Persuasive Communication Analysis of the Instagram Account of a Niqabi Beauty Influencer

Vinanda Cinta Cendekia Putri[1(✉)], Alem Febri Sonni[2], and Janisa Pascawati Lande[1]

[1] Magister Program Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia 90245
vinanda.cinta@gmail.com

[2] Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia 90245

Abstract. Beauty influencers are those who review beauty and skincare products on social media platforms, like Instagram. Generally, to persuade their followers, beauty influencers use their faces as their primary asset when reviewing beauty products. They do this by displaying a photo or video of their face before and after using a product to show the differences and changes that result from the use of beauty products. This study focuses on a niqabi influencer who reviews beauty products without showing their full face. To understand the persuasive communication model utilized by this niqabi beauty influencer, the researchers conducted a qualitative content analysis of the posts on the Instagram account @kinans.review, which has more than 145,000 followers. This study describes and analyses how @kinans.review uses persuasive messaging to build trust by developing source credibility without showing their full face. This research can contribute to researchers and influencers who want to understand the use of persuasive communication in the creation of social media content.

Keywords: Beauty influencer · niqab · persuasive communication · source credibility · social media

1 Introduction

Social media has had wide-ranging effects on modern society. It is a communication medium, a branding tool, a means for moderating relations between organizations and the public, and a marketing channel [1]. One of social media's most prominent functions is as a means of sharing user-made content in a variety of formats, from text to video. This has led to the emergence of a new type of public figure: social media influencers (SMI). According to Duffy, influencers are "a highly visible subset of digital content creators defined by their substantial following, distinctive brand persona, and patterned relationship with commercial sponsors." We can thus define SMIs as a subset of influencers who operate primarily on social media platforms [2].

Unlike traditional public figures and celebrities, influencers create their own content and regularly engage with their followers [3]. The persuasive power SMIs have over their followers, including the ability to influence consumer purchase decisions, is well documented and researched. Today, they are a key part of branding and marketing strategy [4].

Business Insider noted that nearly four out of five brands run brand campaigns on Instagram (75%), Facebook (46%), YouTube (36%), Twitter (24%) and LinkedIn (12%) [5]. This data shows that Instagram is the social media platform of choice for influencers campaigning brands. Additionally, creative agency We Are Social found that 84.4% of Indonesians are on Instagram [6]. Instagram's massive popularity has made it a promising market in the eyes of influencers and brands.

Since brands target specific demographics, SMIs are extremely specialized, each focused on a very specific audience of the online market. Those SMIs whose content are primarily focused on sharing opinions and information about beauty and beauty products are known as "beauty influencers". Research shows that beauty influencers often use their faces as their main asset when reviewing or speaking about beauty products. One example of how they do this is by showing photos or videos of their faces before and after using a product to highlight the differences and changes.

In Indonesia, women with niqab (a veil that covers the face from the nose to below the chin as well as the forehead; associated with Muslim women) who become influencers are more likely to work as hijab influencers (influencers whose content relates to hijab and Muslim women's fashion). From the researcher's observations, in Indonesia, there is only one niqabi beauty influencer profile on Instagram: @kinans.review. This profile is owned and managed by Kinanti Ambar, a niqabi influencer with more than 145,000 Instagram followers.

Because the face plays such an important part in the majority of beauty influencer content [7], the emergence of a niqabi influencer who reviews beauty products is unique. Women who wear niqab, or niqabi, typically wear long robes that conceal the shape of their bodies, avoid intricate and attention-drawing motifs, prefer dominantly dark colors, and wear large headscarves that cover the entire body and the niqab that covers the face [8]. In Indonesia, a social stigma attached to the niqab and niqabi. Many view the niqab and those who wear them in a negative light, often as religious fanatics [8]. Niqabi are often associated with extreme Islamism and terrorism.

How does a woman wearing a niqab attract social media users and gain a following by reviewing beauty products? From the above, the researcher has designed this study, which aims to understand the persuasive communication strategies used by niqabi beauty influencer @kinans.review to build follower trust and generate interest in a product.

Even though @kinans.review says that she prefers to be called a skincare enthusiast [9], in her post, @kinans.review doesn't just show her interest in products. @kinans.review is able to show herself as someone who can build relationships with beauty product sponsors and influence followers on social media.

This research also aims to offer insight into how social media influencers can design and plan their content in a way that builds audience trust.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Social Media Influencer

An influencer is a term that describes an online micro-celebrity with a significant following whose attitudes, opinions, and consumer behaviour they can influence. Modern digital marketing strategy revolves heavily around the use of influencers on social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter to improve brand image and reach specific market segments.

Duffy describes social media influencers as a subset of digital content creators defined by "their substantial online following, distinctive brand persona, and patterned relationship with commercial sponsors" [2]. Influencers are digital content creators that draw a mass audience, build a fan base, and act as a source of advice to their followers [10]. Due to their popularity and the potential of drawing a promising wage, the job of "influencer" is now considered a viable profession [10].

Belanche et al. compared influencers to traditional celebrities: "Influencers gather followers through their own self-developed content allowing followers to tap into the narratives they develop [11]. Sharing information with followers showcases the influencer's character who looks like a friend with similar interests. They are known for the closeness and expertise built into their social media activity. This is why influencers are often considered more credible than celebrities" [11]. Influencers provide their followers with information about brands that they love and use in their daily lives and even offer direct advice about the products their followers should or should not use [12].

Social media has also played a role in the rise of specialized influencers who focus on specific markets, such as food, fashion, and beauty products. This study explores beauty influencers as individuals with the expertise to influence their followers' attitudes and behaviour towards beauty products, specifically on Instagram. Beauty influencers promote beauty products through photo and video content in the form of video reviews, makeup tutorials, product photos, etc.[13].

Some studies explored how beauty influencers contribute to audience trust in beauty products. Beauty influencers use product reviews and their own credibility and trustworthiness to influence their followers' decision to purchase [13]. Beauty influencers have the power to change a consumer's purchase decisions or stimulate positive consumer attitudes and buying behaviours toward a product [14].

2.2   Persuasive Communication

The advent of information technology has led to massive, rapid changes in the way we communicate. Today, one can run and operate a business or influence another person without ever meeting in person [15]. The persuasion process is an attempt to influence a person's thoughts, actions, or behavior of a listener through the senses, but not through coercion or threat [16].

According to Bettinghause, one important aspect of persuasive communication is that it must be performed with the conscious intention to change the behavior of another person or group of other people by conveying some message content [17].

There are several basic components of persuasive communication, namely (1) the source (who), (2) the content (what), and the audience (to whom) [18]. The selection of a communicator must also be considered carefully to ensure the message or invitation conveyed will be received successfully.

The effectiveness of persuasive communication is built on the credibility of the influencer conveying the message [18]. Audiences are more willing to accept messages from an influencer that they perceive as credible. It can be concluded that the more credible an influencer is, the greater their audience's trust in them, and the greater their ability to influence their audience.

2.3 Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness

Previous research discussed how influence build influence through trust. Chekima found that an audience perception of an influencer's physical attractiveness, expertise, and trust were significantly positively correlated to consumer attitudes toward an advertisement and brand, which, in turn, predicted consumer decision to buy a cosmetic product [19]. Lou, in their study, found that can choose to make informative posts and signify attractiveness and similarity with their followers, which had the effect of positively shaping their followers' trust in their branded posts [20].

Kim and Kim (2021) note that source credibility and source attractiveness are exchanged for follower trust [21] Ohanian defines source credibility as "positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message" [22]. Hovland et al. (1953) explained that the dimensions of source credibility are mostly grouped into two categories, namely the speaker's expertise and the speaker's intention [21]. While source attractiveness places greater emphasis on attention and engagement resulting from the attractiveness of the source. The source attractiveness model considers source characteristics such as familiarity, similarity, liking, and attractiveness. In the context of influencer marketing, physical attractiveness and homophily are adopted as two dimensions of source attractiveness [21]. Referring to the research conducted by Kim and Kim (2021), influencer characteristics that drive audience trust can be drawn from the source credibility model dimensions of expertise and authenticity in tandem with the source attractiveness model dimensions of physical attractiveness and homophily. However, Kim and Kim (2021) found that physical attractiveness there was no significant correlation between physical attractiveness and audience trust. Their study thus concludes that there are three predictors of audience trust: expertise, authenticity, and homophily [21]. In some studies, homophily is also referred to as similarity [18] or relatability [23]. Based on this, this study measures the influencer characteristics of expertise, authenticity and relatability, taken from the source credibility model and source attractiveness model, and how they are used to build audience trust.

Expertise shows a person's understanding of what is being discussed. This can be seen when someone is able to provide correct information to others [18, 21]. Consumers are more accepting and trusting of influencers who collaborate with brands that fit their field of expertise [20]. Hoffman said that expertise is domain-specific because it demonstrates knowledge in a specific area [18].

Authenticity is shown when Influencers demonstrate sincerity/honesty in expressing personal opinions that are consistent with their brand identity. White explained

that authenticity is a critical determinant, as audiences seek out opinions that they can trust, and this is decided by the trustworthiness of a source. Sources must display high consistency in values, attitude, and behavior, so that audiences may respond positively [24].

While relatability (homophily in the source attractiveness model) refers more to the perceived similarity in the beliefs, values, experiences, and lifestyle of the communicator by the recipient [21]. Regarding relatability, Forbes said, "The influencer shares a connection with their consumer audience. They give personal accounts and experiences that cause a sympathetic relationship with their peers" [23].

3   Method

Content analysis was performed on all posts uploaded to the @kinans.review Instagram profile during the month of January 2022. Using a modified version of the coding sheet used in a study by Klassen et al. on food industry brands [25], a team of three coders—two co-authors of this paper and one Master's student in communication science—evaluated posts uploaded to the feed of the @kinans.review Instagram profile for the month of January 2022. Coding was performed on each piece of content, evaluating it for characteristics of expertise, authenticity, and relatability. The coders also took note of whether the post contained images of the speaker's face or body, whether it was sponsored, whether it contained self-branding, the tone of the post, what promotional and engagement strategies were employed in the post, and the topic of the post. Any disagreements were settled by a majority decision.

4   Results and Discussion

4.1   Research Results

The @kinans.review profile uploaded to its feed 25 times during the month of January 2022.

Evaluation Categories.

Post Type. 20 posts and 5 reels were uploaded. At the time of data collection, the most liked post received 10,347 likes and the most liked reel received 12,171 likes.

Post Formats. All 25 posts and reels contained text, either overlaid onto an image or video or as a post description. 18 of them displayed product photos and 20 of them displayed videos in the form of videos of product usage or product reviews.

Self-portrait. The @kinans.review profile rarely uploaded images of the speaker's face. Of the 25 posts and reels, only 5 showed the speaker's face (20%), 4 of which were reels. Three posts did not show the speaker at all.

Tone. Nearly all posts used serious language with a positive tone. @kinans.review uses casual language in reviewing beauty products, incorporating informal terms such as "aku" (instead of the more formal saya (me)), "yokkk" (let's go), "udah" (an abbreviated spelling of the word sudah (Done)), "tuh" (an informal variant of the word itu (that)). Messages were occasionally delivered in a spirited style, but not in a way that reduced its seriousness or positive tone.

Self-branded hashtags. The @kinans.review profile always incorporates some for of self-branding into its content. This self-branding is usually in the form of hashtags, such as #kinanskin101 or #kinansapprove. These self-branding hashtags were even used on sponsored posts created in collaboration with brands, often by combining the name "kinan" with the brand's name or product name (e.g. #kinansreviewazarin).

Strategy. In its content, @kinans.review tends to display product photos, personal testimonials, and statistics and facts. Personal testimonials comprised of the sharing of the speaker's personal opinions or experiences regarding the use of the product. In addition, @kinan.review frequently provides data or facts related to the beauty product being reviewed or sponsored. This data includes laboratory results, ingredients lists, and product prices.

Engagement. @kinans.review engages with users in the comments section of every post. The profile also often uploads content answering questions from the comments sections of previous posts. The profile very rarely uses calls to action in its content (only 3 of 25 uploads, or 12%).

Content Topic. The majority of the content uploaded to @kinans.review is either beauty product reviews or personal testimonials. 18 of the 25 @kinans.review content uploads evaluated in this study involved beauty products. Three of the 25 posts related to religious topics. Six content uploads were personal stories and 3 showed the speaker engaging in daily activities.

Sponsorship. 18 of the 25 posts evaluated in this study were brand sponsored posts. Each sponsored post included a product-specific hashtag. Many sponsored posts also included sponsor hashtags and logos.

Influencer Characteristics

Posts with the most likes (above 3000) tend to have the character of expertise and authenticity. The character of expertise, authenticity and reliability itself is built by displaying engagement in the form of questions, calls to action and the habit of influencers who always reply to comments from their followers.

Expertise.

Content analysis results found that 22 out of 25 posts evaluated in this study displayed expertise, defined as understanding and knowledge of the subject being discussed (in this case beauty products) in providing suggestions or describing or reviewing products. All content evaluated as displaying expertise used serious language and a positive tone.

The @kinans.review profile replies to comments on every post. These comment replies often contain answers to skincare- and beauty-related questions, further displaying source expertise.

The @kinans.review profile frequently includes ingredients lists of reviewed products, as well as statistics and supporting data related to a product's contents (Figs. 1, 2 and 3).

Authenticity

All 25 posts and reels evaluated in this study contained content that displayed authenticity, defined as demonstrating honesty/truthfulness in expressing a personal opinion that is consistent with the brand's identity.
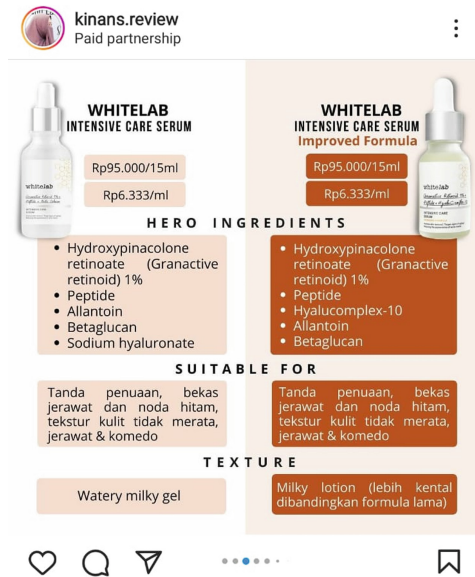
Fig. 1. Beauty product ingredients list uploaded on the @kinans.review Instagram profile

Fig. 2. Image of @kinans.review replying to a user comment. @kinans.review often uses engagement reply comments to show expertise.

Many product reviews uploaded to @kinans.review successfully portray authenticity. The speaker does this by expressing personal critiques of the reviewed product. Interestingly, this is usually accompanied by a qualifying statement purposed to keep the overall language positive in tone. For example, the speaker often appends negative statements with a skincare or beauty tip (as seen in Fig. 4).

Relatability

Only 4 of 25 content evaluated in this study (16%) displayed relatability, defined as content that related to the speaker's personal life or problems. When @kinans.review does talk about the speaker's personal life, it is usually in the form of videos of the speaker performing daily activities, or, more frequently, related to the relationship between beauty products and religion.

When the @kinans.review profile uploads relatable content, it tends to also include the speaker's face. The 2 posts that showed relatability were uploaded in reel format and
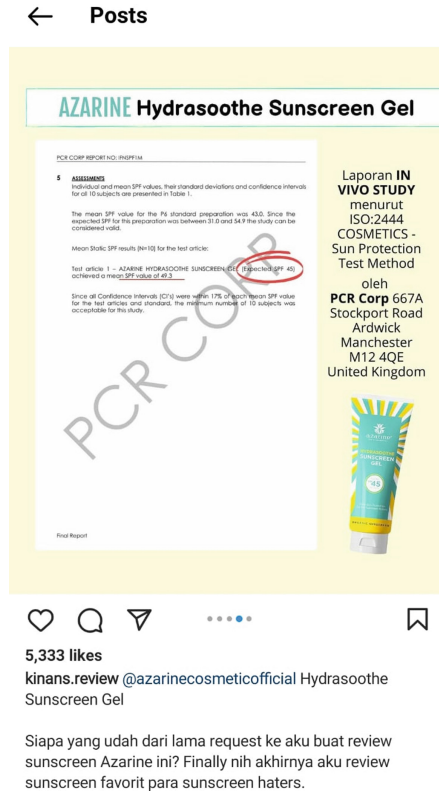
Fig. 3. @kinans.review also uses statistics as a show of expertise.

discussed religious topics, such as the use of perfume during prayer and the use of halal nail polish during prayer (Fig. 5).

The following table describes the number and percentage of posts from @kinans.review related to character and engagement.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Measuring Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability was measured by calculating simple percent agreement. Various experts suggest that a level of agreement within the range of 75–90% is acceptable [26, 27]. Landis and Koch recommended interpreting an agreement of 61–80% as substantial and 81% or higher to be interpreted as a nearly perfect agreement [28].

Absolute percentage agreement between coders was 66.29%. According to Landis and Koch, this indicates a substantial agreement between coders. However, looking at the coding measures individually, the results showed that the percent agreement for 10 of the 27 coded items measured was below 61%. This indicates that further work must be done to improve the descriptions and examples used to help define said measures for coders.

Fig. 4. Authenticity is expressed through honest commentary in reviews delivered with a positive tone.

Content analysis via coding is both an iterative and a deductive process, and this version of the coding sheet has not been finalized. As expected, more abstract concepts, like "positive tone" and "serious tone", were among the coding measures with the lowest percent agreement (20%). Interestingly, some measures that were assumed to be unambiguous at the start of the study also had low percent agreements. For example, the coders could not come to a significant agreement as to whether or not a piece of content contained a statistic or fact (16% agreement between coders).

Percent agreement was also low for the item measuring whether or not the speaker or content creator offered a question to their audience (48% agreement between coders).

The item with the second lowest percent agreement was "Call to Action" (12%), showing that the coders were either unsure of what a Call to Action is, or that they could not tell whether or not a post contained a Call to Action.

Inter-coder reliability for "Logo" was surprisingly low at 48%. A similar issue seems to be behind the low percent agreement of the "Sponsor hashtag" coding measure. In both cases, coders found it difficult to tell if the logo or hashtag being used on the @kinan.review post was entirely self-branding or an official promotional hashtag related to the product being reviewed.

Fig. 5. Two reels that express relatability.

Table 1. Percentage of @kinans.review posts that expressed each influencer characteristic

		Number of Posts	Percentage (%)
Influencer Characteristic	Expertise	22	88%
	Authenticity	25	100%
	Relatability	4	16%
Total Posts		25	

Inter-coder agreement for the "Word play" measure was also poor (48%). This indicates that the coders could not come to an agreement as to what constituted wordplay based on the definition provided alone.

The measure with the lowest percent agreement was "Sharing" (8%), defined as "content focused on intimate discussions or the sharing of personal experiences." These results will be used to inform revisions for future versions of the coding sheet.

The remainder of this discussion will focus on the 17 coding measures for which there was substantial agreement between coders. For these coding measures, any disagreements were decided by the majority choice. Crucially, percent agreements for the

three influencer characteristics that are predictors of trustworthiness—expertise (76% agreement), authenticity (96% agreement), and reliability (72% agreement)—were sufficient for further analysis. Percent agreement for "Sponsored" was also quite high at 92%.

4.2.2 Analyzing How @kinans.review Uses Instagram

All of the feed posts on the @kinans.review profile during the month of January 2022 contained either an image or a video. This is hardly surprising—Instagram does not let its users upload plain text content.

Almost all posts analyzed in this study were reviews or testimonials of skincare products. Nearly all posts contained both an image and a video. The images were mostly product shots, some clearly taken from promo images and others apparently shot by @kinans.review herself. Occasionally, the account uploaded photos of parts of Kinans' face or body, almost always to show the effect of a skincare product on the skin.

@kinans.review tends to use video as a medium for answering questions from her followers or to provide short-form tutorial content. @kinans.review consistently showed a part of their body, usually their hand. Rarely, they will also upload close-up shots of their facial skin or a wide shot of their face, usually largely veiled by a niqab or a face mask. @kinans.review never displayed their full face in the feed content analyzed for this study. Hashtags are a major part of the branding strategy of the @kinans.review Instagram profile. All the feed content analyzed for this study included at least one self-brand hashtag. These hashtags usually included the name Kinans in some way (e.g. #kinansapproved).

The study found that while @kinans.review sometimes did not directly disclaim sponsorships in the caption text of their feed content, they did consistently tag skincare brands behind the product being discussed. All sponsored posts were tagged as paid partnerships. Only a small portion of feed content on the @kinans.review Instagram profile directly discusses religion or religion-related topics. The @kinans.review profile page does have a dedicated "Religion" highlight section. The religious content uploaded to the @kinans.review Instagram profile typically discussed topics relating to both skincare and religion.

4.2.3 Analyzing Influencer Characteristics

Table 1 provides a summary of how often the @kinans.review profile demonstrated the three influencer characteristics the literature review found were predictors of trustworthiness (and thus effectiveness of persuasive communication) [18, 21].

Results showed that the @kinans.review profile very rarely demonstrated relatability in its content (only 16% of all evaluated content). In contrast, authenticity and expertise were demonstrated in 100% and 88% of all evaluated uploads, respectively. The few posts that did demonstrate relatability were reels that showed the speaker's face and discussed topics relating to religion or personal stories relating to skin conditions and how beauty products can help treat them.

On January 1, 2022, @kinans.review uploaded an image of the speaker's facial skin around the forehead and cheek as an example of "normal" skin without beauty filters.

This post received the second most likes among all content in the sample group. The post was accompanied by a description with statements like "Semua orang juga gitu kok" (translated: everybody is like that) and the text "ini kulit manusia normal" (translated: this is normal human skin) overlaid atop the photo (Fig. 6).

Kim and Kim (2021) found that relatability was a significant predictor of audience trust [21]. Interestingly, the @kinans.review Instagram profile rarely uploads relatable content. This may be related to an apprehensiveness on the part of the speaker, a niqabi, to include their face in content. The reasoning behind this apparently deliberate decision to refrain from uploading relatable content is something that warrants exploration through further research.

Authenticity is the most significant of the three influencer characteristics Kim and Kim (2021) found to be predictors of audience trust [21]. All @kinans.review content evaluated for this study demonstrated authenticity. The fact that the vast majority of the profile's content is sponsored makes this even more notable, exhibiting an adeptness at maintaining perceived authenticity despite audience knowledge of sponsorship.

For the purposes of the content analysis, authenticity as defined as demonstrating honesty/truthfulness in expressing a personal opinion consistent with the brand's identity. In conducting sponsored skincare reviews, @kinans.review can still appear honest in expressing their opinions. Examples can be seen in Figs. 4 and 7.

One example of authenticity is seen when @kinans.review brings up the faults and flaws of the sponsored products being reviewed. In the picture above, @kinans.review addresses the flaws of Azarin Sunscreen with a positive tone: "Mungkin akan berasa agak kering" (translated: it might feel a bit dry). @kinans.review tends to append negative statements with tips or advice. In this case, following the criticism with: "tapi bisa banget dilayer dengan moisturizer sebelumnya" (translated: but it can be layered with a moisturizer beforehand). In another example, the speaker honestly expressed the clumping tendencies of another Azarin product: "Beberapa kali aku ngalamin dia kayak berkumpul di satu spot" (translated: "In several instances, it felt like the product clumped in one spot."), but this statement is then accompanied with the following sentence: "But you have to be careful when blending not to rub too much." This illustrates how the @kinans.review profile demonstrates authenticity and expertise with serious language and a positive tone.

The results showed that only 20% of the posts presented parts of the face. This is interesting because @kinans.review has succeeded in demonstrating source credibility without frequent displaying of the face and body parts, despite the profile's content largely covering beauty product reviews. This shows that audience trust can be developed without presenting imagery of the face or body in beauty-related content, a finding that is in line with several previous studies which have proven that physical attractiveness is not a significant predictor of trust [21, 29].

Previous studies that explored the relationship between physical attractiveness and audience trust in influencers did not include niqabi influencers in their samples [18, 21, 29]. For the current study, physical attractiveness was difficult to measure due to the limitations a niqabi holds themselves to with regards to portraying physical images of the self in content.
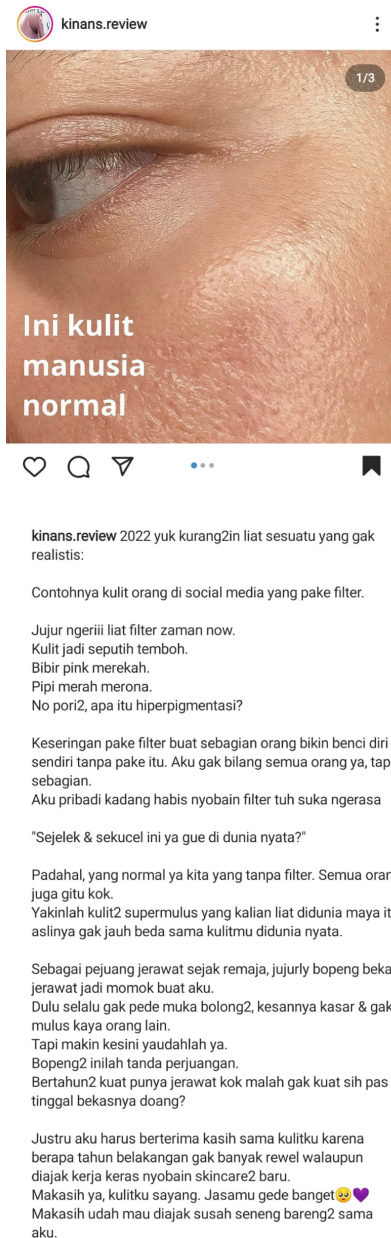
Fig. 6. A post demonstrating relatability.

Another finding of this study explains the relationship between relatability and physical attractiveness in content uploaded by the @kinans.review Instagram profile. @kinans.review showed parts of the speaker's face (from the forehead to just below the eyes) in all content that demonstrated relatability. However, there were only four

Fig. 7. A post that expresses authenticity.

instances of content that demonstrated relatability (16%). As physical image is necessary for evaluating physical attractiveness, the lack of @kinans.review content demonstrating relatability (and, thus, the speaker's face) made it impossible to reliably evaluate the speaker's physical attractiveness.

5   Conclusion

In persuading the audience, @kinans.review builds audience trust by demonstrating the characteristics of expertise, authenticity, and relatability. Of the three characteristics, authenticity and expertise are most often demonstrated in the content uploaded by @kinans.review.

Authenticity is demonstrated through the honest expression of personal, often critical, opinions when reviewing beauty products. These criticisms are always delivered with a positive tone.

The @kinans.review profile demonstrates expertise through the use of statistics, data, ingredients lists, and engaging with users through replies in the comments or uploading answers to user questions as content.

@kinans.review content that demonstrates relatability tends to be either information sharing on the relationship of beauty products with religion or personal experiences, and not product reviews, which make up the bulk of the profile's content. Content uploaded by @kinans.review that demonstrates relatability tends to show part of the face. However, @kinans.review rarely demonstrates relatability in the content they upload.

The study also found that @kinans.review, as a niqabi influencer, shows parts of the speaker's face in only 20% of the content evaluated. This shows that the presenting of the face is not necessary for building audience trust in beauty product review content.

Future research could expand on these findings by increasing the sample size and further exploring the relationship between influencers and followers. Another potentially interesting study could look into how niqabi influencers portray themselves in social media posts. In-depth interviews with niqabi influencers can explore their goals and motivations in building persuasive content on social media platforms.

Authors' Contributions. Vinanda Cinta Cendekia Putri developed the concept of the work, arranged the ideas presented, collected data and performed coding. Janisa Pascawati Lande was responsible for coding, data collection, theory development, and interpretation of the results. Alem Febri Sonni verified the methods and theories, and supervised the research results. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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