Northumbria Research Link

CREDIBILITY OF DIGITAL INFLUENCERS ON YOUTUBE AND INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the phenomenon and influence of beauty influencers on Instagram and YouTube through the analysis of top micro-celebrity profiles and surveys with the followers.
YouTube was identified as the most influential for those aged 18-21 and less powerful for older target group, suggesting beauty reference group influence decreases as the age increases. An exploration into credibility of beauty gurus revealed trustworthiness as the most important factor determining credibility. Quality of images and professionalism of profiles is also crucial in reliability of profiles on these platforms.

Keywords: micro-celebrity, Instagram, YouTube, credibility, trustworthiness, beauty.

1.   Introduction

Beauty industry is particularly affected by the emergence of micro-celebrities in the form of beauty bloggers, vloggers and so-called beauty gurus on social media including Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook (Goody, 2017). From 2016, beauty gurus are responsible for 97.4% of conversations and buzz surrounding new beauty products (Statista, 2016). This research continues further exploration into the credibility factors of beauty micro-celebrity endorsements, the conversation that started in recent work by Djafarova & Rushworth (2017). Newly identified credibility factors specific to social media endorsements explored to create an overall credibility model applicable to beauty micro-celebrity endorsements.

The research questions of the study are as following:

- To what extend do beauty micro-celebrities on Instagram and YouTube act as a reference group influence for consumers aged 18-29 when purchasing beauty-related products?
- What existing academic credibility theory is the most applicable to beauty micro-celebrity endorsement on Instagram and YouTube?
- What are the new factors of source credibility specific to beauty micro-celebrity endorsement on Instagram and YouTube?

The research questions have been developed based on the current limited research within the area of social media and celebrity endorsement credibility. Existing credibility models such as Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990), The Product Match-Up (Kamins, 1990) and The Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985) have been taken as a starting point to explore the research questions.

2. Literature Review

2.1   Micro-celebrities in the Beauty Industry

The role of micro-celebrities within the beauty industry fits within the realm of 'Influencer Marketing', a strategy employed by over 86% of marketers (Linqia, 2017). In implementing this strategy, beauty brands identify and target appropriate beauty gurus who then endorse their products (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Sammis et al., 2015; Potter et al., 2017). The aim of beauty brands is to maximize diffusion of information through the micro-celebrity accounts where endorsements appear to be seamlessly woven into social media content (Abidin, 2016). Endorsements are likely to be interpreted as highly credible eWOM, rather than paid advertisements, particularly desirable for brands as this often leads to lower resistance to marketing messages (De Vries et al., 2012).

Top 10 Beauty Influencers on social media have a total reach of 49,157,110 Instagram followers, 46,543,975 YouTube subscribers, 16,672,533 Facebook likes, and 11,608,220 Twitter followers, thus indicating that Instagram and YouTube facilitate the greatest reach for micro-celebrity reference group influence within the beauty industry (Forbes, 2017). Instagram and YouTube are both visual-based platforms, utilised for demonstrative and educational purposes, both verbally and visually – essential for consumers to fully understand and trust beauty products/reviews (Forbes, 2016; Androulaki-Ralli, 2017). Beauty bloggers often adopt a parallel strategy using these two platforms to increase cross-platform engagement, posting final makeup looks and tutorial 'trailer teasers' onto Instagram, encouraging followers to watch the full related video on YouTube (Cowley, 2016; Steiner, 2017).

The most common types of beauty-related YouTube videos are: general how-to tutorials, accounting for 34% of all YouTube video views, hauls, product reviews, first impressions, monthly/yearly favourites, location tours, and 'tag' videos (Chang, 2014; Statista, 2018a). Some beauty YouTube personalities also post additional lifestyle, fashion, and advice 'vlogs' to provide a greater insight into their daily lives (García-Rapp, 2016). This enables YouTube personalities to become more intimate and personal, whilst appealing to wider audiences through the additional content (García-Rapp, 2016). This higher level of intimacy creates emotional attachment for followers, with consumers viewing beauty bloggers as 'big sisters' or 'friends', making them significantly more relatable, authentic, trustworthy, and influential (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). Most successful beauty micro-celebrities have been offered cosmetic brand collaboration opportunities, such as @NikkieTutorials by Too Faced, and developed their own cosmetic lines, including @Zoella's 'Zoella Beauty', sold in UK Superdrug stores (Rea, 2016).

2.2   Photo sharing on Instagram

Instagram experienced rapid growth since its launch. The application has 800 million monthly active users, 500 million daily users, with 80 million photos shared daily (Streatfield, 2015; Instagram, 2017). Instagram usage is dominated by females (WAF, 2016; Statista, 2017b; TDF, 2018).

Recently, micro-celebrities on Instagram have been referred to as the 'Instafamous' (Marwick, 2013) – a new reference group (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Users obtain an 'Instafamous' status by gaining large followership and becoming well-recognised on the platform (Ewers, 2017; Wilbert, 2017). Marketers display a growing interest in utilising micro-celebrities on Instagram as they create new opportunities for product promotion through the sponsored posts (Woods, 2016; Vignisdóttir, 2017). Instagram therefore provides opportunities for generating financial income; users with 100,000+ followers make on average $5,000+USD per post endorsing a product/brand (O' Connor, 2017). However, regulations enforce micro-celebrities to disclose if they are being paid to feature products in their Instagram posts, by using the "paid partnership" sub-header or #ad hash-tag, potentially affecting credibility (García-Rapp, 2017).

2.3   Video-sharing on YouTube

YouTube is audio-visual platform, which allows to discover, watch, and distribute originally-created video content whilst connecting with users worldwide through channel subscriptions, comments, suggestions, and likes (Androulaki-Ralli, 2017).

YouTube video-sharing differs to Instagram as videos can have a maximum duration of 12 hours (YouTube, 2018), as opposed to 60 seconds (Instagram, 2018).

YouTube is the most used social media by adults aged 18+ in the UK with a usage rate of 85%, above Facebook at 78%, and Twitter at 45% (WAF, 2016). The platform has 1 billion monthly users and receives 2 million video views per minute (TDF, 2018). In 2014, beauty-related YouTube videos generated 14.9 billion views (Pixability, 2014). However, by 2017, this rose to 88 billion views (Statista, 2017a), signifying YouTube as becoming increasingly more influential for this industry. YouTube usage is slightly higher amongst males, with men accounting for 55%, and women 45% (TDF, 2018). However, specific to beauty-related videos, females dominate consumption, with 54.6% of females aged 18-34 regularly viewing content, compared to 14% aged 35-44, and 12% aged 45-54 (Pixability, 2014).

By attracting a large following and achieving a high monthly view count, YouTube personalities can generate enough income to make YouTube a full-time occupation. Top channels generate six-figure revenues annually (García-Rapp, 2016; Westenberg, 2016). Once subscriber counts of 10,000 is achieved, users can become a 'YouTube Partner' which enables monetisation of videos to generate revenue from advertisements playing before, during, and after videos (Zanatta, 2017). Brands have recognised the YouTube phenomenon, and partner with YouTube personalities to create sponsored videos to promote their products (Wu, 2016). Brands also give YouTube personalities affiliated links, along with free PR products in return that it will be featured in a video for followers to see (Wu, 2016). For beauty micro-celebrities, YouTube provides a

platform to showcase techniques, educate and engage audiences, voice opinions, spark discussions, interact with fans, and creatively express themselves (Burgess & Green, 2009; Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017).

2.4   Celebrity Credibility Models

To explore what makes a good beauty guru, existing celebrity endorsement credibility models were reviewed. The Source Credibility model (Ohanian, 1990) contends the effectiveness of a celebrity endorsement message as dependent upon the perceived level of trust, expertise, and attractiveness of an endorser. Trustworthiness regards the honesty, believability, and integrity of an endorser, and the listeners' subsequent "degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker and message" (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). Expertise refers to endorser being trained, informed, educated, knowledgeable, and experienced, in a particular product field to represent mastery and credibility (Ohanian, 1990; Park & Lee, 2009; Swanson & Kent, 2014). Within the source credibility construct, attractiveness refers to physical attractiveness of the endorser as well as wider characteristic traits including personality, attitude, and abilities (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999); physical attractiveness has been highlighted as highly influential for beauty-related products (Kahle & Homer, 1985).

The Product Match-Up Hypothesis suggests celebrity endorsements are more effective and credible when there is a congruence, harmony, or match-up between the endorsers' image and the endorsed product or message (Kamins, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000). The endorsed product categories should be consistent with the celebrities' public image, experiences, lifestyle and forwarding motivations (Amos et al., 2008). For example, online celebrities perceived as fitness professionals are credible endorsers for fitness-related products (Neal, 2017), and those perceived as beauty professionals are credible endorsers for beauty-related products (Forbes, 2016). When matched effectively, the reference group influence of micro-celebrities can be extremely significant, often greater than that of 'best friends' (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016).

The Source Attractiveness model proposed by McGuire (1985), examines the credibility of a source by the receiver's feelings of similarity, familiarity, and liking towards the endorser. Similarity refers to the supposed relatedness and resemblance between the receiver and endorser (Erdogan et al., 2001). Familiarity concerns the receivers' knowledge of the source through previous exposure (Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan et al., 2001). Likeability refers to the receivers' affection for an endorser because of their behaviours and physical appearance (Erdogan, 1999). This theory proposes consumers go through a process of 'identification' when evaluating celebrity endorsements; this is where behaviours and attitudes from endorsers are adopted when consumers perceive themselves as similar, thus increasing credibility (Kelman, 1961; Um, 2017).

Academic research into micro-celebrity credibility is limited. However, Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) study found online celebrity's attractiveness, along with quality and composition of images, to be of significant importance in determining the credibility of celebrity endorsements on Instagram. Alternative studies identified the celebrity's size of following (Granjon & Benedic, 2017), number of likes, comments, and views (Jin & Phua, 2014), the length of time spent online (Korotina &

Jargalsaikhans, 2016), and the quality and depth of relationships developed with the followers (Chung & Cho, 2017) as significant factors in determining micro-celebrity credibility. Additionally, Woods (2016) found that paid endorsements do not affect the credibility of social media endorsements.

3.   Research Methods

To explore potential credibility factors to underpin the main research method (a questionnaire), content analysis was conducted. The aim of the content analysis is to analyse top beauty micro-celebrity profiles to identify qualitative content areas that were of the greatest prevalence to underpin questions within the questionnaire. This, subsequently, generates quantitative data on the newly identified credibility factors (Weathington et al., 2012). The approach involved studying the social media profiles to identify credibility factors potentially examined by consumers. Nine factors were analysed for YouTube (Expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, likeability, similarity, familiarity, match up, sponsored content, , and seven factors (Expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, likeability, similarity, familiarity, match up and quality of visuals) were analysed for Instagram; these were chosen based on the micro-celebrity credibility factors identified in the literature review, and on characteristics observed once the chosen profiles had been identified.

The micro-celebrities chosen for analysis were a combination of the Top 10 Beauty Influencers outlined by Forbes (2017), and smaller influencers identified using Instagram 'Explore', and YouTube 'Recommended'. Twelve Instagram, and twelve YouTube profiles were analysed, accumulating to a total sample size of 24 profiles (see Table 1 and Table 2 below).

Table 1. YouTube Content Analysis

Username	Gender	Channel start	Subscr-iber Count	Total view count	Average weekly uploads	Professional/ Enthusiast prior to YouTube	Type of Content	Advertising before/within videos	Type of endorsements
@jeffreestar	M	14 Feb 2006	6.3m	755m	2	Professional	Beauty, personal	Before only	PR products
@hanrenee x	F	3 Jan 2014	432k	18.4m	2	Professional	Beauty, fashion, lifestyle, personal	1 Before, 2 within	Affiliate links, sponsored videos, PR products
@glamlifeguru	F	8 Nov 2010	3.8m	772m	5	Professional	Beauty, personal	Before only	PR products
@jamescharles	M	1 Dec 2015	3m	190m	2	Enthusiast	Beauty, personal	1 before, 1 within	PR products, AL
@jamie genevieve	F	12 Mar 2013	630k	37.8m	2	Professional	Beauty, personal, lifestyle weekly vlogs, fashion	Before only	Affiliate links, PR products, collaborations
@ambertrev ett	F	11 April 2015	49k	2.6m	1	Enthusiast	Beauty, lifestyle, fashion	None	Affiliate links

@zoella	F	2 Feb 2007	12.8m	1b	1	Enthusiast	Beauty, food, lifestyle, fashion, personal	1 within	Collaborations, Affiliate links
@mannymua	M	17 July 2014	4.5m	302m	3	Professional	Beauty, challenges, personal	None before, 3 within	Collaborations, affiliate links, sponsored videos , PR products
@jordanlipscombe	F	13 Feb 2014	1.2m	51.6m	1	Enthusiast	Beauty, fashion, hair, lifestyle	1 before, 1 within	PR products, Affiliate links
@imogenation	F	19 May 2015	190k	11m	4	Enthusiast	Beauty, challenges, lifestyle, fashion	1 before, 4 within	Affiliate links
@patrickstarrr	M	27 Feb 2013	3.5m	212.6m	1	Professional	Beauty, celeb collaborations	None before, 2 within	PR products, Affiliate links
@nikkietutorials	F	23 June 2008	9.4m	760m	1	Enthusiast	Beauty, celeb collaborations	None before, 2 within	PR products, Affiliate links

Table 1: Million (m), Thousand (k), Male (M), Female (F)

Table 2. Instagram Content Analysis

Username	Follower count	Frequency of posting	Professional/ Enthusiast	Image quality (1-10)	Type of content posted	Engagement with followers	YouTube Presence
@cchloeeliza bethh	241k	2 per day	Professional	6	Finished makeup looks, fashion	Only replies to close friends and fellow beauty influencers	N
@megfeather r	437k	1 per day	Enthusiast	4	Makeup looks, lifestyle, beauty products	Occasionally replies to followers comments	Y
@jamescharl es	3.4m	4 per week	Enthusiast	10	Portfolio of makeup looks	Rarely replies to followers comments	Y
@iluvsarahii	3.8m	5 per week	Professional	10	Makeup looks, lifestyle, beauty products, fashion	Occasionally replies to followers comments	Y
@nikkietutori als	9.6m	2 per week	Enthusiast	10	Portfolio of makeup looks, short tutorials	Very rarely replies to followers comments	Y

@hollyboon_	334k	5 per week	Enthusiast	6	Makeup looks, lifestyle, short tutorials	Occasionally replies to followers comments	Y
@rachleary	175k	5 per week	Enthusiast	8	Finished makeup looks, short tutorials, event photos	Regularly replies to followers comments and questions	Y
@hudabeauty	24.6m	46 per week	Professional	7	Makeup looks, own brands products, short tutorials of followers using Huda Beauty	Very regularly responds to followers comments- reposts followers looks	Y
@makeupbyjaack	505k	4 per week	Enthusiast	9	Finished makeup looks, short tutorials, beauty product	Very rarely responds to followers comments	Y
@makeupbyjakejamie	145k	4 per week	Enthusiast	8	Finished makeup looks, short tutorials	Very rarely replies to followers comments	Y
@ccclarkebeauty	1m	7 per week	Professional	9	Finished makeup looks, short tutorials, events, lifestyle, fashion	Very regularly replies to followers comments	Y
@beautyybird	1m	8 per week	Professional	10	Finished makeup looks, lifestyle, fashion, personal	Often responds to other beauty bloggers or brands	Y

Table 8: Million (m), Thousand (k), 1-10 = 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent, Yes (Y), No (N)

The questionnaire used a 7-point Likert-scale comprised of 29 statements where participants were asked to rate the importance of each credibility factor. The questionnaire, distributed through Qualtrics, was internet-mediated as this provides an efficient, flexible, and accurate means of gathering data on a population. Full questionnaire statements are available in Appendix 1. The chosen sample for the questionnaire comprised of females, aged 18-29. The questionnaire was closed after 216 responses were received - following data cleaning, only 186 were suitable for analysis. The snowball sampling technique was utilised to distribute the questionnaire. Of the 186 respondents, 100% were females, aged 18-29; any participant not meeting the sample requirements were screened out before questions began. 119 respondents were aged 18-21 (64%), 50 were aged 22-25 (26.9%) and 17 were aged 26-29 (9.1%).

4.   Research Findings and Discussion

Of the 186 respondents, 176 (94.6%) were Instagram users, and 158 (85%) were YouTube users. The usage rate for Instagram is 30.6% higher than previously identified (WAF, 2016; Accion, 2015), suggesting Instagram usage has significantly increased amongst females aged 18-29 since the publication of WAF's (2016) study.

Of the 176 respondents using Instagram, 82% followed beauty gurus and out of 158 YouTube users, 64% followed beauty micro-celebrities. This places Instagram as the most-used platform for beauty-micro celebrity content, and more likely to exert reference group influence. Interestingly, the percentage of females aged 18-29 viewing beauty micro-celebrity content on YouTube increased from 55% (Pixability, 2014) to 64% in this study. This signifies a 9.3% increase in the percentage of 18-29's using

YouTube to view beauty micro-celebrity content since 2014, suggesting YouTube reference group influence is increasing.

A chi-square test (with Cramér's V) indicated no significant relationship between age and following beauty micro-celebrities on Instagram, p = 0.1. A higher percentage of participants within every age group follow beauty micro-celebrities on Instagram, meaning reference group influence is likely for all ages. The YouTube chi-square test revealed a significant relationship, p = 0.032; showing engagement with beauty micro-celebrities is more frequent amongst 18-21's. 61% of 18-21's, 48% of 22-25's, and 29.4% of 26-29's followed beauty micro-celebrities on YouTube, suggesting beauty micro-celebrity influence on YouTube decreases as age increases.

68.3% respondents purchased a beauty-related product following introduction from a beauty influencer on Instagram or YouTube. A chi-squared test indicated no significant association between purchase decision influence and age, p = 0.747. The influence was moderately equal amongst all three age categories with 69.7% of 18-21's, 64% of 22-25's, and 70% of 26-29's being influenced to purchase a product.

The results indicate the predominant reason participants were influenced to purchase was simultaneous across all age groups; 'a demonstration of how to use the product and product quality was provided'. This confirms Forbes (2016) findings, which discovered visual platforms like Instagram and YouTube are influential due to their demonstrative purpose ability.

Interestingly, 10% of participants purchased products to copy the micro-celebrity as they trusted their opinion. This supports Escalas & Bettman's (2003) theory of self-brand connection, as consumers used the reference group to form associations regarding the brands they use and incorporated these into their self-concept. Additionally, this shows participants

conformed to micro-celebrity beliefs by purchasing the same product they used.

The most common theme amongst participants aged 18-25 was 'the product endorsed was too expensive'; this implies the 14 (7.5%) participants who were not influenced, may have been if they were not constrained by financial resources. Interestingly, the most common theme amongst 26-29's was a lack of interest in beauty influencers and preference of family/friend recommendations. This matches Whitler's (2014) finding of associative groups being more influential than aspirational. However, overall this study contrasts this finding, as only 10 (5.4%) of participants had this opinion.

4.1   Existing Credibility Factors

The findings of this study indicate 'Trustworthiness' the most important existing credibility factor applicable to beauty micro-celebrities; 40% responded with 'extremely important', and 41% responded with 'very important'. The predominant underlying factor within trustworthiness was 'Reviewing products honestly', with 91% of participants believing this was very/extremely important.

Chi-squared tests were conducted to further investigate this underlying factor. A chi-squared result of $p = 0.871$, indicated no significant association between age and 'reviewing products honestly'; participants of all ages found this extremely important. A chi-squared result of $p = 0.144$ indicated no significant association between YouTube usage and 'reviewing products honestly'. However, a chi-squared result of $p = 0.011$ indicated a significant association between Instagram usage and 'reviewing products honestly', signifying this was more important on Instagram than YouTube.

The second most important factor was 'Likeability' from McGuire's (1995) Source Attractiveness model. 16% of participants responded 'extremely important', and 29% responded 'very important'. The most important underlying factor was being 'pleasant', with 16.9% of participants responding extremely important, and 34% very important.

Expertise was identified as the third most important credibility factor. 12% of participants responded 'extremely important', and 37% responded 'very important'. The most important underlying factor within expertise was the beauty micro-celebrity being skilled, with 14.7% believing this was extremely important, and 34.7% very important.

The fourth most important factor was 'Product Match-Up' (Kamins, 1990). 7% of participants responded extremely important, and 16% very important. No underlying factor stood out to be the most important. This study partially supports the findings of Amos et al., (2008) that endorsements need to be consistent with experiences, lifestyle and forwarding motivations to be credible, as 6.8% of participants viewed this as 'extremely important', and 18.4% 'very important'.

Similarity, a factor within the Source Attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985) ranked as the fifth most important factor, receiving mixed responses from participants. Although 5% of participants responded 'not at all important', 5% responded 'extremely important, and 19% 'very important', revealing how all factors are of some importance and should still be considered as determining credibility. The most important underlying factor was 'identifying with as similar to myself', indicating consumers go through an 'identification' process when evaluating micro-celebrity credibility (Um, 2017).

Familiarity was identified as the sixth most important factor determining credibility. This also received mixed responses, with 8% viewing as 'not at all important', but 17% viewing as 'very important', and 8% 'extremely important', with being 'familiar' with the micro-celebrity being the most important underlying factor.

The results indicate Ohanian's (1990) Source Credibility factor 'attractiveness' as the least important factor regarding beauty micro-celebrity credibility, with 13% of participants responding 'not important at all'. Of the two underlying factors tested, the endorser being 'physically attractive' was the least important factor; with 14.1% of participants responding 'not at all important', and 30.9% responding 'low importance'. This disproves Kahle and Homer's (1985) finding regarding traditional celebrity endorsements in the beauty industry, as being applicable to social media beauty micro-celebrities.

No relationship existed statically between age and the view that physical attractiveness increases credibility, p = 0.596. Furthermore, no relationship existed between YouTube usage and the view that physically attractiveness increases credibility, generating a chi-squared result of p = 0.234. However, Instagram usage and the view that physical attractiveness increases credibility indicated a significant relationship, p = 0.032, suggesting this factor is only important on Instagram.

Figure 1 provides a visual overview of the percentage of responses within each Likert-scale response, for Q8.1 – Q8.18. In Figure 2, these questions are grouped by factor, giving an overall result.

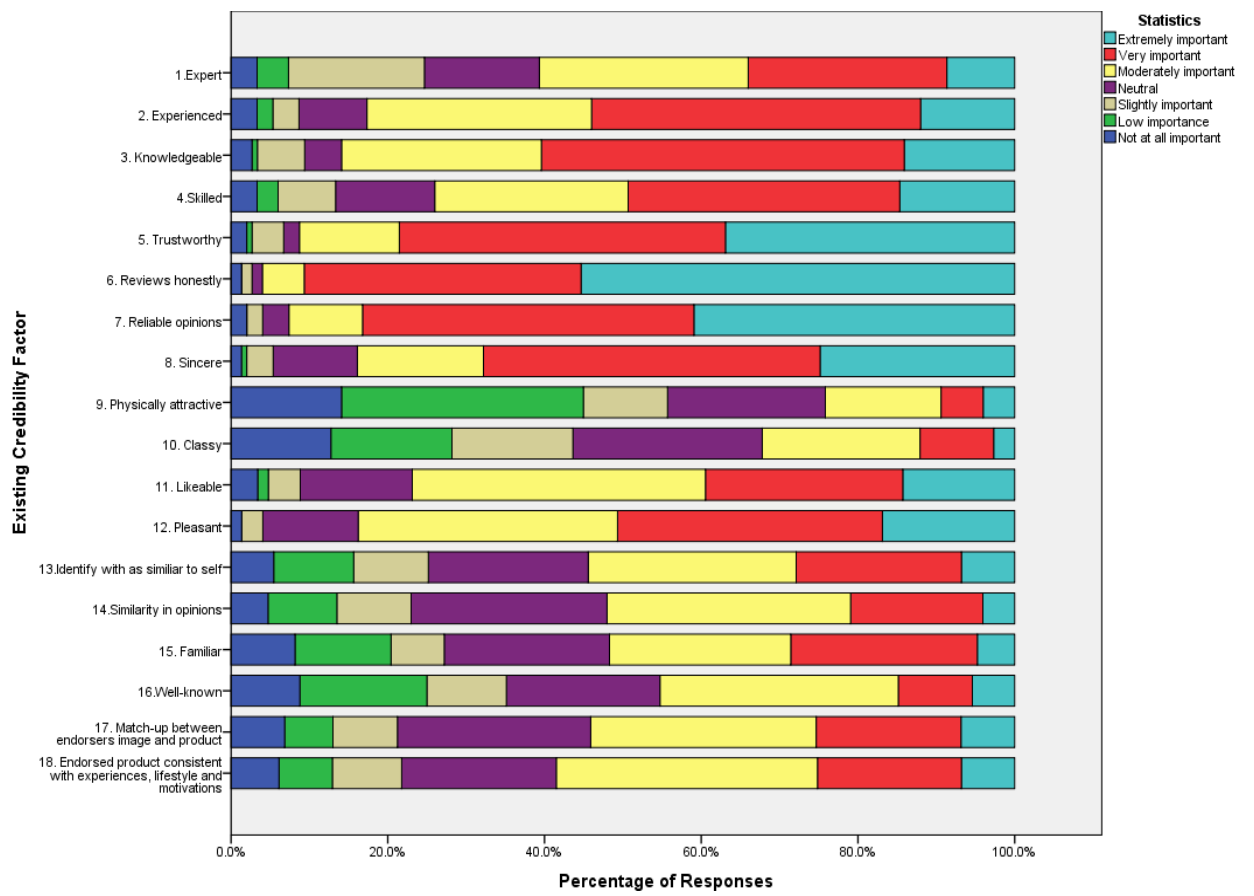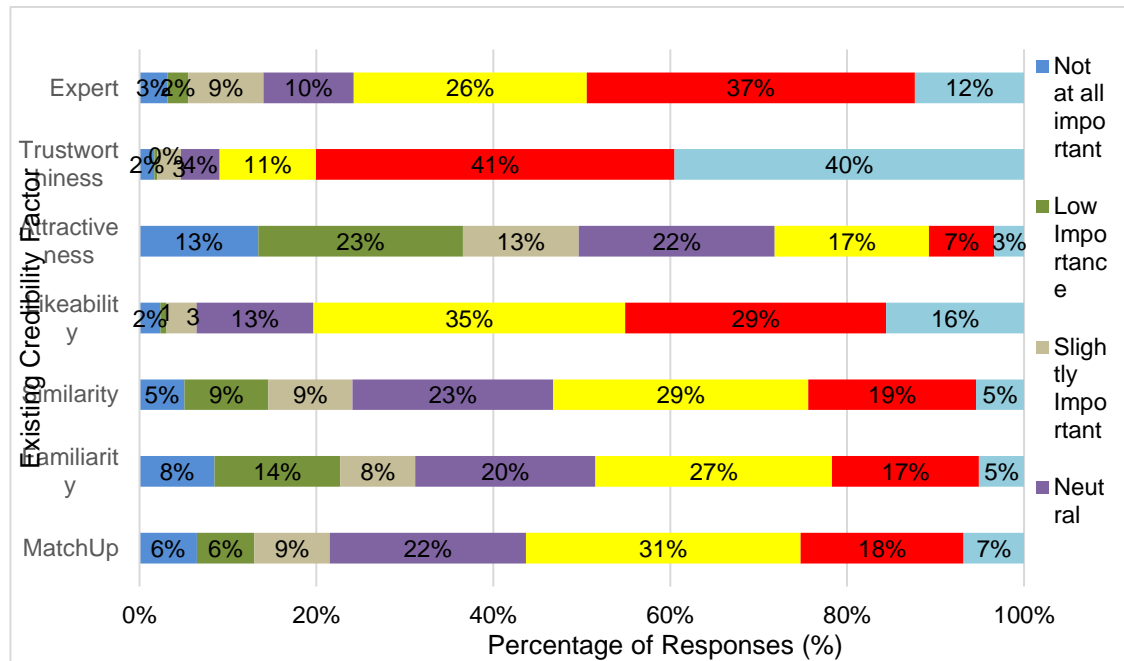Figure 1 Existing Credibility Factors Responses

Figure 2. Stacked bar chart analysis of results grouped by credibility factor (%)

4.2   Instagram Results

Of the 12 Instagram micro-celebrities, 11 (91.7%) adopted a parallel strategy with YouTube, featuring tutorial 'trailer teasers', finished makeup looks, and their YouTube URL in their Instagram bio, prompting consumers onto their YouTube channels. Micro-celebrities use Instagram and YouTube interchangeably to maximise their reach and influence (Cowley, 2016; Steiner, 2017)

The accounts with larger followings of 1million+ typically had enhanced image quality, treating their Instagram profiles like portfolios. This correlation could be explained by such micro-celebrities generating increased income from endorsement deals or YouTube monetisation (Zanatta, 2017), subsequently enabling the purchasing of higher-quality, professional camera equipment to capture/film their social media content.

Regarding the content shared, 58% Instagram micro-celebrities shared a mixture of content types, including event photos, fashion, lifestyle, travel and personal images, in additional to their beauty-related content. This supports García-Rapp's (2016) findings, expressing how micro-celebrities often crossover content categories to appeal to greater audiences and provide greater insights into their lives. Additionally, this supports Berryman & Kavka's (2017) findings, as micro-celebrities sharing personal content means they are more likely to be viewed as 'big sisters' or friends, thus being more credible and influential.

Micro-celebrity @hudabeauty was found to have the greatest interaction/engagement with followers, very regularly replying to comments. However, this was again due to @hudabeauty also being a company, so the interaction was mainly brand-related comments regarding orders, shipments, and complaints. It was then smaller Instagram micro-celebrities with less than 1 million followers who had the greatest

interaction with followers. Following Chung & Cho's (2016) findings, this suggests beauty micro-celebrities with less than one million followers who interact and build relationships with fans are more likely to be deemed credible influencers.

4.3   YouTube results

Only 17% micro-celebrities were found to post sponsored videos actively promoting products or brands; it was much more common to feature PR products and subtly share affiliated links. This highlights how micro-celebrity endorsements are seamlessly woven into content to be perceived as credible eWOM, rather than actively advertising through sponsored videos.

The YouTube micro-celebrities with larger followings of 3million+ more commonly shared personal videos including information on friendships, relationships, families, and lifestyle 'vlogs'. As with Instagram micro-celebrities, this may help in being viewed as a 'friend' or 'big sister' to be deemed more credible.

Of the 8 micro-celebrities which had over 1million subscribers, 7 (87.5%) had been 'famous' online for over 3 years, suggesting a correlation between the length of time active on YouTube and the subsequent following. Regarding advertisements within content, 91% of the 12 YouTube micro-celebrities had at least one advert before or within their video, and are therefore part of the 'YouTube partner' monetisation scheme enabling them to generate revenue from the platform (Zanatta, 2017).

50% of the micro-celebrities analysed worked within the beauty industry prior to gaining fame on social media, mostly as professional or freelance

makeup artists. The other 50% gained fame solely through being a makeup enthusiast who cultivated their talent online.
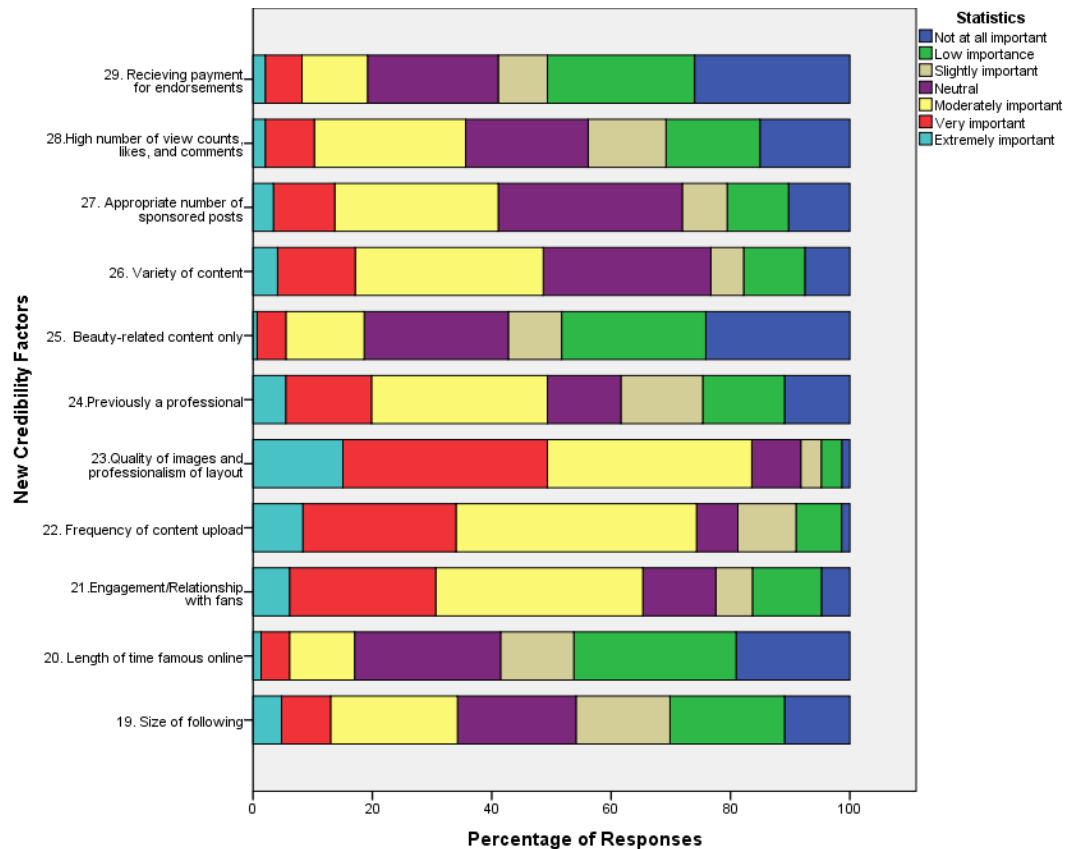
4.4 Quality of images

The results of RO3 determine the 'Quality of images and professionalism of layout' as the leading credibility factor amongst 18-29-year-old females, relevant to Instagram and YouTube beauty micro-celebrities; 50% of participants referred to it as important. This result supports Djafarova & Rushworth's (2017) findings, which also identified quality and composition of images on micro-celebrity profiles to be a main theme in determining micro-celebrity credibility.

The second most important factor was 'Frequency of content upload', with 34% of participants responding 'extremely important'. This suggests participants prefer their beauty micro-celebrities to be very active on social media, constantly staying up-to-date with new product releases and reviewing all of the latest products to be credible.

The results indicate 'Engagement/relationships with followers' to be the third most important factor. Micro-celebrities who build relationships with their fans are more likely to be deemed credible influencers (Chung & Cho, 2016). This study identifies 'Receiving payment for endorsements' as the least important factor when determining beauty micro-celebrity credibility. Interestingly, 51% of participants responded 'not at all important'.

The results of each new credibility factor by Likert-scale response can be viewed in Table 3 below

Table 3. Analysis of new credibility factors by Likert-Scale responses

Statistics
- Not at all important
- Low importance
- Slightly important
- Neutral
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

5. Conclusion

This research emphasises the importance of recognising micro-celebrities within the beauty industry for females aged 18-29. Instagram and YouTube facilitate the greatest reach for beauty micro-celebrities, thus eliciting the greatest potential reference group influence, especially regarding purchase decisions. The results indicate Instagram as the most likely to exert reference group influence, however, YouTube is still significant, particularly amongst younger consumers, aged 18-21. These platforms are especially influential as they enable demonstrations of product use and quality to generate product understanding and trust.

The study contributes to literature by revealing the predominant factors determining credibility of beauty micro-celebrity endorsements, amongst

female consumers aged 18-29. Additionally, this study confirms beauty micro-celebrities act as an environmental influence on purchase decisions during the decision making-process.

The results determine none of the existing credibility theories to be completely applicable to beauty micro-celebrity endorsement on Instagram and YouTube; each theory gained a mixed response regarding the factors within them. However, the results indicate a hybrid of the Source Credibility model (Ohanian, 1990) and the Source Attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985) would be most applicable, including Trustworthiness, Likeability, and Expertise as the determining credibility factors – these ranked as first, second, and third most important.

Managerial Implications

This research leads to a recommendation for practitioners within the beauty industry to take advantage of micro-celebrity influence, however, to do this carefully to remain credible. Beauty brands should refrain from pushing sponsored content, and should instead focus upon seamlessly weaving endorsements into micro-celebrities' profiles. This is less questionable to consumers and is more likely to be interpreted as credible eWOM.

Limitations and Future Research

The results indicated mixed responses when tested within the questionnaire. All factors were deemed important by some participants, and unimportant by others. This suggests some limitations to the sample of this research and further research is required to clarify the findings and reveal more in-depth reasons explaining why these are important to consumers. However, the three most important factors identified which marketers within this industry should consider as a result of this study are: 'quality of images and professionalism of layout' in line with Djafarova &

Rushworth (2017), 'regularly uploading new content', and engagement/relationships with followers'. Interestingly, the micro-celebrities with the highest quality images were those with substantially large followings, but those who engaged most regularly with followers were smaller influencers. This indicates a contradiction in results which could be explored in future research.

Another suggestion for future research is to replicate similar approach in alternative industry to determine whether the findings coincide or contrast with these conclusions. Furthermore, identical study could be conducted on text-based social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook to observe how credibility differs from other platforms.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire Statements

The following statements were asked via a Likert-Scale with the following response anchors:

1. Not at all important, 2. Low importance, 3. Slightly important 4. Neutral 5. Moderately important 6. Very important 7. Extremely important

Q Number.   Statement

8.1   The endorser is an expert

8.2   The endorser is experienced in the product category

8.3   The endorser is knowledgeable in the product category

8.4   The endorser is skilled

8.5   The endorser is trustworthy

8.6   The endorser reviews products honestly

8.7   The endorser gives reliable opinions

8.8   The endorser is sincere

8.9   The endorser is physically attractive

8.10   The endorser is classy

8.11   The endorser is likeable

8.12   The endorser is pleasant overall

8.13   I can identify with the endorser as they are similar to myself

8.14   I believe my opinion and the endorsers are similar

8.15   I am familiar with the endorser

8.16   I consider the endorser to be well-known

8.17   There is a match-up between the endorsers' image and the endorsed product or message

8.18   The endorsed product category is consistent with the online celebrities' experiences, lifestyle and forwarding motivations

8.19   The endorser has a large subscriber/follower base

8.20   The endorser has been 'famous' online for a long time (E.g. longer than 2 years)

8.21   The endorser regularly engages with followers/fans and tries to build relationships with them (E.g. Regularly replies to comments)

8.22   The endorser frequently uploads new content

8.23   The endorser presents high quality images and videos in a professional and attractive layout

8.24   The endorser has relevant beauty experience before becoming a YouTube or Instagram beauty celebrity (e.g. Worked as a professional make-up artist)

8.25   The endorser posts only beauty-related content

8.26   The endorser posts a variety of content, potentially including personal, lifestyle, and fashion content

8.27   The endorser shares an appropriate amount of sponsored posts (E.g. posts sponsored by brands are filtered between non-sponsored posts acceptably)

8.28   The endorser receives high view counts on videos, or a substantial amount of likes or comments

8.29   The endorser is being paid to feature particular products within an image or video