

The Paradox of Influence: Authenticity in TikTok's Blurred Digital Space

An Experimental Survey on The Role of Persuasive Language and
Content Disclosure on Perceived Authenticity

Student Name: Morgan Faith Moelchand

Student Number: 749173

Supervisor: Dr. Lijie Zheng

Master Media Studies - Media & Business

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

The dynamics of short-form video platform TikTok has created new ways for marketers to advertise, blurring the lines between regular content and commercial messaging. In 2022, the European Commission implemented guidelines to protect consumers from hidden advertising practices. As a result, social media influencers must disclose brand partnerships with labels such as 'advertising' or 'ad'. However, studies found out that about 80% of sponsored posts were not disclosed after these guidelines. This raises critical concerns about the consumer perception of authenticity.

The primary objective of this study was to examine how TikTok content types (*rogue marketing* and *native advertising*) and different types of persuasive language devices (*rhetorical question*, *anaphora*, and *awareness patterns*) influence consumers' perceived authenticity. This quantitative study conducted an experimental survey ($N = 240$), in which a 2x3 between-subject design was used. Participants were exposed to one of six stimuli, in which perceived authenticity was measured using an adapted PASMI scale (*sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*). Data were analysed using a PCA and a Two-Way ANOVA.

The results indicated that PASMI scale item *truthful endorsement* reached a marginally significant interaction effect, in which *native advertising* content with the use of *rhetorical question* led to the highest perceived authenticity, instead of *rogue marketing* as was initially expected. Additionally, when solely men were selected, a difference in perceived authenticity was detected concerning persuasive language tools with the use of *anaphora* leading to the highest perceived authenticity, while for women the use of *rhetorical question* led to the highest perceived authenticity. These findings offer valuable insights for marketers and regulators seeking to build connections with its audience, and to better protect from hidden advertising practices.

KEYWORDS: *Rogue Marketing, Native Advertising, Persuasive Language Techniques, Perceived Authenticity, SMIs, European Commission*

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Preface

Ever since I was a little child, my biggest dream was to attend university. It feels surreal to be currently writing the final section of my Master's Thesis. This journey into empirical research has been entirely new to me, a significant shift from my Bachelors in Film- and Literary Studies. This change was not due to boredom, but rather reflects a deep-seated curiosity for multiple fields. This perfectly illustrates my thesis, as it combines components of rhetoric, social media and business.

I am extremely grateful for my supervisor Dr. Lijie Zheng, whose guidance, optimism and consistently calm approach were exceptional throughout this process. Additionally, I want to thank my parents, brother and boyfriend for their immense support throughout my academic career, which allowed me to grow both personally and academically.

Through my Master's in Media & Business, I developed a passion for entrepreneurship. This diverse field enables me to apply my theoretical background in innovation and strategic thinking to real-world settings, thereby transforming my childhood dream into purposeful action.

Morgan Faith Moelchand

Rotterdam, June 30th, 2025

1. Introduction

EU's Regulations on Content Disclosure and Its Challenges

Prior to the year 2022, the distinction between sponsored and non-sponsored content on social media platforms was often indistinguishable. This changed with the introduction of the European Consumer Protection Law in 2022, which required platforms to take steps toward greater transparency (European Commission, 2022, para. 3). This legal framework established clear guidelines that enable users to easily identify sponsored content through labels such as *advertisement*, *sponsored*, and *paid partnership*. Nevertheless, the persistent challenge of undisclosed advertisements demands further examination, especially when targeting young social media users, highlighting the need for this study.

“All social media platforms are required to play by the rules and make sure that consumers can easily identify commercial content, including when promoted by influencers. (...) Thanks to our dialogue, consumers will be able to spot all kinds of advertisement that they are exposed to when using this platform” (European Commission, 2022, para. 2).

According to the Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, the regulations were implemented after concerns were raised by the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), which discovered that users struggle to recognize advertising practices on social media. The BEUC concluded that the platforms had failed to sufficiently protect consumers from hidden advertisements, their concerns were specifically focused on the protection of children (European Commission, 2022, para. 2). Unfortunately, two years after the implementation of the guidelines, the EC reported that only 20% of commercial posts were disclosed as advertising (European Commission, 2024, findings of the sweep section). To illustrate, in 2024, Dutch influencer Rhodé Kok, who has 1.3 million followers on TikTok, became one of the first influencers to be fined for hidden advertising practices in her social media videos. She was given a fine of €6075, highlighting the growing concern of undisclosed commercial content reaching young audiences (NOS, 2024, waakhond bestraft eerste vlogger voor verborgen reclame section). The ongoing non-disclosures may stem from social media influencers' (SMIs) perception that disclosures disrupt the balance between entertainment and commercial messaging, potentially decreasing user enjoyment and their perceived

authenticity of the content (Van Dam & Van Reijmersdal, 2019, pp. 4-10). In response to these distressing findings, the EC (2024) has taken steps for further investigation, including the launch of an Influencer Legal Hub in 2023 to educate SMIs on compliance with EU law (Next steps section; 2023 - sweep on influencers section).

Native Advertising on TikTok and Its Features

A key technique for concealing advertising practices is referred to as *native advertising*. According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau (2019), native advertising is designed to closely match the surrounding content and platform, making it feel natural and fitting to users (p. 11). Deliberately blending content into its environment makes it challenging for users to distinguish commercial from organic content (p. 11). A study by Pasandaran and Mutmainnah (2020) reveal that vulnerability to hidden advertisements is not exclusive to children, indicating that only 23% of young adult consumers were able to identify content as advertising (p. 101). This alarming finding raises concerns about the ability of young consumers to engage with social media content, thereby highlighting the need for stronger regulations to protect users from hidden advertising practices.

Native advertising content is particularly relevant in the context of social media platform *TikTok*. Launched in 2016 by Chinese tech company ByteDance, TikTok is a platform primarily designed for short-form video content. It has since then become the most popular social media platform among young adults under 30 years old, referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z) (Zips & Holendova, 2023, pp. 112-113). Even though the platform has an age restriction below thirteen, a study by Netwerk Mediawijsheid has concluded that about half a million Dutch children between the ages of six and fourteen are active on the platform (2021, De stijgende populariteit van TikTok section).

With over 1 billion downloads in 2020, TikTok is currently the largest competitor on the digital market. Its success is especially attributed to its unique recommendation algorithm, a feature which is not offered by other social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube (Boeker & Urman., 2022, p. 1). TikTok's algorithm is able to generate personalized content suggestions for users, which are displayed on the For You Page (FYP), this is the first page that appears when the app opens (Fauzani et al., 2025, p. 45). These recommendations are influenced by users' behaviors such as following specific content creators, watching videos for extended periods, and liking particular posts (Boeker & Urman, 2022, p. 7).

According to a study by Fitri and Ananta (2025) the FYP makes it relatively easy for users to be exposed to trend based content in which products are promoted (p. 196). This is largely the case for Gen Z, who is growing up in an era dominated by digital media. Therefore, Gen Z displays behaviors characterized by high levels of communication. A study by Zips and Holendova (2023) explains that short-form videos serve as a crucial tool for entertainment, self-expression and engagement, which have become integral to their daily lives (p. 113). Considering that Gen Z constitutes for approximately 60% of TikTok's user base, the platform maintains a central position in their media consumption, making it an essential focus for research (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024, p. 930). Existing literature has explored Gen Z's engagement with TikTok, focusing on the impact of SMIs on users' impulsive purchasing behaviors (Darmatama & Erdiansyah, 2021, p. 888). These studies have identified several persuasive factors that shape consumer behavior, including pricing and business strategies (Rizomyliotis et al., 2024, p. 930; Adyatma, 2022, p. 202).

Rogue Marketing on TikTok

Native advertising is not the only content type that is posted on TikTok, *rogue marketing* is a popular content form in which creators promote products, services, or brands without having a contractual agreement (Norris et al., 2021, p. 333). These posts mirror the creator's own self-importance, in which they want to influence their friends and followers (p. 333). With informal messaging, rogue marketing content is able to reach both positive and negative feedback for a brand, without their control of the content (pp. 333-334). Even though creators who post rogue marketing content usually do not have a big follower base, since products, brands and services are promoted for free, their content is able to go viral because of TikTok's algorithm.

To illustrate, unknown TikTok creator Nathan Apodaca went viral after posting a video of himself lip-syncing to a Fleetwood Mac song while drinking Ocean Spray Cranberry Juice. The brand of the drink embraced the content, rewarding him with a truck filled with the juice (Norris et al., 2021, pp. 335-336). Conversely, comedian Trevor Wallace's viral TikTok video featuring drink White Claw led to a legal notice from the company requesting the removal of the video, as they did not approve the rogue marketing content and the resulting attention (pp. 335-336). This type of content can be seen as a form of free advertising, which is not always appreciated. Additionally, like native advertising, rogue marketing content is

able to go viral due to TikTok's algorithm. Making both content types highly influential in shaping consumer behaviour.

Persuasive Language on TikTok

The integration of SMIs into marketing strategies has grown significantly in recent years (Liao & Chen, 2024, p. 2). One critical, yet underexplored, aspect of influencer marketing on TikTok is the powerful role of *persuasive language*. Specifically, how SMIs utilize storytelling and narration to shape their content impact how audiences interpret their messages.

This aligns with Friestad and Wright's (1994) influential *Persuasion Knowledge Model* (PKM). This model describes how individuals actively use persuasion knowledge, defined as the way individuals interpret, evaluate and respond to persuasive messages (p. 1). Within the context of influencer marketing, specific persuasive language choices can directly influence how consumers perceive the SMIs' authenticity (Sarhour, 2025, p. 4965). The PKM will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.3.

Furthermore, research on persuasive language technique is complex, intersecting with various disciplines, including marketing, strategy and rhetoric, as Braca & Dondio (2023) highlight (p. 377). Their study provides a comprehensive overview of persuasive techniques employed across these fields (p. 377). In digital advertising, rhetorical devices are utilized to persuade audiences by either informing or entertaining (p. 389). While numerous rhetorical devices frequently appear in digital advertising, it is worth questioning the extent to which marketers and SMIs consciously and systematically apply these tools into their content (pp. 389-392). Braca and Dondio's (2023) study is crucial for this research since their overview of persuasive language techniques in digital advertising directly addresses how they are utilized to inform or entertain audiences. These rhetorical tools will be further discussed in Chapter 2.3.

Perceived Authenticity & Skincare Content

The two TikTok content types (native advertising and rogue marketing) influence the *perceived authenticity* of the users. Perceived authenticity, as defined by Lee and Eastin (2021), is essential to the success of influencer marketing, referring to the quality of being genuine and transparent in both content and interactions (p. 823). Transparency stimulates

strong relationships between creators and their follower base. However, a lack of authenticity, which results from promotional messaging, can significantly harm an influencer's credibility and reduce consumer trust (Baghel, 2023, pp. 1259-1260). SMIs act as intermediaries between brands and users, offering a "personalized and authentic form of advertising" (Baghel, 2024, p. 2732). A possible effect of authenticity within influencer marketing is the forming of a *parasocial relationship*, which is the one-sided interpersonal connection between users and SMIs. This relationship leads to feelings of intimacy and a sense of knowing the SMIs personally (Lee & Eastin, 2020, p. 7). This is particularly the case for Gen Z, who is sceptical of traditional advertising, and values content that feels genuine and transparent (Baghel, 2023, p. 1259; Lee & Eastin, 2020, p. 7). Additionally, consumers are most likely to trust an influencer when they perceive alignment between the influencer and the brand being promoted. However, when such compatibility is absent, consumer trust diminishes rapidly, negatively affecting brand loyalty (Baghel, 2023, p. 1260).

Gen Z's strong presence on the platform significantly shaped the skincare industry. Skincare brands actively leverage the platform to connect with their target audiences and promote products (Agustini & Elista, 2024 p. 87-88). This growth largely stems from viral rogue marketing content, which users often perceive as highly authentic and trustworthy (p. 105). This authenticity, combined with SMIs' expertise, significantly increases purchase decisions (p. 105). Furthermore, skincare content is a key focus for this research because consumers approach these purchases with a more deliberate decision-making process. Given that such content directly relates to their health, they carefully evaluate information (Ünalmiş et al., 2024, pp. 4-5). The demand for authenticity in skincare content is crucial, where genuine experiences and visible results, often consumed across multiple videos, are key for building trust (pp. 3-4).

The choice to focus specifically on Dutch skincare content is based on an argument by Septianasari et al. (2021). They explain that native advertising skincare content most often employs *directive speech* to persuade audiences (p. 79). SMIs and brands want to activate their target audiences to increase consumer purchase intentions (p. 79). While this native advertising technique is recognized immediately by audiences and can encourage high engagement between users and SMIs, there is a distinct lack of emphasis and understanding on rogue marketing content.

Despite regulatory efforts, the challenge of undisclosed advertising practices on TikTok remains, with both native advertising and rogue marketing skincare content employing persuasion techniques. This highlights a significant gap in current literature

regarding how persuasive tools are employed across these content types and its impact on perceived authenticity among users. This gap is particularly relevant given the increasing examination on digital advertising practices and the evolving landscape of social media regulations. Given TikTok's significant influence on the skincare industry, and Gen Z being the largest demographic on the platform, the research question addressed in this thesis is:

To what extent does persuasive language in TikTok skincare content, encompassing both native advertising and rogue marketing, influence Gen Z's perceived authenticity?

1.1 Societal Relevance

This study provides valuable insights for both marketers and regulatory bodies, such as the EC and the BEUC. Since Gen Z continues to shape digital consumption trends on TikTok, it is crucial to understand how they perceive authenticity in digital content. With the increasing intersection of personal expression and commercial intent in social media advertising, this study contributes to the development of more ethical and transparent advertising practices that align with the expectations of young consumers. Moreover, given the apparent ineffectiveness of EC guidelines, this study aims to provide implications for them, with a specific focus on TikTok as a platform.

Focusing specifically on the skincare industry, an area where trust and authenticity are crucial, this research emphasizes the significance of Gen Z as a key consumer group. By applying the PKM, this research examines how persuasive language devices, in both native advertising and rogue marketing TikTok content, influences Gen Z's perceived authenticity. The findings offer practical guidance on how brands can strategically communicate with their target audience to enhance the perceived authenticity and trust.

Additionally, while almost all of the existing literature is conducted in English, this study introduces a Dutch-language perspective. Given the essential role of language in shaping perceptions of authenticity, this research offers context-specific insights for Dutch businesses, marketers, and regulators. These findings aim to help businesses and marketers more effectively engage with Gen Z audiences and to protect against hidden advertising practices. Ultimately, the study addresses both international concerns and national societal needs.

1.2 Academic Relevance

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating perspectives from marketing, business, linguistics, and psychology. It contributes to the academic literature by addressing a notable gap in existing research. While numerous studies¹ have explored advertising in influencer marketing and the concept of perceived authenticity, fewer have specifically examined the role of persuasive language within influencer marketing, particularly in the context of native advertising as opposed to rogue marketing on TikTok.

By integrating the PKM, this research enhances our understanding of how Gen Z interprets persuasive intent and authenticity in the digital age. Therefore, the study contributes to digital consumer behaviour, particularly in relation to persuasion techniques within TikTok.

¹ Rizomyliotis et al., 2024; Boeker & Urman, 2022; Baghel, 2023; Baghel, 2024; Lee & Eastin, 2020.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 TikTok As A Dynamic Platform & Perceived Authenticity

The section will delve into the values that TikTok offers for marketers, focusing on its unique features. Moreover, this section will discuss the key role that SMIs play within the platform's ecosystem, highlighting its significance for content and consumer engagement. Finally, this section will address challenges posed by the platform's hidden advertising practices by discussing current EU guidelines, with regard to users' perceived authenticity.

2.1.1 TikTok's Values for Marketers

Since its global launch in 2017, TikTok has positioned itself as a highly attractive platform for marketers (Kantar, 2024, p. 8). This raises an important question: *what makes TikTok well-suited for advertising?* Its popularity among marketers can be attributed to two key features. First, its success is rooted in TikTok's focus on short-form videos, typically ranging from 15 to 60 seconds, which directly aligns with users' preferences for engaging content (Liu, 2023, pp. 76-77). This format is further strengthened by lower production costs compared to traditional longer video content, making content creation more accessible and appealing for marketers (p. 77). Additionally, TikTok offers an extensive array of creative tools, including filters, templates, and effects, which enables users to produce and share content rapidly (Zhang, 2024, p. 324).

The second fundamental factor in TikTok's success is its algorithm system, which personalizes content recommendations by analysing users' viewing history and interactions (Zhang, 2024, p. 324; Boeker & Urman, 2022, p. 7). TikTok proactively delivers content to users FYP based on their behavioural patterns, unlike platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, where content is shown based on user-initiated searches. This algorithm encourages continuous engagement, by providing users with an endless stream of personalized videos (p. 327). Consequently, users are often influenced by *viral trends* that directly shape Gen Z's purchase intentions. To illustrate, the "TikTok Made Me Buy It" trend demonstrates how shared product experiences contribute to purchase intentions, effectively capturing the attention of young consumers (Bulazo et al., 2025, p. 438).

The platform's unique features, while highly appealing for marketers, have nonetheless given rise to significant discussions. On the one hand, the personalized algorithm

and emphasis on content relevance over follower count, have created a more level playing field for advertisers (Adyatma, 2022, p. 203). Which enables smaller companies, such as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), to achieve significant visibility and compete effectively with larger brands without requiring financial resources or large follower base (p. 203). On the other hand, these features form the core of a complex problem: precisely because TikTok's algorithm makes content feel so organic and personal, the line between entertainment and commercial messaging becomes significantly blurred. This grey area creates challenges for transparent content and consumer protection.

2.1.2 Social Media Influencers and Their Role on TikTok

SIMs are fundamental to TikTok's ecosystem, changing the landscape of consumer behaviour and brand communication, by shaping consumer perceptions, enhancing brand visibility, and driving purchase intentions (Haq & Chiu, 2024, p. 3). A dominant content type on the platform is User-Generated Content (UGC). While Professionally-Generated Content² (PGC) also exists, UGC dominates, encouraging high levels of user engagement and creativity (Zhang, 2024, p. 327). Importantly, UGC encompasses both native advertising and rogue marketing, thereby functioning as a primary vehicle for both individual creators and brands.

The value of UGC stems from its perceived authenticity, which is a crucial element in consumer response, with content being highly influential (Lariba, 2023, p. 27). Unlike traditional advertisements, UGC is created by everyday users and relatable influencers, rather than by brands themselves, creating a sense of genuineness that strongly resonates with audiences (p. 27). According to Lee et al. (2015), consumers are more likely to trust UGC over traditional advertising, increasing its perceived authenticity (as cited in Lariba, 2023, p. 26). With the transformation of digital marketing, all types of content creators have become equally valuable in digital marketing strategies. These include not only well-known influencers and celebrities, but also everyday content creators such as less known and unknown influencers (Alcantara-Pilar et al., 2024, p. 4). Influencer marketing, in this context, involves identifying individuals who are capable of establishing authentic connections between brands and their target audiences (p. 4).

² PGC is content produced professionally, with the use of professional media personnel, media teams, entertainment teams (Zhang, 2024, p. 327).

The authenticity of the creator plays an essential role in establishing trust, which helps with consumer engagement (e.g. liking, sharing, commenting) (p. 4). These parasocial relationships between users and SMIs can mimic real friendships, making followers feel as if they personally know the influencer. This illusion enhances the effectiveness of marketing efforts, making users more receptive to the content (Zafina & Sinha, 2024, p. 4; Hoffner & Bond, 2022, p. 1). While such parasocial relationships are highly effective at driving consumer engagement and purchase intentions, they also raise critical questions about the perceived authenticity and the ethics involved. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of TikTok content' impact on users' perceived authenticity is crucial for examining its transparency.

2.1.3 EU Guidelines for Social Media and its Challenges

Regulatory efforts are an essential response to TikTok's unclear distinction between entertainment and commercial intent. The platform's personalized nature raises significant consumer protection concerns due to undisclosed advertising practices. Consequently, the EC established clear guidelines for social media advertising disclosures (2022, para. 2).

As discussed in the introduction, the EC revealed that the guidelines proved to be ineffective, since only 20% of commercial posts had reported advertising content (European Commission, 2024, findings of the sweep section). Current guidelines have therefore not been as effective as they had hoped (Van Quathem & Oberschelp de Meneses, 2024, para. 1). Consequently, a study by Cooper et al. (2025) states that the EC is currently working on a new consumer protection law called the Digital Fairness Act (DFA), which aims to introduce stricter regulations for advertising practices (Para. 1). They expect the DFA to prohibit the promotion of certain goods and services, and impose direct obligations for influencers which enhances consumer protection (Van Quathem & Oberschelp de Meneses, 2024, para. 2). Furthermore, national efforts are currently explored, with France introducing Law No. 2023-451 in 2023, regulating influencer marketing. This law demonstrates legislative approaches to enforce transparency through disclosure requirements, written contracts, and several criminal penalties for non-compliance (Cooper et al., 2025, the French model section).

The persistent struggle for effective disclosures highlights the central role that digital content plays. With perceived authenticity being mediated by different types of content, resulting in inconsistent consumer behaviours, effective digital content disclosure demands nuanced approaches.

2.1.4 Perceived Authenticity on TikTok: Benefits and Challenges

The concept of *perceived authenticity* has been explored across various domains, each offering refined perspectives on how authenticity is constructed, communicated, and interpreted. This is particularly relevant given its crucial role in consumer trust within digital marketing. While some studies emphasize that perceived authenticity strengthens genuine connections and positive responses from users (Athaya & Wandebori, 2024, p. 44; Shehzala et al., 2023, p. 596; Janssen et al., 2022, p. 104). Others highlight a decline in trust and discuss a growing consumer scepticism (Lee et al., 2020a, pp. 822-823; Poyry et al., 2019, pp. 3-8).

Athaya and Wandebori (2024), for instance, define perceived authenticity within the context of UGC, proposing it is intertwined with consumer's belief systems and perspectives. They state that UGC, specifically rogue marketing content, is perceived as more trustworthy and influential, thereby enhancing consumer decision-making (p. 44). Similarly, Shehzala et al. (2023) suggest that whenever SMIs present themselves as authentic and true to their characters (e.g. through unpolished and consistent behaviours), users are more likely to accept their recommendations and form strong parasocial relationships (p. 596). A more strategic and structural definition of the concept is offered by Janssen et al. (2022). They argue that SMIs are effective marketing tools because their perceived authenticity positions them as relatable and trustworthy 'superpeers'. Their study also highlights that an influencer's credibility increases when they promote products aligned with their expertise, reinforcing the perception of an authentic fit between the influencer and product. Interestingly, consumers' awareness of commercial intent does not seem to undermine this credibility or persuasive power (p. 104). However, not all research supports this perspective.

In contrast, Lee et al. (2020a) report a growing consumer scepticism toward influencer marketing, with individuals perceiving such content as inauthentic and irritating (pp. 822-823). Additionally, Poyry et al. (2019), define authenticity by characteristics such as genuineness, originality, sincerity, and truthfulness (pp. 3-5). They argue that authenticity is not fixed, and shaped by the communication medium and the user's interpretation, making it highly context-dependent (p. 6). Tone, voice and other stylistic elements serve as cues of authenticity, yet these are always subject to audience interpretation (p. 6). This leads to a dilemma for organizations, who must balance strategic message control with SMIs requirements to maintain personal authenticity, a tension leading to staged authenticity (p. 7).

While this strategy might build strong connections, it ultimately complicates an organization's ability to control communication outcomes.

The tension between these studies suggests that perceived authenticity is not a fixed perception, but rather a contextually influenced phenomenon that is shaped by content, context, and platform dynamics. It plays a central role in the success of influencer marketing strategies, and underscores the necessity to investigate how authenticity is perceived across different TikTok content types. Specifically regarding the differences between rogue marketing and native advertising content, which will be explored in the following chapter.

2.2 TikTok Content Types: Native Advertising and Rogue Marketing

This chapter explores two TikTok content types, namely native advertising and rogue marketing. The challenges associated with EC guidelines and users' perceived authenticity form the central focus. Ultimately, at the end of this chapter, the analysis will directly lead to the formulation of the first hypothesis.

2.2.1 Native Advertising on TikTok

TikTok's platform layout and algorithm have created a new form of marketing, namely *native advertising*. Which is a form of paid advertisement that resembles unpaid content on the platform, making the advertisements blend in with regular content (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2019, p. 11). This strategy is aimed at integrating commercial intent directly into the user experience, making advertisements feel natural and fitting on their FYP (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2019, p. 11; Zhimin, 2024, p. 10506). Advertisers achieve this seamless integration through personalization, leveraging viral trends, and addressing 'pain points' to create a sense of familiarity and drive consumer engagement (Zhimin, 2024, p. 10506). This marketing form directly impacts how perceived authenticity is constructed within the platform.

The format of native advertising directly makes differentiation between content types difficult for users. This challenge is further enhanced by TikTok's personalized algorithm, which ensures that native advertisements blend almost perfectly into a user's FYP. To illustrate, a 2022 study examined how native advertisements are perceived by TikTok users. Their findings suggest that native advertisements are usually *not* perceived as advertisements,

but as regular unpaid, and therefore rogue marketing content. In the United States, over half of respondents perceived native beauty advertisements as regular unpaid content (Magna Global, as cited in Digiday, 2022, para. 7). This aligns with findings from Mebmer et al. (2024), where 62% of TikTok users acknowledge the overlap between entertainment and commercial intent (Users estimate that every second post on TikTok is an ad section). This raises concerns about potential risks from hidden advertising practices, especially given that one in three advertisements are native (Semenova et al., 2024, para. 2).

Even though the EC has integrated guidelines, a study by Semenova et al. (2024) highlights the ineffectiveness of it. Their study found that one in five FYP videos are undisclosed native advertisements, with a minimal percentage removed for non-compliance (Every fifth video in the For You feed is paid promotion section). Importantly, removals of non-compliances are delayed by approximately two days, leading to content remaining accessible after the finding (Removing ads is slow usually happens after ads have reached their audience section). This reveals a significant loophole in enforcement and ultimately enlarges concerns about hidden advertising on TikTok.

2.2.2 Rogue Marketing on TikTok

Beyond paid promotion content like native advertising, *rogue marketing* describes the phenomenon where TikTok users share unsolicited reviews or recommendations of products and brands without any contractual agreement (Wang, 2024, p. 88; Norris et al., 2021, p. 33). *Rogue* refers to the inability of the company to control the brand message being posted on the platform (Norris et al., 2021, p. 334). This type of content can rapidly go viral and can generate unanticipated publicity, whether positive or negative (Wang, 2024, p. 88; Norris et al., 2021, p. 333). The motivations often stem from an individual's desires for self-enhancement and increased social influence, which arises as a response to consumers 'attention fatigue' from frequent advertisements (Wang, 2024, p. 87). Norris et al. (2021) describe that rogue marketing's informal, relaxed tone, and non-sponsored product placements is key to its viral potential (p. 333). Additionally, this type of content is planned by SMIs and not by the companies themselves, however, as seen in the introduction, sometimes brands respond to the content.

“UGC created and shared by informal, non-sponsored real users, such as product reviews, experience sharing, and recommendations, is considered more authentic and credible by the audience” (Wang, 2024, p. 88).

Wang (2024) highlights that rogue marketing content (referred to as UGC in their article) is considered authentic and engaging, making it a more attractive alternative to advertising content which is often seen as inauthentic (p. 88). This is because consumers process rogue marketing content differently, perceiving it as authentic rather than a ‘sales pitch’ (Mayrhofer et al., 2019, as cited in Wang, 2024, p. 88). While brands are encouraged to embrace its potential for deeper audience connections, the powerful impact on consumer perceptions ensures the line between the content types remains blurred (Wang, 2024, p. 90; Norris et al., 2021, p. 333). This argument is supported by Athaya and Wandebori (2024), as discussed in Section 2.1.4, the authors argue that rogue marketing is perceived as highly authentic, since the content resonates with users’ need for sincere product information (p. 44). Conversely, O’Sullivan-Gavin and Amazeen (2016) criticize rogue marketing as unapproved scams, raising significant legal and ethical concerns (pp. 10-11, 16-21). They argue that social media causes rogue scams to go viral, without companies being aware, resulting in public outrage and having companies explain certain situations without being involved (p. 16). While this critique seems valid for rogue marketing content involving a deceptive nature, it differs from typical TikTok content. Rogue marketing involves SMIs genuinely promoting products from personal interest and direct use (Wang, 2024, p. 87), which distinguishes them from misleading rogue scams that may lack authentic product engagement. Thus, while O’Sullivan-Gavin and Amazeen’s (2016) critique underscores problems of rogue marketing, it does not fully capture the perceived authenticity that can emerge when influencers share genuine user experiences, even within commercial contexts on TikTok.

Despite clear contradictions, the theories provided by Norris et al. (2021), Wang (2024), and Athaya and Wandebori (2024) convincingly underscore the unique ability of rogue marketing content to encourage high levels of perceived authenticity, due to its lack of commercial intent. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The use of TikTok *rogue marketing* content will lead to higher perceived authenticity than TikTok *native advertising* content

2.3 Persuasive Language on TikTok

This chapter explores the impact that persuasive language has on the perceived authenticity of consumers across both native advertising and rogue marketing content on TikTok, with a focus on Dutch skincare content. These theories will be supported by the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), and will lead to the formulation of the last three hypotheses.

2.3.1 Persuasive Language in Digital Media and Consumer Behaviour

Persuasive language strategies are used in our daily lives, and are seen as a powerful aspect of human communication, occurring frequently across personal, social and professional domains (Shaifuddin et al., 2023, p. 109). Its strategic use is particularly central in sectors where influencing others is required, such as marketing (p. 109). To illustrate, it is used to guide individuals towards specific actions (e.g. making purchases, subscribing to services, or supporting brands) (p. 109). Shaifuddin et al. (2023) highlight that the success of persuasive strategies relies on the content of the message and the effectiveness of how it is tailored to the audience's needs and expectations (p. 109). It is a key tactic in achieving marketing goals, deliberately using linguistic strategies, such as direction, tone, and structure (Larson, 2009; Bhatia, 2019, as cited in Shaifuddin et al., 2023, p. 111). Several studies have explored the use of persuasive language in social media marketing, collectively highlighting its central role in shaping consumer behaviour (Zhang & Wang, 2024; Adyatma, 2022; Shaifuddin et al., 2023; Euodia and Oktavianti, 2023). Across these works, an emphasis is placed on the power of language to evoke emotional responses, guide decision-making, and strengthen the relationship between brand and audience.

According to Zhang and Wang (2024), UGC stands out as some of the most persuasive sources of information on the internet, making persuasive tools crucial in influencer marketing (p. 3). Moreover, as Bhatia (2019) argues, language can trigger affective responses, which are deeply embedded in consumer decision-making processes (as cited in Shaifuddin et al., 2023, p. 110). Emotional appeal plays a critical role in effective marketing communication, however, Shaifuddin et al. (2023) also notes that this potential is not always fully realized. Persuasive language is often ineffectively used, leading to disengagement from the target audience (p. 110). Lastly, a study by Euodia and Oktavianti (2023) reaffirm the

persuasive power of social media messaging by showing that persuasion utilized in TikTok content influences consumer purchase intention (p. 116).

Despite these differences in focus and methodology, all studies confirm the importance of persuasive language in capturing attention and motivating consumer behaviour in digital content. However, a shared limitation emerges: none of the studies distinguish between native advertising and rogue marketing content. Whether persuasion functions differently across these types of content is not addressed, leaving a significant gap in the literature. This thesis aims to fill in that gap, by examining how perceived authenticity responds to persuasive language in both TikTok content types.

2.3.2 Persuasion Knowledge Model and its Relevance

The Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), developed by Friestad and Wright (1994), provides a conceptual framework (as shown in Figure 1) for understanding how individuals recognize and respond to persuasive communication. Over time, individuals naturally develop persuasive knowledge, which is an understanding of the intentions and goals behind persuasive messages. This enables users to become active rather than passive recipients of these messages (p. 1). Therefore, the framework emphasizes that consumers do not merely absorb persuasive content, but rather evaluate and interpret it in light of their prior knowledge and experiences (p. 1).

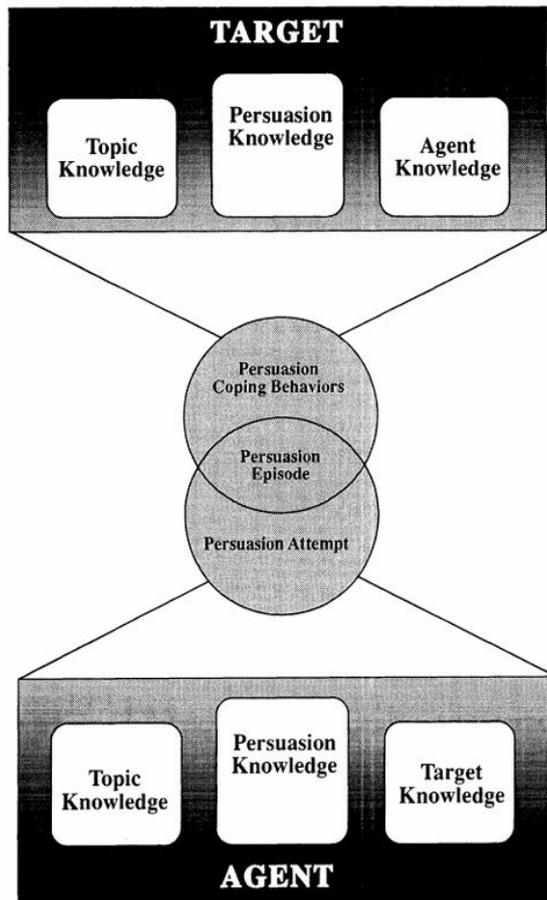
How does the PKM help us understand the way users interpret persuasive language in native advertising and rogue marketing? A study by Revamonte et al. (2023) explain that vague language is used as a strategy to enhance consumer engagement and increase perceived authenticity (p. 119). From a PKM perspective, individuals might not directly recognize commercial intent when using vague language (p. 133). Sarhour's (2025) study further indicates that activating persuasion knowledge is content-dependent. While consumers might easily identify native advertising when a disclosure is present, the perceived authenticity depends on its transparency. Disclosed posts can actually increase perceived authenticity, whereas the noticing of hidden advertising often decreases it. Consequently, rogue marketing content will not even activate consumers' persuasion knowledge, since no advertising practices are employed (p. 4966). Their findings align with a study by Evans and Park (2015), who argue that the PKM cannot be effectively applied to hidden advertising. This is because individuals often perceive such content as regular content rather than advertisements (p. 166). They state that the PKM therefore is not applicable to the entire digital landscape (p. 172). To

address this, they propose a new concept: *advertisement scheme* (p. 162). This suggests that users will not be able to immediately recognize hidden commercial intent. Instead, when users encounter advertisements that do not fit their current advertisement scheme, they will form new ones to interpret content (p. 163). This new approach indicates that the PKM requires a re-evaluation specifically for the digital media era.

These studies suggest that the direct activation of persuasive knowledge might not apply to rogue marketing content, suggesting it is not effective for all TikTok's dynamic content. However, despite these apparent limitations, the PKM remains crucial for this study. This research aims to understand how persuasion knowledge impacts perceived authenticity to not only native advertising, where its application is more straightforward, but also compared to rogue marketing. The absence of the activation on persuasion knowledge for rogue marketing content does not invalidate the model, instead it provides an essential framework to explore *why* persuasion knowledge might not be triggered in such cases, and what impact that has on consumer perceptions. Therefore, this study aims to add nuance to the understanding of the PKM's scope, particularly within the diverse landscape of TikTok content.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Persuasion Knowledge Model



Note. From *The Persuasion Knowledge Model: How People Cope with Persuasion Attempts*, by M. Friestad and P. Wright, 1994, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(1), p. 2, Copyright 1994 by the University of Chicago Press

2.3.3 Persuasive Language Techniques in Dutch Skincare Content

The evolving landscape of TikTok demands a focused approach to understanding persuasive language, and its impact on perceived authenticity. This study adopts the framework of Braca and Dondio's (2023) research because of its comprehensive identification of persuasive language techniques within digital advertising strategies (p. 372-373). Their research is highly suitable, since it examines the role of persuasive language regarding consumer behaviour (p. 372). They argue that understanding the influence of

persuasive tools can positively impact consumer response, highlighting the importance of their study for marketeers (p. 372.)

While they identify various persuasive language tools, for this study, the focus will be on three commonly used rhetorical tools specific for short texts, and is therefore suitable for TikTok's fast-paced environment. These include: *rhetorical question*, designed to engage the target and prompt reflection on personal experiences and desires; *anaphora*, the repetition of words or phrases; and *awareness patterns*, which use keywords to provoke a response (pp. 390-392). All other identified rhetorical tools were not suitable for this study due to their longer text development: *hypophora* (poses a question and an answer, used for political speeches), *epistrophe* (to communicate urgency and emotion by repeating benefits), *antagonize* (used to combine both positive and negative aspects), and *repetition* (used to capture attention with eye-catching keywords/phrases) (pp. 389-391). These devices do not directly align with the brief communication style employed in TikTok skincare content.

The use of *rhetorical questions* is expected to lead to higher perceived authenticity compared to the use of *anaphora*, followed by the use of *awareness patterns*. This is because *rhetorical question* is designed to engage and enable users to think critically (Braca & Dondio, 2023, p. 390). This tool reduces the activation of persuasion knowledge, since the question distracts them from advertising practices, as it forces individuals to think critically. Therefore, persuasive messaging is expected to be perceived as more authentic compared to the other two tools. Furthermore, the use of *anaphora* will be expected as more authentic compared to the use of *awareness patterns*, since its phrasing is more noticeable because of the repetition (p. 390). Lastly, the use of *awareness patterns*, making use of keywords (p. 392), directly impacts persuasion, highly activating its knowledge. Therefore, this persuasive tool is expected to have the lowest perceived authenticity of the three tools. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: The use of *rhetorical question* will lead to higher perceived authenticity than (a) *anaphora* and (b) *awareness patterns*

H3: The use of *anaphora* will lead to higher perceived authenticity than *awareness patterns*

Following the discussion on the impact of persuasive language on perceived authenticity, it is also crucial to consider how the format of TikTok content influences

perceived authenticity. Despite the clear contradictions, the theory on the nature of TikTok content by Athaya and Wandebori (2024) suggests that rogue marketing content may be perceived higher in authenticity compared to native advertising. This is due to the lack of commercial intent with rogue marketing content. Their theory seems to follow the nature of how the PKM is explained, namely that whenever individuals do not recognize advertising practices the perceived authenticity increases. I will propose an interaction hypothesis:

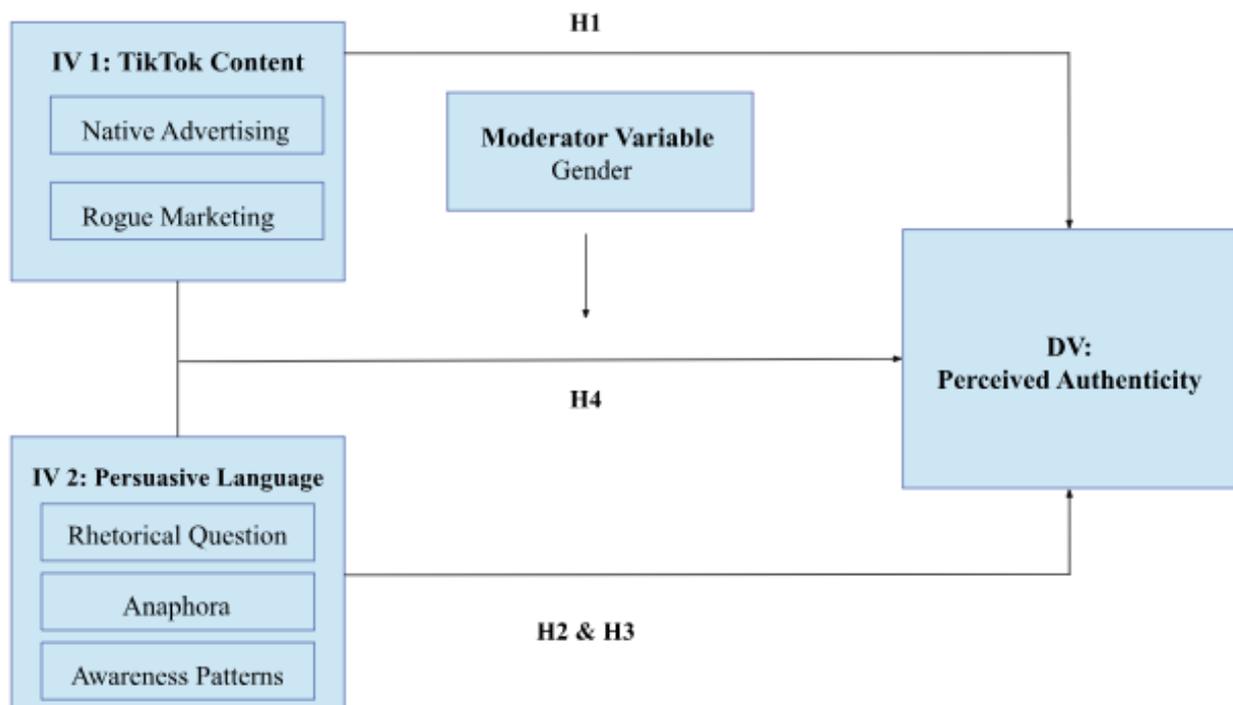
H4: The impact of persuasive language on perceived authenticity will be stronger for TikTok reviews than for TikTok advertisements

Figure 2 proposes the conceptual model that illustrates the impact of persuasive language across native advertising and rogue marketing content on the perceived authenticity of Gen Z.

2.3.4 Conceptual Model

Figure 2

Conceptual Model



3. Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the methodology employed in this study. First, the research design and justification for the selected method are discussed, followed by an overview of the sampling procedures for both the pilot and the main survey. Furthermore, the operationalization of both the pilot and main survey is outlined. Finally, this chapter addresses the validity and reliability of the research, as well as the data analysis procedures used.

3.1 Research Design

The research design utilized in this study is an experimental survey, which is a robust methodology for testing causal relationships between variables (Lavrakas et al., 2019, p. 1). Quantitative research encompasses a variety of methods aimed at the structured examination of social phenomena using statistical or numerical data (Watson, 2015, p. 44). Employing an experimental survey allows for the measurement and analysis of specific variables, in the context of this study this refers to the perceived authenticity and the use of persuasive language within TikTok content. Moreover, this design facilitates the examination of causal relationships by systematically manipulating independent variables to observe their effects on dependent variables (Neuman, 2011, p. 282). Thus, the experimental survey method is particularly suitable for examining how different persuasive language tools influence perceptions of authenticity in TikTok content.

This study used a 2(TikTok content: *native advertising, rogue marketing*) x 3(persuasive language: *rhetorical question, anaphora, awareness patterns*) between-subject design. In this experimental setup, each participant was exposed to only one out of six conditions, thereby allowing for direct comparisons between groups (Charness et al., 2012, p. 1). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions to minimize potential biases and ensure comparability between groups.

Six visual stimuli were developed, varying across native advertising and rogue marketing contexts and incorporating the three persuasive language tools, these stimuli can be found in Appendix A (Pilot) and B (Main Survey). These variations enabled the study to examine how different combinations influenced the perceived authenticity of TikTok content

among Dutch-speaking, TikTok-users of Gen Z. Measures to enhance the study's validity and reliability are discussed in the following sections.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Sampling for Pilot Test

For this study, a specific demographic group was targeted: Dutch-speaking members of Gen Z, aged between 18 and 30 years old, who actively use TikTok. Given that the use and interpretation of persuasive language are culturally and socially influenced, it was essential to select a sample aligned with the study's objectives to enhance the relevance and applicability of the findings. For the pilot test, purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants who met the predefined inclusion criteria. This sampling method ensures that participants are specifically selected to participate in the study (Bhardwaj, 2019, p. 161).

Individuals who did not meet these criteria were excluded from participation. A total of 29 participants completed the pilot survey, which was distributed among family members and friends to gather feedback on the survey's clarity, usability, and comprehensibility. Based on the feedback received, revisions were made to the survey instrument before it was finalized for the main survey. A detailed explanation of the feedback and the specific adjustments made is provided in the operationalization part provided in Section 3.3.

3.2.2 Sampling for Main Survey

For the main survey, the same demographic was targeted as for the pilot test, namely Dutch-speaking members of Gen Z, aged between 18 and 30 years old, who actively use TikTok. A combination of snowball and convenience sampling methods were employed to recruit participants from the same target demographic. Snowball sampling involved initial participants referring to others within their network, facilitating access to a broader pool of eligible respondents (Bhardwaj, 2019, pp. 161-162). This method was integrated to expand the target population the researcher had already reached for the pilot testing phase. This approach was complemented by convenience sampling, through which the survey was disseminated via the researchers' personal TikTok account (pp. 161-162). Given TikTok's algorithmic content distribution, which is not solely dependent on follower count, the survey will reach a diverse audience, including a significant number of individuals outside the

researcher's immediate network. This strategy aimed to mitigate selection bias associated with personal acquaintance.

According to the guidelines for the Master's Thesis, the intended sample size for the main survey is required to be between 150-250 participants. While non-probability sampling methods limit the generalizability of findings to the broader population, they were deemed appropriate for the study focusing on a defined demographic.

3.3 Operationalization

3.3.1 Pilot Test

Prior to conducting the main survey, a pilot test was carried out to validate the survey structure and stimuli used ($N = 29$). Pilot testing is an essential procedure to detect potential misunderstandings, ambiguities, and flaws in the research design (Neuman, 2011, p. 304). The pilot allowed for refining the materials to ensure that the final survey would be both valid and reliable.

For the pilot testing phase six stimuli were created, each representing a screenshot of a fictional TikTok post, promoting a fictional skincare brand called *FÉSE*. To minimize negative or positive associations, a fictitious neutral skincare product was implemented, namely a facial moisturizer. All stimuli maintained a consistent format, incorporating recognizable FYP features such as the like button, comment section, share option, save option, a caption, and a profile picture. However, the conditions differed in two key elements: the presence (native advertising) or absence (rogue marketing) of an advertisement label and hashtags, and the type of persuasive language used in the caption (*rhetorical question*, *anaphora*, or *awareness patterns*). Each participant was exposed to only one stimulus, with random assignment ensuring an equal distribution across conditions.

To measure perceived authenticity, an altered version of the PASMI scale was employed, which measures the perceived authenticity of SMIs (Lee & Eastin, 2021, p. 831). This PASMI scale consists of a 5-point Likert scale where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 5 indicated "strongly agree". For the purpose of this study, only two dimensions from the original PASMI scale were included, namely *sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*. The other

three variables, *visibility*; *expertise*; and *uniqueness*, were excluded, as they require broader assessments of influencer behaviour that are not possible based on one post exposure.

The pilot survey took approximately two to three minutes to complete. It began with an introduction including a cover story, designed to direct participants' attention to the visual elements of the stimuli to minimize bias. After agreeing to the informed consent, participants were exposed to the assigned stimulus, and answered a manipulation check question, provided demographic and usage-related control variables, and completed the PASMI-based items assessing perceived authenticity. Lastly, the participants were debriefed about the actual objective of the study and were thanked for participating. In Appendix C the questionnaire for the pilot can be found.

Following the completion of the pilot, several adjustments were made based on the results and participant feedback. Eight out of 29 participants had failed the manipulation check, incorrectly identifying whether an advertisement label and hashtags were present or absent. In response, the advertisement label in the native advertising stimuli was enlarged to make it more visible. For the rogue marketing conditions, no adjustments were made, as misinterpretations were attributed to participant assumptions rather than deficiencies in stimulus design.

One statement measuring *truthful endorsement* exhibited a ceiling effect, with 72.7% of participants selecting the 'Agree' option. In order to prevent this in the main survey, the 5-point Likert scale was changed to a 7-point Likert scale to enhance reliability. Additionally, participants indicated confusion about the origin of the posts, mistakenly assuming that the researcher had created the content for TikTok. To address this, the description of the stimuli and the condition questions were revised to clearly state that the posts were fictional and unrelated to the researcher. Furthermore, as mentioned before, the sampling method for the main survey was modified. Given the familiarity of some pilot participants with the researcher, a greater emphasis was placed on recruiting participants who were unknown to the researcher to reduce bias. Additionally, two translated statements from the PASMI scale were also reworded to improve clarity, ensuring that participants understood the intended meaning. The following two sentences were changed in Dutch to capture the essence of the words. Therefore, the English translations remain the same.

“Lijkt vriendelijk en goedmoedig” (Seems kind and good hearted) was changed to *“Komt vriendelijk en goedhartig over”* (Seems kind and good hearted).

“*Komt zeer welwillend over*” (comes off as very genuine), was changed to “*Komt zeer authentiek over*” (comes off as very genuine).

Furthermore, the manipulation check question was reformulated to explicitly refer to the specific stimulus viewed, rather than advertisement exposure on TikTok in general.

“*Kan je je herinneren of je een gesponsorde post hebt gezien?*” (Can you remember seeing a sponsored post?) was changed to “*Heb je zojuist een gesponsorde post gezien?*” (Can you remember if you just saw a sponsored post?).

Lastly, all six conditions were added in the debrief, so that the participants can see the conditions that they were not assigned to. These revisions collectively strengthened the survey’s validity, reliability, and clarity.

3.3.2 Main Survey

The main survey ran from April 29, 2025 to May 14, 2025, and had a total of $N = 240$ valid responses. The vast majority of participants were female ($N = 211$), with significantly less male participants ($N = 29$). This gender distribution aligns with the current industry trends, as women constitute over 60% of the beauty industry. While male engagement in the industry is currently lower, it is expected to grow rapidly around the year 2030 (Grand View Research, 2023, Gender Insight section). Consequently, lower male participation in this research was expected.

The final version of the survey incorporated all adjustments identified during the pilot phase. Six stimuli were used, structured in accordance with the two independent variables: the presence (*native advertising*) or absence (*rogue marketing*) and the persuasive language (*rhetorical question, anaphora, awareness patterns*) of an advertisement label and hashtags. As during the pilot phase, participants were randomly assigned, using a randomizer in Qualtrics, to one of the six conditions which ensured an equal distribution across groups.

Each participant viewed one stimulus and then completed a series of questions designed to measure the perception of authenticity of the post. Authenticity was assessed using the adapted version of the PASMI scale, both items consisting of four statements. The main survey maintained a completion time of approximately two to three minutes, ensuring participant engagement and data quality.

The structure of the survey mirrored that of the pilot, beginning with an introduction and a cover story, while also ensuring participants of the confidentiality and voluntary nature of their participation. After providing informed consent, participants were shown one stimulus. Immediately afterwards, they completed a manipulation check question to confirm the recognition of the advertisement label's presence or absence. Participants then answered control variable questions, which gathered demographic data, such as age, gender, country, and education level, as well as information on TikTok usage frequency and daily spare time. These control measures allowed for subsequent subgroup analysis and the exploration of possible moderating effects. Finally, the participants completed the main PASMI items assessing *sincerity* and *truthful endorsements*. Throughout the main survey, careful attention was given to minimize potential bias, ensuring clarity of the stimuli, and maintaining randomization, and anonymity, thereby enhancing the internal validity of the study. The questionnaire for the main survey can be found in Appendix D.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Having outlined the operationalization of the study, it is now crucial to discuss the measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research.

3.4.1 Validity

To ensure internal validity in this study, several steps were incorporated to minimize potential biases and confounding variables.

First, a pilot test was conducted to ensure that the study design was clear and comprehensible to participants. This allowed for any ambiguities or issues with the stimuli to be identified and resolved prior to the main data collection phase. Additionally, a manipulation check was included to assess whether participants were attentive to the experimental stimuli, specifically regarding the presence or absence of an advertisement label and hashtags. This step was crucial to confirm that participants correctly identified the relevant features of the TikTok post. Participants who failed the manipulation check were excluded from the analysis, as they would not be able to provide valid responses to the subsequent questions, thereby ensuring that the data accurately reflects participant perceptions of the stimuli.

To enhance external validity, the visual stimuli were carefully designed to resemble authentic TikTok posts, including recognizable FYP features. This aimed to ensure that participants would be exposed to a visually familiar environment, thereby strengthening the applicability of the findings within this visual medium to real-world TikTok content.

3.4.2 Reliability

To assess the internal consistency of the scales for perceived authenticity, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. During the pilot phase, preliminary reliability checks, alongside participant feedback caused the rewordings of two translated scale items. These changes enhanced consistent interpretation.

Following the main data collection, Cronbach's alpha values for all scales were computed. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 indicates an acceptable reliability (Pallant, 2020, p. 150), ensuring that the survey consistently measures the constructs of *sincerity* and *truthful endorsement* across participants. The findings of Cronbach's alpha for both scales will be reported in Chapter 4, where the findings are presented.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were administered via Qualtrics and subsequently exported for analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which is an online software for statistical analyses (Pallant, 2020, p. 11). The descriptive statistics were analyzed to describe the final sample, these results are presented in Chapter 4. To ensure integrity and quality of the data, a thorough data cleaning process was conducted.

3.5.1 Data Cleaning

A total of 385 responses were collected, including the pilot and the main survey. This included $N = 29$ responses for the pilot, and $N = 356$ responses for the main survey. The data cleaning process began by removing the pilot responses ($N = 29$) and the first 17 variables from the 'Variable View' tab to ensure anonymity and privacy for the respondents' data. Furthermore, the labels from the Qualtrics questions were reformulated to shorten them. Then, incomplete data and participants who did not meet the participation criteria ($N = 20$),

such as age or no TikTok usage, were removed. The responses from participants who did not pass the manipulation check ($N = 96$) were ultimately removed, ensuring that the responses from participants who accurately identified the stimuli were kept for additional analyses. Finally, following the data cleaning process, a total of $N = 240$ responses completed the survey and passed the manipulation check.

3.5.2 Coding process

Before conducting the analyses, some variables needed to be recoded and transformed to run a Two-Way ANOVA. The six original conditions were recoded into one new variable called *condition* (1 = RQ_NoAd, 2 = RQ_Ad, 3 = Ana_NoAd, 4 = Ana_Ad, 5 = AP_NoAd, 6 = AP_Ad). This new variable provided a clear overview of the data. Additionally, the conditions were recoded into *persuasive language* (1 = RQ, 2 = Ana, 3 = AP) and *native advertising* (Ad) and *rogue marketing* (NoAd) (0 = NoAd, 1 = Ad). According to the outcome of a Factor Analysis, two new variables were computed: *sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*. These new variables were used for the Two-Way ANOVA.

3.5.3 Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were analysed to get a comprehensive overview of the sample, including age, gender, country, and level of education. This was done with measures such as mean and standard deviation. Then, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of the chosen scales (*sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*) and confirm the dimensionality of the PASMI scale. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha was conducted to assess the reliability of each scale. Additionally, a Two-Way ANOVA was conducted to test the main effects of the independent variables as well as the interaction effect on the dependent variables. Lastly, before conducting the Two-Way ANOVA, a normality check was conducted to test whether the dependent variables (*sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*) were normally distributed. The findings of these analyses are further outlined in the next chapter.

4. Results

This section delves into the results of the experimental survey conducted on Qualtrics. Prior to conducting the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Two-Way ANOVA, a normality test was conducted by examining skewness and kurtosis values. This tests whether the dependent variables are normally distributed (George & Mallery, 2016, pp. 114-115). According to the guidelines by George and Mallery (2016), values between -2 and +2 are considered an acceptable value of normality (pp. 114-115). The skewness and kurtosis values for all the computed dependent variables fell within acceptable range. For *sincerity* skewness and kurtosis were -0.31 and 0.54, respectively. For *truthful endorsement* the skewness and kurtosis were -0.03 and 0.62, respectively. Accordingly, the four hypotheses were analysed using PCA and two separate Two-Way ANOVAs.

4.1 Factor Analysis

A PCA is a data reduction technique that identifies a large set of data that could be reduced to create a smaller set of factors to be created (Pallant, 2020, p. 264). For this study, two factor analyses were conducted for the dependent variables *sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*.

4.1.1 Factor Analysis - Sincerity

To explore the underlying dimensions of the four *sincerity* scale items, a confirmatory Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted with direct oblimin rotation based on eigenvalues (> 1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of sampling adequacy was 0.59, which is slightly below the recommended minimum value of 0.60, indicating marginal adequacy for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1960, p. 145). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(6) = 328.60, p < .001$, suggesting that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Bartlett, 1955, p. 77). As expected from the study by Lee and Eastin (2021, p. 830), the analysis resulted in a one-factor solution, which explained 58.9% of the total variance in the *sincerity* scale items. This single factor comprised all four items assessing sincerity. The factor loadings and the Cronbach's alpha of the factor are presented in Table 4.1.1.

Table 4.1.1*Factor loadings, explained variance and reliability of the sincerity item*

Scale Item	Sincerity
Kind and good hearted	0.71
Sincere	0.84
Genuine	0.82
Down-to-earth	0.69
Explained Variance (R ²)	0.59
Cronbach's alpha (α)	0.77

4.1.2 Factor Analysis - Truthful Endorsement

To explore the underlying dimensions of the four *truthful endorsement* scale items, a confirmatory Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted with direct oblimin rotation based on eigenvalues (> 1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of sampling adequacy was 0.57, which is slightly below the recommended minimum value of 0.60, indicating marginal adequacy for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1960). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(6) = 312.06, p < .001$, suggesting that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Bartlett, 1954). As expected from the study by Lee and Eastin (2021, p. 830), the analysis resulted in a one-factor solution, which explained 53.7% of the total variance in the *truthful endorsement* scale items. Even though the second component had an eigenvalue of 1.2, this minor factor was not in line with the study by Lee and Eastin (2021), suggesting only one factor was sufficient for this study. Moreover, if a second factor loading was added, only two items would be assigned to each factor, resulting in a fragile structure. The single factor comprised all four items assessing *truthful endorsement*. The factor loadings and the Cronbach's alpha of the factor are presented in Table 4.1.2.

Table 4.1.2*Factor loadings, explained variance and reliability of the truthful endorsement item*

Scale Item	Truthful Endorsement
Meaningful Insights	0.75
Honest Reviews	0.80
Endorse with Personality	0.68
Self-relevant Promotion	0.70
Explained Variance (R ²)	0.57
Cronbach's alpha (α)	0.71

4.2 Two-Way ANOVA

A Two-Way ANOVA is an analysis of variance in which two independent variables and one dependent variable are analysed (Pallant, 2020, p. 389). The Two-Way ANOVA was used to understand the effect of the independent variables individually as well as their combined outcome (p. 389). This study measured whether the independent variables (*persuasive language* and *TikTok content*), had an effect on dependent variables (*sincerity* and *truthful endorsement*). For these analyses, the factor scores derived from the PCA for *sincerity* and *truthful endorsement* were used as the dependent variables.

For this study, H1 proposed that *rogue marketing* content, without advertising disclosures, will lead to a higher perceived authenticity compared to *native advertising* content, including advertising disclosures. Moreover, H2 and H3 proposed that the use of three persuasive language tools will separately lead to a higher perceived authenticity. A post-hoc test was conducted on *persuasive language*, since this variable consists of three levels (*rhetorical question*, *anaphora*, and *awareness patterns*). This test allows for independent groups to be compared to analyse differences in means (p. 398). Lastly, H4 proposed that *persuasive language* on *perceived authenticity* will be stronger for *rogue marketing* than for *native advertising*.

4.2.1 Two-Way ANOVA - Sincerity

A Two-Way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of independent variables *persuasive language* and *TikTok content* on dependent variable *sincerity*. The analysis revealed that the independent variable *persuasive language* did not significantly influence dependent variable *sincerity*. No significant main effect for *TikTok content* type was found, $F(1, 233) = 2.52, p = .114, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$. This suggests that the use of *rogue marketing* does not lead to a higher perceived authenticity on TikTok compared to *native advertising*. Therefore, H1 is rejected.

Additionally, no significant main effect for *persuasive language* was found, $F(2, 233) = 0.88, p = .416, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$. This indicates that the use of *rhetorical question* does not lead to a higher *perceived authenticity* compared to *anaphora* and *awareness patterns*. Moreover, the use of *anaphora* does not lead to a higher perceived authenticity compared to *awareness patterns*. Therefore, H2 and H3 are rejected.

Furthermore, no significant interaction effect was found for H4, $F(2, 233) = .204, p = .816, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$. This finding suggests that the effect of *persuasive language* on *sincerity* does not depend on whether the content is disclosed as an advertisement or not. Therefore, H4 is rejected, and no post hoc test was conducted. The mean scores and standard deviations for sincerity are presented in Table 4.2.1 below.

Table 4.2.1

Descriptive statistics for sincerity

IV 1 Native Advertising & Rogue Marketing	IV 2 Persuasive Language	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No Ad Label	Rhetorical Question	4.40	1.04
No Ad Label	Anaphora	4.21	1.39
No Ad Label	Awareness Patterns	4.43	0.99
Ad Label	Rhetorical Question	4.73	1.10
Ad Label	Anaphora	4.46	1.14
Ad Label	Awareness Patterns	4.55	1.03

4.2.2 Two-Way ANOVA - Truthful Endorsement

A Two-Way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of independent variables *persuasive language* and *TikTok content* on dependent variable *truthful endorsement*. The analysis revealed that the independent variables did not significantly influence the dependent variable. No significant main effect for *TikTok content* type was found $F(1, 227) = 1.28, p = .237$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. This means that the use of *rogue marketing* does not lead to a higher perceived authenticity on TikTok compared to *native advertising*. Therefore, H1 is rejected.

Additionally, no significant main effect for *persuasive language* was found on dependent variable *perceived authenticity*, $F(2, 227) = 0.40, p = .644$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$.

Finally, the analysis did reveal a marginally significant interaction effect for H4, $F(2, 227) = 2.39, p = .073$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. To further examine this interaction, follow up analysis was conducted. A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to examine the main effect of *TikTok content* on *truthful endorsement*. For the *rogue marketing* condition, no significant effect on *truthful endorsement* was found, $F(2,96) = 0.46, p = .633$. However, the *native advertising* condition did reach a significant effect on *truthful endorsement*, $F(2, 131) = 2.74, p = .044$. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey were conducted to reveal the differences in *persuasive language*. The comparison between *rhetorical question* and *awareness patterns* revealed a marginally significant difference ($M = 0.44, SD = 0.19$), $p = 0.52$.

Then, the SPSS file was split for *persuasive language*, and an independent t-test was conducted to compare the independent variables *TikTok content* and *persuasive language*. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for *rhetorical question* and the *native advertising* condition, $t(71.66) = -2.51, p = .014$. Thus, participants exposed to *rhetorical question* for the *native advertising* conditions reported significantly the highest *truthful endorsement*, as shown in Figure 3 below. The mean scores and standard deviations for *truthful endorsement* are presented in Table 4.2.2 below.

Figure 3

Interaction plot persuasive language on truthful endorsement (N = 233)

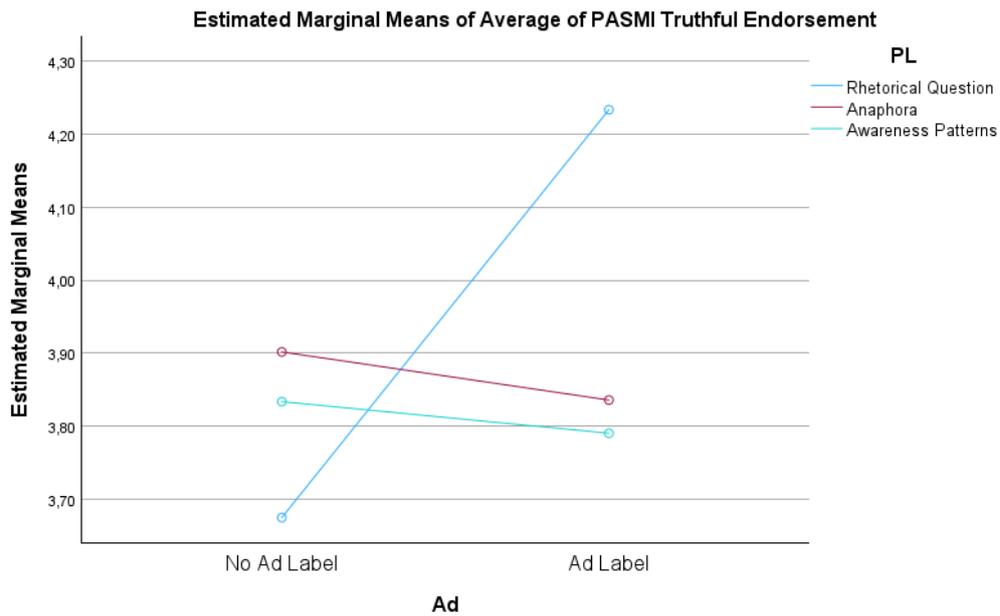


Table 4.2.2

Descriptive statistics for truthful endorsement

IV 1 Native Advertising & Rogue Marketing	IV 2 Persuasive Language	M	SD
No Ad Label	Rhetorical Question	3.67	0.95
No Ad Label	Anaphora	3.90	1.11
No Ad Label	Awareness Patterns	3.83	0.89
Ad Label	Rhetorical Question	4.23	1.01
Ad Label	Anaphora	3.84	0.96
Ad Label	Awareness Patterns	3.79	0.80

4.2.3 Two-Way ANOVA - Truthful Endorsement - Female

As discussed in Section 3.3.2, females are driving the beauty industry, observing a difference in gender behaviours compared to males. Therefore, the Two-Way ANOVA was conducted again for dependent variable *truthful endorsement* for a selected case, that of females ($N = 206$). While no significance was found for separate analyses of *sincerity* for both women and men, the analysis for dependent variable *truthful endorsement* revealed a significant interaction effect for H4, $F(2, 200) = 3.77, p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. While H4 was marginally significant for the overall sample ($p = .073$), the p -value observed for women ($p = .016$) was considerably lower, indicating a trend that resulted in significance for this specific demographic. As shown in Figure 4, the use of *rhetorical question* led to the highest *perceived authenticity*, which in line with the overall sample.

Interestingly, when comparing the interaction plot for *persuasive language* on *truthful endorsement* for women and men, different *persuasive language* tools were perceived as higher in authenticity. As shown in Figure 5, which shows the selected case for men, for native advertising, the use of *anaphora* led to the highest *truthful endorsement*, while for *rogue marketing* this was the use of *rhetorical question*. Thus, women tend to follow the same trend as the overall sample, therefore the overall model was mainly driven by women, while men showed a different trend.

Table 4.2.3

Descriptive statistics for Truthful Endorsement - Female

IV 1 Native Advertising & Rogue Marketing	IV 2 Persuasive Language	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No Ad Label	Rhetorical Question	3.59	0.93
No Ad Label	Anaphora	3.90	1.13
No Ad Label	Awareness Patterns	3.90	0.89
Ad Label	Rhetorical Question	4.28	0.96
Ad Label	Anaphora	3.80	0.95
Ad Label	Awareness Patterns	3.72	0.82

Figure 4

Interaction plot for persuasive language on truthful endorsement for females (N = 206)

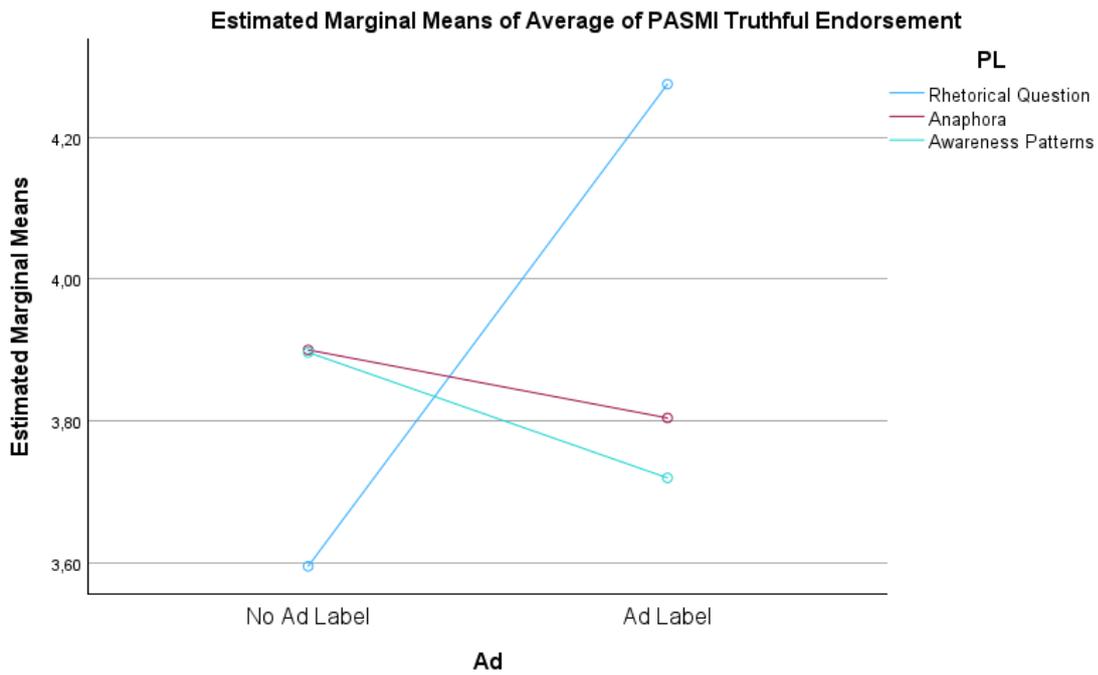
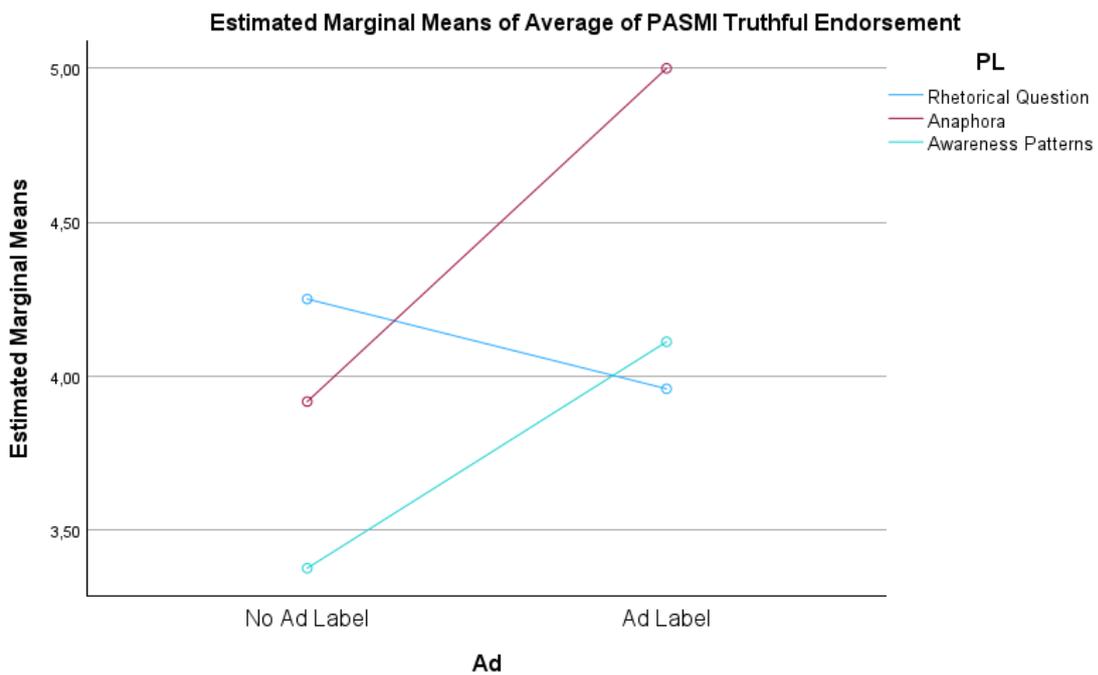


Figure 5

Interaction plot for persuasive language on truthful endorsement for men (N = 27)



5. Discussion & Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

This study aimed to examine the influence of persuasive language in TikTok skincare rogue marketing and native advertising content on Gen Z's perceived authenticity, using the PKM. Utilizing the theoretical lens of the PKM, this research tried to link complex dynamics of the platform to how Gen Z consumers interpret persuasive intent. The results paint a nuanced picture of consumer perception, often challenging existing literature and revealing unexpected paradoxes. While the dependent variable *sincerity* revealed no significant effect, the dependent variable *truthful endorsement* did reveal a marginally significant interaction effect for H4, which was mainly driven by female participants. This chapter will delve into these findings, breaking down the theoretical and practical implications, and ultimately providing a comprehensive answer to the research question: *To what extent does persuasive language in TikTok skincare content, encompassing both native advertising and rogue marketing, influence Gen Z's perceived authenticity?*

5.1.1 TikTok Content: The Paradox Of Authenticity

A surprising finding of this study is the interaction effect discovered for the dependent variable *truthful endorsement*. Native advertising content led to a significantly higher perceived authenticity compared to rogue marketing content. This outcome starkly contrasts with much of the existing literature on advertising disclosures, which primarily suggests they tend to decrease users' perceived authenticity, leading to a form of scepticism (Van Dam & Van Reijmersdal, 2019, p. 4; Baghel, 2023, pp. 1259-1260; Wang, 2024, p. 88; Lee & Eastin, 2020, p. 7). A reason why the finding of this research does not align with theirs could be attributed to several factors. Van Dam and Van Reijmersdal (2019) examined young adults between the ages of 12 and 16, and Wang's (2024) study not specifying on age, thus their demographics differed from this study. Moreover, studies by Baghel (2023) and Lee & Eastin (2020) did not specify on TikTok as a platform, but focused on multiple social media platforms instead. For instance, the study by Lee and Eastin (2020) allowed their participants to choose a SMI they personally know, and showed them posts from all the platforms their specific SMI utilizes (p. 7). Given the clear decrease in perceived authenticity associated with the lack of disclosures in rogue marketing, the traditional assumption that perceived

authenticity decreases with the presence of disclosures appears fundamentally flawed (Baghel, 2023, pp. 1259-1260; Lee & Eastin, 2020, p. 7; and Athaya & Wandebori, 2024, p. 44). Instead, this study suggests that disclosures can paradoxically act as a mechanism for an increase in authenticity.

Several interesting explanations might describe this unexpected paradox. Firstly, the EC regulations may have caused a shift in consumer perceptions. In an era where the link between disclosed and undisclosed content is blurred, Gen Z'ers who grew up in a digital landscape, may interpret disclosed content as a sign of professionalism and honesty (Jansen et al. 2021, p. 104; Poyry, 2019, pp. 3-5). Jansen et al. (2021) highlights that advertising can be used as an instrument to marketing success (p. 104). They argue that influencers most often started out as authentic content creators who built up their follower base, and are still seen as authentic for that reason (p. 104). Therefore, evident advertising disclosures can be a sign of an authentic creator, indicating that the SMIs obeys ethical guidelines and is transparent about contractual collaborations. Conversely, rogue marketing content by definition lacks these disclosures and therefore lacks transparency (Norris et al., 2021, p. 334). Sometimes, rogue marketing content can be perceived as commercial, however when this is the case, the content can be interpreted as deceptive. This leads to a decrease in perceived authenticity. For Gen Z, rogue marketing can be seen as hiding commercial intent. A study by Shen et al. (2024), for instance, states that disclosed sponsorship content increases the audience's perceived authenticity since it increases the influencers' transparency (p. 676) Additionally, Gen Z'ers might always be aware that hidden commercials exist, which could result in rogue marketing not being believed if it contains commercial messaging. Disclosing ads suggests that the creator has nothing to hide.

Nevertheless, the potential for disclosures to act as a catalyst for increased authenticity is challenged by the results of the manipulation check for the main survey in this study. As discussed in Section 3.5.1, a substantial portion of participants failed to correctly identify the presence or absence of an advertisement label. Those individuals did not notice an advertisement label, even though one was present, while others believed a label was present when none existed. A study by Zhang et al. (2022) examined how consumers perceive influencer marketing. They concluded that consumers have trouble identifying whether a post was an advertisement, because social media content is blurred nowadays (pp. 6-7). The participants needed extra time to determine if the post they had just seen had an advertisement disclosure or not, which is not the case with regular TikTok users, due to the personalized FYP in combination with quick scrolling (p. 8). This suggests that, while the

concept of transparency leads to higher perceived authenticity, the current implementation of disclosures might not be as effective as believed. According to the PKM, individuals can only activate their persuasion knowledge if they first *recognize* that there is a persuasive intent (Friestad and Wright, 1994, p. 13). When disclosures are overlooked, however, this first step is impaired, leaving individuals unable to critically judge content based on the activation of persuasive knowledge. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, these findings align with Magna Global's (2022) argument that native advertisements are often perceived as regular content instead of advertising (as cited in Digiday, 2022, para. 7). This is due to the blurring of lines between content types, contributing to an increase in perceived authenticity (p. 19).

Furthermore, contrary to initial expectation, this study found that rogue marketing was perceived as *less* authentic than native advertising. As discussed in Section 2.2.2, O'Sullivan-Gavin and Amazeen (2016) raised concerns about rogue marketing content. They argued that such content could be misleading and deceptive to users (p. 10). While their original definition of rogue marketing was initially viewed as one-sided, only discussing the rogue scams, it did not fully represent TikTok's nuanced influencer content, limiting its applicability to perceived authenticity. Nevertheless, the findings of this study reveal a nuanced truth within their concerns. This study suggests that the blurring of entertainment and commercial content on TikTok contributes to inconsistencies for consumers, which may contribute to underlying deception. For instance, the findings of this study demonstrate a complex pattern: the influence of *rhetorical question* on the perceived authenticity was higher for native advertising compared to rogue marketing, while *anaphora* showed greater authenticity for rogue marketing than for native advertising. This highlights that even when content is disclosed, it can still lead to a decrease in perceived authenticity.

5.1.2 Truthful Endorsement and The Role of Women

The dependent variable *truthful endorsement* revealed a significant interaction effect, which was driven by women. As discussed in Section 4.2.3, the perceived authenticity of *truthful endorsement* for women increased when exposed to native advertising. Particularly when *rhetorical questions* were used as a persuasive language tool. This finding stands in stark contrast with the male participants, for whom no significance was found. It indicates that women evaluate the authenticity of SMIs in skincare content differently than men, suggesting that their processing of perceived authenticity on TikTok is highly dependent on the presence and nature of advertising disclosures.

This gendered difference could be explained according to several factors. Firstly, women are often the primary consumers of skincare content online, fostering a more sophisticated approach to content evaluation (Rand, 2025, how social media is shaping Gen Z's beauty and grooming choices section) This article suggests that Dutch Gen Z women account for about two-thirds of time spent on skincare-associated content. This is, therefore, significantly more than men, who count for one-third. From a PKM perspective, this indicates that Gen Z women possess a highly developed persuasion knowledge schema concerning native advertising.

Consequently, for women, native advertising with explicit disclosures might be interpreted as a confirmation of the SMIs professionalism and adherence to ethical guidelines. This transparency in collaborations with businesses can, in turn, cultivate stronger perceived authenticity (Jansen et al. 2021, p. 104; Shen et al., 2024, p. 676). Therefore, for Gen Z women, authenticity appears to depend not on the absence of commercial intent, but rather on the honesty of its disclosure.

5.1.3 Implications for Non-Significance

The dependent variable *sincerity* was not found to be significant in this study. While that variable focuses on the SMIs trustworthiness, *truthful endorsement* examines the SMIs promotional content in combination with authenticity. A possible explanation for the insignificance of *sincerity* could stem from its definition. According to Lee and Eastin (2021), *sincerity* is a crucial element when forming parasocial relationships between users and SMIs (p. 833). This indicates that, when examining *sincerity*, a high perceived authenticity takes time to develop. Given that explicit commercial intent is primarily linked to native advertising SMIs, rogue marketing content that implicitly carries a commercial message might be perceived as inherently insincere. This aligns directly with the findings in Section 5.1.1, which suggests that non-disclosed content is generally not regarded as authentic.

Furthermore, individuals may differentiate between the two dependent variables. While *truthful endorsement* is often linked to specific content or even a single post. *Sincerity* focuses on the overall presence of the SMI, encompassing multiple posts and engagement across various social media platforms.

The insignificance of the independent variable persuasive language indicates that persuasive language did not have a measurable effect on perceived authenticity. This

outcome can be explained according to two factors related to TikTok's platform characteristics and user engagement. Firstly, TikTok's design, optimized for rapid content consumption and quick scrolling, may lead to insufficient user attention span (Alghamdi & Aljabr, 2024, p. 3). As supported by findings from the manipulation check, many participants were used to scrolling rapidly and may have become disengaged by looking at the same image. Thereby hindering the processing of persuasive language and the activation of persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 1). Secondly, TikTok's visual and auditory environment, characterized by many filters, icons and effects, contributes to significant digital noise (Wang, 2024, p. 87). This stimuli can overload users' attention, consequently hindering the cognitive processing required for engagement, with persuasive language, as placed in the caption of the post, preventing the activation of persuasion knowledge.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of TikTok, however, it is important to acknowledge its inherent theoretical implications. This research was able to effectively expand the PKM's application to the context of TikTok.

It is important to recognize that the PKM is not specifically designed for the nuanced digital landscape, particularly regarding hidden advertising practices and rogue marketing content. These forms of social media content, often characterized by their lack of transparency and disclosures, present challenges to consumers' ability to activate their persuasion knowledge effectively.

This study highlights the critical need for theoretical refinements and thereby the expansion of the PKM. Even with its current limitations, the model remains highly relevant for understanding consumer behaviour. Given the ongoing persuasive content and increasing lack of transparency and disclosures, this research not only applies the PKM but also argues for its nuances in the continually evolving digital landscape.

5.3 Practical Implications

5.3.1 Practical Implications for EC Guidelines

This study also offers practical insights for EC guidelines and social media marketers. Firstly, O’Sullivan-Gavin and Amazeen’s (2016) study reminds us that the perceived authenticity of TikTok content is not a straightforward concept for users. The EC guidelines, however, implicitly assume that disclosures enable users to critically judge content, expecting that exposure to commercial intent would increase the perceived authenticity. However, the findings from this study contradict these assumptions, suggesting that disclosures do not necessarily lead to the protection from underlying deception. For instance, the reason why *rhetorical question* score higher in perceived authenticity for native advertising might be that it avoids aggressive directness, inviting user engagement. Combined with a disclosure, this approach paradoxically enhances the perceived authenticity. This outcome is not inherently wrong, but rather underscores that the way Gen Z perceives and processes content is far more complex than current guidelines anticipate. This raises a crucial question: *can we truly claim that EC guidelines are effectively protecting consumers from hidden advertising practices?*

Building upon the insights from Semenova et al. (2024), which highlight the shortcomings of current EC guidelines, this research presents several recommendations for the ineffective “one-size fits all” approach. Firstly, the guidelines assume that advertising disclosures would automatically enhance advertising visibility. However, the findings of this study challenge this argument, as a significant number of participants did not seem to notice the presence or absence of disclosures (Zhang et al., 2022, pp. 6-7). When individuals do not effectively notice persuasive intent, they will not be able to use their persuasion knowledge to judge the content (Friestad and Wright, 1994, p. 13). This implies that the current guidelines are insufficient and lack proactive measures. While the EC requires advertising disclosures, they overlook instances where these disclosures are present but not noticed. The EC should therefore conduct further research into reasons why individuals do not notice disclosures, and find solutions to prevent this. Given TikTok’s dynamic nature, the guidelines could be adapted to these content types³, making disclosures more prominent and visible.

³ These TikTok content types include: short-form videos, images, livestreams, and stories.

5.3.2 Practical Implications for Social Media Marketers

Furthermore, this study offers valuable insights for how social media marketers develop strategies for this demographic, particularly concerning both men and women

Rather than merely disclosing advertising content marketers should strategically integrate it into their content, to enhance perceived authenticity. The findings of this study indicate that for women, the use of *rhetorical question* within native advertising is perceived as the highest in perceived authenticity, while for men, this is the use of *anaphora*. Therefore, marketers should prioritize strategic use of both these persuasive language tools to target both men and women.

Furthermore, an interesting finding emerged regarding *awareness patterns* for rogue marketing for women: the use led to an increase in perceived authenticity. This highlights that specific persuasive language choices impact consumer perceptions. Consequently, marketers are encouraged to move beyond standard advertising practices and experiment with diverse persuasive styles that actively invite audience engagement from both men and women. This could involve research on rhetorical approaches and methods to optimize authenticity and consumer engagement.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This final section will discuss this study's limitations and opportunities for future research. Firstly, even though this study focused on a specific participant demographic: Dutch-speaking Gen Z who are active on TikTok, this study was not able to fully control participants' persuasion knowledge. With persuasion knowledge being culturally dependent, the internal validity of this research was therefore not expected to have such influence on the outcome. The participants who spend a significant amount of time on social media might have developed high levels of persuasive knowledge. While others who do not spend as much time on the platforms lack this knowledge. As a result of these differences in knowledge, participants' ability to notice disclosures and interpret persuasive cues could have potentially varied. These differences may have influenced the perceived authenticity, challenging the precise impact of the independent variables (*persuasive language* and *TikTok content*) on the dependent variable (*perceived authenticity*). Future research could delve deeper into participants' existing persuasion knowledge, by adding pre-screening questionnaires to assess their general level of persuasion knowledge. Moreover, expanding the demographic sample

to include not only Dutch-speaking Gen Z but focusing on diverse cultural backgrounds could be crucial for assessing generalizability of the findings and identifying nuances in how persuasive language is perceived globally.

Secondly, this research focused specifically on skincare content. As a result, more women participated than men, which also led to differing outcomes. While females reached a significant effect, driving the dependent variable *truthful endorsement*, men did not reach a significant effect. Future studies could examine persuasive language in relation to other content genres, including other genders, to achieve a more equal distribution, and to increase its generalizability.

Lastly, since this study was conducted at a specific point in time and focused on the current TikTok platform, the findings are time-bound. This underscores that direct replication of this study might not be sufficient since the dynamics of TikTok change constantly. Therefore, future research should adapt this research into the evolving layout of social media platforms accordingly.

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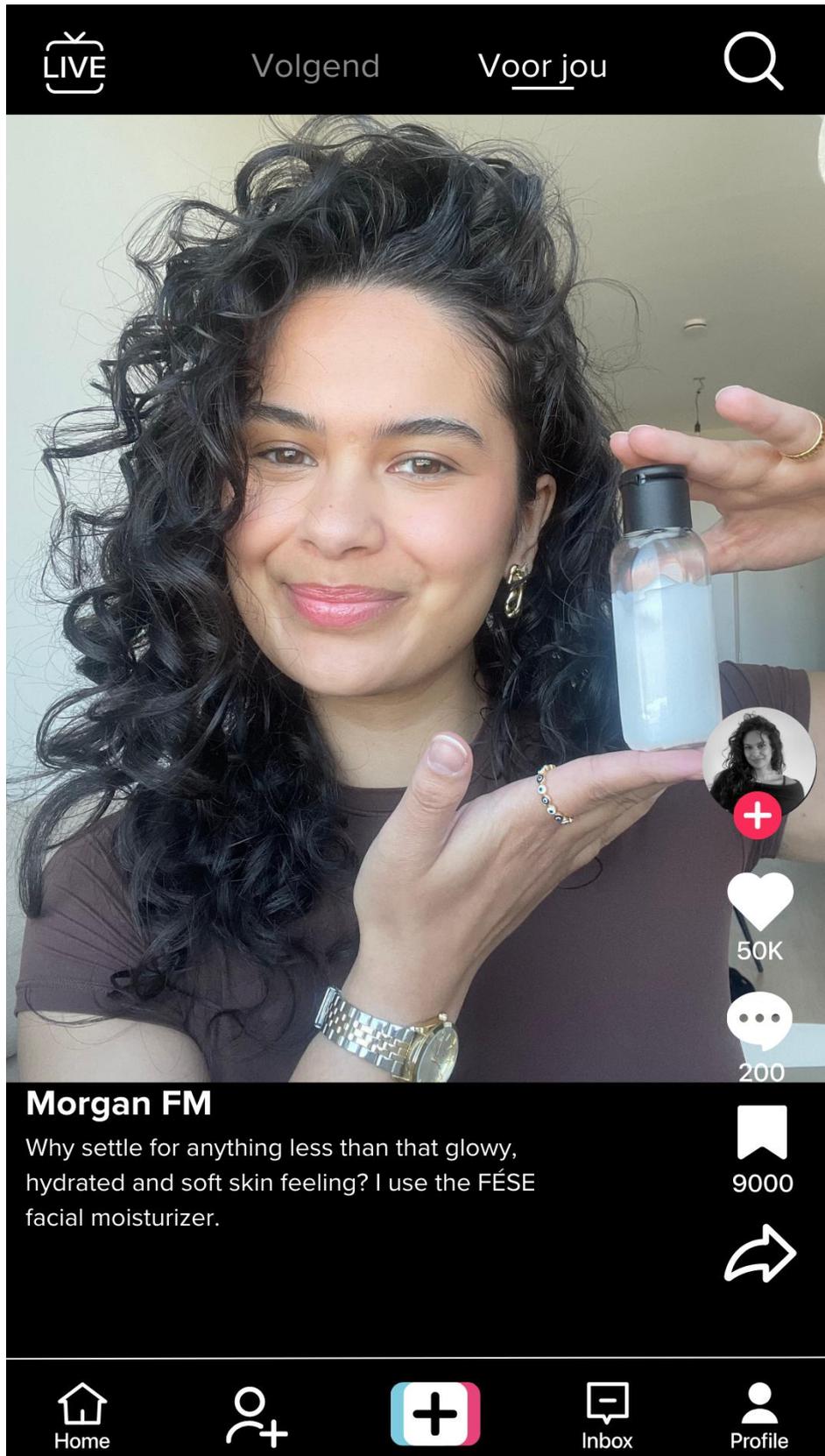
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Appendix A: Stimuli Pilot (ENG)

Rhetorical Question - No Ad - ENG





The image shows a woman with long, dark, curly hair, smiling and holding a clear glass bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. She is wearing a dark brown top, a gold watch, and several rings. The background is a simple indoor setting.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 🔍

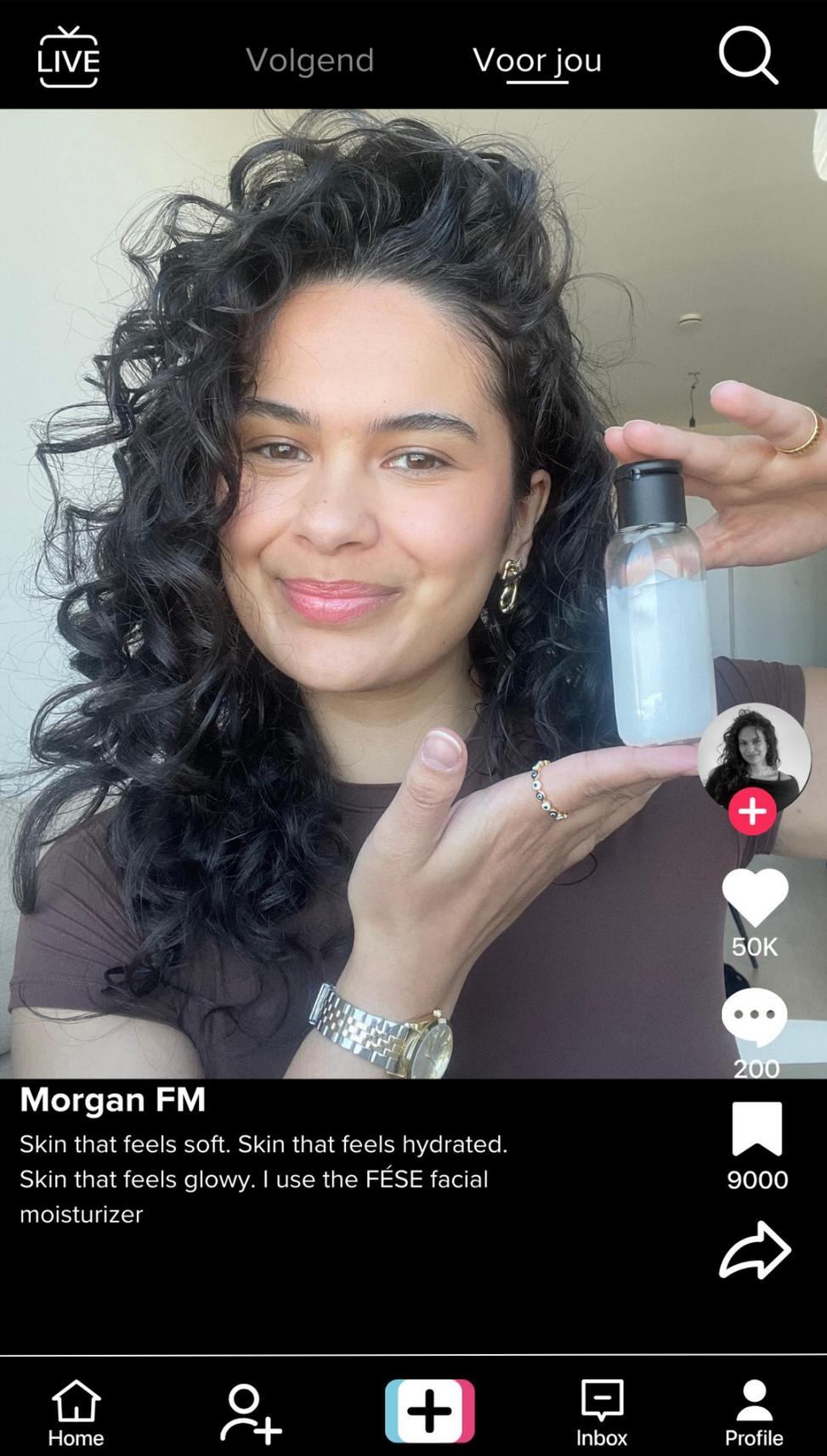
Morgan FM ✓

Why settle for anything less than that glowy, hydrated and soft skin feeling? I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer.
#Ad #Skincare

Advertisement

50K
200
9000

Home + Inbox Profile



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' and 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. The video has a circular profile picture of the user, Morgan FM, with a red plus sign. Below the video, there are icons for likes (50K), comments (200), and shares (9000). At the bottom, there is a caption for Morgan FM: 'Skin that feels soft. Skin that feels hydrated. Skin that feels glowy. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer'. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for Home, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 

 50K

 200

Morgan FM

Skin that feels soft. Skin that feels hydrated.
Skin that feels glowy. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer

 9000



 Home    Inbox Profile



Volgend

Voor jou



50K



200

Morgan FM

Skin that feels soft. Skin that feels hydrated.
Skin that feels glowy. I use the FÉSE facial
moisturizer

#Ad #Skincare

Advertisement



9000



Home



Inbox



Profile

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' (Following), 'Voor jou' (For you), and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top and a gold watch, holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a red plus sign in a circle, a heart icon with '50K' below it, a speech bubble icon with '200' below it, a bookmark icon with '9000' below it, and a share icon. Below the video, the name 'Morgan FM' is displayed in bold, followed by the text: 'Imagine: you wake up to skin that feels hydrated and soft. Discover the glowy feeling. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer'. At the bottom of the screen is the Instagram navigation bar with icons for Home, a female symbol, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' and 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top, holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. The video has a circular profile picture of the user, Morgan FM, with a red plus sign, indicating it's a live broadcast. Below the video, there are icons for likes (50K), comments (200), and shares (9000). The caption reads: 'Imagine: you wake up to skin that feels hydrated and soft. Discover the glowy feeling. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer. #Ad #Skincare'. A grey 'Advertisement' label is at the bottom left of the caption area. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for Home, a user icon, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 🔍

Morgan FM ✓

Imagine: you wake up to skin that feels hydrated and soft. Discover the glowy feeling. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer.
#Ad #Skincare

Advertisement

50K
200
9000

Home 👤 + 📧 Profile

Appendix A: Stimuli Pilot (NL)

Retorische Vraag - No Ad - NL

The image is a screenshot of a social media post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend', 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video frame showing a woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a dark top and a watch, holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a red plus sign in a circle, a heart icon with '50K' below it, and a speech bubble icon with '200' below it. Below the video, the name 'Morgan FM' is displayed in bold. Underneath the name is the text: 'Waarom genoeg nemen met minder dan dat stralende, gehydrateerde en zachte huidgevoel? Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème.' To the right of this text are a bookmark icon with '9000' below it and a share icon. At the bottom of the screen is a navigation bar with icons for Home, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou Q

Morgan FM ✓

Waarom genoeg nemen met minder dan dat stralende, gehydrateerde en zachte huidgevoel? Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème. #Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging

Advertentie

50K
200
9000

Home + Inbox Profile

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' (Following), 'Voor jou' (For you), and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top, holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. She is smiling and looking at the camera. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a circular profile picture with a red plus sign, a heart icon with '50K' below it, and a speech bubble icon with '200' below it. Below the video, the name 'Morgan FM' is displayed in bold white text. Underneath the name is the caption: 'Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichts crème.' To the right of the caption are a bookmark icon with '9000' below it and a share icon. At the bottom of the screen is a navigation bar with icons for Home, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou

Morgan FM
Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichts crème.

50K 200 9000

Home Inbox Profile



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' and 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair holding a clear bottle of light blue face cream. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a profile picture with a red plus sign, a heart icon with '50K', a comment icon with '200', a bookmark icon with '9000', and a share icon. Below the video, the post is from 'Morgan FM' with a verified badge. The caption reads: 'Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème. #Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging'. A grey 'Advertentie' label is at the bottom left of the caption area. At the very bottom is the Instagram navigation bar with icons for Home, Add, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou

Morgan FM ✓

Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème.
#Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging

Advertentie

50K
200
9000

Home Add Inbox Profile

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend', 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a brown top, holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. The video has a circular profile picture of the woman, a red plus sign, a heart icon with '50K', a comment icon with '200', a bookmark icon with '9000', and a share icon. At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, a person with a plus sign, a plus sign in a square, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 🔍

Morgan FM
Stel je voor: je wordt wakker met een gehydrateerde en zacht aanvoelende huid. Ontdek het stralende gevoel. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème.

50K
200
9000

Home + Inbox Profile

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend', 'Voorujou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top and a watch, holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. The video has a circular profile picture of the user, a red plus sign, a heart icon with '50K', and a comment icon with '200'. Below the video, the user's name 'Morgan FM' is displayed with a verified badge. The caption reads: 'Stel je voor: je wordt wakker met een gehydrateerde en zacht aanvoelende huid. Ontdek het stralende gevoel. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème. #Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging'. There is a '9000' bookmark icon and a share icon. A grey 'Advertentie' label is at the bottom left. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for Home, a female symbol, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voorujou 🔍

Morgan FM ✓

Stel je voor: je wordt wakker met een gehydrateerde en zacht aanvoelende huid. Ontdek het stralende gevoel. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème.
#Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging

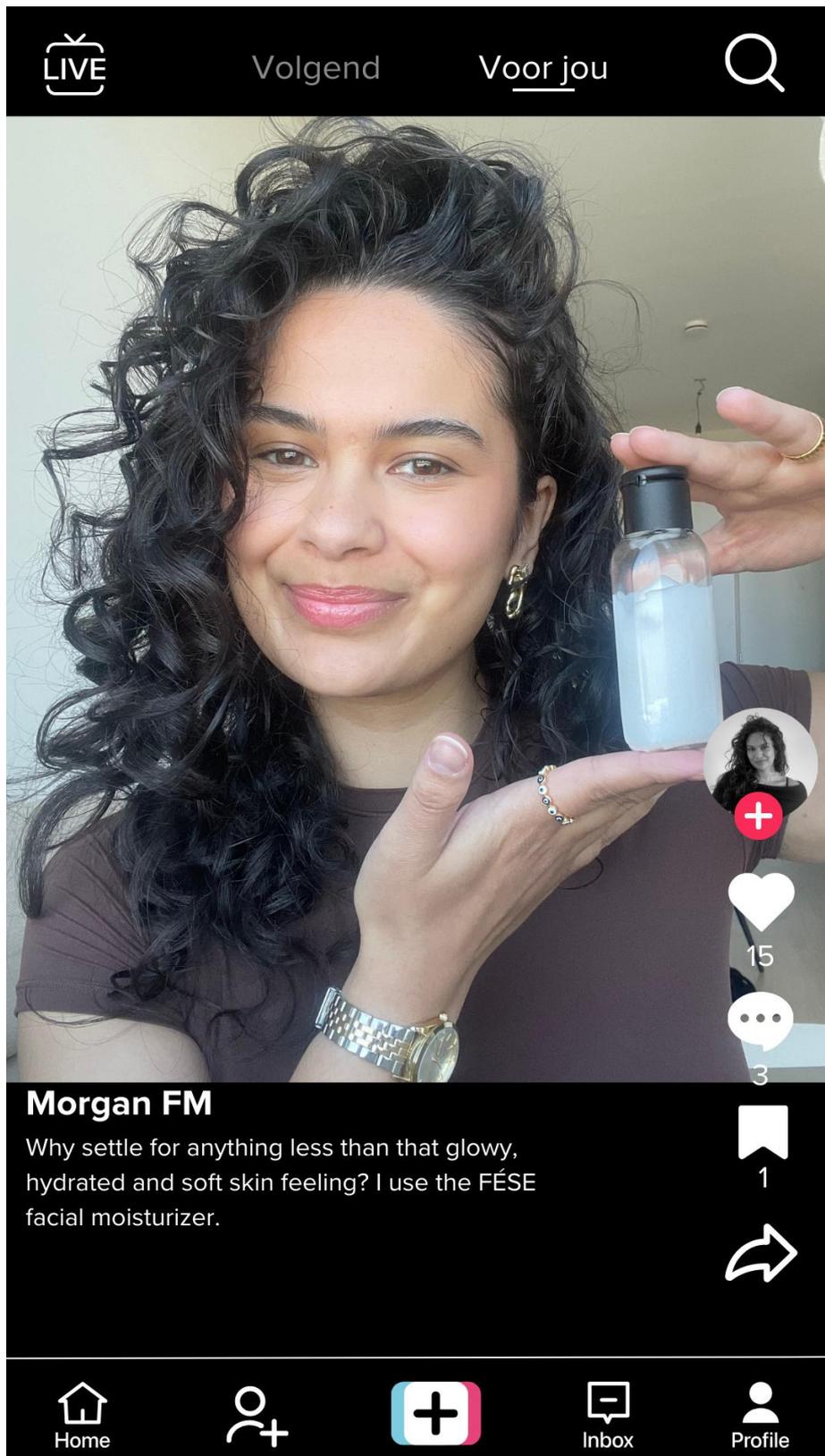
Advertentie

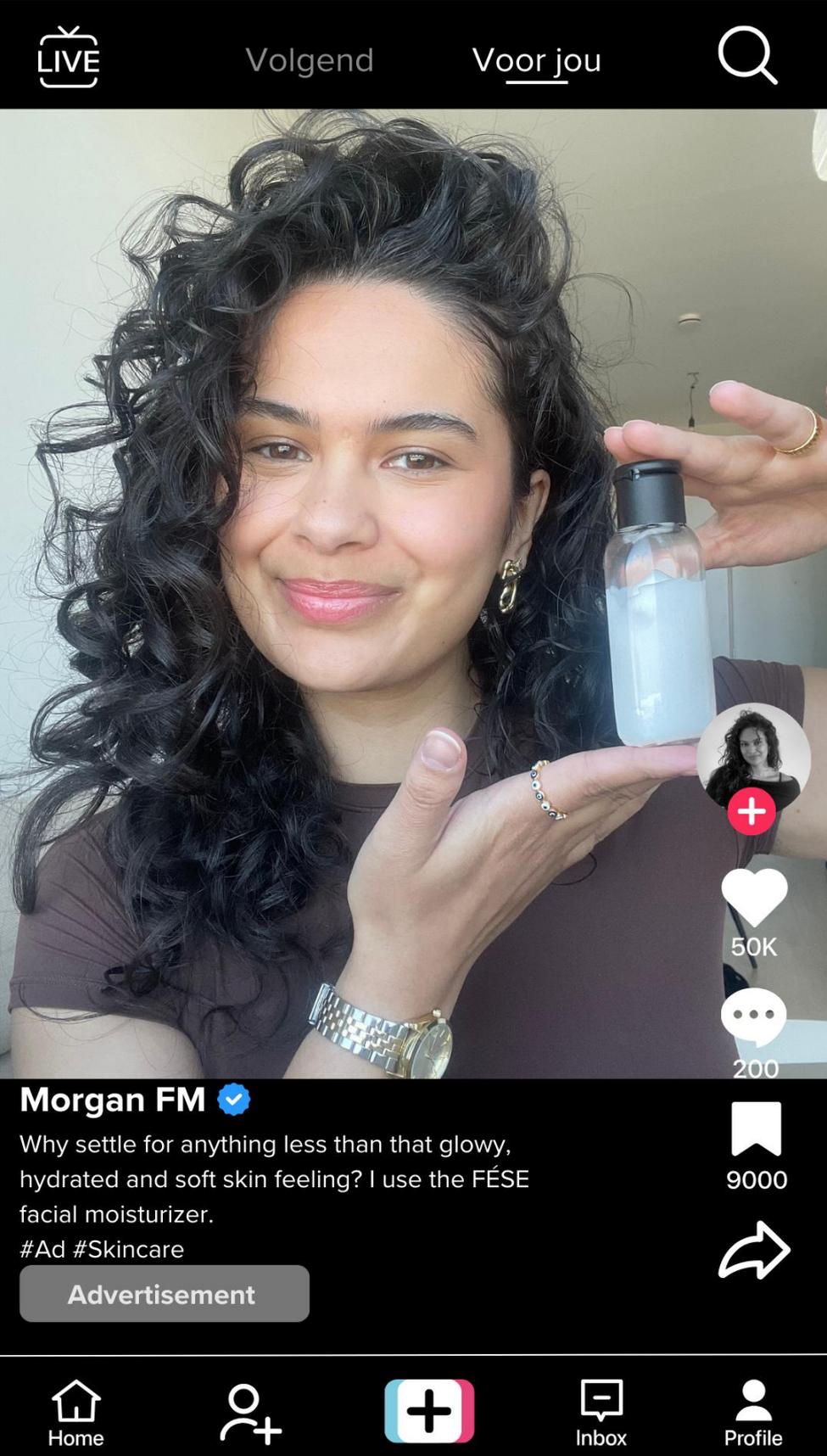
50K
200
9000

Home ♀️ + 📧 Profile

Appendix B: Stimuli Main Survey (ENG)

Rhetorical Question - No Ad - ENG





The image shows an Instagram post from the account 'Morgan FM'. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. The post includes a caption, a hashtag, and an 'Advertisement' label. On the right side, there are icons for adding to a collection, liking (50K), commenting (200), and sharing (9000). The bottom navigation bar shows icons for Home, a female symbol, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 🔍

Morgan FM ✓

Why settle for anything less than that glowy, hydrated and soft skin feeling? I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer.
#Ad #Skincare

Advertisement

+ 50K 200 9000

Home ♀ + Inbox Profile

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' (Following), 'Voor jou' (For you), and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top and a watch, holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a profile picture with a red plus sign, a heart icon with the number '15', a comment icon with the number '3', and a bookmark icon with the number '1'. Below the video, the text reads: 'Morgan FM' followed by 'Skin that feels soft. Skin that feels hydrated. Skin that feels glowy. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer'. At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' (Following), 'Voor jou' (For you), and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top and a watch, holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. The video has a red heart icon with '50K' likes and a comment icon with '200' comments. Below the video, the user's name 'Morgan FM' is displayed with a verified badge. The caption reads: 'Skin that feels soft. Skin that feels hydrated. Skin that feels glowy. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer #Ad #Skincare'. There is a grey 'Advertisement' label. To the right of the caption are icons for a bookmark (9000) and a share icon. At the bottom is the Instagram navigation bar with icons for Home, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou

Morgan FM ✓

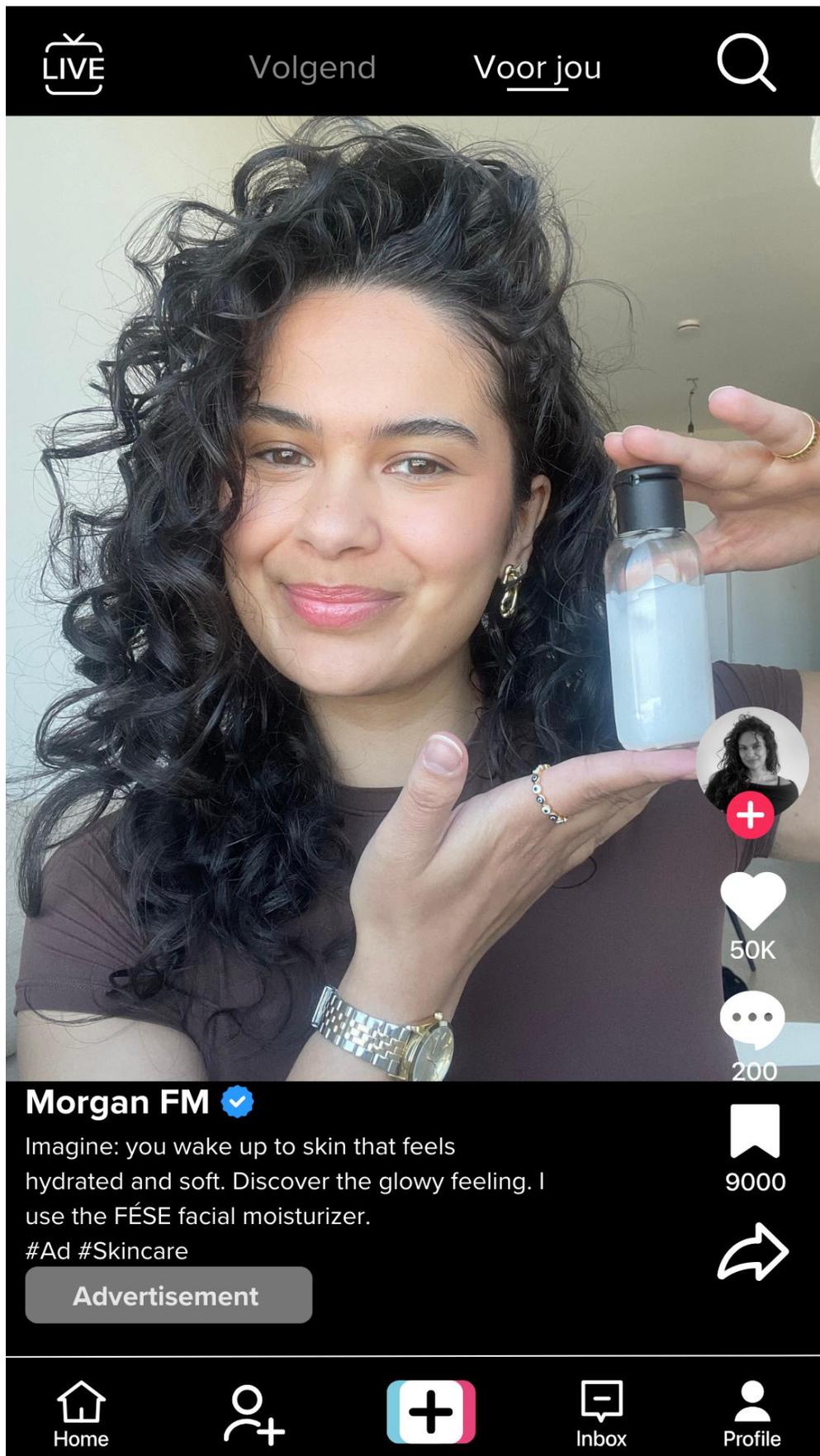
Skin that feels soft. Skin that feels hydrated.
Skin that feels glowy. I use the FÉSE facial
moisturizer
#Ad #Skincare

Advertisement

50K
200
9000

Home + Inbox Profile

The image is a screenshot of a social media post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' (Following), 'Voor jou' (For you), and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with long, dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top and a watch, holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a profile picture with a red plus sign, a heart icon with the number '15', and a comment icon with the number '3'. Below the video, the name 'Morgan FM' is displayed in bold, followed by the text: 'Imagine: you wake up to skin that feels hydrated and soft. Discover the glowy feeling. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer'. To the right of the text are icons for a bookmark (with the number '1') and a share icon. At the bottom of the screen is a navigation bar with icons for Home, a person with a plus sign, a plus sign in a square, Inbox, and Profile.



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend', 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair holding a clear bottle of light blue facial moisturizer. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a profile picture with a red plus sign, a heart icon with '50K', and a comment icon with '200'. Below the video, the post is from 'Morgan FM' (verified), with the text: 'Imagine: you wake up to skin that feels hydrated and soft. Discover the glowy feeling. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer. #Ad #Skincare'. A grey 'Advertisement' label is at the bottom left of the post. On the right side of the caption area, there are icons for a bookmark (9000) and a share icon. At the very bottom is the Instagram navigation bar with icons for Home, Add, Inbox, and Profile.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 🔍

Morgan FM ✓

Imagine: you wake up to skin that feels hydrated and soft. Discover the glowy feeling. I use the FÉSE facial moisturizer.
#Ad #Skincare

Advertisement

50K
200
9000

Home Add Inbox Profile

Appendix B: Stimuli Main Survey (NL)

Retorische Vraag - No Ad - NL

The image is a screenshot of a social media post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend', 'Voor jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top, holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. She is smiling and looking at the camera. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a red plus sign, a heart icon with the number '15', a speech bubble icon with the number '3', and a bookmark icon with the number '1'. Below the video, the name 'Morgan FM' is displayed in bold. Underneath the name is the text: 'Waarom genoeg nemen met minder dan dat stralende, gehydrateerde en zachte huidgevoel? Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème.' At the bottom of the screen is a navigation bar with icons for 'Start', 'Vrienden', a plus sign, 'Inbox', and 'Profiel'.

LIVE Volgend Voor_jou 🔍

Morgan FM ✓

Waarom genoeg nemen met minder dan dat stralende, gehydrateerde en zachte huidgevoel? Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème. #Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging

Advertentie

50K
200
9000

Start Vrienden + Inbox Profiel

The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend' (Following), 'Voor jou' (For you), and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a brown top, holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. She is smiling and looking at the camera. On the right side of the video, there are interaction icons: a red plus sign in a circle, a heart icon with the number '15', a speech bubble icon with the number '3', and a bookmark icon with the number '1'. Below the video, the name 'Morgan FM' is displayed in bold white text. Underneath the name is the caption: 'Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscreme.' At the bottom of the screen is the Instagram navigation bar with icons for 'Start', 'Vrienden', a plus sign, 'Inbox', and 'Profiel'.

LIVE Volgend Voor jou 🔍



Morgan FM ✓

Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichts crème.
#Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging

Advertentie

50K
200
9000

Start Vrienden + Inbox Profiel

Bewustwordingsstrategie- No Ad - NL



Volgend

Voor jou



15



3

Morgan FM

Stel je voor: je wordt wakker met een gehydrateerde en zacht aanvoelende huid. Ontdek het stralende gevoel. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichtscrème.



1



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'LIVE' icon, the text 'Volgend', 'Voor_jou', and a search icon. The main content is a video of a woman with long, dark, curly hair, smiling and holding a clear bottle of light blue face cream. The video has a circular profile picture of the creator, Morgan FM, with a red plus sign, and engagement icons for likes (50K), comments (200), and shares (9000). The caption reads: 'Morgan FM [verified] Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichts crème. #Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging'. A grey 'Advertentie' button is located below the caption. At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with icons for 'Start', 'Vrienden', a plus sign, 'Inbox', and 'Profiel'.

Appendix C: Pilot Questionnaire (ENG)

1. Introduction

Welcome!

Thank you for your time and participation in this research.

My name is Morgan Moelchand, a student from Erasmus University, and I am conducting a brief survey as part of my master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to explore how visuals in TikTok content shape audience's perceptions.

You will be shown one TikTok post screenshot and asked to answer a few short questions about it. There are no right or wrong answers, please answer honestly and carefully.

- This survey will approximately take about 2-3 minutes to complete
- This study focuses on a specific target group with individuals who are between the ages of 18-30 years old, who speak Dutch, and who use TikTok

CONFIDENTIALITY

All gathered information will be kept fully confidential and used only for academic research purposes.

Your responses are collected anonymously and stored in a secure digital environment. No data will be shared with third parties, and I will not be able to identify you in any way.

VOLUNTARY

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the survey without any consequences. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me:

Morgan Moelchand

749173mm@eur.nl

- a. By clicking 'I agree', you confirm that you have understood the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in this study
 - i. I agree
 - ii. I do not agree - skip to the end of the survey
- b. What is your age (in years)?
 - i. Below 18, skip to the end of the survey
 - ii. Above 30, skip to the end of the survey
- c. In what country do you live?
- d. What is your gender?
 - i. Female

- ii. Male
 - iii. Other
 - iv. I would rather not say
- e. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- i. Elementary/Middle school
 - ii. MBO
 - iii. HBO
 - iv. University (Bachelor)
 - v. University (Master)
 - vi. PhD (Doctorate)
 - vii. Other

2. Stimuli

- a. Please take a few seconds to observe the screenshot of a TikTok-post below. The post is about the face cream brand FÉSE. After this, you will answer a few short questions.

3. Manipulation Check and Control Variables pt. 1

- a. Can you remember if you have seen a **sponsored post** (e.g. ad label or hashtags)
- i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not sure
- b. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Think of the creator you just saw in the screenshot of the TikTok post). Finish the sentence: “*The creator of the TikTok post...*”

{1-5 scale, 1: Strongly disagree, 5: Strongly agree }

- i. Seems kind and good hearted
 - ii. Is sincere
 - iii. Comes off as very genuine
 - iv. Is down-to-earth
- c. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Think of the creator you just saw in the screenshot of the TikTok post).

{1-5 scale, 1: Strongly disagree, 5: Strongly agree }

- i. Although the creator post ads, she gives meaningful insights into the products
- ii. Gives very honest reviews on FÉSE
- iii. The product and brand she endorses vibe well with her personality
- iv. Promotes products she would actually use

4. Control Variables pt. 2

- a. How much time do you spend on TikTok on average per day (in hours)?
{Numerical slider scale: 0-10}
- b. Which of the activities below do you regularly do on TikTok? (Select all the activities that apply)
 - i. Viewing content
 - ii. Liking content
 - iii. Commenting on content
 - iv. Sharing content
 - v. Saving content
 - vi. Creating and posting content
 - vii. Participating in trends and challenges
 - viii. Other
- c. How many hours of free time do you have on average per day (outside of work/study)?
{Numerical slider scale: 0-10}

5. Debrief

Thank you for participating in this study!

The aim of this research was to explore how **persuasive language** use in TikTok ads (with an ad label) and in TikTok reviews (without an ad label) affects the **perceived authenticity** among the audience. You have just seen one of the six images, below you can see all the images used for this study. To ensure unbiased answers, I did not mention this at the beginning of the survey.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me at **749173mm@eur.nl**.

Again, thank you for your time and participation. **Your contribution is greatly appreciated!**

Appendix C: Pilot Questionnaire (NL)

1. Introductie

Welkom!

Bedankt voor je tijd en deelname aan dit onderzoek.

Mijn naam is Morgan Moelchand, student aan de Erasmus Universiteit, en ik voer deze korte enquête uit als onderdeel van mijn Master Scriptie. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te verkennen hoe visuele elementen in TikTok content de perceptie van het publiek beïnvloeden.

Je krijgt een screenshot van een TikTok post te zien en wordt gevraagd om een paar korte vragen te beantwoorden. Er zijn geen juiste of foute antwoorden, geef alsjeblieft eerlijke en zorgvuldige antwoorden.

- Het invullen van de enquête duurt ongeveer 2-3 minuten
- Het onderzoek richt zich op een specifieke doelgroep met mensen tussen de 18 en 30 jaar, die Nederlands spreken en TikTok gebruiken.

VERTROUWELIJKHEID

Alle informatie die wordt verzameld wordt strikt vertrouwelijk behandeld en uitsluitend gebruikt voor academisch onderzoekdoeleinden. Je antwoorden worden anoniem verzameld en opgeslagen in een beveiligde digitale omgeving. Er zal geen data worden gedeeld met derden, en ik zal je op geen enkele manier kunnen identificeren.

VRIJWILLIGHEID

Je deelname is volledig vrijwillig, en je kunt op elk moment stoppen tijdens de enquête zonder enige gevolgen. Aan dit onderzoek zijn geen bekende risico's of vormen van ongemak verbonden.

VERDERE INFORMATIE

Als je vragen hebt over dit onderzoek, neem dan gerust contact met mij op:

Morgan Moelchand

749173mm@eur.nl

- a. Door op 'Ik ga akkoord' te klikken, bevestig je dat je de bovenstaande informatie hebt begrepen en vrijwillig instemt met deelname aan dit onderzoek
 - i. Ik ga akkoord
 - ii. Ik ga niet akkoord
- b. Wat is je leeftijd (in jaren)?
 - i. Minder dan 18, skip naar het einde van de enquête
 - ii. Meer dan 30, skip naar het einde van de enquête

- c. In welk land woon je?
- d. Geef je geslacht aan
 - i. Vrouw
 - ii. Man
 - iii. Anders
 - iv. Wil ik liever niet zeggen
- e. Wat is het hoogste opleidingsniveau dat je hebt afgerond?
 - i. Basis / middelbare school
 - ii. MBO
 - iii. HBO
 - iv. Universiteit (Bachelor)
 - v. Universiteit (Master)
 - vi. PhD (Doctoraat)
 - vii. Anders, geef hieronder aan

2. Stimuli

- a. Neem alsjeblieft een paar seconden de tijd om de onderstaande screenshot van een TikTok-post te observeren. De post gaat over het gezichtscrème-merk FÉSE. Hierna ga je een paar korte vragen beantwoorden.

3. Manipulation Check en Control Variables pt. 1

- a. Kan je je herinneren of je een **gesponsorde post** hebt gezien? (Bijv. advertentie label of hashtags)
 - i. Ja
 - ii. Nee
 - iii. Weet ik niet zeker
- b. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? (Denk hierbij aan de maker die je net zag in de screenshot van de TikTok-post). Maak de zin af: "*De maker van de TikTok-post...*"

{1-5 schaal, 1: Helemaal niet mee eens, 5: Helemaal mee eens}

- i. Lijkt vriendelijk en goedmoedig
- ii. Is oprecht
- iii. Komt zeer welwillend over
- iv. Is down-to-earth
- c. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? (Denk hierbij aan de maker die je net zag in de screenshot van de TikTok-post).

{1-5 schaal, 1: Helemaal niet mee eens, 5: Helemaal mee eens}

- i. Hoewel de maker advertenties plaatst, geeft ze waardevolle inzichten in het product
- ii. De maker geeft zeer eerlijke reviews over FÉSE

- iii. Het product en merk dat ze promoot sluit goed aan bij haar persoonlijkheid
- iv. Ze promoot producten die ze zelf zou gebruiken

4. Control Variables pt. 2

- a. Hoeveel tijd spendeer je gemiddeld per dag aan TikTok (in uren)?
{Numerieke slider schaal: 0-10}
- b. Welke van de onderstaande activiteiten doe je regelmatig op TikTok (Selecteer alle activiteiten die van toepassing zijn).
 - i. Het bekijken van content
 - ii. Het liken van content
 - iii. Reageren op content
 - iv. Delen van content
 - v. Het opslaan van content
 - vi. Het maken en posten van content
 - vii. Anders
- c. Hoeveel uur vrije tijd heb je gemiddeld per dag (buiten werk/studie om)?
{Numerieke slider schaal: 0-10}

5. Debrief

Bedankt voor je deelname aan dit onderzoek!

Het doel van dit onderzoek was om te verkennen hoe **overtuigend taalgebruik** in TikTok advertenties (met een advertentie label) en in TikTok reviews (zonder advertentie label) invloed heeft op de **waargenomen authenticiteit** bij het publiek. Je hebt zojuist één van de zes afbeeldingen gezien, hieronder zie je alle afbeeldingen die zijn gebruikt voor deze studie. Om onbevooroordeelde antwoorden te waarborgen, heb ik dit niet aan het begin van de enquête vermeld.

Als je vragen of opmerkingen hebt over dit onderzoek, neem dan gerust contact met me op via: **749173mm@eur.nl**.

Nogmaals, bedankt voor je tijd en deelname. **Je bijdrage wordt zeer gewaardeerd!**

Appendix D: Main Survey Questionnaire (ENG)

1. Introduction

Welcome!

Thank you for your time and participation in this research.

My name is Morgan Moelchand, a student from Erasmus University, and I am conducting a brief survey as part of my master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to explore how visuals in TikTok content shape audience's perceptions.

You will be shown one TikTok post screenshot and asked to answer a few short questions about it. There are no right or wrong answers, please answer honestly and carefully.

- This survey will approximately take about 2-3 minutes to complete
- This study focuses on a specific target group with individuals who are between the ages of 18-30 years old, who speak Dutch, and who use TikTok

CONFIDENTIALITY

All gathered information will be kept fully confidential and used only for academic research purposes.

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VOLUNTARY

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the survey without any consequences. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me:

Morgan Moelchand

749173mm@eur.nl

- a. By clicking 'I agree', you confirm that you have understood the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in this study
 - i. I agree
 - ii. I do not agree - skip to the end of the survey
- b. What is your age (in years)?
 - i. Below 18, skip to the end of the survey
 - ii. Above 30, skip to the end of the survey
- c. In what country do you live?
- d. What is your gender?
 - i. Female
 - ii. Male

- iii. Other
- iv. I would rather not say
- e. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - i. Elementary/Middle school
 - ii. MBO
 - iii. HBO
 - iv. University (Bachelor)
 - v. University (Master)
 - vi. PhD (Doctorate)
 - vii. Other

2. Stimuli

- a. Below you can see a fictitious TikTok post (screenshot), which is about the face cream brand FÉSE. Please take a few seconds to observe the screenshot. After this, you will answer a few short questions.

3. Manipulation Check and Control Variables pt. 1

- a. Did you just see a **sponsored post**? (e.g. ad label or hashtags)
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not sure
- b. The following statements are about the authenticity of the creator of the post. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Finish the sentence: “*The creator of the TikTok post...*”

{1-7 scale, 1: Strongly disagree, 7: Strongly agree }

- i. Seems kind and good hearted
- ii. Is sincere
- iii. Comes off as very genuine
- iv. Is down-to-earth
- c. The following statements are about the authenticity of the creator of the post. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

{1-7 scale, 1: Strongly disagree, 7: Strongly agree }

- i. Although the creator post ads, she gives meaningful insights into the products
- ii. Gives very honest reviews on FÉSE
- iii. The product and brand she endorses vibe well with her personality
- iv. Promotes products she would actually use

4. Control Variables pt. 2

- a. How much time do you spend on TikTok on average per day (in hours)?

{Numerical slider scale: 0-10}

- b. Which of the activities below do you regularly do on TikTok? (Select all the activities that apply)
- i. Viewing content
 - ii. Liking content
 - iii. Commenting on content
 - iv. Sharing content
 - v. Saving content
 - vi. Creating and posting content
 - vii. Participating in trends and challenges
 - viii. Other
- c. How many hours of free time do you have on average per day (outside of work/study)?
- {Numerical slider scale: 0-10}

5. Debrief

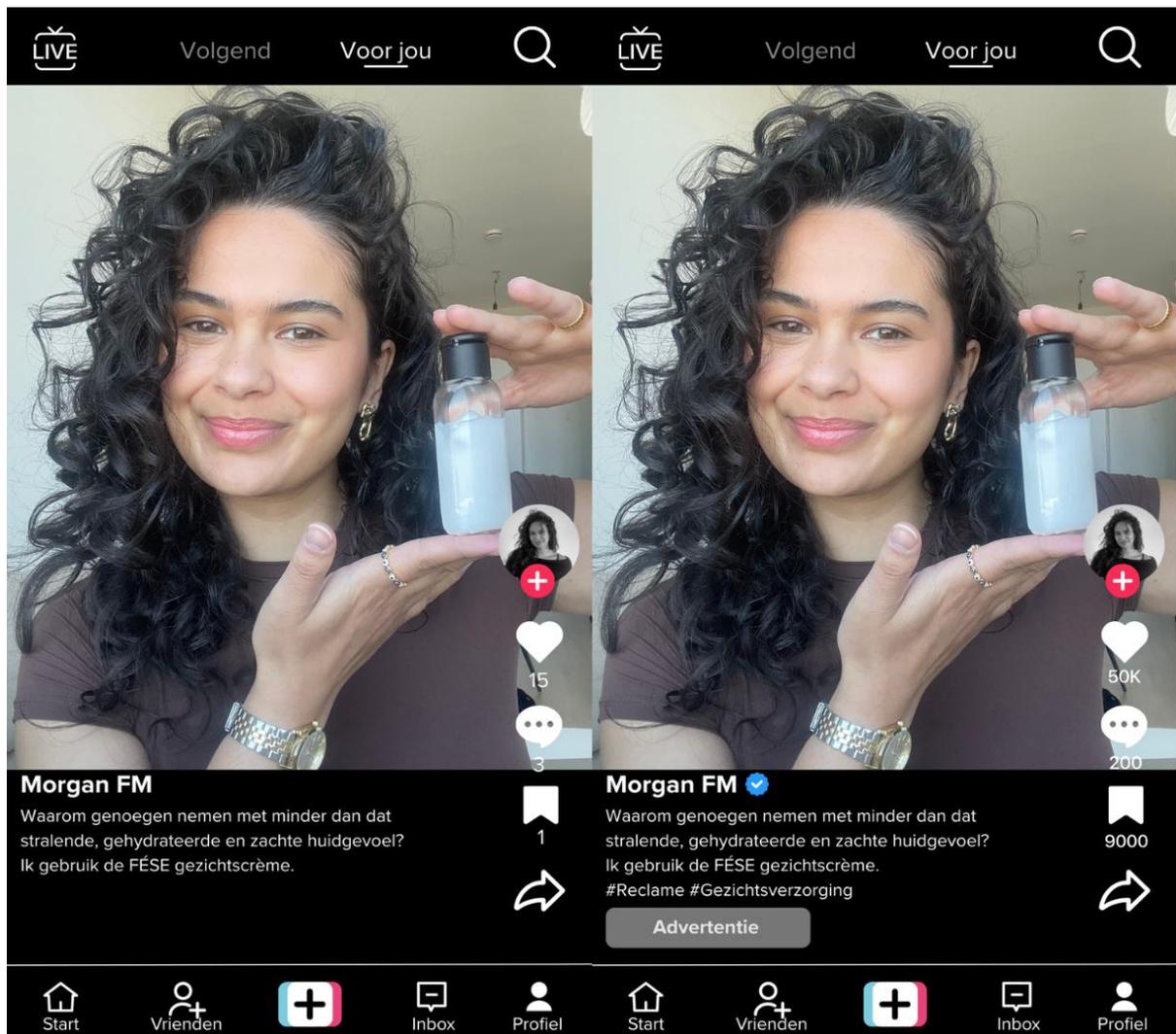
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The aim of this research was to explore how **persuasive language** use in TikTok ads (with an ad label) and in TikTok reviews (without an ad label) affects the **perceived authenticity** among the audience. You have just seen one of the six images, below you can see all the images used for this study. To ensure unbiased answers, I did not mention this at the beginning of the survey.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me at **749173mm@eur.nl**.

Again, thank you for your time and participation. **Your contribution is greatly appreciated!**

Rhetorical Question



Anaphora

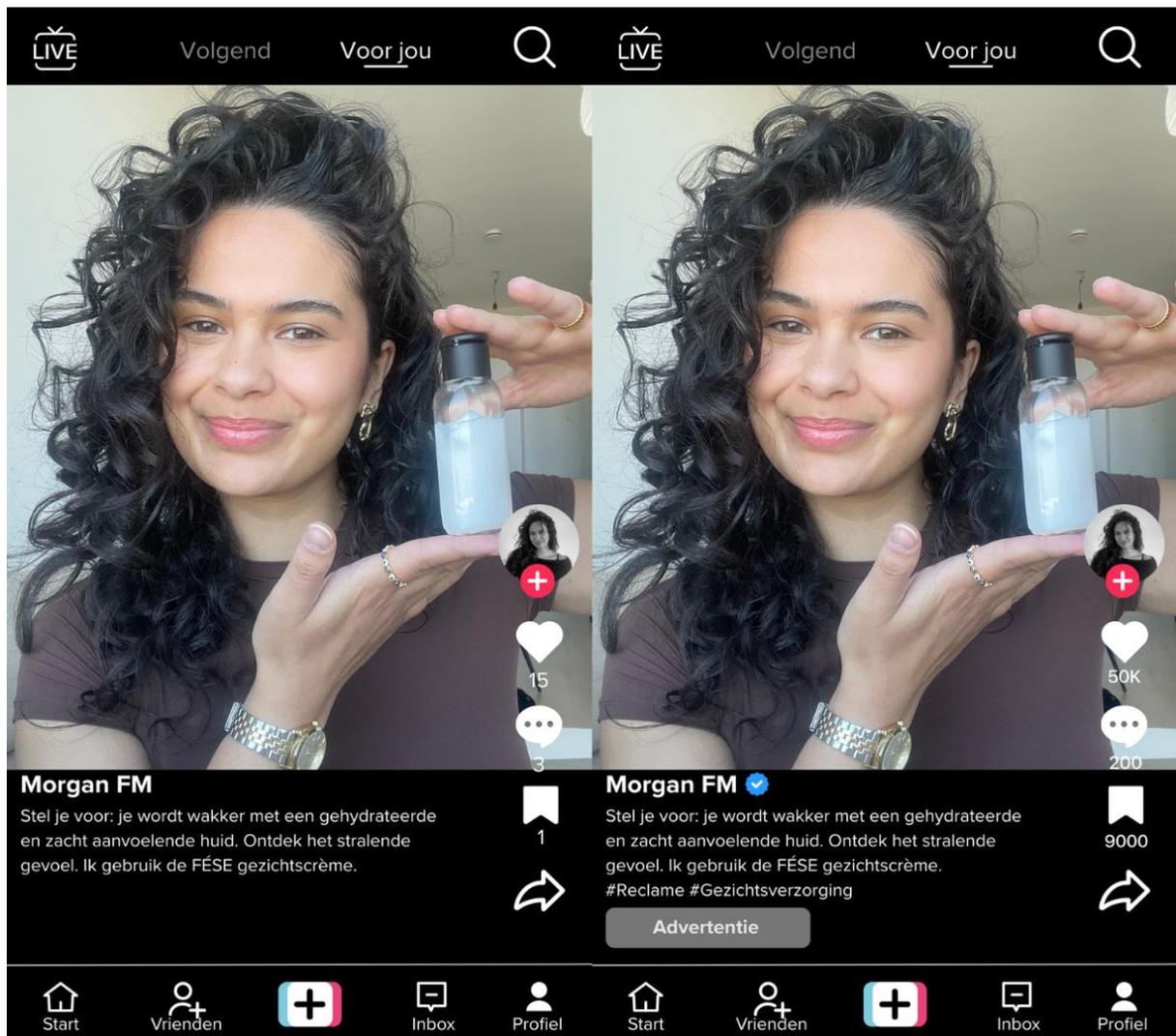
Morgan FM
Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FESE gezichtscrème.

Morgan FM
Huid die zacht aanvoelt. Huid die gehydrateerd aanvoelt. Huid die stralend aanvoelt. Ik gebruik de FESE gezichtscrème.
#Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging

Advertentie

Start Vrienden + Inbox Profiel Start Vrienden + Inbox Profiel

Awareness Patterns



Appendix D: Main Survey Questionnaire (NL)

1. Introductie

Welkom!

Bedankt voor je tijd en deelname aan dit onderzoek.

Mijn naam is Morgan Moelchand, student aan de Erasmus Universiteit, en ik voer deze korte enquête uit als onderdeel van mijn Master Scriptie. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te verkennen hoe visuele elementen in TikTok content de perceptie van het publiek beïnvloeden.

Je krijgt een screenshot van een TikTok post te zien en wordt gevraagd om een paar korte vragen te beantwoorden. Er zijn geen juiste of foute antwoorden, geef alsjeblieft eerlijke en zorgvuldige antwoorden.

- Het invullen van de enquête duurt ongeveer 2-3 minuten
- Het onderzoek richt zich op een specifieke doelgroep met mensen tussen de 18 en 30 jaar, die Nederlands spreken en TikTok gebruiken.

VERTROUWELIJKHEID

Alle informatie die wordt verzameld wordt strikt vertrouwelijk behandeld en uitsluitend gebruikt voor academisch onderzoekdoeleinden. Je antwoorden worden anoniem verzameld en opgeslagen in een beveiligde digitale omgeving. Er zal geen data worden gedeeld met derden, en ik zal je op geen enkele manier kunnen identificeren.

VRIJWILLIGHEID

Je deelname is volledig vrijwillig, en je kunt op elk moment stoppen tijdens de enquête zonder enige gevolgen. Aan dit onderzoek zijn geen bekende risico's of vormen van ongemak verbonden.

VERDERE INFORMATIE

Als je vragen hebt over dit onderzoek, neem dan gerust contact met mij op:

Morgan Moelchand

749173mm@eur.nl

- a. Door op 'Ik ga akkoord' te klikken, bevestig je dat je de bovenstaande informatie hebt begrepen en vrijwillig instemt met deelname aan dit onderzoek
 - i. Ik ga akkoord
 - ii. Ik ga niet akkoord
- b. Wat is je leeftijd (in jaren)?
 - i. Minder dan 18, skip naar het einde van de enquête
 - ii. Meer dan 30, skip naar het einde van de enquête
- c. In welk land woon je?

- d. Geef je geslacht aan
 - i. Vrouw
 - ii. Man
 - iii. Anders
 - iv. Wil ik liever niet zeggen
- e. Wat is het hoogste opleidingsniveau dat je hebt afgerond?
 - i. Basis / middelbare school
 - ii. MBO
 - iii. HBO
 - iv. Universiteit (Bachelor)
 - v. Universiteit (Master)
 - vi. PhD (Doctoraat)
 - vii. Anders, geef hieronder aan

2. Stimuli

- a. Hieronder zie je een fictieve TikTok-post (screenshot), dat gaat over het gezichtscrème-merk FÉSE. Neem alsjeblieft een paar seconden de tijd om de screenshot te observeren. Hierna ga je een paar korte vragen beantwoorden.

3. Manipulation Check en Control Variables pt. 1

- a. Heb je zojuist een **gesponsorde post** gezien? (Bijv. advertentie label of hashtags)
 - i. Ja
 - ii. Nee
 - iii. Weet ik niet zeker
- b. De volgende stellingen gaan over de authenticiteit van de fictieve maker van de post. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? Maak de zin af: “*De maker van de TikTok-post...*”

{ 1-7 schaal, 1: Helemaal niet mee eens, 7: Helemaal mee eens }

- i. Komt vriendelijk en goedhartig over
- ii. Is oprecht
- iii. Komt zeer authentiek over
- iv. Is down-to-earth
- c. In hoeverre ben je het eens met de volgende stellingen? (Denk hierbij aan de maker die je net zag in de screenshot van de TikTok-post).

{ 1-7 schaal, 1: Helemaal niet mee eens, 7: Helemaal mee eens }

- i. Hoewel de maker advertenties plaatst, geeft ze waardevolle inzichten in het product
- ii. De maker geeft zeer eerlijke reviews over FÉSE

- iii. Het product en merk dat ze promoot sluit goed aan bij haar persoonlijkheid
- iv. Ze promoot producten die ze zelf zou gebruiken

4. Control Variables pt. 2

- a. Hoeveel tijd spendeer je gemiddeld per dag aan TikTok (in uren)?
{Numerieke slider schaal: 0-10}
- b. Welke van de onderstaande activiteiten doe je regelmatig op TikTok (Selecteer alle activiteiten die van toepassing zijn).
 - i. Het bekijken van content
 - ii. Het liken van content
 - iii. Reageren op content
 - iv. Delen van content
 - v. Het opslaan van content
 - vi. Het maken en posten van content
 - vii. Anders
- c. Hoeveel uur vrije tijd heb je gemiddeld per dag (buiten werk/studie om)?
{Numerieke slider schaal: 0-10}

5. Debrief

Bedankt voor je deelname aan dit onderzoek!

Het doel van dit onderzoek was om te verkennen hoe **overtuigend taalgebruik** in TikTok advertenties (met een advertentie label) en in TikTok reviews (zonder advertentie label) invloed heeft op de **waargenomen authenticiteit** bij het publiek. Je hebt zojuist één van de zes afbeeldingen gezien, hieronder zie je alle afbeeldingen die zijn gebruikt voor deze studie. Om onbevooroordeelde antwoorden te waarborgen, heb ik dit niet aan het begin van de enquête vermeld.

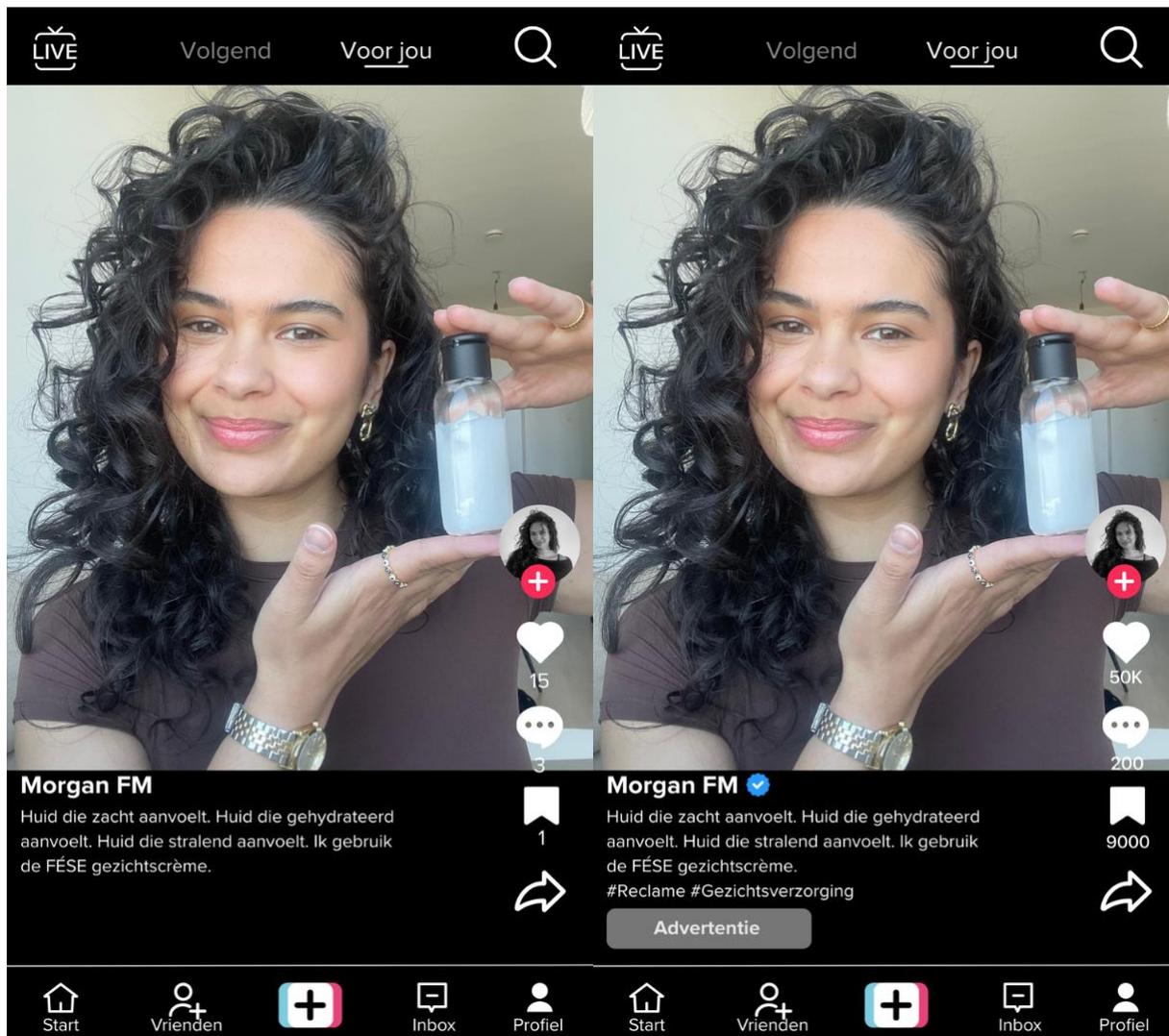
Als je vragen of opmerkingen hebt over dit onderzoek, neem dan gerust contact met me op via: **749173mm@eur.nl**.

Nogmaals, bedankt voor je tijd en deelname. **Je bijdrage wordt zeer gewaardeerd!**

Retorische vraag

The image displays two side-by-side screenshots of an Instagram post by Morgan FM. Both screenshots show a woman with dark, curly hair holding a clear bottle of FESE face cream. The left screenshot shows 15 likes and 3 comments, while the right screenshot shows 50K likes and 200 comments. The caption is identical in both: "Waarom genoeg nemen met minder dan dat stralende, gehydrateerde en zachte huidgevoel? Ik gebruik de FESE gezichtscreme." The right screenshot includes a "Reclame" (Advertisement) label and a "9000" share count. The bottom navigation bar is visible in both, showing icons for Start, Vrienden, a plus sign, Inbox, and Profiel.

Anafoor



Bewustwordingsstrategie

The image displays two side-by-side screenshots of a social media post for Morgan FM. Both screenshots show a woman with dark, curly hair holding a clear bottle of light blue liquid. The post content is identical in both:

- Profile:** Morgan FM (verified)
- Description:** Stel je voor: je wordt wakker met een gehydrateerde en zacht aanvoelende huid. Ontdek het stralende gevoel. Ik gebruik de FÉSE gezichts crème.
- Hashtags:** #Reclame #Gezichtsverzorging
- Engagement (Left Screenshot):** 15 likes, 3 comments, 1 share.
- Engagement (Right Screenshot):** 50K likes, 200 comments, 9000 shares.
- Buttons:** A grey 'Start' button is visible in the right screenshot.

The top navigation bar includes 'LIVE', 'Volgend', and 'Voor jou' options. The bottom navigation bar includes 'Start', 'Vrienden', a '+' icon, 'Inbox', and 'Profiel'.