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Finding the right influencer – An exploratory study within the beauty industry

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Abstract

Influencing consumers and their decision-makings has long been a marketing practice for companies and a well-researched topic in marketing literature. With the emergence of social media, the scale and practice of influencing has been disrupted and consequently altered brands marketing communication. On social media, one-way brand-to-consumer communication is replaced with peer-to-peer communication through influencers. The aim of this paper is therefore to better understand the process behind identifying and selecting influencers who will carry the brands communication and messages, and potential risks connected with having influencers carry the voice of the brand. To do so, an exploratory study with semi-structured interviews with influencer marketing practitioners who are deemed as experts in the subject were conducted. Findings suggests that the process is guides by the culture of the company and characteristics of its workforce rather than a standardized process. Furthermore, a thorough screening and filtering process when identifying and selecting influencers reduces the risks of having influencers carry the voice of the brand. Instead, brands are eager to have influencers function as their voice, as it delivers a more genuine and trustworthy message in a creative manner that the brands themselves never could.

Introduction

Since its introduction, social media has seen exceptional growth and in 2015 its users could be counted in billions, reaching a third of the world's population (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017). In light of such numbers, it is safe to say that social media is more than a hype and is consequently here to stay. Besides its sheer number of users, social media has been a disruptive force for the marketing landscape (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017; Booth & Matic, 2011; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017; Liu et al, 2015), and like other disruptive forces, it requires those affected by it to adapt and change. More than ever before, consumers rely on each other through interactive peer-to-peer communication rather than traditional one-way brand-to-consumer communication (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Consumers write openly about their opinions and feelings towards brands and their products, which functions as electronic word of mouth (e-wom). Social media has provided consumers with an easily accessible microphone that ensures them that their voices are being heard. Additionally, this e-wom is deemed more trustworthy, authentic and reliable by consumers than communication made from the companies (Kulmala, Mesiranta & Tuominen, 2013; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders 2017; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Given this newfound reality, where consumers are empowered through social media and where peer-to-peer communication is more efficient than the brand's own communication, marketers need to recognize that their customers have a powerful voice and that the marketers control of the brand communication is diminishing (Booth & Matic, 2011; De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014).

To deal with this, marketers incorporate consumers in their communication strategies by influencing peer-to-peer conversations through selected individuals, opinion leaders and celebrities, often referred to as influencer marketing (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018; De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017; Liu et al, 2015; Booth & Matic, 2011). Besides the benefits of influencing the peer-to-peer conversation, influencer marketing is also a cost-effective way to communicate to the target audience (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017; Liu et al, 2015; Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). However, by utilizing influencer marketing as a communication strategy, the voice of the brand on social media platforms is transferred from the marketers of the brand, to the influencing consumers. As such, the voice, message and narrative the brand wants to communicate is not entirely their own (Booth & Matic, 2011),

which could potentially be harmful to the brand (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017). Given the fact that companies let these non-employees carry the voice of the brand, whether they are world famous celebrities, opinion leaders or social media influencers, it is important that these voices are carefully selected and aligned with the values of the brand, as endorsement from an influencer might transfer the image of the influencer to the brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017; Araujo, Neijens & Vliegenthart, 2017).

Identifying and selecting influencers that align well with the brand is one of the more difficult challenges for a company that utilizes an influencer marketing strategy (De Veriman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Furthermore, marketers need not only to consider the influencer and his/her alignment with the brand, but also the social platform on which the influencer(s) operate, as endorsing behavior varies depending on user interfaces and the different social behavior that is applied on the platforms (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017). Given these challenges, our study aims to explore the process of identifying and selecting influencers for influencer marketing strategies on Instagram. Previous literature on influencer marketing on Instagram have analyzed practices and their effect on gaining followers (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017) and the likeability and brand effects of Instagram influencers (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). However, no study has taken a marketer's perspective and explored the process of identifying and selecting the influencers that will promote a brand. By doing so, this study aims to offer valuable insights into the practice of influencer marketing campaigns which could be utilized by marketers within the field of influencer marketing. Additionally, this thesis will contribute academically to the existing literature of influencer marketing by exploring the underlying reasons and the process behind influencer campaigns and shed further light on the scarce research on influencer marketing on Instagram.

Research Questions
- How does the process of identifying and selecting influencers for influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram look like?
- How do marketers view the risk of losing the brand's voice in an influencer campaign on Instagram?

To answer this, the authors conducted interviews with marketers working with influencer marketing strategies within the beauty industry for their own distinct brands. Marketing within the beauty industry is transforming and traditional marketing activities are replaced with influencer strategies on social media with enormous profits. Forbes dubbed Kylie Jenner the youngest ever self-made billionaire when her cosmetics company Kylie Cosmetics was valued at $900 million, a valuation she reached without paying for advertisements but rather only using her own social media accounts (Hoffower, 2019). Although an extreme case, there is evidence to suggest that marketing in the beauty industry is truly in a disrupting stage. Therefore, studying how marketers adapt to these changes by exploring the process of how marketers work within the beauty industry is required. To fulfill such a purpose, the paper starts by building an understanding of social media and influencer marketing while also describing relevant marketing concepts. The methodological chapter presents a description of how the study was carried out and the choices made to best answer the research questions. Then, the empirical data, the subsequent analysis and its relation to the theoretical framework is presented in the findings. Lastly, a discussion of the findings and the conclusions drawn are presented, followed by managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Framework
Social Media Marketing
Social media are online applications that utilizes both web-based and mobile technologies building on the foundations of web 2.0 and user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, Mccarthy & Silvestre, 2011). They come in different shape, ranging from blogs (weblogs, social blogs and microblogs) to podcasts and social networking sites (Kim & Ko, 2012; Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017). Kim and Ko (2012) argue that the platforms and mediums of social media are increasing and as such, firms, businesses and even government organizations are establishing a presence on social media to communicate with their customers and users. Owing to the enormous exposure of social media, a new communication landscape has opened up for business where a variety of platforms are available to reach the target audience (Kietzmann, Hermkens, Mccarthy & Silvestre, 2011) and consequently, businesses excluding social media as part of their online marketing strategy not only miss out on reaching consumers, but also its influence on their purchase decisions (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Social media offers platforms for consumers to turn to for peer-to-peer information about products and services both pre and post purchase, to either enhance the purchase decision or voice their satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards the company in question (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017). An old truth within marketing is that a dissatisfied customer will tell 10 people. Because of social media, those 10 people could now easily be counted in the millions if a dissatisfied customer make a post on social media that turns viral, argue Mangold and Faulds, (2009). However, the opposite might very well be true, and a satisfied customer has equal opportunities to spread a positive e-wom. Kimmel and Kitchen (2014) argue that positive e-wom is not only more common than negative, but it also has a greater effect on consumers. With that in mind, companies turn to social media for many of their online branding activities.

However, marketing on social media is different from traditional marketing channels. Fournier and Avery (2011) say that because social media is for interactive peer-to-peer communication and user generated content, brands are not always welcome to participate, as they are seen inauthentic or even intrusive and out of place. Brands are not appreciated, or even welcome on social media, yet it is a channel too attractive to ignore. Therefore, a strategy utilized by many brands is to embrace the peer-to-peer conversation, and let consumers speak for them through influencer marketing.

Influencer Marketing
Within marketing literature in general, and consumer behavior in particular, consumers obtaining information from each other, in forms of e-wom or through various other social communication channels, has long been investigated and found to have stronger effect on consumer decision-making than traditional brand-to-consumer communication, argue Goldsmith and Clark (2008). Furthermore, such communication is deemed more trustworthy, authentic and reliable by consumers (Kulmala, Mesiranta & Tuominen, 2013; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders 2017; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). As previously discussed, the emergence of social media has provided consumers with platforms on where to share reviews, opinions and feelings, and it is these platforms together with the credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness of peer-to-peer communication that gave birth to the phenomenon of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing strategies allow companies to reach consumers with their message, without targeting them directly. In today's online environment, reaching consumers can prove challenging, as the internet has allowed consumers to skip ads or even install ad-blocking software to prevent companies from targeting them. By

utilizing an influencer marketing strategy, brands' can sidestep such efforts and instead communicate their message through more trustworthy opinion leaders who are greatly admired by their followers. As such, an influencer marketing strategy allow companies to reap the benefits of e-wom marketing and indirectly market their products (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders 2017).

A crucial element of influencer marketing on social media is to identify and target the influential users who, through their social media activities can endorse a specific product or a brand. Identifying the influential users is challenging, but a common metric used is to look at the number of followers a particular influencer has. A higher number of followers indicate a larger reach for the commercial message and is therefore an important element of identifying influential users, argue Araujo, Neijens and Vliegenthart (2017).

E-wom
With the introduction of new products in the market, the success of these products defines the firm's long-term performance. With success being the focus, marketing activities are deemed to be the driving force for the company after a launch of a new product in the market. Communication in this area could be considered as one of the key components of the marketing activities, where the notion of communication is directly subjected to fuel the consumer's acceptance around the newly launched product (Lopez & Sicilia, 2013). Furthermore, within the marketing literature, interpersonal influence is heavily emphasized to be one of the major elements when innovation adoption is linked with consumers. Hence, communication combined with interpersonal influence gives birth to the concept of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) (Lopez & Sicilia, 2013; Groeger & Buttle, 2014). The concept of WOM could be described generally within the scope of marketing as "…word-of-mouth marketing is an action for informally sharing experiences and spreading information among consumers whenever they are satisfied or dissatisfied with specific products" (p.294, Li, Lin & Lai, 2010). The authors Li, Lin and Lai (2010) further argue that WOM marketing generally encompasses the marketing approach, which takes advantage of the customers' social networks in order to expand the brand-awareness, by means such as "self-replication and message diffusion" (p.294). From a similar perspective, the notion of WOM marketing typically includes, seeding of products to the relevant audience or segment while having the main focus on reassuring the delivery of a positive message, which as a result generates increased brand awareness, market-share and revenues for a firm (Groeger & Buttle, 2014).

Lopez and Sicilia (2013) argue that one of the most traditional form of WOM marketing involves 'refer-a-friend programme', the approach includes firms encouraging customers to endorse and recommend the products to peers and family, while a referral bearing fruitful result is rewarded by the firm. Additionally, Li, Lin and Lai (2010) says that with the advancement of technology and internet, the traditional approaches are progressively taken over by the digital initiatives which bear decreased costs, superior speed and reach and externality effects. The advent of internet has expanded the horizons for a consumer to extract unbiased product information provided by other consumers, while chipping in with their own consumption-related views, known as the extension to WOM, namely, the electronic WOM (e-wom) (Hennig-Thurau, T. et al., 2004). Shedding light on the concept of e-wom, the authors Lopez & Sicilia (2013) argue that recent technologies has broadened and smoothened the process of product and brand information-sharing for the consumers. The process could be observed as the upscaling of the traditionally existing WOM, making the transmission of knowledge more agile and widened in perspective, where the studies depicting, over 70-percent of the internet users positively exhibiting their trust towards the e-wom (Lopez & Sicilia, 2013).

Source Credibility in E-wom
Source credibility refers to the consumer perception regarding the source of the information based on elements such as trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise towards the area of the product that is being endorsed (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Rabjohn, 2008). Within e-wom, the effectiveness regarding consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions is to some extent determined by the perceived credibility of the communicators. In online environments aiming to generate positive e-wom, celebrity endorsements are considered credible, both traditional celebrities like movie stars, musicians and athletes, but also digital celebrities such as bloggers, vloggers and instafamous personalities. The credibility of the celebrity transfer to the brand and hence positively impact the credibility of the brand. As such, brands will be associated with their celebrity endorser from consumers point of view (Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). However, Djafarova and Rushworth (2011) argue that traditional celebrities are losing endorser power, and that the digital celebrities, the bloggers, vloggers and instafamous, are more influential as they are perceived to be even more authentic and accessible.

Rabjohn (2008) argues that source credibility represents a problem for brands in e-wom, as online opinions are considered more trustworthy than the information communicated by the brand itself. Because their own communication is not deemed as credible as consumers online, brands utilizes consumers to speak for them through influencer marketing.

Brand Awareness
The notion of brand awareness could generally be described as "…whether consumers can recall or recognize a brand, or simply whether or not consumers know about a brand" (p.92, Sarigollu & Huang, 2012). The brand name could be considered as the factor behind the developed memory nodes in the mind of consumers, while the consumers typically link the brand knowledge with the brand name. Thus, the concept of brand awareness entitles a brand with the learning advantage. Furthermore, brand awareness undoubtedly has a direct impact on the consumers decision process, as consumers often treat it as a "decision heuristic" (p.93, Sarigollu & Huang, 2012). Where the concept entails that the chances on consumer choosing a known brand is considerably higher than a less known or unknown brand, making a brand with higher awareness experiencing superior performance in the market, when compared with brands entailing lower awareness (Sarigollu & Huang, 2012). This is in line with the authors Liao et al., 2012, who argue that the consumers choices are affected profoundly by the brand awareness, as it is one of the vital facets that revolves around the consumers purchase decisions.

Moreover, Rahman (2018) explains brand awareness as being one of the essential objectives in focus of an advertising campaign of a brand, making it clear to understand that the target customers purchase decisions are directly affected by recollection of brand and the awareness. The author further argues that this recollection of brand is usually connected with likable and attractive personality endorsing the brand in an advertising campaign. Where this personality could empower the brand awareness while an unattractive figure used for this purpose could have a reverse effect, causing a reduced brand recollection and awareness (Rahman, 2018). Furthermore, brand awareness is deemed as one of the vital metrics when it comes to new brands in the market, however, the already established brands with significant awareness are constantly faced with new potential customers, hence making brand awareness essential for every brand; new or established (Romaniuk et al., (2017).

Brand Trust

Speaking of brand trust, Tatar and Eren-Erdogmus (2016) says that it is a notion deemed as a vital prerequisite in building a strong brand, specifically when the brand presence is found in social media spaces and online environment. He further argues that brand trust in general entails the expectations and promises related to the brand, maintained by the brand. Viewing it from a similar stance, the authors Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) describe the concept as "...beliefs that include expectations of brand reliability, consistency, competence, and/or predictability of performance across all products sold under that brand" (p.374). It could be argued that the brand trust in general is what enables the consumer to confide in the brand and taking risk, hence it being the goodwill of brand in the consumers mind. The authors further elaborate that it is the trust which demonstrates dedication and complacency from a customer towards the brand (Rishi, 2013).

The literature argues that the process of brand trust could well be deemed as a mechanism which is well thought-out and precisely studied by the consumer. The development of the process is drawn by a positive emotional feedback loop, which reinforces the perception of dependability of a brand in the consumer's mind. It has been further argued that the notion of brand trust is directly linked with a consumer's purchase and attitude loyalty, where trust is the factor which filters down all the uncertainties in a space where a customer senses vulnerability as it becomes obvious as to which brand should be a customer's focal point (Song et al., 2012). Furthermore, the studies have depicted that brands encompassing higher level of trust from the consumers are far more readily remembered, where the brand trust focuses on the learning aspect from the consumers, building a scenario which restrains them to turning towards the competitor brands. Higher level of trust further sets the brand in a position, where it does not necessarily need high level of advertising exposure, in other words advertising principally yields a much stronger outcome (Pintado, 2017).

Methodology
Justification for the chosen method

The aim of this thesis is to explore the process behind identifying and selecting appropriate influencers to utilize in an influencer marketing strategy. By using influencers as part of the communication strategy, brands lose control of their communication which could potentially damage the brand (Booth & Matic, 2011; Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017). Therefore, exploring further the process behind such an important aspect as identifying and selecting influencers is crucial. The authors call for a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews with marketers working with PR and influencer strategies within the beauty industry. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) argue that interviewing experts within the given subject is one of the ways in which an exploratory purpose can be answered. Qualitative research methods are commonly used when the knowledge of the chosen subject is scarce, and the researchers are looking to gain a deeper understanding of the subject (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The research design, or the plan of the research, how the authors propose to answer the research questions should be selected based on the nature of the research. An exploratory research design is beneficial to use when the objective is to understand a foundation of a problem, find out what is happening, underlying reasons or to seek new insights on a given phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Data collection method and sampling

Given the qualitative approach and exploratory purpose of this study, non-probability sampling techniques were utilized. It is a sampling technique unsuitable to use for making generalizations based on statistical confidence intervals because the sampled population is not representative

of the whole population, yet suitable for qualitative research for its time and cost efficiency (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Eriksson & Kovalained, 2008). As such, the sampled population in this research is selected based on certain criteria and qualities rather than being statistically randomized. For this research, criterions for being included in the sample was based on professional capacity i.e. working with PR or within a marketing department of a beauty brand that utilizes an influencer marketing strategy. Four interviews were conducted with experts in the field of influencer marketing. The authors deem them experts as they work with influencer marketing on Instagram on a daily basis. In qualitative research, there is no magical number of participants required as statistically confident generalizations is not the aim. Given the nature of this study, where the entire population of possible participants is small, four interviews were deemed as a good sample size. Anonymity was promised to all participants for ethical concerns, but the interviewees agreed to have their titles included in the paper to help ensure trustworthiness and credibility of what was being said. The experts interviewed hold the following titles for companies operating in the beauty industry; PR and Communications manager, E-PR manager, Category Manager Fragrance and PR manager. Each expert is responsible for a portfolio of beauty brands, ranging from 7 brands up to 10 brands, where each brand has its own guidelines to follow. The experts share the same employer and are all operating within the Swedish market.

In qualitative research, there are several ways to gather primary data, the researchers should therefore utilize the collection method that is most suitable for answering the purpose of the research and the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Given the exploratory design of this research, where an understanding of the process behind identifying and selecting influencers are explored, semi structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method.

Semi-structured interviews are beneficial because of its unstructured nature, where a strict interview guide does not have to be followed. Instead, the researchers derive a few themes and topics drawn from the theoretical framework that guide the interviews, in this case themes such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, e-wom, brand awareness and brand trust were discussed. This allow more freedom for the researchers because the interviews are not limited to a written script, but the conversation flows more naturally, and the researcher can steer the conversation and follow the trajectory of the answers given by asking probing questions (Eriksson & Kovalained, 2008).

Pattern Matching
When the primary data has been collected, the material needs to be coded in relation to the purpose of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) argue that there is no standardized process to how the coding should be done and the trio argue that the analyses of the empirically gathered material can be done bearing the theoretical foundation of the study in mind. The method of analysis and the coding is therefore a subjective interpretation from the researchers and their ability to process data and interpret and present the results. In this study, the analyses were done using pattern matching, a method where the researchers compare the empirically gathered material to the theoretical foundation of the study and use it as a basis for the interpretation. To do this, the authors transcribed the interviews and compared it with relevant theoretical foundations. More specifically, exploring the process of identifying and selecting influencers on Instagram in the beauty industry was interpreted bearing theoretical foundations such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, brand awareness and e-wom to name a few, in mind.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting research that involves dealing with people, ethical considerations should be present, no matter the scope, type or method utilized in the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The ethical considerations mirror the values of the study and should be included and apparent with each interaction throughout the research. Without such considerations present, risks and harmful behavior can emerge, not only to participants of the study, by the researchers and society as well. A primary concern is to avoid any harmful effects on the participants of the study, for example of psychological nature through stress or work-related situations. Furthermore, another important factor to consider is the need for informed consent of the participants of the study. It is necessary to provide full information of the nature of the research and any implications this might have for the respondents. Deception of the intent and nature of the study is also an issue of ethical consideration, where false information to what is being researched could harm the trust between researcher and respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

To deal with the ethical considerations presented above, the authors took several steps to minimize the possibility of harmful effects on the participants. The questions in the interviews were pretested and deemed non-intrusive, the interviewees were fully informed, to the extent as not to tilt the answers in any way, of the nature and purpose of the study. The participants of the interviews were promised anonymity, to make sure that any answers given in the interviews would not come back and potentially harm the interviewee. As the interviews contained sensitive information about brands, such as collaborations and releases that was not yet public knowledge, no brands were mentioned by name. One of the interviewee's provided an example where Neymar was mentioned as the face of the brand. The authors were given permission to include the example in the paper to better illustrate how marketers work, which contributed to better answering the research question. By giving the participants a brief presentation of the study and its aim, deception was minimized.

Issue of Quality

As the study is of qualitative nature and the sample size was small, trustworthiness is the criteria used to determine the quality of the research. It is a concept commonly used in qualitative research, and it contains four elements, transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Transferability will be of lesser concern for the authors of this research, given the small and unrepresentative sample size, making larger generalizations and transferring the conclusions to other social settings unsuitable. The element of credibility should be addressed in qualitative research because it is conducted in a social world where there are no absolute truths. As such, if potentially several versions of social reality exist, it is the element of credibility that will decide the acceptability of the conclusions drawn to other members of that reality. Therefore, it is important that such conclusions are presented in a social reality in which it was studied. Dependability is also an important element to consider in qualitative research. It refers to how well one can trace the steps of the research, how the documentation process has been conducted. Objective auditors or third-party researchers should be able to trace the claims and statements made in the research to further insure the trustworthiness of the conclusions. Lastly, confirmability connects to the objectivity of the conducted research, outlying the importance that personal views and opinions from the researchers have not steered the conclusions drawn in any way, and consequently that the findings are connected to the researcher's interpretations (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In this research, the following steps were taken to obtain trustworthiness. Dependability was ensured through transcriptions of the interviews. However, because sensitive company information was discussed in the interviews, the direct transcription is not included in the paper or in appendixes. This was agreed upon before the interviews took place and allowed the interview participants to provide relevant examples during the interviews, to better explain their answers and give the researchers a better foundation towards answering the research questions. Conformability was addressed by keeping the questions in the interviews open-ended where leading questions where avoided to push the interview and its subsequent analysis in a certain direction. Given the settings in which the interviews took place, where marketing experts in the beauty industry where asked to describe their processes, opinions and reasoning behind influencer marketing strategies on Instagram, the answers should be interpreted for a similar setting. The fact that the participants were asked to describe daily routines and processes, where no brand names were mentioned made the answers given credible as it could not serve as a promotional aspect for a given brand. Lastly, in the findings chapter, several quotes are presented, taken from the interviews to better illustrate and explain the participants view of the subject. However, a conscious decision to not include the working title of the owner of the quote was made by the authors. This decision was taken to remove the focus from "who said what" and instead present the different views of the experts of the industry.

Findings
Marketing on social media
When discussing marketing on social media, there is consensus among the experts that it is an excellent tool to reach the target audience. As one of the participants put it; "*we are really focused on targeting the millennials, and a younger crowd, and the younger crowd is not very fond of sitting in front of the tv, but rather be on social media I would say*." The same expert goes on saying that even though they still do traditional marketing, mostly through tv advertisement, it is not as effective as its social media counterpart. Another interviewee takes a similar stance on social media marketing arguing that it is part of the very core of what marketing is today, saying that "*I have only been in the business since social media has been around so I am brought up with this, in this generation where this is marketing to me, and social media is part of marketing to me.*" The experts highlight Instagram as the most effective social media platform with one of them saying that "*Instagram is like the holy grail, for now*" and argues that from a company perspective, it is the best platform to use because of its young audience, its ability to track results through posting links and swipe up options that directly takes you to the e-commerce sites. However, the main reason for using Instagram, as argued by all our interviewee's, is because it is where their customers are. This view of social media aligns well with the arguments of Kietzmann et al (2011), where social media, due to its enormous exposure, allow firms to reach its target audience through a new communicative landscape. The social media landscape, although relatively new in its practice is already a well-established channel for marketers to utilize and operating within such a landscape is a central part of what it means to be a marketer in the digital era of today.

Speaking generally about the ability to influence consumers on social media, the experts argue that influencing have been around for a long time but thanks to social media, the reach have gotten bigger, it is easier for influencers today to reach a bigger audience, which is why they are so attractive. One of the experts explains it by saying "*...the ability to influence people has always been around, it's just that social media has given us a tool to influence, the influence of someone gets bigger.* "

Influencers and online credibility
Although the benefits for a brand to establish a presence on social media is realized by the interview participants, they also recognize that they need external help to legitimize their presence there. Fournier and Avery (2011) argue that brands are not welcome on social media due to their inauthentic and even intrusive nature in this user generated media. The interviewees seem to share the notion that their presence on social media is problematic due to its lack of authentic communication, although they do not consider their presence intrusive. "*It is really naive to think that people listen just because we say something*" says one of the experts. The same expert continues the argument by saying that a major problem from their perspective is that people are not listening when they speak on social media and then consequently it does not matter how loud they are screaming because only a few people are tuned in to listen. This is where they turn to external communicators in form of influencers to help them establish a credibility but also give them a reach they cannot get on their own. *"...you want the credibility that a certain person might have towards a certain product and you want to reach people that we are not talking with at the moment.*" Judging from the way influencers are being utilized by marketers, where reaching consumers that are not currently being talked to is considered an important aspect of the collaboration, one could make the connection to what Rahman (2018) calls essential objectives of marketing campaigns, namely raising brand awareness. The interviewed marketers make it clear that different objectives with an influencer campaign calls for different set of influencer profiles. When creating brand awareness is on the agenda, collaborating with big influencers or celebrities such as sport stars and actors are preferable not only because they have a massive reach, but also because the message from these types of bigger influencers tends to be different from their smaller counterparts. Smaller influencers tend to be detail oriented towards the product while the bigger influencers and celebrities are not so focused on the details, but rather introduces the brand and put their name in association with it.

The expert talk about the importance of trying to find a balance between a big name and a small influencer. Using a big influencer might give the brand a lot of reach and create a good awareness, but big influencers often lack the high engagement from its followers that the smaller influencer typically have. On the other hand, using only smaller influencers might give a high level of engagement but lack in both reach and credibility. Trying to cover the whole spectrum of reach, credibility and engagement is tricky business, often due to monetary restraints on the given campaign. There is simply not enough money to cover it all. There are many reasons why smaller influencers are useful for the brands, although one of the main reasons for using them is financial. Smaller influencers are typically happy with receiving products from the brand and require no monetary fee to make an Instagram post about the products they are given. This makes it a very cheap form of advertisement for the company. "*Our role is to build relationship and get free publicity basically, both with press and influencers.*" One of the experts argues that if they did a paid collaboration of a profile with around 1 million followers, which is massive, they could maybe afford to do this once a year. If they instead opted for an influencer that have around 100 000 followers, they could afford to do it more times throughout the year and as such activate the brand more often. Consistently through the year they could also send out products to small influencers, as this expert label an influencer with below 20 000 followers, to keep the brand alive and active throughout the calendar year instead of spending the whole budget on one big influencer at one time.

Additionally, communication is done mostly through influencers not only because of the reach and credibility they provide, but also because it gives marketers the ability to communicate an image towards a brand. One expert provides an example where they wanted to move a brand's image from a healthy and sporty brand and instead give it more of an expert feel, to be an

advanced skincare brand. To do so, the brand moved away from working with influencer profiles whose focus was on health and sports, and instead started to work with an influencer who has been in the beauty industry for the past two decades and whose profile contains a lot of skincare talk, where she is not only posting about skincare but is oftentimes also seen wearing skincare products. The interviewee argues that by doing such a collaboration, the expert feeling, and credibility of the influencer is transferred to the brand. Such transformation between influencer and the brand supports the claim by De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017 as well as Araujo, Neijens and Vligenhart, 2017, that an influencers endorsement might transfer the image of the influencer to the brand.

The process of identifying and selecting influencers
When speaking about the process of identifying and selecting influencers on social media, it becomes clear that there is no standardized process, rules or guidelines to follow. That being said, the process is not random either, as there are certain objectives behind every influencer campaign and the individual influencer is often picked based on the given objective of the campaign. When asked to describe the process of identifying an influencer, the respondents argued that the first thing to do is to look at the objectives of the campaign, to find out what is the intended outcome. Another big factor that decides how the process will look like is the time frame given. When working with influencer marketing, sometimes there is a need to act quickly to find influencers to support a campaign, and if so, one cannot be too picky about which influencers to select argues one expert. However, no matter the time frame given or the objective of the campaign, what appears crucial for all interviewed experts is that the influencer needs to be well aligned with the brand in terms of values, relevance and credibility. This argumentation follows how De Veirman et al (2017) and Araujo et al (2017) explain the importance of aligning values of the brand with values of an influencer. It is important that these three elements are somewhat aligned with the brand, and it does not matter if two of the three elements fit perfectly if the third does not. One expert explains it further by providing an example of a campaign where the target is to reach middle aged women with kids and a family. For such a target group, the influencer cannot be a 20 years old single woman, even though the content of her profile is both relevant for the product and credible for its expertise. The values of the 20 years old woman do not align with the values and image that the brand wants to project and is therefore not suitable to be an influencer for the brand.

The experts refer to the process of identifying and selecting the influencers as a filtering process. When the objective of the campaign and the time frame has been established, the process of identifying suitable influencers begin. From this point on, the process differs depending on the reasons previously discussed and can therefore not be considered a standardized process. One of the experts provides a recent example where the marketer needed to find influencers on the local market, in this case the Swedish market, that aligns with the celebrity that was chosen as the face of the brand for the global market. The face of the brand is Brazilian football star Neymar and the influencers on the Swedish market therefore needed to have similar profiles as him. As such, the marketer identified certain characteristics of Neymar; his age, his visible tattoos and that he has a girlfriend were some of the noticeable aspects that they wanted their local influencers to share. Another campaign required female influencers between 20-30 years old, they needed to have a specific skill or profession besides being an influencer etc. When the characteristics that the local influencers should possess had been identified, a screening process on Instagram began. Given that these marketers are working closely with influencers and are actively screening Instagram, several potential influencers emerge at this point. To keep track on what influencers are working with what brand, an inhouse mapping tool have been developed. This is to avoid using the same influencer for several brands, as each brand is

supposed to have its own uniqueness and characteristics and should therefore not target the same consumers. But more importantly, the experts argue that the credibility of the influencers is lost when they are working with several brands simultaneously. Although none of the marketers want their influencers to work with competitive brands, they all recognize that it is very likely that they will at some point, and since the influencers and their profiles are not controlled by the company, they are free to do what they want on their own platform.

For the bigger influencers where there is a paid collaboration it is a little bit different because they must sign contracts with the company, but for smaller influencers where there is no money involved, there is nothing stopping an influencer from posting about one brand today and a competitive brand the next day. This is one of the things that the marketers evaluate during the screening process, although this factor is not equally important for all marketers interviewed. One of the experts said that their brands could never work with someone who had posted about competitors, while another said that if the post was a few weeks old, they would be okay with it. The experts realize that working with smaller influencers requires relationship building, and they are therefore understanding that the influencers want to build their own brands and gain followers and they cannot prohibit every influencer they work with to post about their competitors because there is a risk of losing valuable relationships.

Influencers being the voice of the brand
Speaking of risks related to influencer strategies, where some literature suggests that utilizing influencers for brand communication is potentially harmful for the brand as the voice of the brand is transferred to consumers (Virtanen, Björk & Sjöström, 2017) the experts shared a different view. Although there are certainly risks involved in influencer marketing, transferring the voice of the brand to the consumers is not harmful, but beneficial. *"...the whole purpose for me by using influencers is to let that person put his own tone on the message."* The experts argue that the screening and filtering process that takes place when the influencers are identified and selected heavily reduces the risk of a message being out of line with what the brand wants to communicate. The 20 years old single woman in a previous example was ruled out for this very reason. Instead, what could potentially have been harmful i.e. that the message is not in the tone of the brand's own communication, is instead seen as beneficial and a main reason for why influencers are used. Communicating as a brand can sometimes be very strict and there are often not a lot of room for creativity. Therefore, the fact that influencers are free to set their own tone to the communication is only beneficial for the brand. As one expert argues; *"The idea behind it is to influence, and influence the people who already follow this person, so they already like your voice, they already like your way of looking at things."* Putting words into influencers mouths and try to control the message that they are trying to communicate could therefore be counterproductive.

Influencing Brand Awareness and Trust
While discussing brand awareness and developing consumers trust around it, all the experts working with their distinct brands find both awareness and trust of high importance. The literature links brand awareness with a likable and attractive figure who is portrayed as the face of the brand to broaden this awareness. However, it is important to carefully select the relevant personality as a negative person associated could naturally damage the awareness (Rahman, 2018). One of the experts, while sharing similar insights, expresses that the criterion for the personality associated to the brand needs to be genuine and personal in the eyes of the consumer. While another expert argues upon using bigger names and celebrities as the most constructive way of building awareness around the brand. Celebrities with a massive following helps the consumer in the recollection process of the brand *"...it makes people think, that your brand*

product is legit, they think it is a luxury because someone with authority has put their name behind it." However, awareness could be deemed as one of the first steps, as Sarigollu and Huang, (2012) highlights that the awareness creates the bridge for consumers to select a brand with higher awareness when compared to a lower awareness brand.

Furthermore, one could not rule out other factors involved for an actual brand purchase to occur. The expert explains the phenomenon as awareness on a higher level and a lower level, where a bigger celebrity helps in creating awareness on a bigger level that not necessarily establishes the grounds of persuading a consumer in buying the brand. However, the chances are greater with a smaller influencer which has a higher level of engagement with its followers. Hence, "*...in a perfect world one would want to use one massive name to create awareness, and you would want to use tons of smaller ones to have that dialogue with the followers/readers and to guide them more towards a purchase*". Similarly, the literature suggests brand trust being one of the facets which is closely studied by the consumer, which falls on to the positive emotional feedback of the brand and its dependability factors (Song et al., 2012). The way the influencer communicates to the followers, regarding a product of a specific brand plays a vital role according to the experts. The notion of relatability of an influencer with his or her followers is what helps in developing trust, as any local influencer would be perceived as a lot more dependable and relatable than a celebrity across borders with no local association. The literature further elaborates on the level of trust, where a higher level achieved by a brand naturally increases a brand's reliability, consistency, competence and performance in a consumer's mind. Brand trust in a similar fashion as awareness confines the consumer to shift towards the competing brands in the market (Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Pintado, 2017). The expert shares her opinion that it is the genuine and personal aspect that the local influencer possesses which helps in developing the brand trust, and "*...that's why we do it because we want to be more locally relevant and we don't think a big star campaign is realistic as it does not create trust.*"

Discussion and Conclusion

It is evident that within the beauty industry, social media is the go to marketing channel to utilize due to its enormous reach and influence. We can see that brands crave a presence on social media to communicate with customers and influence their purchase decisions as argued by Kim and Ko (2012) while simultaneously enjoy its reach. There seem to be consensus from these marketers within the beauty industry that Instagram is the crowned king of the social media platforms in the new communication landscape (Kietzmann et al, 2011), although that could change in a moment's notice if consumers were to switch platform.

From a company perspective, influencing on social media offers a shortcut into potential customers online flow. We can see from the interviews that the marketers realize that there are better ways to reach consumers than through their own brand communication, especially so on social media. Building social media profiles for brands on Instagram with creative content, a big reach and an audience that considers you trustworthy and genuine is no easy task. By using influencers, the brands can reach an audience of potential customers where the message is delivered in a credible and genuine way. Furthermore, influencing on social media offers financial advantages from a company perspective as many of the smaller influencers require no monetary fee to include the company's products in their posts. Marketers can utilize smaller influencers and benefit from the fact that the influencers consider themselves to be a brand of their own, where they have their own agenda, which is to grow their number of followers and eventually put them in a position where they are able to charge money for posting about

products. To reach such a status, they need constant updates filled with creative and relevant content which is arguably why they are so eager to collaborate with brands, even without a monetary fee. Influencers benefit to collaborate with brands because they can fill their profiles with new content and stay relevant and up to date, while companies benefit to collaborate with smaller influencers through cheap exposure in a genuine and credible way to an engaged audience of potential customers.

Brand awareness and trust are arguably two of the most important factors when consumers and a brand are linked together. Rahman (2018) suggests that involving a likable personality as the face of the brand helps in creating awareness around the brand. The experts in the field of influencer marketing also agree with the discussed notion, as involving bigger names and profiles with the brand results in a higher reach and greater brand awareness. However, with bigger celebrity and stars carrying their own perks, finding someone with a higher level of engagement with his or her followers is the key. The interviews show that being genuine and personal is what generally forms the process of recollection in a consumer's mind, as selecting a negative profile which lacks the aspect of being genuine and personal to the audience could cause adverse effect on the brand awareness. Hence, the findings imply that in a general scenario one could observe a mix of carefully selected stars and celebrities to create an overall higher brand awareness, and the selection of smaller influencers to reinforce it by being relatable and having higher form of engagement with the target audience. In a similar fashion brand trust, according to the findings, is linked heavily with the notion of being true to your crowd. The positive emotional feedback which leads to trust does not magically appear but is worked upon by the profiles associated with the brand. It is crucial for the marketers to win the trust of the consumers, confining them to turn towards competing brands. The notion is again achieved through working with influencers which are more relevant and dependable in the eyes of the consumer, as compared to big names having no direct association to the crowd.

The process of identifying and selecting influencers seems to be guided more from the culture of the company and the characteristics and knowledge of its workforce than rules and guidelines. There is an idea of how this process should look like, although it seems to stem from experience from previous influencer campaigns, rather than a structural methodological approach. It appears to be a more agile approach, which is arguably a suitable method to use considering the short time frames and the fact that it is a fairly new marketing approach. However, the lack of a structural approach could be risky, as it places a lot of trust in the employees and their ability to organize influencer campaigns that meets the given objectives. Replacing one of these employees could potentially make a brand's influencer campaigns different, as so much is dependent on the work of a single employee. There are however some pillars on which the process rely on once the objectives are outlined and the time frame is given. A screening and filtering process to find suitable influencers who align well with the brand in terms of value, relevance and credibility is essential. Local influencers should have characteristics that matches the global face of the brand. It is important, although not crucial that the local influencers selected for a given campaign is not currently involved with other campaigns of brands from the company's portfolio or more importantly, with direct competitors. As there is no way to control the influencers who do not receive monetary fees and consequently signs contract with the company, this poses a threat to the credibility of the influencer, which reflects poorly on the brand and its campaign. The amount of Instagram followers is an important metric to consider, although it is not a factor that will determine if a collaboration should be done or not. Mostly, it appears that the personal relationships between an influencer and the marketer of the brand is a more important factor. An influencer with a small number of followers, anywhere between 2000 and 25 000 may lack in terms of reach, but

could be considered to have growth potential, and establishing a relationship with such a profile may therefore be worthwhile as there are very little costs involved.

Using influencers as part of the voice of the brand have in previous literature through Virtanen, Björk and Sjöström, (2017) been linked with riskful strategies that could potentially be harmful to the brand if the influencers do not align with the values of the brand. It is evident from the conducted interviews that this notion holds true, which is why the process of identifying and selecting influencers need to be carefully conducted. However, from the interviews, a layer of the discussion emerged that the previous literature had failed to recognize. Although allowing influencers to carry the voice of the brand is risky and could potentially be harmful, due to careful consideration of which influencers are allowed to speak for the brand, the risk and harmful effects are replaced with genuine communicators that can carry the voice in a creative manner that the brands themselves never could. Free from creative restraints and skeptical audiences, the influencers' voices can be vastly different from the brand's own voice which is a major reason for why they are utilized. The process of identifying and selecting influencers reduces the risky and harmful aspects of losing the brand's voice and instead turns it into beneficial components of a marketing strategy. As such, we can see that the marketers interviewed in this study realize potential threats of losing the brand's voice if there is no screening and filtering process of influencers. However, if the process is carefully conducted, the risk is replaced with an eagerness to lend the brands voices to influencers, as they can carry it in ways the brand's themselves never could.

Managerial implications
The findings of this study offer managerial implications for marketers wanting to utilize influencer marketing on Instagram as a communication tool. Identifying influencers whose values align with the values of the brand is essential, as it diminishes risk of losing the brand's voice. Different marketing objectives calls for different types of profiles, where celebrities with a big reach are suitable to increase brand awareness, while smaller influencers with a high engaged audience better influence purchase decision. Relationship building with influencers is crucial, as often times they do not operate under contract with the company and healthy relationships is a cornerstone for continuous collaborations. Once suitable influencers have been identified, a notion upon which they should be evaluated is their collaborations with competitive brands. It is perhaps too much to ask for exclusive collaborations when there is no monetary fee involved but keeping track of their profiles other endorsements might prove valuable, as too many collaborations lower the credibility of the influencer.

Limitations and future research
This study has contributed to the field of influencer marketing on social media by taking industry professionals point of view and exploring the process and reasons behind influencer campaigns on Instagram. The study is a first step towards a better practical understanding of how marketers within the beauty industry operate and establish brand presence in a digital landscape heavily occupied by peer-to-peer communication. Given its initial stage in a scarcely researched subject, further research in a few areas is suggested. Even though this study crowns Instagram as the king of social media, exploring deeper a similar process of identifying influencers on various other social media platforms could be of interest, as what is a popular platform today could have gone out of style by tomorrow. Influencers posting about competitive brands is not appreciated amongst the marketers and could potentially be the deciding factor to not collaborate with a particular influencer. Taking influencers perspective on this notion, to gain a deeper knowledge of their view on the matter and why they do it could therefore be of interest. Finally, to better understand outcomes of the collaborations with influencers,

identifying possible measurements in both qualitative and quantitative ways, for example through relevant KPI's could prove beneficial.

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