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**Abstract:**

Everyone has the opportunity to voice their opinion on social media, and while AI is becoming more prevalent and indistinguishable from reality, honesty is perceived as a rarer commodity online than previously. Younger consumers sense the lack of honesty in brand social media communication and further indicate that they expect and prefer honest marketing practices. This paper addresses the gap between what Generation Z and Millennials expect from brands and how most brands currently do their social media marketing. Through a quantitative analysis of 200 participants, the study results indicate that honesty in social media marketing will boost engagement across Generation Z and Millennials. Further, it is found that the effect is partially explained by the consumer's perception of warmth and competence of a company's social media posts. This paper hopes to inspire brands to increase their honesty in social media marketing, benefiting both themselves and the consumers. Thus, this research aims to contribute to generational studies and the literature on social media and ethical marketing while offering practical information for marketing professionals.

*Keywords:* Honesty, Generation Z, Millennials, Social Media, Communication, Marketing & Branding Strategy

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## 1.0 Introduction

With all the information we want readily accessible online, it can be tempting to selectively choose the “truths” that align with our preconceptions. This phenomenon, commonly called post-truth, highlights a shift in consumer behavior, where emotions often outweigh factual evidence (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, 2024). However, interestingly, new generations are more invested in the search for truth than before (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In response to these trends, the field of Public Relations is now prioritizing regaining trust in their communication channels. The director of the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication at Penn State University suggests that honesty is essential in gaining trust and combatting a post-truth society (Bortree, 2017). Building upon this foundation, this paper explores the implications of honesty within marketing.

In today’s market landscape, there is an overall emphasis on transparency, ethical marketing, and sustainability (Singh, 2023) (Olyneec, 2023). However, despite these initiatives, the prevalence of greenwashing, selective transparency, and increased false information have made honesty a rare commodity (Toffel, Z, & Marquis, 2016). Consumers are often primed with false or misleading information to benefit their counterparts (Meyvis & Janiszewski, 2002), and honesty is commonly used to reduce the negative consequences post-crisis by admitting mistakes and promising improvement. However, it could be argued that complete honesty can assist a company’s communication in the pre-purchase phase by creating connections with consumers and evoking positive emotions such as warmth.

Some companies have initiated a shift towards honesty and transparency through their products. An example is the Aura project that is spearheaded by the LVMH group (Aura blockchain consortium, 2024). Despite these initiatives, values of honesty and transparency have not been seen in marketing and communication efforts to reach potential consumers. As academics and industry workers alike are searching for new ways to connect with younger audiences, this paper focuses on the impact of honesty in company communication to attract and retain these new generations.

With the ongoing increase in global connectivity, scholars and industry experts suggest that generational shifts will play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, potentially surpassing the influence of socioeconomic backgrounds (McKinsey & Company, 2018). As Generation Z (Gen Z) and Millennials (Gen Y) are becoming the major part of the digital population, companies must realign their marketing strategies to engage these audiences effectively. Therefore, it will be increasingly important to be able to separate the



generations and understand their differences and similarities to better target the chosen customer base.

Generation Z is characterized by a natural curiosity and a strong inclination towards seeking truth, often demonstrated by their tendency to cross-reference multiple sources before making decisions (Francis & Hoefel, 2018) (Markovitz, 2023). Conversely, studies suggest that Generation Y also prioritizes truthfulness from corporations, although they tend to exhibit a higher level of trust towards companies compared to Gen Z ( The Center for Generational Kinetics, LLC, 2020). Although there are similarities between the two generations, research implies generational differences, particularly in the degree of questioning the accuracy of information provided by corporations. Given the significance of these two generations in today's market space highlighted in the literature, this paper's main study is primarily focusing on Gen Z and Gen Y.

Given the projections that Generation Z will be the most important demographic in the near future (Intel, 2023) (Qualtrics, 2022) (GenHQ, 2020), this paper is primarily focusing on this group, comparing their responses to those of Generation Y. The research aims to investigate whether honesty in social media marketing can serve as an effective method of communication to reach these generations. Although previous research has been conducted on the characteristics and traits of Gen Z and Y, few have focused on comparing the two groups. Further, honesty could be a beneficial strategy for companies to gain goodwill from stakeholders by acting ethically while also benefitting from attracting new customers.

Based on previous research on Gen Z, a theory is proposed that they will be attracted to honesty in a firm's marketing and communication. The results will hopefully contribute to the literature on social media, marketing, branding, and Generation Z/Y, in addition to inspiring others to look more deeply into the topic of honesty as an important factor in the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Beyond academic contributions, the hope is that this research has the potential to provide valuable insights for industry practitioners in the field of marketing, as the paper is aimed at supporting managers in making informed decisions when building their social media strategies. The goal is also to open the door for honesty in marketing as an effective tool to reach younger generations.

## 1.1 Research Questions

Specifically, the main study investigates the effectiveness of honesty as the primary element in companies' social media strategy, with Generation Y and Z serving as moderators. The research aims to address the following questions:

1. Does honesty in social media marketing positively affect consumer response?
2. Can honesty in social media marketing increase interest in brands?
3. How do Generation Z and Y differ in their response to honesty in social media marketing efforts?

## **2.0 Theoretical Development**

### 2.1 Honesty

In today's digitally interconnected world, the amount of user-generated and especially AI-generated content has created a diverse landscape where opinions are treated as facts, often blurring the lines between truth and fiction (Karanasios & Risius, 2024) (Bergignat, 2023). Due to this, companies frequently resort to distorting the truth to their advantage; a common example is video game advertisements on social media platforms such as Instagram (Appendix 2). Hiding information or choosing not to reveal certain aspects of products are common practices that could be attributed to the fear of being removed from consumers' choice set. Therefore, it can be argued that honesty can be a valuable tool as a point of difference in a crowded competitive landscape. The impact of honesty on consumer perceptions of brands could vary widely, potentially eliciting both positive and negative responses. However, limited research has been done, so it is important to delve deeper into the role of honesty in marketing and its implications for consumer behavior.

Despite the limited literature specifically dedicated to honesty in marketing, there exist relevant streams of research such as ethical and green marketing (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001), (Vocalelli & Dangelico, 2017), (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001), (Hunt, Wood, & Chonko, 1989). One could say that ethical marketing is a broader term that focuses on values and morals (Liew, 2023), while green marketing highlights the importance of sustainability (Polley, 2021). According to Edelman's annual trust study (Edelman, 2024), transparency and honesty significantly impact consumer loyalty and brand choice. The report's results indicate that 86% of consumers believe that transparency is an important

consideration when choosing a brand and that 94% express higher loyalty to firms that exhibit complete openness. Moreover, 68% of participants expressed that a brand's honesty is crucial. Younger generations—Gen Z and Millennials in particular—are looking for businesses that are fundamentally honest, real, and reliable. These results highlight the increasing need for integrity and openness in today's interactions between brands and consumers (Eledeman, 2024).

The role of honesty in marketing is increasingly recognized as a significant factor in the competitive landscape, with potential implications for business growth, job security, and overall well-being. Honesty in marketing is also argued to be a strong competitive force alongside traditional ones, including product, quality, and price (Fagerhaug, 1998). Honest marketing is also predicted to increase growth, job security, and general well-being (Fagerhaug, 1998). Some literature revolves around the connection between honesty and well-being, and other research suggests that honesty, in general, at a large scale, leads to positive outcomes but that it can also strain social relationships (Le, 2022). Although the literature has not looked directly at the impact of honesty in marketing, the research seems to create a foundation for further studies on the topic.

The majority of research on honesty seems to be predominantly centered around the post-purchase stage, with a particular emphasis on variables such as customer loyalty (Eledeman, 2024). This emphasis may stem from the significance of being transparent and honest in the post-purchase stage, whether in addressing customer service, aftercare, or managing product returns and brand crises. However, as newer generations shift their expectations towards corporate conduct and truth (The Center for Generational Kinetics, LLC, 2020), while misinformation is getting more common in a post-truth environment, it can be strategically important for companies to consider honesty as a pre-purchase tool.

Previous research leaves a gap in the possibility of negative effects of honesty in the pre-purchase stage, as most of the negative effects that have been analyzed have been related to crisis management or scandals. An example is the Volkswagen case, where the company had losses of up to 27.4 billion euros after a press release admitting their mistakes (Barth, Eckert, Gatzert, & Scholz, 2022). Considering this, one might also predict that there can be negative effects of being too honest in the pre-purchase stage as well. Revealing a company's weakness publically might keep customers away or lead existing customers to wait for other opportunities to make purchases. Further, as honesty can strain social relationships (Le, 2022), the same might be true for transactional ones. Other research has been done on the negative effects of too much transparency, which reveal that it can lead to blaming culture,

increase distrust, increase cheating, and spark resistance (De Cremer, 2016). However, the research does not consider the pre-purchase phase but rather focuses on internal company affairs.

As limited research has been conducted with honesty in marketing as the primary focus, a qualitative approach was chosen to define honesty through in-depth interviews with peers and industry professionals. The interviews were conducted on the phone and Facetime, with new participants recruited until a pattern could be seen in the answers. To ensure a diverse range of perspectives, including Gen Z and Y, the mean age of the interviewees was 39, with a median age of 24. The gender sample consisted of 3 males and 2 females. Each participant was asked three open-ended questions. Firstly, they were asked to define honesty in a general context. Secondly, they were asked to define honesty specifically in the context of advertising. Finally, they were asked to provide an example from memory. To make the setting feel comfortable, the conversations were conducted in Norwegian, the native language of the participants, with slight modifications to the framing based on who was interviewed.

To assist the reader in understanding the concept, four examples of honesty in marketing are visualized in the table below. These elements serve as the measurement in the pre-study when checking if the social media posts used as stimuli are perceived as honest.

Figure 1: Elements of honesty

<b>Honesty</b>	
<b>(1) True statements:</b>	Not overstating features or benefits.
<b>(2) Realistic portrayals:</b>	Demonstrating the product’s real functionality without using misleading staging.
<b>(3) Recognizing your limitations:</b>	Being upfront about any flaws or potential disadvantages.
<b>(4) Avoiding deceptive claims:</b>	No misinformation or wording meant to be confusing.

Based on the answers received (Appendix 1), the consensus was that honesty could be defined as “*speaking the truth to avoid false claims and exaggerations*”.

## 2.2 Social Media

Social media has become the primary means of communication, with over 60% of the world's population using some form of social media (Chaffey, 2024). With apps such as TikTok, X, and Instagram, the majority of consumers now have the chance to be heard and voice their opinions, facilitating both true and false information. Further, an experiment concluded that social media companies unintentionally encourage users to share false information due to the reward system based on engagement (Allen, 2023). It has also become a home for younger generations as they spend more time on social media than before. In 2022, 38% of Generation Z spent more than four hours on social media daily (Statista, 2022).

Current research implies that the glamour of being perceived as perfect is less trendy, and authenticity and realness are more relevant on social media platforms today (McLeod, 2023). The findings suggest that consumers are increasingly wary of overly polished or deceptive advertising tactics, signaling an opportunity for brands to leverage honesty to improve engagement and effectiveness. The attention span of younger generations, especially Gen Z, is shorter, and they enjoy the endless stream of short-form content on social media (McKinsey, 2022). Thus, it is increasingly important to find new strategies to attract the interest of younger consumers. Honesty in a company's marketing efforts is especially interesting in social media because it can be crucial in capturing and retaining Gen Z customers' attention, particularly when the landscape is crowded with misinformation.

Additional studies indicate that components like eye-catching details, celebrity endorsements, and emotional appeal significantly influence the willingness of customers to make purchases through social media marketing (Sriram, 2021). In a space where misinformation is common, honesty could be an effective tool to create an emotional connection with the consumers. Academics have also found indications that customers are far more open to being influenced by a message delivered by an individual they can relate to or feel a connection with (Belch, 2012). Thus, In the next section, it is argued that being honest can lead to a sense of warmth, which might help humanize the brand and its message, making it relatable to the audience and more impactful. Further research finds that customers' perception of the value of social media advertising is positively influenced by its informativeness, entertainment value, and credibility. This, in turn, positively affects the intent to make an online purchase (Van-Tien Dao, 2014). Honesty might improve a brand's or product's credibility by showing confidence in its offerings, which could mean that similar effects can be found.

The literature on social media highlights the importance of credibility, creating emotional connections, and the trend of being “real” and authentic. Based on these findings, honesty could lead to more effective social media marketing as it aligns with previous findings and current trends. Thus, the first hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Honesty in social media marketing will positively affect its engagement.

### 2.3 Warmth and Competence

Motivating why honesty can be effective in social media marketing, this effectiveness may be partly due to consumers perceiving a signal of warmth from an honest social media post. Research reveals that brands are more likely to elicit good feelings in customers, boost consumer engagement, create loyalty, and increase purchase intention when the brand is warm and competent (Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012). Further, brands should aim to balance being perceived as warm and competent. This balance will emphasize the human and professional side of the company, which in turn results in a well-rounded brand image (Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012). Research also found that people seen as competent most of the time can elicit some incompetent behavior without negatively affecting the impression of being competent overall (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006). The effect could indicate that if a firm is seen as competent in its marketing efforts, displaying its weakness through honesty does not necessarily mean that consumers would then perceive the firm as less competent overall. Further, warmth is judged before competence and is more important when creating behavioral reactions (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006). Because warmth is the most important of the two for behavioral reactions, it might also be the strategically most productive element to utilize when creating social media engagement and effectiveness of marketing efforts.

Based on recent research in social cognition, on one hand, the warmth dimension is the traits related to perceived intent. These traits include friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, trustworthiness, and morality (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006), as well as being kind, friendly, and approachable (Wang, Mao, Li, & Liu, 2016). On the other hand, competence reflects traits that relate to perceived ability. This includes intelligence, skill, creativity, and efficacy (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006). Based on these elements, one can make the connection between honesty and warmth. The connection with competence might be weaker, however, honesty in marketing can be looked upon as creative.

Based on the attributes previous research has connected to perceived warmth, this paper theorizes that honesty and warmth are conceptually similar from a consumer’s point of view.

Figure 2: Elements of Honesty and Warmth

<b>Honesty</b>	<b>Warmth</b>
<b>(1) True statements:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendliness</li> <li>• Helpfulness</li> <li>• Sincerity</li> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> </ul>
<b>(2) Realistic portrayals:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpfulness</li> <li>• Sincerity</li> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> </ul>
<b>(3) Recognizing your limitations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sincerity</li> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> </ul>
<b>(4) Avoiding deceptive claims:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sincerity</li> <li>• Trustworthiness</li> <li>• Morality</li> </ul>

By “speaking the truth to avoid false claims and exaggerations”, a company might create a sense of warmth. When a company communicates honestly, it shows genuine concern for its audience, fostering trust and respect. By prioritizing honesty, the company might be perceived as a reliable partner, thus humanizing the brand and making it seem warm from the consumer's point of view. In essence, this paper predicts that honesty builds meaningful relationships between the brand and the consumer by cultivating a feeling of warmth. Because a similar connection between honesty and competence is not seen, this effect can be assumed to be less prominent.

Although the previous literature on warmth and competence is conducted with a focus on consumers and branding, this paper contributes to the literature by connecting honesty with the sense of warmth. The connection between honesty and warmth is prominent through their attributes and definitions, which is why it can be predicted that the feeling of warmth can be a reason why honesty might positively affect social media marketing performance.

Thus, the second hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Honesty in social media marketing will positively affect its engagement by evoking a feeling of warmth.

## 2.4 Generation Z

Although different generations seem to have the same perception of what honesty is, they might react differently to honest communication on social media. In other words, there might be differences in how they interpret honesty on social media and how they react to it. Thus, the question of whether there are generational differences in the demand for honesty is proposed. This section of the paper looks at the existing research on Gen Z and argues why Gen Z, in particular, is an interesting case for honesty in marketing on social media. It is essential to consider generational differences because Gen Z and Gen Y are the two largest populations on social media platforms (Dixon, 2021). Consequently, a firm's marketing efforts might have different effects depending on which generation sees the post.

The first stand-out characteristic of Generation Z is their search for truth. This is the highlight of a McKinsey and Box1824 study in 2018. Their survey revealed that most of the core traits of Gen Z are anchored in their search for truth. The findings highlight that the generation is more pragmatic and analytical in their decision-making. Gen Z cares not only about what they consume but the very act of consumption (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Mike Proulx, VP research director, also agrees with the findings as he proposes that Gen Z, especially, are demanding and searching for truth. Proulx comments that the generation lives in a time where truth is under siege, and therefore, Gen Z's are naturally more skeptical until they are assured that they share the same values as their counterparts (Proulx, 2021). Therefore, honesty in social media marketing might fit well with Gen Z's search for truth. In line with the skeptical behavior, another McKinsey report found that Gen Z and Gen Y are the two generations that are most likely to try to protect their digital behavior. This includes actions such as deleting data after use and paying for better online security (McKinsey, 2022).

Further, Hootsuite found that 61% of Gen Z consumers will pay more for a brand they trust and that 71% will recommend a brand they trust despite mistakes the brand has made (Martin, 2022). The finding is particularly relevant when compared to that 83% of Gen Z are making purchases on social media, and 87% want a personalized experience (Martin, 2022). Honesty in a firm's marketing efforts could lead to a sense of trust and might be deemed



more effective for Gen Z as they enjoy shopping through social media.

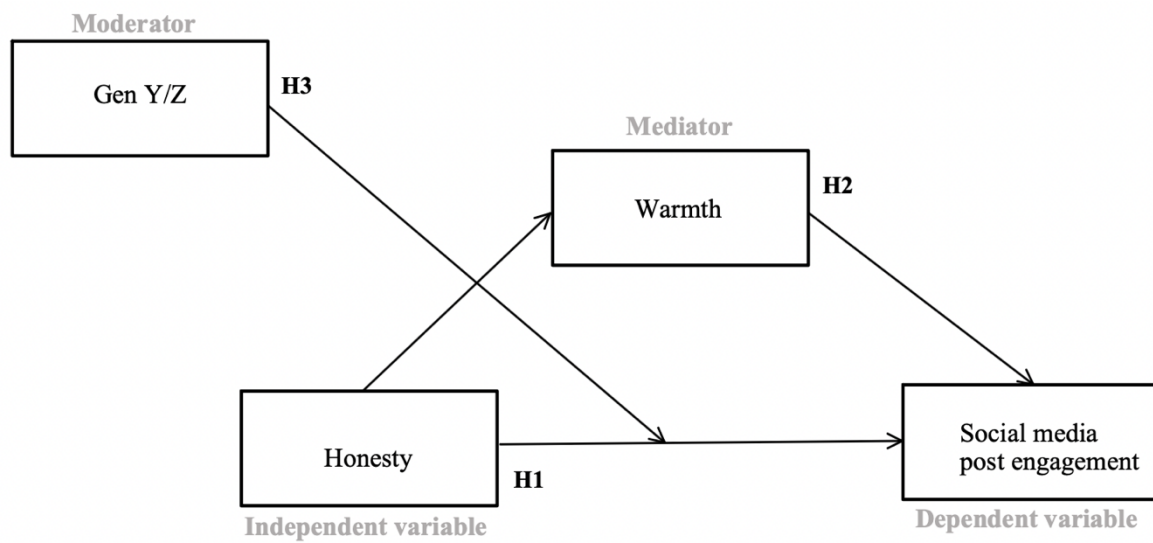
Current research indicates that compared to Gen Y, Gen Z is more realistic and ethical and prioritizes uniqueness. They are also digital natives and have a higher social media presence (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Brands that elicit honesty in a space that is perceived to be crowded by lies might come off as unique and friendly in Gen Z's eyes. Therefore, the effect could be more appealing to the generation. Younger consumers seek brands that provide a sense of truth and trust, in addition to any potential benefits that may result from doing so. Although being honest about the weaknesses of a product can be a risk, being upfront about them might not be as much of an issue for Gen Z as Gen Y due to their obsession with truth and the importance of being ethical. Further, due to the generational traits previously discussed, Gen Z might be more sensitive to honesty than older generations. Given the trend of prioritizing authenticity and truthfulness among Gen Z consumers, it is also theorized that the inclusion of honesty in social media marketing will resonate with them more than others, thereby potentially resulting in an increase in marketing effort effectiveness for Gen Z compared to Gen Y. Thus, the third and final hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** The effect of honesty on social media marketing engagement will be stronger if seen by Generation Z compared to Y.

## 2.5 Theoretical Model

To conclude the theoretical development, honesty has traditionally been primarily associated with post-purchase interactions or crisis management strategies within the field of marketing. However, honesty could also be valuable in the pre-purchase phase. Honesty can be utilized in a positive light by, for example, conveying that you “own” your mistakes or are aware of your value offering. This paper assumes the effect to be particularly relevant within the context of social media marketing. Further, it can be argued that honesty can lead to a feeling of warmth, which mediates its effect on a firm's marketing efforts. Lastly, due to generational differences, it is predicted that Generation Z and Y can serve as moderators of honesty's impact on social media marketing effectiveness.

Figure 3: Theoretical Model



### 3.0 Method

An experimental approach was taken to test the hypotheses, utilizing a survey-based methodology for data collection. Statistical analysis of the gathered quantitative data was conducted using IBM SPSS. First, a pilot study was conducted to determine if the main study's stimuli and conditions (honest vs. control) were valid for use. Then, the main study was conducted to gather the complete data needed to analyze and test the research questions and hypotheses.

#### 3.1 Pilot-Study

The pilot study was conducted to test two sets of stimuli options to find the most effective one for the main study. It also tested whether the four attributes of honesty were reliable. The survey was created using Qualtrics, and results were gathered from 35 respondents (26 male, 8 female, 1 non-binary). The mean age of the population was 27 (SD = 9.4). The standard deviation indicates that on average, individual observations deviate from the mean by about 9.4 years. Further, the population is skewed positively, with a statistic of 2.808, showing that most participants are younger than the mean. Therefore, the participants' ages should be similar to those in the main study (Gen Z and Gen Y) (Appendix 3).

The questionnaire presented two sets of pictures as stimuli under both conditions (honest vs. control). The participants were asked to review the stimuli based on the attributes

previously created from the previous in-depth interviews (true statements, realistic portrayals, recognizing limitations, avoiding deceptive claims) and rate them on a Likert scale of 1 – 9 (e.g., “To what extent do you think the company is recognizing its limitations”; 1 = not at all; 9 = very much). A reliability analysis was run on IBM SPSS to see if the scale was efficient enough to be used; the results showed Cronbach’s alpha values of 0.494 and 0.532.

Analyzing the results with a one-way ANOVA, stimuli 1 showed no significant difference between the honest and control pictures,  $F(1,33) = 0.546$ ,  $p = 0.465$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.16$ . The reason could be that both images show a customer review, thus making both feel honest. Consequently, the mean responses showed a score below 5, meaning both pictures were seen as more honest than not (Appendix 4). Stimuli 2 proved to be useful and significant,  $F(1,33) = 7.908$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.193$ . Thus, the honest and control image had a real perceived difference. The mean of the control condition was  $> 5$ , and  $< 4$  for the honest condition with acceptable low standard deviations ( $SD_{Gen Z} = 1.64$ ,  $SD_{Gen Y} = 1.22$ ) (Appendix 5). Thus, the conclusion was that stimuli 2 would be used for the main study.

### 3.2 Main Study

The main study was created on Qualtrics. Firstly, To avoid collecting data from bots or unserious participants, an attention check question was added at the beginning of the survey (e.g., “This is an attention check. Ignore the question below, and slide the scale to the number 20 to continue the survey.”) if the participants failed in doing this, the survey was ended.

Secondly, the participants were presented with the stimuli that were proven effective by the pilot study. The stimuli were randomized between two conditions (Honest Instagram post vs. Regular Instagram post) (appendix 5). The participants were then asked several questions regarding engagement, warmth, competence, and other characteristics. They were asked to rate their agreement on a 9-point Likert scale (e.g., “I would comment on this post”; 1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree) in a matrix. The measure of engagement included liking, commenting, sharing, and clicking in to look at the profile. The measuring of warmth and competence was adapted from two previous pieces of research (warmth: friendliness, trustworthiness (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006) , kind, approachable (Wang, Mao, Li, & Liu, 2016) (competence: reliable, competent, capable, sincere (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006)). Other questions included asking the participants if they enjoyed the post and if they found the post humorous, as well as another attention check (e.g., “Please click on strongly agree”).

Lastly, the participants were asked general questions including their age, gender, if

they use social media, and a few more statements on honesty (e.g., "Honesty in company communication is important to me on social media"; 1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree). In the end, an open-ended question was included, and the participants were asked to recall a social media advertisement that made an impression on them. The open-ended question was meant to see if any new interesting leads for limitations or future research on the topic could be found.

The study was conducted on 200 participants in total, with 188 remaining after importing the data to IBM SPSS and cleaning for bots and poor responses (Male 55%, Female 45%). The participants were originally split evenly between Generation Z and Y, and after cleaning the dataset, it remained relatively balanced (N = 87, N = 101). The total mean age was 30, with the most participants between 22 and 38 (SD = 8). Data collection was done through "Connect, powered cloud research" with an estimated time of 3 minutes and target specifications of age (Gen Z, Gen Y) and language (English).

Figure 4: Age of participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	188	18	45	30	8
Gen Z	87	18	25		
Gen Y	101	26	45		

#### 4.0 Results

After exporting the data into IBM SPSS, multiple analyses were conducted to test the three hypotheses. Firstly, the main effect (ANOVA) was tested, followed by a mediation (model 4) and moderation (model 1) analysis (Process Regression by Andrew F. Hayes). Lastly, multiple analyses were used to answer the research questions by reviewing differences between Gen Z vs. Gen Y and Honest vs. Regular posts (ANOVA, Linear Regression). To assist in understanding the results, the coding of the "generations" and "condition" variables are presented in figure 5.

Figure 5: Variable coding

Generations	1 = Gen Z	0 = Gen Y
Condition	1 = Honest	0 = Control

#### 4.1 Main Effect

To test the first hypothesis (H1): “Honesty in social media marketing will positively affect its engagement”, an ANOVA analysis was used to check for a significant difference between the means. The analysis has a non-significant result for the Levenes test, which shows that the homogeneity of variance assumption is met ( $p = 0.543$ ). Further, the results show a significant difference between the honest and control conditions on engagement of the Instagram post,  $F(1,186) = 9.106$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.047$ . The results indicate that the honest condition ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $N = 95$ ) was more effective than the control condition ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $N = 93$ ) due to the higher mean response on the engagement variable.

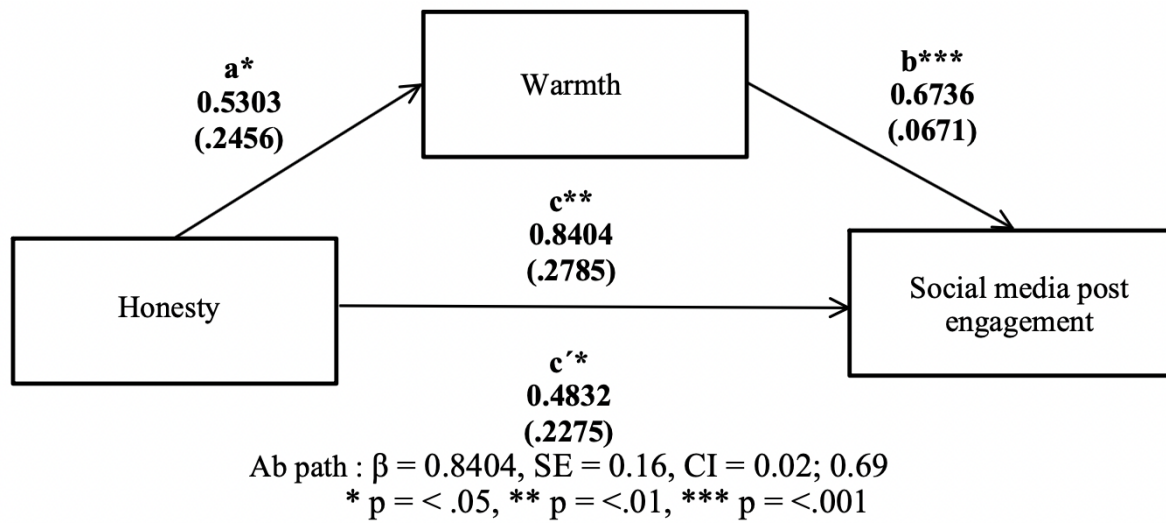
Thus, the study finds support for the hypothesis that honesty in social media marketing positively affects engagement (Appendix 6).

#### 4.2 Mediation Effect

The mediation analysis aims to answer the hypothesis (H2): “Honesty in social media marketing will positively affect its engagement by evoking a feeling of warmth”. To assess the mediating role of warmth in the relationship between honesty and social media post engagement, Andrew F. Hayes's Model 4 Process Regression was run.

Firstly, there is a significant indirect effect of  $\beta = 0.3527$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ , 95% CI: (0.02; 0.69), suggesting that honesty affects participants’ engagement by evoking a feeling of warmth. Furthermore, the direct effect of honesty on engagement in presence of the mediator was also found to be significant ( $\beta = 0.4832$ ,  $SE = 0.2275$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ). Lastly, the total effect size is positive ( $\beta = 0.8404$ ). The analysis indicates that a complimentary mediation with warmth partially mediating the relationship between honesty and social media post engagement. Thus, the analysis finds support for H2 (Appendix 7). The summary of the mediation analysis is presented in figure 7 below. Due to the relationship between honesty and competence, it was also tested as a possible mediator. The results were relatively similar, as shown in the full summary of results in figure 6.

Figure 6: Mediation by Warmth



### 4.3 Moderation Effect

To test for a moderation effect (H3): “The effect of honesty on social media marketing engagement will be stronger if seen by Generation Z compared to Y”, the Model 1 Process Regression by Andrew F. Hayes was used. The results indicate that only a 0.83% change in social media post engagement is accounted for by the three variables “honesty, generation, interaction”,  $R^2 = 0.0838$ ,  $F(3,184) = 5.61$ ,  $p = 0.0011$ . Furthermore, the model shows no significant interaction effect ( $p = 0.6621$ ), suggesting that generations do not moderate the relationship between honesty and social media marketing engagement, thus rejecting H3 (Appendix 8).

Figure 7: Moderation Effect

Relationship	Model R-Square	Model P-value	Interaction P-value	Interaction Confidence interval		Conclusion
(Y) Engagement (X) Honesty (W) Generation	0.0838	0.0011	0.6621	<u>Lower bound</u> (-1.3872)	<u>Upper bound</u> (0.8452)	No Moderation

#### 4.4 Honest vs. Regular Post

As established for the main effect, the results indicate that honesty increases engagement for the social media post ( $\beta = 0.840$ ,  $t = 3.018$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). However, there is no significant difference between the honest condition and the control condition when it comes to the question "I would be interested in the company",  $F(1,186) = 1.363$ ,  $p = 0.245$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.007$ , the same applies when asked if the participants would apply to work at the company presented in the stimuli,  $F(1,186) = 1.299$ ,  $p = 2.56$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.002$ . Even though these results indicate that honesty in marketing does not increase interest in a company, the study revealed some results that might seem contradictory. There was a significant difference between the groups when asked if they would look at the Instagram profile ("I would look at the Instagram profile"; 1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree), with the mean of the honest condition being higher than the control condition,  $M = 5.5$ ,  $F(1,186) = 7.572$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.039$ . This might be attributed to the honest condition being found more humorous than the control condition ( $\beta = 1.564$ ,  $t = 4.282$ ,  $p = <0.001$ ). There was also a significant difference between the groups on whether they believed other people around their age would like the post,  $F(1,186) = 9.368$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.048$ . However, again, the mean was moderate but higher for the honest condition ( $M = 5.2$ ). The data indicate that although honesty increases social media engagement, it does not seem to create a considerable boost in terms of interest in the company itself (Appendix 9).

#### 4.5 Gen Z vs. Gen Y

Both generations answer that honesty in company communication is important on social media ("scale 1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree",  $M = 7$ ). Further, they also indicate that they expect companies to be fully honest in their digital communication ( $M = 6$ ), and lastly, both Gen Z and Gen Y agree that companies generally are not very honest on social media ( $M = 4$ ). An ANOVA analysis indicates that Gen Z ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ) shows more engagement compared to Gen Y ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ),  $F(1,186) = 7.00$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.036$ . Through a two-way ANOVA analysis, the results indicate that Gen Z ( $M = 4.85$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ) shows higher engagement in the honest condition than Gen Y ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ). For the control condition, Gen Z also remains more engaged ( $M_{GenZ} = 4.14$ ,  $M_{GenY} = 3.28$ ). The results can be interpreted as Gen Z generally being more engaged than Gen Y and that the honest social media post improved engagement for both generations. No other results were

significant, indicating that the generations seem to be similar in their responses to the other variables tested. The key finding is that Generation Z demonstrates higher engagement levels than Generation Y, with both groups showing increased engagement in response to honest social media posts. In contrast, other tested variables showed no significant differences between the two generations (Appendix 10).

Figure 8: Summary of findings

Main Effect							
Relationship	Analysis Type	Significance Level	F-statistic	Eta-Squared	Conclusion		
Honesty → Engagement	ANOVA	0.003	9.106	0.047	Positive		
Mediation Effect							
Relationship	Total Effect	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence interval		t-statistic	Conclusion
Honesty → Warmth → Engagement	0.8404 (0.0029)	0.4832 (0.0350)	0.3572	<u>Lower bound</u> 0.0231	<u>Upper bound</u> 0.6969	2.1453	Partial Mediation
Honesty → Competence → Engagement	0.8404 (0.0029)	0.4886 (0.0271)	0.3518	<u>Lower bound</u> 0.0063	<u>Upper bound</u> 0.6879	2.0288	Partial Mediation
Moderation Effect							
Generations	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Age	188	18	45	30	8		
Gen Z	87	18	25				
Gen Y	101	26	45				
Relationship	Model R-Square	R-P-value	Model P-value	Interaction P-value	Interaction Confidence interval		Conclusion
(Y) Engagement (X) Honesty (W) Generation	0.0838	0.0011	0.6621	0.6621	<u>Lower bound</u> (-1.3872)	<u>Upper bound</u> (0.8452)	No Moderation
Honesty vs. Control							
Relationship	Significance level	F-statistic	Beta Coefficient	Mean	Conclusion		
Interest in company	0.245	1.363			Although honesty increases social media engagement, it does not seem to create a big boost in terms of interest in the company itself		
Application to company	2.56	1.299					
Look at Instagram profile	0.007	7.572		5.5			
Finding post humorous	<0.001		1.564				
People around my age would like the post	0.003	9.368		5.2			
Gen Z vs. Gen Y							
Relationship	Significance level	Mean		Conclusion			
Importance of honesty in company communication	>.05	7		Generation Z demonstrates higher engagement levels compared to Generation Y, with both groups showing increased engagement in response to honest social media posts.			
Expectations of honesty	>.05	6					
Companies are generally honest on social media	>.05	4					
Engagement on Honest condition	0.008	4.9_Gen Z, 4.2_Gen Y					
Engagement on Control condition	0.008	4.1_Gen Z, 3.3_Gen Y					



## 5.0 Discussion

Based on this paper's study, it is clear that honesty positively affects social media marketing engagement. The results indicate that warmth partially mediates this relationship, meaning that honest posts tend to attract more engagement partially due to being perceived as warm. Unexpectedly, the same effect was found but on a weaker scale for competence, meaning that the brand may be perceived as more warm and competent through honest marketing. Interestingly, It was discovered that different generations respond similarly to honesty in social media posts, refuting the expectation of generational differences, meaning no significant moderation effect was found. However, while honesty boosts engagement, it does not necessarily lead to increased interest in the company. Notably, Generation Z exhibits higher engagement levels than Generation Y overall, while honesty increases engagement for both. The results indicate support for H1 and H2, but not for H3.

### 5.1 Contributions

Although there is room for further improvements and exploration of this study, the hope is that the results can inspire other academics to see the value of honesty in social media marketing. The results confirm the findings of the annual trust study in that younger generations are searching for more honesty (Eledeman, 2024) and expand on the research with the finding that honesty seems to be as relevant for the pre-purchase phase as the post-purchase. The results of the main study highlight the potential impact honesty can have on engagement. It also contributes to the literature on warmth and competence for branding strategies, as results indicate a perception of warmth and competence by using honesty as a pre-purchase marketing tool. By uncovering the role of warmth and competence as partial mediators between honesty and engagement, concepts from social psychology are integrated into marketing theory, hopefully broadening our understanding of consumer behavior in digital contexts. Further, it may inspire future research into the effectiveness of honest communication strategies, which could eventually contribute to sustainable and ethical marketing practices. Hopefully, this paper can be an example of how to conduct ethical marketing through honesty to benefit both consumers and corporations.

## 5.2 Limitation and Future Research

The choice of stimuli might explain the effect of honesty increasing engagement but not company interest. Even though the Instagram post that was shown to the participants reflected honesty, it lacks elements such as storytelling to create a deeper emotional connection and interest in the brand (Crespo, Ferreira, & Cardoso, 2022). Incorporating honesty in social media post storytelling could be valuable for future research as it might improve engagement and company interest. Further, previous literature on social media indicates that credibility can lead to purchase intention (Van-Tien Dao, 2014); these results were not reflected in this paper's study but might be worth further investigating as honesty might make a firm more credible.

The non-significant moderation effect observed in the study may be attributed to the relatively narrow age range of participants, primarily clustered between 22 and 38 years old. A larger-scale study encompassing more participants within Gen Z and Y could introduce a wider standard deviation in participant ages, potentially yielding more diverse responses. With a greater variation in age, a new study may uncover significant moderation effects that were not shown in the findings of this paper's study. Thus, expanding the participant pool could provide deeper insights into how both generations interact with social media marketing efforts.

While considering potential moderators of the observed effects, previous research was also explored on how market entry order moderates the effectiveness of a firm's competitive tactics (Covin, Slevin, & Heeley, 2000). One could theorize that the effectiveness of using honesty in marketing might change based on whether a company is a market leader or a follower. Consumers and stakeholders have higher expectations from market leaders (Teichner, Jacobs, & Alldredge, 2021) (Peterson, 2023), which might lead to a changed effect of honesty in marketing compared to when a consumer has lower expectations of a brand.

Including market followers and leaders as moderators for future research is also interesting because results can vary among generations. Market leaders may appeal to some Gen Y customers due to their reputation and trustworthiness (Live Well, 2023). The older generation may also be drawn to industry-leading brands because of their reputation for quality and innovation (CFI, N/A). It could be argued that Gen Z will prefer market followers, particularly those who are perceived as competitors or disruptors in their sector (Shaw, N/A). Market followers frequently present themselves as alternatives to the mainstream, appealing to Gen Z's individualism and uniqueness-seeking nature (Hirose,

2022). Thus, market entry order could provide valuable insight for future research and studies on the topic of generations and honesty in social media marketing and build upon the results of this paper.

Lastly, the stimuli used in the main study were made to replicate Instagram picture posts specifically; previous research has shown that engagement varies depending on the social media platform used (Babin , et al., 2020). One suggestion for future research could be to examine the relationship between how generations interact with honesty across social media platforms. Further, it could also be valuable to study if there are any differences based on the post format (video, image, text). The scale used to measure the perceived honesty of the stimuli in the pre-test was suboptimal, as indicated by the reliability analysis ( $\alpha = 0.494, 0.532$ ). This might have weakened the results of the main study; thus, it can be recommended to optimize the “honesty scale” or develop a new scale that can be used to conduct more accurate research on the topic in the future. To increase the real-life implications of this paper’s study, future researchers could also be recommended to utilize real A/B testing with advertisements on social media. These avenues for future research could improve this study’s limitations and expand the results into more applicable findings for real-life scenarios and use.

### 5.3 Managerial Implications

The paper was made with the hopes of contributing not only to academics but also to industry professionals, which is why this last section is dedicated to managerial implications and resources that marketing professionals can use as inspiration for new strategies and ideas.

Emphasizing honesty in social media marketing could drive user interaction and meet audience expectations for honesty. The results of this paper indicate that utilizing honesty in firms’ pre-purchase social media strategy can increase engagement for both Generation Z and Y. Being honest seems to evoke a sense of warmth and competence, which benefits any brand; therefore, being honest in social media marketing should benefit the majority of companies across industries. If a company is looking to increase awareness and reach a broader audience, it can be helpful to tailor the social media marketing strategies to appeal to Generation Z. Gen Z tends to show higher engagement, meaning that effectively targeting them can increase the likelihood of a social media post going viral. Going viral results in a significant boost in awareness and reach. Being overly honest can also result in the post being

perceived as humorous; if this aligns with a brand’s image or identity, it could be a valuable tool to catch the attention of Generation Z and Y.

As honesty in social media marketing efforts increases the likelihood of exploring a company's profile, it should be recommended for a firm to ensure that the profile is engaging and reflects the honest messaging in the post. In other words, brands should have a holistic approach to honesty in marketing, ensuring consistent communication across posts, profiles, and platforms. Honesty improves engagement across Generation Z and Y, suggesting that a consistent strategy focusing on honesty can be effective across different generations. However, honesty should not be the only tool used if targeting a specific generation. Therefore, complementing honest messaging with other user-target strategies should be recommended to maximize effectiveness. Further, while honesty boosts engagement and the likelihood of profile views, it does not significantly increase interest in the company. Therefore, one should combine honest marketing with other strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the marketing efforts. The critical insights for industry professionals are represented in the table below.

Figure 9: Managerial key insights

<b>Managerial Implications</b>	
<b>1</b>	Honesty in social media marketing increases engagement from Gen Z and Gen Y.
<b>2</b>	Honesty in social media marketing makes the brand seem more warm and competent from Gen Z and Gen Y's perspective.
<b>3</b>	Tailoring social media marketing for Gen Z can increase chances of going viral as they tend to show more engagement.
<b>4</b>	Ensuring honest communication is consistent throughout the social media profile is important.
<b>5</b>	Honesty leads to engagement but not necessarily brand interest, therefore being honest in itself is not enough.
<b>6</b>	Honesty in company communication is expected but rarely seen from Gen Z and Gen Y's perspective.

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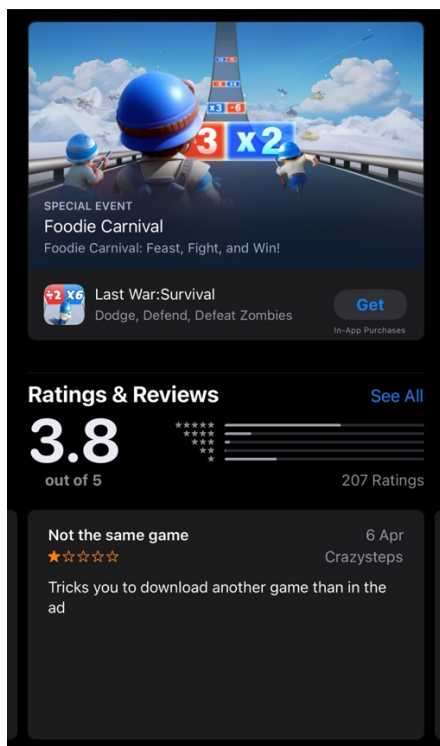
# Appendix

## Appendix 1 - Honesty In-depth Interview:

*Note: The interview was conducted in Norwegian. Answers are manually translated into English.*

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
<b>How do you personally define honesty in the context of marketing or advertising?</b>	Honesty to me means speaking the truth without any intention of deceiving others. It's about being transparent and upfront in all aspects of communication.	Honesty in marketing means presenting the product or service in a truthful and genuine manner. It's about providing accurate information to customers.	To me it is about being transparent and truthful in all communications with consumers. It's about representing the product or service in an accurate and genuine light.	it means providing accurate and truthful information to consumers. It's about being upfront and tell the truth about the product or service being promoted.	Honesty in marketing means providing truthful and accurate information to consumers.
<b>How can honesty be demonstrated in marketing or advertising?</b>	Then, honesty would involve accurately representing the features and benefits of the product without exaggeration or giving false claims. It's about giving customers truthful information so they can make informed decisions	Sure, honesty can be demonstrated by providing realistic portrayals of the product's functionality. This means not using misleading staging or editing techniques to make the product appear better than it actually is. For example recently apple showed an edited video of someone talking to an AI, i thought it was real, but later a friend told me that it was edited.	Honesty in product promotion involves recognizing and acknowledging any limitations or flaws the product may have. It's about being upfront about any potential disadvantages.	Honesty can be demonstrated by avoiding deceptive information. This means ensuring that all messaging is clear and straightforward, without any wording intended to confuse or mislead consumers.	Honesty in product promotion would mean avoiding false claims and exaggerations. It's about representing the product in a genuine and realistic manner.
<b>Can you provide an example of how honesty can be demonstrated in product promotion?</b>	Let's say you're selling a phone. Being honest would mean not overstating its features or benefits. For example, if the phone has a certain lifespan, don't claim it will last longer just to make it sound better. That would be dishonest.	Other than the apple example, let's say you're advertising a skincare product. Being honest would mean not using Photoshop to exaggerate the results of using the product. Instead, show real before-and-after photos to give customers a genuine idea of what to expect.	yes, if you're advertising a <b>iphone</b> , being honest would mean not making deceptive claims about its capabilities. If the battery life isn't particularly long or the camera is bad when its dark outside, don't try to mask it with misleading information like only showing the picture quality in daylight. Be transparent about its features and limitations.	Let's say you're advertising a weight loss product. Being honest would mean not making exaggerated claims about its effectiveness. Instead, provide realistic information about what the product can and cannot achieve.	okay, if you are advertising for protein powder, an example could be sticking to the facts and provide evidence to support any claims you make about the product's efficacy.

## Appendix 2 – False game advertisement:





## Appendix 3 – Pre Test Descriptive Statistics:

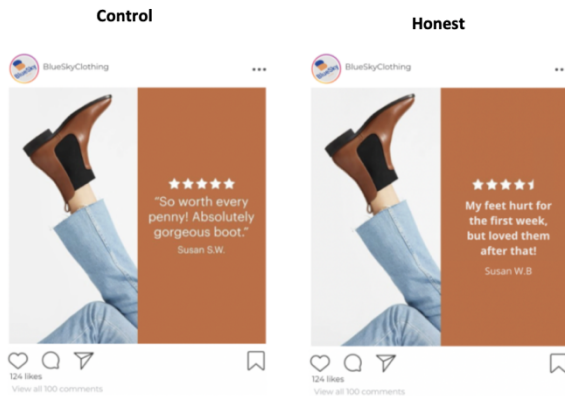
### Descriptives

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
How old are you?	35	18	61	27.40	9.400	2.808	.398
Valid N (listwise)	35						

### What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	26	74.3	74.3	74.3
	Female	8	22.9	22.9	97.1
	Non-binary / third gender	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix 4 – Pre Test Stimuli 1 Results:



S1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
0	18	4.1528	1.19785	.28234	3.5571	4.7485	1.75	6.75
1	17	3.7941	1.64942	.40004	2.9461	4.6422	1.00	7.00
Total	35	3.9786	1.42505	.24088	3.4890	4.4681	1.00	7.00

S1	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.125	1	1.125	.546	.465
Within Groups	67.922	33	2.058		
Total	69.046	34			

S1		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
	Eta-squared	.016	.000	.172
	Epsilon-squared	-.014	-.030	.147
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	-.013	-.029	.143
	Omega-squared Random-effect	-.013	-.029	.143

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

*Appendix 5 – Pre Test Stimuli 2 Results:*

**Control**

**Honest**



**Descriptives**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
0	18	5.1250	1.64998	.38890	4.3045	5.9455	2.50	9.00
1	17	3.7353	1.22943	.29818	3.1032	4.3674	1.00	6.25
Total	35	4.4500	1.60285	.27093	3.8994	5.0006	1.00	9.00

**ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.885	1	16.885	7.908	.008
Within Groups	70.465	33	2.135		
Total	87.350	34			

**ANOVA Effect Sizes<sup>a,b</sup>**

S2		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
	Eta-squared	.193	.014	.404
	Epsilon-squared	.169	-.016	.385
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.165	-.015	.379
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.165	-.015	.379

- a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.
- b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

*Appendix 6 – Main effect (H1) results:*

**Descriptives**

Engage		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
0		93	3.6796	1.97575	.20488	3.2727	4.0865	1.00	9.00	
1		95	4.5200	1.84192	.18898	4.1448	4.8952	1.00	9.00	
Total		188	4.1043	1.95023	.14224	3.8237	4.3848	1.00	9.00	
Model				1.90929	.13925	3.8295	4.3790			
Fixed Effects										
Random Effects					.42023	-1.2353	9.4438			.31438

**Tests of Homogeneity of Variances**

Engage		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean		.372	1	186	.543
Based on Median		.062	1	186	.803
Based on Median and with adjusted df		.062	1	178.999	.803
Based on trimmed mean		.246	1	186	.620

**ANOVA**

Engage		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups		33.193	1	33.193	9.106	.003
Within Groups		678.043	186	3.645		
Total		711.237	187			

**ANOVA Effect Sizes<sup>a</sup>**

Engage		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Eta-squared		.047	.006	.117
Epsilon-squared		.042	.000	.113
Omega-squared Fixed-effect		.041	.000	.112
Omega-squared Random-effect		.041	.000	.112

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

Appendix 7 – Mediation (H2) results:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com  
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

\*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4  
Y : Engage  
X : cond  
M : Warmth

Sample  
Size: 188

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
OUTCOME VARIABLE:  
Warmth

Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.1564	.0245	2.8345	4.6621	1.0000	186.0000	.0321

Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	4.8118	.1746	27.5623	.0000	4.4674	5.1562
cond	.5303	.2456	2.1592	.0321	.0458	1.0148

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
OUTCOME VARIABLE:  
Engage

Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.6189	.3830	2.3720	57.4263	2.0000	185.0000	.0000

Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.4382	.3601	1.2169	.2252	-.2722	1.1487
cond	.4832	.2275	2.1244	.0350	.0345	.9320
Warmth	.6736	.0671	10.0428	.0000	.5413	.8060

\*\*\*\*\* TOTAL EFFECT MODEL \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
OUTCOME VARIABLE:  
Engage

Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.2160	.0467	3.6454	9.1056	1.0000	186.0000	.0029

Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.6796	.1980	18.5852	.0000	3.2890	4.0702
cond	.8404	.2785	3.0175	.0029	.2910	1.3899

\*\*\*\*\* TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Total effect of X on Y						
	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	.8404	.2785	3.0175	.0029	.2910	1.3899

Direct effect of X on Y						
	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	.4832	.2275	2.1244	.0350	.0345	.9320

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
Warmth	.3572	.1665	.0231	.6969	(.357/.1665) = t 2.1453	

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:  
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:  
5000

----- END MATDTP -----

*Appendix 8 – Moderation (H3) results:*

**MODERATION**

Model : 1  
 Y : Engage  
 X : cond  
 W : Gen

Sample  
 Size: 188

\*\*\*\*\*  
 OUTCOME VARIABLE:  
 Engage

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.2896	.0838	3.5413	5.6129	3.0000	184.0000	.0011

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	4.1043	.1372	29.9044	.0000	3.8335	4.3751
cond	.8398	.2745	3.0594	.0025	.2982	1.3814
Gen	.7424	.2753	2.6971	.0076	.1993	1.2855
Int_1	-.2410	.5506	-.4378	.6621	-1.3272	.8452

*Appendix 9 – Honest vs Control group results:*

**HONEST VS. CONTROL HUMOUR**

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	114.971	1	114.971	18.340	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1166.024	186	6.269		
	Total	1280.995	187			

a. Dependent Variable: Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - The post is humorous

b. Predictors: (Constant), cond

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.204	.260		16.193	<.001
	cond	1.564	.365	.300	4.282	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - The post is humorous



**Descriptives**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound				
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I would look at the Instagram profile	0	93	4.53	2.573	.267	4.00	5.06	1	9		
	1	95	5.52	2.351	.241	5.04	5.99	1	9		
	Total	188	5.03	2.507	.183	4.67	5.39	1	9		
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.464	.180	4.67	5.38			
		Random Effects				.494	-1.26	11.31			.424
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I would be interested in the company	0	93	4.51	2.398	.249	4.01	5.00	1	9		
	1	95	4.92	2.422	.248	4.42	5.41	1	9		
	Total	188	4.71	2.413	.176	4.37	5.06	1	9		
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.410	.176	4.37	5.06			
		Random Effects				.205	2.11	7.32			.022
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I think other people around my age would like this post	0	93	4.12	2.354	.244	3.63	4.60	1	9		
	1	95	5.17	2.350	.241	4.69	5.65	1	9		
	Total	188	4.65	2.404	.175	4.30	4.99	1	9		
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.352	.172	4.31	4.99			
		Random Effects				.525	-2.02	11.32			.493
Imagine you are applying for a job and please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would apply to the company	0	93	9.08	2.415	.250	8.58	9.57	6	14		
	1	95	9.47	2.378	.244	8.99	9.96	6	14		
	Total	188	9.28	2.398	.175	8.93	9.62	6	14		
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.396	.175	8.93	9.62			
		Random Effects				.199	6.75	11.81			.018

**ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I would look at the Instagram profile	Between Groups	45.958	1	45.958	7.572	.007
	Within Groups	1128.909	186	6.069		
	Total	1174.867	187			
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I would be interested in the company	Between Groups	7.916	1	7.916	1.363	.245
	Within Groups	1080.574	186	5.810		
	Total	1088.489	187			
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I think other people around my age would like this post	Between Groups	51.826	1	51.826	9.368	.003
	Within Groups	1029.004	186	5.532		
	Total	1080.830	187			
Imagine you are applying for a job and please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would apply to the company	Between Groups	7.460	1	7.460	1.299	.256
	Within Groups	1068.157	186	5.743		
	Total	1075.617	187			

**ANOVA Effect Sizes<sup>a,b</sup>**

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I would be interested in the company	Eta-squared	.007	.000	.050
	Epsilon-squared	.002	-.005	.044
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.002	-.005	.044
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.002	-.005	.044
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I think other people around my age would like this post	Eta-squared	.048	.006	.119
	Epsilon-squared	.043	.001	.114
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.043	.001	.114
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.043	.001	.114
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I would look at the Instagram profile	Eta-squared	.039	.003	.106
	Epsilon-squared	.034	-.002	.101
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.034	-.002	.101
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.034	-.002	.101
Imagine you are applying for a job and please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would apply to the company	Eta-squared	.007	.000	.049
	Epsilon-squared	.002	-.005	.044
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.002	-.005	.043
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.002	-.005	.043

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

*Appendix 10 – Gen Z vs Gen Y results:*

**GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES (descriptive analysis):**

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Warmth	.00	101	5.1460	1.74974	.17411	4.8006	5.4915	1.00	9.00
	1.00	87	5.0029	1.64710	.17659	4.6518	5.3539	1.00	9.00
	Total	188	5.0798	1.70000	.12399	4.8352	5.3244	1.00	9.00
Comp	.00	101	5.2723	1.67448	.16662	4.9417	5.6028	1.25	9.00
	1.00	87	5.2328	1.64767	.17665	4.8816	5.5839	1.00	9.00
	Total	188	5.2540	1.65780	.12091	5.0155	5.4925	1.00	9.00
Engage	.00	101	3.7604	1.84348	.18343	3.3965	4.1243	1.00	8.60
	1.00	87	4.5034	2.00461	.21492	4.0762	4.9307	1.00	9.00
	Total	188	4.1043	1.95023	.14224	3.8237	4.3848	1.00	9.00
Do you have a social media account?	.00	101	1.95	.218	.022	1.91	1.99	1	2
	1.00	87	1.99	.107	.011	1.97	2.01	1	2
	Total	188	1.97	.176	.013	1.94	1.99	1	2
Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Honesty in company communication is important to me on social media"	.00	101	12.29	1.402	.140	12.01	12.56	9	14
	1.00	87	12.02	1.607	.172	11.68	12.37	8	14
	Total	188	12.16	1.502	.110	11.95	12.38	8	14
"How often do you consider purchasing a product through social media?"	.00	101	4.26	2.243	.223	3.81	4.70	1	9
	1.00	87	5.08	2.070	.222	4.64	5.52	1	9
	Total	188	4.64	2.198	.160	4.32	4.95	1	9
"I expect companies to be fully honest in their communication on social media"	.00	101	5.76	2.688	.267	5.23	6.29	1	9
	1.00	87	5.72	1.969	.211	5.30	6.14	1	9
	Total	188	5.74	2.376	.173	5.40	6.09	1	9
Do you believe companies in general are honest in their advertising on social media?	.00	101	4.14	2.020	.201	3.74	4.54	1	9
	1.00	87	4.31	2.002	.215	3.88	4.74	1	9
	Total	188	4.22	2.008	.146	3.93	4.51	1	9
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - I enjoyed the post	.00	101	4.25	2.351	.234	3.78	4.71	1	9
	1.00	87	4.63	2.450	.263	4.11	5.15	1	9
	Total	188	4.43	2.399	.175	4.08	4.77	1	9
Please rate the extent to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: - The post is humorous	.00	101	4.96	2.679	.267	4.43	5.49	1	9
	1.00	87	5.03	2.558	.274	4.49	5.58	1	9
	Total	188	4.99	2.617	.191	4.62	5.37	1	9
Imagine you are applying for a job and please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:  I would apply to the company	.00	101	9.20	2.462	.245	8.71	9.68	6	14
	1.00	87	9.37	2.333	.250	8.87	9.87	6	14
	Total	188	9.28	2.398	.175	8.93	9.62	6	14

### Descriptives

Engage

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
.00	101	3.7604	1.84348	.18343	3.3965	4.1243	1.00	8.60	
1.00	87	4.5034	2.00461	.21492	4.0762	4.9307	1.00	9.00	
Total	188	4.1043	1.95023	.14224	3.8237	4.3848	1.00	9.00	
Model									
Fixed Effects			1.91966	.14001	3.8281	4.3805			
Random Effects				.37226	-.6258	8.8343			.23664

### Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Engage	Based on Mean	1.274	1	186	.261
	Based on Median	1.377	1	186	.242
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.377	1	185.582	.242
	Based on trimmed mean	1.360	1	186	.245

### ANOVA

Engage

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.806	1	25.806	7.003	.009
Within Groups	685.431	186	3.685		
Total	711.237	187			

### ANOVA Effect Sizes<sup>a,b</sup>

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Engage	Eta-squared	.036	.002	.102
	Epsilon-squared	.031	-.003	.097
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.031	-.003	.097
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.031	-.003	.097

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.



### Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Engage

cond	Generations	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	.00	3.2800	1.72426	50
	1.00	4.1442	2.16127	43
	Total	3.6796	1.97575	93
1	.00	4.2314	1.85100	51
	1.00	4.8545	1.79424	44
	Total	4.5200	1.84192	95
Total	.00	3.7604	1.84348	101
	1.00	4.5034	2.00461	87
	Total	4.1043	1.95023	188

### Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances<sup>a,b</sup>

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Engage	Based on Mean	1.358	3	184	.257
	Based on Median	1.308	3	184	.273
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.308	3	182.818	.273
	Based on trimmed mean	1.370	3	184	.253

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Dependent variable: Engage

b. Design: Intercept + Gen + cond + Gen \* cond

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Engage

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	59.632 <sup>a</sup>	3	19.877	5.613	.001	.084	16.839	.941
Intercept	3184.725	1	3184.725	899.302	<.001	.830	899.302	1.000
Gen	25.847	1	25.847	7.299	.008	.038	7.299	.767
cond	32.262	1	32.262	9.110	.003	.047	9.110	.851
Gen * cond	.679	1	.679	.192	.662	.001	.192	.072
Error	651.605	184	3.541					
Total	3878.080	188						
Corrected Total	711.237	187						

a. R Squared = .084 (Adjusted R Squared = .069)

b. Computed using alpha = .05