

**Star Power versus Influencer Charm –
Investigating Authenticity in Celebrity-Owned Beauty Products**

A 2x2 Experimental Survey Design on Brand Perception, Self-Esteem, and Purchasing
Willingness in Different Settings



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Abstract

Aim: This study investigates the impact of different personas (celebrity versus influencer) and settings (personal versus professional) on perceived brand authenticity of celebrity-owned beauty brands on social media, focusing on Hailey Bieber's skincare brand, Rhode Skin. It explores how these perceptions influence users' self-esteem and purchasing willingness.

Method: A 2x2 experimental survey design was employed, involving 116 participants (92% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.71$ years). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, each depicting a product endorsement by either a celebrity or an influencer in a personal or professional setting. The survey measured the mediating variable and the dependent variables using a Likert scale. Data were analysed using two-way ANOVA and multiple linear regression. **Results:** The results revealed no significant effects of person or setting on perceived brand authenticity. Influencers positively impacted self-esteem, while celebrities significantly increased purchasing willingness. Higher perceived brand authenticity was significantly correlated with increased purchasing willingness but did not affect self-esteem. Fans of Hailey Bieber showed higher purchasing willingness, while those who disliked her reported lower brand authenticity scores. **Discussion:** The findings demonstrate that while celebrities enhance purchasing willingness, influencers boost self-esteem. This suggests that marketing strategies should be tailored to the specific strengths of each type of endorser. Brand authenticity, although crucial for purchasing decisions, was not influenced by person or setting, indicating that other factors are at play. Marketers should consider the distinct roles of endorsers in consumer engagement to optimize authenticity perceptions. Future research should include larger, more diverse samples and additional variables to deepen understanding of these dynamics.

Keywords: social media, brand authenticity, celebrity endorsement, influencer marketing, setting, self-esteem, purchasing willingness

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1. Introduction

Instagram ranks among the top five most popular social networks worldwide, boasting over 2 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2024d). The platform enables individuals and public figures, such as singers, actors, athletes, and politicians, to share personal insights into their private lives, vacations, events, and initiatives through their postings (Kim et al., 2024). Additionally, it revolutionized marketing strategies by enabling users to directly interact with brands and their branded content through likes, comments, and shares, providing companies with innovative ways to reach and influence their target audiences (Ferguson et al., 2015; Varghese & Agrawal, 2021).

A growing number of these companies are founded by well-known celebrities who had a strong presence in primarily artistic fields before venturing into corporate business. By continuously maintaining their image through social media (SM) postings, celebrities can actively manage public perceptions and alter their transmitted style, for example, being perceived as edgy, chic, clean, glamorous, bold, trendy, casual, or natural (Mei et al., 2022). Here, self-presentation and product marketing merge as celebrities often utilize SM to market their own brands, moving away from traditional one-way communication methods such as TV advertisements (Jacobson, 2020; Varghese & Agrawal, 2021). This opens new approaches for analysing consumer sentiment towards such branding activities (Audrezet et al., 2020).

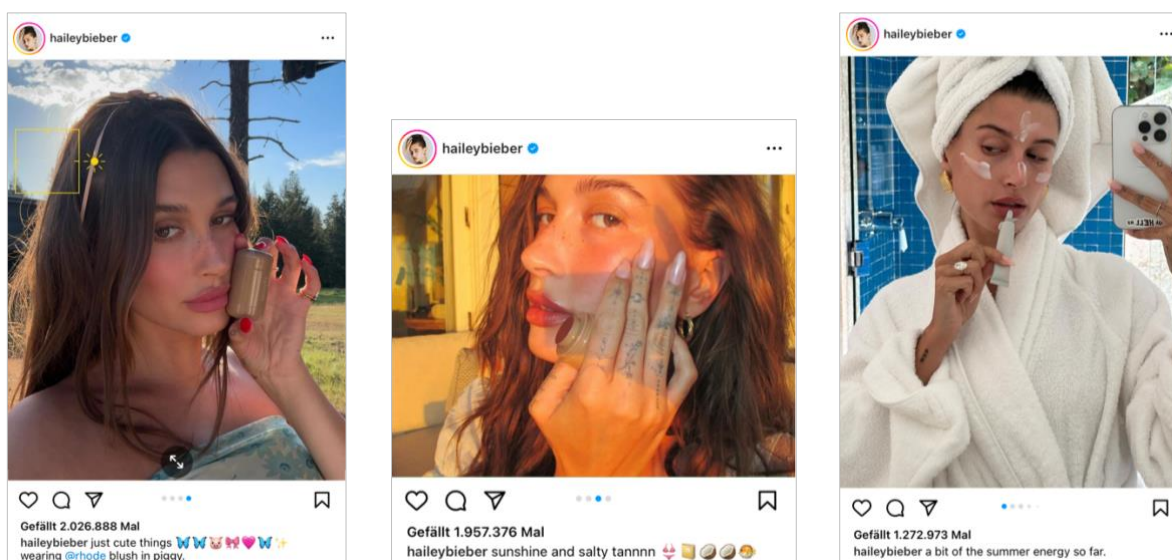
Their product ranges often include items like clothing, food, beverages, and beauty products, such as makeup and skincare, which often align with their public image and style - portraying luxury, fitness, exceptional beauty, or essentials for public appearances (De Lenne et al., 2018). The beauty industry alone is projected to generate over \$640 billion in revenue by 2024, experiencing continuous growth (Statista, 2024a). Notable examples within the beauty industry include Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez, r.e.m. beauty by Ariana Grande, Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, Kylie Cosmetics by Kylie Jenner, and Rhode Skin by Hailey Bieber, with

Gomez, Jenner, and Grande among the top ten Instagram accounts with the most followers as of 2024 (Statista, 2024c).

Using the skincare brand Rhode Skin by Hailey Bieber, this research aims to determine when celebrity-owned beauty brands are perceived as genuine, sincere, and therefore authentic (Yang et al., 2021). In recent years, branded posts on SM started to present products and services with a more personal touch and in more personal settings (Jacobson, 2020; Labrecque et al., 2011; Mei et al., 2022; Moulard et al., 2015). Although typically more amateurish in nature, these presentations can be perceived as more relatable due to their personal touch. Celebrities increasingly incorporate branded content presenting themselves within personal spaces such as homes, bathrooms, cars, or in nature (see Figure 1). Research by Yang et al. (2021) shows that natural shots, rather than studio pictures, enhance user engagement through higher authenticity. This suggests a shift towards more intimate and relatable promotional tactics that could also impact the purchasing willingness of users.

Figure 1

Examples of brand postings including celebrity-owned beauty products in a personal setting



Note. Left: haileybieber, Instagram post, 2024; Middle: haileybieber, Instagram post, 2024; Right: haileybieber, Instagram post, 2023.

Supporting this, influencers on SM are highly favoured to partner with companies to promote their products, incorporating them into their everyday lives in a non-commercial way (Audrezet et al., 2020; Wellman et al., 2020). They can reach a vast audience like celebrities but without having been highly famous beforehand (Leung et al., 2022). This raises the question of who in celebrity-owned brands has higher perceptions of authenticity.

To strengthen the understanding of brand authenticity perceptions and purchasing willingness, self-esteem levels will also be examined to draw conclusions on a deeper level. Research has found that the presentation of products through celebrities can make the products more desirable through psychological attachment to the celebrities (Özer et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2020). However, comparing oneself to the idealized appearances in branded posts can distort self-esteem and increase the desire to buy products to meet these standards, especially among young adults who tend to be strongly influenced by SM (Berryman et al., 2017; Faelens et al., 2021; Jan et al., 2017; Midgley et al., 2020; Seekis et al., 2020). And since the beauty industry predominantly targets women, the results of this study are particularly valuable for this demographic (Audhkhasi & Arora, 2021).

A 2x2 experimental survey design was used to investigate the impact of *person* and *setting* on *Self-Esteem* and *Purchasing Willingness*, through the mediating variable of perceived *Brand Authenticity*. Consequently, the following research question (RQ) is posed:

RQ: *How do young adults perceive the authenticity of celebrities' beauty brands when presented by the celebrity compared to an influencer in personal or professional settings on social media, and how does this perception affect their self-esteem and purchasing willingness?*

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Brand Authenticity and the Influence of Social Media Personalities

Authenticity is characterized as a condition expressing originality, sincerity, and genuineness, perceived effortlessly by individuals as a natural and intuitive experience rather than a conscious construct (Fine, 2003; Yang et al., 2021). In branding, a brand aspires to be fundamentally authentic, meaning it truthfully reflects its unique values and characteristics to the public and consumers (Brown et al., 2003). The importance of authenticity in branding reflects a fundamental shift in consumer expectations, as branding and advertising are increasingly perceived as overly staged and excessively retouched (Cornelis & Peter, 2017).

In the context of increasing uncertainty on SM due to unrealistic standards, misinformation, artificial intelligence (AI), and computer-generated imagery (CGI), there is a heightened demand for authenticity in marketing campaigns, which directly influences brand success (Bruhn et al., 2012; Cornelis & Peter, 2017). Morhart et al. (2014) identified four key measurements of brand authenticity: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. These components encompass a brand's timeless nature and consistent performance, its commitment to fulfilling promises, its engagement in passionate, loyal, and ethical practices, and the use of symbols and cultural cues that resonate with consumers.

Different personas, such as celebrities or influencers, in branded SM postings play an important role in transmitting products or services with authenticity to create a better user experience (Moulard et al., 2016). In this research, it is important to note that celebrities act similarly to influencers when presenting their own products. However, celebrities can be seen as brands themselves, and perceptions may differ because they not only brand their own products but have also personally branded themselves, given their prior fame. This merged authenticity between the person and the product could have different effects compared to influencers.

Audrezet et al. (2020) identified two strategies where authenticity becomes especially important for influencers: passionate authenticity, driven by the genuine interests of the creator, and transparent authenticity, where content is clearly disclosed as part of a paid partnership (Audrezet et al., 2020). An interesting aspect is the ethical challenges influencers face when promoting products through sponsorships, as financial motivations are often clear to consumers (Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023; Wellman et al., 2020). Wellman et al. (2020) state that many influencers value the credibility of their content but have encountered others who create content solely for payment, disregarding their established image. Transparency can strengthen authenticity, or as stated by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), behaviour motivated externally by rewards or pressure may be seen as inauthentic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Consequently, celebrities might be seen as embodying their products more, reflecting intrinsic satisfaction and sincere, authentic self-expression (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This contrasts with the findings of Jin et al. (2019), who found that influencers were perceived as more trustworthy. However, this perception was specific to a different context and did not include celebrity-owned brands.

This study does not investigate reactions to disclosed content labelled as ads but examines the authenticity of celebrity-owned product branding on SM. It explores whether celebrities, in contrast to influencers, can enhance perceptions of genuineness, as they may not be seen as motivated purely by financial gain (Audrezet et al., 2020; Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023; Wellman et al., 2020).

While authenticity can be deconstructed into various factors and measured to some extent, researching it poses challenges because perceiving authenticity is inherently subjective and influenced by individual experiences and circumstances (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). However, brand authenticity is still regarded as a distinct construct, separate from other brand-related concepts like brand involvement or brand image, although it may be an aspect of them (Bruhn et al., 2012). Additionally, Bruhn et al. (2012) clarify that authenticity is not

motivation-driven; a brand can be perceived as authentic without necessarily prompting consumer engagement. Similarly, a brand may be desired or deemed necessary without being perceived as highly authentic.

Yang et al. (2021) suggest that future research should focus on selective industries to support the conceptualization and understanding of brand authenticity in its complex characteristics. Brand authenticity is influenced by various attributes, which may not be comparable among organizations or products with significantly different target audiences. Hence, this research focuses on the beauty industry, specifically on brands created by celebrities, which have rapidly expanded in recent years (Anishametra et al., 2018).

2.2 Brand Authenticity and the Influence of Celebrity Endorsements

For decades, celebrities have been integral to brand advertisements. And many studies support the hypothesis that celebrities cause priming effects in consumers by activating associations, such as desirability and prestige, with the celebrity's lifestyle, which increases the aspiration to buy or try a certain product (Nagar, 2021). This is supported by the Meaning Transfer Model (MTM), which states that a celebrity broadcasts various cultural attributes that are then projected onto the product within an advertisement or campaign (McCracken, 1989). Based on McCracken (1989), it means that, for example, attributes such as exclusivity and beauty are embedded in a product through its design and description. These meanings are then transferred through advertisements featuring celebrities, who embody these attributes, thereby helping the brand transfer these meanings to the products. Ultimately, when consumers see the advertisement with celebrities and the product, they want to embody the same image shown and associate themselves with exclusivity and beauty as well (McCracken, 1989). Consequently, consumers receive not only the product itself but also the values associated with the celebrity, enhancing the overall experience.

Therefore, people select brands that appear valuable to their lives, similar to choosing a real-life partner, with the brands adopting qualities that one might wish for in their life (Fournier, 1998). Consumers therefore start to create psychological attachments to those brands and their presented values, such as elegance or beauty (Zhou et al., 2020). Hence, when celebrities live a lavish lifestyle and express luxury through their personal brand, consumers may feel a greater desire to adopt that lifestyle by purchasing brands endorsed by those celebrities (Prentice & Loureiro, 2018).

Traditionally, marketers have focused on the trustworthiness and attractiveness of celebrities; however, new research highlights the importance of exploring psychological phenomena and identifying emotional relationships between consumers and celebrities (Özer et al., 2022). Thus, celebrity attachment plays a vital role in examining consumer behaviour, as admiration for celebrities directly links to higher brand loyalty, mediated by self-congruence, brand attachment, and perceived quality of the brand. Here, the concept of parasocial relationships (PSRs) is interesting to consider, especially in the context of SM.

Following and interacting with content from celebrities barely differs from interactions with friends nowadays and fosters emotional, one-sided connections with those celebrities (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). And because marketers must consequently adjust to the ever-changing interests of the public, adapting celebrity endorsements has been a common strategy over the last few decades to increase emotional attachment to products and services in different sectors (Liu et al., 2019; Min et al., 2019). A study by Zhou et al. (2020) took it further and found that big brands that actively work with celebrities and allow them to establish their brand sub-labels significantly increase perceptions of brand equity and brand love. This field of research is relatively new, as previous research primarily identified the factors of celebrities as endorsers rather than as endorsers of their own brand (e.g., McCracken, 1989; Min, 2019; Nagar, 2021; Prentice & Loureiro, 2018).

Indeed, with the advancement of the digital era and the rapid evolution of communication across various media channels, such as Instagram, celebrities now enjoy a vast array of options for presenting themselves and spreading messages in diverse content formats (Mei et al., 2022; Jacobson, 2020). With these options, creating a desired self-image is easier than ever before, allowing them to extensively present their personal image to users (Labrecque et al., 2011; Mei et al., 2022; Moulard et al., 2015). Illic and Webster (2016) highlight that staying true to their persona is a significant moderator for authenticity when it comes to the self-representation of celebrities. Now, when combining personal self-presentation with presenting their own products on their SM posts, the perceptions of their own products used in their everyday life could be enhanced when aligned with their image. Generally, when presenting their own products on their online profiles, a positive and sincere attitude and highly visually appealing content are important assets to gain high engagement, which could consequently serve branding purposes and enhance purchasing willingness (Baccarella et al., 2019).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: *The perception of a brand's authenticity is positively influenced when a celebrity's beauty product on social media is presented alongside the celebrity compared to when it's presented alongside an influencer.*

2.3 Brand Authenticity and the Influence of Personal Settings

In recent years, professional marketing has merged with more personal marketing on SM (Jacobson, 2020; Labrecque et al., 2011; Mei et al., 2022; Moulard et al., 2015). Influencers have become famous by showcasing their private lifestyles and incorporating sponsorships to appear more approachable and charismatic. User-generated content has gained popularity, where SM users create content for companies that is displayed in their homes or private lives (Ki et al., 2020; Masuda et al., 2022; Mayrhofer et al., 2019).

Generally, the authenticity of such marketing tactics is often related to factors like more credibility, relatability, and transparency to the creators (Bruhn et al., 2012). But previous research has also found that consumers evaluated the authenticity of brands higher when presented with positive expressions, such as smiling, and with snapshots rather than professional studio photography (Yang et al., 2021). Interestingly, celebrities have been observed to present themselves and their brands in more natural settings, such as bathrooms or cars, as opposed to professional studio settings, which often include overly staged lighting and editing (Chopra et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Although research on specific settings in SM branding posts is limited, this study aims to investigate whether perceived authenticity is influenced by the presented setting. In addition to the presented person, the setting is introduced as a separate factor for affecting brand authenticity and therefore self-esteem and purchasing willingness.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: *The perception of a brand's authenticity is positively influenced when a celebrity's beauty product on social media is presented in a personal setting compared to a professional setting.*

2.4 Self-Esteem and the Role of Authenticity on Social Media

To gather deeper insights into the emotional state of users when reacting to branded posts, including celebrity-owned products, measuring self-esteem can be a good indicator of the individual's state after viewing the posts. The reason for this is that several studies have already researched the influence of SM usage on young adults' well-being. One study found that young women who spend a lot of time on SM tend to compare themselves more and, consequently, be less satisfied with their appearance, especially when confronted with posts related to beauty, fashion, and celebrities (Seekis et al., 2020).

Previous studies have defined self-esteem as a component of self-image, reflecting an individual's subjective assessment of their own perceived value as a human being (Rosenberg

et al., 1998). Consequently, self-esteem is not a direct indicator of a person's specific characteristics or successes, but rather their own positive or negative evaluation of themselves (Donnellan et al., 2011; Orth & Robins, 2014; Rosenberg et al., 1989). Further, external factors like relationships, education, employment, health, or SM can all influence self-esteem and vice versa (Orth & Robins, 2014). With SM becoming one of these external factors, the bidirectional relationship is even more apparent, as high or low self-esteem can influence behaviour online, while positive or negative perceptions of SM can also affect self-esteem (Cingel et al., 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2006). This includes general activity on SM, such as posting, liking, and commenting, as well as viewing pictures, videos, and advertisements from friends, celebrities, strangers, or brands.

Indeed, SM can positively impact well-being and self-esteem by increasing interactions, fostering self-expression, providing space for exploration and interests, and serving as a tool for entertainment (Weinstein, 2018). However, SM can also negatively impact well-being and self-esteem by promoting comparisons to other users. It's important to note that the effects, whether positive or negative, can vary based on factors such as age, cultural background, time spent on SM, and the specific platform used (De Lenne et al., 2018).

Comparing one's own life to the attractiveness presented in SM posts can negatively influence one's self-image, including self-esteem (Midgley et al., 2020). The specific posts that affect an individual can vary depending on personal traits, ranging from idealized living conditions to perfected physical appearances. According to the Social Comparison Theory, individuals often determine their own value by comparing themselves to others whom they perceive as better off, which can lower their self-esteem, or worse off, which can enhance it (Festinger, 1954, as cited in Midgley et al., 2020).

Furthermore, it is observed that individuals tend to purchase products that align with their self-perceptions (Burnasheva & Suh, 2020; Nagar, 2021). For instance, a study by Stuppy et al. (2019) suggests that those with negative self-esteem might choose objectively worse

products to maintain consistency with their worldview. They further state that these perceptions can shift if products are marketed as cool and trendy. Therefore, in this study, these marketing approaches could make specific celebrity-owned beauty products more valuable to consumers when aligned with their own identity, either positively or negatively (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010).

Additionally, parasocial relationships (PSRs) can play an important role here. Hoffner and Bond (2022) explain that when an individual has a PSR with a celebrity or influencer, seeing posts from that person can evoke positive emotions and enhance their well-being. However, someone who doesn't have a PSR with the celebrity or influencer may tend to compare themselves negatively, viewing the celebrity or influencer as superior by making upward comparisons (Festinger, 1954, as cited in Midgley et al., 2020). This means they see the other person as better off in terms of beauty or success, which can lead to feelings of being less valuable.

Hence, the focus here is on the perception of authenticity in branding posts on SM, which often showcase beauty and idealized appearances, including beauty products (De Lenne et al., 2018). Research by Brown and Tiggemann (2016) has already found negative effects on women's mood and body image when presented with pictures of celebrities on SM. This means that for this study, if the branded posts are perceived as authentic celebrity and product presentations in terms of being real, genuine, and transparent, users may feel worse about themselves when comparing their own lives to the presented perfection because they do not feel as attractive as the celebrity displayed (Fine, 2003; Jan et al., 2017; Midgley et al., 2020; Seekis et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: *Higher perceived brand authenticity of a celebrity's beauty product post on social media negatively influences the self-esteem of young adults.*

In addition to the primary hypothesis, this study also included the potential direct effects of the independent variables (person and setting) on purchasing willingness. These exploratory analyses aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables.

Therefore, the following exploratory hypotheses are formulated:

H3a: *The self-esteem of young adults is negatively influenced when a celebrity's beauty product on social media is presented alongside the celebrity compared to when it's presented alongside an influencer.*

H3b: *The self-esteem of young adults is negatively influenced when a celebrity's beauty product on social media is presented in a personal setting compared to a professional setting.*

2.5 Purchasing Willingness and the Role of Authenticity on Social Media

Users are exposed to a great amount of brand content on SM, including product placements and advertisements. This means that consumer behaviour has undergone significant changes in recent decades, as SM has created new opportunities for brands to reach their audiences more directly (Sheth, 2018). Therefore, brands aim for a certain authenticity level in their postings to effectively connect their products and services to their target audience and to improve user engagement. Research by Goyal et al. (2024) found that higher brand authenticity builds greater consumer trust, which results in better relationships between the brand and its consumers. This strengthened consumer loyalty can lead to higher purchase intentions, helping the brand stand out in the market among other competitors. Additionally, Sheth (2018) highlights that consumers' beliefs influence their purchasing behaviour when they see branded posts, which are often perceived as authentic. Hence, consumers' personal views of posts, combined with the time they spend on SM platforms, can alter the likelihood of their buying decisions (Zahoor & Shah, 2023).

Further, whether personal or branded, postings on SM often showcase various objects and possessions, thereby supporting a materialistic culture and promoting conspicuous consumption (Gupta & Vohra, 2019). This means that luxury or highly desired products transmit a sense of wealth, beauty, status, and prestige, attributes that particularly appeal to younger adults who increasingly seek affirmation from these displays (Gupta & Vohra, 2019; Prentice & Loureiro, 2018). The outcome is often impulse buying, where users make sudden purchases driven by the urge to satisfy an immediate desire for the product and experience its gratification effect (Gupta & Vohra, 2019; Rook, 1987).

A study by Oh et al. (2019) found that in the fashion industry, brand authenticity could indeed be an indicator of increased purchasing behaviour through emotional attachment to those brands. This study expands that finding to beauty products. Factors like the celebrities' proficiency, the originality and connectedness to the product, ideally presented together with the celebrity in a personal setting (H1 and H2), can make it more desirable and trigger behavioural intentions (Lehman et al., 2019; Nunes et al., 2021). This assumes that in the realm of celebrity-owned beauty products, higher brand authenticity will enhance purchasing willingness.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Higher perceived brand authenticity of a celebrity's beauty product post on social media positively influences the purchasing willingness of young adults.

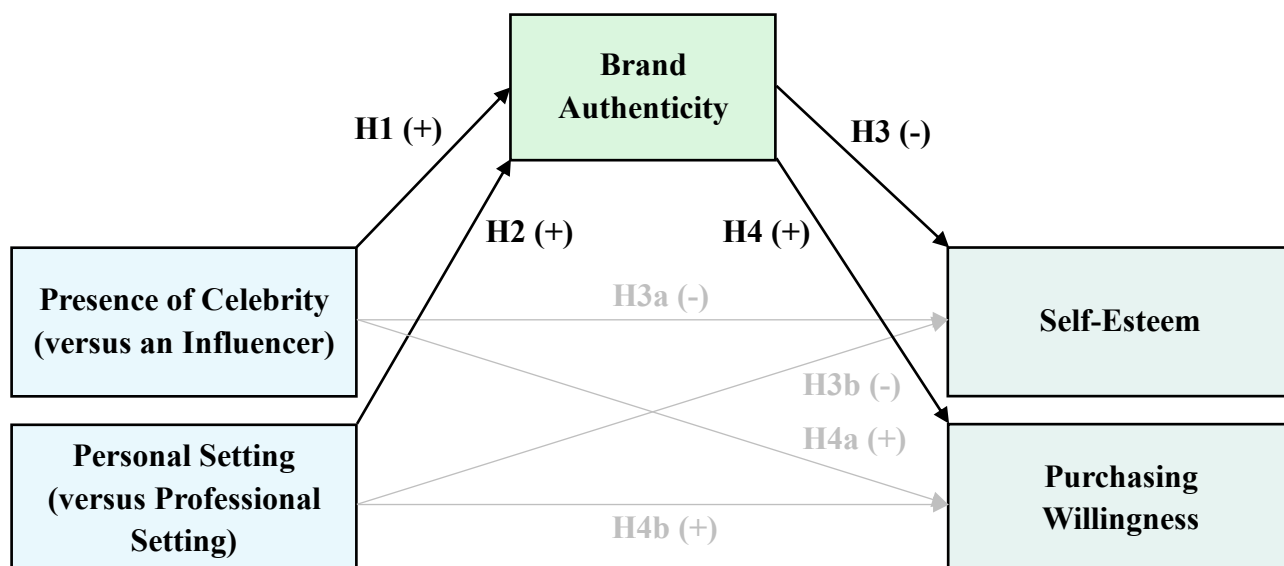
In addition to the primary hypothesis, this study also included the potential direct effects of the independent variables (person and setting) on purchasing willingness. These exploratory analyses aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables.

Therefore, the following exploratory hypotheses are formulated:

H4a: *The purchasing willingness of young adults is positively influenced when a celebrity's beauty product on social media is presented alongside the celebrity compared to when it's presented alongside an influencer.*

H4b: *The purchasing willingness of young adults is positively influenced when a celebrity's beauty product on social media is presented in a personal setting compared to a professional setting.*

2.6 Research Model



Note. Black arrows indicate the primary hypotheses. Grey arrows indicate the exploratory hypotheses.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

The aim of this study is to assess how person and setting contribute to the authenticity of brands presented on SM and how self-esteem and purchasing willingness are affected by that perception. Using quantitative methods, a between-subject 2x2 experimental survey design was employed to measure the impact of *celebrity* versus *influencer* presence (person)

and *personal* versus *professional* settings (setting) on consumer perceptions of *brand authenticity*, *self-esteem*, and *purchasing willingness*. The factors *person* and *setting* act as independent variables, directly affecting *brand authenticity*, which acts as a mediating variable. *Brand authenticity* is then predicted to affect the dependent variables of *self-esteem* and *purchasing willingness*.

The primary aim was to examine causality - whether perceptions and outcomes vary when consumers are exposed to different types of SM stimuli. The experimental survey design is justified as it allows for the controlled manipulation of stimuli, essential for examining the precise effects of different SM settings and different personas on *self-esteem* and *purchasing willingness* (Thompson & Panacek, 2006).

3.2 Participants

Participants were primarily recruited online via direct messaging through WhatsApp and an Instagram story with a link to the survey to ensure a broad and diverse demographic reach. Additionally, the survey was published on a platform for exchanging academic and professional surveys, called SurveyCircle (<https://www.surveycircle.com>), to support the recruitment of more participants. Further recruitment was conducted through snowball sampling, asking family, friends, and peers to refer the survey to their nearest surroundings to reach more participants within the target audience.

The study targeted young adults aged 16 and older, but there was no upper age limit to allow for a broader scope and inclusivity. Recruitment centered around Instagram, where over 62% of users are aged between 18 and 34, so the age range was expected to be naturally skewed toward participants younger than 35 (Statista, 2024b). This demographic range included both university students, working professionals, high school students and trainees. The study did not restrict participation based on gender, ethnicity, or educational background, aiming to capture a wide array of perspectives within the targeted age group.

Individuals who use SM and have a natural interest in beauty and skincare products were eligible to participate. Additionally, familiarity with Hailey Bieber was a requirement since she was the celebrity whose presence and skincare brand were featured in the experimental manipulations. Participants did not need to follow her, know detailed information about her, or know her skincare brand beforehand. The identification of her as a celebrity was sufficient for participation in this study. This target group and these requirements align with current literature, which emphasizes the significant impact of SM and celebrity advertisements on young consumer populations (Seekis et al., 2020).

The anticipated natural skew in the age distribution was confirmed, with only two participants being over 40, while the remainder were under 32. The mean age of all participants was 22.71 years ($SD = 3.89$). The study included 139 participants, of whom 116 were considered valid after examining and cleaning the dataset for incomplete responses. This reduction occurred because one respondent withdrew consent, and 22 did not complete the survey, resulting in missing values. Of the valid respondents, 107 (92.24%) were female, 8 (6.90%) were male, and 1 (0.86%) preferred not to disclose their gender. Additionally, 98 participants (84.48%) were German, 3 (2.59%) were Dutch, 14 (12.07%) were from other nationalities (including American, Argentinian, British, Croatian, Egyptian, Italian, Kurdish, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, and Turkish), and 1 (0.86%) preferred not to disclose their nationality.

Most respondents were university students, with 69 (59.48%) falling into this category. Independently of other demographics, 'Frequently' was the most common response for SM frequency ($n = 86$). The most common responses for time spent on SM were 10 to 30 minutes ($n = 36$) and 30 minutes to 1 hour ($n = 38$). Detailed descriptive statistics, including count (n) and percentage (%), for all responses can be found in Appendix A.

After encountering quite a few missing values among participants, the data had to be shortened. Due to this, the respondent distribution between the stimuli varied slightly. The

first stimulus was presented to 28 participants, the second to 30, the third to 27, and the fourth to 31 participants. Since the participants were randomly assigned to the stimuli, it was important to ensure enough equal distribution across the different experimental conditions.

Usually, a chi-squared test is conducted; however, some values in the categorical demographics had very low frequencies, which could affect the accuracy of the outcomes. Therefore, a Fisher's Exact Test was conducted to provide more reliable results within the categorical descriptives. The p -values of Gender ($p = .313$), Nationality ($p = .416$), Profession ($p = .331$), SM Frequency ($p = .102$), and SM Time ($p = .796$) indicate no significant differences in the distribution of the categorical values across the four stimuli. For a distribution test for the numerical variable Age, an ANOVA was applied to compare the mean values between the groups. The results also indicated no significant differences in the mean age across the four groups, $F(3, 112) = 0.961, p = .414$.

Overall, these findings support the validity of the applied experimental survey design by showing a balanced distribution of all the demographic variables and SM values. The results of the Fisher's Exact Test and the ANOVA are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Statistical Tests for Demographic and SM Variables Across Stimuli Groups

Variable	Test Type	Test Statistic	df	p-value
Gender	Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	.313
Nationality	Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	.416
SM Frequency	Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	.102
SM Time	Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	.796
Profession	Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	.331
Age	ANOVA (F)	0.961	(3, 112)	.414

Note. df = degrees of freedom, p-value = probability value.

3.3 Stimuli

A 2x2 experimental survey design was conducted, resulting in four different stimuli. Each stimulus featured either the presence of a celebrity or an influencer and was set in either a personal or professional setting (see Figure 2). To ensure internal validity, the stimuli were meticulously designed to minimize the impact of external variables that could affect participants' perceptions. Therefore, the designs included consistent backgrounds and similar lighting for both personal and professional settings, the same product displayed, similar sections of the persons' faces, and the same SM display format. The stimuli were primarily created using the graphic design platform Canva (<https://www.canva.com>), where images and backgrounds were seamlessly combined and edited to simulate an Instagram environment displayed on a mobile phone.

The posts featured either the celebrity Hailey Bieber or a fictional influencer, Luna Rose, who was used as a control group. This included profile pictures, usernames, verification badges to reinforce the public persona, locations, like, comment, and share buttons, the post itself, and an identical post description across the stimuli. The only difference was that the influencer's description was written from an outsider's perspective, while Hailey Bieber's description used "our" to indicate ownership of the displayed skincare brand.

In the personal setting (Stimuli 1 and 2), both individuals appeared in their own bathrooms with natural lighting, showcasing the product while getting ready at home. In the professional setting (Stimuli 3 and 4), both individuals were shown in high-quality photos, showcasing the product near their faces and looking directly into the camera, demonstrating a more branded, campaign-like advertisement.

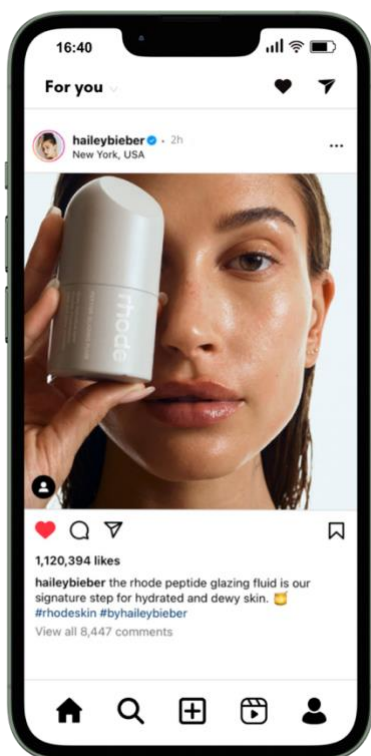
Figure 2

All Four Stimuli

Stimulus 1: celebrity in personal setting



Stimulus 2: influencer in personal setting



Stimulus 3: celebrity in professional setting



Stimulus 4: influencer in professional setting

The research aimed to simulate a SM environment by presenting stimuli as Instagram posts, formatted to resemble Instagram's main page, commonly known as the “For You” page. The posts featured either the celebrity Hailey Bieber or a fictional influencer, Luna Rose, who was used as a control group. This included profile pictures, usernames, verification badges to reinforce the public persona, locations, like, comment, and share buttons, the post itself, and an identical post description across the stimuli. The only difference was that the influencer's description was written from an outsider's perspective, while Hailey Bieber's description used "our" to indicate ownership of the displayed skincare brand.

In the personal setting (Stimuli 1 and 2), both individuals appeared in their own bathrooms with natural lighting, showcasing the product while getting ready at home. In the professional setting (Stimuli 3 and 4), both individuals were shown in high-quality photos, showcasing the product near their faces and looking directly into the camera, demonstrating a more branded, campaign-like advertisement.

3.4 Procedure

The study was conducted following ethical guidelines approved by the BMS Ethics Committee of the University of Twente before acquiring respondents. Within this primary data collection, an online survey was created to examine how skincare product presentations on SM affected participants' views of their self-esteem and purchasing willingness, as mediated by the perception of the brand's authenticity (see Appendix B). The survey included four distinct stimuli, following a 2x2 between-subject experimental design. The survey was conducted using the experience management software Qualtrics. The data collection process employed quantitative scales to precisely measure responses immediately after exposure to the stimuli. This ensured that participants' perceptions were recorded accurately and without significant delay, reducing the likelihood of memory bias or external influences affecting their responses. Participants could take part in the study at any time, from anywhere online, without

the researcher having to be present. The survey was presented in a single-blind manner, so participants were not fully aware of the stimulus they were assigned to reduce bias.

Participants were given an informed consent form that indicated the nature of the study, voluntary participation, and explanations of data security, confidentiality, and anonymity. Acknowledging the potential sensitivity of these topics, which could affect individuals' self-esteem, measures were put in place to safeguard participant comfort. It was emphasized that the anonymity and security of the responses were maintained, and all data collected were securely stored and accessible only to the authorized researcher. Additionally, the researchers' contact details were provided for any further inquiries. Participants proceeded with the survey by clicking "I agree", or they were referred to the end of the survey if they chose "I do not agree".

Initially, questions regarding demographic information, including age, gender, nationality, profession, SM frequency use, typical time spent on SM, and familiarity with Hailey Bieber, were asked. Participants who selected "Never" for SM frequency or "No" for familiarity with Hailey Bieber were excluded from the survey due to specific requirements. Then participants were randomly assigned to one of four different experimental conditions, each featuring a distinct stimulus depicting either (1) a celebrity in a personal setting, (2) an influencer in a personal setting, (3) a celebrity in a professional setting, or (4) an influencer in a professional setting. After viewing the stimulus, participants answered questions across three different blocks using a Likert scale format: Block A measured Brand Authenticity, Block B measured Self-Esteem, and Block C measured Purchasing Willingness. The stimulus could always be referred to while answering the different sections. To verify that the stimulus was correctly recognized, a manipulation check was conducted at the end of each survey. This included a question about the identity of the person and the type of setting. Additional informational questions followed, regarding participants' knowledge of Hailey Bieber and her skincare brand, whether they followed her on SM, or if they had used products from Rhode

Skin before. This was done to account for any noticeable outcomes that might require further investigation into the influence of prior knowledge of the celebrity, suggesting a parasocial relationship (Hoffner & Bond, 2022; Seekis et al., 2020).

Upon completing the 7-10 minute survey, participants received a debriefing outlining the study's goals and context, previously withheld to avoid bias. Participants were not compensated for their involvement in the study. In addition, a 72-hour window was provided to complete the survey before it was deemed incomplete.

3.4.1 Manipulation Check

Participants identified the person (Hailey Bieber or influencer) and the setting (personal or professional) in the pictures or indicated "I don't remember" if they couldn't recall. The results showed that 86.2% of participants correctly identified the person displayed, and 89.7% correctly identified the environment. The high percentages for both factors indicate strong validity of the experimental designs.

3.5 Measures

The instruments of this study were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) (Joshi et al., 2015). It was important to measure internal consistency reliability as well as construct validity to confidently assess the values of each participant in the blocks: Brand Authenticity (A), Self-Esteem (B), and Purchasing Willingness (C). This ensures that all items measure a coherent construct within the blocks.

For all three blocks, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for reliability, and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the variance across the items, the eigenvalue of the main factor (MR1), and the communalities for validity. All items were retained after the final analysis to ensure the comprehensiveness and to stay true to the original scales, given the limited number of fitting items. The factor loadings per item can be found in Table 2.

Table 2*Factor Loadings for each Block*

Item	Statement	Factor Loading
A_Q1	The presentation of the product makes a genuine impression.	0.71
A_Q2	The presentation of the product is credible.	0.77
A_Q3	The presentation of the product is truthful and honest.	0.62
A_Q4	The aesthetics of the post are original.	0.39
A_Q5	The presentation of the product is natural.	0.48
A_Q6	The person makes a genuine impression.	0.77
A_Q7	The person projects credibility.	0.74
B_Q1	I feel attractive.	0.72
B_Q2	I am satisfied with myself.	0.70
B_Q3	I am pleased with my appearance.	0.76
B_Q4	I feel confident about myself.	0.77
B_Q5	I have a positive attitude towards myself.	0.67
C_Q1	I would buy the product.	0.84
C_Q2	I am interested in the brand.	0.83
C_Q3	The product is interesting to me.	0.93
C_Q4	The price would not be my first priority.	0.24
C_Q5	I think the product is useful for me.	0.79

Note. Items are written as Block_QuestionNumber. Block 1: Brand Authenticity, Block 2:

Self-Esteem, Block 3: Purchasing Willingness.

3.5.1 Brand Authenticity

Known scales and items from previous research were used and slightly modified to fit this study, creating a set of seven items intended to measure the mediating variable *Brand Authenticity* in Block A (Bruhn et al., 2012; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Tran & Keng, 2018). The scale incorporated statements such as, "The presentation of the product makes a genuine impression" or "The person projects credibility". Overall, the scale performed well in terms of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, ranging from 0.77 to 0.83 when any individual item was dropped. The mean response for *Brand Authenticity* was 3.31 (SD = 1.08).

After examining the construct validity through an EFA, the total variance in the items explained by MR1 was 0.427 (42.7%). MR1 had an eigenvalue of 2.987, explaining almost three units of variance across the items. With seven items in total, this underscores the importance of the factor. All items, except for A_Q4 (0.152) and A_Q5 (0.227), had higher communalities, suggesting that a significant part of the variances was explained by MR1. The measures of variance, eigenvalue, and Cronbach's alpha can be found in Table 3.

3.5.2 Self-Esteem

Known scales and items from previous research were used and slightly modified to fit this study, creating a set of five items intended to measure the dependent variable *Self-Esteem* in Block B (Mannarini, 2010; Rosenberg, 1965, as cited in Mannarini, 2010; Webster et al., 2020). The scale incorporated statements such as, "I am satisfied with myself" or "I have a positive attitude towards myself". Overall, the scale performed well in terms of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, ranging from 0.80 to 0.83 when any individual item was dropped. The mean response for *Self-Esteem* was 3.57 (SD = 0.84).

After examining the construct validity through an EFA, the total variance in the items explained by MR1 was 0.524 (52.4%). MR1 had an eigenvalue of 2.621, explaining about 2.6

units of variance across the items. With five items in total, this underscores the importance of the factor. All items had high communalities, meaning their variances were well explained by MR1. The measures of variance, eigenvalue, and Cronbach's alpha can be found in Table 3.

3.5.3 *Purchasing Willingness*

Known scales and items from previous research were used and slightly modified to fit this study, creating a set of five items intended to measure the dependent variable *Purchasing Willingness* in Block C (Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2017; Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996). The scale incorporated statements such as, “I would buy the product” or “I am interested in the brand”. Overall, the scale performed well in terms of internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.84, ranging from 0.75 to 0.91 when any individual item was dropped. The mean response for *Purchasing Willingness* was 2.66 (SD = 1.24).

After examining the construct validity through an EFA, the total variance in the items explained by MR1 was 0.588 (58.8%). MR1 had an eigenvalue of 2.942, explaining nearly 3 units of variance across the items. With five items in total, this underscores the importance of the factor. All items, except for C_Q4 (0.055), had higher communalities, suggesting that a significant part of the variances was explained by MR1. The measures of variance, eigenvalue, and Cronbach's alpha can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Measures of Variance, Eigenvalue, and Cronbach's Alpha for each Block

Measure	Block A	Block B	Block C
Proportion of variance (%)	42.70	52.40	58.80
Eigenvalue of MR1	2.99	2.62	2.94
Cronbach’s alpha	0.82	0.85	0.84

Note. A = Brand Authenticity, B = Self-Esteem, C = Purchasing Willingness.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the statistical software RStudio, scripted with the programming language R. The data were cleaned and reshaped to conduct descriptive statistics, reliability, validity, and hypothesis testing.

The raw data were loaded into RStudio as a CSV file and inspected for completeness. Rows containing metadata, unfinished surveys, missing values (NA), and unnecessary metadata (e.g., IP address, location) were deleted. The data were then converted into a long format, where each participant's answers were represented in separate columns. The corresponding stimulus, block, and response values (ranging from 1 to 5 based on the Likert scale) were added as columns.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for demographics. The mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated for "Age" and for the scales across all conditions. Percentages (%) and counts (n) were reported for categorical variables. Cronbach's alpha assessed reliability for blocks A, B, and C, and validity was examined with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), producing factor loadings and communalities.

Further, statistical tests were performed to examine the relationships between the conditions and the study variables (independent, moderating, and dependent). Fisher's Exact tests were used instead of chi-square tests due to the low frequency of specific values in some columns, ensuring the demographics were equally distributed across the four stimuli.

Hypothesis testing was conducted with a two-way ANOVA to assess the effects of the stimuli on responses within each block. Additionally, multiple linear regression analyses were used to further examine the direct and indirect effects of each independent variable (person and setting) on the dependent variables (Brand Authenticity, Self-Esteem, and Purchasing Willingness). Regression plots were created to visualize the relationships identified. Finally, the *M* and *SD* of each block and stimulus were examined to strengthen the interpretation of

the outcomes, and p -values were calculated to determine the significance of the manipulations.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the *mean* (M) and *standard deviation* (SD) of responses within each block (A, B, and C) and for each stimulus (1, 2, 3, and 4) were calculated. Stimulus 1, including the celebrity in a personal setting, had the highest mean response for Block A ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.14$) and Block B ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.89$), while Stimulus 4, including the influencer in a professional setting, had the highest mean response for Block B ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.79$). Block C responses were generally lower across all stimuli, with the highest *mean* for Stimulus 1 ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.21$).

4.2 Two-way ANOVAs

A series of two-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effects of person (*celebrity* versus *influencer*) and setting (*personal* versus *professional*) on *Brand Authenticity*, *Self-Esteem* and *Purchasing Willingness*. This analysis specifically tests whether the statistical data support the direct effects, namely hypotheses H1, H2, H3a, H3b, H4a, and H4b, as outlined in the Theoretical Framework section (Chapter 2).

4.2.1 Person and Setting on Brand Authenticity

The two-way ANOVA results indicated no significant effects of *person* or *setting* on *Brand Authenticity*. The main effect of *person* was not significant, $F(1,808) = 2.28$, $p = .131$. The main effect of *setting* was not significant, $F(1,808) = 2.45$, $p = .118$. Finally, the interaction effect between *setting* and *person* was also not significant, $F(1,808) = 0.16$, $p = .694$. This means that the hypotheses H1 and H2, stating that a celebrity compared to an

influencer and a personal setting compared to a professional setting increase brand authenticity, were rejected.

4.2.2 Person and Setting on Self-Esteem

For *Self-Esteem*, the two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of *person*, indicating that the type of endorser (*celebrity* versus *influencer*) significantly impacted *Self-Esteem*. *Self-Esteem* scores were significantly higher for endorsements with the influencer ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.785$) compared to the celebrity ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.880$). Thus, the main effect of *person* was significant, $F(1,576) = 9.96$, $p = .002$. The main effect of *setting* was not significant, $F(1,576) = 0.16$, $p = .690$, with *personal* setting showing a mean of 3.58 ($SD = 0.837$) and *professional* setting having a mean of 3.55 ($SD = 0.840$). The interaction effect between *setting* and *person* was not significant, $F(1,576) = 0.55$, $p = .458$.

This means that H3a, which predicted a negative influence on *Self-Esteem* when a celebrity's beauty product is presented alongside the celebrity compared to an influencer, was rejected. Instead, the data showed a positive effect on *Self-Esteem* when the product was endorsed by an influencer. Further, H3b, which predicted a negative influence on *Self-Esteem* when the product is presented in a personal setting compared to a professional setting, was also rejected.

4.2.3 Person and Setting on Purchasing Willingness

For *Purchasing Willingness*, the two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of *person* and a trend towards significance for *setting*. There was no significant interaction effect between *setting* and *person*. The main effect of *person* was significant, $F(1,576) = 6.42$, $p = .012$, where products endorsed by the celebrity had a mean of 2.80 ($SD = 1.25$) and those endorsed by the influencer had a mean of 2.53 ($SD = 1.21$).

The main effect of *setting* approached significance, $F(1,576) = 3.09, p = .079$, with *personal* setting having a mean of 2.75 (SD = 1.20) and *professional* setting having a mean of 2.57 (SD = 1.27). The interaction effect between *setting* and *person* was not significant, $F(1,576) = 0.37, p = .543$.

This means that H4a, which predicted a positive influence on *Purchasing Willingness* when a celebrity's beauty product is presented alongside the celebrity compared to an influencer, was supported. Therefore, H4b, which predicted a positive influence on *Purchasing Willingness* when the product is presented in a personal setting compared to a professional setting, was rejected.

4.3 Regression Analysis

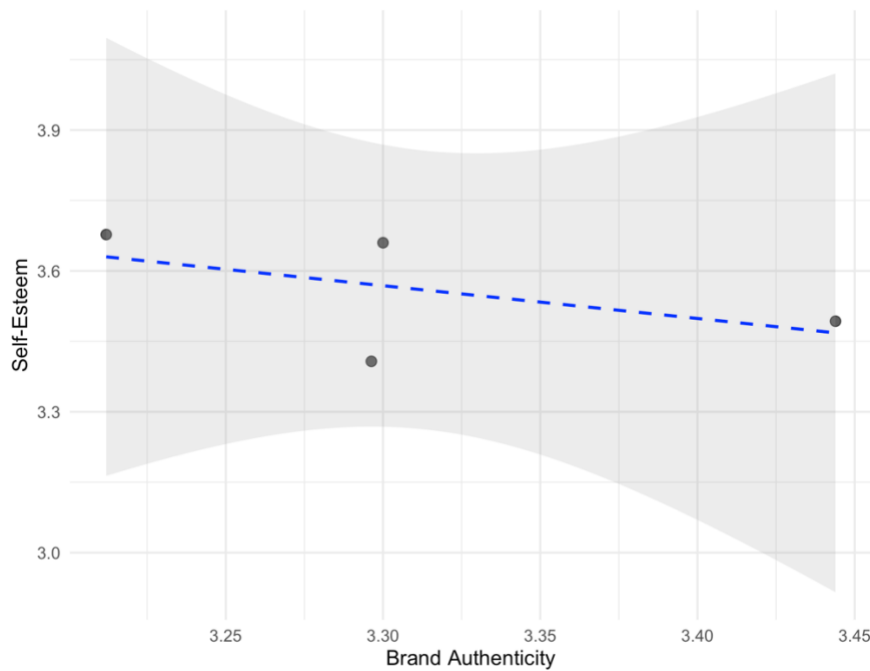
A series of multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the effects of perceived *Brand Authenticity* on *Self-Esteem* and *Purchasing Willingness*. This analysis focuses specifically on testing whether the statistical data support the hypotheses H3 and H4, as outlined in the *Theoretical Framework* section.

4.3.1 Brand Authenticity on Self-Esteem

The regression analysis investigating the effect of *Brand Authenticity* on *Self-Esteem* did not reveal a significant relationship. The model results were $F(1,2) = 0.713, p = .488$, with an R^2 of .263. The coefficient for *Brand Authenticity* was not significant ($\beta = -0.698, p = .488$), indicating that perceived *Brand Authenticity* did not significantly predict *Self-Esteem*. Thus, H3, which predicted a negative influence of *Brand Authenticity* on *Self-Esteem*, was not supported. This non-significant effect can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Non-significant Effect of Brand Authenticity on Self-Esteem



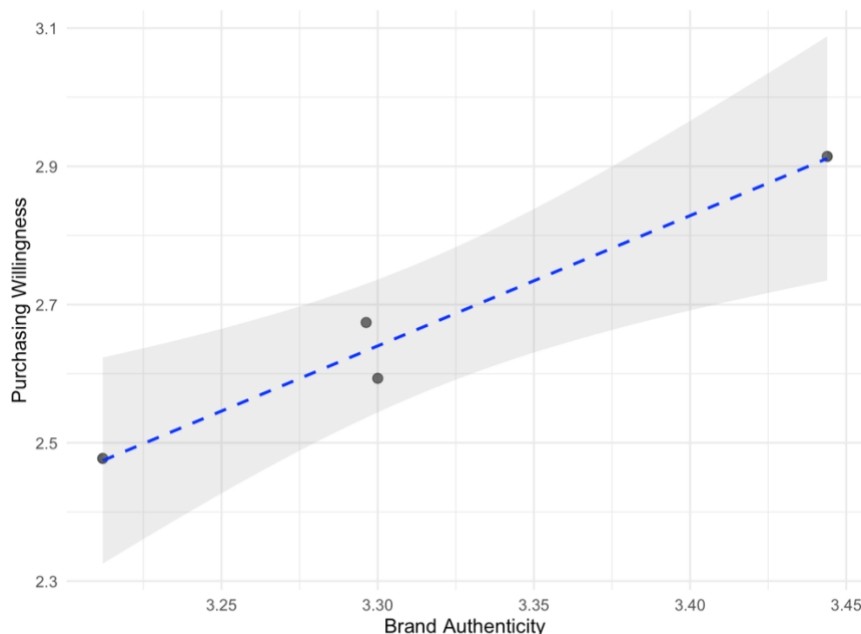
Note. Grey dots represent individual observations. The dashed blue line indicates the regression trend between *Brand Authenticity* and *Self-Esteem*, and the light grey shaded area around this line shows the 95% confidence interval.

4.3.2 Brand Authenticity on Purchasing Willingness

The regression analysis on *Purchasing Willingness* revealed a significant positive relationship between *Brand Authenticity* and *Purchasing Willingness*. The model results were $F(1,2) = 50.81, p = .019$, with an R^2 of .962. The coefficient for *Brand Authenticity* ($\beta = 1.885, p = .019$) was significant, suggesting that higher perceived *Brand Authenticity* leads to higher *Purchasing Willingness*. Thus, H4, which predicted a positive influence of *Brand Authenticity* on *Purchasing Willingness*, was not supported. This significant effect can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Significant Effect of Brand Authenticity on Purchasing Willingness



Note. Grey dots represent individual observations. The dashed blue line indicates the regression trend between *Brand Authenticity* and *Purchasing Willingness*, and the light grey shaded area around this line shows the 95% confidence interval.

4.3.3 Fan and Follow on Brand Authenticity

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the *Fan* and *Follow* variables on *Brand Authenticity*. The model results indicated a significant relationship, with participants who strongly disliked Hailey Bieber reporting lower *Brand Authenticity* scores ($\beta = -0.993, p = .045$). Additionally, there was a trend suggesting that big fans of Hailey Bieber might report higher *Brand Authenticity* scores ($\beta = 1.156, p = .069$). The *Follow* variable did not show a significant effect ($\beta = 0.066, p = .839$).

4.3.4 Fan and Follow on Self-Esteem

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the *Fan* and *Follow* variables on *Self-Esteem*. The model results did not reveal significant relationships. None of the variables showed significant effects, indicating that neither the likeliness of Hailey Bieber nor following her on SM significantly affected *Self-Esteem*. The model results were not significant for any of the coefficients (all p -values $> .216$).

4.3.5 Fan and Follow on Purchasing Willingness

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the *Fan* and *Follow* variables on *Purchasing Willingness*. The model results did reveal significant effects for some *Fan* variables. Participants who liked ($\beta = 1.431, p = .001$) or were big fans ($\beta = 1.439, p = .021$) of Hailey Bieber reported higher *Purchasing Willingness* scores. The *Follow* variable did not show a significant effect ($\beta = 0.040, p = .895$).

5. Discussion

5.1 Main Findings

This study aimed to explore the impact of different individuals and settings on the perceived brand authenticity of celebrity beauty brands on SM, as well as its effects on users' self-esteem and purchasing willingness. Accordingly, the following research question was posed: “*How do young adults perceive the authenticity of celebrities' beauty brands when presented by the celebrity compared to an influencer in personal or professional settings on social media, and how does this perception affect their self-esteem and purchasing willingness?*”

While previous research has explored the impact of celebrity endorsements, primarily in advertisements of external products, as well as influencer marketing, this study focuses on

celebrity-owned beauty products and directly compares the effects of celebrity versus influencer endorsements and personal versus professional settings (McCracken, 1989; Min, 2019; Nagar, 2021; Prentice & Loureiro, 2018).

The results provide a mixed perspective on the studied relationships among the variables. It is important to note that the interaction between *setting* and *person* had no significant effect on other factors in any relationship, which diminishes the combined strength of these factors. However, individual effects were observed, indicating that future research and practitioners should consider the potential implications of each factor independently. The interaction between *setting* and *person* warrants further investigation to uncover any underlying complexities that may arise in future studies.

5.1.1 Brand Authenticity

The findings of this study provide a mixed perspective on the studied relationships among the variables. According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), behaviour motivated externally by rewards may be perceived as inauthentic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theoretical perspective suggests that celebrities might be seen as embodying their products more, reflecting intrinsic and sincere motivations and therefore higher *Brand Authenticity*. However, the effects were not significant, rejecting H1 and H2, indicating no differences in authenticity perceptions between *celebrity* and *influencer* or *personal* and *professional* settings. This means that while there were direct effects of *person* and *setting* on the dependent variables, *Brand Authenticity* did not act as a mediating variable in this case.

Additionally, participants who strongly disliked Hailey Bieber reported lower *Brand Authenticity* scores, indicating that personal feelings towards a celebrity can influence users perceptions. This suggests that *Brand Authenticity* can be influenced by personal biases towards the celebrity endorser, which aligns with the outcome that *person* and *setting* alone do not significantly moderate *Brand Authenticity*.

The findings contradict the Meaning Transfer Model (MTM), which suggests that celebrities typically enhance brand perceptions through their connection to the product (McCracken, 1998). This discrepancy may be due to the nature of specific celebrity products and how their reputations are built in collaboration with the celebrity. The era of product launches has changed drastically, and users now have significantly more knowledge about SM strategies, perceiving posts with greater awareness (Cao et al., 2021). A brand's post can influence a user, but their perception of the *celebrity* and previous interactions with the brand - such as comments, shares, likes, and direct feedback - can also greatly impact perceived *Brand Authenticity* (Ferguson et al., 2015; Varghese & Agrawal, 2021). This can be a result of celebrities today being far more accessible on SM than those featured in TV advertisements in the past. Even though previous research has highlighted distinctive attributes between influencers and traditional celebrities, this study suggests that the perceptions of influencers and celebrities on SM might increasingly converge, with celebrities adopting actions traditionally associated with influencers to promote their own products, leading to non-significant differences in outcomes between the two groups (Lee & Eastin, 2021; Wahab et al., 2022). While Jin et al. (2019) found that influencers were perceived as more trustworthy, our findings suggest that such perceptions might be context-dependent and do not universally apply to celebrity-owned brands.

Generally, beauty brands were found to incorporate more idealized presentations in advertisements to make them be perceived as more truthful (Kaur et al., 2013). However, this study specifically emphasized different *settings* in SM posts and their perceptions, building on previous research that indicated ordinary elements could enhance authenticity (Yang et al., 2021). The *setting*, however, was shown to have no effect on perceived *Brand Authenticity*. This finding suggests that external factors, such as the overall presence of the content and the actions of the person in the post, might be more critical for indicating *Brand Authenticity* than the *setting* and the *person* itself.

Hence, the outcomes highlight the complexity and multifaceted nature of measuring *Brand Authenticity* and illustrate how results can differ from previous research. This discrepancy may stem from the lack of a universally validated and comprehensive scale for measuring these exact perceptions in the online realm (Bruhn et al., 2012). Building on that suggestion, a study by Agnihotri et al. (2023) measured the authenticity of SM influencers through dimensions such as expertise, sincerity, truthful endorsement, uniqueness, and visibility. This different approach offers a more detailed perspective on authenticity compared to this study. Their items are more in-depth and require a greater familiarity with the influencers or brands being measured than the five-item scale used in this research.

Finally, the interaction of *person* and *setting* had no statistical effects, indicating that perceived *Brand Authenticity* is not influenced by these factors. To conclude, neither the type of endorser (*celebrity* versus *influencer*) nor the environment (*personal* versus *professional*) significantly impacts *Brand Authenticity* in this context.

5.1.2 Self-Esteem

Investigating *Self-Esteem* as a dependent variable based on *person* and *setting* through *Brand Authenticity*, the outcomes only partially aligned with previous research, leading to the rejection of H2. The direct effects were significantly positive for *influencer* endorsements but not for *celebrity* endorsements, leading to the rejection of H3a, which posited that a *celebrity* compared to an *influencer* would negatively impact *Self-Esteem*. These findings suggest a valuable direction for future research and marketing strategies, emphasizing the need to explore why influencer endorsements are more beneficial for self-esteem. The regression analysis also revealed that neither the likability of Hailey Bieber nor following her on social media significantly affected *Self-Esteem*. This aligns with previous research indicating that social media postings enhancing feelings of autonomy and relatability are more effective with

influencers, who generally exhibit higher levels of relatability (Ferguson et al., 2015; Hoffner & Bond, 2022).

However, Social Comparison Theory, frequently cited in previous research, suggests that social media increases both upward and downward comparisons, often negatively impacting self-esteem (Festinger, 1954, as cited in Midgley et al., 2020; Seekis et al., 2020). Therefore, the notion that parasocial relationships (PSRs) with *celebrities* promote negative *Self-Esteem* is not supported by the outcomes of this study (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). It is possible that celebrities face different perception challenges and appear more distant to users, making direct comparisons less relevant than with *influencers* who provide more natural and relatable insights (Lee & Eastin, 2021).

Furthermore, the direct effects of *setting* were non-significant, leading to the rejection of H3b, which proposed that a *personal* setting compared to a *professional* setting would negatively impact *Self-Esteem*. Midgley et al. (2020) note that comparisons often occur based on ideal appearances. In this study, the *personal* setting did not significantly decrease *Self-Esteem* by promoting natural environments for branding purposes. This finding suggests that a person, regardless of fame, using a product in a *personal* setting might increase perceived naturalness, making them seem more down-to-earth and thus reducing comparisons (Weinstein, 2018; Yang et al., 2021). Finally, the interaction of *person* and *setting* had no statistical effects, indicating that *Self-Esteem* is also not influenced by these factors combined.

Brand Authenticity on Self-Esteem. Contrary to expectations based on previous research, higher perceived *Brand Authenticity* had no significant mediating effect on *Self-Esteem*. This suggests that participants distinguished between the positive impact of the *influencer* on *Self-Esteem* and the perceived *Brand Authenticity*. The assumption that authentic posts - perceived as real, genuine, and transparent - might make individuals feel worse about themselves is not supported, despite indications from previous research (Fine, 2003; Jan et al., 2017; Midgley et al., 2020; Seekis et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021).

These results, taken along with the context of SM and branding, demonstrate the complex nature of the variables affecting *Self-Esteem* within an online realm. They emphasize the need of comprehending the distinct roles that celebrities and influencers play in influencing customer attitudes and consider that *Self-Esteem* may not be much impacted by *Brand Authenticity* alone.

5.1.3 Purchasing Willingness

Investigating *Purchasing Willingness* as a dependent variable based on *person* and *setting* through *Brand Authenticity*, the outcomes aligned more with previous research than those for *Self-Esteem*. The direct effects of *person* were significantly positive for the *celebrity* on *Purchasing Willingness*. This, despite the lack of effect on *Brand Authenticity*, supports partially the MTM which suggests that celebrities can enhance trust and attachment, thus increasing buying behaviour. This occurs when celebrities remain true to their persona, indicating that Hailey Bieber's promotion of beauty products, particularly skincare, aligns with her values and previous presentations of her skincare and beauty affiliation, or her persona in general (Illic & Webster, 2016). Generally, research emphasizes that admiration through PSRs with celebrities can directly link to higher brand attachment (Özer et al., 2022). This is supported by this study's results, which show that participants who liked Hailey Bieber or were big fans of her reported higher *Purchasing Willingness* scores. Thus, strong positive attitudes towards a celebrity can enhance the drive to buy the products endorsed by that celebrity.

The direct effects of *setting* showed a positive trend for *personal* settings but were not statistically significant. Further research is needed, but this finding could be linked to previous studies emphasizing the importance of matching presentations to their context in SM marketing strategies (Varghese & Agrawal, 2021). Baccarella et al. (2019) support this by stating that higher sincerity and visually appealing content can increase buying behaviour,

particularly when considering the sincerity of the *person* and the *setting* without involving *Brand Authenticity* as a mediator. In skincare, personal settings might be ideal since most people use skincare products in personal spaces, such as bathrooms. Although this was not statistically significant, it suggests an interesting direction for future research in this area.

Brand Authenticity on Purchasing Willingness. Higher perceived *Brand Authenticity* was found to have a significant effect on *Purchasing Willingness*. Although *Brand Authenticity* was not affected by *person* or *setting*, this indicates that higher perceptions of general authenticity in a broader context play a crucial role. This means that *Brand Authenticity*, as a complex concept, is based on multiple factors not directly associated with the *person* or the *setting* but will enhance *Purchasing Willingness* regardless. This finding aligns with previous studies, which showed that continuity, integrity, quality, and trust could increase authenticity (Morhart et al., 2014; Moulard et al., 2016). These findings again suggest that other factors may play a more critical role in shaping perceptions of *Brand Authenticity*, offering valuable insights for future research and marketing strategies aimed at understanding consumer behaviour regarding celebrity-owned beauty product branding posts.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study propose several theoretical implications. The Meaning Transfer Model (MTM) posits that endorsers such as celebrities enhance brand perceptions through specific cultural meanings, such as luxury or beauty, that are directly projected onto the product (McCracken, 1989). This is supported by other studies stating that celebrities can evoke a greater desire in consumers to adopt a specific lifestyle or product (Prentice & Loureiro, 2018). However, this study did not find any effects of *celebrities* on *Brand Authenticity*, only that a *celebrity* had a direct effect on *Purchasing Willingness*. Hence, the traditional MTM could be refined to address the context of celebrity-owned brands, considering that *Brand Authenticity* may not always be directly affected by the presence of

celebrities. Similarly, an unknown influencer may not hold direct cultural meanings for users but can be perceived as equally valid due to factors such as anonymity and neutrality. For example, research by Lee and Kim (2020) found no effects of influencer credibility on brand perceptions.

The self-congruity theory could be used to refine the MTM, suggesting that an influencer could match more closely with the self-concept of consumers, thereby strengthening perceptions without being more or less persuasive than celebrity endorsements (Liu et al., 2012). Additionally, the source credibility model, which states that perceived credibility can be an indicator of persuasion, could be relevant to the direct findings of the celebrity's impact on *Purchasing Willingness* (Seiler & Kucza, 2017). Additionally, research by Chung and Cho (2017) found that parasocial relationships improve brand credibility in celebrity endorsements, but only for products not directly related to the celebrity. Building on this, the current study found that negative emotional connections to celebrities can worsen perceptions of *Brand Authenticity*. Thus, considering parasocial relationships within consumer behaviour research is crucial, especially concerning celebrity-owned brands.

It is also important to note that celebrities and influencers on SM increasingly converge in their actions and presentations, complicating the distinction between these groups. This convergence could shift perceptions of authenticity, self-esteem, and purchasing willingness. Therefore, a focus on differentiating these groups better would be beneficial for further analysis (Ferguson et al., 2015; Varghese & Agrawal, 2021; Wahab et al., 2022).

Generally, the findings highlight the complexity of measuring *Brand Authenticity* on SM and the need for a universally validated scale for online perceptions. Such a scale would provide more nuanced measurement items, allowing for better comparisons of brand perceptions within an online realm, aligning with modern approaches to branding and user reactions (Bruhn et al., 2012). Although not statistically significant, there was a tendency for *personal* settings to positively impact *Brand Authenticity* and direct *Purchasing Willingness*.

Rethinking the composition of *Brand Authenticity* for future research might include a more detailed examination of the setting's significance and its possible effects on SM (Chopra et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021).

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer valuable practical implications for the communication strategies of beauty products. Although the focus is on celebrity-owned products, these implications can be relevant for all beauty brands using celebrity and influencer endorsements on SM.

First, marketing and brand managers should reconsider the actual aim of authenticity in their brand communications. Understanding which types of posts generate more positive engagement and potentially higher authenticity is essential. Although this study found that neither *person* nor *setting* significantly affected *Brand Authenticity*, authenticity overall still influenced *Purchasing Willingness*. Therefore, marketing strategies focusing on authentic interactions based on other factors could be beneficial. For example, genuine endorsements conveyed through purposeful personal stories or behind-the-scenes content could enhance trust and loyalty (Klassen et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2021).

Second, it is important to emphasize continuity, which this research did not directly measure (Morhart et al., 2014). Consistent brand management and storytelling across SM platforms are important. This can be achieved by strategically incorporating celebrities or influencers and varying the settings used, while maintaining a consistent message. The lack of differences between professional and personal visuals suggests that a balanced use of both settings could be favourable in building brand trust and staying relatable (Klassen et al., 2018; Södergren, 2021). Generally, transparent content that does not seem overly staged enhances credibility and interactions (Cornelis & Peter, 2017; Morhart et al., 2014; Södergren, 2021).

Third, creating relationships between the brand and different personas is crucial. Since the *influencer* positively affected *Self-Esteem*, it is recommended to create posts involving influencers to enhance consumer satisfaction through higher self-esteem and positive emotions (Cingel et al., 2022; De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2006). And since fans of the celebrity showed higher *Purchasing Willingness* and critics showed lower scores in *Brand Authenticity*, identifying these relationships is important as they directly affect the brand's image and marketing outcomes (Hoffner & Bond, 2022; Özer et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2020). In conclusion, a strategic mix of influencer and celebrity posts would ideally improve conversions.

For SM users, this research highlights the importance of critically evaluating branding content and distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic posts. Understanding whether a post aims to provide a positive consumer experience or simply aims to increase engagement for revenue purposes is key. Most SM content is part of marketing strategies and campaigns, and users who can evaluate messages from celebrities or influencers can enhance their buying behaviour and control impulse buying (Gupta & Vohra, 2019; Rook, 1987). Since the presented person should only positively affect self-esteem, as seen with influencers in this study, controlling one's own comparison is also important (Festinger, 1954, as cited in Midgley et al., 2020). Previous research, in contrast to this study, found that young women tend to compare themselves negatively; therefore, it remains important to be aware of potential upward comparisons (Seekis et al., 2020). Overall, understanding marketing intentions is beneficial, as financial motivations and sponsorships are often present for both celebrities and influencers (Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023; Wellman et al., 2020).

5.4 Limitations

This study has several limitations that must be considered. The sample started with 139 responses, but after excluding incomplete responses, the final sample size was reduced to

116. With approximately 30 participants per stimulus, the small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings and could impact the robustness of the analysis and conclusions. Moreover, the sample had an uneven distribution of nationalities, with 84.48% of participants being from Germany. This imbalance makes it challenging to theorize the results to all young adults and, consequently, the broader population.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce bias. Participants may not accurately recall their feelings and behaviours, or they might respond in ways they believe are expected from them (Junco, 2013). Furthermore, the survey utilized a combination of different and adjusted scales, rather than a single, well-established scale. This could have affected the reliability of the findings (Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2017; Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996; Bruhn et al., 2012; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Mannarini, 2010; Rosenberg, 1965, as cited in Mannarini, 2010; Tran & Keng, 2018; Webster et al., 2020).

And while the stimuli were carefully designed to measure the specified variables, other factors not included in the study, such as product quality, ingredients, or texture, may also influence perceptions of beauty products. Consequently, the experimental 2x2 design might have oversimplified the complex interactions and feelings users would have towards SM postings, especially when they involve videos, stories, or carousel-type posts that include multiple pictures to enhance presentations and storytelling (Bazi et al., 2023).

Initially not planned, exploratory sub-hypotheses were added due to observed data patterns indicating that the mediating variable of *Brand Authenticity* was not influenced by *person* or *setting*. To address this and to gain deeper insights into the data and relationships, exploratory hypotheses for the dependent variables *Self-Esteem* and *Purchasing Willingness* were incorporated. This addition aimed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play and to enhance the overall value of the research findings, even though this was not expected prior.

It is also important to consider the impact of external factors during the data collection. First, focusing solely on a single celebrity brand limits the scope of perceptions. Second, Hailey Bieber, who was included in the stimuli, went viral online shortly before data collection commenced due to her pregnancy announcement with Justin Bieber. This event could have influenced public interest, image, and engagement with her, potentially skewing the data collected during this period.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the stated limitations, the recommendations for future research include several approaches that could enhance the accuracy and validity of the findings. First, a larger and more diverse sample would provide a stronger foundation for drawing conclusions about the entire population, ensuring stronger external validity and capturing the population's complexity. Additionally, a longitudinal study could be beneficial for capturing changes over time, considering different events and exposures in the SM realm (Caruana et al., 2015). Over a longer period, perceptions may vary, change, strengthen, or weaken, affecting the examined variables.

If applicable, gathering direct feedback through qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide more insightful discussions about the backgrounds of perceptions and the reasons behind certain feelings. This would add depth to the understanding of behavioural triggers and emotions in the research (Jackson et al., 2007). Showing different content of products by celebrities and offering opportunities for open discussions about these perceptions would support understanding users' values, beliefs, and assumptions (Choy, 2014).

It is important to emphasize the need for future research involving other celebrity brands or more celebrity brands in comparison. But incorporating additional variables that could affect the brand perceptions of celebrity-owned beauty products could also enhance

future research. These variables might include product ingredients, product quality, reviews, transparency factors, video content, or different types of products within the same celebrity brand. Examining these factors would help determine if *Brand Authenticity*, *Self-Esteem*, or *Purchasing Willingness* are more significantly affected.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the interplay between *Brand Authenticity*, *Self-Esteem*, and *Purchasing Willingness* in the context of celebrity-owned beauty brands on social media. The results indicate that celebrities boost purchasing willingness, whereas influencers enhance self-esteem. Interestingly, *Brand Authenticity* was not significantly influenced by the *person* or the *setting*, though it remained a key factor in *Purchasing Willingness*.

These findings refine theoretical frameworks such as the Meaning Transfer Model and Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing the complexity of authenticity in today's digital age. Practically, they suggest that brands should prioritize genuine, relatable content and a strategic blend of endorsers, as well as identifying the ideal use of personal and professional settings, to build trust and engage consumers effectively.

Despite limitations in sample size and distribution, this study opens avenues for future research with broader samples and longitudinal approaches. While particularly relevant to celebrity-owned beauty brands, these findings are also applicable to the wider beauty industry. Such efforts can provide deeper insights into consumer behaviour on social media, ultimately helping brands craft more effective and authentic engagement strategies.

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Appendices

In this paper, the use of ChatGPT was particularly significant in enhancing the writing style and vocabulary, especially in overcoming language barriers and correcting grammatical errors. It facilitated the rephrasing of sentences for better understanding, inspired new expressions, and offered clarity on any ambiguities encountered during the study.

Furthermore, the tool was valuable in identifying and correcting potential errors in R coding with RStudio. Following the application of ChatGPT, I, the researcher, thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed, taking full responsibility for the final outcome.

Appendix A

Demographics of Gender, Nationality, Profession, SM Frequency, and SM Time

Demographics	Percentage (%)	Count (n)
Gender		
Male	6.90	8
Female	92.24	107
Prefer not to say	0.86	1
Nationality		
German	84.48	98
Dutch	2.59	3
Other	12.07	14
Prefer not to say	0.86	1
Profession		
High School Student	10.34	12
University Student	59.48	69
Trainee or Apprentice	8.62	10
Employed	19.83	23
Prefer not to say	1.72	2
SM Frequency		
Frequently	74.14	86
Regularly	23.28	27
Occasionally	1.72	2
Rarely	0.86	1
SM Time		
Less than 10 minutes	5.17	6
10 - 30 minutes	31.03	36
30 minutes - 1 hour	32.76	38
1 - 2 hours	18.97	22
More than 2 hours	12.07	14

Appendix B

Survey

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research for my bachelor thesis, which focuses on the promotion of beauty products via Instagram and its effects on users.

This study is conducted by Lisa Sienkiewicz, a third-year Communication Science student at the University of Twente's Faculty of Behavioural Management and Social Sciences, Netherlands.

I will present the full aim and purpose of this study after you have completed the survey. This is to ensure that the answers provided are as unbiased as possible.

The survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. The data collected will be used for research and educational purposes and will be treated with absolute confidentiality. Your participation is anonymous, so the information you provide cannot be used to identify you in any way.

Requirements: This survey is intended for participants who use social media, have an interest in beauty/skincare products, and are familiar with Hailey Bieber. You do not need to have detailed knowledge about her or follow her on social media. It is only necessary to have a general understanding of who she is and recognize her as a celebrity.

If you have any questions, remarks, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at l.sienkiewicz@student.utwente.nl.

If you have concerns about this study that you wish to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee for the domain of Humanities & Social Sciences at the University of Twente at ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl.

Thank you very much for your efforts!

PS: Users of the research platform SurveyCircle.com will receive SurveyCircle points for their participation.

By clicking the "I agree" button below, you indicate that you have read this informed consent form and agree to participate in this research study.

- I agree (1)
- I do not agree (2)

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: General Information

How old are you?

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Other: (4) _____
- Prefer not to say (5)

What is your nationality?

- German (1)
- Dutch (2)
- Other: (3) _____
- Prefer not to say (4)
-

What is your profession?

- High school student (1)
 - University student (2)
 - Trainee or apprentice (3)
 - Employed (4)
 - Prefer not to say (5)
-

How often do you use Social Media? (e.g. Instagram or TikTok)

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (a few times a month) (2)
 - Occasionally (a few times a week) (3)
 - Regularly (daily) (4)
 - Frequently (multiple times per day) (5)
-

If you use Social Media, how long do you typically spend on it at a time?

- Less than 10 minutes (1)
 - 10 - 30 minutes (2)
 - 30 minutes - 1 hour (3)
 - 1 - 2 hours (4)
 - More than 2 hours (5)
-

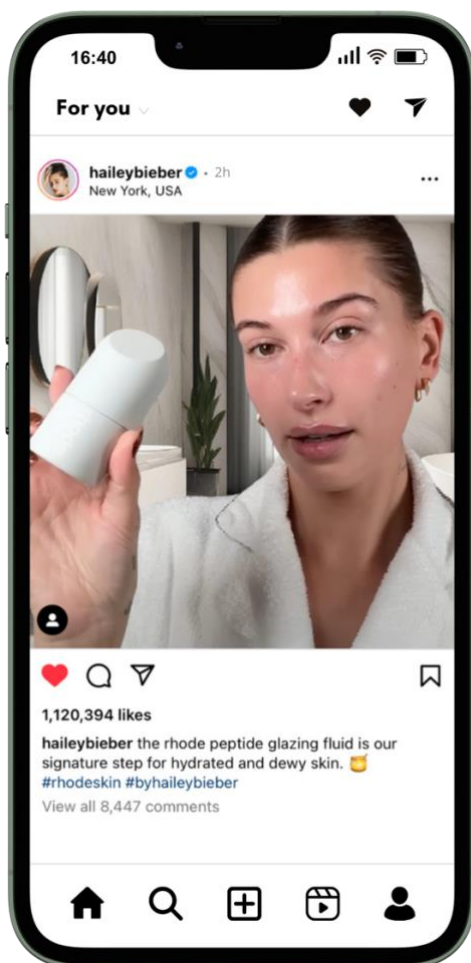
Do you know Hailey Bieber? (you do not need to have detailed knowledge about her or follow her on social media)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block: General Information

Start of Block: Stimulus 1: celebrity + personal

Here, you can see an Instagram post about a specific product from Hailey Bieber's skincare line, "Rhode Skin." Please take a moment to carefully examine it, as your responses to the following questions will be based on your perception and understanding of this post.



Need to view the image again? [Click here to go to the image](#)

1_A For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by selecting the option that best reflects your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The presentation of the product makes a genuine impression. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The presentation of the product is credible. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The presentation of the product is truthful and honest. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The aesthetics of the post are original. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The presentation of the product is natural. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The person makes a genuine impression. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The person projects credibility. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Need to view the image again? [Click here to go to the image](#)

1_B For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by selecting the option that best reflects your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I feel attractive. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with myself. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am pleased with my appearance. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident about myself. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a positive attitude towards myself. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Need to view the image again? [Click here to go to the image](#)

1_C For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by selecting the option that best reflects your opinion.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I would buy the product. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in the brand. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The product is interesting to me. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The price would not be my first priority. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the product is useful for me. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Stimulus 1: celebrity + personal

Start of Block: Manipulation check

Who was featured in the Instagram post you just viewed?

- Hailey Bieber (1)
 - An influencer (2)
 - I don't remember (3)
-

What type of setting was depicted in the Instagram post?

- A personal setting (e.g. at home, bathroom) (1)
- A professional setting (e.g. studio shoot) (2)
- I don't remember (3)

End of Block: Manipulation check

Start of Block: General Information 2

After answering all the questions, I would like to know more about your prior knowledge of the presented post.

Do you follow Hailey Bieber on any social media platform?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
-

Would you consider yourself a 'fan' of Hailey Bieber? This means being highly familiar with her social media presence and actively supporting her and her products attentively and regularly.

- Yes, I'm a big fan (1)
 - Yes, I like her (2)
 - Neutral (3)
 - No, I don't like her (4)
 - No, I strongly dislike her (5)
-

Did you know about her skincare brand "Rhode Skin" before taking this survey?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
-

Have you ever used or purchased any products from Rhode Skin in the past?

- Yes, but other products (1)
- Yes, the presented product (2)
- Yes, multiple products including the presented product (3)
- No (4)

End of Block: General Information 2

Thank you so much for your time spent taking this survey! Your response has been recorded.

For users of SurveyCircle (www.surveycircle.com) the survey code is: N6RJ-7NJD-T12Q-SVR6

Aim and Purpose of this Survey:

As mentioned in the beginning, I would like to enlighten you about the aim and purpose of the study. I am investigating the authenticity perceived by social media users in the context of celebrity products. In recent years, several beauty brands established by celebrities have gained prominence (e.g., Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, Kylie Cosmetics by Kylie Jenner, Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez, and Rhode Skin by Hailey Bieber). Celebrities, known for their careers in singing, acting, modeling, etc., have a significant advantage in reaching a wide audience and achieving easier market entry with their products and brands.

Their marketing strategies range from general campaign shoots to posts, stories, or videos showcasing their personal lives, demonstrating that they use their products and attributing

their appearance to these products. This opens new avenues for investigating how these personal vs. professional settings in combination with the presence of the celebrity vs. an influencer affect self-esteem and buying behavior. Such effects could be attributed to parasocial relationships and self-comparisons.

In this survey, you were presented with one of four different stimuli (celebrity vs. influencer and personal vs. professional setting). Based on what each participant saw, I expect to observe differences in self-esteem perceptions and the willingness to buy or try these products.
