

# **What makes beauty influencers credible?**

A qualitative study on how young adults evaluate beauty influencers' credibility on Instagram

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# WHAT MAKES BEAUTY INFLUENCERS CREDIBLE? A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON HOW YOUNG ADULTS EVALUATE BEAUTY INFLUENCERS' CREDIBILITY ON INSTAGRAM

## Abstract

*The purpose of the study is to research how young adults evaluate the credibility of beauty influencers on Instagram, which has been conducted within the framework of the Master thesis programme at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Thus far, there have been no studies that have examined the way young adults evaluate the credibility of beauty influencers (BIs) on Instagram. Understanding this process is highly relevant for marketers since collaborating with a credible BI would likely be fruitful for them. For BIs it is also important to understand how young adults evaluate their credibility in order to make adaptations to become more credible. There is a research gap on what the elements within source credibility entail, namely expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, and whether this is applicable to BIs on Instagram. The role of parasocial interactions within source credibility is also unresearched. The main question the present research aims to answer is: "How do young adults evaluate the credibility of beauty influencers on Instagram?" To do so, and focussing on young adults, in-depth interviewing was chosen as the most suited data collection method in order to understand their experiences, opinions, and attitudes. Twelve interview transcripts have been analysed with thematic analysis as this is the most appropriate method of data analysis since it is focused on discovering themes, enabling to construct reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006).*

*Six themes emerged from the interview transcripts, namely: expertise, trustworthiness, critical awareness, attractiveness, similarity, and distant connection. The theme expertise arose from the sub-categories: expert, experience, knowledge, and skilled. The second theme, trustworthiness, through the sub-categories: trust, honesty, reliability, sincerity. Critical awareness is based on the following sub-categories: awareness of dishonesty, extra research, mindfulness, and doubtfulness of influencer. Attractiveness is derived from three sub-categories, namely: physically attracted, visually attracted, and appealing content. The fifth theme is similarity, which surfaced from the following sub-categories: community feeling, relatable, and relevant content. Distant connection appeared from general one-sided interaction and disconnection, which are the sub-categories of the theme.*

*This led to the conclusion that expertise (e.g., experience, knowledge, and skills) and trustworthiness (e.g., honesty and sincerity) are the most important elements that determine BIs' credibility on Instagram. Critical awareness is a strong element that came forward which indicates a general sense of scepticism towards BIs on Instagram. Another element was that the female interviewees needed to be attracted physically, visually and through the BI's content. Whenever these young adults sensed similarities in relatability and community feelings with the BI this formed a bonus for a BI's credibility. Nevertheless, the young-females did feel a certain degree of detachment towards BIs through the one-sided interaction and the feeling of disconnection. Interestingly, this does not decrease a BI's credibility, but interviewees are simply aware of this and do take it into consideration.*

**KEYWORDS:** *source credibility, parasocial interaction, beauty influencers, Instagram, young adults*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

If Instagram is hot, influencer marketing is even hotter. In recent years, influencer marketing has been increasingly used by companies to promote their products (Breves et al., 2019). In 2021, the global value of influencer marketing amounted to 13.8 billion U.S. dollars, and Instagram was the primary platform (Statista, 2021). Social media platforms enable the existence of influencers as they offer the tools and space to unleash their creativity (Henriksen et al., 2016). YouTube is the platform where the first vloggers started, some of them became celebrities later on like Michelle Phan and Jacklyn Hill (Henriksen et al., 2016). These female vloggers turned into beauty influencers (BIs): opinion leaders in beauty-related subjects such as makeup, skin and body care (Chen & Kanai, 2021). Instagram enables creators to upload photos and short videos of a couple of seconds, whereas YouTube allows uploading of videos of several minutes which provide more detailed information. At some point in the 2010s, there was a shift in content creation from YouTube to Instagram. A possible explanation, according to Shao (2009), is that that people enjoy snack content, which is content that can be consumed quickly. The flip side of this trend is that due to the shorter content which allows for less details, young adults perceive Instagrammers to be less credible than YouTubers, especially regarding beauty products (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019; Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Xiao et al., 2018). This is a disadvantage for BIs on Instagram as well as the young adults on there.

Several authors who researched the credibility of either social media influencers (SMIs) or celebrities (Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021; Leite & Baptista, 2021; Breves et al., 2019) usually embedded their research in Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory. This is because she was the first to perform reliability checks on the results from factor analysis. Previous researchers studying source credibility did not run such checks, rendering their results less certain (Ohanian, 1990). For a source to be perceived as credible it needs to have the following components: expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Nevertheless, it has been suggested that SMIs are considered more credible if they perceive to share similar issues with them (Leite & Baptista, 2021; Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) related this phenomenon to parasocial interaction, i.e., the psychological relationship of audiences with influencers on social media. Young adults follow other people online when they perceive the other to have seemingly comparable beliefs and behaviours (Khan et al., 2016). Another reason why young adults follow other people online is due to their achievements (Childers & Rao, 1992). For marketers it is imperative to comprehend

how young adults evaluate a BI's credibility on Instagram is essential in order to find the right BI. For BIs it is also beneficial to understand this process since they will know where they should pay attention to.

Once source credibility has been established, young adults will accept influencer's recommendations (Belanche et al., 2021; Breves et al., 2019; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). These young adults then utilize such sources for information to create and assess their own opinions (Khan et al., 2016). For instance, young adults would follow certain SMIs since they sense that they have aspects in common and share interests. They then utilize these SMIs as references for certain information. Regarding make-up, skincare of body care BIs could be a source of information for young adults. Therefore, the notion of credibility is so important for BIs. Marketeers need to comprehend the way young adult assess credibility as they collaborate with BIs for their audience to accept the product.

Thus, this research for this Master thesis addresses this question by interviewing young adults on their opinions and experiences in this field.

### *1.1 Social relevance*

The majority (57%) of companies operating in beauty-related areas partner with SMIs to promote their product (Forbes, 2018). Such SMIs are rather influential in the online lives of young adults (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Once young adults trust a SMI, they are more likely to follow up on their recommendations (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019), which is ultimately the goal of both influencers and companies. Specifically, influencers specialised in beauty products on social media, BIs hereafter, have a greater challenge to gain credibility since young adults are aware that such a produce might have a different result on them (Schouten et al., 2020). For instance, the BI might have a dry skin so a dewy foundation looks amazing on them, however if the young adult has an oily skin, the same product might have completely different results.

Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019) pointed out that BIs on Instagram are generally perceived as less credible than their colleagues on YouTube. Even though BIs are part of a huge industry, they are under researched (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Xiao et al., 2018; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding how young adults evaluate the credibility of BIs on Instagram is imperative for beauty brands to work with a BI that is perceived as credible. It is also useful for BIs themselves to comprehend the evaluation process of young adults so that they are able to alter their image and strategy.

Thus, the research for this Master thesis focuses on how young adults evaluate the credibility of BIs.

## 1.2 Scientific relevance

The present study examines whether Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory is still applicable to evaluate BIs' credibility on Instagram for the current generation of young adults. The three dimensions of this theory are expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The third dimension, attractiveness, concentrates on the physical attraction of celebrities, however, with the rise of new media platforms such as Instagram, visuals are more important than ever. Not only should the BI attract, but their feed too should be attractive for these young adults (Colliander & Marder, 2018). This aspect has not yet been incorporated in examining the relevance of Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory. Therefore, this research plans on investigating the relevance of this theory with BIs on Instagram.

Molly Mae Hague, a BI on Instagram, was a guest on the podcast of "*The Diary of a CEO*" in which she argued that before she was an influencer herself, she could feel whenever an influencer was genuine or not. Still, she had a difficult time expressing the reasons behind this feeling (The Diary of A CEO, 2021). This illustrates that it is complicated for people to identify factors that makes an influencer credible. In a study on Instagram celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), one interviewee claimed she "just gets a feel if an account is genuine." This feeling could possibly be connected to parasocial interactions. Thus, the current research aims at exploring whether parasocial interactions could play a role in credibility since this has not yet been explored. This approach has been suggested as future research by Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021) because it is an under researched area.

As 62.2% of Instagram users are between 18 and 34 years old (Statista, 2022b) and so young adults are the biggest user group. This age group has also revealed a paramount degree of attraction towards influencer marketing on Instagram (Chen, 2018). Not only is Instagram the biggest platform for influencer marketing (Statista, 2021), it is also believed to be a great medium for demonstrating beauty products since the platform is rooted in embellished pictures (Jin et al., 2019). It is suggested that young adults are still developing (Sebastian et al., 2011) and so might their tools to evaluate BIs' credibility. As a result, it is rather beneficial to comprehend young adult's evaluation process towards the credibility of BIs on Instagram.

The majority of studies that focused on source credibility used questionnaires to collect data and used quantitative methods to study SMI's credibility; fewer studies seek a deeper understanding of BIs' perceived credibility through qualitative methods. For this reason, there is no knowledge on how young adults assess BIs' credibility. Yuan and Lou (2020) suggest that a qualitative approach might be needed in order to show more about what is involved surrounding the evaluation of the trustworthiness of influencers. Xiao et al. (2018) suggested such future research into one specific area on social media platforms since they did not focus on a specific area such as beauty. Following up on this, Muda and Hamzah (2021) specifically focused on beauty YouTubers, which still leaves Instagram unresearched. Even though Instagram holds many active BIs. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) did focus on Instagram, however, they researched the source credibility of celebrities.

For this reason, it is essential to delve more into young adult's opinions and experiences through source credibility theory. Hence understanding young adults' evaluation of credibility is imperative for both BIs and marketers. This Master study will be able to provide marketers the tools which will help them identify a credible BI. For marketers it is rather important that influencers are perceived as credible by young adults as they appear to be more inclined to accept their recommendations (Belanche et al., 2021; Breves et al., 2019; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Supposedly, this is the end goal of a brand that partners with BIs. For BIs the outcome of this Master study could be beneficial to them in building credibility towards their young adults' audience. It is, thus, essential to obtain a deeper insight into their evaluation process. In order to gain this insight, 12 in-depth interviews have been held with young adults, additionally enabling them to explain the type of (parasocial) interactions they experience with their favourite BIs on Instagram.

Therefore, the research question of the present study is: "How do young adults evaluate the credibility of beauty influencers on Instagram?"

### **Sub-questions:**

The main research question has been divided into three sub-questions in order to better conceptualise the research. The first sub-question will try to examine the current opinions of young adults towards the credibility of BIs on Instagram. The goal is to indicate to what extent young adults consider BIs on Instagram to be credible. This has been done through asking about their favourite influencers and their opinions on them. The second sub-question will investigate the way these young adults evaluate the trustworthiness, expertise and



attractiveness of BIs on Instagram. The aim is to research whether these three characteristics build a BI's credibility and how they assess it. The third sub-question will explore the role of parasocial interactions in evaluating the credibility of BIs on Instagram. The intention is to investigate to what extent parasocial relationships of young adults with BIs on social media play a role in their credibility.

### *1.3 Thesis outline*

This Master thesis contains the following chapters: "Introduction", "Theoretical framework", "Methodology", "Results", "Discussion and conclusion". In the "Theoretical framework" chapter, all the suitable literature regarding Instagram, BIs, young adults, source credibility, and parasocial interactions is reviewed. The current research is embedded in the previous literature. Subsequently, the "Methodology" chapter goes into more depth about the methods and approaches applied, concentrating on thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Kuckartz (2014). Additionally, this chapter consists of more in-depth information of the interviewees and the procedure of the interviews. Next, in the "Results" chapter the findings concluded from the in-depth interviews will be explained based on the themes found from the interview transcripts. The last chapter "Discussion and Conclusion" entails a discussion of the results as well as a conclusion which solves the research question. Limitations and possibilities for future research will be mentioned in the final section of the last chapter.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In this section the current relevant literature on Instagram, the BIs, young adults, source credibility and parasocial interaction are reviewed. The three dimensions of source credibility (perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) will be introduced. Parasocial interaction will be explained and the possible role such interactions play within source credibility. These two theories will be used as framework for the data collection and analysis, which is essential for answering the research question.

### *2.1 Instagram*

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking service, launched in October 2010. Using this visual mobile application tens of millions of images are posted on-line on a daily basis (Thornton, 2014). Instagram enables everyone to share information visually. Users are able to share videos, or images accompanied by captions. Photos cater to a more personal style of communication and participating in human interaction (Valentini et al., 2018). It also facilitates comprehension of situations and stories more easily than text-based communication.

The technology built in the application is designed to share pictures easily (Thornton, 2014). Users are able to browse other users' content by hashtags and view trending topics. Hashtag are used to identify a message on a specific subject or theme and allow cross-referencing and content sharing. Users searching for a particular hashtag will find all posts that include that hashtag. Sharing a photo with another person has been argued as a type of connection and interaction (Thornton, 2014).

### *2.2 The beauty realm and beauty influencers' involvement*

The beauty industry is large area with many BIs in it. The beauty industry is expected to amount to 564.438 million U.S. dollars in 2022 and is still predicted to grow (Statista, 2022a). In beauty-related areas the majority (57%) of the companies operates with influencers on social media. Individuals perceive SMIs more intimate, reliable, and less commercial and regulated than brands and thus, more original, which fits their taste better (Forbes, 2019; Odell, 2016). Supposedly, this is the reason why so many brands have turned to BIs to promote their beauty products. In this part of the theoretical framework, the current research on BIs and current opinions on the promoted content by BIs on Instagram will be discussed.

### *2.2.1 Beauty influencers*

When an SMI can be seen as an opinion leader in the digital realm (Breves et al., 2019), a BI can be considered an opinion leader regarding topics such as: makeup, skin and body care (Chen & Kanai, 2021). Young adults and adults tend to follow people on social media such as Instagram because they feel that there is a match with their beliefs and norms (Schouten et al., 2020). Uzunoğlu and Misci Kip (2014) suggested that the main reason for individuals to follow influencers on Instagram is a mixture of wonder and the perception of relatedness to the influencer. Because SMI's messages smoothly penetrate into the lives of their followers and the outside world, these are seen as credible (Breves et al., 2019). This could be because of the use of filters on platforms (Arta & Yasa, 2019; Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019), making it more difficult to evaluate a product. However, Schouten et al. (2020) also showed that being attracted by beauty products showcased by BIs is not straightforward since the female young adults and adults in their study explained that they are aware that this specific product might have a different effect on them than on the influencer. This also shows that promoting beauty products as an influencer is rather challenging.

### *2.2.2 Attitudes on sponsored content by beauty influencers on Instagram*

Stubb et al. (2019) discuss that it is rather likely that part of influencer's content is paid promotional posts. From Martínez-López et al.'s (2020) online experiments it was discovered that the commercial nature of the content has a strong negative effect on its perception, which decreases the trust in the SMI. In this situation, the recipients demonstrate stronger motives to seek supplementary information on the good (Martínez-Lopez et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). This confirms previous research showing that recipients wish for honest commentary without false commercial intent from influencers (Lee & Koo, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Stubb et al. (2019) point out that if recipients feel that the influencer is being biased because this person is receiving a monetary compensation from the brand, it negatively relates to the influencer's credibility. This is also applicable when an SMI promotes a product that is not within his or her realm of expertise (Stubb et al., 2019).

## *2.3 Young adults in a mediatised landscape*

Currently, young adults are living in mediatised environment and therefore could be considered digital natives. This generation of young netizens utilizes media for two reasons (Crone & Konijn, 2018). Firstly, for entertainment such as to watch films and to listen to

music, and secondly, more and more for communicating with peers through Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and WhatsApp (Crone & Konijn, 2018).

Once an individual turns 18, the influence of parents decreases, whereas the one of peers increases (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). The influence of peers is proposed to form choices and actions regardless of one's age and thus also relevant for university aged young adults. Specifically, this age group is important due to the closeness with peers in this setting (Dalton, 1989; Penman & McNeill, 2008). Clearly, young adults are at a stage where they are still developing and can be influenced by different factors, one of which is peer influence (Sebastian et al., 2011). It is possible that one of young adult's first interaction with BIs is through their peers. Imagine if the majority of one's peers is talking about NikkieTutorials then it is likely that this individual is going to explore what this BI is talking about. Additionally, when such an influencer promotes a product, and a peer has tried it this could also be related to a young adult accepting the BI's recommendation. Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend young adult's social media usage, consumer behaviour, and social comparison. Understanding these aspects will aid researching the manner in which young adults evaluate BIs on Instagram.

### *2.3.1 Social media usage*

Young adults constitute one of the largest groups of social media users (Lu et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2020). Social media platforms are part of an extensive area of the internet including social network sites (SNSs), like Instagram. In the last decade, these SNSs have attracted many young adult users (Terzi et al., 2019). Young adults' motivations for using SNSs are online interactions in order to improve the increased interpersonal connections (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016; Kaya & Bicen, 2016). Three aspects govern the usage of social media. Firstly, common interests regarding the shared content. Secondly, users are continuously forming their personal social media environment that caters to their needs, which is based on the communities linked to the platform, as well as its functionality (Zhao et al., 2016). This is something that has not been pointed out by Ohanian (1990). Supposedly because user-generated content did not exist yet. Still, it could be something BIs on Instagram need to be aware of. A third aspect is emotional desire as this might direct young adults' media usage and treating it. For instance, feeling lonesome might alleviate the direction to associate with a media personality or to lean on SNSs for social communication (Konijn et al., 2016; Nowland et al., 2018).

It is rather rare for young adults to use a single SNS only, and thus many SNSs are being used simultaneously (Vaid & Harari, 2021). Specifically, on Instagram young adults search for social interaction, participate in public expression and escapist acts, to collect personal life events, and to get a glimpse of the lives of others (Khan et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2015). Especially the last element, getting a glimpse of others' lives, might be linked to parasocial interactions, which will be explained in section 2.5.

### *2.3.2 Consumer behaviour*

Social media platforms such as Instagram enable young adults to socialize as well as aid them in their purchasing intentions (Stokes, 2013). Young adults' financial behaviour is an area receiving increasingly more interest. There are three elements that drive this type of behaviour, namely materialism, money management ability, and impulsiveness. Materialism involves the degree of importance regarding the possession of material goods to a person with the idea that these items will offer them joy and life contentment (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Usually, this element has actively been associated with consumption (Lee & Ahn, 2016). Currently, young adults find themselves in an online landscape where they are bombarded with promoted content by influencers, including BIs. In order to spend their money responsibly, these young adults are required to develop money management competences (Bamforth et al., 2018). Impulsiveness refers to the consumer being focused on the present result instead of the future consequences (Lučić et al., 2021). When young adults deliberate on a purchase, they are not always rational and thus, might be emotionally motivated, which leads to impulsive buying (Lučić et al., 2021). Young adults are seen as a separate market segment, which has established as a separate dominant consumer-spending category (Moschus, 1976; Grant & Waite, 2003).

### *2.2.3 Social comparison*

As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons for young adults to follow a BI is out of wonder. It is human nature to compare oneself with other people, which could be peers or celebrities (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011), but also an influencer on social media. When young adults evaluate the extent of similarities with an influencer, this could create positive emotions such as hope and wonder (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011). However, the authors emphasise that when they evaluate the extent of differences, this could create negative emotions such as dissatisfaction towards their self-image (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011). They,

hence, argue that this phenomenon of social comparison does play a role in social identity (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011).

Usually, BIs on Instagram are specialised in selling a dream, “a picture perfect” world that is related to one’s physical appearance. Therefore, it is possible that young adults compare and evaluate themselves to these BIs. This knowledge of social comparison could be useful within the parasocial interactions theory because it could help at relating personal information.

## *2.4 Source credibility*

### *2.4.1. Definition*

Source credibility is part of the concept media literacy and is essential online (Dou et al., 2012). Media literacy combines various practices permitting people to interact with media, and can be defined as the capability of accessing, examining, assessing, and creating all forms of contents (Redmond, 2015). These also include: non-print and non-alphabetical content such as images, emojis, videos and videogames, but also television and websites (Redmond, 2015). Media literacy focuses on creating pragmatic skills and critical thinking through assessing all forms of texts (Redmond, 2015).

Previous studies have displayed that source credibility could act as a tool or encouragement to regulate people’s reasoning of message credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Petty et al., 1983). In the present online media scene, individuals who use the internet cannot seem to escape the content on online platforms. Such individuals are required to swiftly evaluate information in order to prevent confusion as well as to conserve mental work. They thus depend on external signals to evaluate information (Fogg et al., 2003; Metzger, 2007), which enhances the significance of source credibility when evaluating online sources (Dou et al., 2012; Metzger et al., 2010; Sundar, 2008).

### *2.4.2. Ohanian’s source credibility*

Ohanian (1990) argues that source credibility has three dimensions, namely: perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and physical appeal. The first dimension indicates the degree of expertise to which the influencer is perceived to be a legitimate source (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). In order for a BI to be perceived as having expertise, they should have knowledge about beauty and experience with it. The second dimension, trustworthiness, covers the degree of perceived sincerity, believability, and integrity of influencers (Erdogan,

1999; Ohanian, 1990). For a BI to be perceived as trustworthy they should come across as honest and sincere. The third dimension, attractiveness, deals with how the consumer is attracted in some shape or form by the source (Ohanian, 1990). In this case, a BI should be perceived as beautiful by their audience. According to Ohanian (1990), if a source has perceived expertise, and/or has gained the trust and physical appeals of the individual, they will consider this source as credible.

Even though the original theory by Ohanian (1990) is not novel, it is still referenced by the majority of studies regarding source credibility (Breves et al., 2019; Djafarova, & Rushworth, 2017; Erdogan, 1999; Filieri, 2016; Leite & Baptista, 2021; Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Uribe et al., 2016; Xiao et al., 2018; Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021). This is because Ohanian (1990) was the first to apply reliability tests to factor analysis of collected data (Appelbaum & Anatol, 1972; Baker & Churchill, 1977; Bowers & Phillips, 1967; DeSarbo & Harshman, 1985; Patzer, 1983; Simpson & Kahler, 1980; Whitehead, 1968; Wynn, 1987).

Only a couple of studies have applied a different source credibility model to analyse influencer credibility. One of these is the four-dimension source credibility model by Munnukka et al. (2016), which adds similarity as an extra dimension to the three of the Ohanian's (1990) model. While not referring to Ohanian's (1990) model at all, Yuan and Lou (2020) have applied the Munnukka et al. (2016) model by adding the theory of personal interaction to the four-dimensional source credibility model to analyse influencer credibility. They justify this choice because there is a gap in the literature on how expertise and trustworthiness relate to parasocial relationships. Nevertheless, as the majority of the used studies applied Ohanian's (1990) source credibility model, this approach is adopted for the research for this Master thesis.

In the following sections each of these dimensions by Ohanian (1990) will be explained in detail. The dimensions will be explained by mentioning the elements that constitute it and their meanings. The possible research gaps will be pointed out per dimension.

### *2.4.3. Expertise*

Expertise indicates the degree of expertise to which the influencer is perceived to be a legitimate source (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). Interestingly, the source does not actually need to have all the knowledge, it just needs to be perceived as possessing it (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990). Roobina Ohanian pointed out in her 1990 paper in which she formulated her source credibility theory that other researchers have referred to this dimension

as authoritativeness, competence, expertness and qualification. The variables that are included in this dimension are expert, experience, knowledge, qualification and skilled. These factors have first been identified as coherent signs linked to expertise by Applbaum and Anatol (1972), Simpson and Kahler (1980), and Wynn (1987). Expert relates to an individual who is specialised in a specific area. Experience refers to the course of directly facing, observing, or going through something. Knowledge means to be acquainted with a specific subject. Qualification involves having the particular qualities in a specific subject or area. To be skilled indicates the acquisition of skills for a specific subject.

Ohanian (1990) tested expertise through questionnaires but did not disclose how statements or questions were formulated. Muda and Hamzah (2021) and Xiao et al. (2018) have revealed that in their questionnaires they used these dimensions in a statement like, for instance, to what extent is the source considered to be an expert in this specific field. However, from the current literature, it seems that there is no clear indication or explanation as to what makes a source skilled or qualified. It is the aim of the present study to explore this through in-depth interviews with young adults.

Breves et al. (2019) suggested that their target group perceived a high degree of expertise when the influencer and the brand seemed to match well. Presumably, the perceived expertise of SMIs by the outside world is based on whether they have specialised themselves in an explicated area of interest in their career (Colliander & Marder, 2018; Schouten et al., 2020; Uzunoglu & Misci Kip, 2014). It is argued that an influencer needs to have a satisfactory degree of expertise in order to have trust (Arta & Yasa, 2019; Uribe et al., 2016). Thus, in order for the public to trust the influencer, it is argued that it hinges on the perceived expertise of the influencer (Uribe et al., 2016; Filieri, 2016).

Nevertheless, from the current literature, it seems that there is no clear indication or explanation as to what creates expertise. For instance, it is not clear what makes a source qualified or skilled. It is the aim of the present study to research this through in-depth interviews with young adults.

### *2.4.3 Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness covers the degree of perceived sincerity, believability, and integrity of influencers (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). Marketeers benefit from the significance of trustworthiness by carefully choosing endorsers who are already viewed as honest and believable (Shimp, 1997). This dimension includes the following variables: trustworthy, sincere, reliable, honest, and dependable (Ohanian, 1990). These have been operationalised by



Bowers and Phillips (1967) and Whitehead (1968). Trustworthy refers to the worthiness of earning someone's trust. Sincere refers to what extent the source is genuine. Reliable implies that the source can be relied on for accuracy. Honest relates to fairness in actions, motives, and ethics. Dependable indicates whether the source is adequate to be depended upon. It is assumed that the variables were posed in statement-like questions as done in recent quantitative studies by, e.g., Muda & Hamzah (2021) and Xiao et al. (2018) that clearly stated, for example, "to what extent is the source considered to be honest". Nonetheless, from the current literature, it seems that there is no clear indication or explanation as to what makes a source reliable or sincere. It is the aim of the present study to explore this through in-depth interviews with young adults.

#### *2.4.4 Attractiveness*

Attractiveness deals with how the consumer is attracted in some shape or form by the source (Ohanian, 1990). The third and last dimension consist of the following variables: attractive, classy, beautiful, elegant, and sexy which have been operationalised by Baker and Churchill (1977), DeSarbo and Harshman (1985), and Patzer (1983). Attractive refers to the provision of a pleasing physical display which is alluring. Classy indicates to what extent the source is deemed of high class. Beautiful relates to the degree of beauty of the source. Elegant involves the source to be graceful in taste and form. Sexy implies the source is excitingly appealing. BIs specifically can effortlessly be seen as appealing due to the allure of the beauty industry (Schouten et al., 2020). All these previous authors focused on the physical appeal of (beauty) influencers online.

However, not solely the looks of such a BI are important to consider, but also their Instagram "feed", essentially referring to their page on that platform. Generally, social media consist of more "light" or even informal communication. In contrast to traditional studio aesthetics, snapshot aesthetic refers to visuals depicting a setting that could have photographed by anyone, often using phone cameras, almost like professional unprofessionalism (Colliander & Marder, 2018). These researchers found through their experiment that a snapshot aesthetic obtained more likes and, thus, was preferred over studio aesthetics. Colliander & Marder (2018) concluded that this also resulted in more credibility of the brand. Nevertheless, this could also be applicable to BIs in the sense that their Instagram posts should be of sufficient quality. It was shown that the most influential factor surrounding aesthetic preference is meaningfulness, which is operationalised through preference in faces or colours for instance (Martindale et al., 1990). Particularly for Instagram this is very

relevant since it lives on the exchange of user-generated images with such a snapshot aesthetic (Shelden & Bryant, 2016). Possibly, this snapshot aesthetic could be part of the attractiveness dimension of Ohanian (1990), however, this had not been researched in combination with in-depth interviews.

Because Ohanian's research dates back to 1990, no social media or user-generated content existed. Therefore, this research did not focus on being visually attracted by the content of the source, in this case BIs on Instagram. The current research will examine whether physical attractiveness still plays a critical part in credibility. The study by Colliander and Marder (2018) made it clear that one's Instagram feed is also very influential. The current research will examine the possible role within the attractiveness dimension.

## *2.5 Parasocial interaction*

In a study by Leite and Baptista (2021) using questionnaires young adults indicated that even though an SMI is seen as an expert, trustworthy as well as attractive, it does not automatically signify that solely these three dimensions could persuade them to try the recommendation. Importantly, Leite and Baptista (2021) pointed out that whenever an SMI shared more personal information, this would then convince these individuals to try the recommendation. This next aspect has often been linked to parasocial interaction; this concept will be introduced in this section.

### *2.5.1 Definition*

Social media influencers often can be recognised as forming a bridge between brand and consumer (Yuan & Lou, 2020). The type of communication these SMIs radiate, is rather indirect, yet they often succeed in building meaningful interaction with their following (Booth & Matic, 2011). This phenomenon can be identified with the concept of parasocial interaction, introduced by Horton & Wohl (1956), which refers to individual's deceptive social experiences with media personalities. Horton & Wohl (1956) focused on the experience while observing such media personalities. However, as technology has evolved so has this theory. Thus, Hartmann (2016) claims it is not solely an observation anymore, but a genuine interaction even though there is awareness that the interaction is in the individual's mind. An evolved version of parasocial interaction, is the idea of parasocial relationships, which implies the existence of a rather long-lasting relationship that is able to live further with the media exposure (Giles, 2002; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Tukachinsky & Sangalang, 2016). For

instance, a parasocial relationship could entail that the followers are very intimate with and feel a certain closeness to influencers, believing they are actually friends (Leite & Baptista, 2021). Thus, parasocial interaction is rather focused on the action of sharing personal information whereas parasocial relations are focused on the connection (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Nonetheless, the interaction and the relationship are completely in the individual's mind (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

This Master thesis will apply the concept of parasocial interaction by Hartmann (2016) since it merely wants to research young adult's attitudes towards personal information sharing of BIs on Instagram. Hartmann's (2016) research also used the full concept with no sub-dimensions.

### *2.5.2 Role of parasocial interactions in source credibility*

Some studies that utilized source credibility also incorporated the concept of parasocial interaction into it (Leite & Baptista, 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021). Huang (2015) revealed that in addition to the three dimensions of source credibility, viz., perceived expertise, trustworthiness and physical appeal, sharing personal information about oneself would contribute to creating a positive impression. It should be considered as a separate dimension since it is focused on the extent to which SMIs share personal information. Because sharing personal information is unrelated to either of the three sub-dimensions of source-credibility, it could rather be regarded as an extension of the source credibility concept.

In order for SMIs to create a positive impression (Berg & Archer, 1982; Jacobs et al., 2001), they are required to disclose a high degree of personal information on their social media platforms. Leite and Baptista's (2021) research results suggest that the exchange of personal information is able to aid SMIs to attract individual's attention to their recommendation of products. Specifically concerning advertised content, recipients may be less critical towards SMI's recommendations if they combine it with a personal discovery. Therefore, when SMIs incorporate promoted goods into their intimate stories on their social media pages, they are actually strategically taking advantage of emotional engagement (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Whenever such influencers do not disclose intimate information about themselves on their platforms, it may decrease the individual's degree of credibility towards them (Leite & Baptista, 2021).

Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) believe that not solely source credibility relates to individual's perception of SMI's credibility. Through their questionnaires, these authors have

found that parasocial interactions play a mediating role on trustworthiness as well as expertise, but not on attractiveness. Tukachinsky and Sangalang (2016) concluded from their experiments that high levels of parasocial interactions without earlier intimate relationships will likely increase the chance of turning argumentative. This means that whenever an influencer shares a lot of personal information and the recipient is a new follower, this could result in a certain resistance towards this particular internet personality. Thus, this can be threatening to the recipient's own notion of liberty.

From questionnaires, it was shown that Gen Z experienced a friendly connection with BIs, which has been linked with parasocial interactions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Berryman & Kavka, 2017). Additionally, several studies concluded that the participants from Gen Y and X did experience more a friendly connection with BIs (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Moghavemi et al., 2017; Romo et al., 2017).

Followers use the provided intimate information to assess the influencer's personal traits. Consequently, the more they consume this type of information, the more they will become familiar with SMIs (Huang, 2015). This, thus, shows that parasocial interactions are likely to be involved in people's assessment regarding the credibility of SMIs. It is possible that parasocial interactions could explain "this feeling" expressed by one of the interviewees in Djafarova and Rushworth's (2017) in-depth interviews, referred to above (section 1.2).

By applying the concept of parasocial interaction to the current research in the framework of this Master thesis, it could extend Ohanian's theory with a fourth dimension as well as explain "this feeling" expressed by one of the respondents in Djafarova and Rushworth's (2017) study. Additionally, in the current literature it is neither discussed specifically what kind of personal information is disclosed by influencers on social media nor how it makes the followers feel. This Master thesis research intends to reveal these aspects.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, this Master thesis has consulted all relevant literature surrounding Instagram, the beauty industry, young adults, source credibility and parasocial interaction. The basic mechanisms and intentions of Instagram were explained. It assembled research on the beauty industry and the BIs active in it. Subsequently, literature on young adults has been shared with a focus on social media use and social comparison. Moreover, all important research on source credibility as well as parasocial interaction was assembled.

Many studies that have taken a quantitative approach using questionnaires have concluded that the three elements within Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory are still

applicable (Breves et al., 2019; Leite & Baptista, 2021; Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021). However, why a specific source generally seems skilled, honest or qualified has left out in such studies. Ohanian (1990) applied the attractiveness dimension towards the physical appearance of celebrities, however, the possibility of being visually attracted has not been researched. The role of parasocial interaction in source credibility is also rather unreached especially regarding BIs on Instagram. The previous studies focused on celebrities, SMIs, travel influencers, and YouTubers, however, none have researched BIs.

There is a lack of research focussed on young adult's experiences with respect to especially the source credibility and parasocial interactions. Explicitly, the evaluation process is absent from the current literature. A qualitative approach will be used, due to Yuan and Lou's (2020) suggestion that such an approach might be needed in order to indicate more about what is involved regarding the evaluation of influencers' credibility. Thus, the current research is going to explore how young adults evaluate the credibility of BIs on Instagram. This will be done by pointing out the current attitudes towards BIs, researching whether Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory is still relevant, and exploring the role of parasocial interaction within credibility. In the next chapter on "Methodology", the collection, operationalisation and analysis of data, as well as sampling, will be thoroughly explained.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this research is to identify which factors aid young adults in evaluation the credibility of BIs on Instagram. In order to answer the research question of this Master thesis, on how young adults evaluate the source credibility of Instagram BIs, a qualitative research approach was adopted. This chapter will explain the methodological decisions that have been made through-out the research. The text has been divided into seven sections namely research design, sampling, data collection, operationalisation, data analysis, validity and reliability, and lastly, ethics.

### *3.1 Research design*

To be able to answer the research question of this Master thesis, on how young adults evaluate the credibility of BIs on Instagram, a qualitative research approach is chosen. The aim of a qualitative approach is to obtain a deeper insight into and identify views (Kvale, 2007) of young adult's perceptions of credibility of BIs on Instagram. A qualitative approach is suited for clarifying connections which need to be profoundly comprehended and are not able to be quantified (Brennen, 2013). The purpose of this method is exploring meaning-making, socially constructed realities and important connections (Brennen, 2013). Thus, it is a great manner for comprehending experiences and opinions (Brennen, 2013) of young adults on the credibility of BIs on Instagram.

To be able to answer this research question, it is necessary to conduct in-depth interviews, which is a method of data collection that explores profound understanding and information about a certain topic (Johnson, 2001). An additional goal of in-depth interviews is that it permits the researcher to obtain a better understanding (Johnson, 2001) of the perceived credibility and interactions young adults have with BIs on Instagram. By having conversations, the researcher is able to comprehend the experiences, perceptions, and thoughts (Kvale, 2007) of young adults on the credibility of BIs on Instagram. Such a conversation will also allow the researcher to go further than the already existing comprehension of source credibility and parasocial interaction (Johnson, 2001). Another unique strength from conducting in-depth interviews is that both the researcher as well as the interviewees are familiar with BIs on Instagram. Thus, the information is being generated through the synergy between them (Kvale, 2007), which means that this enables the information flow, as both can add to it. For this reason, in-depth interviews have been chosen as the best data collection method for the current study.

With in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews are a popular format as it offers the researchers a certain extent of structure as well as a certain degree of flexibility to adjust and improvise (Kvale, 2007). Due to the structure, it ensures that all the needed subjects are discussed during the conversation (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Therefore, semi-structured interviews have been chosen to guide the interview. In order to conduct the in-depth interviews, an interview guide has been made, which can be found in Appendix A.

### *3.2 Sampling*

The population for this research comprises young adults aged between 19 and 26. This population has been chosen because young adults in this age group comprise 31% of the Instagram users (Statista, 2022b) and young adults have shown to have the biggest attraction to influencer marketing on Instagram (Chen, 2018). Consequently, it is expected that they are using Instagram on a regular basis and therefore, are considered digital natives. Additionally, as statistics from Statista (2022a) shows, the beauty industry is rather big and thus, it is assumed that a portion of young adults follows Instagram BIs. Potential participants younger than 18 have been excluded as the same Statista (2022ab) report shows that 8% of Instagram users are minors. For this reason, they probably better represent the following of BIs than minors.

Purposive sampling has been applied as only young adults who met the sampling criteria have been invited for the in-depth interview (Flick, 2007). The sampling criteria of this research are based on three requirements. Firstly, the interviewees needed to be at least 18 years old or be in their twenties, since this age group often are acquainted with Instagram and are likely to be digital natives. Secondly, the young adults needed to follow or have followed a minimum of five BIs on Instagram, which is essential since they needed to express their perceptions of them. Thirdly, these young adults needed to have tried a product based on the recommendation of a BI. This is important as this experience might be related to their opinion on BIs as a credible source. As a result, the sample was heterogenous which highlights the similarities and differences between the interviewees (Flick, 2007, Patton, 2002). I tried to recruit young adults from as many different ages and to have it as equally divided as possible.

### 3.2.1 Sample

A total of 12 in-depth interviews have been conducted. Once the researcher conducted 12 interviews, there was no new information supplied by the recruited young adults. Data saturation occurred during the 10<sup>th</sup> interview as no new experiences, opinions and thoughts were mentioned. On average, the interviews took approximately one hour. The shortest interview was 47 minutes and six second and the longest one was one hour and 20 minutes. Demographic information of the interviewees can be found in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnic background</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Residence</i>
S.	Female	26 years old	Dutch	Working full-time as capacity specialist	Purmerend
G.	Female	25 years old	Dutch/ Spanish	Student, part-time job	Amsterdam
D.	Female	26 years old	Dutch / Moroccan	Working full-time as team leader	Amsterdam
K1.	Female	21 years old	Dutch	Student, part-time job	Amsterdam
M1.	Female	21 years old	Dutch/ Moroccan	Student, part-time job	Assendelft
K2.	Female	20 years old	Dutch	Student, part-time job	Limmen
M2.	Female	25 years old	Dutch	Student, part-time job	Amstelveen
R.	Female	23 years old	Dutch	Working full-time as a Dutch teacher	Den Haag
E1.	Female	22 years old	Dutch	Student, part-time job	Amsterdam
E2.	Female	24 years old	Dutch	Working full-time	Hilversum
P.	Female	19 years old	Dutch	Student, part-time job	Bergen
L.	Female	22 years old	Dutch	Working full-time as a primary teacher	Wormerveer

### 3.3 Data collection

An interview guide has been made in order to collect the data which can be found in Appendix A. The conceptualisation of the parts of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are based on the questionnaires of Muda and Hamzah (2021) and Xiao et al. (2018) which were statement based on Likert-scales. These statements have been adapted to “to what extent” questions in order to make it open-ended questions. A couple of additions have been made concerning two-sided information as well as the role of images by Filieri (2016). The role of bad press has also been addressed based on the in-depth interviews by Djafarova & Rushworth (2017). To conceptualize the part about parasocial interactions, the questions from Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021) have been used and adapted. These questions were



also statements based on Likert-scales which have been altered to “to what extent” questions. In addition to these questions, the role of personal details by Leita and Baptisa (2021) have been added. The last part focused on product recommendation and young adults’ experiences on it. The question: “whenever an influencer promotes a brand the participants are not aware of, would they accept this product recommendation” is based upon Djafarova and Rushworth’s (2017) research.

Before executing the interviews, a pilot interview was taken. The participant did match the sampling criteria in order to confirm whether the interview guide was clear and would be sufficient for 45-minute interview. The pilot was approximately 25 minutes. After those 25 minutes, the researcher was half-way through the interview guide. Therefore, it was assumed that this guide was extensive enough in order to complete 45-to-60-minute interviews. The pilot went well since the feedback of the participant was that the questions were clear, logical and interesting.

Eleven Interviews have been conducted face-to-face and one via Zoom. I preferred to conduct the interviews face-to-face since it offered lively interaction. Even aspects such as facial expressions, body language, tone of voice are proven to be valuable for the researcher (Kvale, 2007). The place where the interviews were conducted varied. Nine interviews were at an office since the majority of young adults worked there. A meeting room was reserved where the researcher and participant were alone, in a quiet room and away from distraction. Two of the interviews were held in the living rooms of the interviewees themselves, as was proposed by them. One meeting was held in the living room of the researcher. This was due to last-minute cancellation and re-scheduling of the interview, and I was unable to reserve a more neutral space on time. I tried to prevent having an interview in my living room as it was possible that participants may not be at their most comfortable in that setting. Nonetheless, the participant seemed comfortable and not distracted during the interview. One participant was not able to participate in a face-to-face interview and therefore, this interview was conducted through Zoom.

The participants signed the consent form before starting with the interview. All participants have signed this and given verbal agreement to be recorded and that this recording will be transcribed and analysed.

### *3.3.1 Procedure*

After the participants agreed to the interview, it was scheduled. Before starting, the interviewees were asked whether they had any question about the current research or interview (Edwards & Holland, 2013). None had questions beforehand. In order to ease the interviewees and make them feel comfortable, the interview started with some introductory questions related to the study such as: “to what extent do you consider yourself an active user” and “what do you like and dislike about Instagram”. The purpose of such introductory questions is to create rapport with the interviewees. This rapport is then expected to become more established along the interview by treating the interviewees respectfully, paying attention and having a sincere conversation regarding their opinions and experiences. Occasionally, some new questions were posed, or some questions got more attentions, however, this was feasible as the interviews were semi-structured.

After the introduction, the first part is related to their favourite influencer. Questions about who it is and what they know about this person were addressed. This has been chosen because it would make the following questions in other sections easier to answer.

The next part of the interview guide is connected to the perceived expertise of BIs on Instagram. Questions involved whether participants considered their favourite influencer to be an expert, experienced, knowledgeable qualified, skilled in beauty. It was also related back to credibility.

The third part of the interview guide relates to trustworthiness. Questions regarding the perceived trustworthiness of BIs on Instagram were asked based on the following factors: trustworthy, honest, reliable, sincere, dependable. For instance, the question “How do you judge whether an influencer is sincere? was asked.

The fourth part of the interview guide is connected to attractiveness. Questions regarding the perceived attractiveness of BIs on Instagram and their feed were asked. These were based on the following factors: attractive, elegant, beautiful, class, and sexy. Questions about the importance of BIs’ visuals was also asked.

The fifth part of the interview guide relates to parasocial interactions. Questions regarding a possible connection, the extent to BIs feeling like a friend and the degree of excitement when they post on Instagram were posed.

The sixth part of the interview guide is linked to the interviewees experience with product recommendations and how they are related to BIs’ credibility. They were asked to explain which product they tried and how this experience was.

The last part of the interview guide is linked to both source credibility and parasocial interactions. The participants were asked to point out where in the most recent Instagram post of their favourite influencer they could indicate they had expertise in beauty, are perceived as trustworthy, what elements were they attracted to and what kind of personal information was being shared.

Usually, the order of the interview guide was also the actual order of the interview as mentioned above. In some cases, it started with the second theme “trustworthiness” because these participants mentioned honesty, therefore, it seemed more logical to continue with that. Additionally, approximately half of the times, questions from the last theme “parasocial interaction” were asked through-out the interview since the interviewee would start talking about what they had in common or about the demonstration of products. In this case, if certain questions or follow-up questions had already been answered by the interviewees, they were passed upon in order to prevent repetition.

Most questions of these semi-structured interviews were made beforehand. Due to this format, it offered the chances to stray from the structure, the order, and ask new questions along the way. The interview guide consists of quite some questions since it guaranteed that all the subjects would be discussed in the interview.

### *3.4 Operationalisation*

The main two theories that lead this research are source credibility and parasocial interactions, which were discussed in the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. These theories with the appropriate sub-dimensions were used to create the interview guide and guide the actual in-depth interviews. The concepts that were included in the interviews were: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, parasocial interactions regarding BIs on Instagram. They have been selected in order to comprehend how young adults evaluated the credibility of BIs on Instagram. The interview guide, which can be found in Appendix A, follows the structure set out in the theoretical framework.

Table 2. Themes of the interview

Theme	Definition	Sensitizing concepts
Perceived expertise	The spectrum to which the influencer is perceived to be a legitimate course (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990).	Potential answer: “She explained the key ingredients of the serum very well, therefore it seemed that she knew what she was talking about”.
Trustworthiness	The degree perceived sincerity, believability, and integrity of the influencer (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990).	Potential answer: “I have seen the product in her non-branded content”.
Physical appeal	The degree of physical appeal of the influencer (Ohanian, 1990).	Potential answer: “her Instagram stories and feed look very aesthetically pleasing, therefore it is nice to consume her content”.
Parasocial interaction	The illusionary interaction an individual with media personalities (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Hartmann, 2016),	Potential answer: “she has shared her acne problems, which I can relate to”.

### 3.5 Data analysis

For the data analysis, thematic analysis has been applied. This is a method which focuses on language and offers the tools that help discovering themes, enabling to construct reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are three levels of coding namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Boeije, 2010). Open coding is the process of arranging the text and making codes of it (Boeije, 2010). This is where the researcher looks at all the answers given by the interviewees and carefully determines if it had any relation to the research question. If so, it gets an open code. Axial coding refers to the grouping of these open codes which will lead to sub-categories (Boeije, 2010). Here, the researcher looks at all the open codes and classifies them. Lastly, selective coding denotes the classification of these sub-categories which then turn into themes (Boeije, 2010). These themes will then answer the research question (Boeije, 2010; Kuckartz, 2014).

To analyse these transcripts, the researcher needed to engage with them (Kuckartz, 2014). This has been done through transcribing all the interviews manually. I have chosen

ATLAS.ti as software to code the interview transcripts. From the transcripts there were six segments as illustrated in the interview guide. Subsequently, based on the answers, coding has been applied, which is an analytical process in which data are categorized for analysis. After the first round of coding 112 open codes emerged. The reason why the pool of initial codes is somewhat smaller is because the interview had clear segments and therefore the answers were rather grouped together. An example of how the transcripts were coded can be found in Appendix B. During the second round of coding which is axial coding, the pool of initial codes has been grouped into 19 sub-categories. Within the third round of coding these sub-categories were arranged into themes. Based on these sub-categories, six themes have emerged, namely, expertise, trustworthiness, critical awareness, attractiveness, similarity, and distant connection which can be seen in Appendix C. The six themes that appeared from the coding of the transcripts will be the results needed to answer the research question (Boeije, 2010; Kuckartz, 2014).

### *3.6 Reliability and validity*

Reliability and validity are rather complex aspects to prove with in-depth interviews. Validity refers to the degree of truth and accuracy of the answers whereas reliability expresses the trustworthiness and consistency of the answers (Kvale, 2007). To the best of the researcher abilities, reliability has been assured by conducting a pilot-interview to ensure the comprehension and questioning of the interview guide. An interview guide guaranteed that all the concepts and factors within these concepts were discussed during the interview. The concepts of the interview guide are connected to the theoretical framework. Additionally, most of the questions were taken from quantitative studies but were formulated differently as these were solely statement with Likert-scales. Nevertheless, it is more complex to ensure validity since whenever another researcher would ask these questions, they could get diverging answers. Additionally, the gender of the interviewer might also play a part in this. If a 40-year-old man asks these questions, he might also get different results, which might be related to the reproducibility of the study (Broom et al., 2009). I am a 23-year-old female who also follows BIs on Instagram and have accepted numerous product recommendations by BIs, therefore, they might feel as if I really understand them. Whereas they might feel differently towards a 40-year-old male since he might be perceived as less understanding. Finally, reliability as well as validity have been tried to be ensured through recording the interviews and transcribing them. It is also good to point out that these results are not going to be

generalisable since it is a very small sample and therefore not representative of the population (Babbie, 2014). However, since the present study aims to discover experiences, opinions, and meaning making, it also does not have the purpose of generalizing obtained results.

### *3.7 Ethics*

From every interviewee consent has been requested before the interview (Kvale, 2007) by asking them to sign a consent form stating they agree data will only be used for research purposes, the audio will be deleted after transcribing it. All participants were told that they would not receive a monetary compensation and explained their rights: they could quit at any moment and whenever they do not want to answer a question they were allowed to.

Every participant has been made acquainted with the research subject and the objectives, has been informed regarding the timespan of the interview, and the course of topics (Kvale, 2007). Besides having the interviewees sign the consent form, the researcher also verbally asked their permission to be recorded. Participants were also informed that personal information such as one's gender, age, occupation and ethnic background would be shared, but they would be identified by their initial only in order to remain anonymity. This is because the interviewees could share certain insecurities. Once the participants agreed to all of this verbally, the recording started. Thematic analysis is an unobtrusive method of analysing data.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the goal of this research was to identify which factors aid young adults in evaluation the credibility of BIs on Instagram. This has been done by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with 12 female young adults. The chosen sampling method was purposive sample and the young adults needed to have three specific criteria. Before starting the recording, these women have signed a consent form and have agreed verbally to be recorded and that the transcripts will be analysed. Anonymity has been promised to them as dealing with beauty it was guessed that perhaps certain insecurities would come up. Finally, all the interviews were transcribed, and thematic analysis has been applied. In the next chapter, results, the findings from the interview transcripts will be discussed including the main themes, sub-categories and initial codes.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter the research results of the 12 interview transcripts are presented. Six main themes emerged through thematic analysis of the coded data (Table 3):

1. Expertise is one of the best predictors for credibility
2. Trustworthiness is one of the best predictors for credibility
3. Critical awareness is always present
4. Attractiveness invites young adults to look
5. Similarity is a bonus for credibility
6. Distant connection does not minimize credibility

All themes and their constituting 19 sub-categories will be discussed in the chapter. There is also a total of 112 initial codes. The complete coding framework is given in Appendix C where all themes, sub-categories, initial codes, and example questions can be found. Each theme will be carefully explained in its own sub-section.

**Table 3: Main themes with coherent code groups**

<i>Main themes</i>	<i>Code groups</i>
<i>Expertise</i>	Expert, Experience, Knowledge, and Skilled
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	Trust, Honesty, Reliability, Sincerity
<i>Attractiveness</i>	Physically attracted, Visually attracted, and Relevant content
<i>Similarity</i>	Community feeling, Relatable, and Interest in influencers' personal life
<i>Distant connection</i>	Awareness of one-sided interaction, and Disconnection
<i>Critical awareness</i>	Extra research, Reflection, and Doubtful of influencer

### 4.1 Expertise

The theme expertise refers to the perceived expertise of BIs on Instagram noticed by the female young adults interviewed. This theme emerged due to the sub-categories: experience, knowledge, skilled, and expert. The subcategory experience appeared by the female young adults mentioning that they assessed the degree of experience of BIs through their time in the industry, awareness of product changes, getting invited to beauty events, and growing experience throughout their time in the industry. Remarkably, if these BIs have their own brand it demonstrated experience. The sub-category knowledge came up through the interviewees mentioning that for them it was essential that BIs need to be informative, knew what they were talking about, could give explanations and demonstration, and backed by

research. The sub-category in this theme, skilled, developed through the young adults mentioning that skills can be seen as BIs having a university degree. Also, BIs prove they have skills through thoroughly and convincingly demonstrating the product, doing other people's makeup and the end results should look great. The last sub-category expert incorporated answers that pointed towards the BI as a specialist, having the total package, and the way of talking. Ohanian (1990) identified this theme as one of the factors that contributed to source credibility. Thus, it may be the most important factor in young adults' evaluation process, generally they do care about the overall expertise of BIs on Instagram.

#### *4.1.1. Experience*

All the interviewees have pointed out in several answers that they believe a BI on Instagram needs to have experience in beauty in order for them to be credible. Interestingly, the influencers they follow or have followed such as NikkieTutorials, Monica Geuze, FleurMaxime, Fadim, Huda, all have this experience they consider is important. There are a lot of factors the young adults mentioned that demonstrated experience. One of the main aspects that returned was the time active in the beauty sector as well as being one of the first BIs. These are a bit related, because the longer the BI is in the industry, the more experience she is likely going to have. So, when one is one of the first such as NikkieTutorials and Monica Geuze, they are perceived as having a lot of experience in beauty.

*“Her makeup products... Exactly... Also on a later age she builds an empire, yes, sick, just sick.” (D)*

The main argument why this proves that specifically these BIs are experienced in beauty, is that they have built their own business. In order to do so, they need to have years of experience knowing the of kind or product, the formula, what is popular. It is suggested that these BIs are aware of this through having tested a decent amount of beauty products in their online career. This is not only the case for the BIs who have their own brand, but also the regular ones. One of the interviewees (G.) pointed out that because of the years they are in the beauty business as well as testing of products, BIs are aware of changes in products. This could only be demonstrated due to the years of acquired experience in beauty. Lastly, as BIs getting invited to beauty related events also proved that brands too noticed them as experienced in beauty.



#### 4.1.2. Knowledge

Another part of expertise was the sub-category knowledge. All the participants pointed out that knowledge was necessary for them to consider a BI on Instagram as credible. A collection of aspects demonstrated the BIs' knowledge such as explaining the product, being informative, and being aware of Instagram trends.

*“She explains why she is showing it, and what active ingredients or what is in the product. SO, why this is a good or bad product. I think that is mainly it. It is not simply a post of “hey, buy this”, it is more like why is this good for your skin, for who is this good, for who this isn't good with a good explanation.” (M1)*

However, four participants also discussed that going beyond the necessary also suggested that the BI has knowledge.

*“Yes, because then she stills backs it up with extra information, academic articles. So, it's goes beyond the scope of solely the product. It is not that she is only focused on the promotion part of her content.” (S)*

Interestingly, the back-up by research component was only mentioned when a BI would be specialised in skincare. This concern was raised by two participants as they said that as they would apply a skincare product to their face when it is getting absorbed. Therefore, whenever the BI would back this up with academic research demonstrating whether it is good or bad for the skin, it got signalled as knowledgeable.

#### 4.1.3. Skilled

The last part of this theme is the sub-category skilled. All of the female young adults pointed out that in order to be considered credible, these influencers need to be skilled till a certain degree. For these interviewees to acknowledge BIs as having skills was through a step-by-step demonstration how to apply a certain product, whether it be skincare or makeup. On-screen demonstrations seeing it being applied also help most of the interviewees to form an opinion of the product. Another way for BIs to show their skills is through doing other people's makeup. This then suggest that they are so skilled they are hired to do that. Two BIs namely Xelly and NikkieTutorials are actual makeup artists themselves, the latter having done Kim Kardashian's makeup.

*“But you also have beauty influencers who do the makeup-up of other people. For instance, NikkieTutorials did that on celebrities like Kim K and stuff. Then I think oh shit, you are good.” (D)*

The thought-process of one of the interviewees was, if NikkieTutorials is allowed to do Kim Kardashian’s makeup, then she must be very skilled. Remarkably, seven of the female young adults have mentioned that certain BIs on Instagram have degrees such as Xelly, Mascha Feoktistova (Beautygloss), and FleurMaxime. The seven participants argued that because these influencers have studied for it, they automatically are skilled. Nevertheless, the other five believe this is not necessary for a BI on Instagram in order to be seen as credible.

Having a great complexion was also an element through which BIs could show they are skilled. This was indicated by six of the interviewees of which two even went as far as saying that NikkieTutorials creates art. This code then refers to makeup as an art form which demonstrates BIs having skills

#### *4.1.4. Expert*

Although seven of interviewees mentioned that being a beauty expert is not a necessity for BIs. The other eight interviewed female young adults point out that for a BI to be seen as an expert they needed to be a specialist in a specific field within beauty.

*“Nikkie [Tutorials] really started with make-up, she wanted to become known for her makeup [and she still only does this]. She does the makeup for really famous people, for special occasions, for big events.” (K1)*

Not only NikkieTutorials was seen as a specialist in her field, FleurMaxime has also been named a specialist since she is also very specialised in skincare. Interestingly, the six interviewees who named either of these two as their favourite influencer, considered them also a specialist in their specific area.

Four participants in this research also mentioned that an expert in beauty, simply has the whole package. The answers point out that the whole package signifies experience, knowledge, skills, but also aspects from honesty to relevant content. This will be explored in the coming sections.

The way of talking refers to how the young adults interviewed feel whenever a BI is speaking on a certain beauty-related topic. Four felt that these BIs are speaking on something; they know what they are talking about by the way they talk.

#### 4.2. *Trustworthiness*

The second theme that emerged from the interview transcripts is trustworthiness, which involves the perceived trustworthiness of BIs on Instagram acknowledged by the participating female young adults. The theme appeared through the sub-categories: honesty, sincerity, trust, and reliability. Honesty came into light by the interviewees noticing accountability, transparency, two-sided information as well as BIs remaining true to themselves. The second sub-category, sincerity, developed from answers that referred to BIs actually enjoying the product and a mix of organic and promoted content on Instagram. The sub-category trust refers to answers that indicated general trust in the BIs followed. The sub-category reliability emerged through answers that revealed advice, a convincing feeling, and repetition of promoted content. This dimension has also been identified by Ohanian (1990) as an essential factor for credibility.

##### 4.2.1. *Honesty*

One interesting aspect that was mentioned during the interviews was BIs taking responsibility when something goes wrong regarding their promoted goods. An example of this could be, that it was a bad product or that it was not delivered to the followers who purchased. If a BI was able to take accountability, then this would still contribute to their credibility.

Being transparent was also a recurring element in the interviews. This was related to the product, partnership as well as their personal life. This then demonstrated trustworthiness.

*“She openly talked about like ehm plastic surgery, which was something I appreciated as a person that she is not like telling lies.” (D)*

Another factor that was associated with honesty, was the fact that BIs stayed true to themselves as opposed to change for the worse. Some of the BIs mentioned by the interviewees are rather big. Therefore, it is assumed that seeing them remain themselves, demonstrates honesty.

Five of the interviewees also mentioned that whenever a BI is critical about a product or experience, they relate this to their overall honesty.

The last aspect within this theme is offering two-sided information. This refers to BIs on Instagram being able to give their honest opinion. So, not solely telling what is good about a product, but also what is not. This is something all participants agreed upon

*“If someone can also point out negative and risks to be removed from the PR lists. A lot of people like Huda, said that the first load of Kylie’s lip kits were bad, and when you say those things online you get removed from the PR list, but that you want to risk that, that is good.” (D)*

#### 4.2.2. Sincerity

The second sub-category of this theme, sincerity, has been recognised as a factor, which they associate trustworthiness with. This sub-category contains four different aspects such as enjoying the products, the mix of organic and sponsored content, pure intention, and talking freely. The first feature, enjoying products, refers to the fact that these young adults interviewed can see that the BI also uses the products outside the promoted content. This then demonstrates they are sincere about promoting the items in the first place.

*“Imagine someone would also use the product before, then I would be like okay so without the money you also already used it.” (M2)*

In addition, BIs on Instagram have to show a good balance between organic and sponsored content. Whenever a BI would only post promoted content, then these young adults interviewed, view it as if they only want to make money. Therefore, a mix of it is alright.

Related to this, is that BIs on Instagram need to show pure intentions, which means that the BI is in this business for the right reasons such as helping her audience. When these BIs do come across as having pure intentions, these female young adults associate this with sincerity.

*“She... for sure wants to inform people and that she has pure intentions or something.” (D)*

The last item in the sub-category is that young adults need to notice that BIs on Instagram talk freely and are not acting or reading a script since this comes across as insincere, the opposite of what young adults would like to see.

#### 4.2.3. Trust

In a digital world called Instagram, it is inescapable for young adults to consume promoted content. That is why being selective is one of the factors that contribute to a BI's trustworthiness according to three of the interviewees. Another interesting aspect is the believe seven participants have in BIs on Instagram. Three of them indicated that whenever a BI seemed real by showing their ugly side or just a real portrayal of things, it created trust for them. Two others mentioned that trust was also created because they believe that these BIs would not promote a bad product since it may jeopardise their reputation. Similarly, a BI investing her own money into a brand is better trusted.

Another interesting part is the time these participants have followed BIs. It is suggested that the longer they have followed such a person, the more likely it is the trust in them increases, as illustrated by the following quote.

*“Because through that you get to know the person. Imagine if I see a video from someone I don't know, then I don't know if I can trust them. It is similar to a stranger you're meeting on the street and they are trying to promote something. Then you also don't know whether it is sales or because they actually like the product. However, if a friend would recommend you something, then you would trust them way quicker because I know her for a long time and I trust her. So, for me it works the same with influencers.” (M)*

Three of the participants indicated that they would take the opinion of certain BIs as truth, suggesting they experience a certain degree of trust.

*“If someone tells me a lot about the product, I quickly take that as truth and that becomes my opinion of the product as well. If someone then asks me if I know that product, I share that opinion with that person.” (R.)*

#### 4.2.4. Reliability

The last sub-category of this theme is reliability, which refers to being able to rely on the BI. This sub-category consists of three elements of which the first one is advice. Whenever the young adults interviewed felt they could get advice from BIs, this assured reliability.

With reliability, also comes that certain interviewees have noticed that the BIs in question are convincing. Not only with believes, but also with actions.

*“Very catchy. I never heard it before. But well, she convinced me to wear sunscreen everyday.”*

One participant mentioned a couple of times that a BI should also be consistent in order to be perceived as reliable.

The last element of reliability is the reputation of promoted content. According to half of interviewees, it is important for them to see repetition of the promoted content in order to perceive the BI as reliable. This refers to promoting it more than once so that the young adults are aware that they can rely upon the BI for it.

#### 4.3. Critical awareness

The third theme that emerged from the transcripts is critical awareness, which means that the female young adults maintain a critical thought process towards the BIs on Instagram. This theme is based on the following sub-categories: awareness of dishonesty, extra research, mindfulness, and doubtfulness of influencer. Extra research suggests that the young adults do extra research in order to check whether the BI was truthful. This can be done through searching for reviews of “real” people who have tried the product or looking up what other BIs have said about a certain product. Reflection signifies that they are attentive of what the BI is promoting or if mistakes might have been made. The last sub-category, doubtfulness of influencer, refers to the wariness the interviewees experienced with certain BIs in Instagram. This theme coincides the other themes, suggesting that even though a BI has expertise, trustworthiness, is attractive and is similar, female young adults still are critically aware of the situation they are in.

#### *4.3.1. Extra research*

All twelve interviewed female young adults would not solely base their opinion on what the BI is saying about a product. They do extra research whenever they are really interested in purchasing it. This sub-category emerged through the following codes: opinion of other influencers, other social media platforms, own research, reading reviews, look for confirmation.

Three interviewees mentioned that they looked for what other influencers were saying about a product. One specifically said that she would not do that because she does not know which BI would also talk about that product.

The next code, other social media platforms, involved the act of the young adults searching for more content of the promoted product but on TikTok or YouTube. This could provide other perspectives of a product.

Nine young adults interviewed will look up and read reviews of “actual” people who have tried the product since they are critical towards the recommendation of BIs on Instagram.

In a way when these young adults are doing their own research, they are essentially looking for confirmation of what the BI has mentioned about a product. So, they are not looking for reasons as to why recommendations of BIs would not be true.

The last code, own research, means reading the comments underneath the post as well as going to the website of the product itself in order to see how that looks and what is mentioned there. One of the interviewees even contacted the client service to attain certain information about a product promoted by a BI. Apparently, she could not find such information neither on the official website nor in the BI’s posting.

Interestingly, it does not matter for these young adults whether the product is promoted or not because they will always do their own research, which demonstrates a certain awareness.

#### *4.3.2. Reflection*

The second sub-category that is part of the theme critical awareness, is reflection. Reflection involves the young adult’s ability to reflect upon the BI’s actions, motives, and demonstrations, whilst keeping in mind their own opinions. This surfaced due to the following codes: it is a job, it should be different, mistakes can happen, own evaluation, own experience, products might work differently, put things into perspective, and the use of filters.

The first code, it is a job, refers to the fact that approximately half of the interviewees are aware that being an influencer is a job, therefore, in order to make money they need to incorporate promoted content.

*“I realize that it is part of their job and revenue model that they have to make a living from something.” (R)*

Next, it should be different, refers to the attitude of a few of the interviewees that the Instagram culture with its beauty ideals needs to change. One influencer in particular, Vera Camilla, was named by three interviewees since she is breaking the stigma of being pretty and skinny. Their opinion is that even though she is not seen as an “Instagram hottie” she is a credible BI because she is so real. Another three interviewees pointed out that it is not the job of one or two to break it.

Another recurring code was that mistakes can happen. With is meant by this is that BIs have made mistakes through bad partnerships or by promoting a bad product. This was also mentioned whenever a BI starts an own brand, then it is rather normal that some errors will be made.

*“People make mistakes, it happens. It would be disgusting if we cancel someone just based on that.” (M2)*

Another recurring answer was that three of these young adults still mentioned that they trusted on their own evaluation before accepting a recommendation. They are aware that they need to think rationally whenever a BI is promoting or simply saying something about a product. Especially towards an unknown brand, they would also use their own critical decision-making.

Another code within this sub-category is young adults’ own experience. This refers to how every participant experienced a product recommended or promoted by a BI on Instagram. Some had a bad experience, some a positive one that was similar as the BI’s. Interestingly, all the three participants who tried something promoted by a BI and had a bad experience, never really associated this with the credibility of the BI in question. Rather they would, rather, consider that it was more because of them (skin, texture etc) that it did not work out for them or because the reviews they have read about the product were positive.



The next code, product might work differently, involved the consciousness of the interviewees that even though it works well on the BI, it might work differently on them. There are a lot of possible factors that could influence this.

Four of the interviewees mentioned that they felt like some things needed to be put into perspective. This means that a BI does not need to look pretty in order to be perceived as credible, but it does help attract. However, if this BI has expertise and trustworthiness then they do not need to be pretty.

The use of filters by BIs on Instagram to look prettier is something that all the interviewees have noticed. The majority is rather neutral about their general use. Some of these young adults also use filters themselves.

*“Yes, I’m kind of neutral about it. Because I get why they use it, they want to show the prettiest side of themselves. On the other hand, I do think that is not needed.” (G)*

#### 4.3.3. *Doubtful of influencer*

This sub-category consists of the codes that signify numerous doubts towards BIs on Instagram. It contains the following codes: minimum effort, changing for the worse, does not know everything, doubts in BIs ability, doubts honesty when sponsored, fake, impure intentions, influencers accepting offers, insufficient information, not taking accountability, unnuanced opinion, unspecialised BIs, and using filters with promoted content.

Minimum effort means the perceived time and energy spend on a post by the young adults. Simply posting a photo with “this is great, purchase it” will not suffice.

*“Maybe yes because I think that whenever someone is just posting a picture with a caption, then I feel like someone has put less time in it. So, it feels more like an ad in between things, like oh I post it quickly and I earn money with it.” (E)*

Another item that eight interviewees noticed is that a BI does not know everything. Whenever they feel like this, they will doubt the influencer as can be seen in the following quote.

*“In fact, I personally find it very annoying when I feel that people don't know what they are talking about. I unfollow people immediately.” (R)*

Doubt in influencer's ability is more focussed on the overall sense BIs are showing through their content on Instagram. One example given by S was that with FleurMaxime she sometimes also has pimples. However, if this happens every week and FleurMaxime is making content in order to control acne. S doubts whether or not FleurMaxime controls it herself, thus, then she would doubt the BI's ability.

Ten young adults flagged that they tend to consider certain BIs rather fake, mainly those they do not follow. Whenever certain BIs they do follow become fake, they are likely to unfollow them, which Pom as done with Queenofjetlags.

Six interviewees consider a BI starting to be an influencer in order to earn money as having an impure intention. They are of this opinion not only when BIs start their career, but also when they are only in it for the money when their business is advanced.

This is also connection to the next code, influencers accepting offers, which implies that certain interviewees feel that certain BIs accept everything. Other participants believe that smaller BIs or starting BIs simply accepting everything. Therefore, certain young adults are aware that BIs might be dishonest.

Three female interviewees mentioned that whenever a BI would promote or talk about a certain product and only mentions something such as "This is an amazing product, buy it", then they would immediately have doubts about this BI. They became suspicious because the BI in question gave insufficient information about the product.

Another interviewee kept repeating that whenever a BI would not take accountability with a failed product or partnership, she would perceive serious doubts about the BI.

Seven interviewees expressed doubt on unspecialised BIs, persons they do not follow but are just aware of, because such influencers are not specialised in one thing, but do a bit of everything.

*"This really depends on... Imagine if someone's scope of promoting things is very divergent, so it would promote this and then it would promote that. Thus I would trust this person less than someone who has a certain subject and explains well why they are promoting this product." (M2)*

Generally, all young adults interviewed are questioning the BI's honesty when they promote a product or service. They are explicit about that they were very well aware that surely if BIs are getting paid, their honesty could be jeopardised.

*“So yeah.. I also find it difficult to say because a lot of content is promoted so they get paid. You know this and that might exaggerate when they praise a product.” (G)*

This then connects to another code, unnuanced opinion, as seemingly BIs who are getting paid to say certain positive things about selected products usually seem more enthusiastic about it than reality. Although this may not be true, it is how interviewees perceive it.

Lastly, they are aware of the filter and Photoshop culture on Instagram and as mentioned earlier they are neutral about it. It is not uncommon for BIs to apply filtering or photoshop pictures of their videos to improve quality aiming to better sell the product they are promoting. Whenever interviewees notice this, they are really questioning the BIs honesty.

*“Imagine if they’re promoting a foundation, but they have blurred their face ... then... you might believe that you get such a skin when you use the products but is has been filtered and stuff. This would definitely decrease someone’s credibility. However, if it is... if it has nothing to do with a product, then I am not that bothered.” (E)*

#### *4.4. Attractiveness*

Attractiveness refers to the perceived attractiveness of physical appearance, visuals as well as content of BIs on Instagram. This theme derived from three sub-categories namely: physically attracted, visually attracted, and appealing content. The sub-category physically attracted appeared by the young women mentioning what physical aspects they might be drawn to. Besides, physically attracted, they needed to be attracted by the visuals put out by the BIs, which is where the second sub-category emerged, visually attracted. Appealing content appeared by the interviewees mentioning that the content needed to be informative as well as alluring. Interestingly, Ohanian (1990) has identified attractiveness as a third and last factor of source credibility of which it focused only on the physical part. Still, the current research proposed that more elements are relevant in order for female young adults to be attracted.

##### *4.4.1. Physically attractive*

The majority of the interviewees indicated that the following elements, classy, elegance, good-looking, perfect image, and social comparison are aspects that help in order to be attracted. Classy refers to the degree the interviewees regard BIs as of high-class. Elegance

means that the BI has refined taste. Good-looking involves the BIs' looks. All of the participants agreed that that these elements helpful as they are essentially promoting beauty are not a necessity for a BI on Instagram in order to be considered credible. Still, even though these female interviewees are aware of this, they can't help but feel unconsciously attracted to good-looking BIs. An image is considered perfect as it depicts what female young adults perceive as the perfect image. Social comparison refers to the event where these young adults compare themselves in either looks or status to BIs on Instagram.

*"I'm not so sure. Perhaps unconsciously yes. However, this is not something I am very conscious about."* (G)

Remarkably, even though factors such as classy, elegance, and good-looking are associated with credibility, sexy is not. Some might find certain BIs, such as Monica Geuze, sexy. However, ten participants confirm that it is neither what they search for in a BI on Instagram nor it is necessary.

*"Yes... well... I don't think it is their function. There are people that are being labelled as sexy or something and often that is the case when they present themselves as sexy... However, often beauty influencers are not the people who are sexy. Like perhaps they want to be... Like often they are those BBL-chicks, I don't think that is sexy. I'm sure that a lot of people do find that sexy."* (D)

They do need to appear as if they are taken care of, therefore the sub-category, take care of themselves came into light.

Seven interviewees noticed that on Instagram perfect image, which is the third code, is what BIs are trying to maintain. It is suggested that since these young adults are constantly consuming such content from these influencers. These seven young adults mentioned that they have become attracted to this perfect image.

Due to this perfect picture, another code emerged namely, social comparison, which refers to the phenomenon of young female adults comparing themselves to BIs, either in looks and/or status. For some it can be inspiring, but for others it is more related to negative feeling of themselves. Even though, certain female young adults are aware that it is a possible unattainable image, they are attracted to it. One argued this is because BIs need to "sell" something they do not have and possibly could strive for.

*“This does not work for me yet. You begin to think can it be better? Can it be different? Should I do something differently? Instead of just waking up and be content with what you have.” (S)*

#### *4.4.2. Visually attractive*

As Instagram is a visual medium, the female young adults indicated that it is also essential to be visually attracted to the BIs on Instagram. From the moment they lay eyes on a BI’s Instagram feed, they need to be lured in, which has been categorised as attractive feed.

*“For attracting the audience, it is really important, absolutely.” (M2)*

Some other aspects such as colourful, aesthetically pleasing, and professional looking are elements that need to be noticed by these female young adults. Colourful refers to the degree that the image attracts the eye and that the colour palette used matched with each other. Aesthetically pleasing means that the whole assemble depicted is stylish, matches and meets the needs of female young adults. Professional looking involves the degree of appropriateness of the visuals. For some it also meant not dressing to naked as a BI.

The last aspect is that the feed needs to be inspiring, meaning that the young adults are able to take inspiration from it.

*“Ehm, well I often think with people... I often get inspiration from clothing, hairstyle, ehm looks that I remember for a party.” (E)*

#### *4.4.3. Appealing content*

Not only need these female young adults to be attracted physically and visually, the content the BI on Instagram also need to be appealing for them. This sub-category appeared through the codes: curiosity, helpful, looking forward, personalized, and quality. Curiosity can be identified by the sensation of being pricked by BIs’ content on Instagram.

Another element is that the content needs to be helpful in ways such as improving skin care routine or makeup routine. Whenever young adults perceive a BI to have appealing content, some of the interviewees were looking forward to their content.

*“A lot... with her [FleurMaxime]... it is not that I go to Instagram and consciously think I want to see something of her, but when I see what she has posted something, then I would immediately look what she has posted, what is it about?” (M2)*

Another item that constitutes content to be appealing, is that the BI is able to offer personalized content. An example given by one of the interviewees is that S is interested in acne-related postings, so she expects FleurMaxime to also go into depth about this subject.

Lastly, the content of the BIs on Instagram need to have a certain degree of quality. This was a bit hard for the interviewees to explain, however, they should be able to notice that time and effort was spent on the content produced by these influencers.

#### *4.5. Similarity*

The fifth theme is similarity, which covers the perceived similarity between the female young adults interviewed and the BIs they follow on Instagram. The theme surfaced from the following sub-categories: community feeling, relatable, and relevant content. Community feeling relate relates to the feeling certain interviewees experienced as belonging to their favourite BIs' group. The sub-category relatable involved the degree of relatability BIs radiate through their content and personality. The last sub-category within this theme is interest in BIs' personal life. This indicates the curiosity certain female young adults feel towards the BIs they follow. Ten interviewees believe that seeing similarities with the BIs they follow plays a part in evaluating whether they are credible or not. Certain aspects of this could be connected to the parasocial interaction concept (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Hartmann, 2016). The data gathered from the interviews suggest that similarity might play a part in young adult's evaluation towards BIs' credibility.

##### *4.5.1. Community feeling*

Community feeling consists of a team, friend or sister connection certain young adults interviewed might experience through their time of following a BI. The community feeling also refers to a personal bond young adults might feel. Additionally, meeting the BI in real life also plays a role in the community feeling. The main reason for this feeling is due to the manner the BI interacts with their audience. Ten participants have expressed this community feeling.

*“If you watch her videos... She feels like a friend you're sitting next to, and she talks about her life.” (E)*

Solely three interviewees have actually met one of the BIs they follow, namely Monica Geuze and Beautygloss. These experiences were short but sweet. The main takeaway is that when they met, the BIs also felt like normal people to which these interviewees could relate. Another four participants would see it as fun meeting their favourite BI because they have this sense of community.

Interestingly, whenever the interviewees would mention this community feeling, it is always either feeling like they are in the BI's team or that the influencer feels like a friend.

#### 4.5.2. *Relatable*

The relatable sub-category developed by the following codes: believing in the same things, feels comfortable, feeling like an equal, fun person, liking the same things, recognition, respect, and role model position.

The first code, believing in the same things, refers to certain societal wokeness that is getting attention on social media. Examples could be, Black Lives Matter.

*“Yes, imagine if someone is racist, then preferably... no... I don't want to be a client of yours. Then I think “no’ mainly.” (D)*

Comfortable refers to the degree young adults feel comfortable by the way BIs post their content. This can either be the visual, the text in the caption as well as what and how they talk in their stories or reels.

Two female young adults even pointed out that they perceived the BI they followed so relatable that they believe that they would get along together.

Feeling like an equal involves the degree to which the young adults feel the BI is an equal. The BI could demonstrate this by also showing their less glamorous side, also being in their pyjamas, without makeup, and not posing. Being relatable also removes the pressure these young adults feel due to the ideal image, mentioned in the theme attractiveness.

Another important element eight interviewees have mentioned is that BIs on Instagram need to be fun persons, which is defined as someone with humour, enthusiastic, or having a fun personality.

*“She gets me into that enthusiasm so when she is excited about a product in a video or photo it automatically makes me happy. She can positively influence my mood.” (R)*

The interviewees have also pointed out on a couple occasions that it is important for them to see that the BIs like the same things as they do. This includes a lot of different aspects such as fashion, make-up as well as what these influencers are enjoying in their spare time, like going for drinks, or seeing friends.

Nine participants mentioned that BIs they follow on Instagram need to inspire them as they see them as sources of inspiration.

Another item that was highlighted by the majority of the interviewed female young adults is the need of recognition of some part of themselves in the BI they follow. This could be advocating for the same things such as alcohol free and perfume free skincare. It can also be more cultural heritage they see in one of their favourite influencers as mentioned by interviewee D.

*“And ehm. I also found it nice that she was a woman of colour and Arabic. She was like millionaire and [I] as a little girl to see that someone who looks like you or has the same origin, that can achieve was nice” (D)*

The code respect refers to the degree of respect female young adults have for BIs on Instagram. Three interviewees revealed that it was important for them to have respect for the BIs. Such influencers are able to earn their respect through having similar morals as them.

The last aspect within this sub-category is that some participants feel that some BIs have a role model position, which they appreciate. However, it is not solely about status. One interviewee clearly explained that BIs need to be aware of their position as they are influencing their following with their content. Whether it is promoted or organic is irrelevant.

#### *4.5.3. Interest in influencer's personal life*

Similarly to how the media is interested in the personal lives of movie stars and legendary singers, the same could be applied to the personal lives of BIs on Instagram. Eleven of the female young adults interviewed discussed that due to the fact they are following them, they have developed an interest into their personal lives.

*“You have developed such an interest in their lives that you want to see more of them.” (R)*



That these young adults feel similarities with BIs they follow is because of the amount of personal information these influencers share online, ranging from where they live, their home situation to showing their children, or to coming out of the closet like NikkieTutorials.

Since they often share their personal lives or personal information till a certain degree, their following only gets a glimpse of their “real” life. One participant even pointed out that she felt it was necessary for these influencers to share their lives in order to be successful.

*“Absolutely, yes. I think they cannot become really big without sharing anything about their personal life.” (K)*

#### *4.6. Distant connection*

Distant connection refers to the degree the females interviewed feel detached from the BIs. This theme appeared from general on one-sided interaction and disconnection which are the sub-categories of the theme. Awareness of one-sided interaction involves the consciousness of the interviewees that the interaction or need for it only comes from their part. The second sub-category, awareness of reality, suggests that what the BI talks about or puts out is not a genuine reality. The last sub-category, disconnection, implies that the young adults interviewed do not feel connected with the BIs they follow on Instagram. Interestingly, these sub-categories have been indirectly mentioned by most of the interviewees. They also clearly state that it is not essential to evaluate a BIs’ credibility. Often, they discussed that expertise or trustworthiness are the determining elements for this.

##### *4.6.1. Awareness of one-sided interaction*

This awareness of one-sided interaction is created through the following codes: they know that you don’t exist, BIs not feeling like a friend, not actually knowing BIs, not feeling a connection towards them, not feeling part of BIs team, and they keep things private. Essentially, this sub-category means that young adults are aware that there is only one line of communication.

Six participants are aware that the BIs they follow have absolutely no recollection of who their following are. This is because these young adults who follow them, get to see some snippets of the BIs’ lives. However, it is not as if the BI knows what is going on in their lives and therefore these young adults know that BIs are not really aware of their existence. Therefore, the two other codes, does not feel like a friend and not part of the team, also came

up. The main reason mentioned by the interviewees who felt the one-sided interaction was, if these BIs don't know me, how can I be part of their team or feel like they are my friend.

Most of the young adults interviewed are also aware that even though the BI has shared certain personal information, they still do not know this person. Some have argued this because they feel that it is possible that they have strategically chosen to share certain things and keep other things private.

*“Like it remains quite hard because you don't know this person, so you don't know what kind of person they are. Sometimes you are able to see whether it is a serious person, but you don't know them personally so that is hard to assess.” (E)*

Due to the fact they do with the BI because they do not know who these influencers really are.

The last aspect these young adults are aware of is that even though BIs do share personal information about them on their Instagram, they surely keep certain things private. However, the interviewees highlighted that this does not bother them and they understand that like G expressed below. Some have also pointed out that they do not follow BIs for their personal lives.

*“If someone has a personal problem or something... yeah... then that is something private and I understand that you might not want to share it with the outside world” (G)*

#### 4.6.2. Disconnection

Disconnection, the last sub-category of this theme, concerns the missing connection the young adults feel with the BIs they follow on Instagram. This sub-category appeared from the mentions of bad press, distance, no need to know the influencer, not friendly, and not looking forward.

The first code bad press involves the fictive scenario that a BI would be involved in a scandal. In case of scandal similar to the sexual abuse allegations around the televised talent show *The Voice of Holland*, then the interviewees would disconnect from the BI. If it were a scandal that took into question someone's credibility, then certain interviewees expressed that for them too it would relate to BIs' credibility.

Distance involves the feeling of three participating female young adults that there is a certain distance between them and the BI in terms of background or status.

Not friendly refers to behaviour of BIs considered as not friendly. 'No need to know the BI' means that young adults do not feel the need to personally know a BI, they are simply interested in the beauty related content by the BI on Instagram. Five of the interviewees have indicated this feeling.

Lastly, most of the interviewees have mentioned that they do not feel excited towards the content posted by the BIs they follow. It is suggested that this might be due to a disconnection between the young adult and the BI.

*“And on her feed, I do appreciate a good picture, but it’s not like I’m waiting until they have posted something.” (G)*

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, from the collected findings of the 12 transcripts of in-depth interviews with female young adults, the following six themes emerged: expertise, trustworthiness, critical awareness, attractiveness, similarity, and distant connection.

The first sub-question explores what the current opinion of female young adults is towards the credibility of BIs on Instagram. The theme critical awareness, which suggests that they usually keep a critical mind towards these BIs on Instagram, answers this sub-question. The young adults often perceive doubts towards the BIs and therefore need reflection and extra research.

The second sub-question sought to find out the way female young adults evaluated the trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of BIs on Instagram. The following three themes: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness did emerge. Expertise developed from the young adults expressing that BIs needed to have experience, knowledge and preferably skills. Trustworthiness appeared as the interviewees mentioned trust, honesty, reliability, and sincerity. Attractiveness emerged through the indications of these young females interviewed that BIs needed to look as if they took care of themselves, BIs need to produce attractive visuals and the content has to be relevant for them. It is important to point out that physical attraction helps, however, it is suggested that it does not necessarily relate to BIs credibility. Elements such as visually attractive and appealing content also play a role in this theme.

The last sub-question examined the role of parasocial interactions in evaluating the credibility of BIs on Instagram. Here two themes emerged, namely similarity and distant

connection. Similarity came up through what the young adults knew about BIs and their relatability towards them. It shows that for the female young adults it is an element used to evaluate BIs credibility. On the other hand, distant connection appeared because most of the interviewees discussed they were aware that the interaction is from one-side, their side, as well as of the reality of influencer marketing.

In the next chapter, the data will be analysed and linked to previous findings in the literature, and combined to answer the research question. In there it will touch upon the limitation of the study and possible future research opportunities.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This research aimed at exploring how young adults evaluated BIs' credibility on Instagram. Semi-structured in-depth interviews have been chosen as the most suitable method to investigate how the target group evaluates the credibility of BIs on Instagram. These in-depth interviews have been based upon Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory and Hartmann's (2016) take on parasocial interactions.

To conclude the main research question of the present study was how young adults evaluate the credibility of BIs on Instagram. Critical awareness is a strong element that came forward in the 12 interviews as there is generally some scepticism surrounding BIs on Instagram. To better evaluate this the female young adults reflected critically upon BIs behaviour and product recommendations and did their own research before accepting any recommendations by them. During the interviews the young adults indicated that expertise (e.g., experience, knowledge, and skills) as well as trustworthiness (e.g., honesty and sincerity) are the most important elements that determine BIs' credibility on Instagram. All the BIs that were mentioned by the participants have both in their perspective. Another element was that the female interviewees needed to be attracted physically, visually and through the BI's content. Whenever the young adults feel similarities in relatability and community feelings with the BI this will form a bonus for a BI's credibility. Nevertheless, young adults do feel a certain degree of detachment towards BIs on Instagram through the one-sided interaction and the feeling of disconnection. Interestingly, this does not decrease a BI's credibility, but they are simply aware of this and do take it into consideration.

### *5.1 Discussion*

The first sub-question focused on pinpointing the current opinions of female young adults towards the credibility of BIs on Instagram. The scepticism is often focused on the regular perception of promoted content BIs post on Instagram. Yuan and Lou (2020), Martínez-Lopez et al. (2019), and Stubb et al. (2019) concluded that promoted content by BIs might be perceived as suspicious by their following. If BIs on Instagram want to be perceived as credible by young adults then they should keep paying attention to a healthy balance between organic and promoted content, which suggests that it strengthens their trustworthiness. The research suggests that critical awareness is an essential item for female young adults to evaluate the source credibility of BIs on Instagram. Even though a BI might

have expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, these young females interviewed remain critical. Even with the BIs they follow on Instagram. Especially with promoted content, young adults are likely to do their own additional research (Martínez-Lopez et al., 2019; Belanche et al., 2014). It is suggested that this could be connected to the interviewees' personalities. This could be linked to the Big Five personalities theory, which could make influencer marketing and credibility even more interesting by connecting it to another psychological theory.

As a result, a BI on Instagram needs to be aware that young adults are rather critical, especially regarding promoted content. Therefore, it is suggested that BIs are elaborate in their explanations, demonstrate products, are being repetitive with them. These young adults will either way do their own research on the product, therefore, it is advised for a BI to be as honest as possible.

The second sub-question aimed to explore whether expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness were factors female young adults relate to credibility. The current research indeed suggests that expertise and trustworthiness are factors associated with BIs' credibility corroborating what Ohanian (1990) has mentioned. Even a certain degree of attractiveness helps especially in the beauty realm (Schouten et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the findings suggest some alteration of Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory. Regarding the previous two elements of expertise and trustworthiness there are also some inconsistencies because qualified as well as skilled were perceived as rather similar. The element "dependable" within the trustworthiness dimension was not applicable according to the interviewees because they will always do their own research and critically evaluate promoted content. The findings of the present study indicated that physical attraction from Ohanian (1990) played a small part in the credibility of BIs on Instagram. The main argument mentioned was that it helps when BIs are good-looking, classy, and elegant since they are discussing beauty. However, a BI does not have to be either one of these things when they have expertise and trustworthiness. Still, it seems that the BIs on Instagram are supporting a certain perfect picture, where these female young adults feel the need to compare themselves with (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011). The source credibility theory was created in 1990 when social media did not exist; therefore, visuals did not matter. However, in the current social media landscapes it does as was pointed out by the young females interviewed. The idea of "snapshot aesthetics" by Colliander and Marder (2018) did not come forward from the present analysis. Additionally, young adults argued that the content the BI creates on Instagram also

need to be appealing. Again, this is not an aspect Ohanian (1990) touched upon as her theory is based on celebrities as well as a world without social media and user-generated content.

Thus, it is suggested that BIs should demonstrate expertise and trustworthiness in their content. Especially sharing knowledge, explaining, and being honest will help gain credibility with female young adults. Particularly, honesty towards promoted products (Lee & Koo, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). Additionally, a BI does not have to look beautiful, elegant, classy, and sexy when they have perceived expertise and trustworthiness. It is also important for BIs to take care of their content as it needs to look put together and needs to add something (e.g. informative) for young adults. For marketers it is, therefore, useful to look for BIs who have these qualities because when a BI is perceived as credible, the young adults are more likely to accept the recommendation (Belanche et al., 2021; Breves et al., 2019; Senecal & Nantel, 2004).

The last sub-question aimed at evaluating the possible role of parasocial interactions in evaluating the credibility of BIs on Instagram. All interviewees experienced a certain degree of similarity and the expressed that it does boost a BI's credibility, which confirms Hartmann's (2016) research. The elements through which the interviewees noticed these similarities was through community feeling (Horton & Wohl, 1956), relatability, and the interest in BIs' personal lives (Huang, 2015; Khan et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2015). Three of the interviewees even mentioned that they believed BIs cannot get big without sharing personal information, confirming what other researchers have concluded (Huang, 2015); Leite & Baptista, 2021; Berg & Archer, 1982; Jacobs et al., 2001). Essentially, this result hints that perceived similarities play a role in young adults' evaluation of BIs' credibility (Huang, 2015; Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014). Thus, parasocial interaction to a certain degree might play a role in a BI's credibility. Nonetheless, the theme distant connection is close to contradicting the theme similarity since simultaneously the young adults interviewed feel a distant connection. As the interviewees were born and raised in The Netherlands, it could explain that the Dutch are rather down to earth. Understandably, this research cannot prove it and only suggest it. The theory of parasocial interactions was erected by American researchers (Horton & Wohl, 1956) based on studies of Americans who are culturally somewhat different from the Dutch. Interestingly, the participants expressed that this feeling did not diminish a BI's credibility. The main elements for that are expertise and trustworthiness. This means that when a BI does share personal information, young adults are able to evaluate the possible similarities, which increases a BI's credibility (Huang, 2015).

Thus, a BI is not obliged to share personal information if they do not want to, however, whenever they would this could be positively associated with their credibility. Whenever a BI would choose not to share personal details about their lives, it needs to have perceived expertise and trustworthiness by their young adult audience.

## *5.2 Limitations and future research*

Qualitative interviews were the best suited method in order to explore how young adults evaluate the credibility of BIs on Instagram. This method offered insights into their opinion and experiences, which has been useful to find out what makes a BI seen as honest, sincere, and having knowledge and experience. A limitation of the research reported in this master thesis is that due to the small sample of twelve female young adults, it cannot be generalised. Obviously, future research should take a bigger sample in order to generalize the findings.

In the current study only one researcher transcribed the interviews and analysed these, which can be seen as a limitation. It is advised that for future research the coding process should be done with another researcher in order to increase reliability.

Lastly, the pilot of the interview guide only tested half of the interview guide, therefore, it is arguable whether this was reliable. As a result, it is suggested that for future research there should be a pilot done regarding the whole interview guide.



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# Appendix A - Interview guide

## *Introduction*

Hello, my name is Heleen de Jong. I am a student at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, and I will interview you today. Thank you in advance for taking the time to participate. The goal of my research is to study how young adults evaluate the credibility of beauty influencers on Instagram. I am interested in your perspective of beauty influencer's credibility on Instagram. Your first-hand experiences are very valuable for my understanding of how young adults evaluate beauty influencers' credibility on Instagram. There are no right or wrong answers. This interview will be audio recorded; do you feel comfortable with this? [yes]

Great. The recording will be stored on my phone and will be deleted after the transcript is complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, there is no monetary compensation, and you are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. You are also allowed to indicate when you do not want to answer the question. The interviews will be handled anonymously. Personal information such as gender, age, occupation, nationality will be described.

Here I the informed consent form, I need you do read and sign this form before starting the interview. You will receive a copy of the signed permission form.

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. I will ask you some questions about different topics related to your perceived expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and personal information of beauty influencers on Instagram. With beauty is means anything that has to do with makeup, skincare, body care, nails and hair. You can take a break at any point.

Do you have any questions about the interview of the study?

**ONCE THE FORM IS SIGNED, THE AUDIO RECORDING WILL START**

## *Ice breaker questions:*

- Please introduce yourself to me (name, gender, education, etc.)
- To what extent do you consider yourself active on social media?
- What do you like and dislike about Instagram?
  - To what extent do you feel Instagram influences you in your daily life?
- What type of content do you like?
- How have you come to like beauty related content on Instagram?

## *Favourite influencer*

- Please tell me about your favourite influencer.
- Why do you follow them?

## *Part 1 – Expertise*

We are now going to discuss possible expertise beauty influencers on Instagram may have. We are going to talk about the different factors that constitute expertise. We will explore to what extent expertise has a role in your perception of a beauty influencers' credibility.

Expert

- To what extent do you consider X to be an expert in beauty?
  - Possible: Does the influencer have a degree. If so: Which degree?

- Possible: What kind of role does them having a degree play in their credibility?
- What does X do or say that makes you feel that they are an expert?
- If no: In your personal experience, what should a beauty influencer do or say to convince you of their expertise?

#### Experience

- To what extent do you consider X to have experience in beauty?
  - In what aspects do you see them as experienced?
- How long has X been a beauty influencer (on Instagram)?
  - How does this play a role in you perceiving them as having experience on the topic?

#### Knowledgeable

- To what extent do you consider X to be knowledgeable in beauty?
  - Are there any specific aspects within beauty they are knowledgeable about?
  - Which areas then?
- To what extent do you feel like your favourite beauty influencers knows that they are talking about?
- What are some factors through which you assess they are knowledgeable on beauty?
  - Skincare: does the influencer talk about ingredients?
  - How does this make you feel?

#### Qualified

- To what extent do you consider X to be qualified in beauty?
  - How do you experience this?

#### Skilled

- To what extent do you consider X to be skilled in beauty?
  - How do you experience this?
  - Have you seen X utilise beauty products on their Instagram?

## ***Part 2 – Trustworthiness***

We are now going to discuss possible trustworthiness beauty influencers on Instagram may have. We are going to talk about the different factors that constitute trustworthiness. We will explore to what extent trustworthiness has a role in your perception of a beauty influencers' credibility.

#### Trustworthy

- To what extent do you feel like you can trust your beauty influencer in general?
  - If an influencer is making money on a post, how does this relate to your judgement of their honesty?
- Do you believe they have used filters on their videos and photos?
  - What are your feelings towards the use of filters on Instagram?
- What role does the message of the influencer play in evaluating their credibility
  - What factors of the message makes you feel like you can trust the influencer?
- How do you follow (new) beauty influencers?/ Have you ever followed someone from the explore tab? Why (not)?
  - How was this experience?

- To what extent would you be able to trust this unknown influencer immediately?

Sincere

- How do you judge whether an influencer is sincere?
  - What does/what should an influencer do or say to make you feel they are trustworthy?
  - To what extent do you consider beauty influencers to be sincere?

Reliable

- To what extent do you think that X is able to abuse their position as influencer?
- How long do you follow X?
  - What role does the length play in your assessment of credibility of this influencer?

Honest

- To what extent do you feel they are honest?
- Does this influencer have promoted posts?
  - What are your thoughts on these promoted posts?
  - How come you feel this was?
- To what extent does X also voice negative aspects (e.g. disappointment) about a product?
  - If yes: How does this make you feel?
  - How do you relate it to their credibility?

Dependable

- In what way would bad press surrounding X relate to your perception of their credibility?

### ***Part 3 – Attractiveness***

We are now going to discuss possible attractiveness beauty influencers on Instagram may have. We are going to talk about the different factors that constitute attractiveness. As we are focussing on Instagram, we will also discuss the attractiveness of their Instagram profile. We will explore to what extent attractiveness has a role in your perception of a beauty influencers' credibility.

Attractive

- To what extent do you consider beauty influencers to be attractive?
  - In what ways do you experience this?

Classy

- Do you find X a glamorous beauty influencer on Instagram?
  - In what ways do you experience this?

Handsome/beautiful

- Do you find X a good-looking/beautiful beauty influencer on Instagram?
  - In what ways do you experience this?

Elegant

- Do you find X an elegant/charming beauty influencer on Instagram?
  - In what ways do you experience this?

Sexy

- Do you find X a sexy beauty influencer on Instagram?
  - In what ways do you experience this?
- These physical factors we have just discussed, to what extent do they play a role in your evaluation of a beauty influencers' credibility?

Attractiveness of Instagram feed

- Do you think that the aspects we talked about; attractive, classy, good-looking. To what extent can we apply those factors to their Instagram feed instead of their appearance?
- In what way does the image (post/story) play a role in evaluating the influencers credibility?
  - What factors do you notice first?
  - Why are these important?

#### ***Part 4 – Parasocial interactions***

We are now going to discuss possible interactions you feel you have with beauty influencers on Instagram. We are going to talk about the different factors that this possible interaction. We will explore to what extent this possible interaction or connection has a role in your perception of a beauty influencers' credibility.

- To what extent do you look forward to seeing the posts of the beauty influencers you follow?
  - To what extent do beauty influencers inspire you?
  - In what way do they inspire you?
- Whenever the beauty influencer you follow appears in another profile, what are the chances that you check out that profile?
  - Can you describe what you would experience in that moment?
- To what extent when you follow X, do you feel like you are part of their team?
  - In what ways do you experience that you are on their team?
- To what extent do you feel like X (who you follow) feels like a friend?
  - In what aspects do you feel like they feel like an old friend?
  - How come you feel X is like a friend to you?
  - To what extent does this relate to your perception of their credibility?
  - To what extent do you feel like you know this beauty influencer?
  - To what extent do you feel there is a connection between you and the influencer?
    - Could you describe this connection for me?
- To what extent would you like to meet X personally?
  - If so: how was this experience?
  - If no: how come you would like to meet them personally?
- If there was a blog or magazine who wrote content on X, what are the chances that would you read it?
  - If so: how did you experience this?

- Would you look for this? Why (not)?
- To what extent does this relate to your perception of their credibility?
- To what extent do you feel comfortable (just as if you're friends) by the way X shares things online?
  - What are some aspects that are similar between this experience with X as with your actual friends?
  - To what extent do you have similar aspects with this person?
    - What are the aspects you have in common with the influencer?
    - How come you believe you have these things in common?
- When X shared how a beauty product works, to what extent does this sharing help you create your own opinion on the product?
  - Do you only trust X about a beauty product?
  - Do you consult other influencers about the same topic X talked about?
  - To what extent does this relate to your perception of their credibility?
- What has the influencer mentioned about their personal information that you can remember?
  - To what extent does this relate to your perception of their credibility?
  - How do those personal details make you feel?
  - To what extent do these personal details help you connect to the influencer?
- The factors we previously discussed (personal information, feels like an old friend, looking forwards to see their posts etc) to what extent does this play a role in forming your opinion on the influencer?
- The factors we previously discussed (personal information, feels like an old friend, looking forwards to see their posts etc) to what extent does this relate to your action to accept a recommendation?

### ***Part 5 – (Product) recommendation***

We are now going to discuss your experiences you had when you have tried a (product) recommendation made by beauty influencers on Instagram. We will explore to what extent this experience has a role in your perception of a beauty influencers' credibility.

- Have you already tried something of the influencer?
  - How was this experience?
  - What consequences did it have on your perception of this beauty influencer's credibility?
- Whenever an influencer promotes a brand you are not aware of, what are the chances you would accept this product recommendation?
  - Have you done this before? if so, can you explain this experience to me?
- We have talked about expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness of the person and the feed, and the more personal side. Which one of these factors is the most related to evaluate a beauty influencer's credibility?

### ***Part 6 – Prop-section***

We have arrived at the last part of the interview, the prop section. We are going, well you, are going to analyse most recent Instagram post of one of your favourite influencers. You will analyse is through the four themes we have discussed in this interview. Can you maybe look up X' Instagram page and select their most recent post?

- Can you explain to me what you see?
- What elements show you that they have expertise in beauty?
- What elements show you that they are trustworthy?
- What elements in the picture/video are attractive to you?
- What kind of personal information do they share?

### ***Part 7 – Ending***

1. Thank you so much for participating in this interview
2. Do you have any questions for me after this conversation?
3. If you have any questions, you can contact me by mailing to [579917hj@eur.nl](mailto:579917hj@eur.nl). The email is written in the copy of the consent form.



## Appendix B – Example coding process

H: To what extent do you consider Nikkie to be experienced in beauty?

E2: Ehm the highest possible. I think she has been doing this for 15 years or so and ehm at least on YouTube or so. SO, yes quite a lot of ehm... experience.

[8:08]

H: To what extent do you consider Nikkie to be knowledgeable in beauty?

E2: I think high because, like I have said, she can explain a lot and point things out about why, her choices like colours or products, you name it. I can notice that she has done her research and that she has gained knowledge from ingredients in products. She can go into the details so she can zoom in on a very high level. So yeah I think she is very knowledgeable about beauty.

H: Alright

[8:42]

H: To what extent do you consider Nikkie to be qualified in beauty?

E2: Well also pretty high. She has done training into becoming a makeup artist and I know from the nail people I follow, I always pay attention to those things. They are all certified people. I do something like this very important because if else everyone can make videos and say I am a makeup artist or nail artists. So, I do find it important that there is a degree to show that they have studied for it.

H: Is this a factor that is related to a beauty influencer's credibility?

E2: absolutely. Yes, because they can like guess things and tell people what they like and what is their taste. However, when it is researcher for instance, with nails like this product works for nails and this does not. This you can only know when you have studied for it and it is not something really that you can teach yourself.

[10:05]

[28:14]

H: To what extent when you follow these beauty influencers, do you feel like you are part of their team?

E2: With nail artists, then I can find myself in it because ehm like the content they make, I can use for my own work and surely there are girls who follow me and get inspiration from me. Ehm so like this es, and they talk about the nail community, it is a certain sector, but like with beauty influencers I do not have that, unless it is a vlog and I see that they also go to work, go to school or something like that. Then it does feel a bit more, but not with someone like NikkieTutorials then not.

[29:08]

H: With this nail community, that you feel like you're in it and get inspiration from it, do you then get the idea that you have a personal connection with them?

E2: I think so because especially on that level, everyone has an annoying customer or someone with a certain nail problem or someone who bits extremely on their nails. So, this then does create connections and that you feel like you experience the same things. The only thing is that one is in America and the other in The Netherlands, but with the bigger lines you're doing the same job.

H: Right

[29:46]

H: That you feel this type of connection, does this then relate to their credibility?

E2: Yes, I think so because they are speaking from their own experiences which I can also find myself in. Ehm. Then they say how they solved it and I can then think perhaps I can also use it for me. Or like a certain way they handle thing, I recognize that. This recognition is important.

H: Alright

Exp: (long) time in L... 21

Know: Give explana... 20

Know: Backed by res... 4

Skill: degree 19

Skill: degree 19

Com feel: feels part ... 12

Aw of one-sided int: ... 9

Com feel: feels part ... 12

Rela: recognition 12

## Appendix C – Coding Framework

Main theme	Sub-category	Initial codes	Examples from transcript
Expertise	Expert	Specialist	“Nikkie really started with make-up, she wanted to become known for her makeup. She does the makeup for really famous people, for special occasions, for big events.”
		Total package	“I consider her as a real, real, real expert because of what she does she gets sponsored, she also has her own product line of which people are excited about.”
		Way of talking	“I don’t know, but she says this all. Because she talks about these things, it makes me believe that she’s an expert.”
	Experience	(Long) time in the beauty industry	“Well, I think she is very experienced, but she is also already for quite some time known on YouTube due to beauty. She has years of experience with everything, like this is how it all started for her and she never switched or whatever.”
		Aware of changes in products	“Yes... I think it does play a role because if you would only be in this sector for 6 months then you wouldn’t know everything... Like products change within the years so then you also don’t know if products have changed for the better or for the worse.”
		Influencer gets and tests a lot of products	“But then because she gets send a lot of free products, then I do believe you have experience with beauty.”
		Invited to beauty events	“She gets invited by different brands for different events.”
		One of the first	“She may not be the most relevant, but she is like a veteran.”
		Own beauty brand	“Her makeup products... Exactly... Also on a later age she builds an empire, yes, sick, just sick.”
	Knowledge	Backed by research	“For instance, academic research why a certain factor has an effect on you, or if an product contains these ingredients and you have skin type A then don’t use it.”
		Give explanation	“She explains why she is showing it, and what active ingredients or what is in the product. SO, why this is a good or bad product. I think that is mainly it. It is not simply a post of “hey, buy this”, it is more like why is

			this good for your skin, for who is this good, for who this isn't good with a good explanation.”
		Goes beyond the necessary	“Yes, because then she stills backs it up with extra information, academic articles. So, it's goes beyond the scope of solely the product. It is not that she is only focused on the promotion part of her content.”
		Informative	“Yes, it needs to be informative. People are spending their money on it... You need to know what you're buying and what you're putting on your face, what you take, what you put on your teeth. It should definitely be informative. It cannot be possible that, they promote just something.”
		Know what works for them	“Because, well this is personal for everyone, but when she ehm.. shares different things.. well has promoted different things or used it themselves. Then they know the best what works for them.”
		Knowledge about make-up	“She knows a lot about make-up, the ingredients in it.”
		Trends on Instagram	“with gyasa tools, massages you can do to your own skin, pressure points in your face. There are apparently massage techniques that can give you a natural facelift.”
	Skilled	Art	“Ehm she creates amazing art that also helps She has a big following which proves that other people also agree with this.”
		Degree	“She also have studied for it, so I feel like her her judgement is valuable.”
		Demonstration of product	“There are a lot of people who have no knowledge about makeup, like me. However, when they explain what it is, how it works, how to apply it, that is very nice. I think I would purchase it sooner than when I would not know how it works and then I would just have to improvise. So, a how-to video would definitely help.”
		Doing other people make-up	“But you also have beauty influencers who do the makeup-up of other people. For instance, NikkieTutorials did that on celebrities like Kim K and stuff. then I think oh shit, you are good.”
		Development of skills	“I know that for Temptation she applies her own make up. And she probably can't do that if companies think it doesn't look good on her.”
		Great complexion	“She, I think so at least, has a great skin. So, I don't know which products she uses, but she is knowledgeable about it. Like she always looks good,

			her skin glows and seems healthy. She looks healthy, happy so she knows what she is doing.”
Trustworthiness	Trust	Being real	“Then I feel like that she also points out the less pretty sides of yourself and things and still... it is not only the perfect picture with her, not all like look at me and how fantastic my life is, like no one lives like that.”
		Being selective	“it is more like, she does not allow much.”
		Believe in influencer	“If someone tells me a lot about the product, I quickly take that as truth and that becomes my opinion of the product as well. If someone then asks me if I know that product, I share that opinion with that person.”
		Hurts BI’s reputation	“Also, because of the range of followers, they can’t afford to promote badly, reputation wise.”
		Length of following	“Yes, if I follow them for a longer period then for me it means that I ehm consider you credible. ehm. Usually when I am not interested anymore, I unfollow them immediately. ehm. So, whenever I do follow them for a longer period, it means that I find them credible and I would purchase it sooner than with a newer person.”
		Take BI’s opinion for truth	“I think so, but I am not the only one, because when I talk with friends about it, they have the same. You just take what they say for truth and the online shopping adds to it. It is easy to add stuff to your chart and I just trust easily. I have to add, that this is mostly with the bigger influencers.”
	Honest	Critical	“Jessie Maja does this very well, she is very critical.”
		Take accountability	“Also, they should be able to accountable of the consequences of the people they have influenced. Like imagine if someone would go up to them and be like “you promoted this, but it does not work for me”. They should be able to explain it and not just refer back to the brand because if else you apparently don’t have the knowledge.”
		Transparency	“She openly talked about like ehm plastic surgery, which was something I appreciated as a person that she as not like telling lies.”
		True to themselves	“Yes... For this reason, I am a fan of hers because she is now ashamed of who she is.”
		Two-sided information	“If someone can also point out negative and risks to be removed from the PR lists. A lot of people like Huda, said that the first load of Kylie’s lip

			kits were bad, and when you say those things online you get removed from the PR list, but that you want to risk that, that is good.”
	Reliable	Advice	“but she gives amazing tips.”
		Consistence	“Like this, I think... I also think that ehm... with the cooking for example, like I follow account for certain type of content, so then I expect that they keep coming with that kind of content. So, I think like Rianne, she would never post a super created picture or ehm... that she would switch personality...”
		Convincing	“Very catchy. I never heard it before. But well, she convinced me to wear sunscreen everyday.”
		Repetition of promoted products	“If someone stays longer with one product and promotes this, the I also... Then they have out a bit more time and effort into that product than when they would only promote it once. They need to post it a couple of times and explain some things with the post.”
	Sincere	Enjoying the products	“Imagine someone would also use the product before, then I would be like okay so without the money you also already used it.”
		Mix of organic and sponsored content	“Therefore, a mix of receiving products and purchasing your own products is great for me. Then I feel like a beauty influencer is at least trying.”
		Pure intention	“She... for sure want to inform people and that she has pure intentions or something.”
		Talk freely	“This is because they talk freely and are not like reading a text.”
Critical awareness	Extra research	Opinions of other influencers	“Other influencers indeed”
		Other social media platforms	“Yes, I notice that when I see something on TikTok first or the other way around, on Instagram first, then I do scroll further when I already have seen it. Like if it is interesting, I get something out of it and then... That is it.”
		Own research	“So, I look at the product and do research about it.”
		Reading reviews	“Like I read reviews from like normal people, not influencers, who have used it and their thoughts.”
		Look for confirmation	“Yes exactly. If someone else is saying the same thing, then it must be alright.”

	Reflection	It is a job	“I realize that it is part of their job and revenue model that they have to make a living from something.”
		It should be different	“It is scarring. But yes, it is not the job of one or two to break the stigma, I do think it is good that there are people who show themselves unfiltered, but yeah, I don’t know. If you know, for me, well, on me it has no effect. I am aware that skin doesn’t look like that and that is now how blended contour looks like. However, it is ehm, it is dangerous for people who don’t know, who believe it and then feel bad about their flawed skin.”
		Mistakes can happen	“People make mistakes, it happens. it would be disgusting if we cancel someone just based on that.”
		Own evaluation	“So then I have to decide for myself that I say no.”
		Own experience	“Yes, I think so. You think like oh this product worked, so the others will also work. I would more quickly accept other recommendations from her.”
		Product might work differently	“Hmm. I might be more inclined to try the product. especially with skincare, it works on every skin type differently; what works great for someone, works less great for another person.”
		Puts things into perspective	“However, I believe that I can see these two things separate from each other. Whether you find someone attractive is very personal of course, but yes... It is not necessary when they are able to display a product well.”
		The use of filters	“Yes, I’m kind of neutral about it. Because I get why they use it, they want to show the prettiest side of themselves. On the other hand, I do think that is not needed.”
	Doubtful of influencer	Minimum effort	“Maybe yes because I think that whenever someone is just posting a picture with a caption, then I feel like someone has put less time in it. So, it feels more like an ad in between things, like oh I post it quickly and I earn money with it.”
		Changing for the worse	“because of the testing. I think by myself “Aren’t you moving away from where you started?”
Does not know everything		“In fact, I personally find it very annoying when I feel that people don't know what they are talking about. I unfollow people immediately.”	

		Doubts honesty when sponsored	“So yeah.. I also find it difficult to say because a lot of content is promoted so they get paid. You know this and that might exaggerate when they praise about a product.”
		Doubts in influencer's ability	“Yes, like with Teske I used to think what are you doing”
		Fake	“Yes, like with all her fillers and she look so.... Yes I don't like it and such lips with red lipstick and then I think pf.... It is just to fake for me...”
		Impure intentions	“Because they get so much money for it... and you hear more often how much money.”
		Influencers accepting offers	“Mmm... for sure smaller influencers less quick because they take... they take everything they can get in order to grow. So I see that from a friend I my village, she has become an influencer.”
		Insufficient information	“I usually find them too short, not enough information then I think like how can you tell in one minute that it is a great curling tool?”
		Not taking accountability	“quite some influencers have promoted it and then later in the news it was mentioned that it could change one's eye colour.”
		Unnuanced opinion	“Absolutely. If you only hear positive things about a product, that is not possible because everything has negatives sides to it.”
		Unspecialised influencers	“This really depends on... Imagine if someone's scope of promoting things is very divergent, so it would promote this and then it would promote that. This would I trust this person less than someone who has a certain subject and with explains well why they are promoting this product.”
		Using filters with promoted content	“Imagine if they're promoting a foundation, but they have blurred their face ... then... you might believe that you get such a skin when you use the products but is has been filters and stuff. This would definitely decrease someone's credibility. However, if it is... if it has nothing to do with a product, then I am not that bothered.”
Attractiveness	Physically attracted	Classy	“I consider the beauty influencers do radiate class. The moment that someone is occupied with its appearance, that is looks like they have taken care of themselves. Then I already see those people with a certain degree of class, you know. Ehm so yeah, often they make videos so ehm

			they can communicate well, are well expressed, good vocabulary. So, then I consider them as people with class yes.”
		Elegance	“Ehm {silence} ehm yes I find it often... the beauty influencers, who spend a lot of time on their makeup and hair. A lot of the times... these are more the girly girly girls, who are often more elegant, than the tough girls. I imagine they don’t want to become beauty influencer so yes, often they are elegant people. I consider them elegant.”
		Good-looking	“Ehm... yes... I just find some... Ehm. I think again this is more personal preference, I just find them good looking.”
		Perfect image	“Yes, well it originates from celebrities in general, right. Kind of that people need to be perfect all the time. I think that... in the beginning...”
		Sexy	“I think it helps... whenever they are sexy for sure.”
		Social comparison	“They might also offer an image that you don’t have, haha. So that is why I think... it always fits the beauty idea that I now being created, what is should be...”
		Take care of themselves	“Right, I think it is important that they do their best because I... I also... I also think that that is important. To name an example... bit random but... I think it is important that you just take care of yourself.”
		Unconscious attraction	“I’m not so sure. Perhaps unconsciously yes. However, this is not something I am very conscious about.”
	Visually attracted	Attractive feed	“For attracting the audience, it is really important, absolutely.”
		Colourful	“it had a nice colour palette.”
		Aesthetically pleasing	“If you see someone page and there are like yellow, blue, green, all the colours are mixed, then I can consider this very intense and think this will bother me. So, like this, it is nice if it is aesthetically pleasing.”
		Professional looking	“Yes. It kind of has a professional look to it and therefore, I perceive I think that I believe her.”
	Appealing content	Curiosity	“I don’t know... probably out of curiosity, like oh what are you doing there and be like let’s click on it and then probably immediately back. But yes, I probably would look at it, it’s small effort.”
		Helpful	“My brows... I did not plug them, I did not fill them in, but when you put a lot of foundation, too much, on your face and it was literally sitting in



			my brows, which was ugly. Ehm, when you do see a lot of content of people who do their makeup, then you will use other techniques, you will apply it differently. You're getting older so you realize certain things aren't that nice, you might wear less foundation so... yes it helps"
		Looking forward	"A lot... with her... it is not that I go to Instagram and consciously think I want to see something of her, but when I see what she has posted something, then I would immediately look what she has posted, what is it about?"
		Personalised	"Whenever the text speaks to me, I will read into it."
		Quality	"You can notice where the focus is in their content and if you see there is time for detail and that they have spent time on it and it is really about their craft, then I see you as more credible. Especially not when there is #ad."
Similarity	Community feeling	Bond	"Yes because of the connection... With a seller you don't have a connection at all, she says that you have to purchase a mascara from Chanel... Why? Because it is very good?!"
		Feels like a sister	"Yes maybe that is quit accurate, rather a big sister than a friend for sure."
		Feels part of the team	"I do have it with Chaimae Omaz because she regularly does giveaways because she is so grateful for her following. She is big because people stared to purchase her products. So there is a part of gratitude and she wants to do something back. Because of this you feel more connected and this more in a team."
		Meeting influencer	"Yes... I think.... I would really find it cool that whenever I walk through the streets or shopping that I come across someone, I like that to see someone in their own habitat."
		Feels like a friend	"If you watch her videos... She feels like a friend you're sitting next to, and she talks about her life."
	Relatable	Believe in the same things	"Yes, imagine if someone is racist, then preferably... no... I don't want to be a client of yours. Then I think "no' mainly."
		Feel comfortable	"Yes, I think I do feel comfortable... because you recognise it, at least that is the case with me that I feel comfortable."

		Feels like they could get along	“but I think that me and her could have a good laugh with one another.”
		Feels like an equal	“Chaimae seems just more real, like she does not edit her pictures and she does not use filters, she shows herself when she is looking less good, just on the couch. Like everyone in their pyjamas on a Sunday afternoon. Ehm, so yeah, she shows that she is more like us.”
		Fun person	“She gets me into that enthusiasm so when she is excited about a product in a video or photo it automatically makes me happy. She can positively influence my mood.”
		Inspiring	“Ehm, well I often think with people... I often get inspiration from clothing, hairstyle, ehm looks that I remember for a party.”
		Liking the same things	“Yes, I think it is more... the more they dress like me or do something else, then I find you credible. And the rest I find stupid. That.”
		Recognition	“And ehm. I also found it nice that she was a woman of colour and Arabic. She was like millionaire and as a little girl to see that someone who looks like you or has the same origin, that can achieve was nice.”
		Respect	“And if you have certain norms and values that I do share with you and you so speak out about the injustice in the world or something like, let’s say, you don’t want to work with beauty brands that test on animals. That’s, That’s like pretty respectable. Then I do find them more credible.”
		Role model position	“They are like... I feel like they are in role model positions, even for me absolutely”
	Interest in influencer’s personal life	Need to know more about influencer	“You have developed such an interest in their lives that you want to see more of them.”
		Personal information shared by BI	“She is also transgender, she used to be a man. No one knew about it until a year ago where she announced it and that was because she was obliged to publicly announce it. Ehm Furthermore she is a sweet person, it is not that she influences in order to please people, it is because she enjoys doing it. That is the reason why I like her.”
		Glimpse	“Absolutely, yes. I think they cannot become really big without sharing anything about their personal life.”

Distant connection	Awareness of one-sided interaction	Aware that you don't exist	“Yes, because you are aware that she does not know you, does not know about your existence.”
		Does not feel like a friend	“My phone is just my phone; it is not real if you know what I’m saying. It more like flipping through a magazine. I also don’t feel friends with those models. It is more images.”
		Don't actually know them	“Like it remains quite hard because you don’t know this person, so you don’t know what kind of person they are. Sometimes you are able to see whether it is a serious person, but you don’t know them personally so that is hard to assess.”
		No (personal) connection	“Yes, it is not personal, there is no interaction, it is one-sided traffic so I don’t think you are able to build a connection or a relationship of the sorts.”
		Not part of the team	“{thinks} because I cannot discuss things with her.”
		Private	“If someone has a personal problem or something... yeah... then that is something private and I understand that you might not want to share it with the outside world”
	Disconnection	Bad press	“Yes, I think so it would be a bigger role. It is the same with the Voice scandal that all those famous Dutch people were put in a bad light and now you think very differently about them. You look differently at Marco Borsato now.”
		Distance	“For instance... ehm... Monica Geuze. There I don’t feel connected at all because she is so on her own cloud and in her influencer world ehm.... it is so far away... there I feel totally no connection to anymore.”
		No need to know influencer	“I am not really interested in their personal lives, that just doesn’t really speak to me. It is fine if they share it, but...”
		Not friendly	“However, imagine she has done something... ehm cursed at someone, then I will see you differently than promoting bad products.”
		Not looking forward	“And on her feed, I do appreciate a good picture, but it’s not like I’m waiting until they have posted something.”