right is implicit message. SkinDay is a fictitious brand. Soap is utilitarian product and Bath bomb is hedonic product.









Appendix B

You will be asked to review 14 products. Please rate your perceptions of whether each product is utilitarian or hedonic.

Please read carefully both definition of utilitarian and hedonic below.

1. Utilitarian product is useful, practical, functional, something that helps achieve a goal.
2. Hedonic product is pleasant and fun, something that is enjoyable and appeals to the senses.

Deodorant

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Perfume

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Lipstick

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Lip Balm

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Hair Dye

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Shampoo

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Ice Cream

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Milk

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sunglasses

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Glasses

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Bath Bomb

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Bubble Bath

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Body Wash

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Soap

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. You will be asked to review 13 products. Please rate your perceptions of whether each product is utilitarian or hedonic.

Facial Mask

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Moisturizer

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Anti-Wrinkle Moisturizer

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sunscreen

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nail Clipper

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nail Polish

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Water

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Wine

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Coffee

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Chocolate

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Granola Bar

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Laptop

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

MacBook Pro

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. You will be asked to review 12 products. Please rate your perceptions of whether each product is utilitarian or hedonic.

Comic Book

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

School Textbook

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Skincare Products

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Makeup Products

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Fancy Clothes

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Causal Clothes

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

High Heel Shoes

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Running Shoes

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Cooking Pot

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Instant Pot

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Lamp for Room Deco

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Lamp for Livingroom

Hedonic						**Utilitarian**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C

Do you have an Instagram account?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

I identify as

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you selected prefer to self-describe, please describe your gender identity.
_____.

Here are some questions for your general opinion about **ads**.

	Strongly Disagree						**Strongly Agree**
We can depend on getting the truth in most advertisement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertising's aim is to inform consumers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe advertising is informative.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertising is generally truthful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertising is truth well told.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Compared to other people, how familiar do you think you are with the product, **soap/bath bomb**?

Very unfamiliar **Very familiar**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do you know precisely what attributes of a **soap/bath bomb** decide the function of the **soap/bath bomb**?

Entirely don't know **Know very precisely**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do you think you can make a satisfactory purchased of a soap/bath bomb based on only your knowledge, without another person's help?

Absolutely not **Absolutely yes**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How knowledgeable a person is you about soap/bath bomb?

Very unknowledgeable **Very knowledgeable**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Rate your knowledge of soap/bath bomb as compared to the average consumer.

One of the least knowledgeable **One of the most knowledgeable**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

If you were going to buy a soap today, how comfortable would you feel making a purchase based on your own knowledge about soap/bath bomb?

Very uncomfortable **Very comfortable**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

STIMULUS EXPOSURE HERE

We'd like to ask how you see the product in the post.

I think the product category in the post is:

Unenjoyable **Enjoyable**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Functional **Not functional**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I think the product is a _____ product: (a) utilitarian (b) hedonic.

- Utilitarian: useful, practical, functional, something that helps achieve a goal (e.g., a vacuum cleaner).
- Hedonic: pleasant and fun, something that is enjoyable and appeals to the senses (e.g., perfume).

☐ Utilitarian

☐ Hedonic

How familiar are you with the brand featured in the ad?

Extremely Unfamiliar						**Extremely Familiar**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I think the ad message is persuading me _____.

Subtly						**Assertively**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indirectly						**Directly**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Implicitly						**Explicitly**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

We are interested in your evaluation of the specific post you observed.

	Strongly Disagree						**Strongly Agree**
This advertisement is meant to sell the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This advertisement stimulates the sales of the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This advertisement influences opinions about the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This advertisement makes people like the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This advertisement provides information about the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This advertisement lets people know more about the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree						**Strongly Agree**
The fact of sponsorship is concealed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Product praise is exaggerated to mislead viewers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Product weaknesses are not discussed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Things are made up to deceive viewers in some way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Information is distorted to deceive viewers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Viewers aren't told important information that they need to know.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Based on the above advertisement, it seems

Unconvincing						**Convincing**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Unbelievable						**Believable**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Biased						**Unbiased**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please answer the following questions about the Instagram ad you viewed.

	Strongly Disagree						**Strongly Agree**
I will be considering to click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I will be intending to click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I will likely click "Shop Now" of the advertisement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I desire to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to buy the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I plan to purchase the product that is promoted on Instagram Story.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How many hours do you spend on Instagram on a typical day?

- ☐ None
- ☐ Less than 30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes to less than 60 minutes
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ More than 2 hours

What is your age?

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identification?

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

What was your approximate total household income last year (before taxes)?

- ☐ Less than $20,000
- ☐ $20,000-$39,999
- ☐ $40,000-$59,999

- ☐ $60,000-$79,999
- ☐ $80,000-$99,999
- ☐ $100,000-$119,999
- ☐ $120,000-$139,999
- ☐ $140,000-$159,999
- ☐ $160,000-$179,999
- ☐ $180,000-$199,999
- ☐ $200,000 or more

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High school or less
- ☐ Associate degree (community college, technical school, two-year college)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ PhD degree or more

VITA

Bomi Lee, a native of Seoul, Republic of Korea, was born on March 22, 1991. She holds a Master of Science degree in Clothing and Textiles from Kyung Hee University, which she earned in February 2016, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Clothing and Textiles from Kyung Hee University, completed in February 2014. With a desire to further her education and expand her knowledge, in the spring of 2018, Bomi Lee entered the doctoral program in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management at the University of Tennessee. During her time in Graduate School, she actively participated as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and Lecturer. Her research interests encompass various aspects of the retail and consumer sciences field, including social media marketing, consumer behavior in the retail industry, and sponsored advertising.