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ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIFFERENT INFLUENCER CATEGORIES - EXPLORATION OF GENERATION Z

Lucia SPÁLOVÁ – Peter MIKULÁŠ – Oľga PÚCHOVSKÁ

ABSTRACT:
The issue of intersection of digital media and acquisition of forms of public awareness is still relatively new. This research study identifies cognitive aspects of subjective perception of different categories of influencers operating in the online environment. The aim is a more detailed explanation of the psychosemantic structure of the perception of selected domestic influencers in relation to the self-respondents and the brand, as this is where the promotional aspect of the researched topic is revealed. Theoretical starting points of the study accentuate the knowledge based on endorsement models of using celebrities in marketing communication, as well as on the concept of social psychology and persuasion. The elementary definition of the concept of influencers lies in the etymological analysis, which we supplement with the analysis of currently established scientific-professional approaches to the categorisation of influencers and also draw attention to a critical explanation of terms related to influencer marketing, such as opinion leader, brand ambassador, as well as the influencer itself. To identify social representation of celebrities and marketing communication in the semantic space of generation Z we applied a psychosemantic method of Semantic Choice Test. The results indicate a markedly positive self-concept of the studied cohort of Generation Z and its focus on professional application represented by the semantic proximity of two influencers (Sajfa and LucyPug). At the same time, significant distrust of politicians and political communication and a critical approach to the aggressive communication of political entities were identified.

KEY WORDS:
ambassador, celebrity, Generation Z, influencer, marketing communication, self, social media

1 Introduction

The Internet has greatly influenced the creation of celebrities and social interactions with their audience. This intervention cannot be reduced to the new ways of building fame and attention, but it also relates to the

impact on the traditional forms of 'celebrity status'. These, according to Rojek relate either to ascribed status (based for example on royal status and lineage), achieved status (based on own success) or attributed status (with media popularity or self-branding as the starting point).[1]

We currently distinguish a number of categorical approaches to the celebrity phenomenon with the limits in the social and political determinants, as well as in the public profile.[2] Povedák identifies the common ground in the cult of personality, its intensity, professional skills or the person's fame.[3] Richey understands celebrity status as a result of an accumulation of generated profit; however, she does not only focus on big screen personalities, but extends the concept of celebrities to personalities whose position and popularity is mainly supported by the transformation of media systems.[4]

It becomes common practice that the traditional celebrities extend their fame into the area of digital media, thereby broadening their public fame and attention,[5] which specifically concerns the impact on younger age segments.[6] Therefore, it cannot be generally concluded that there is a single indication pointing to the fact that these (originally) non-Internet celebrities would be currently less connected to the Internet than those who gained their fame exclusively through digital media. And this can also be applied to the roles that these celebrities[7] take in the positions of marketing communications, namely the so-called marketing influencers.

The first publication on the use of the Internet for the purpose of receiving public fame and attention was published in 2008 (*Camgirls* by Senft).[8] The main topic of this publication is self-presentation, whose essential role in the celebrification process is demonstrated by so-called camgirls, i.e., women presenting themselves and their privacy. This publication also discusses the term "microcelebrity" (as a micro-celebrity): *"Microcelebrity sometimes looks like conventional celebrity, but the two aren't the same... Micro-celebrity is best understood as a new style of online performance that involves people 'amping up' their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs and social networking sites."*[9] The etymology of the term is rather vague, with some publications[10] explaining it as the ability of the referenced person to 'celebrificate' her or his self, without help from traditional media production. On this basis, a certain kind of relationship is created with the fans, which through social closeness and/or quality of simulation differs significantly from the major social barriers typical for the traditional relationship of celebrities and their audiences.[11]

The book by Senft deals primarily with the pre-social Internet media, which is usually referred to as Web 1.0. However, it is the digital social media where the outlined trends were fully developed. The onset and success of social media are mainly due to the nearly simultaneous success of *Facebook* and *YouTube*, which have significantly affected the behaviour of Internet users and made space for the emergence of new celebrification mechanisms. The creation of a solid and relatively unlimited space for user-generated content is a major paradigm shift instigated by social media compared to their traditional counterparts. It is believed that social media have become a rival of the traditional media and this competition is definitely won by social

media among the generation of digital natives.[12] In addition to other resources (e.g., the transformation of traditional media into social services) this content is made by the users themselves, who in some cases turn into microcelebrities. This fact *"(...) has rapidly changed the dynamics of celebrity culture"*.[13]

In addition to the term "microcelebrity",[14] the celebrities emerging exclusively or primarily via the Internet are also denoted by the term "Internet celebrity".[15] Even the terms related to specific digital services such YouTubers and/or YouTube stars,[16] instagrammers,[17] twitterati[18] and others, have been introduced in a similar sense. These, however, generally refer to the overly active and/or creative users of these services who may or may not happen to be microcelebrities. However, research shows that *"persons emerged by social media are becoming more popular than traditional celebrities in young age groups. We can assume, that this process escalates and creates pressure on marketing communication."*[19]

These microcelebrities, as well as traditional celebrities, are *a priori* dependent on the ability of branding. More than a decade ago, Senft noted: *"In spite of their differences, Web micro-celebrities share something important with mainstream media stars: both must brand or die."*[20] This fact is becoming ever more articulated at the level of marketing communication. These skills are, in fact, increasingly used even for the promotion of third parties. In the area of marketing communication, the term "microcelebrities" is used quite scarcely, and it is replaced by particular manifestations of the Internet celebrities in relation to their promotional abilities. The term "influencer" is becoming pivotal in this context. While the concept of a "microcelebrity" refers to the degree of public fame and popularity, the term "influencer" refers to a person who uses their knowledge for promotional purposes. An influencer largely represents a transposition of the traditional concept of opinion leadership into current digital communications.

2 Etymological Paradigm of Social Influencers and Their Categorisation

When conducting a more detailed analysis of the theoretical concept, it is necessary to accept a certain degree of divergence and take into account the deeper etymological plane of the English term "influence-r" (influence, influencer). The roots of this word can be traced back to Old French, Latin and English, and its first use dates back to the 13th – 14th century. In Old French, the term *influence* refers to *"streaming ethereal power from the stars when in certain positions, acting upon character or destiny of men"*. In Medieval Latin, we identify an overlap with the word *influentia* and *influentem*, referring to a "flow" in terms of "fluency". In English, we see that the term is established as an impersonal outflow of energy associated with any forces, including immaterial and unnoticeable ones. The use of the term within the meaning of *invisible interpersonal action* took hold as late as in the 1980s although the meaning "person with influence on others" dates back to the 17th century (1650) thanks to the overlap with the then Latin term and pivotal concept of *influentialis*. The symbolic meaning of this word can also be derived from the concept *influenza*, which denotes a viral disease

1   ROJEK, C.: *Celebrity*. London : Reaktion Books, 2001, p. 17-18.
2   TURNER, G.: *Understanding Celebrity*. London : SAGE, 2014, p. 23-26.
3   POVEDÁK, I.: *Heroes and Celebrities in Central and Eastern Europe*. Szeged : Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, 2014, p. 7-8.
4   RICHEY, L. N.: *Celebrity Humanitarianism and North-South Relations: Politics, Place and Power*. Abingdon : Routledge, 2016, p. 146.
5   See: WASIŃSKI, A., TOMCZYK, Ł.: Factors Reducing the Risk of Internet Addiction in Young People in Their Home Environment. In *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2015, Vol. 57, p. 70; OGONOWSKA, A.: *Uzależnienia medialne. Czyli o patologicznym wykorzystaniu mediów*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, 2015, p. 6.
6   WALOTEK-ŚCIAŃSKA, K., SZYSZKA, M., WĄSIŃSKI, A.: *New Media in the Social Spaces. Strategies of Influence*. Prague : Verbum, 2014, p. 59.
7   Remark by authors: Occasionally, also non-living celebrities can be used, as a manifestation of so-called necromarketing. See: MIKULÁŠ, P., WOJCIECHOWSKI, Ł. P.: Celebrity Necromarketing: Nonliving Celebrities in Media Communication. In ČÁBYOVÁ, Ľ., PETRANOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: Digital Life – Part I.* Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015, p. 193; WOJCIECHOWSKI, Ł. P.: Poznámky k definícii nekromarketingu. In *Sborník konferenčních příspěvků ze 4. ročníku mezinárodní konference (KO)MÉDIÁ*. Zlín : UTB, 2010, p. 2.
8   SENFT, T. M.: *Camgirls: Celebrity & Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York : Peter Lang Publishers, 2008, p. 24.
9   SENFT, T. M.: *Camgirls: Celebrity & Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York : Peter Lang Publishers, 2008, p. 25.
10   See: JERSLEV, A.: In the Time of the Microcelebrity: Celebrification and the YouTuber Zoella. In *International Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 5233-5251; JIN, S. V., MUQADDAM, A., RYU, E.: Instafamous and Social Media Marketing. In *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 2019, Vol. 37, No. 5, p. 567-579.
11   MAR PO, L., JORGE, A., TOMAZ, R.: "I Felt Like I Was Really Talking to You!": Intimacy and Trust Among Teen Vloggers and Followers in Portugal and Brazil. In *Journal of Children and Media*, 2019, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 22-37.

12   ADAMSKI, A., JUPOWICZ-GINALSKA, A., LEONOWICZ-BUKAŁA, I.: Polish Nationwide Catholic Opinion-Forming Weeklies on Social Media – From Theoretical Introduction to Empirical Approach. In *Religions*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2020, p. 190.
13   GAMSON, J.: The Unwatched Life Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture. In *PMLA*, 2011, Vol. 126, No. 4, p. 1065.
14   See: SENFT, T. M.: *Camgirls: Celebrity & Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York : Peter Lang Publishers, 2008, p. 25; MARWICK, A.: *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2013, p. 112.
15   ABIDIN, C.: *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online*. Bigley : Emerald Group Publishing, 2018, p. 1-18.
16   MISRA, P., MUKHERJEE, A.: YouTuber Icons: An Analysis of the Impact on Buying Behaviour of Young Consumers. In *International Journal of Business Competition and Growth*, 2019, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 330.
17   BIEL, M.: *Ako pracujú a zarábajú slovenskí instagrameri?* Released on 20th May 2019. [online]. [2019-12-05]. Available at: <https://www.trend.sk/trend-archiv/ako-pracuju-zarabaju-slovenskych-instagrameri>.
18   See: SHETH, J. N.: How Social Media Will Impact Marketing Media. In HEGGDE, G., SHAINESH, G. (eds.): *Social Media Marketing*. Singapore : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
19   AULT, S.: *Survey: YouTube Stars More Popular Than Mainstream Celebs Among U.S. Teens*. [online]. [2014-08-05]. Available at: <https://variety.com/2014/digital/news/survey-youtube-stars-more-popular-than-mainstream-celebs-among-u-s-teens-1201275245/>.
20   SENFT, T. M.: *Camgirls: Celebrity & Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York : Peter Lang Publishers, 2008, p. 26.

of an epidemic character, and the origin of the name of this disease traces back to astrology, referring to the visit and impact of the heavens and the stars.[21] The 'viral' component in the meaning is gaining traction especially with the current form of the "influencer" phenomenon in social media, where the increasing potential 'impact' is directly moulded by the aspects of virality and the determinants of the digital environment, in particular by the specifics of Web 2.0.

The term "influencer" is currently used mostly in the above sense, and a glossary associates it with two meanings: a person who inspires, encourages, steers the actions of other people; and/or a person capable of stimulating interest in something (such as a product) through social media posts.[22] A similar definition is provided by a website specialising in influencer marketing issues – *Influencer Marketing Hub*,[23] which provides two definitions of "influencer": *"An influencer is someone who has the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience; a following in a distinct niche, with whom he or she actively engages. The size of the following depends on the size of his/her topic of the niche."* The first indicates the marketing aspect of the concept, while the second builds explicitly on the importance of relationships existing within a small but intensely connected community associated with a particular theme or area. Both approaches assume the existence of social media, which serve as a hub for the influencers and their activities. Therefore, influencers are sometimes labelled as "social media influencers".

When interpreting the meaning of "influencer", it is necessary to emphasise the so-called "opinion authority" and "persuader",[24] which appear in the traditional concepts of influencers within the paradigm of social sciences. For example, the *Influencer Marketing Hub* website also underlines the categorisation of influencers based on the level of impact, defining the so-called celebrities, key opinion leaders and people reaching above-average results in the context of interpersonal interactions.[25] An "opinion authority" or "opinion leader" is an individual with a significant impact on people in the given community (friends, colleagues, neighbours, etc., which unfolds in the local and/or geographically, ethnically or community-based actions), and the interaction occurs both through traditional media, personal contact and – increasingly so – digital media.[26] The concept of "opinion authorities" can be used within the meaning of buying decision influencers, and in some cases, the role of an "opinion authority" and "influencer" overlaps.[27]

An "ambassador" is yet another term for the promotional role of subject. Similar to the aforementioned "opinion authority", this concept evolutionarily predates the idea of influencers, and it entered semantic confrontation only with the advent of social media. The "ambassador" is therefore semantically unrelated to digital media, but initially linked to the traditionally dominant mass media. However, the ambassador's media presence is not limited to actual space, as is the case of influencers, but extends to the entire spectrum of media content. An ambassador promotes the brand even in other social spheres than mass media: events, promotional materials, ordinary social interaction, etc. The ambassador's activities go well beyond the sphere of Public Relations. An effectively functioning ambassador promotes the brand the way it becomes part of their lifestyle and self-brand. The ambassador therefore establishes long-term partnerships and solid connections with the brand that often last for their entire active career, and can last until the end of their life. In exceptional circumstances, the partnership between a celebrity and brand persists *post-mortem*.[28]

Following the various roles of influencers, categorisation approaches and the importance of "advice", it is important to emphasise the ambiguity especially in the case of celebrities and influencers. For example, Backaler, Gulberti or the *Influencer Marketing Hub*[29] delimit celebrities as a separate category within the parent category of influencers, and on the other hand, some authors[30] construe the category of celebrities as being superior, or possibly separate, singling out specific pairs of categories such as social media celebrities and traditional celebrities, or celebrities and social media influencers.
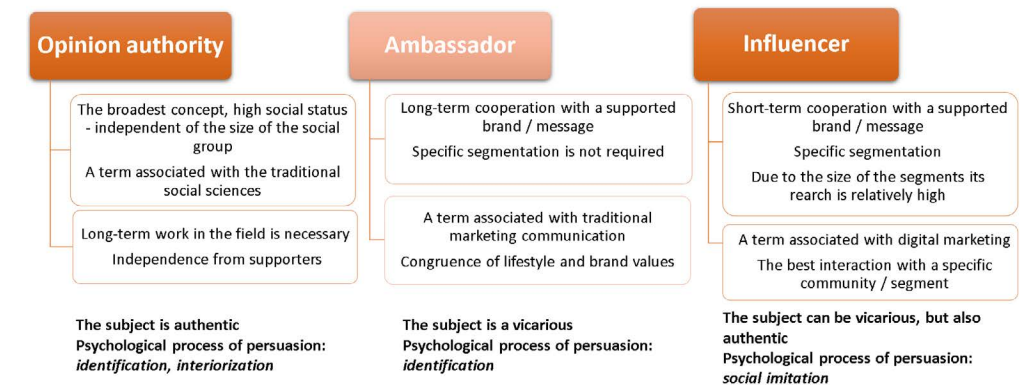

Figure 1: Conceptual model of social influencers
Source: Own processing

Based on these findings, we propose a three-component model in the typology of social influencers with a potential application in the marketing communication model. The primary position is taken by the widest concept of "opinion authority", particularity its high social status and independence from major social groups and supporters, and mostly with local (possibly global thanks to media platforms) level of action based on the principles of psychological interiorisation. The "opinion authority" is not directly related to digital media platforms, and should not be subject to marketing and economic influences. In terms of personality predispositions in the theoretical models of persuasion, this category is primarily based on credibility. The second position is taken by the "ambassador" as a personality activated by marketing, in which the congruence between the lifestyle, values and spirit of the brand especially comes to mind. These recommendations are typical for a long-term cooperation with the brand, and identification is highlighted from the perspective of socio-psychological processes. The specific attributes in this category of influencers include congruence, professionalism and social responsibility. The third category consists of influencers who are strongly commercially committed individuals, but in a rather short-term cooperation with the brand, which is determined by the congruence of the influencer, audience, brand and high attractiveness. If we cross reference the given typology of influencers with the older concepts of traditional Kelman's concept of "persuader", which highlights attributes such as honesty (promoted by the psychological internalisation instrument), attractiveness (identification instrument) and strength (obsequence instrument),[31] we identify certain parallels and prevailing psychological instruments presented in Figure 1.

21   *Influence (n.)*. [online]. [2020-09-06]. Available at: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/influence/>.
22   *Influence (n.)*. [online]. [2020-09-06]. Available at: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/influence/>.
23   INFLUENCERMARKETINGHUB: *What Is Influencer Marketing: An in Depth Look at Marketing's Next Big Thing*. [online]. [2020-08-06]. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-influencer-marketing/>.
24   See: BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business*. Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; LIN, H. C., BRUNNING, P. F., SWARNA, H.: Using Online Opinion Leaders to Promote the Hedonic and Utilitarian Value of Products and Services. In *Business Horizons*, 2018, Vol. 61, No. 3, p. 435.
25   INFLUENCERMARKETINGHUB: *What Is Influencer Marketing: An in Depth Look at Marketing´s Next Big Thing*. [online]. [2020-08-06]. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-influencer-marketing/>.
26   LIN, H. C., BRUNNING, P. F., SWARNA, H.: Using Online Opinion Leaders to Promote the Hedonic and Utilitarian Value of Products and Services. In *Business Horizons*, 2018, Vol. 61, No. 3, p. 435.
27   HSU, C. L., LIN, J. C., CHIANG, H. S.: The Effects of Blogger Recommendations on Customers' Online Shopping Intentions. In *Internet Research*, 2013, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 69-88.
28   Remark by authors: An example is a connection between Marilyn Monroe and *Channel 5*. The mental bond is so strong that even decades after the death of Monroe (in 2013) she was still part of a *Channel 5* advertising campaign. See: YOUNG, K.: *Marilyn Monroe Stars*

in New Chanel Ad Campaign. [online]. [2020-03-02]. Available at: <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/beauty/news-features/TMG10383749/Marilyn-Monroe-stars-in-new-Chanel-ad-campaign.html/>.
29   See also: BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business*. Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; GULBERTI, G.: *Four Types of Influencers and the Brand Objectives You Can Achieve with Them*. [online]. [2019-10-24]. Available at: <https://www.launchmetrics.com/resources/blog/types-of-influencers>; INFLUENCERMARKETINGHUB: *What Is Influencer Marketing: An in Depth Look at Marketing's Next Big Thing*. [online]. [2020-08-06]. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-influencer-marketing/>.
30   For more information, see: JIN, S. V., MUQADDAM, A., RYU, E.: Instafamous and Social Media Marketing. In *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 2019, Vol. 37, No. 5, p. 567-579 SCHOUTEN, A. P., JANSSEN, L., VERSPAGET, M.: Celebrity vs. Influencer Endorsements in Advertising: The Role of Identification, Credibility, and Product-Endorser Fit. In *International Journal of Advertising*, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 258-281.
31   See: GRÁC, J.: *Persuázia, ovplyvňovanie človeka človekom*. Bratislava : Osveta, 1985.

The term of "influencer" is currently also quite often seen in negative connotations.[32] Bakhtiari stresses the importance of media fragmentation, which is seen as an important factor in the process of influencer creation: *"Sites like Myspace and Facebook opened the door for ordinary people to have a say and showcase their talents. Suddenly, a one-way conversation facilitated by television turned into a digital republic."*[33] Bakhitiari also highlights the decadent nature of the "influencer" concept: *"Unlike influencers, creators produce content they genuinely care about, content that adds value to their respected communities."*[34] The concept of "creators" as a progressive alternative to influencers is also mentioned on the Influencer Marketing Hub website, stressing that influencers should not be seen as "tools", but rather as assets in terms of their relationships and social circles.[35] Building relationships is nowadays largely determined by the actual content that a brand communicates with the target group, ideally within the purview of congruence.[36]

As we have already mentioned, the term "influencer" covers a relatively large area of people with interpersonal influence. Within the conceptual and categorisation-based approaches, the division is based on the size of the community, the platform used by the influencers, or the role the influencer takes (thus, depending on the specifics of these categories, we use a more general concept "influencer", or its specific incarnation "social media influencer").

In terms of size of the community, Backaler suggests a rather pragmatic approach, dividing influencers into three categories: (1) celebrity influencers, (2) influencers within a specific category, and (3) micro-influencers.[37] The very type of the platform shapes the character of the shared content, and therefore, applying this approach, it is possible to distinguish between the following categories of influencers: bloggers, YouTubers, podcasters and 'social posts only'.[38] At present, however, *Instagram* has a special position not only in terms of popularity with the influencers themselves, but also by its significantly higher rate of use over other social networks.[39] The often-cited criterion in the typology of celebrities is their professional background according to Leslie.[40] He proposes a typology that applies not only to celebrities, but also to the broader category of famous and well-known people. Leslie offers eight categories, or social spheres, in which a celebrity may be formed: politics, art, science, entertainment industry, sports, business and entrepreneurship, religion and the general public. This typology should be supplemented by the recent "microcelebrities" phenomenon. By way of an analogy, we may also introduce the typology of influencers: their public status is either motivated by their work (e.g., they have been previously known thanks to the entertainment industry), or their status is acquired exclusively by their creative activity on social media.

Instagram shaped the central criterion for the categorisation concept proposed by the *Elite Solutions* agency, which identified the following categories: celebrities, bloggers, vloggers, fashion/beauty bloggers, travellers, photographers and visual artists.[41] The area of interest and activity of influencers is reflected in the approach of the *PR.Konektor* agency report,[42] which identifies a relatively wide range of categories – mumfluencers, sports and fitfluencers, foodfluencers, travelfluencers, fakefluencers, motivational and sarcastic admins and their communities, the media as influencers, and a unique category of virtual influencers.

The efforts to create a typology of influencers can also be seen in the rather non-systematic approaches, which are often encountered in the concepts of marketing agencies. For example, Brown proposes a concept integrating the already-mentioned approach based on the popularity of influencers (number of followers) and their relationship with the brand. In this concept, six categories are proposed: mega, macro, micro, advocates, referrers and loyalists whose pragmatic meaning cannot be denied, but at the same time, we consider it to be more appropriate in the two-stage application.[43] An equally inspiring and rather extensive concept is offered by Chaffey, whose categories are determined by professional actions (the celebrity, the authority, the connector, the personal brand, the analyst, the activist, the expert, the insider, the agitator, the journalist). The potential mutual overlap of the above-mentioned categories is not indicated, however, and their further specification is absent.[44] These approaches are challenging and they have the potential to extend the already established approaches.

3 Influencer Marketing – Trends, Approaches and Digital Metrics

The extraordinary popularity of influencers is also reflected by marketing communication, where a new category was created – the so-called influencer marketing.[45] Its basic topics are the characteristics of influencers. According to Backaler, there are four fundamental attributes under the acronym ABCC: A = Authenticity, B = Brand Fit, C = Community and C = Content.[46] The authenticity of influencers is a prerequisite for a successful interaction because an authentic and credible relationship with the community is an essential element of success in the perception of the audience.[47] Being an influencer's success factor, brand fit emphasises the need for a consistent personal brand, which is also in line with the value framework of the brand for future collaboration. Regarding the attribute of community, Backaler emphasises the targeted approach, engagement and the overall growth potential, which are also a reflection of effective communication, interaction and presentation by the influencer; the selection of an appropriate influencer is also determined by specific metrics with the category of engagement and awareness in the foreground. Awareness represents the reach, impressions and audience growth, whereas engagement is represented mainly by so-called social activities such as posting, sharing, labelling, commenting, or liking.[48]

Certain parallels with influencer marketing are also found in earlier theoretical models of so-called word-of-mouth marketing: *"(...) Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) is accordingly not about generating conversations between consumers (these exist already), but rather to encourage these conversations and to anchor them in the overall marketing strategy."* Its aim is *"giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, and making it easier for that conversation to take place".*[49] Newer marketing concepts emphasise

32   BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business.* Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 138.
33   BAKHTIARI, K.: *Influencer Fatigue Sets Stage for a New Generation of Creators.* Released on 6th April 2020. [online]. [2020-04-06]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2020/04/06/influencer-fatigue-sets-the-stage-for-a-new-generation-of-creators/#634d8ecf2535/>.
34   BAKHTIARI, K.: *Influencer Fatigue Sets Stage for a New Generation of Creators.* Released on 6th April 2020. [online]. [2020-04-06]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2020/04/06/influencer-fatigue-sets-the-stage-for-a-new-generation-of-creators/#634d8ecf2535/>.
35   INFLUENCERMARKETINGHUB: *What Is Influencer Marketing: An in Depth Look at Marketing's Next Big Thing.* [online]. [2020-08-06]. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-influencer-marketing/>.
36   BAKHTIARI, K.: *Influencer Fatigue Sets Stage for a New Generation of Creators.* Released on 6th April 2020. [online]. [2020-04-06]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2020/04/06/influencer-fatigue-sets-the-stage-for-a-new-generation-of-creators/#634d8ecf2535/>.
37   BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business.* Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 21.
38   INFLUENCERMARKETINGHUB: *What Is Influencer Marketing: An in Depth Look at Marketing's Next Big Thing.* [online]. [2020-08-06]. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-influencer-marketing/>.
39   CASALÓ, L. V., FLAVIÁN, C., IBÁÑEZ-SÁNCHEZ, S.: Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and Consequences of Opinion Leadership. In *Journal of Business Research,* 2018, Vol. 117, No. 1, p. 510-519.
40   See: LESLIE, L. Z.: *Celebrity in the 21st Century: A Reference Handbook.* Santa Barbara : ABC-CLIO, 2011.
41   ŠURIN, P., LAJOŠ, Ľ., JUROVCOVÁ, B.: *Instaheroes: Top slovenskí influenceri na Instagrame.* Bratislava : Elite Solutions, 2017, p. 6.
42   PR.KONEKTOR: *Influencer Report.* [online]. [2020-09-19]. Available at: <https://www.mediahub.sk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/pr-konektor-influencer-report_-email-SMALL.pdf>.

43   BROWN, D.: *6 Types of Influencers (Mega, Macro, Micro, Advocates, Referrers, Loyalists).* [online]. [2019-06-26]. Available at: <https://senseimarketing.com/6-types-of-influencers/>.
44   CHAFFEY, D.: *Top 10 Influencer Marketing Strategy Boosting Segments in 2021 [Infographic].* [online]. [2020-12-20]. Available at: <https://www.smartinsights.com/online-pr/online-pr-outreach/types-of-influencers/>.
45   Compare to: ČÁBYOVÁ, Ľ., KRAJČOVIČ, P.: *The Role of SoLoMo Marketing and Media in the Communication of Eco-Innovations.* Budapest : Wolters Kluwer, 2020, p. 47.
46   BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business.* Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 28-32.
47   VAN DRIEL, L., DUMITRICA, D.: Selling Brands While Staying "Authentic": The Professionalization of Instagram Influencers. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies,* 2020, Vol. 27, No. 84, p. 66-84.
48   BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business.* Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 106.
49   MEINERS, N. H., SCHWARTIG, U., SEEBERGER, B.: The Renaissance of Word-of-Mouth Marketing: A 'New' Standard in Twenty-First Century Marketing Management?! In *International Journal of Economic Sciences and Applied Research,* 2010, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 82.

active participation and involvement of the audience[50] and transform the position of followers; for example, content marketing. Müller and Christandl define three areas related to content: content marketing, sponsored content and user-generated content (UGC).[51] Content marketing understands the creation and distribution of relevant content directly by the company or brand in order to attract and encourage the desired activity of the consumers. Sponsored content is a deliberate connection of a brand or product with an appellative message, which is embedded into traditional editorial content.[52] UGC refers to any content associated with the brand, which is voluntarily formed by the users themselves,[53] and in the context of influencers, we can even identify its diversification into influencer-generated content, which may be either authentic content generated by the influencers themselves, or it may carry some characteristics of sponsored content, which is created through the cooperation between influencers and brands. Both types, however, are an important incentive for further UCG production – but by the actual audience – which boosts the penetration rate of the brand and increases its engagement and overall awareness of the person and content.

4 Methodology

The methodological approaches dealing with branding are varied and consist of diverse views.[54] When applying the concept of "brand value" on marketing communication, the relevant concepts include the "perceived brand value", which is the assessment of aspects such as credibility, responsibility, solidarity, focus on charity, communication skills in participation with donors, and concepts of brand associations. The mentioned concept also includes the conceptions used in critical social psychology – the psychosemantic methods, which allow us to explore the subjective meaning of social representations and social concepts in marketing research.[55] Based on the above, we wanted to explore how Generation Z perceives the use of influencers in non-profit marketing on social networks in Slovak conditions. Due to the nature of our research, we prefer the triangulation approach (theoretical and methodological triangulation) with a preference for the qualitative approach, and we ask the following broad research questions:

RQ1: How does Generation Z perceive the concept of celebrity, ambassador and influencer in relation to self and the brand?

RQ2: Which Slovak influencers are semantically linked with positive connotations in relation to a credibility persuader?

The aim of our research was to identify the anchoring of the concepts of "ambassador", "celebrity" and "influencer" in the semantic space of Generation Z in relation to self and the brand. The said aim and answers to research questions have been implemented through the psychosemantic method and by using the Semantic Selection Test, which was modified by the authors.

To identify the social representations of celebrities and social advertising in the semantic space of adolescents, we used the psychosemantic method – Semantic Selection Test (hereinafter SST). When using SST, we focus on how the participant views themselves and persons/things around in the participant's semantic space.[56] In this space, each object has its position according to what it means to the respondent. The SST works with two types of elements, which will be called stimuli/terms and attributes/images. Both elements are 'meaningfully charged' from the respondent's perspective. The respondent assigns attributes to the individual terms based on their own beliefs, emotions and associations. In the original version of the SST, the attributes are rendered with 16 semantic pictures (house, flower, water, sun, lips, fish, eye, boat, moon, knife, bar, grave, spider web, snake, bar, worm). In the modified version the participants select at least 4 and up to 8 images that best characterise the individual terms/stimulus words. When operationalising the research problem, we have chosen the stimulus words based on the theoretical concepts of influencers[57] and previous empirical findings about the subjective perception of the effectiveness of cooperation of micro-influencers in brand management.[58] In the modified SST we have proposed to monitor the relationships (semantic maps) of the following terms:

- Terms with an affinity to the media and marketing: *Brand, Facebook, Instagram, Zomri, Emefka, ecological crisis*. Influencers: *Selassie, Milan bez mapy, LucyPug, Sajfa, Kufa, Zrebný, Blaha, Plačková*.
- Concepts with an affinity to (non)effectiveness of communication with positive connotations: *solidarity, expertise, responsibility, justice, truth, security*, and with negative connotations: *hatred, favouritism, falsehood, manipulation, individualism*.
- Reference terms: *me, friend, follower, celebrity, influencer, ambassador*.

The selection of terms with an affinity to media and marketing was determined by their relevance and popularity; *Facebook* and *Instagram* were selected as the top channels in the context of influencer marketing, and *Zomri* and *Emefka* represent highly popular entertaining media portals in the Slovak Generation Z environment. In our evaluation, we also reflected on the current and highly penetrated topic of climate emergency, which is becoming increasingly urgent, which is also reflected by some milestones such as Extinction Rebellion (XR), Greta Thunberg, Green New Deal, school climate demonstrations, Blue Planet – the Oxford Dictionary has labelled the phrase "climate emergency" as the word of 2019.[59]

The selection of particular influencers followed the above categorisations.[60] When operationalising the research problem, we used a hybrid categorisation approach representing the transformation, which reflects the current structure and specificities of the influencer phenomenon, with a focal point being the influencer's thematic area and the dominant media platform in which the person achieved a significant degree of fame (number of followers and likes).

When characterising the selected influencers, which are present in Table 1, we use a number of categories. The first one is the dominant role of influencers in the field of social media, i.e., assigning the services to influencers. In doing so, we have taken into account the transmedia nature of the selected influencers, since, as the table shows, most of them are active on several digital platforms, which essentially diversifies their portfolio. However, taking into account the basic quantitative metrics, which we provide in connection with the selected platforms (*Instagram*, *Facebook* and *YouTube*), we can conclude that each of the selected influencers shows a significant inclination towards a single social medium. Since we found that up to three of the influencers were not active on *YouTube*, we decided not to include it in the research. The ability of *Facebook* and *Instagram* to integrate video to a certain extent is one of the possible explanations for this phenomenon. Video is no longer an exclusive media format of *YouTube*, as was the case in the past decade. In Table 1, we

50 Compare to: WIDERA, Z., PRAVDOVÁ, H.: *Marketing wydawniczy*. Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach, 2016.
51 MÜLLER, J., CHRISTANDL, F.: Content Is King – But Who Is the King of Kings? The Effect of Content Marketing, Sponsored Content & User-Generated Content on Brand Responses. In *Computer in Human Behavior*, 2019, Vol. 96, No. 1, 2019, p. 46-55.
52 BOERMAN, S., VAN REIJMERSDAL, E., NEIJENS, P.: Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure Timing on the Processing of Sponsored Content: A Study on the Effectiveness of European Disclosure Regulations. In *Psychology and Marketing*, 2014, Vol. 31, No. 3, p. 214-224.
53 WILEY, D.: *How to Drive User-Generated Content Through Influencer Marketing*. Released on 3rd July 2019. [online]. [2019-07-03]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2019/07/03/how-to-drive-user-generated-content-through-influencer-marketing/#1b10d821124b0/>.
54 See: KELLER, K. L.: *Strategické řízení značky*. Prague : Grada, 2007; DU PLESSIS, E.: *Jak zákazník vníma značku*. Prague : Computer Press, 2011, p. 32-33.
55 See also: URBÁNEK, T.: *Psychosémantika: Psychosémantický přístup ve výzkumu a diagnostice*. Prague : Psychologický ústav AV ČR, 2003; PLICHTOVÁ, J.: *Metódy sociálnej psychológie zblízka. Kvalitatívne a kvantitatívne skúmanie sociálnych reprezentácií*. Bratislava : MÉDIA, 2002; HENDL, J.: *Kvalitativní výzkum*. Prague : Portál, 2016, p. 440.

56 See: URBÁNEK, T.: *Psychosémantika: Psychosémantický přístup ve výzkumu a diagnostice*. Prague : Psychologický ústav AV ČR, 2003.
57 See also: CASALÓ, L. V., FLAVIÁN, C., IBAÑÉZ-SÁNCHEZ, S.: Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and Consequences of Opinion Leadership. In *Journal of Business Research*, 2018, Vol. 117, No. 1, p. 510-519; BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business*. Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 19-36.
58 ISYANTO, P., SAPITRI, R. G., SINARA, O.: Micro Influencers Marketing and Brand Image to Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Product Focallure. In *Sys Rev Pharm*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 602.
59 ZHOU, N.: *Oxford Dictionaries Declares 'Climate Emergency' the Word of 2019*. Released on 21st November 2019. [online]. [2019-11-21]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/21/oxford-dictionaries-declares-climate-emergency-the-word-of-2019/>.
60 See: PR.KONEKTOR: *Influencer Report*. [online]. [2020-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.mediahub.sk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/pr-konektor-influencer-report_-email-SMALL.pdf/>; LESLIE, L. Z.: *Celebrity in the 21st Century: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara : ABC-CLIO, 2011, p. 23.

also reflect on the dominant theme that influencers are engaged in. We also monitored the hugely popular entertainment portals *Emefka Official* (441,000 followers on *Facebook*) and the satiric site *Zomri Official* (more than 310,000 followers on *Facebook*).

Table 1: Overview and characteristics of the corpus of selected influencers

	Dominant Scope	Dominant Theme	Number of Followers on Instagram	Number of Followers/Likes on Facebook	Number of Subscribers on YouTube
LucyPug	Instagrammer	Lifestyle	800,200	74,000/73,000	551,000
Zuzana Plačková	Instagrammer	Lifestyle	678,200	126,000/128,000	N/A
Selassie	Youtuber	Fun	388,500	88,000/86,000	731,000
Sajfa	Instagrammer	Lifestyle	336,400	170,000/171,000	191,000
Milan bez mapy	Instagrammer	Travel	38,100	27,000/26,000	1,000
Matej Zrebný	Youtuber	Humour	11,300	53,000/52,000	Zrebný & Frlajs 373,000
Ľuboš Blaha	Facebook influencer	Politics	800	86,000/66,000	N/A
Marián Kuffa	Facebook influencer	Religion	600	30,000/ 25,000	N/A

Source: Own processing

The research file consisted of a total of 94 respondents born between 1993 and 2000, and we processed 89 tests in the analysis (5 tests were excluded due to insufficiently populated data). The average age of the respondents was 22.6 years. The population consisted of 20 men with an average age of 22.5 years and 69 women with an average age of 22.6 years. The data was collected in the winter semester of 2019/2020 at the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.

5 Results

We used correspondence analysis to process the statistical data from Semantic Selection. The closer the points on the chart, the higher the similarity between the corresponding categories. It is also possible to interpret groups of similar categories in relation to the position of the points relative to the main axes. The justification for the correspondence analysis method was examined on the basis of the result χ^2 – independence test. At the selected materiality level $\alpha=0.01$ we reject the zero hypothesis of independence between the concepts and objects, and accept the alternative hypothesis that concepts and objects are dependent ($\chi^2 = 3115.311, p = 0.000$).

15 dimensions were extracted in the correspondence analysis of the entire population (N = 89). For a more appropriate visual representation, we will only work with two dimensions. The first dimension contributes with a value of 0.166, which represents an inertia of 62%, and the second dimension contributes with a value of 0.033, which represents an inertia of 12%, for a total inertia of 74%. The correlation between the two extracted dimensions is very small ($r = 0.102$).
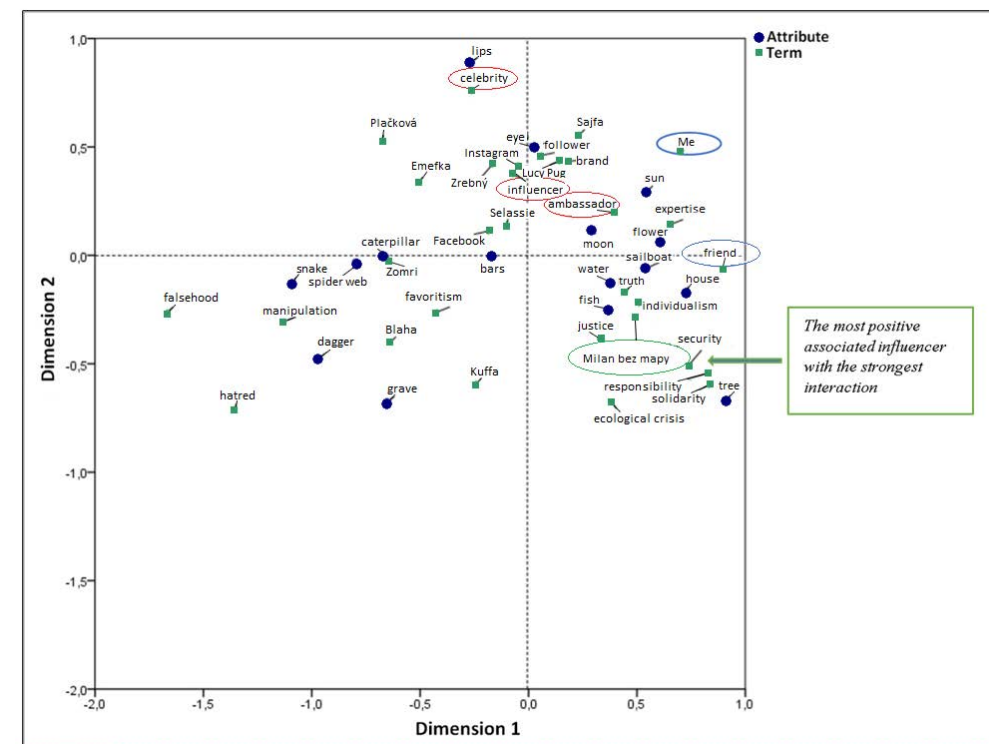

Figure 2: Semantic map of the concepts associated with digital influencers (celebrity, ambassador, influencer) in the subjective perception of Generation Z[61]
Source: Own processing

The results from the population were placed into four quadrants (see Figure 1) with the examined stimuli as follows. Dimension 1 divides the semantic space of Generation Z into a positive and negative self-image in the self-concept. Dimension 2 divides the semantic map quadrants into a socially close and socially distant self-concept; however, its precise delimitation is limited by the low inertia of this dimension (12%).

1. **Positive self-concept quadrant with media identification**. The results suggest a distinctly positive self-concept of Generation Z because *Me* is anchored in the same quadrant as the symbols *sun, moon, eye, flower*. This quadrant is characterised by the perceived positive self-concept of the ideal self in conjunction with the close concept of *expertise*, which indicates the preferred orientation of Generation Z toward professionalism and personal growth. In the field of *social interaction* with other social subjects, the close connection with the media and the prevailing media interaction stands out: the quadrant also includes the explored concepts of brand, ambassador and follower (here, the specific research set of students of media and communication studies needs to be taken into account). The quadrant is also amplified by the semantic closeness of influencers *Sajfa* and *LucyPug. Sajfa* and *LucyPug* may be perceived as celebrities that achieved their success with their own hands, which is a highly valued asset in Generation Z:[62] *"The habits and the overall lifestyle of young people are becoming influenced by trends,*

61   Remark by authors: Terms with an affinity to the media and marketing communication: *brand [značka], ecological crisis [ekologická kríza], Emefka, Facebook, Instagram, Zomri, Influencers: Blaha, Kuffa, LucyPug, Milan bez mapy, Plačková, Sajfa, Selassie, Zrebný*. Terms with an affinity to (non)effectiveness of communication: with positive connotations: *expertise [odbornosť], justice [spravodlivosť], responsibility [zodpovednosť], solidarity [solidarita], security [bezpečnosť], truth [pravda]*, with negative connotations: *falsehood [faloš], favoritism [prospechárstvo], hatred [nenávisť], individualism [individualizmus], manipulation [manipulácia]*. Reference terms: *ambassador [ambasádor], celebrity [celebrita], follower, friend [priateľ], influencer [influencer], Me [Ja]*.
62   VRABEC, N., PETRANOVÁ, D.: *Vplyv mediálnej komunikácie na nové vzory mládeže – Výskumná správa*. Trnava : FMK UCM,

values and stimuli presented in the media and/or persons active in the media.[63] This is in line with the findings of Lou and Kim: *"Influencer expertise was positively associated with adolescents' materialism, and influencer attractiveness and followers' perceived similarity to influencers were positively associated with adolescents' purchase intentions."*[64] The presence of the term "ambassador" and the two observed influencers highlights the importance of role models in the adolescence period as defined by Vrabec and Petranová.[65] The identification with an influencer can be close to self-conception because people prefer similar individuals around them.[66]

2. The **parasocial media relations quadrant** is represented by the social representations of media concepts in association with *lips, bars* and *caterpillar* (bars and caterpillar are on the border with Dimension 2). The semantics of lips (it has a positive connotation in the original TSV) takes on a different – even ambivalent – dimension (parallels can be seen in the stylised photos of women with the so-called duck face, facelifts, etc.) The terms anchoring this quadrant are thus perceived negatively by Generation Z. In this quadrant, almost all the terms with an affinity for the media and marketing communication are grouped together: *Facebook, Instagram, Zomri, Emefka, celebrity, influencer* and the influencers *Zrebný, Plačková, Selassie*. In a more detailed analysis, we identify certain differences: while the term *Facebook* is associated with Generation Z, bars and the influencers *Sellasie and Plačková*, it is semantically the closest to the perception of *celebrity. Instagram* and *influencer* are very close to the quadrant of positive self-concept where we can assume a strong implicit influence on the perception and decision making of Generation Z.[67]

3. **Unwanted/rejected self-concept quadrant:** the symbols *snake, spider web, dagger, grave* can be found in the quadrant representing the distant negative concepts along, with *caterpillar* and *bar* on the border of this dimension along with other negative concepts of ineffective persuasive action: *hatred, favouritism, falsehood, manipulation* and the concepts of *Zomri, Blaha, Kuffa*. This indicates a persistent mistrust of politicians and of overall political communication in Generation Z, but it also points to the rejection of aggressive, conspiratorial communications of political actors on social networks and an increasing media literacy in the area of critical thinking toward public policies. Ľuboš Blaha and Marián Kuffa are perceived by the research cohort in correspondence with the controversial topics associated with these two persons, which is reinforced by the fact that these influencers are perceived as the setters of uncomfortable agendas. In addition, Blaha is associated with conspiracy theories and manipulative attacks against his political opponents. The distrust toward Blaha is also expressed at the behavioural level, namely in the form of a public *Facebook* group called *Ľuboš Jakobín Blaha mi dal ban* (in English *Ľuboš Jakobín Blaha Banned Me*), which aims to *"(...) Analyse the greatest delusions of this communist warrior against liberalism and shampoo".*[68]

4. **The ideal self-concept quadrant** primarily anchors the concept of *friend* (here, we assumed an interpersonal dimension of a close relationship compared to a predominantly virtual relationship to a celebrity, influencer or ambassador). The semantic space is saturated with *water, fish, house,*

sailboat, tree, which confirms the above, and is often associated with the attributes of home and safety. The semantic map is completed by positive concepts of effective persuasive action: *solidarity, responsibility, justice, truth, safety* and the term *individualism* (categorised as a negative component of persuasion in the operationalisation of our research problem). It was interesting to observe that the influencer *Milan bez mapy* is anchored positively, and where the presumed location of the concept of ecological crisis is. We are linking this result to the currently heavily exposed environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who inspires millions of young people on her *Instagram* account dedicated to the ecology, while encouraging and addressing the issue. Ecology is the most discussed social theme by Generation Z on social media, and its timeliness is also confirmed by the above results. *Milan bez mapy* communicates in an innovative way and has a high degree of authenticity and congruence when communicating a specific travel topic.

It follows from the foregoing that Generation Z only perceives the concept of an "ambassador" in a positive connotation in relation to self, and *Me* is also perceived in a positive way. The ideal self-concept is associated with the concept of *friend* and influencer *Milan bez mapy*, and the concept of "ecological crisis" is foregrounded among the media concepts. These findings confirm the significant impact of the media-shared content on the values and reference framework of Generation Z and their important position as a source of information, entertainment and cultural framework, which is also reflected by Radošinská, Kvetanová and Višňovský.[69]

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The theoretical analysis of the elements in the terminological framework of influencers has highlighted the fundamental differentials between the individual concepts of "celebrity", "ambassador" and "influencer"; however, these are also confronted by the specifics of anchoring these concepts in the semantic space of representatives of Generation Z. The original concept of "opinion authority" stands at the forefront of these concepts as an individual with a significant social status whose activities are saturated by the level of credibility and independence from the media platforms or other socio-economic influences within the social group and the persuasion process itself. An "ambassador" is a marketing-exposed personality with brand congruence, expertise and social responsibility in the foreground, and the socio-psychological interaction is based on the identification of an individual with an ambassador. This term was placed in the positive self-concept quadrant with media identification, along with the instagrammers *Sajfa* and *LucyPug* and the simultaneous presence of the attribute "expertise", brand but also the reference terms *follower* and *Me*. This position supports the perceived importance of the "credibility" attribute. A common denominator of both personalities is the link between "online popularity", own work enthusiasm and professional orientation, as well as a selective, critical and responsible involvement in the marketing activities congruent with their personal brand. Semantically, the terms "brand" and "follower" are in close proximity to both instagrammers, and it is associated with authenticity and a positive extension of marketing activities outside the media space, thereby integrating the brand into the lifestyle of the influencer and therefore their self-branding. Our findings are in harmony with the theory of use and satisfaction, which highlights the active role of the audience when receiving information as a source of the satisfaction of their social and psychological needs.[70] The intention to satisfy psychological needs through differentiation from others is also provided by personal branding, which due to globalisation and internationalisation (not only) in the working environment, is becoming an essential way to stand out among the others,[71] and celebrities such as *Sajfa* and *LucyPug* are potential role-models.

2013, p. 14-18. [online]. [2020-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.iuventa.sk/files/documents/7_vyskummladeze/vyskum/2013/vplyv_medialnej_komunikacie_na_nove_vzory_mladeze_v%C3%BDskumna_sprava_final.pdf/>.

63   VRABEC, N., PETRANOVÁ, D., SOLÍK, M.: New Role Models for Slovak Youth in the Context of Media Communication. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2014, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 143.

64   LOU, C., KIM, H. K.: Fancying the New Rich and Famous? Explicating the Roles of Influencer Content, Credibility, and Parental Mediation in Adolescents' Parasocial Relationship, Materialism, and Purchase Intentions. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2019, Vol. 10, p. 10.

65   See: VRABEC, N., PETRANOVÁ, D.: *Vplyv mediálnej komunikácie na nové vzory mládeže – Výskumná správa.* Trnava : FMK UCM, 2013, p. 14-18. [online]. [2020-09-13]. Available at: <https://www.iuventa.sk/files/documents/7_vyskummladeze/vyskum/2013/vplyv_medialnej_komunikacie_na_nove_vzory_mladeze_v%C3%BDskumna_sprava_final.pdf/>; FANDELOVÁ, E., KAČÁNIOVÁ, M., ŠTRBOVÁ, E.: Modely a vzory a ich vplyv na socializáciu adolescentov v intenciách mediálnej a marketingovej komunikácie. In *Analýza a výskum v marketingovej komunikácii*, 2016, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 5-13; FICHNOVÁ, K.: "Back to the Future": Sci-Fi in (KO)Media. In *Communication Today*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 137-138.

66   See also: ROSS, I.: Self-Concept and Brand Preference. In *The Journal of Business*, 1971, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 38-50; CORDIER, A.: *Post-War French Popular Music: Cultural Identity and the Brel-Brassens-Ferré Myth.* Surrey : Ashgate Publishing, 2014, p. 188.

67   LOU, C., KIM, H. K.: Fancying the New Rich and Famous? Explicating the Roles of Influencer Content, Credibility, and Parental Mediation in Adolescents' Parasocial Relationship, Materialism, and Purchase Intentions. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2019, Vol. 10, p. 13.

68   Ľuboš *Jakobín Blaha mi dal ban.* [online]. [2020-09-12]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/200418140661660/>.

69   RADOŠINSKÁ, J., KVETANOVÁ, Z., VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: To Thrive Means to Entertain: The Nature of Today's Media Industries. In *Communication Today*, 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 5.

70   RUGGIERO, T. E.: Uses and Gratification Theory in the 21st Century. In *Mass Communication & Society*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 5.

71   BOZTEPE TAŞKIRAN, H.: Uses and Gratifications Approach, Social Media and Personal Branding: A Study on Social Media Users in Turkey. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 147.

The closeness of the terms "friend" – "ecological crisis" – "*Milan bez mapy*" and "individualism" and "security" in the ideal self-concept quadrant may be a reflection of the recent intensification of social bonds, in which it is possible to establish a close relationship with an instagrammer (a person who is not a direct friend) based on their authentic, open, free and friendly behaviour and information on the topics important for Generation Z (for example, ecological crisis). In the context of influencers, Backaler is talking about four important attributes – Authenticity, Brand Fit, Community and Content,[72] whose meaning is subsequently supported by the semantic position of the selected concepts in both quadrants. Their placement in the Ideal Self-Concept Quadrant can be interpreted within the limits of the trends and current preferences of Generation Z, and the position of social media as an important medium of interaction of this Generation with their friends and global events.[73] The term "friend" in a broader sense is associated with the position of a social community, which may be in this sense also represented by *Milan bez mapy*, and the significant position of the concept of "ecological crisis" can be linked to safety issues (and potential fears about the future). On the other hand, safety can be interpreted in relation to the authenticity of content shared by a given influencer who shares their own travel experiences, often enriched by their attitude to current global challenges (COVID-19, climate crisis, refugees, etc.).

The parasocial media relations quadrant assumes an ambivalent dimension thanks to the placement of the YouTuber *Zrebný*, the entertainment platform *Emefka* and the instagrammer *Plačková*, as well as the very notion of "celebrity". The borderline placement close to the positive self-concept quadrant was attained by *Selassie*, the term "influencer" and *Instagram*. The social network *Facebook* was placed in the same quadrant; however, in the semantic proximity to the symbol of *bars*, standing on the border with the rejected self-concept quadrant. The above findings support the negative connotations of the term "influencer" identified in the theory,[74] but also the concept of "celebrity", which has been perceived most negatively compared to the concept of "influencer" and "ambassador". The instagrammer Plačková, the original 'star' of the television reality show *Paradise Hotel*, is in semantic closeness to the concept of "celebrity": she has built a fairly extensive base of followers thanks to her activities on social media, particularly on *Instagram*. However, given her semantic position, what stands out is the motivation to follow this instagrammer whose positions and personal brand is broadly incompatible with the concept of authenticity and credibility (cases of alleged fake followers). *Kuffa* and *Blaha* are in the unwanted self-concept quadrant, with a proximity to *utilitarianism/favouritism*, *manipulation* and *falsehood*, and none of them is perceived as a potential influencer by Generation Z. Based on this finding, we may label Generation Z as "homo medialis",[75] i.e., independent people with a critical approach to the information disseminated in the media and without the tendency to uncritically believe in everything presented by the media.

The research results indicate the significant position of the attributes of "credibility" and "authenticity" as the basic elements of a successful influencer. Following from the research findings, we recommend conducting a thorough selection of influencers when using them in the marketing activities focused on Generation Z based on the significant congruence of their profiles and style of communication with the brand values and target audience, with an emphasis on their natural interest in the issue, target group and brand. The current generation of consumers lives in a world saturated by commercial messages and therefore prefers natural communication and recommendations along the lines of friendship. In this case, it is possible that a short-lived influencer becomes a long-time ambassador of the brand. Generation Z tends to seek out, follow and personalise with the opinions of social media personalities who have built their status through objective careers, efforts and achievements, and behave authentically.

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72   VAN DRIEL, L., DUMITRICA, D.: Selling Brands While Staying "Authentic": The Professionalization of Instagram Influencers. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 2020, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 66-84.
73   KRAJČOVIČ, P.: Use of Media to Raise Awareness of Eco-Innovations. In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 126.
74   BACKALER, J.: *Digital Influence: Unleash the Power of Influencer Marketing to Accelerate Your Global Business.* Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 152.
75   GÁLIKOVÁ-TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Media and Truth in the Perspective of the Practice and Life Form of the Modern "Homo Medialis". In *Communication Today*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 16-17.

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