The Rise of Virtual Athletes

The influence of uses & gratification and para-social interaction on consumers' attitudes towards high-involvement products endorsed by micro-celebrities

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Abstract

Many brands face the challenge of selling high-involvement products and must contend with the high risks which consumers perceive to be associated with these products. These perceived risks include social, functional and financial risks. Friedman and Friedman (1979) posit that celebrities can mitigate these perceived risks. However, current research fails to identify specific factors that influence consumers to perceive low risks to high-involvement products that are promoted by celebrities. This research suggests that consumer needs, and para-social interaction with celebrities influence consumers' behaviour regarding high-involvement products, in this case, video gaming products. Thus, to help brands execute effective celebrity endorsement campaigns, this causal research examines the factors that influence consumers' purchase intentions towards high-involvement products endorsed by influencers in the gaming community.

Most specifically, this study examines the uses and gratification needs that drive consumers to watch, and form para-social interaction with video gaming celebrities. Furthermore, this study examines the effects that para-social interaction has on perceived social, functional and financial risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products. Moreover, the research examines the influence of these perceived risks on purchase intentions. Additionally, the study examines if video gaming influencers are as influential on non-gaming products as they are on video gaming products.

Through a judgement sampling method, 105 participants that spectate gaming influencers playing video games were asked to fill a survey. Social integrative needs, cognitive needs, affective needs and tension release needs had a positive influence on para-social interaction. However, para-social interaction only influenced consumers who had prior experience of purchasing endorsed video gaming products. For example, the findings from this research suggested that para-social interaction influenced this group of experienced customers to perceive high risks for products that were a poor fit with the celebrity's image. Low social, functional, and financial risks led to high purchase intentions for video gaming products that were endorsed by good fit video gaming influencers.

Interestingly, tension release needs mitigated functional risks associated with video gaming products. Cognitive needs mitigated functional risks associated with video gaming products only for consumers that had previous experience of purchasing endorsed video gaming products. Social integrative needs influenced consumers to buy non-gaming products that were endorsed by a video gaming influencer.

Video gaming influencers were more effective in influencing perceived risks and buying behaviour when they endorsed video gaming products than non-gaming products. When the influencer was a good fit, consumers perceived lower social, functional and financial risks than when they were a poor fit. Furthermore, consumers had higher purchase intentions towards a good fit product than a poor fit product. The research discusses the implications of the findings.

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Chapter 1 – Research Overview

1.1. Introduction

Consumers are spending more of their leisure time on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, than on traditional media such as TV and radio (Molla, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial for brands to have a social media presence. Advertising through social media is also more cost effective and efficient than utilising traditional media channels (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 56). For instance, placing an ad on TV, radio and billboards costs thousands of dollars and sometimes the messages do not reach their intended audience. However, social media marketing is more affordable and allows brands to efficiently target their specific target markets more accurately than traditional media (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2015, p. 420).

Godin (1999) suggests in his world renown book, 'Permission Marketing: Turning Customers into Friends and Friends into Customers' that brands should not sell products to consumers directly. Instead, brands should foster relationships with their customers to the point where they gain their trust. Once brands have established this trust with prospective consumers, thereafter they can offer these prospects their products. Social media offers an opportunity for brands to foster friendships with consumers (Godin, 1999). On social media brands politely ask consumers for their permission to communicate to them. Furthermore, consumers could permit brands to send content to them by subscribing to the brand's social media pages.

Social media platforms allow consumers to share content on any given subject with their friends, family and social networks. The content that users post on social media in the form of text, videos, audio and images is known as user-generated content (UGC) (Romaniuk & Hartnett, 2017). Consumers tend to share their post-purchase evaluation information regarding different products with their social networks on social media (Trusov *et al*., 2009). Consumers seeking information to inform their purchase choices and look for alternatives, utilise UGC from past customers to evaluate products; ultimately, this information from past customers influences consumers' purchase decisions (Christodoulides *et al*., 2012).

Consumers prefer utilising UGC from social media over professional advertising material from brands, because they perceive the information to be more credible (Romaniuk & Hartnett, 2017). Furthermore, consumers trust information from their friends and past customers that have experienced the product (Romaniuk & Hartnett, 2017). Recommendations from friends and experienced customers online is known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Christodoulides *et al*., 2012).

Consumers utilise these UGC social media platforms for entertainment, knowledge, tension release and social interaction (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Individual consumers take on the task and responsibility to create content for an active audience. A tiny fraction of these content creators experience success in attracting substantial active audiences (Ho & Huang, 2009). Consumers tend to interact with these content creators through media to the point where they become familiar with them and value their opinions. The opinions from content creators can have a strong influence on consumers' attitude and purchase behaviour. For instance, consumers generate strong friendships with the content creators to the point where they seek to possess all the products associated with the media personae (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

These content creators also deliberately utilise products that are relevant to their target audience to the point where they are perceived to have high expertise regarding to those specific products (Bayazıt, Durmuş & Yıldırım, 2017). The celebrity status that online influencers hold, influences consumers by generating positive attitudes towards products that the content creators endorse (Hill, Troshani, & Chandrasekar, 2017; De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Consequently, these online content creators take on the role of valuable online opinion leaders, which consumers can utilise as an external information source (Chung & Cho, 2017).

Professionally generated brand advertisements have been shown to be less effective on social media where younger consumers spend most of their time (Romaniuk & Hartnett, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial for brands to form relationships with these online opinion leaders and utilise them in their marketing mix (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke, 2015). These opinion leaders could act as a useful gateway between brands and consumers, if employed correctly and integrated into the marketing mix.

Lee and Watkins (2016); Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) refer to these online opinion leaders as online micro-celebrities, or online influencers. A micro-celebrity is an individual that enjoys a great deal of fame; however, the celebrity strictly gains this fame from the internet by generating an active group of followers (Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2017). This internet-based fame is measurable and quantifiable through social media cues such as likes, followers and comments (Hill, Troshani, & Chandrasekar, 2017). For example, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) define individuals with more than eleven thousand highly engaged followers as micro-celebrities.

These micro-celebrities often form stronger relationships with their followers than traditional celebrities (movie stars, music artist, book writers, sports athletes and TV presenters). For instance, consumers perceive micro-celebrities as more relatable than traditional celebrities, because they spend most of their time interacting with consumers on social media (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Liu, Qu & Zhao, 2017). However, more and more traditional celebrities are levelling the playing field as they are using the same approach that micro-celebrities use to remain relevant and marketable in the digital age. For instance, Will Smith rose to fame in the 90s through his musical talents, and the Emmy nominated comedy TV show 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' before the birth of social media. Nonetheless, today, the fifty-year-old is active on popular social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Will Smith is also experiencing success in attracting sponsors and movie roles due to his ability to adapt to change and remain relevant in a society that spends more time on new media rather than traditional media.

1.1.2. Para-social interactions

Lee and Watkins (2016) pinpoint the friendship that consumers develop with celebrities as a critical factor that influences consumer perception and the resulting consumer buying behaviour. Interactions on social media with famous individuals influence consumers to the extent to which some consumers perceive these celebrities as friends (Chung & Cho, 2017). Consumers generate friendships with media personae that they perceive to have similar beliefs and values as themselves (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Most importantly, consumers are likely to become friends

with celebrities that offer them value (Rubin *et al*., 1985). For instance, celebrities that produce content that gratifies consumers' social, affective, tension release, or cognitive needs (Shao, 2009; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). To elaborate, consumers are likely to become friends with celebrities that meet their specific needs (Rubin *et al*., 1985). For example, the need for specific knowledge. Should a micro-celebrity offer insightful knowledge on a particular activity, say fitness, consumers become friends with fitness YouTubers because they offer knowledge that can aid the consumer to tackle their fitness goals.

During the consumption of content, consumers exchange messages on social media platforms with their favorite celebrity, as if the consumer was a friend of the star. However, this relationship is one-sided as the interactions between consumers and media personae lack equal participation from both parties with the celebrity dominating the interaction (Frederick *et al*., 2012). For example, the celebrity frequently shares messages, and the consumer receives the information. However, the celebrity barely has time to receive and process messages from many fans. Instead, the celebrity only replies to a small sample of followers to encourage the illusion of friendship. Furthermore, these interactions involve little to no physical contact between the two parties (Stever & Lawson, 2013).

The celebrity also has the power to present an identity of their choice (Rubin *et al*., 1985). The celebrity can choose the information they want to hide and disclose to followers. For example, Demi Lovato was once a famous Disney star that only chose to reveal information that portrayed herself in a positive light. Media users labelled her as 'America's angel'. However, the former Disney star later revealed that behind the cameras and the spotlight she was struggling with drug addiction. This relationship that the consumer generates with a celebrity is labelled a Para-social Interaction (PSI) (Horton & Wohl, 1956). PSI is when consumers form the illusion that the celebrity is a real flesh and blood friend of theirs (Horton & Wohl, 1956). For instance, a consumer seeks guidance from the celebrity, wants to be part of the celebrity's social group, and plans to meet the celebrity (Rubin *et al*., 1985).

PSI between consumers and celebrities influences consumers' tendency to trust the celebrity and the brands associated with them (Phua, Lin & Lim, 2018; Lim & Kim, 2011; Lee & Watkins, 2016). PSI with a celebrity endorser can increase purchase

intentions, even when the consumer is aware that the endorser is being paid to recommend a brand or product (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Nonetheless, endorser – product fit is more significant than ever when PSI is present; Consumers will generate a negative attitude towards brands that do not fit with their celebrity friend (Gong & Li, 2017). When PSI is present the consumer knows almost every single detail about the celebrity and know when the star is behaving out of character by endorsing products that they have no knowledge of, purely for financial gain.

1.1.3. The rise of micro-celebrity gamers

In the modern world, most brands can find an appropriate micro-celebrity that is part of their target market's community to promote their specific products (Kilgour *et al*., 2015): These industries include fitness, food, gaming, cars, computer software, cosmetic and fashion. Recently, online micro-celebrities that play video games have been making headlines for their influence on younger consumers and the gaming industry.

The phenomenon of people spectating other individuals playing video games has been around for decades. The behaviour dates back to the arcade games days, where people would surround an individual playing, or have a sneak peek to check a player's progress while walking past. Nonetheless, the birth and development of the internet have brought such behaviour at a larger scale into the 21st century. Today, it is more convenient than ever to spectate other individuals playing video games.

Some young people now spend most of their leisure time spectating famous players such as Ninja playing video games on social media through computers and mobile devices. The majority of people that consume gaming content are single males in the age bracket of 18-30, with no significant liabilities to pay off, such as a mortgage, and who are either studying or just beginning their young working careers (Euromonitor, 2015).

Many consumers that spectate other people playing video games are gamers. The gaming market has an estimate of 2.3 billion gamers across the world (Takahashi, 2018). These gamers partake in the activity through gaming consoles, computers

and mobile devices. Furthermore, there are many genres of video games that consumers partake in which include action games, strategy games, sandbox, sports games, battle royale and racing games. Therefore, this huge market can be segmented into different niche markets that have different needs.

1.1.4. Gaming spectatorship on social media

Today, social media platforms such as Twitch, which is owned by Amazon, offer consumers an opportunity to spectate other people playing video games. Twitch was introduced in 2011 and is the most popular gaming social media platform allowing gamers to live stream their gameplay and interact with other users. Although Twitch is free to use, there is an option for the user to subscribe to their favourite streamer and support them so that they continue delivering content. A streamer is a content creator that streams video gameplay for a live audience. It costs $4.99 a month to subscribe to a streamer; the proceedings go to Twitch and the content creator with a 50% split between the two parties (Twitch, 2018). Additionally, users can send donations while viewing the live stream to support the longevity of the channel that is owned by the streamer (Sjöblom, 2019).

1.1.5. Positive reinforcement on social media

Consumers receive a bundle of social benefits when they subscribe to a gaming micro-celebrity:

- Access to an exclusive chat room that allows the consumer to send unlimited messages to the Twitch community and the content creator.
- Access to emotes, badges, and emojis which consumers can send to their favourite streamer.
- Special recognition and acknowledgement from the content creator in front of the community.
- Exclusive access to competitions and prizes, which include gaming computers and mobile phones from sponsors.

1.1.6. Growth and engagement figures of gaming spectatorship

At the end of 2016, Twitch recorded more than 185 million users, which was the highest number of users among Netflix, HBO, Spotify, ESPN and Hulu (Workman, 2017). The gaming-oriented social media platform is experiencing rapid growth and high engagement levels in viewers. For instance, in 2017, users spent 355 billion minutes of viewing live gaming content, which was a 21.5% increase from the previous year (Twitch Tracker, 2018). Furthermore, in 2018 the overall minutes spent watching content on Twitch increased to 434 billion minutes (Shacknews, n.d). YouTube and Facebook have also noticed the growth and potential of gaming (YouTube, 2018; Facebook, 2018). Therefore, the two parties launched their gaming-oriented social media platforms: YouTube Gaming and Facebook Gaming which allow people to share and consume live video gaming content just like Twitch.

Before YouTube introduced the gaming live streaming feature, the video-sharing social media platform was experiencing high engagement towards gaming content. In 2014, 'Minecraft' a building game was the second most searched keyword on YouTube (Euromonitor, 2015). Furthermore, some Twitch streamers have also been considered as YouTube content creators because they share their delayed gameplay highlights on YouTube. There is also a group of micro-celebrity video gamers that specialise in posting pre-recorded video content. For instance, PewDiePie has over 71 million subscribers, which is the highest among all YouTube channels (YouTube, 2018).

There is still more room for video game spectatorship to grow because the current figures only account for well-developed locations that have access to the internet. Thus, gaming content viewership figures are expected to grow with the increase of internet users over time. Furthermore, video streaming developers have expressed some interest in implementing technologies such as VR glasses into gaming spectatorship (Evangelho, 2016). In the possible future, people that watch gaming content could experience the phenomenon visually as if they were right next to their favourite gamer. Therefore, video spectatorship should remain relevant for an extended period.

1.1.7 Promotional investments & revenue growth

As expected, the high volumes of consumer traffic that engage in video game content on social media has drawn brands to invest money in adverting and sponsorship. In 2017, eSports generated an estimate of US$421million through advertising and sponsorship. Experts suspect that brands will spend an estimate of US$879 million through ads and sponsorship by the year 2020 (Schultz, 2019). The most popular YouTuber, PewDiePie made an estimated US$15 million through sponsorship and endorsements in 2015 (Berg, 2017). At a point in time, a 26-year-old American man named Tyler Blevins also known as 'Ninja' was estimated to be making more than US$350 thousand a week from Twitch subscriptions, donations and sponsorships (Tassi, 2018).

The majority of brands that recruit gaming micro-celebrities are in fast food, technology and the gaming industries (Twitch, 2018). For instance, globally established and trusted food-related brands such as UberEATS, KFC, MacDonald's, Dominos and Red Bull often seek exposure. The goal of these well-established food brands is to arouse the user into purchasing their food products. Therefore, these brands often place banner ads on gaming content. An Australian survey indicates that food-related content such as posts by friends and banner ads can influence a consumer's eating habits (Euromonitor, 2017). The strategy of placing advertising material on popular media may have had a positive influence on the success of the food industry, primarily the fast food sector. For instance, in 2017, the New Zealand fast food industry generated an estimate of NZ$2.6 billion, which was a 3% increase from the previous year; pizza outlets had the highest growth with a 48% increase from the previous year (Euromonitor, 2017).

The global gaming industry is experiencing huge returns. For instance, in 2018, the video game market was worth more than US$138 billion which is a US$16 billion increase from the previous year (Wijman, 2018). However, an estimate of 51% of the revenue came from mobile gamers (Takahashi, 2018). The Asian continent is the largest gaming market (Kolakowski, 2017).

Small countries such as New Zealand are also experiencing growth in the video gaming industry. In 2018, Kiwis spent more than NZ$118 million in retail stores on video games (Ambler, 2018). Interestingly, in the same year, New Zealand

electronic game developers earned more than NZ$143 million, which was a staggering 43% increase from the previous year (Ambler, 2018). Nonetheless, 93% of this revenue came from exports. The year 2018 also brought a 10% employment growth in the video gaming industry for New Zealand.

There are so many tangible and intangible products that brands offer this target market: including gaming software, video games, computer hardware, in-game accessories, and gaming furniture. The market leaders in the gaming area are highly established brands such as Sony corporation, Nintendo corporation and Microsoft corporation.

1.1.8 Perceived risks

Some of the gaming technology-based products are high-involvement products as consumers associate them with high perceived risks. For example, gaming computers, consoles, monitors and headsets. Products which consumers associate high perceived risks and high significance are labelled high-involvement products. Consumers associate high-involvement products with high perceived risks such as social, functional, and financial risks (Han & Kim, 2017; Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 136).

In respect to social risks, consumers are concerned with buying products that are not socially accepted by their friends (Shirkhodaee & Rezaee, 2014). With functional risks, consumers are concerned about purchasing products that will not serve their purpose, for instance, faulty products, or products that will not last for the duration of their expected lifespan (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 136). In respect to financial risks, consumers are scared of losing large amounts of money through unethical transactions (Han & Kim, 2017). Furthermore, for financial risks, consumers worry about purchasing products that turn out to be more expensive than other alternatives (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 136). High perceived risks have a negative influence on trust and purchase intentions, primarily towards online products where consumers cannot utilise their five senses to evaluate the product (Shirkhodaee & Rezaee, 2014).

Consumers spend more time evaluating the offered value and perceived risks associated with high-involvement products before reaching a decision (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 136). During the evaluation process for high-involvement products, consumers will seek internal information from previous experience. In addition, consumers will seek external information from friends, family and internet sources (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 136). These online sources include websites, eWOM from past customers, as well as online influencers in the product area.

Consumers will spend a substantial amount of time comparing different alternatives offers from different brands to get the best possible deal in terms of attributes such as price, the reputation of brand and gaming support materials (Kerin & Hartley, 2018). Experienced consumers have an evoked set which comprises of the brands that they would consider buying from first in a specific product category (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 136). The evoked set can present many barriers for newer brands in the market because some consumers do not give them a chance as they have their minds set on specific brands. Furthermore, consumers perceive purchasing from a brand in the evoked set as a safer option in terms of perceived risks (Kopanidis *et al*., 2017, p. 137).

Whereas, low-involvement products are offerings that consumers associate with low perceived risks and consider them to be less significant; therefore, consumers spend less time evaluating the proposed value and use their internal memory to make quick decisions (Shirkhodaee & Rezaee, 2014). For instance, milk is a low-involvement product where some consumers utilise their internal memory to purchase the cheapest milk from a brand that they are familiar with through experience.

1.2. Problem definition

In summary, the statistics show that consumers are spending a substantial amount of time watching video gaming content on social media to gratify their cognitive needs, affective needs, tension release needs and social needs. Hence, brands are advertising their gaming high-involvement offerings through influencers to a massive market of video gamers. High-involvement products face challenges as consumers associate them with high perceived risks. However, video gaming

brands such as Sony are experiencing huge returns, supported by a range of promotional strategies including celebrity endorsement. Therefore, it is significant to examine this phenomenon and understand the factors that make these micro-celebrities influential on the younger generation. Bringing these factors to light can help existing brands and new brands successfully promote their high-involvement products.

1.2.1. Report structure

This report will be structured as follows; chapter 2 will include the literature review which will give insight on the present knowledge in the areas related to the Uses and Gratification theory (U & G), spectatorship, PSI and celebrity endorsement. Chapter three will uncover the research questions, proposed model and hypothesises, methodology; this includes questionnaire development and statistical tests that the research includes. Chapter four will discuss and explain the results in detail. Chapter five will draw conclusions from the findings and suggest recommendations.

Furthermore, the research will attempt to make links between findings from this study and the present literature. Section seven will draw some of the implications from these findings that can affect brands. Moreover, recommendations will be provided to help brands improve their advertising strategy. Finally, section eight will address the limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1. Motivation models

Early communications theories perceive mass media as an influential source that has significant power to influence consumers to behave in a specific way, due to its perceived authority. For instance, older models such as the Hypodermic Needle Theory (HNT) suggest that people are passive and behave according to the messages that the media communicates (Laswell, 1971/1927). Furthermore, the HNT states that mass media affects the population as a whole rather than an individual reacting differently to the messages that the media presents. Some past assumptions even suggest that the media serves the purpose of shaping a false reality (Laswell, 1971/1927). Scholars perceive the HNT as an assumption that lacks supporting and significant evidence to qualify as an academic model (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). Therefore, most scholars do not recognise the model as a valid theory. Instead, they perceive it as an outdated assumption developed out of moral panic and limited knowledge.

To be able to understand media consumption behaviour, it is significant to understand Maslow's theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as it plays an influential role in the design of the core media consumption motivation theory used in this research: The U & G theory. Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs theory suggests that there are five needs that influence an individual's behaviour. These needs are split into three categories. In the first category, an individual seeks to satisfy basic needs which include two stages: physiological needs, which suggest that an individual needs food, sleep and water to survive; safety needs then follow which influence the individual to seek shelter and security. In the second category, psychological needs make up stage three and four of the hierarchy model: stage three, the need to belong can influence the consumer to form relationships and conform to a community; stage four, esteem needs can motivate an individual to differentiate themselves from others by competing against others to improve their status within the community. Once the individual satisfies all the necessity needs and psychological needs, the individual may seek self-fulfilment in stage five which include participating in creative activities. The same notion applies to the media consumption context (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). As consumers utilise media to gratify specific needs.

2.1.2. The Uses and Gratification Theory

Lasswell (1948) suggests that the U & G theory can aid in understanding consumers' behaviour in the media consumption context. The U & G suggest that the consumer is active rather than passive in their media consumption as they purposefully choose the media they consume (Lasswell, 1948). The theory further argues that consumers are goal driven in their media consumption and choose specific mediums that meet their specific needs among competing media (Katz *et al*., 1973). Furthermore, the consumer is aware of their media consumption and can pinpoint the motives that lead them to consume specific media.

Early developments of the U & G theory suggest that consumers use media to satisfy four functions: surveillance, personal identity, diversion and personal relationships (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960). The function of surveillance suggests that consumers seek to be informed of their surroundings. For example, consumers watch the news to gratify surveillance needs. The second function of personal identity posits that individuals perceive the media as a source that can help them learn about the meaning of life. Hence, the consumer can utilise the information from the media to formulate their own identity. The function of diversion suggests that consumers use the media as a distraction from life; this includes watching the media to pass the time or escape from daily problems. The function of personal relationships brings to light that individuals use media to form and maintain relationships with media characters and real-life friends.

Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) discuss the functions of media consumption and suggest five functions. For instance, Lasswell (1948) and Wright (1948) suggest that in the surveillance function the consumer seeks to acquire information to protect themselves. The same notion applies in the personal identity function where the consumer also seeks knowledge to construct their own identity. Nonetheless, Katz *et al*. (1973) groups all the needs related to seeking knowledge under one category: cognitive needs. The same applies to all the needs related to emotions that are combined to make affective needs:

1. Affective needs are needs related to emotions, pleasure, enjoyment, entertainment, eustress and aesthetic experiences. For instance, a consumer can watch a comedy movie for pleasure.
2. Cognitive needs are needs related to gaining knowledge, information and understanding. For instance, watching the news to learn about current issues and world events.
3. Social integrative needs are needs related to enhancing relationships with social groups which include friends, family and communities. For instance, a media user may watch a TV show because the majority of their friends watch it, which allows the consumer to partake in conversations with friends about the specific media. The consumer may utilise the media to fulfil the empty void of loneliness.
4. Personal integrative needs are a combination of both cognitive and affective needs. They are needs related to boosting confidence, credibility and status within a community. For instance, a consumer can make a persuasive argument that is supported by many other users in the comments section of a Herald newspaper post on Facebook, which may lead to the user perceiving themselves as a credible individual.
5. Tension release needs are needs related to escape from reality, relieving stress and passing the time. For instance, a consumer may listen to a song that reminds them of their happy place.

2.1.3. Personal Factors

The U & G has been utilised in many different contexts to understand consumer behaviour. For instance, people spend time playing video games to gratify affective needs, achievement needs, self-presentation needs and social needs (Li *et al.,* 2015). Whereas, people are motivated to play sports video games because of peer pressure from social group members and the need to compete against other individuals (Lee & Schoenstedt, 2011). Consumers spectate eSports to escape from life problems, to acquire knowledge, to watch new players blossom and for the enjoyment of aggressive behaviour (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Moreover, aesthetic influences the consumer to watch less eSport games. Habitual needs, social needs and cognitive needs influence individuals to watch reality shows (Shariffadeen &

Manaf, 2017). Whereas, knowledge seeking, and habitual needs have a positive influence on attitude towards the use of smartphones (Joo & Sang, 2013).

In some contexts, the consumer has to choose from many competing media that serve similar needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). For example, social media and the newspaper website can satisfy cognitive needs by offering information to consumers (Go *et al*., 2016). Some consumers prefer news content from user-generated platforms such as social media. Other consumers, do not trust news content from social media and instead consume material from a perceived trusted and reliable source: the newspaper.

Different needs influence consumers to utilise various features on social media platforms such as group, chats, commenting and video games (Smock *et al*., 2011; Khan, 2017; Leiner *et al*., 2018). Video-sharing media such as YouTube present consumers with a wide range of media options that can be utilised to fulfil multiple needs (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). However, different needs influence consumers to consume specific genres on video sharing sites (Sjöblom *et al*., 2017). For instance, the information seeking needs influence the consumer to watch news content on YouTube. Whereas, entertainment needs lead to the media user consuming comedy content (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008).

In the video game spectatorship context, different needs influence consumers to watch different genres of games and streamer types (Sjöblom *et al*., 2017). Some needs have similar effects on the genre choice. For example, the genre of "First Person Shooting" has one of the most robust relationships with affective needs and tension release needs. Some needs differ in effect on genre choice. For instance, Real-time Strategy (RTS) games do not gratify affective needs. Social and personal integrative needs are satisfied by less intense games such as Sandbox games, which are slow paced games that give the gamer freedom to engage in activities of their choice such as Grand Theft Auto. This allows the streamer to interact with the audience and for the consumer to socialise with other community members.

Needs also influence consumers to watch specific types of streamers. For example, casual and competitive eSports stream types have a significant correlation with affective and tension release needs (Sjöblom *et al.,* 2017). Furthermore, consumers

are more likely to use 'Let us play' stream types (streamers that play the game from beginning to end) to retrieve information about a new video game. Additionally, people are more interested in acquiring gameplay knowledge from streams on Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games such as League of Legends and Dota. The two most preferred stream types to acquire gaming strategy and tactics are Competitive eSport Tournaments and Game Tutorial streams. Moreover, casual stream types gratify social and personal integrative needs. Consumers consider Casual streams to be small in size. Therefore, they allow consumers to intimately interact with each other (Hilvert-Bruce *et al*., 2018).

2.1.4. Situational factors

The sports spectatorship findings are almost identical to the findings contributed by Sjöblom *et al*. (2017); Hanson and Haridakis (2008). Needs influence the consumer to seek specific sports types to participate in, to spectate, and to generate fandom. These sports types include team sports, individual sports, mainstream sports, niche sports and computer-mediated sports. Team sports are activities that have at least two groups competing against each other (Gau, 2013). Moreover, the competing sides have at least two or more people. Popular team sports include soccer, rugby, American football and basketball. Individual sports are activities practised by an individual either competing against other people or just simply playing by themselves. Electronic sports (eSports) are computer-mediated games played through machines such as a gaming computer or a gaming console (Macey & Hamari, 2018). Mainstream sports are activities that attract many consumers and media attention such as soccer (Greenhalgh *et al*., 2011). Whereas, niche sports attract small crowds and little media coverage: for instance, touch rugby.

Social needs are one of the prime reasons influencing consumers to invest time and effort into team sports. For instance, group membership influences people to attend English Premiership League soccer games of their home teams (Charleston, 2008). In support, Gau (2013) posits that social needs are part of the core needs that drive people to become involved in globally known sports. For example, soccer goers perceive, aesthetic (the beauty of the game), teamwork, sportsmanship, team support, and interaction with community members as significant drivers of watching FIFA World Cup soccer games. When these core values are available,

consumers will spectate the sporting event even if the main action itself is not of high quality. For instance, people will watch the game that does not involve any star players and rivalries as long as the core values such as social needs are available (Gau, 2013).

Social needs are the common predictor of people participating and spectating team sports. For instance, Tokuyama and Greenwell (2011) suggest that local soccer club players spectate other players, for companionship, to experience the beauty side of the game and for the enjoyment of competition. Furthermore, motives such as achieving goals and stress reduction can influence people to join local sports clubs. Nonetheless, the need to belong to the community explains both spectatorship and sports club participation.

Social needs also influence people in both physical sports and computer-mediated sports spectatorship (Brown *et al*., 2018). The research posits that participants consume both computer-mediated sports and physical sports content to socialise with people, to acquire knowledge that solidifies themselves as experts in the sporting context, and to identify themselves with a team. These core motives could be the reason why eSport events such as the League of Legends Championships attract sell-out crowds at large venues such as the Birds Nest stadium in China and millions of media viewers worldwide, just like traditional sports such as soccer.

2.1.5. Comparisons between different contexts

There are many different types of spectators that seek to gratify many diverse needs. For example, some consumers spectate sports for social reasons and others spectate for the competition attribute (Garland Macpherson & Haughey, 2004). The literature suggests that consumer motivations differ slightly between individual and team sports contexts. For example, Ambrose and Schnitzlein (2017) conduct a comparison study in the rivalry context between team sports and individual sports. Rivalries can drive fans to spectate in both team sports and individual sports. Social factors play a significant role in sparking rivalries in team sports (Tyler & Cobbs, 2015); whereas, individual sports tend to rely on star power to ignite rivalries (Ambrose & Schnitzlein, 2017). For instance, research posit that in team sports marketers can integrate social elements with many factors to trigger a rivalry, these

factors can include geographical, historical and cultural aspects (Tyler & Cobbs, 2015). For example, fans can get behind a rivalry just because the opposition is from a neighbouring city. Moreover, other factors such as quality of competition, spectacular moments and star players can also influence rivalries in team sports. For instance, people may perceive two teams to have a similar playing style which may lead fans to believe that there is a rivalry.

However, to spark a rivalry in individual sports, marketers have to rely on a limited number of attributes, which include star players in peak form. In support, Ambrose and Schnitzlein (2017) posit that spectacular moments and star power are two of the most influential factors that trigger rivalries in solo sports. Furthermore, the researchers suggest that historical factors have less impact on fuelling rivalries in individual sports. For instance, sports franchises such as the Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics can use their rich history of championship battles that span decades to attract fans even if both teams are not winning games and have no talented individuals. Whereas, in individual sports, it is challenging to promote rivalries using the historical element when the athletes are past their prime.

Moreover, in some individual sports, geographical factors may not affect rivalries (Ambrose & Schnitzlein, 2017). For instance, in tennis, the majority of tournaments are played on neutral grounds in different locations. Furthermore, the athletes do not associate with any particular locations. On the other hand, teams such as the Lakers belong to cities. Hence, aficionado fans create communities to support their city and teams; this is evident in American and English team sports.

The needs that drive consumers to consume sports also differ in mainstream sports and niche sports contexts. The need to socially interact with the community and star power attributes can drive individuals to watch games of mainstream leagues such as the National Basketball League (NBA) National Football League (NFL) who attract millions of spectators (Greenhalgh *et al*., 2011). Whereas, spectators are motivated to consume niche sports that attract smaller crowds and less media attention such as Women's National Basketball League (WNBA) and National Lacrosse League (NLL) when they are affordable and when there are likable players that are perceived similar to the consumer. For instance, a female consumer that plays basketball is likely to generate a liking for WNBA athletes.

The literature suggests that eSports activities are no different from physical sports (Lee & Schoenstedt, 2011). ESports come in many different types just like traditional sports. Different sets of needs influence consumers to participate and spectate different traditional and electronic sports that suit their needs (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Hilvert-Bruce *et al*., 2018). Hence, different video game genres will influence the behaviour of spectators. Furthermore, the research finds a significant difference between individual sports and team sports (Garland *et al.,* 2004; Ambrose & Schnitzlein, 2017). Therefore, needs that influence consumers to consume gaming teams and individual gamers can also differ.

Team sports have more benefits to attract consumers with than individual sports (Ambrose & Schnitzlein, 2017). Thus, practitioners should consider strategies on integrating activities so that they have a team element to them. For instance, some consumers would not consider watching some of the individual sports in the Olympics if they were not part of the historic games. The integration of sports into the Olympics games gives every sport included a team like atmosphere. Consumers tend to get behind their home country.

2.1.6. Needs influence behaviour during media consumption

Needs also influence the consumer's behaviour within a context (Mubarak & Raymond Choo, 2018; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Hilvert-Bruce *et al*., 2018). The research shows that some needs have a similar effect on behaviour and other needs differ in effects on consumer behaviour. For instance, the sensation-seeking needs, social needs and cognitive needs influence consumers to multitask (Chang, 2017). However, affective needs have no significant effect on multitasking. Furthermore, consumers do not always gratify all the needs that they seek to gratify when they multitask (Wang & Tchernev, 2012). Instead, some needs suffer during multitasking. For instance, school children that multitask with media while doing their homework are likely to perform their homework poorly.

Heravi, Mubarak and Raymond Choo (2018) discover that individuals that seek information needs on social media are likely to be concerned with information privacy in their media use. Whereas, consumers that solicit entertainment motives

are not worried about security issues. In the video gaming streaming context, cognitive needs influence consumers to watch more streamers and to spend more time on the live streams (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Whereas, personal integrative needs influence the consumer to watch fewer streamers. Furthermore, tension release needs and affective needs lead to consumers spending more hours in gaming live streams. Social needs influence consumers to spend money by donating and subscribing to live streamers. However, Affective needs do not influence consumers to spend money on live streams (Hilvert-Bruce *et al*., 2018).

The findings in physical sports context support the contributions made by Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) and Hilvert-Bruce *et al*. (2018). Needs influence consumers to behave in a specific manner. Some of these needs have a similar effect on behaviour, and some do not. For instance, Trail and James (2001) suggest that eleven motives drive consumers to spend their leisure time spectating sports: achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, drama, escape, family, physical attraction, physical skill and social interaction. Nonetheless, Aesthetic, physical skill, achievement and social interaction have the strongest relationships with spectatorship in sports among the eleven needs. For instance, the four needs lead to team identification, loyalty to the team, an increase in media consumption and the purchase of merchandise (Trail & James, 2001).

Spectating sports and identification with sports groups does improve a consumer's well-being. Some needs have a significant influence on well-being. For instance, affective needs that sports fans perceive in sports are significant predictors of well-being (Kim, Kim & Kim, 2017). Moreover, personal achievement through sports also influences the consumer's well-being, but only for those participants that show high identification with the team (Kim *et al.,* 2017). For instance, fans may share vicarious experiences which include a sense of accomplishment when their team wins a game or being proud of their group for exceeding expectations. Additionally, social values correlate with spectator's well-being, only if the consumer watches the games around members of their ingroup such as friends, family and other team supporters (Kim *et al.,* 2017).

The research suggests that some needs are significant predictors of media addiction. Affective needs influence consumers to compulsively watch YouTube content

(Klobas *et al*., 2018). Whereas, cognitive needs may drive the user to watch less YouTube material. Nonetheless, compulsive use of YouTube leads to a decrease in the academic drive. For example, university students are less likely to be motivated in their academic studies when they engage in the compulsive use of video sharing social media platforms. Khang, Kim and Kim (2013) posit that self-traits and motives are significant predictors of media addiction. For instance, time spent, passing time, self-presence and self-control can influence consumers to generate internet, video game and mobile use addiction. Furthermore, the need for social interaction and low confidence in performing tasks can also lead to mobile device use addiction. The literature suggests that some needs influence consumers to generate personal friendships with celebrities (Rubin *et al*., 1985). For instance, a consumer can become personal friends with a YouTuber that offers tips on decorating homes.

These findings suggest that some needs can influence specific behaviours in different contexts, which include media consumption, sports spectatorship, multitasking, well-being and addiction (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Khang *et al*., 2013; Klobas *et al*., 2018; Trail and James, 2001; Wang & Tchernev, 2012). Most importantly specific needs can influence consumers to form friendships with performers.

2.1.7. Needs influence purchase

U & G needs have a direct influence on the likelihood of purchasing a product. Consumers engage in offered products or continue to use a service when the media meets customers' specific needs. For instance, in the social media marketing context Choi *et al*. (2016) reports that users are gratified by business Facebook pages which they perceive as convenient to use, allow individuals to express their opinions, and pages that have in-depth information. Most importantly, when those three qualities are present, consumers are more likely to engage in the offered product. In support, research suggests that status seeking needs, convenience needs, affective needs, and cognitive needs explain the continuance use of virtual learning software (Gallego, Bueno & Noyes, 2016).

In the gaming context, social needs have a substantial influence on consumers' purchase intentions of virtual gaming products among all needs. Social group members such as friends that play the video game and other players can influence a consumer to buy in-game virtual products such as costumes and upgrades (Hamari *et al*., 2017; Hamari, 2015). For instance, game creators such as Epic the maker of Fortnite and 2K the creator of the NBA2K series use a strategy where the user begins the video game in a perceived basic unattractive outfit. Furthermore, the consumer has to pay real money in order to have a perceived decent looking outfit. Additionally, modern gamers flaunt their premium outfits towards community members.

Moreover, the gaming community can label a consumer that chooses to use the basic freemium outfit a 'noob' (a new, inexperienced player on the specific video game, or in the gaming world overall). This label can result in rejection from the gaming community. For example, other players may refuse to play with someone that comes across as inexperienced. Therefore, consumers purchase these in-game products to fit in their communities. This finding suggests that some needs have a direct influence on purchase intentions. The literature suggests that some consumer media consumption needs can have a direct influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Christou (2013) reports that experienced gamers perceive greater value in gaming products than inexperience gamers.

2.1.8. Summary

In summary, the literature suggests that consumers consume different types of media and activities to gratify specific needs. Furthermore, some of these needs influence consumers' behaviour in different contexts. For instance, some needs influence consumers to form PSI with celebrities. Additionally, some needs affect consumers' purchase intentions. In marketing, it is essential for brands to identify and gratify consumer needs. The notion should be the same for celebrity endorsers; brands should aim to understand the bundle of benefits that the celebrities who promote their products are offering their target market because they might influence the success of celebrity endorsement campaigns.

It is also crucial to understand the effects that these benefits have on endorsements. Understanding the benefits that impact specific behaviour can help brands maximise positive behaviour such as positive purchase intentions. For instance, if social interaction has a positive impact on purchase intentions. Brands can encourage their celebrity endorser to create content that is community-based which influences consumers to interact.

2.2. Celebrity Endorsement fit

A celebrity endorser is an individual that enjoys a great deal of fame and who utilises this recognition to promote brands and products towards their followers (McCracken, 1989). Scholars utilise three common models to understand the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement: Source Credibility Theory, Match- Fit Model and the Meaning Transfer Model. The source credibility theory suggests that the celebrity endorsement strategy can successfully generate positive outcomes when the consumer perceives the source to be credible regarding the brand and the offered products (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Furthermore, the source credibility theory suggests that three staple factors can influence credibility: expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1991).

Expertise examines the source's experience and knowledge in the product area (Erdogan, 1999). Attractiveness focuses on two attributes: outer, which examines the physical beauty of the source; whereas, inner is the perceived manner the celebrity conducts themselves and the perceived resemblance in behaviour and beliefs between the celebrity and the consumer (Ohanian, 1991). Trustworthy is the consumer's confidence in trusting the celebrity to provide their honest opinions regarding endorsed products (Erdogan, 1999).

A consumer that perceives a celebrity to be attractive, knowledgeable and trustworthy regarding the endorsed products and target market is also likely to see the star as a credible source of information; subsequently, this credibility influences consumers to purchase and use the endorsed products (Wang, Kao & Ngamsiriudom, 2017; Ohanian, 1991). Furthermore, expertise gained from experience is more valuable than expertise gained from academic qualifications. For instance, celebrities that are perceived to be actively involved in the area of the

product they endorse are more likely to be viewed as credible endorsers than celebrities with qualifications and no experience (Bayazıt *et al*., 2017).

The celebrity's attractiveness can influence the consumer to develop favourable attitudes towards an endorsed product. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that consumers often search for cues when analysing advertising material. The consumer can engage in low elaboration which is also known as peripheral processing where the consumer utilises heuristic methods to evaluate ads and make rapid decisions. When the consumer engages in low elaboration, they spend less time on the ad and search for shortcut cues, such as attractive models in the ad. The consumer can buy the advertised product merely because the model involved in the ad is physically appealing. Consumers tend to use heuristic processing on low-involvement products that are affordable and less important, such as salt. Consumers stereotype attractive people to be more intelligent and sociable than unattractive individuals (Eagly *et al*., 1991). Furthermore, Individuals are more likely to perceive attractive people as normative subjects that they can listen to and follow in order to be socially accepted by society (Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010).

However, in high elaboration also known as central processing route, the consumer spends more time on the ad and exerts cognitive energy to evaluate the argument quality presented. The consumer weighs in the benefits and the perceived risks associated with the advertised product. People tend to use the central processing route when evaluating high-involvement products such as cars because they associated with high perceived risks, which include social risks, financial risks and functionality risks.

Utilising celebrities that are physically attractive may temporally help brands grab the consumer's attention. However, hiring a celebrity that is perceived to have both the expertise and attractiveness attributes is more effective. For instance, Eisend and Langner (2010) posit in their longitudinal study that at first glance consumers have an immediate positive attitude towards brands that are endorsed by physically attractive endorsers with no expertise in the field. Interestingly, people perceive attractive celebrities with no expertise in the field to be more knowledgeable than non-attractive stars with high expertise in the area. However, consumers' attitudes

decrease for the attractive endorser with no knowledge in the area after repeat exposure to the ad because customers focus more on the augment quality. For instance, the consumer pays more attention to the fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product. Nonetheless, after repeat exposure, consumers' attitudes remain positive for the brand that is endorsed by an attractive endorser with expertise in the area. Therefore, brands should utilise celebrities that are both knowledgeable and attractive to maximise the success of their celebrity endorsement campaigns for high-involvement products.

However, the literature argues that attractive endorsers are effective when endorsing relevant beauty products towards both consumers that use peripheral and central processing because the endorser's beauty signifies their expertise and credibility (Trampe *et al*., 2010; Kamins, 1990). For instance, consumers are likely to buy a face cream that is endorsed by a celebrity with smooth skin because they will assume that the product is the cause of beauty. Though, that is not the case for products that are not related to attractiveness. For instance, attractive models are ineffective when endorsing non-beauty products (Trampe *et al*., 2010).

The match-fit theory suggests that celebrity endorsement is useful when consumers perceive the celebrity endorser as a suitable match with the product, brand, and the target market in the eyes of the consumer (Pradhan, Duraipandian & Sethi, 2014). The literature utilises the self-concept to understand the celebrity and target market congruence. The concept suggests that consumers make personal goals of improving their actual-self to reach their ideal-self. The ideal-self is not a stagnant goal; the consumer often alters their goal due to external influence. For instance, consumers can seek inspiration for their future-self-image from celebrities. Consumers that perceive congruence between their ideal-self and the celebrity's image are likely to have a positive attitude towards the ad and positive purchase intentions (Phua, Lin & Lim, 2018; Choi & Rifon, 2012). Hence, consumers purchase products or engage in certain behaviours that are associated with celebrities to reach this desired-self.

The congruence of personality traits between celebrities and brands influence consumer behaviour (Misra & Beatty, 1990). For instance, the researchers posit the brand's personality traits – celebrity's personality traits fit result in higher consumer

brand recall. Moreover, consumers that perceive congruence between the celebrity's personality and the brand's personality are likely to view the celebrity as a suitable and credible endorser (Mishra, Roy & Bailey, 2015). Most importantly, the presence of the celebrity - brand match-fit results in a positive attitude towards the ad and higher purchase intentions. When utilising the product-celebrity congruence strategy, the end goal is to communicate the argument that the endorser is a credible source in the area of the endorsed product (Till & Busler, 2000). The product- celebrity fit influences positive attitude towards an ad, intention to spread eWOM and positive purchase intentions (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Phua *et al*., 2018). Consumers perceive celebrities that endorse too many brands to be less credible than those stars that endorse fewer quality brands (Hung, Chan & Tse, 2011; Chen *et al*., 2013). Celebrities endorsers that disclose in-depth information concerning their relationship terms with brands are more credible than those stars that share little detail in the eyes of the consumer (Carr & Hayes, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2016).

McCracken, (1989) claims that the source credibility theory and the match-fit model fail to describe the factors that make the celebrity a valid endorser for one product and invalid for another. Hence, the research presents the Meaning Transfer Model, which suggest that celebrity endorsement can be successful when the consumer perceives the celebrity, and the brands they endorse to have transferable symbolic meanings that add value to their lives and personality.

McCracken (1989) elaborates that individuals assign symbolical meanings to celebrities by observing the roles that the famous stars play in life. Moreover, symbolical meanings can arise from multiple factors, which include gender, social status, social class, sexual orientation, lifestyle, nationality, ethnicity and personality traits. For instance, Angelina Jolie who does charity work around the globe and often plays a strong woman with no fear in movies. Therefore, consumers can associate Ms Jolie with the 'inspirational' and 'good Samaritan' traits. Brands can bring these transferable meanings to light which allows them to select a suitable celebrity.

Moreover, from the customer's point of view, these symbolic meanings can transfer to brands that the celebrity associates with through advertising, primarily celebrity

endorsement; subsequently these symbolic meanings can pass on from brands to consumers via possession of endorsed products (Roy & Jain, 2017). Multiple exposures to advertising material can strengthen the meaning transfer from a celebrity to a brand (Knoll *et al*., 2017). Furthermore, the consumer's familiarity with the endorsed brand and celebrity liking can also positively influence the meanings transfer.

Individuals can perceive the celebrity as the prototype of their ideal-self (McCracken, 1989). Thus, consumers buy from endorsed brands to retrieve symbolic meanings in order to construct their everchanging identity and reach their desired-self- image. For instance, when a celebrity whom consumers perceive as sexy endorses a bottle of perfume, that physical attraction trait is likely to be associated with the endorsed brand. Most Importantly, consumers are likely to buy products from that brand so that they can obtain the same sensual meaning associated with the celebrity and the brand promoted.

Negative traits can transfer to the endorsed brands and can overshadow positive attributes when both are present, which could harm the brand image (Campbell & Warren, 2012). Knittel and Stango (2013) support, the majority of brands that were endorsed by Tiger Woods suffered losses in market share after the athlete's unethical cheating scandal. Similarly, Bartz, Molchanov and Stork (2013) suggest that brands that choose to keep a celebrity with a bad public image, primarily if the media have densely covered the star's case are likely to experience stock market losses. On the other hand, brands that end ties with the celebrity after the incident experience no loss. Though, negative traits can be useful for brands that endorse products that are linked to risky traits (Phua *et al*., 2018). For instance, a celebrity that is often at the wrong side of the law and is portrayed by consumers as a badass can successfully promote cigarettes and alcohol products. The findings posit that brands should avoid employing celebrities with negative personality traits. However, brands that offer products associated with risks should use celebrities with negative traits as they may trigger a positive reaction from the market.

2.2.1. Summary

The three celebrity endorsement theories all emphasise the importance of a good fit between the celebrity, the target market, the brand and the endorsed product. Furthermore, the findings suggest that brands should pay attention to detail and be more specific in their reasoning for selecting an endorser. For instance, it is not sufficient for a sports shoe brand to choose an athlete because they are trustworthy, attractive and an expert; it is not useful to suggest that the athlete is a good fit with the products, brand and target market because they are an athlete. Instead, brands should specify the personality traits that make the endorser a good fit for the situation. For example, the sports brand could set a goal of wanting consumers to view them as a trendy brand. Therefore, they choose an athlete that is well known for their great taste in fashion and irresistible charm.

Consumers are likely to perceive endorsers that endorse products that are relevant to them and their field of operation and to be more credible. Whereas, endorsers that recommend products that are irrelevant to themselves and their field of operation are perceived to lack credibility. It should be interesting to examine how great of an influence a gaming micro-celebrity has on the younger generation. For example, do these micro-celebrities have a great power to influence consumers to buy products that are irrelevant to them and the gaming context?

2.3. Para-social interaction

Utilising celebrities as spokespeople can help foster relationships with consumers. The latest research suggests that the intimate relationship between celebrities and media users can play a significant role in the success of the celebrity endorsement strategy (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Lee & Watkins, 2016). The relationship between celebrities and consumers can be explained using the PSI concept coined by Horton and Wohl (1956) and refined by Rubin, *et al*. (1985). PSI is the relationship between a consumer and a media persona. In PSI, the consumer has the illusion that the relationship with a celebrity is as real as an interpersonal relationship. Moreover, the consumer seeks guidance, exerts energy, wishes to be part of the celebrity's social group and wants to meet the celebrity in real life (Rubin, *et al*., 1985).

Nonetheless, the relationship between the consumer and the celebrity is one-sided because there is minimal physical contact between the two parties (Stever & Lawson, 2013). Moreover, the relationship lacks equal participation from both parties as the celebrity often dominates the relationship (Frederick *et al*., 2012). For instance, the celebrity shares messages, and the consumer receives them. However, when the consumer attempts to send messages to the celebrity, the latter does not have time to consistently receive and process the messages as they are overwhelmed with many messages from fans. Furthermore, in real life, the celebrity does not know every single individual that engages in their content and interacts with them on a personal level. Instead, the celebrity has an idea that they have followers, which they view as one homogeneous group. The social media platform heightens the illusion of consumers perceiving the resemblance between PSI and interpersonal interaction because the media user has the notion that they can interact with the celebrity on a two-way basis. Furthermore, celebrities encourage this illusion by disclosing detailed information through social media about their lifestyle and by replying to a small sample of their followers. This makes it difficult for the consumer to differentiate reality and fantasy relationships.

Moreover, the celebrity is in full control of the one-sided relationship and has the power to shape and present an altered fictional identity of their choice (Horton & Wohl, 1956). For instance, the celebrity has time to plan and choose the information that they want to disclose to the audience. Additionally, the ultimate goal of the media personnel is to present content that portrays themselves as a predictable, friendly and harmless personae (Rubin, *et al*.,1985).

2.3.1. Factors that form PSI

Multiple factors make up the PSI variable, including empathy, guidance, companionship, and interaction. The factor of companionship aims to understand the level to which the consumer perceives the celebrity as a friend (Levy, 1979). The interaction factor measures the degree to which consumers are willing to go to see the celebrity (Lee & Watkins, 2016). For instance, is the media user willing to watch the star on another programme or channel. The empathy factor examines the level of affection behavioural responses towards the celebrity (Rubin *et al.,*1985).

For example, consumers that are attached to a celebrity may feel bad for the character when they make a mistake. The guidance factor measures the extent to which consumers seek guidance from the celebrity in a field where they perceive the star to be an expert.

The interaction is a controversial factor that is ignored by some scholars (e.g. Horton & Wohl, 1956). For instance, the literature examines PSI using different perspectives: the short and the-long-version PSI version. The literature explains the short-version of PSI as an interaction that a consumer forms with a character of a show that only lasts for the duration of the programme (Horton & Wohl, 1956). For instance, a consumer will perceive Batman as a friend during the movie, and that relationship will finish as the movie ends. Whereas, the long-notion of PSI suggest that the consumer extends the relationship with a celebrity beyond a single media (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). For example, the consumer generates a relationship with the celebrity to the point where they develop a powerful attachment and feel the need to consume almost every single media that features the star. The long-notion allows researchers to examine the level of attachment of the consumer towards the celebrity, which is significant in the marketing context where researchers perceive messages from long-term associates to be highly credible (e.g. WOM from friends).

2.3.2. Antecedents of PSI

In many situations, people on media screens and radios are employed based on their interpersonal communication skills (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Furthermore, these celebrities are then trained to use the same communication skills on camera or live radio that they use in face-to-face interactions with their friends. These communication skills include the use of a conversational style of speech towards the camera as if it was a real person. For instance, media personnel tend to address people by utilising personal pronouns to interact with media consumers. Furthermore, the media personnel incorporate verbal and non-verbal cues such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and voice tones as if they are engaging in interpersonal interactions with flesh and blood friends.

Auter (1992a) states that there is a wall of separation between the consumer and media personnel, which is labelled ‘the fourth wall’. The fourth wall is a barrier that

prevents the celebrity from interacting with the audience. For instance, celebrities in movies such as Marvel Avengers play their role and do not interact with the audience. Consumer are likely to perceive a celebrity as another character that is tasked to follow a script. However, the celebrity can break the fourth wall by looking at the camera and acknowledging the audience. Newscasters and internet vloggers tend to break the fourth wall, by interacting with the audience. Moreover, breaking the fourth wall humanises the celebrity, which leads to consumers generating higher PSI with the interactive media personae as opposed to stars that do not interact with the audience (Auter, 1992b). The correct use of non-verbal, verbal cues and production tactics can influence the consumer to generate PSI with a celebrity (Cummins & Cui, 2014). Whereas, the incorrect use of the three elements may result in the consumer distancing themselves from the media character. For instance, a consumer may perceive an individual that does not stare at the camera to be unfriendly.

Consumers can engage in PSI with socially active celebrities that disclose in-depth personal information about themselves through the internet (Kim & Song, 2016). Similarly, Frederick *et al*. (2012) posit, sports fans form one-sided relationships with particular individuals within the team that they perceive to be socially interactive on social media. Liebers and Schramm (2017) suggest that social and physical attractiveness influences PSI and para-social romance (PSR) with book characters. In the sports context, Pan and Zeng (2017) posit that fans are likely to form PSI with athletes of the same ethnicity. Ferchaud *et al*. (2018) discovered in their study that vloggers were ranked first in self-disclosure because they share content that shows in-depth personal information through their video diaries. Moreover, gaming content was ranked second, which shows that gamers do share personal information during gameplay. Additionally, sketches and tutorials made up the rest of the list.

Moreover, consumers can generate PSI with individuals that share content that they perceive to have a sense of realism and authenticity (Rubin *et al*., 1985). For instance, YouTube consumers preferer to follow real people that are relatable who share real authentic stories. Nonetheless, contrary self- disclosure can signify a high degree of realism and authenticity (Ferchaud *et al*., 2018). For instance, one of the first vloggers on YouTube, Charles, witnessed an increase in subscribers and

engagement levels on his content when he decided to share his health issues with his followers. Charles Trippy alerted his followers that he had a deadly brain tumour that required a dangerous procedure. Charles recorded the experience and shared the content on his YouTube channel. This vulnerable experience that Charles shared with consumers resulted in subscribers forming personal bonds with the vlogger. Some people created video content expressing how inspired they were by the vlogger.

Many viewers consume media content to the point where it is a daily ritual. Hence, the consumer becomes familiar with celebrities. Thus, time and familiarity also have an influence on PSI with media personae (Rubin *et al*., 1985). For instance, the consumer can anticipate on a daily basis to see certain celebrities such as newscasters and weather forecasters (Levy, 1979). Furthermore, the absence of the celebrity on a programme may leave the consumer upset.

The literature suggests that factors such as age and education level may play a role in the factors that influence PSI. For instance, a study by Lim and Kim (2011) posit that loneliness influences PSI with media characters among the elderly. Furthermore, the participants that make up the sample of the research are 60 years and older. Meanwhile, other scholars that utilise samples of younger participants fail to detect a significant relationship between loneliness and PSI, for instance, Rubin *et al*. (1985) who utilise a sample with an average age of 26.52 years-old; Hwang and Zhang (2018) with participants ranging from 18-40 years old. Levy (1979) argue that more educated people are more socially active, which influences them to form less PSI with celebrities in-relation to less educated consumers.

Consumers consume specific media to gratify different needs. Consumers will generate PSI with celebrities that gratify specific needs. For instance, Rubin *et al*. (1985) suggest that consumers generate PSI with newscasters because they offer cognitive value. Furthermore, the consumer uses this knowledge in everyday interactions with friends and relatives. However, escape needs have no significant influence on PSI (Rubin *et al*., 1985).

2.3.3. eWOM from celebrity friends

Consumers utilise their friends as opinion leaders in different contexts, where they perceive them as credible sources (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009). Consumers are influenced by their friends even if the consumer is aware that their friend is being paid by a brand to endorse that specific name (Abendroth & Heyman, 2013). Nonetheless, due to blurred lifestyles, this opinion leader list is expanding as people are adding online friends such as micro-celebrities from all different areas. Consumers trust these online celebrity friends as if they are flesh and blood (Gleich, 1997; Murtiasih, Sucherly, & Siringoringo, 2013). For instance, some females are trusting cosmetic YouTubers with makeup advice and product recommendations (Gannon & Prothero, 2018); fitness enthusiast are seeking advice from fitness YouTubers in regards of workouts and products to utilise to conquer fitness goals.

Consumers perceive recommendations from celebrity friends to be no different to WOM product recommendations from real-life friends and past customers (Gong & Li, 2017). WOM from friends and past customers is recognised as the most effective method of influencing consumer behaviour (Trusov *et al*., 2009). WOM from friends and past customers can break or grow a business: Positive WOM will result in more customers engaging in the product. Whereas, negative WOM could lead to people not engaging in the offerings. WOM is often more significant than professional advertising material produced by brands such as TV ads and billboards (Romaniuk & Hartnett, 2017). Friends are a credible source of information because they offer perceived subjective and accurate opinions about the offerings (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015). Past customers are perceived as credible individuals because they have experienced and evaluated the product. It is perceived that a brand will never disclose honest information about their product in an ad. Instead, a brand will release scripted positive information to attract customers (Christodoulides *et al*., 2012). Therefore, consumers trust social messages from friends and key influencers within the product area more than commercial messages from the brands themselves, such as paid TV ads (Kilgour *et al*., 2015).

2.3.4. PSI linked to celebrity endorsement

The literature shows strong evidence that PSI influences consumer behaviour in many different contexts. Labrecque (2014) posit that consumers can also form PSI with brands. For example, consumers are likely to engage in PSI with brands that they perceive to be interactive and open minded. Additionally, PSI explains brand loyalty and the willingness to share information about the brands with friends (Labrecque, 2014). Consumers generate PSI with politicians on social media which influences consumers to vote for the political celebrities (Lee & Shin, 2014). Consumers are likely to engage in intimate relationships with bloggers rather than magazine brands (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). In turn, this PSI can transfer to brands.

Consumers have a positive attitude and purchase intentions towards brands that are promoted by bloggers than those marketed by magazines. Bloggers are perceived to be more sociable, likeable and relatable individuals as opposed to magazine authors. Similarly, in the product placement context, Knoll *et al*. (2015) suggest that consumers can form PSI with TV show characters that they perceive to be socially attractive. Furthermore, PSI has a positive influence on consumers' attitude towards brands linked to characters.

Social media interaction between the consumer and celebrity influences the consumer propensity to generate PSI with celebrities (Chung & Cho 2017). This PSI influences consumers to trust the celebrity. Moreover, when the consumer perceives the endorser to be trustworthy, the former is likely to generate positive purchase intentions towards an endorsed product. Similarly, Tsai and Men (2017) posit that consumers engage in PSI over social media with CEOs they perceive to be compassionate. Most importantly, this PSI leads to consumers to trust the CEOs' respective brands. For instance, Bill Gates the founder of Microsoft is highly active on LinkedIn, where he shares all of his humanitarian work across the world.

Consumers are likely to generate PSI with celebrities that are socially accepted by their friends, family and society (Jin, 2018). For instance, when a consumer shares content from a YouTuber with their friends and expresses their love for the celebrity, the friends are more likely to generate PSI for the celebrity too. Furthermore, consumers have higher positive attitudes towards celebrity

endorsement ads that are shared by their social group members than the original ad from the celebrity. For instance, an ad from Kylie Jenner is more effective in influencing a consumer when the consumer sees it on another friend's timeline than the consumer seeing the post on Ms Jenner's timeline. Therefore, social influence is an essential element that affects PSI and purchase intentions.

Consumers generate PSI with likeable YouTubers that they perceive to have similar values and beliefs (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Furthermore, the PSI influences consumers to believe the endorser when they claim that the endorsed brand is of the luxurious statue. Moreover, PSI influences consumers to perceive a match-fit between their self and the endorsed prestige brand. The combination of perceiving the endorsed name to be a prestige brand and brand- consumer match-fit influence consumers to have high purchase intentions. Hwang and Zhang (2018) suggest the ability to understand others' feelings, and the value the individual places on relationships, influences consumers propensity to generate PSI with celebrities. Moreover, this PSI positively influences consumers' purchase intentions towards endorsed products. Additionally, PSI influences consumers to spread eWOM to their social networks.

Lonely elderly consumers are likely to form PSI with media personae that sell products through infomercials (Lim & Kim, 2011). Moreover, this PSI may influence positive satisfaction levels among consumers. Consumers generate positive purchase intentions towards products that are endorsed by their celebrity friends (Phua *et al*., 2018; Gong & Li, 2017). Consumers perceive more value towards brands and products that are associated with their celebrity friends. For example, consumers generate positive attitudes and purchase intentions towards brands that are endorsed by celebrity friends because owning these products gives the consumer a sense of association with their favourite celebrity (Lueck, 2015).

Consumers that engage in PSI are likely to purchase the product and spread WOM only if the celebrity is considered a fit with the product (Gong & Li, 2017). However, a consumer is less likely to purchase a product and spread WOM if the celebrity they have PSI with is not perceived to be fit with the product. These findings suggest that PSI is not going to blindside the consumer from evaluating the credibility of the endorser. Even if the consumer is friends with the celebrity,

the former will evaluate the fit between the opinion leader and the product. Moreover, consumers can immediately determine whether their celebrity friend is a fit endorser of the offered product because they are familiar with the celebrity. Consumer persuasion knowledge can have a negative influence on consumers' purchase intentions (Matthes & Naderer, 2015). For instance, the consumer being aware that the celebrity is being paid to endorse a product leads to negative purchase intentions. However, PSI can reduce the negative purchase intentions that is caused by persuasion knowledge (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

2.3.5. Summary

In summary, the literature suggests that some consumers are living blurred lifestyles where they are becoming friends with online opinion leaders that have celebrity status. Any recommendations from these celebrity friends are no different to WOM from real friends. Celebrity endorsers have the power to influence consumers' purchase intentions, even if the consumers are aware that the brand is paying the celebrity. However, celebrity endorser- product fit is important when using celebrities that have a strong PSI with their followers, as their followers will have negative purchase intentions when there is a poor fit. Thus, this research expects good product fit to drive positive behaviour in all situations, but primarily when PSI is present.

2.4. Product types and perceived risks

Celebrity endorsement is more effective in influencing consumers' purchase intentions than user-generated product reviews from past customers on search products that the customer can physically evaluate before purchase such as clothes and shoes (Wei & Lu, 2013). However, celebrity endorsement is ineffective in influencing female consumers to purchase experience products that they can only evaluate during consumption such as face cream (Wei & Lu, 2013). Consequently, female consumers prefer more information on experience products before they can trust the brand and buy the product. For example, consumers seek product reviews from past customers.

Research also examines the effects of celebrity endorsement on high-involvement and low involvement products. High-involvement products are offerings that

consumers consider significant which consumers also associate with high perceived risks which include social risks, functional risks, financial risks, psychology risks and time. For example, consumers are concerned with buying products that are not socially accepted by their friends (Shirkhodaee & Rezaee, 2014). In the functional risks bracket, consumers are concerned about purchasing products that will not serve their purpose. Financial risks, consumers are scared of losing vast amounts of money through unethical transactions (Han & Kim, 2017). High perceived risks have a negative influence on trust and purchase intentions, primarily towards online products where consumers cannot utilise their five senses to evaluate the product (Shirkhodaee & Rezaee, 2014). Consumers spend an extensive amount of time evaluating high-involvement products to weigh the benefits against the risks. Low-involvement products are less important products which consumers associate with low perceived risks. Therefore, consumers spend less time evaluating the proposed value and use mental shortcuts to make decisions (Shirkhodaee & Rezaee, 2014). For instance, milk is a low-involvement product where consumers utilise their internal memory to purchase the cheapest milk bottle from a brand that they are familiar with through experience. Whereas, consumers often seek external information in regard to high-involvement products from opinion leaders such as past customers and friends.

Consumers prefer recommendations regarding high-involvement products from close friends with strong-ties than strangers with weak-ties (Wang & Chang, 2013). Celebrity endorsers are more effective than customer endorsers and expert endorsers on products that consumers associate with perceived psychological and social risks (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). For instance, a consumer may avoid wearing clothes from a new brand because their friends may laugh at their choice of clothing. However, a celebrity endorsement campaign can probe consumers to socially accept the new brand, primarily when consumers identify themselves with the endorser. However, expert endorsers are the most effective in endorsing high-involvement technology products that consumers associate with high financial and functional risks over customer endorsers and non-expert celebrity endorsers (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). In support, Trampe *et al*. (2010) suggest that an unpopular expert endorser is more effective than using an attractive celebrity for high-involvement products such as computers.

2.4.1 Summary

In conclusion, these findings suggest that perceived risks are barriers that stand in the way of consumers buying high-involvement products. Celebrity endorsements can reduce the perceived risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products but only when the endorser is a good fit. Therefore, brands should employ a trustworthy celebrity that is a good fit with the product. In turn, this research posits that a good fit celebrity will mitigate social, functional and financial risks. Whereas, a poor fit endorser does not mitigate high perceived risks. In the past, it would have been difficult to find a celebrity that is a good fit with technology products. However, the birth of the internet and micro-celebrities allows brands to find opinion leaders that are a good fit.

2.5. Research gap

The current literature examines the influence of U & G needs on purchase intentions (Gallego, Bueno & Noyes, 2016); and the effects of PSI on consumers' attitudes towards products (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Furthermore, the literature explores the mitigation effect that PSI has on the negative impact that persuasive knowledge has on consumers' purchase intentions (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). However, the literature does not examine the effects of U & G needs and PSI on consumers' behaviour towards high-involvement products that consumers associate with high perceived risks. Hence, this study plans to fill this gap by studying the influence of U & G needs and PSI on perceived risks and purchase intentions. This study strictly directs its attention on individual gaming micro-celebrity gamers due to the newfound influence that they now have on the younger generation. The following research questions are constructed,

The literature identifies factors such as homophily, social attractiveness, physical attractiveness and self-disclosure as influencing PSI (Pan & Zeng, 2017; Lee & Watkins, 2016). However, these antecedences have only been shown to be valid regarding beauty products. This research does not consider these four factors to be significant in the gaming context. Instead, this study will utilise the value aspects that consumers seek when watching other people playing video games. The U & G can aid in explaining the value and needs that consumers seek when they consume media content (Katz *et al*., 1973). For example, consumers consume media to

gratify social needs, affective needs, cognitive needs and tension release needs. Scholars have examined the relationship between U & G consumer needs and PSI before in the media context (Rubin *et al*., 1985) and the marketing context (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

This research is significant as it results in a model that will aid research scholars and marketing theorists in understanding the process of consumers becoming close friends with micro-celebrities, and its effects on consumers' purchase regarding high-involvement products (refer to figure 1). Furthermore, this research will update the understanding of the role of celebrities in mitigating perceived social risks, functional and financial risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products. This research will also help researchers understand these rare and unique gaming micro-celebrities and their influence on the younger generation.

Most importantly, this research is significant because it will help practitioners connect with the younger generation using micro-celebrities. Furthermore, more and more new brands are entering the technology market. However, high perceived risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products and unfamiliar brands, continue to present barriers for these brands. These new brands will struggle to generate sales. Thus, this research will bring to light the factors that mitigate high perceived risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products and unfamiliar brands. These findings will allow newer brands to generate sales. Existing brands might also struggle selling new high-involvement products. The findings from this research will also help these existing brands sell their new offerings.

Chapter 3 – Methods

3.1. Research questions

1. What motives drive consumers to watch gaming content from micro-celebrities?
2. What needs influence consumers to generate PSI with gaming micro-celebrities?
3. Do consumer needs and PSI mitigate perceived risks associated with high-involvement products?
4. Do perceived risks affect consumers' purchase intentions?
5. Are gaming micro-celebrities as influential regarding non-gaming products as they are on gaming products?

3.2. Hypothesis generation

Behaviour can differ between consumers that have previous experience, and those that are inexperienced in a specific area (Cakarnis & D'Alessandro, 2015; Park & Lee, 2009). This research posits that consumers that have experience in purchasing products endorsed by micro-gaming celebrities will place more importance on all the U & G needs than those that are inexperienced regarding purchasing endorsed video gaming products. Furthermore, experienced consumers will signal that they have higher levels of PSI than inexperienced consumers.

H1. Consumers that have experience in buying endorsed products from gamers will place higher importance on (a) cognitive needs, (b) social needs, (c) affective needs, (d) tension release needs, and (e) personal integrative needs than inexperienced consumers.

H2. Consumers that have experience in purchasing products endorsed by micro-celebrities will perceive greater PSI than those that are inexperienced in purchasing products endorsed by micro-celebrities.

Consumers are more likely to purchase high-involvement products when the endorser is a good fit with the products than when the endorser is a poor fit (Trampe *et al.*, 2010). When the celebrity is a good fit with the product, the consumer is likely to perceive the endorser as a credible source of information regarding that

specific product category (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Phua *et al.*, 2018). Hence, consumers listen to these credible celebrities, and are likely to generate positive purchase intentions towards the products that the stars endorse. However, consumers are likely to display negative purchase intentions towards endorsed products when the endorser is perceived as a poor fit endorser (Gong & Li, 2017).

H3. Consumers will display higher purchase intentions for products that are endorsed by a good fit celebrity than a poor fit celebrity.

Consumers are more likely to associate higher perceived risks towards a product that is considered a poor fit with the celebrity than the product that is a good fit with the celebrity (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Consumers perceive the good fit celebrity to be more credible than a poor fit celebrity regarding the endorsed product. Therefore, this research posits that consumers perceive lesser social, functional and financial risks when a good fit endorser promotes the product than when a poor fit endorses the offering.

H4. Consumers will associate lower (a) social risks (b) functional risks, and (c) financial risks for products that are endorsed by a good fit than a poor good fit.

Cognitive needs have been found to influence PSI with celebrities (Rubin et al., 1985). Personal integrative needs also influence PSI (Auter, 1992). For instance, consumers are more likely to generate PSI with celebrities that acknowledge them through media. New media platforms, such as social media, present opportunities for consumers to be heard by others. Most celebrities' goals are to encourage audience engagement, especially gamers. For instance, influencers often ask users to leave comments about specific subjects. Furthermore, endorsers tend to recognise individuals using various techniques. For instance, through competitions, or by merely acknowledging new subscribers and people who leave comments.

Affective needs, social needs, personal integrative needs, cognitive needs and tension release needs have been found to influence consumer engagement in personal gaming channels. Thus, this research posits that these five needs will have a significant influence on PSI.

H5. (a) Social integrative needs, (b) affective needs, (c) cognitive needs, and (d) tension release needs have a significant positive influence on PSI.

PSI has been found to have a significant positive influence on purchase intentions for good fit products (Gong & Li, 2017). PSI with a celebrity can influence consumers liking of a specific product (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). Celebrity endorsement can reduce perceived risks (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). This research posits that PSI with a celebrity will mitigate social, functional and financial risks that consumers associate with good fit products.

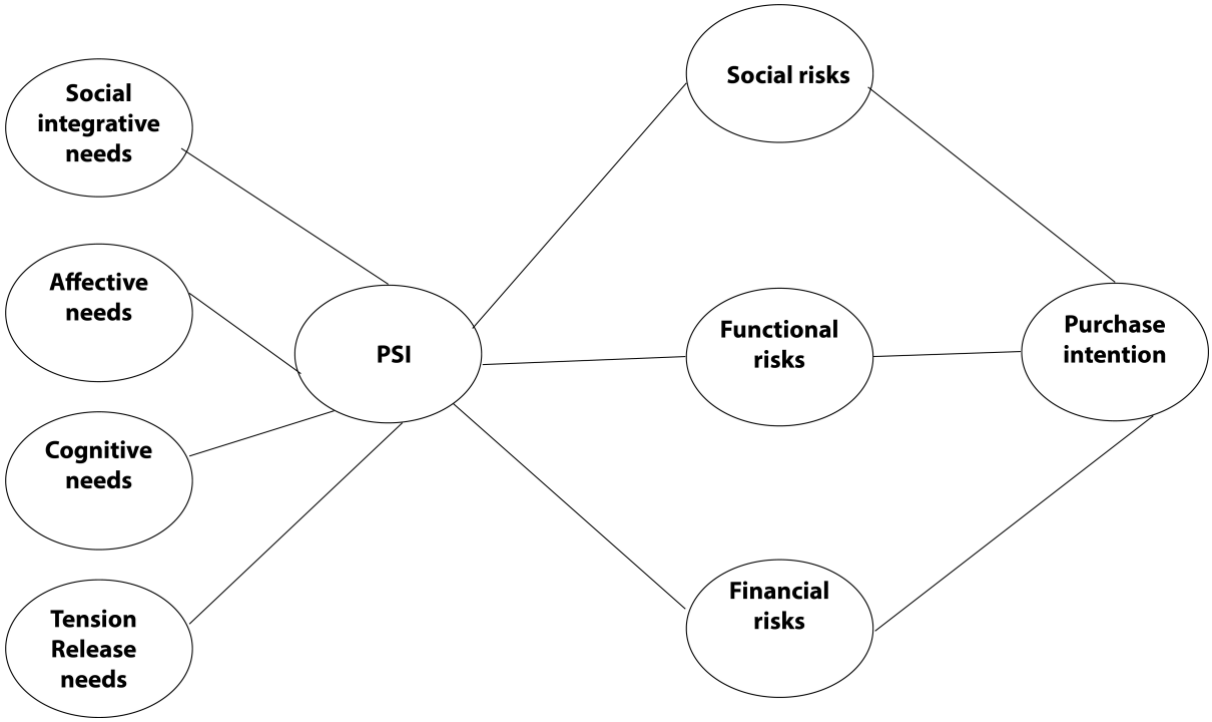
H6. High PSI leads to lower (a) social risks (b) functional risks, and (c) financial risks for products where the endorser is considered a good fit.

Celebrity endorsements have the power to mitigate high perceived risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). For example, when the celebrity is considered a good fit, consumers will associate low perceived risks with these endorsed products (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). In turn, this will result in higher purchase intentions (Trampe *et al.*, 2010; Friedman & Friedman, 1979). This research posits that a good fit celebrity will mitigate high social, functional and financial risks that consumers associate with high-involvement products. Therefore, the consumers will perceive low social, functional and financial risks to all good fit products. These low functional, financial, social risks will influence consumers to generate high purchase intentions for the endorsed products.

H7. Low perceived risks (a) social risks, (b) functional risks, and (c) financial risks lead to high purchase intentions for products that the endorser is considered a good fit.

Figure 1

Proposed model



3.3. Pre-test

Five individuals who have expertise in both the gaming and the marketing contexts were recruited to participate in a face-to-face interview. The goal of the interview was to choose two high-involvement products for the conditions: one high-involvement product that consumers perceive the gamer as a good fit and another that consumers perceive the gamer to be a poor fit. The five experts chose the wireless gaming headset as participants of the pre-test perceive it as the only universal product that is utilised by both PC and console gamers. For the unfit product, the experts chose a fitness abs toner. The survey utilised a fictional brand for the headset; Furthermore, the survey used an unfamiliar American brand for the abs toner.

Consumers associate these two products with high perceived functional, social, and financial risks. For example, both products have financial risks because they both have a high price range of $400-$500. Furthermore, both products are sold online which influences consumers to worry about losing their money through online scams. Consumers associate high perceived functional risks towards the two technology products because they worry about buying faulty products that do not serve their purpose. Both the good fit and the poor fit product present high social risks, given that they are often used in a social context. Consumers consider a gaming micro-celebrity a good fit for a wireless gaming headset because playing video games is their profession. However, a gaming micro-celebrity is not a good fit with a health and beauty fitness abs toner.

3.4. Design and sample

An online survey was conducted to collect the data. A judgement sample method was utilised to recruit participants. For instance, the researcher initiated conversations through social media with individuals and judged whether they were a gamer that watches other micro-celebrities playing video games. Once the author judged and perceived the individual to be a gamer that spectates other celebrity gamers, the individual was asked to take part in the study. A survey software named Qualtrics Survey was utilised in February 2019 to collect data.

One hundred and thirty participants attempted the survey, and 105 people completed the survey, which was an 80.7% response rate. The survey utilised a randomised 50/50 condition split for the fit and unfit product.

3.5. Measurements

This research only examines individual micro-celebrities because the literature suggests that behaviour in team sports and individual sports differ (Tyler & Cobbs, 2015). Therefore, participants will be asked to select their favourite individual gamer. Those that selected teams were removed from the sample. The survey began with a screening question that asked participants if they have ever watched gaming content from a gamer. The study automatically removed participants that answered 'no'. The research includes a question that asked participants whether they had purchased products that were endorsed by a gamer before. This question aimed to collect descriptive statistics of consumers that buy endorsed products. Furthermore, the question also allows the research to identify experienced consumers and inexperienced consumers regarding purchasing endorsed products.

The research utilised a 7-point Likert scale to measure the variables that make up social needs, personal integrative needs, affective needs, cognitive needs, tension release needs, social risks, functional risks, financial risks and purchase intentions. Four items are adopted from Venkatesh (2000); Van der Heijden (2004); Sjöblom and Hamari (2017) to measure affective needs, such as "I find my favourite gamer to be entertaining". Four items from Papacharissi and Rubin (2000); Van der Heijden (2004); Sjöblom and Hamari (2017) measure cognitive needs, such as "Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me get information on learning to play games".

The research adopts four items to measure personal integrative needs from Hernandez *et al.* (2011); Sjöblom and Hamari (2017), such as "I like it when other users take my comments into account". Four items are adopted from Smock *et al.* (2011); Chavis, Lee and Acosta (2008); Sjöblom and Hamari (2017) to measure social needs, such as "It is very important to be a part of my favourite gamer's community". The study adopts eight items from Lee and Watkins (2016); Rubin *et*

al. (1985) to measure PSI, such as "My favourite gamer is like an old friend of mine"; "I would like to meet my favourite gamer one day"; and "When my favourite gamer shows me how they feel about a gaming brand, it helps me make up my own mind about that gaming brand".

Items for social risks, functional risks, and financial risks are all adopted from Han and Kim (2017): three items to measure social risks, such as "I am concerned that buying gaming products recommended by my favourite gamer may cause others to think less highly of me"; four items to measure functional risks, such as "I am concerned that the recommended gaming products may not perform as expected"; three items to measure financial risks, such as "I am concerned the price of the recommended gaming products is more expensive than others". Five items for purchase intentions are adopted from Lee and Watkins (2016); Han and Kim (2017), such as "I will purchase the product from this brand next time I need the product".

The research employed questions to collect descriptive statistics. For instance, the research has a question that asks participants to specify the game that their favourite micro-celebrity plays. These genres are adopted from Sjöblom *et al*. (2017). The genres include Action games, Battle Royale, Collectible card games (CCG), Fighting, First-person shooter (FPS), Massive multiplayer online (MMO), Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA), Rhythm, Role-playing game (RPG), Real-time strategy (RTS), Sandbox games and Sports games.

Moreover, the research employed a question that asks the consumer to specify the method that they prefer watching their favorite celebrity live-stream/pre-recorded. It is significant to retrieve descriptive statistics on the amount of time consumers invest in content from their favourite micro-celebrities. Hence, the research inserted three nominal questions to measure time spent spectating other people playing video games. such as "How long have you been following your favourite gamer?"; "How many times a week do you watch your favourite gamer?"; "How many hours per day do you watch your favourite gamer?". Demographic questions make up the rest of the survey. These questions include gender, annual income, education level, ethnicity and age group.

Chapter 4 – Results & Discussions

4.1. Descriptive statistics

YouTube was the most popular social media platform in terms of spectating other people playing video games with 94.29%; Twitch was second with 64.76% (refer to figure 2). Furthermore, 67.6% of the sample indicated that they prefer watching other people playing video games via pre-recorded content; On the other hand, 32.4% of the sample prefer watching other gamers through the live-stream feature (refer to figure 5). Meanwhile, 36.19% of consumers watch video game content 6-7 days a week; 30.48% watch video game content 2-3 days a week (refer to figure 6). On the other hand, 44.76% of the consumers spend less than an hour per day on video gaming content. Whereas, 31.43% spend one to two hours consuming gaming content (refer to table 6). The majority of participants have been following the celebrity for more than a year: 57.14% (refer to table 5). As expected, the majority of the participants are male: 87.62% (refer to figure 3). European (28.58%) and Maori (29.52%) made up the majority of the sample (refer to table 1).

As expected, the 18-25 years old age group is the largest group: 90.48% (refer to figure 4). Furthermore, the majority of the sample were perusing a bachelor's degree (33.3%) (refer to table 2). The 'Battle Royale' genre is the most popular video game genre with 40%, followed by the 'First Person Shooter' genre with 10% (refer to table 4). Furthermore, micro-celebrity gamers that stream Battle Royale games, such as Tfue and Ninja were popular among the sample (refer to figure 13). The popularity of the 'Battle Royale' genre comes as no surprise. For instance, freemium Battle Royale video games, such as Fortnite and PUBG were trending on PC, gaming consoles and mobile devices when this research was conducted.

Figure 2

Social media platforms used to consume gaming content

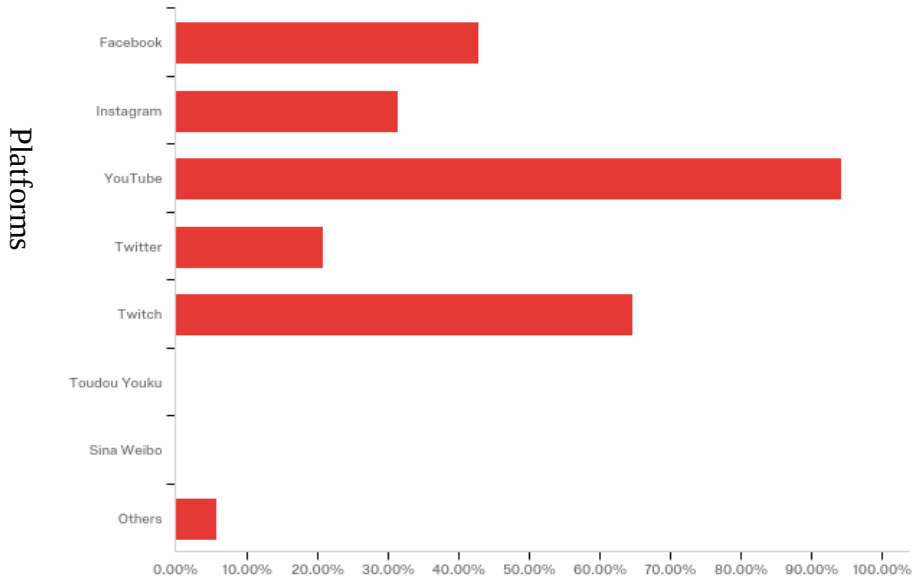


Table 1

Ethnicity:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Chinese	4	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Indian	2	1.9	1.9	5.7
	Korean	2	1.9	1.9	7.6
	European	30	28.6	28.6	36.2
	Māori	31	29.5	29.5	65.7
	Samoan	5	4.8	4.8	70.5
	European Māori	12	11.4	11.4	81.9
	Other	19	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3

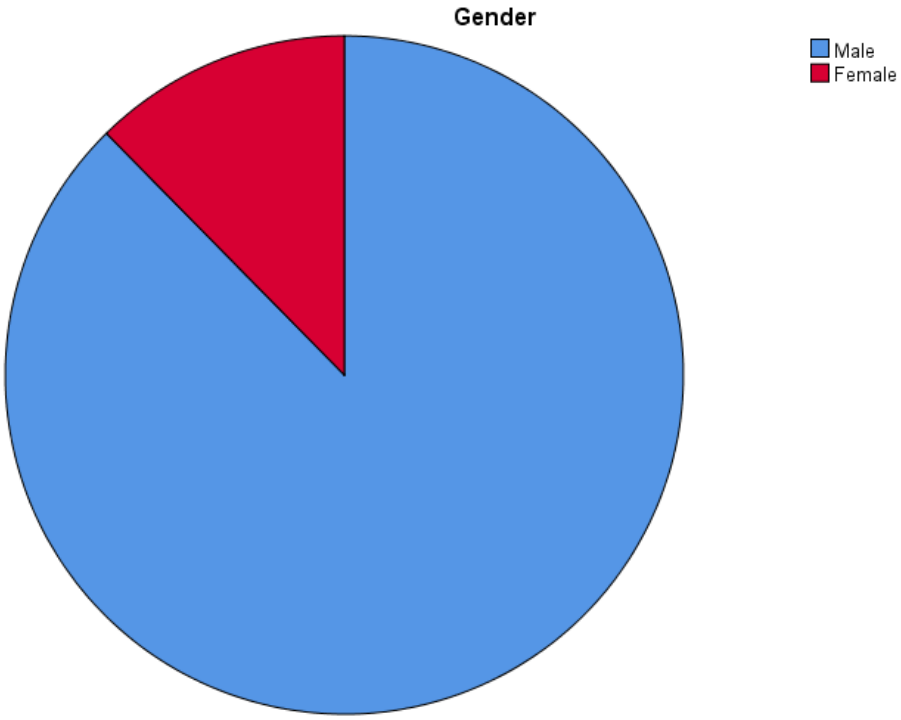


Figure 4

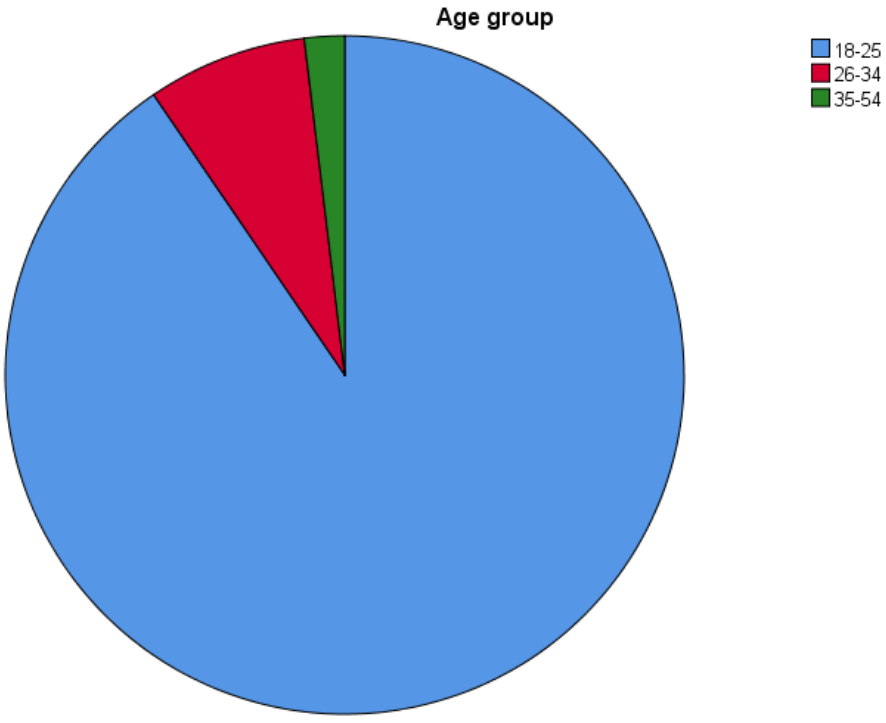


Table 2

Level of education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School / College	4	3.8	3.9	3.9
	Polytechnic / Institute of Technology (or equivalent)	14	13.3	13.6	17.5
	University / Bachelors Degree	35	33.3	34.0	51.5
	University / Honours Degree	7	6.7	6.8	58.3
	University / Masters Degree	7	6.7	6.8	65.0
	University / PhD	4	3.8	3.9	68.9
	Other - please specify	32	30.5	31.1	100.0
	Total	103	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.9		
Total		105	100.0		

Table 3

Annual income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rather not say	25	23.8	23.8	23.8
	Under $10,000	16	15.2	15.2	39.0
	$10,000 - $19,999	12	11.4	11.4	50.5
	$20,000 - $29,999	5	4.8	4.8	55.2
	$30,000 - $39,999	9	8.6	8.6	63.8
	$40,000 - $49,999	15	14.3	14.3	78.1
	$50,000 - $74,999	17	16.2	16.2	94.3
	$75,000 - $99,999	4	3.8	3.8	98.1
	$100,000 - $150,000	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	Over $150,000	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

Genre:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Action games	6	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Battle Royale games	42	40.0	40.0	45.7
	Collectible card games	3	2.9	2.9	48.6
	Fighting games	9	8.6	8.6	57.1
	First-person shooter games	11	10.5	10.5	67.6
	Massive multiplayer online games	6	5.7	5.7	73.3
	Multiplayer online battle arena games	10	9.5	9.5	82.9
	Role-playing games	4	3.8	3.8	86.7
	Real-time strategy games	4	3.8	3.8	90.5
	Sandbox games	1	1.0	1.0	91.4
	Sports games	9	8.6	8.6	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Figure 5

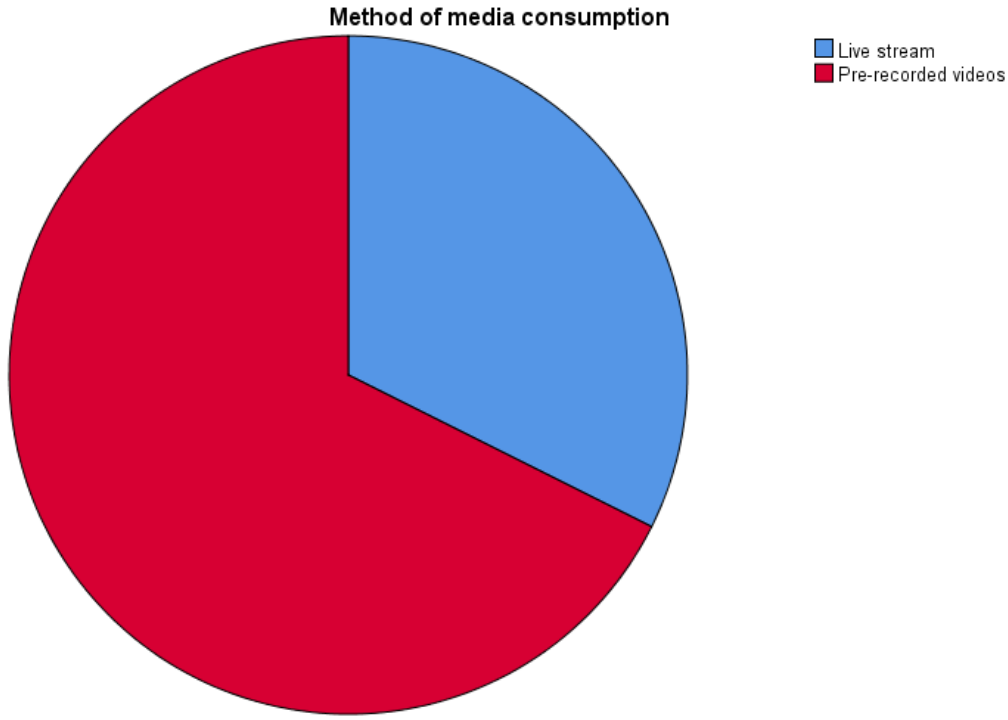


Table 5

Time spent following the celebrity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-3 months	8	7.6	7.6	7.6
	3-6months	13	12.4	12.4	20.0
	6-9 months	14	13.3	13.3	33.3
	9-12 months	10	9.5	9.5	42.9
	More than 12 months	60	57.1	57.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

Average time spent per day watching gaming content

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 hour	47	44.8	44.8	44.8
	1-2 hours	33	31.4	31.4	76.2
	2-3 hours	10	9.5	9.5	85.7
	3-4 hours	11	10.5	10.5	96.2
	More than 4 hours	4	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Figure 6

4.2. Factor analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics 25 was utilised to perform various analyses. First, the study identifies the appropriate items that explain social needs, personal integrative needs, affective needs, cognitive needs, tension release needs and PSI using a factor analysis. PSI is placed in the same factor analysis with other U & G needs because scholars argue that it is similar to social needs (Rubin et al., 1985). Items for purchase intentions, social risks, functional risks and financial risks are not included in the factor analyses. The four variables and their items have been accepted and utilised by many scholars.

The study determines the appropriateness of the data using the Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Scholars suggest that for accurate analysis the KMO value should be over the threshold of 0.60, which signifies that the data can be grouped into smaller sets of factors. Moreover, the eigenvalue should be set to 1, which allows the research to eliminate unnecessary components. Bartlett's test of sphericity must have a p value below .05, which suggest that the variables in the study are correlated in population. A minimum factor loading cut off is set at 0.5, which means that items that do not meet this threshold do not explain any of the variables and will be deleted from the study.

The KMO from the factor analyses was .824 which is well over the 0.60 threshold (refer to appendix 1). The Bartlett's test of sphericity p value is significant at 0.00. Therefore, items can be grouped into different factors. Five items are deleted due to low loading levels that were below 0.50: "when I'm watching my favourite gamer, I feel as if I am part of his or her group"; "Members of my favourite gamer's community share important events"; "Members of my favourite gamer's community care about each other'; 'If my favourite gamer appeared on another social media channel, I would watch that video"; "I look forward to watching my favourite gamer on their social media".

Six components are identified by the factor analyses (refer to appendix 1). However, the sixth component only has one item that successfully loaded; consequently, the component is deleted from the data set. All four personal

integrative items and the two remaining social needs items loaded under one factor. Hence, this variable was labelled social integrative needs. It is no surprise that the two factors integrated to make up a single variable because Katz *et al* (1973) suggest that personal integrative needs are a combination of affective needs and social needs. The six items that loaded social integrative needs include, "I like it when other users take my comments into account"; "I feel good when my comments prove to other users that I have knowledge about the game being played"; "I try to see that my comments improve my reputation among other users"; "I like it when my favourite gamer takes my suggestions into consideration"; "It is very important to be a part of my favourite gamer's community"; "I spend a lot of time with other community members that subscribe to my favourite gamer and enjoy spending time with them".

Four affective needs factors loaded as expected: "Watching content from my favourite gamer is exciting"; "I find watching content from my favourite gamer enjoyable"; "Watching content from my favourite gamer is fun"; "Watching content from my favourite gamer is entertaining". However, a PSI item had a high loading under the affective needs factor: "When my favourite gamer shows me how they feel about a gaming brand, it helps me make up my own mind about that gaming brand".

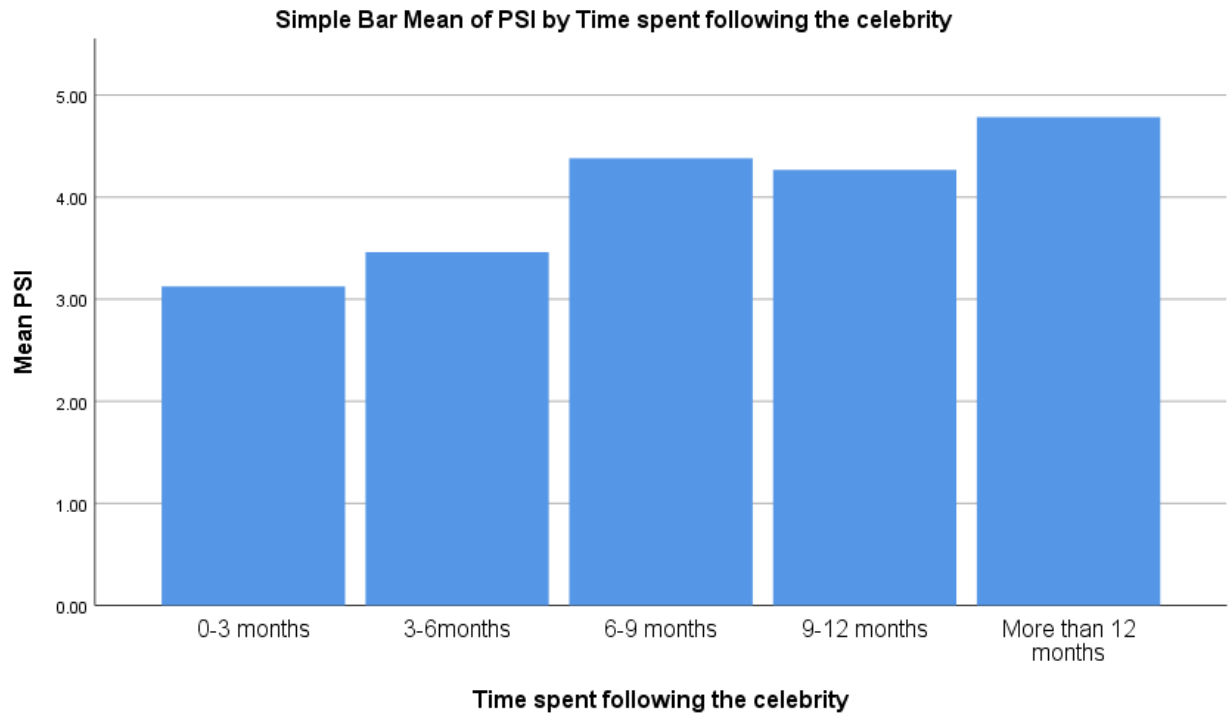
Four cognitive needs items loaded as expected under their respective factor: "Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me learn game tricks"; "Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me get information on learning to play games"; "Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me see what game tactics are out there"; "By watching content from my favourite gamer, I am better informed about new game strategy".

Similarly, tension release needs also loaded under their expected factor: "Watching content from my favourite gamer is a habit, just something I do"; "When I have nothing better to do, I watch content from my favourite gamer"; "Watching content from my favourite gamer gives me something to do to occupy my time"; "Watching content from my favourite gamer passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored".

Three factors loaded under the PSI variable: “My favourite gamer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends”; “My favourite gamer is like an old friend of mine”; “I would like to meet my favourite gamer one day”. The item, “If there were a story about my favourite gamer in a newspaper, blog, or magazine, I would read it” loaded by its self and was deleted.

The descriptive statistics suggest that consumers that have been following the celebrity for over a year have the highest PSI. Hence, indicating that consumers generate stronger PSI over time (refer to figure 7)

Figure 7



4.3 Hypothesis testing

An Independent t-test is conducted to test the hypothesis that perceived risks for the fit product are lower than unfit product. The mean scores of financial risks are similar for a good fit product ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.18$, $N = 46$) and the poor fit product ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.05$, $N = 59$) as consumers are somewhat disagreeing or undecided. Moreover, there is no significant difference between the good fit product and the poor fit product ($F = .388$, p = .535, $t(103) = 1.23$, p = .225). The functional risks mean value of the poor fit product ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.35$, $N = 59$) is slightly higher than the functional risks score for the good fit product ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.31$, $N = 46$). Furthermore, the results also suggest that there is a significant difference in functional risks ($F = .073$, p = .788, $t(103) = 4.44$, p = .000). The sample somewhat agrees that a product which a gamer is considered a poor fit presents functional risks. Whereas, for the product where the consumer is considered a good fit the sample somewhat disagrees that the product is associated with functionality risks. The sample disagrees that the good fit product presents any social risks ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.21$, $N = 46$). Whereas, for the poor fit product the consumer is undecided ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.29$, $N = 59$). There is a significant difference between the two groups in perceived social risks ($F = .508$, p = .478, $t(103) = 4.83$, p = .000).

Purchase intentions for the good fit product ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.32$, $N = 59$) are higher than those of the poor fit product ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.40$, $N = 59$). Consumers somewhat agree on the likelihood of purchasing the good fit product. Whereas consumers somewhat disagree on purchasing the poor fit product. All the mean scores of the perceived risks are higher than the purchase intention score for the poor fit product. However, purchase intentions are higher than all the perceived risks for the good fit product. This suggest that perceived risks may have a role to play in the purchase intentions behaviour.

To test the hypothesis that consumers that have experience in purchasing products endorsed by micro-celebrities perceive greater PSI than those that are inexperienced in purchasing products endorsed by micro-celebrities, an independent t-test was conducted. The experienced buyers' group was associated with a PSI mean score

(*M* = 4.96, *SD* = 1.30, *N* = 46). By comparison, the inexperienced buyers' group was associated with a numerically smaller PSI mean score (*M* = 3.94, *SD* = 1.17= *N* = 59). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied via Levene's *F* test, *F* = .89, p = .346. The independent t-test was associated with a statistically significant effect *t*(103) = 4.19, p = .000. Thus, the experienced buyers' group are associated with a statically significantly greater PSI mean score than the inexperienced buyers' group.

To test the hypothesis that the experienced buyers' group and the inexperienced were associated with statistically significant different U & G needs mean scores, an independent t test was conducted. The experienced buyers' group was associated with a social integrative score (*M* = 4.56, *SD* = 1.11, *N* = 46); By comparison, the inexperienced buyers' group was associated with a numerically smaller social integrative needs mean score (*M* = 3.68, *SD* = 1.03, *N* = 59). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied via Levene's *F* test, *F* = .67, p = .412. The independent t test was associated with a statistically significant effect *t*(103) = 4.18, p = .000. Thus, the experienced buyers' group were associated with a statically significantly greater social integrative needs mean score than the inexperienced buyers' group.

The experienced buyers' group was associated with a affective needs mean score (*M* = 6.00, *SD* = .75, *N* = 46); By comparison, the inexperienced buyers group was associated with a numerically smaller affective needs mean (*M* = 5.29, *SD* = .89, *N* = 59). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied via Levene's *F* test, *F* = .67, p = .412. The independent t test was associated with a statistically significant effect *t*(103) = 4.18, p = .000. Thus, the experienced buyers' group were associated with a statically significantly greater affective needs mean score than the inexperienced buyers' group.

The experienced buyers' group was associated with the cognitive needs mean score (*M* = 6.26, *SD* = .74, *N* = 46). By comparison, the inexperienced buyers' group was associated with a numerically smaller cognitive needs score (*M* = 5.34, *SD* = 1.22, *N* = 59). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested via Levene's *F* test, *F* = 7.64, p = .007. Since, the p value is below .05, variances are assumed equal. The independent t test was associated with a statistically significant effect

t(103) = 4.47, p = .000. Thus, the experienced buyers' group were associated with a statically significantly greater cognitive needs mean score than the inexperienced buyers' group.

The experienced buyers' group was associated with a tension release needs mean score (*M* = 5.83, *SD* = .88, *N* = 46). By comparison, the inexperienced buyers' group was associated with a numerically smaller tension release needs mean score (*M* = 5.04, *SD* = 1.29, *N* = 59). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested via Levene's *F* test, *F* = 5.89, p = .017. Since, the p value is below .05, variances are assumed equal. The independent t test was associated with a statistically significant effect *t*(103) = 3.53, p = .000. Thus, the experienced buyers' group were associated with a statically significantly greater tension release needs mean score than the inexperienced buyers' group.

Pearson Correlation test was conducted to test the hypothesis that four U & G needs have a significant positive relationship with PSI. All four needs extracted from the factor analysis have a positive relationship with PSI: Social integrative needs *r* = .546**, *N* = 105, *p* = .00; affective needs *r* = .491**, *N* = 105, *p* = .00; cognitive needs *r* = .235*, *N* = 105, *p* = .016; tension release needs *r*=0.383**, *N* = 105, p = .00. Therefore, the hypothesis of the four needs having a positive relationship with PSI is accepted.

4.3.1. Good fit products

The 'select case' and 'If condition' functions in SPSS are utilised to isolate and examine only the data that is associated to the good fit product. Condition 1 = abs toner / poor fit product and condition 2 = headset / good fit product.

Pearson Correlation test was conducted to test the hypothesis that PSI has a significant negative relationship with perceived (a) social risks, (b) functional risks and (c) financial risks associated to a good fit endorsed product. PSI has no significant negative relationship with all the three perceived risks: social risks *r* = .089 *N =46, p* = .556; functional risks *r* = -.051, *N* = 46, *p* = .737; financial risks *r*= .055, *N* = 46, p = .715. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Pearson Correlation test was conducted to test the hypothesis that PSI has a significant positive

relationship with consumers' purchase intentions. The results indicate that PSI has no significant positive relationship with purchase intentions: purchase intentions *r* = .236 *N =46*, *p* = .114. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected.

Pearson Correlation test was conducted to test the hypothesis that U & G needs (a) social integrative needs, (b) tension release needs (c) affective needs (d) cognitive needs have a significant negative relationship perceived risks (a) social risks (b) functional risks and (c) financial risks. The results indicate that social integrative needs have no significant negative relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks *r* = .213 *N =46*, *p* = .155; (b) functional risks *r* = .217 *N =46*, *p* = .147; (c) financial risks *r* = .186 *N =46*, *p* = .216. Tension release needs only have a single significant negative relationship with functional risks: (a) social risks *r* = -.197 *N =46*, *p* = .189; (b) functional risks *r* = -.306* *N =46*, *p* = .039; (c) financial risks *r* = -.139 *N =46*, *p* = .358. Affective needs have no significant negative relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks *r* = -.058 *N =46*, *p* = .700; (b) functional risks *r* = -.016 *N =46*, *p* = .917; (c) financial risks *r* = .007 *N =46*, *p* = .961. Cognitive needs have no significant negative relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks *r* = -.190, *N =46*, *p* = .205; (b) functional risks *r* = -.091 *N =46*, *p* = .548; (c) financial risks *r* = -.067 *N =46*, *p* = .656.

All the needs have no significant influence on purchase intentions: (a) social integrative needs *r* = .129, *N =46*, *p* = .392; (b) affective needs *r* = .143, *N =46*, *p* = .342; (c) cognitive needs *r* = .230, *N =46*, *p* = .124; (d) tension release needs *r* = .271, *N =46*, *p* = .069. All perceived risks have a negative influence on purchase intentions: social risks *r* = -.536**, *N =46*, *p* = .00; functional risks *r* = -.694**, *N =46*, *p* = .00; financial risks *r*= -.505**, *N =46*, *p* = .00.

4.3.2. Poor fit products

The 'select case' and 'If condition' functions in SPSS are utilised to isolate and examine only the data that is associated to the condition of the poor fit product. Similar to the good fit product study, PSI does not have a significant effect on any of the perceived risks: social risks *r* = .065, *N* = 59, p = .624; functional risks *r* = .086 *N* = 59, p = .516; financial risks *r* = .095, *N* = 59, p = .475. Furthermore, PSI does not have a significant effect on purchase intentions *r* = .203, *N* = 59, p = .123.

The results indicate that social integrative needs have no significant relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks r = .111 N =59, p = .405; (b) functional risks r = .062 N =59, p = .639; (c) financial risks r = .095 N =59, p = .473. Furthermore, tension release needs have no significant relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks r = -.005 N =59, p = .969; (b) functional risks r = -.019 N =59, p = .885; (c) financial risks r = .010, N =59, p = .937. Moreover, affective needs have no significant negative relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks r = .036, N =59, p = .789; (b) functional risks r = .062, N =59, p = .641; (c) financial risks r = .074, N =46, p = .575. Additionally, cognitive needs have no significant negative relationship with any of the perceived risks: (a) social risks r = .102, N =59, p = .442; (b) functional risks r = -.056 N =59, p = .672; (c) financial risks r = .145, N =59, p = .273.

Social integrative needs are the only needs with a significant influence on purchase intentions: social integrative needs r = 0.271*, N = 59, p = .038; affective needs r = -.050, N = 59, p = .705; cognitive needs r = .084, N = 59, p = .529; tension release needs r = .177, N = 59, p = .179. Functional risks are the only perceived risks with a significant negative influence on purchase intentions: functional risks r = -.580**, N = 59, p = .00; social risks -.215 N = 59, p = .102; financial risks -.134, N = 59, p = .313.

4.3.3. Experienced consumers

The research examines the behaviour of the sample group that has prior experience of purchasing gaming products that are endorsed by a micro-celebrity gamer. Multiple Pearson Correlation tests were conducted to test the (a) the influence of needs on perceived risks and purchase intentions, (b) the influence of PSI on perceived risks and purchase intentions, and (c) the influence of perceived risks on purchase intentions for the good fit and the poor fit products. For the product that the gamer is considered a good fit the results suggest that cognitive needs have a significant negative influence on functional risks: r = -.519**, N = 27, p = .023. Moreover, tension release needs have a negative relationship with functional risks: r = -0.458**, N = 27, p = .049 and financial risks r= -.509**, N = 27, p = .026. All perceived risks have significant negative relationships with purchase intentions:

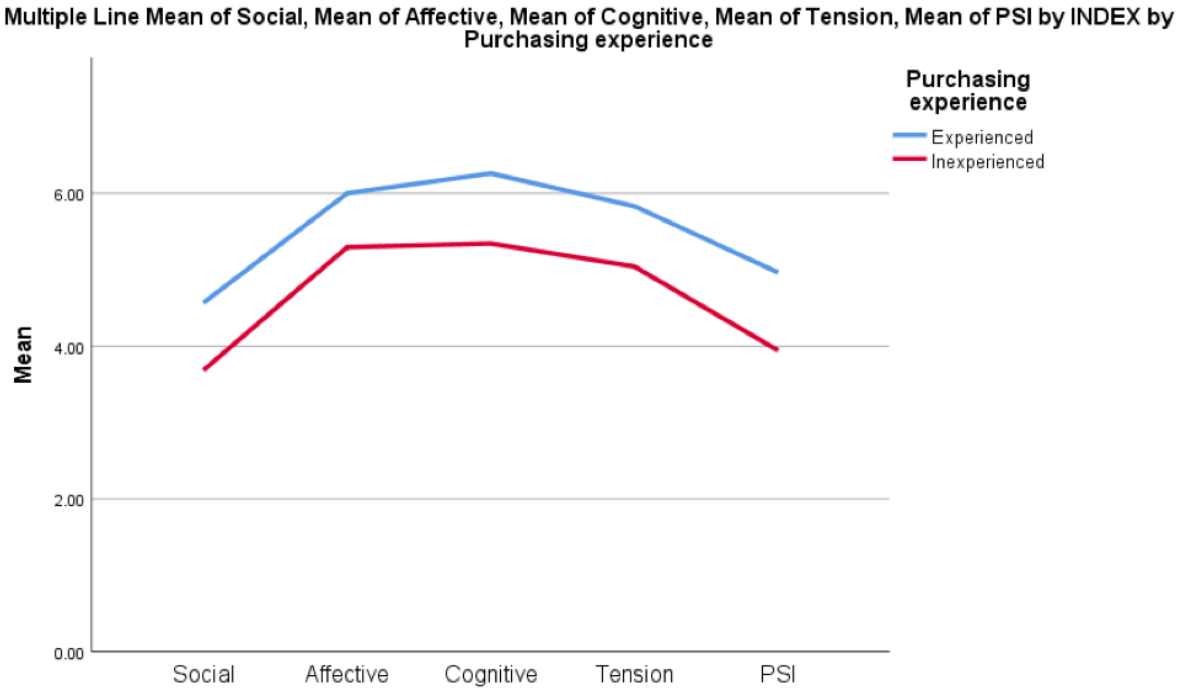
financial risks r= -.736**, *N* = 27, p = .00; functional risks r = -.826**, *N* = 27, p= .00; social risks r= -.624**, *N* = 27, p = .04. For the unfit product PSI has a positive significant relationship with functional risks r= .387*, *N* = 27, p = .046. Moreover, functional risks have a significant negative relationship with purchase intentions r = -.547**, *N* = 27, p = .003.

4.4. Discussions

4.4.1. Experienced versus inexperienced consumers

Consumers that have experience in buying gaming products endorsed by gaming celebrities place higher importance on social, affective, cognitive, and tension release needs. Moreover, these experienced consumers also perceive higher para-social interaction with celebrities than inexperienced consumers (refer to figure 8). This finding is supported by Cakarnis and D'Alessandro (2015); Park and Lee (2009), who suggest that experienced consumers and inexperienced consumers can differ in behaviour.

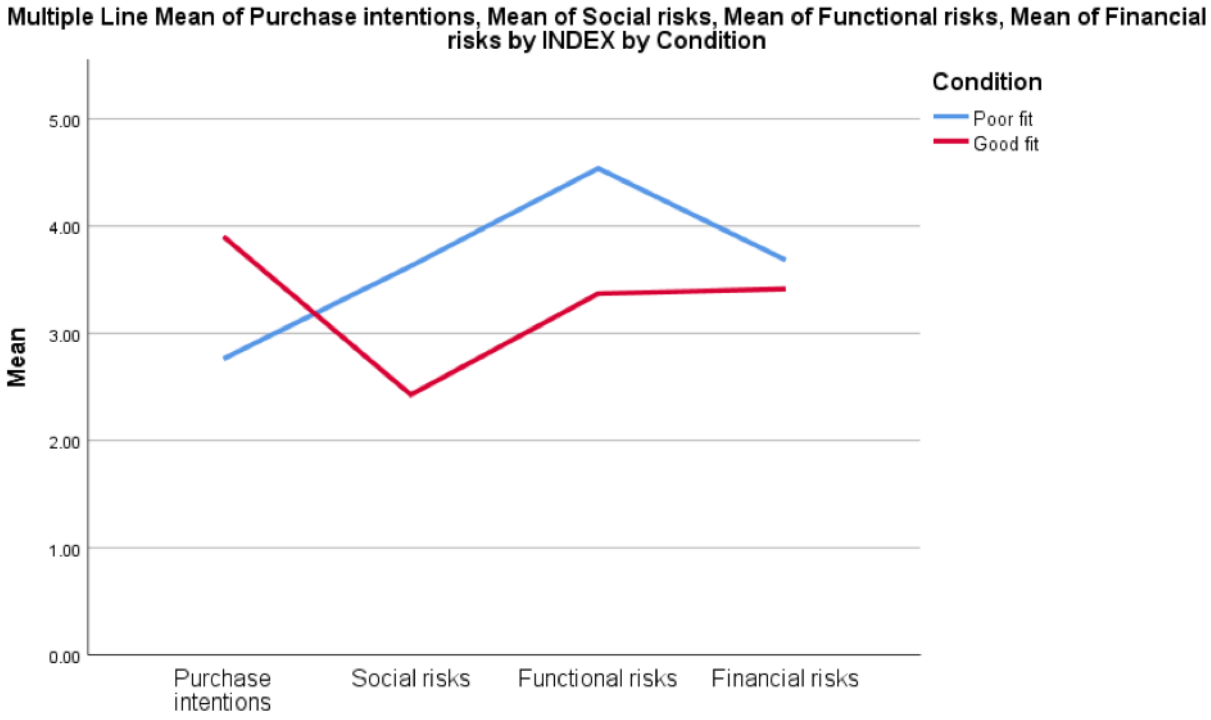
Figure 8



4.4.2. Good fit is crucial in celebrity endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is more effective when the celebrity is a good fit with the product than a poor fit. For example, consumers perceive lower social and functional risks when the celebrity is a good fit than when they are poor fit (refer to figure 9). Furthermore, consumers have higher purchase intentions for good fit products than poor fit products. However, there is no significant difference in financial risks between good fit products and poor fit products. Pradhan *et al.* (2014); Till and Busler, (2000); Choi and Rifon (2012); Phua *et al.*, (2018); Eisend and Langner (2010) support this finding, by suggesting that a celebrity endorser that is considered a good fit with the product is more effective than a poor fit endorser because they are perceived to have high levels of credibility.

Figure 9



4.4.3. Consumers' needs influence PSI

The research examines the influence of consumer needs on para-social interaction with celebrities. The findings suggest that social integrative needs and affective needs have a moderate influence on para-social interaction with celebrities (refer to figure 10). Moreover, cognitive needs and tension release needs have a weak positive influence on para-social interaction with celebrities. Hence, the more the consumer values the four needs, the more likely their para-social interaction with the celebrity is to increase. These findings align with Rubin *et al.* (1985) who suggest that media consumption needs influence consumers to generate para-social interaction with celebrities.

The findings suggest that para-social interaction with celebrities has no significant influence on social risks, functional risks, financial risks and purchase intentions for both good fit and poor fit products. However, PSI is only significant among consumers that have previous experience in purchasing gaming products that are endorsed by micro-celebrities. The experienced consumers utilise their para-social interaction with the celebrity to identify the endorser as unqualified to endorse non-gaming products. For example, para-social interaction influences consumers to associate high functional risks to a poor fit product, however, the influence is relatively weak (Refer to figure 12). Similarly, Gong and Li (2017) suggest that celebrity endorsement is ineffective when the endorser promotes poor fit products, especially when consumers have a strong para-social relationship with the celebrity.

One probable explanation of para-social interaction not influencing consumers' attitudes in this study is that consumers perceive high-involvement technology products to be significant and associate the products with high perceived risks. Therefore, consumers do not rely on the strength of their para-social interaction with the celebrity to mitigate these perceived risks, primarily when the consumer is unfamiliar with the brand. Instead, consumers evaluate the expertise of the endorser regarding the product rather than examining their friendship with the celebrity. For instance, consumers will search for cues to evaluate the expertise of the endorser. In this case, consumers examine endorser – product fit. In support, Trampe *et al.* (2010); Friedman and Friedman (1979) suggest that a good product – endorser fit via expertise is so effective in inducing positive consumer attitude towards high-involvement technology products. For example, the consumer is likely to make a

purchase decision regarding high-involvement technology products based on information from an unfamiliar expert endorser that is considered a good fit than a poor fit, but likeable celebrity (Friedman & Friedman,1979; Trampe *et al*., 2010).

4.4.4. Perceived risks influence purchase intention

As expected, all three perceived risks have a moderate negative influence on purchase intentions towards high-involvement products that are considered a good fit with the endorser (refer to figure 10). Thus, suggesting that consumers that associate endorsed high-involvement gaming products with low perceived risks after their favourite celebrities endorse them are more likely to have high purchase intentions. However, functional risks are the only perceived risks among the three that have a negative significant relationship with consumers' purchase intentions towards poor fit high-involvement products. Thus, suggesting that when consumers associate high functional risks to a product that the endorser is considered a poor fit, consumers' purchase intentions decrease and vice versa. Friedman and Friedman (1979) suggest that celebrity endorsement can mitigate perceived risks and influence positive purchase intentions. However, in their findings, they only prove that celebrity endorsement only reduces perceived social risks. Whereas, this study suggests that effective celebrity endorsement can mitigate social, functional and financial risks.

4.4.5. Consumer needs play a crucial role in endorsement effectiveness

Consumer needs have a direct influence on perceived risks and purchase intentions. For the good fit product, tension release needs have a weak negative significant impact on functional risks (refer to figure 11). This result suggests that the more consumers value escape from boredom, the lower their perceived functional risks of endorsed gaming products. Interestingly, social integrative needs have a weak positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions towards poor fit products. Therefore, social integrative needs can increase consumers' purchase intentions for poor fit /non-gaming products that are endorsed by a gamer. For instance, the more a consumer values being part of their celebrity's community, the more likely they are to purchase non-gaming products that are endorsed by a gaming micro-celebrity. Hamari *et al*. (2017); Hamari (2015) suggest that specific needs influence consumers to engage in offerings. For instance, gamers that value social interactions purchase in-game virtual products. Hamari and Sjöblom (2017);

Hilvert-Bruce *et al*. (2018) posit that consumer needs such as social needs can influence consumers to donate and subscribe to online celebrities. Hence, it is no surprise that these needs influence consumers to purchase products that are endorsed by their favourite celebrities.

The results suggest that cognitive needs mitigate functional risks only for consumers that have experience in buying video gaming products that are endorsed by gaming micro-celebrities (refer to figure 12). Thus, the more experienced consumers value informative content, the less likely they are to associate high functional risks with gaming products that are recommended by gaming opinion leaders. A reasonable assumption can be made that this group of consumers perceive all the relevant gaming products endorsed by the gaming celebrity to be part of the bundle of cognitive benefits. For instance, gamers seek knowledge to improve their game play; The consumer can perceive that the celebrity is endorsing a keyboard that also offers a competitive advantage in the gaming context.

Figure 10

Consumers' attitudes for good fit & poor fit products

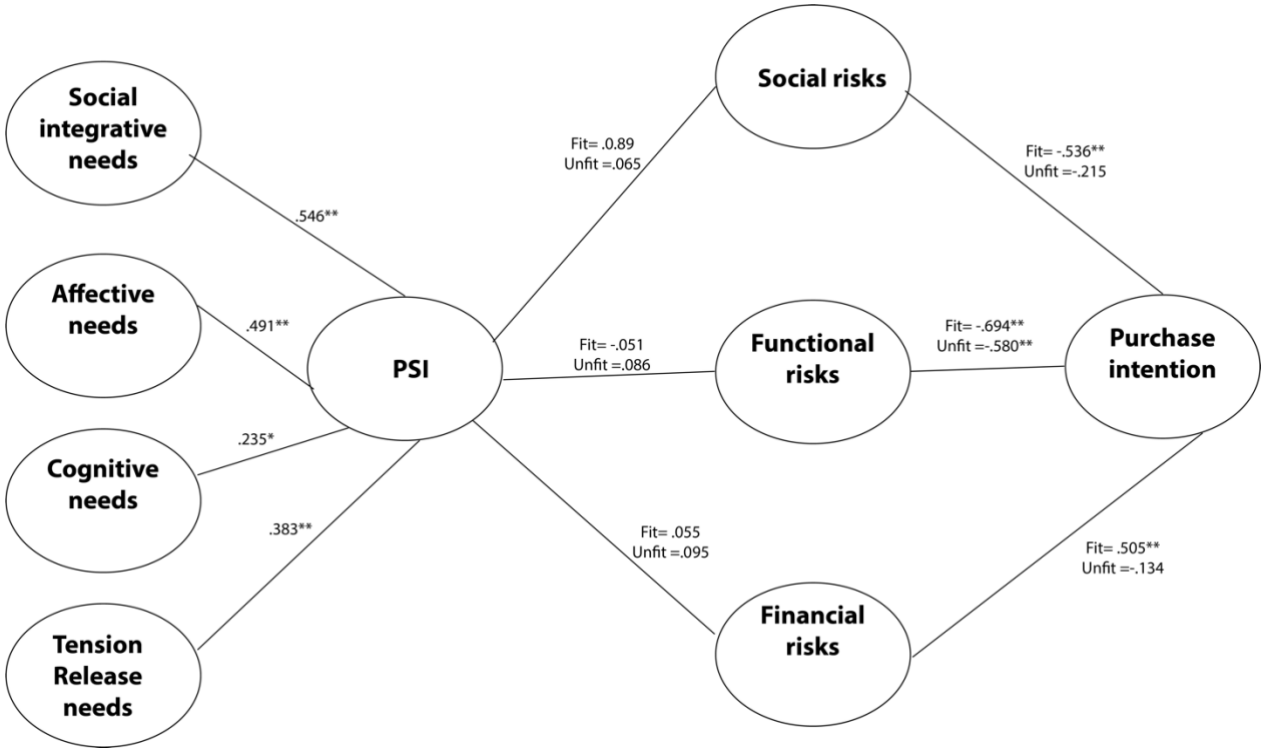


Figure 11

The influence of needs on consumer behaviour for good fit & poor fit products

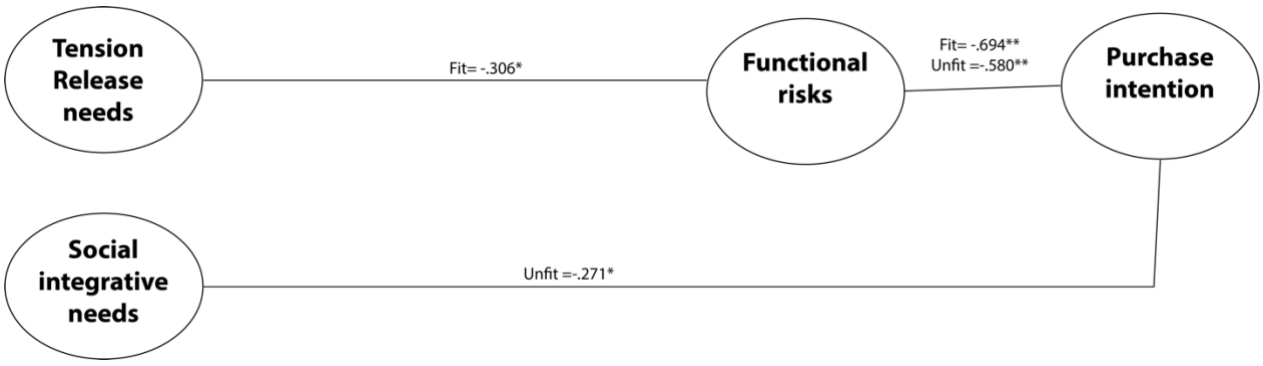
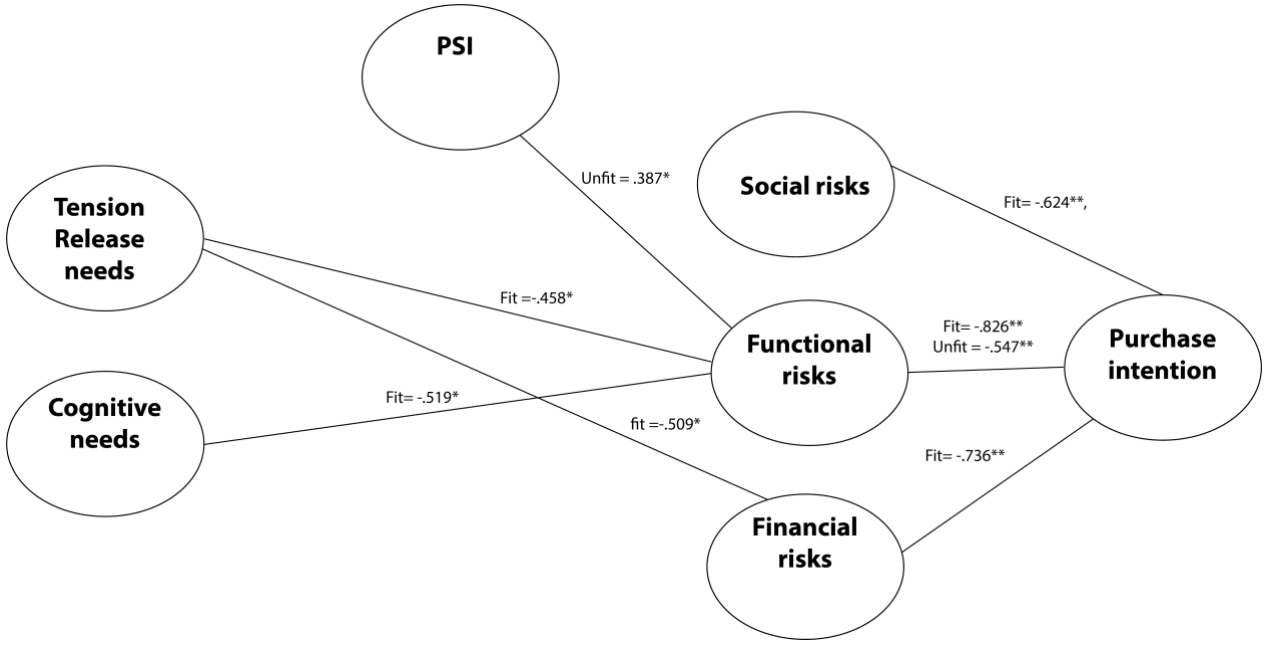


Figure 12

Experienced consumers' attitudes for good fit & poor fit products



Chapter 5 – Conclusion & implications

5.1. Recruit a good fit endorser

The findings from this research suggest that brands should utilise micro-celebrities within the community of the target market to endorse high-involvement products. For example, a brand that sells video game related products is recommended to recruit influential opinion leaders within the gaming community to endorse video gaming products. Consumers perceive online opinion leaders as experts regarding products that are a good fit with the micro-celebrity and the target market. It is crucial for brands to hire a micro-celebrity that consumers view as a good fit with the products. For example, the findings suggest that consumers perceive lower social and functional risks for products that are endorsed by a good fit celebrity than a poor fit star. Furthermore, consumers have higher purchase intentions for products that are endorsed by a good fit star than a poor fit celebrity. Therefore, brands should not utilise micro-celebrities to promote high-involvement products that they are considered a poor fit to endorse.

The findings suggest that when a celebrity friend endorses a product that they are considered a poor fit to promote, experienced consumers are likely to associate high functional risks with the irrelevant product, ultimately, leading to negative purchase intentions. Hence, it is crucial for brands to recruit celebrities that consumers consider to be good fit with the offered products, especially when offering high-involvement products that consumers associate with high levels of perceived risks. Furthermore, this good fit should be more specific rather than broad. For instance, when providing a durable and stylish gaming headset, brands should recruit an endorser that has a similar personality with the gaming headset rather than employing someone to endorse the gaming product because they are a gamer. Hence, the endorser needs to be bubbly and stylish to match the product. This extreme and specific good fit between the celebrity and the product should influence consumers to associate the endorsed product with low-perceived risks, ultimately, this could lead to positive purchase intentions.

5.1.1. Gratify consumer needs

Brands should evaluate the bundle of benefits that consumers value in the celebrities' content, as these benefits have been found by this research to reduce perceived risks. Furthermore, brands should encourage micro-celebrities to pay attention to these consumer needs and explore strategies to gratify these needs as they influence the reduction of perceived risks and purchase intentions. For instance, the findings suggest that tension release needs influence consumers to associate less functional risks to gaming products endorsed by a good fit celebrity. Therefore, gaming micro-celebrities should post more content that offer consumers an escape from boredom. For example, the gamer can post content of them playing games that have compelling storylines. Furthermore, cognitive needs influence experienced consumers to associate less functional risks towards gaming products endorsed by a fit celebrity. Hence, to mitigate consumers from associating high functional risks with gaming products, micro-celebrities should provide informative content by offering more video gameplay tips and tactics.

Moreover, brands and micro-celebrities should explore creative methods to link those affective, social, tension release and cognitive values with the products. For instance, an informative micro-celebrity that offers gaming knowledge and can recommend a gaming product that can also improve the consumers gaming experience. Thus, the consumer may associate the cognitive value they receive from the celebrity's content with the recommended product. In turn, influencing consumers to associate less perceived risks towards the endorsed products and increase purchase intentions.

5.1.2. Utilise celebrities to mitigate perceived risks

This research recommends that brands should utilise the celebrity as a promotional source to communicate the bundle of benefits being offered and the marketing mix to the target market. However, messages from these online celebrities should not be communicated in a manner that consumers perceive them as manicured commercial messages by professional marketers. For example, brands should avoid utilising these online celebrities in professional ads and billboards. The information from these celebrities needs to come across as easy-going social messages from

celebrity friends. Brands can do this by allowing the celebrity to utilise the offered product and evaluate these products. Moreover, celebrities should share their own opinions with their followers in a natural setting.

Financial risks will influence consumers to worry about losing money because there is a possibility that the offered product might be more expensive than other alternatives in the market. Consumers are concerned that there might be a better price-deal elsewhere. To reduce the perception of high financial risks, marketers could encourage the micro-celebrity to communicate the pricing tactics and promotions to their followers. For example, online opinion leaders can tell their followers about active discounts regarding endorsed products.

Functional risks will influence consumers to be concerned with the product not serving its purpose. For instance, consumers are sceptical in purchasing a gaming headset that they associate with an unfamiliar brand, and a premium price tag because they are afraid that the product will not live up to its promised expectations. To mitigate these functional risks celebrities should discuss about their experience with the product. However, if the opinion leader has had a bad experience with the product, they should discuss about the warranty and replacement that the brand offered them. Mentioning the warranties can assure the consumer that even if the product is faulty, this brand will replace it with another brand-new functional product that serves its desired purpose.

To reduce both financial risks and functional risks for brands utilising a skimming pricing strategy, the celebrity can for example emphasise that the product is of high price because the brand uses reliable technology and material to make the durable product. The celebrity can use their experience with the product as evidence to support their argument of the product being durable and of higher quality by comparing the endorsed products to other offerings from different brands. Furthermore, to mitigate functional risks the celebrity can discuss with their followers how their experience with specific attributes and benefits promised by the producers confirm or counter what was promoted by the brand, and whether they serve their purpose. For instance, PlayStation can suggest that their new console will have better graphics that mirror real life. The micro-celebrity will experience the product and evaluate the product to see if the graphics mirror real

life. The celebrity can then make a judgement and confirm whether the brand meets this expectation or not in communication with their followers.

Social risks have a significant influence on consumers today; consumers have a fear of purchasing products from brands that are not socially accepted by their peers. For example, consumers are afraid that their friends will judge them as uncool because they purchase from specific brands. Celebrity endorsement can help consumers socially accept products and brands. Consumers tend to perceive celebrities as opinion leaders that have the power to accept products and set trends. To mitigate, social risks it is crucial for the celebrity to verbally and visually emphasise that the recommended product or brand is cool and trendy. Consumers can also choose not to purchase products because they associate brands with child labour and unfair working conditions. It is crucial to clear this discourse by allowing opinion leaders to explain how ethical the company is.

5.2. Limitations & Future research

As all research studies, this research comes with some limitations. The study did not utilise a probability sampling method, which makes it difficult to generalise the findings to the broader population. The sample size was fairly small, which may limit the study from obtaining accurate results.

Furthermore, perceived risks associated with the products were not adequately measured. For instance, the survey asks the consumer to indicate the degree that they associate perceived risks with the products after the celebrity has endorsed them. However, the study does not measure the perceived risks prior endorsement due to time limitations. Instead, the study relies on the word of the five gaming and marketing experts that the selected products are high-involvement products and high on perceived risks.

The research assumed that any gaming celebrity was a good fit with the gaming product. Nonetheless, this good fit was not a specific fit, it was a broad one. The survey asked participants to choose their favourite gamers. Then consumers are asked to answer questions based on their favourite gaming celebrity endorsing a fictional product. However, the gaming industry has evolved, there are many

different gamers, which range from serious to playful gamers. Consequently, not every gamer is a good fit with the selected product. For instance, the good fit product had a dull black colour. While there are gamers with playful personalities that utilise stylish gaming equipment with lots of loud colours such as red and orange. Therefore, these gamers are not considered to be a good fit with the dull black headset. To eliminate, this limitation this research should have added a celebrity as a condition. For instance, the research should have provided a celebrity in the study that is considered as a good fit with the gaming headset. Instead, of making the consumer choose their favourite celebrity. However, this study prioritised para-social interaction over good fit. As consumers tend to form para-social interaction with their favourite celebrity over time.

In the feasible future, this research recommends other scholars to conduct a longitudinal research on high-involvement products. For instance, the future research should measure consumers' attitudes towards a specific high-involvement product prior endorsement, then measure these attitudes post-endorsement.

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Chapter 7- Appendices

Appendix 1- Factor analysis

Table 7

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I like it when other users take my comments into account.	.822					
I feel good when my comments prove to other users that I have knowledge about the game being played.	.764					
I try to see that my comments improve my reputation among other users.	.758					
I spend a lot of time with other community members that subscribe to my favourite gamer and enjoy spending time with them.	.690					
I like it when my favourite gamer takes my suggestions into consideration.	.682					
It is very important to be a part of my favourite gamer's community.	.534					
Watching content from my favourite gamer is exciting.		.815				
To what extent do you agree with the following statements? - I find watching content from my favourite gamer enjoyable.		.770				
Watching content from my favourite gamer is fun.		.739				
Watching content from my favourite gamer is entertaining.		.679				

When my favourite gamer shows me how they feel about a gaming brand, it helps me make up my own mind about that gaming brand.		.515				
Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me learn game tricks.			.883			
Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me get information on learning to play games.			.853			
Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me see what game tactics are out there.			.848			
By watching content from my favourite gamer, I am better informed about new game strategy.			.802			
When I have nothing better to do, I watch content from my favourite gamer.				.811		
Watching content from my favourite gamer gives me something to do to occupy my time.				.719		
Watching content from my favourite gamer passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored.				.687		
I would like to meet my favourite gamer one day.				.529	.502	
I look forward to watching my favourite gamer on their social media.						
My favourite gamer is like an old friend of mine.					.772	
My favourite gamer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.					.717	

If my favourite gamer appeared on another social media channel, I would watch that video.						
Members of my favourite gamer's community care about each other.						
Members of my favourite gamer's community share important events.						
When I'm watching my favourite gamer, I feel as if I am part of his or her group.						
Watching content from my favourite gamer is a habit, just something I do.				.546		.619
If there were a story about my favourite gamer in a newspaper, blog, or magazine, I would read it.						.550

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Table 8

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.824
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1874.510
	df	378
	Sig.	.000

Table 9

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.626	34.378	34.378	9.626	34.378	34.378	4.055	14.482	14.482
2	3.339	11.926	46.304	3.339	11.926	46.304	3.921	14.005	28.488
3	2.483	8.868	55.172	2.483	8.868	55.172	3.650	13.037	41.525
4	1.382	4.936	60.108	1.382	4.936	60.108	3.278	11.706	53.231
5	1.285	4.589	64.697	1.285	4.589	64.697	2.970	10.608	63.839
6	1.064	3.800	68.497	1.064	3.800	68.497	1.304	4.658	68.497
7	.935	3.338	71.835						
8	.821	2.931	74.766						
9	.785	2.802	77.568						
10	.724	2.587	80.155						
11	.630	2.249	82.404						
12	.582	2.080	84.484						
13	.548	1.958	86.443						
14	.491	1.755	88.197						
15	.418	1.491	89.689						
16	.392	1.400	91.089						
17	.350	1.250	92.339						
18	.324	1.159	93.497						
19	.290	1.037	94.534						
20	.284	1.014	95.548						

21	.255	.910	96.459						
22	.220	.787	97.245						
23	.186	.665	97.910						
24	.146	.522	98.432						
25	.132	.470	98.902						
26	.116	.415	99.317						
27	.104	.372	99.689						
28	.087	.311	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Appendix 2- factors that influence PSI

Table 10

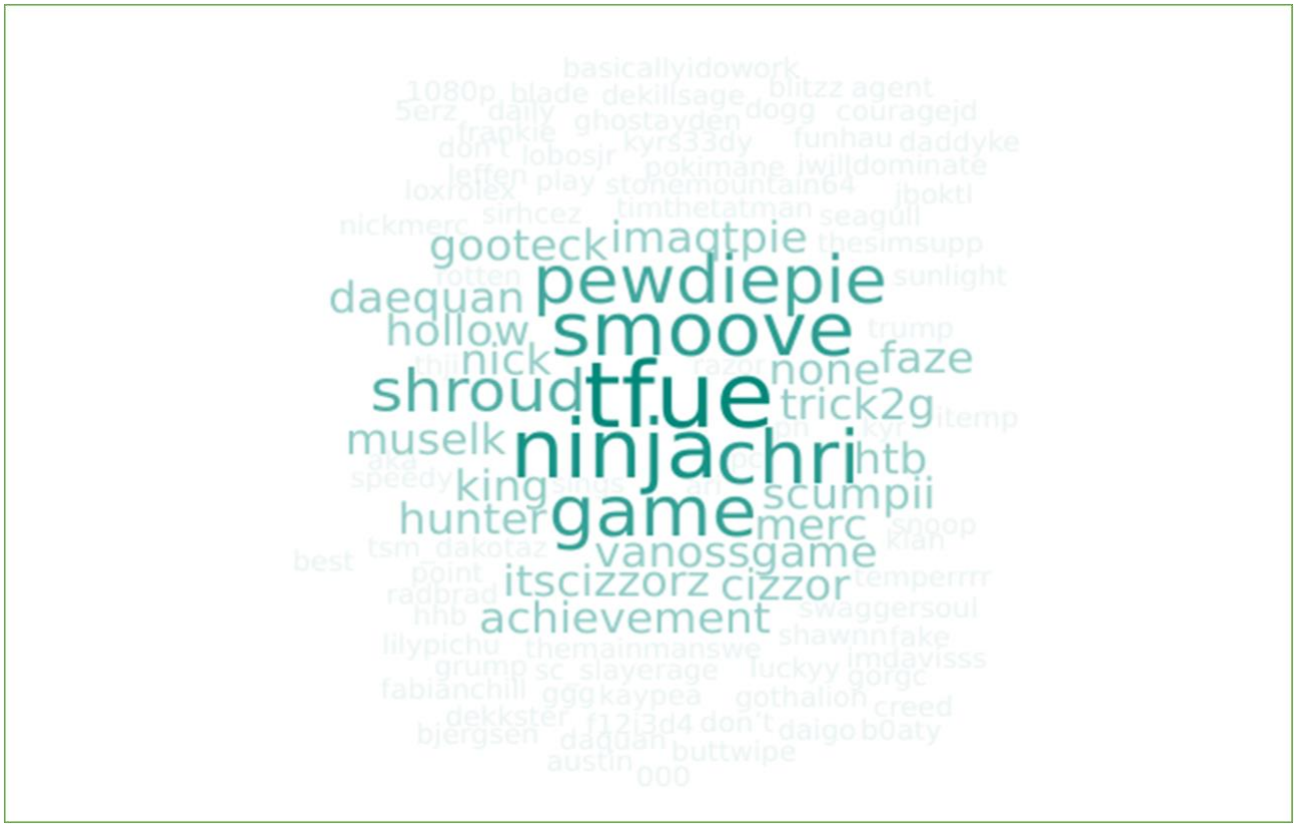
Author	Year	Method	Key Findings
Cummins and Cui	(2014).	Causal Research	Addressing people, using verbal and non-verbal cues influences people to generate strong PSI in relation to not addressing people and the use of bad body language.
Pan and Zeng	(2017)	Descriptive and Causal Research	Fans are likely to generate PSI with celebrities of a similar culture.
Levy	(1979)	Qualitative, descriptive and causal research	PSI is formed over multiple exposures with celebrities. PSI then influences consumers to watch more content from the celebrity so that they can interact with the them.

Author	Year	Method	Key findings
Tsai and Men	2017	Causal research	Responsive and assertive celebrities are perceived as caring which influences consumers to have positive attitudes towards their brands.
Lee and Shin	2014	Causal research	Those prone to imagination are likely to form PSI with celebrities.
Chung and Cho	2017	Causal research	Interactions with celebrities over social media influence consumers to generate PSI. Then, Ultimately, PSI influence s trustworthiness. Trust then influences credibility, which later on affects purchase intention.
Lueck	2015	Case study	When PSI is present, consumers perceive value in brands that the celebrity personally and emotionally connect with.
Colliander and Dahlén	2011	Causal research	Consumers generate higher levels of PSI with bloggers than magazines because the former is perceived sociable and relatable.
Phua, Lin & Lim	2018	Causal research	PSI mediates female consumer- female celebrity congruence and positive purchase behaviour. PSI mediates Celebrity -

			product fit and positive purchasing attitude.
Lim and Kim	2011	Causal	Loneliness influences PSI with TV infomercial actors among elderly people. Moreover, PSI influences customer satisfaction of TV shopping.

Appendix 3 – Most watched micro-celebrity gamers

Figure 13



Appendix 4 - Survey

Have you ever watched any video content from a gaming content creator (e.g. streamer, gaming YouTubers and anyone that makes game related videos)?

- Yes
- No

Please specify the name of your favourite gamer:

Please specify the genre that your favourite gamer plays most:

- Action games
- Battle Royale games
- Collectible card games
- Fighting games
- First-person shooter games
- Massive multiplayer online games
- Multiplayer online battle arena games
- Rhythm games
- Role-playing games
- Real-time strategy games
- Sandbox games
- Sports games

Are you familiar with the brand 'Vudox' that makes the gaming headset (condition 1) above?

- Yes
- No

Figure 14

The following questions are 7-point Likert questions (1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

After my favourite gamer recommends to me the gaming headset product above:

- It is very likely that I will buy the headset.
- I will purchase the product next time I need a headset.
- I will definitely try the headset.
- I will recommend the headset to my friends.
- I am concerned that I can become a victim of money theft from buying the recommended headset.
- I am concerned that the seller might not send the recommended headset.
- I am concerned the price of the recommended headset is more expensive than others.
- I am concerned that the recommended headset may not perform as expected.
- I am concerned that the recommended headset may not meet my expectation.
- I am concerned the recommended headset delivered may be of poor quality.
- I am concerned that the recommended headset may be faulty.
- I am concerned that buying the recommended headset is not classy.
- I am concerned that buying the recommended headset does not fit well with my personal-image.
- I am concerned that buying the recommended headset may cause others to think less highly of me.

Are you familiar with the brand Slendertone which makes the fitness abs toner product (condition 2) above?

- Yes
- No

Figure 15

After my favourite gamer recommends to me the fitness abs toner product above:

- It is very likely that I will buy the abs toner.
- I will purchase the product next time I need a abs toner.
- I will definitely try the abs toner.
- I will recommend the abs toner to my friends.
- I am concerned that I can become a victim of money theft from buying the recommended abs toner.
- I am concerned that the seller might not send the recommended abs toner.
- I am concerned the price of the recommended abs toner is more expensive than others.
- I am concerned that the recommended abs toner may not perform as expected.
- I am concerned that the recommended abs toner may not meet my expectation.
- I am concerned that the recommended abs toner delivered may be of poor quality.
- I am concerned that the recommended abs toner may be faulty.
- I am concerned that buying the recommended abs toner is not classy.
- I am concerned that buying the recommended abs toner does not fit well with my personal-image.
- I am concerned that buying the recommended abs toner may cause others to think less highly of me.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

- Watching content from my favourite gamer is a habit, just something I do.
- When I have nothing better to do, I watch content from my favourite gamer.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored.

- Watching content from my favourite gamer gives me something to do to occupy my time.
- By watching content from my favourite gamer, I am better informed about new game strategy.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me get information on learning to play games.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me learn game tricks.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer helps me see what game tactics are out there.
- It is very important to be a part of my favourite gamer's community.
- I spend a lot of time with other community members that subscribe to my favourite gamer and enjoy spending time with them.
- Members of my favourite gamer's community share important events.
- Members of my favourite gamer's community care about each other.
- I like it when other users take my comments into account.
- I feel good when my comments prove to other users that I have knowledge about the game being played.
- I try to see that my comments improve my reputation among other users.
- I like it when my favourite gamer takes my suggestions into consideration.
- I find watching content from my favourite gamer enjoyable.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer is exciting.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer is entertaining.
- Watching content from my favourite gamer is fun.
- When my favourite gamer shows me how they feel about a gaming brand, it helps me make up my own mind about that gaming brand.
- If my favourite gamer appeared on another social media channel, I would watch that video.
- My favourite gamer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

- When I'm watching my favourite gamer, I feel as if I am part of his or her group.
- If there were a story about my favourite gamer in a newspaper, blog, or magazine, I would read it.
- I would like to meet my favourite gamer one day.
- My favourite gamer is like an old friend of mine.
- I look forward to watching my favourite gamer on their social media.

Which of the following options do you prefer watching gamers through?

- Live stream
- Pre-recorded

Which social media platforms do you watch gaming content on? (Please tick all that are appropriate)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Twitch
- Toudou Youku
- Sina Weibo
- Others

Please specify how often you watch gaming content during the week:

- None
- 1 day
- 2-3 days
- 4-5 days
- 6-7 days

Please specify the average time you spend per day watching video game content.

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours

- More than 4 hours

Have you ever bought a product that was recommended by a gaming content creator (including, in-game accessories such as skins)?

- Yes
- No

How long have you been following your favourite gamer?

- 0-3 months
- 3-6months
- 6-9 months
- 9-12 months
- More than 12 months

Please specify the level of education you are currently pursuing:

- High School / College
- Polytechnic / Institute of Technology (or equivalent)
- University / Honours Degree
- University / Master's Degree
- University / PhD Other - please specify

Please specify your gender

- Male
- Female

Please specify your ethnicity:

- Chinese
- Indian

  Korean
- European
- Japanese
- Māori
- Samoan
- Tongan
- European
- Māori
- Other

Please specify your age group:

- Under 13
- 13-17
- 18-25
- 26-34
- 35-54
- 55-64
- 65 or over

Please indicate your current annual income in NZ dollars:

- Under $10,000
- $10,000 - $19,999
- $20,000 - $29,999
- $30,000 - $39,999
- $40,000 - $49,999
- $50,000 - $74,999
- $75,000 - $99,999
- $100,000 - $150,000
- Over $150,000
- Rather not say