The beauty blogging phenomenon

and the effect beauty bloggers have on their readers

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22-06-2015
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Preface

Nerves started kicking in the moment I received an invitation to attend a meeting which would inform me about writing the bachelor's thesis. I have heard all kinds of terrifying stories about writing a thesis, so it was safe to say I was not really looking forward to this last semester of blood, sweat and tears (or so they have told me). After receiving some practical information about what was to be expected from us students, I had to choose a subject for my thesis from a list of about forty topics. Right there, at the very bottom, I saw it; a shining light at the end of the tunnel. This topic made my day, and looking back, my entire semester quite a bit better: Beauty blogs.

It is safe to say I have a massive weakness for all products that are beauty-related, so when I am not buying such products or putting them on myself, I like to read about them on beauty blogs on a daily basis. This I have been doing for several years now and I am not ashamed of admitting that I have developed quite an addiction to these kinds of blogs. Of course, the benefits of writing a thesis about beauty blogs meant actually spending time on these blogs, which I did not mind one bit. Also, having built up knowledge from all the years I have already been following beauty blogs made me have a lot of useful insights in the world of beauty blogging, which came in rather handy when writing this thesis. I felt in my place and am very grateful that I was granted this topic.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my one and only fellow beauty lover Robin Schaap, for sharing this addiction and topic with me. It made working on a thesis a lot more fun. Also, much gratitude for my supervisor Piia Varis and my second reader Mingyi Hou, for always being supportive and believing in scientific research on the topic of beauty blogs. And last but not least, all of my friends and family for their love and support. To anyone who will be reading this; enjoy!

Abstract

This research addressed the popular phenomenon of beauty blogs and what their effect is on their readers. The aim of this thesis was to find out what kind of effects beauty blogs thus have on their public. A case study about the most popular Dutch beauty blog, Beautygloss, is presented to give a clear overview of what a beauty blog entails. Furthermore, an online questionnaire was used to collect data which was spread via Twitter and Facebook. The results show that there is indeed an effect that beauty bloggers have when it comes to readers' judgements of trustworthiness and their buying behaviour. Also, it is considered that beauty blogs will become a (more) important form of marketing in the future.

1 Introduction

A phenomenon that has been coming up and rising quickly these past few years is that of beauty blogging. It has become a worldwide hype that captures a lot of (mostly) women's attention. One might wonder what exactly is a beauty blog? To put it simply, it is an online blog that is usually managed by a young woman who writes about beauty-related content. This beauty-related content mostly consists of reviewing beauty products such as cosmetics and skincare, filming make-up tutorials and giving fashion tips. All of this is done with a lot of enthusiasm and, what looks like, a lot of knowledge about the subjects these beauty bloggers are speaking of. To an outsider, this phenomenon may seem strange, but many beauty blogs all around the world have gathered a massive fanbase over the years and some bloggers have even reached celebrity status, not to mention even becoming producers of their own line of cosmetics. The American beauty blogger Michelle Phan[1] is a great illustration of this, as she reached all these goals starting from scratch, and one might say this beauty blogger is an inspiration to most (upcoming) bloggers and even companies to work together with.

The example of Michelle Phan might be the *'All American dream',* but here in the Netherlands some beauty bloggers are starting to gain celebrity status and a large fanbase too. From what started as simple beauty blogs with short (amateuristic) reviews and photographs that were of rather bad quality (eg. taken with a webcam), the blogs nowadays are elaborately written and accompanied by pictures taken with professional cameras. Companies send popular beauty blogs a massive amount of free products for them to review on their site and some even hope for a collaboration, like the blogger Cynthia Schultz from the blog MissLipgloss[2] being featured in a short program about make-up on TLC, which is a Dutch television channel. Some bloggers are even offered book deals (MissLipgloss, Beautygloss[3] and BeautyLab[4]) or have offers to record their own hit song, like Teske de Schepper, owner of the blog Teskuh. These are just a small number of ways beauty bloggers earn their money, for it is their full-time job. They also get paid hundreds, if not thousands of Euros each month for the amount of YouTube hits they receive. The most popular Dutch beauty blogger Beautygloss for instance, gets close to 100.000 views each day on her daily videos.

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[1] www.michellephan.com (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[2] www.misslipgloss.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[3] www.beautygloss.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[4] www.beautylab.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)

Looking at numbers, which will be further discussed later on, Mascha Feoktistova from Beautygloss is indeed the most popular beauty blogger in the Netherlands, she was also the first one. It is no wonder why in May 2015, she has hosted the Beautygloss Party for the fifth year in a row. This party gives her viewers a chance to meet her and to have fun at a beauty themed party. Mascha Feoktistova was the first blogger in the Netherlands to host this kind of an event and many others followed in her footsteps. So not only does she influence her own viewers but also her fellow colleagues. It is not surprising then, that she is sponsored by a lot of companies, has her own book published and has a clothing line in collaboration with Dutch fashion icon Josh V. To illustrate the growth and popularity of Beautygloss, and other beauty blogs, a case study is performed and will be discussed below. The choice to do a case study on this blog is because of its immense popularity and personal preference, for this was the first beauty blog I came in contact with myself. Also, this blog can be generalized to other blogs in the Netherlands when it comes to their development and trends. The evidence for this can be noted in the copying behaviour of other, perhaps competing, beauty blogs. For instance, Beautygloss was the first blog to host a beauty themed party/event, many other blogs followed this example. Also, before Beautygloss started personal vlogging (video blogging), no other beauty blog in the Netherlands was doing this.

1.1 The case study: Beautygloss

Today, the most popular Dutch beauty vlogger (Beautygloss) on YouTube has 364.047 subscribers and has 317.431.795 page views on her personal site Beautygloss.nl (21-03-2015). From what started as a simple blog about beauty and make-up, Mascha Feoktistova has turned Beautygloss into one of the biggest and most popular beauty blogs in the Netherlands. Today, according to Feoktistova (2014) this blog that once started out as a hobby, is the main source of income not only for Beautygloss, but several beauty blogs in the Netherlands, hence it is a fulltime job for her.

The thing that stands out is that most blogs all started out small, unknown and somewhat amateuristically. When we look at beauty blogs nowadays they are very well written, and photos/videos are taken with professional equipment (high end cameras, lights), as opposed to webcam shots in earlier days. Another interesting aspect is that most bloggers are self-taught, meaning they are not professionals of any kind. Anything they show on their site, such as make-up tutorials or reviews are based on their personal experiences without having a degree in beauty/make-up.

On September 5th 2015, Beautygloss will have existed eight years. The biggest differences between the articles she publishes today and those she published eight years ago is in the quality. The quality of the articles has not only improved when it comes to the written text, but to many more aspects which will be discussed further below. When looking at articles that have been written eight years ago, the length of the written text is very striking; from articles with a few words (100-300) that usually consists of the author's opinion to articles that contain many more facts and product information with a word count of approximately 500-1000. While comparing articles it is very noticeable that the blogger's writing skills, visible for instance in article length and the quality of the content, have improved a great deal over the years due to experience.

Another striking difference when it comes to quality, is the quality of photographs that accompany the articles. Nowadays, Beautygloss uses a professional photo camera with lights, screens and photo shopping programs. Back in the day however, it was common to make photos with a webcam, cell phone or a regular digital camera. The same goes for making videos that used to be shot with a webcam and thus resulted in poor quality. Nonetheless, these articles and videos were already being watched massively because Beautygloss was the first beauty blogger in the Netherlands. Viewers simply did not have much choice in looking for other (Dutch) blogs since these articles and videos were the only ones produced by a Dutch person.

Ever since the beginning in 2007, one or two articles and/or videos were posted by Beautygloss each day, although not in the same structured way it is done today (on set times, and each day pf the week has its own theme, for instance 'Tutorial Tuesday'). This is a trend that continues to this day and what most blogs have as an unwritten guideline to insure a high number of page views. Ideally a blogger would like the viewers to come back every day, if not multiple times a day. This is why most bloggers choose to post two articles/videos per day on specific and structured times so that viewers know that each day, multiple times, something new can be found on the blog. Usually the posts come out in the morning and afternoon. The structure and steadiness is an important difference between now and almost eight years ago and these are features which viewers have grown fond of. This is especially noticeable when, for instance, the upload of a post goes wrong and it does not appear online in time; viewers will try to contact the blogger via Twitter, Facebook and/or Instagram to ask what has happened and when they can expect the post.

Another big difference between then and now is the point of focus. A few years ago when beauty blogs were up and coming, the bloggers mainly focussed on everything to do with makeup, beauty and tutorials about those subjects. Now, the fans seem to have taken an interest in the personal lives of their favourite bloggers. It seems that the more popular the bloggers become, thus having more fans, the more interested those fans become in their personal lives. In the Netherlands this is a trend that has gone viral in about two years' time: Each day, Beautygloss posts a video of what she does all day in her life in addition to articles about make-up/beauty. These videos are referred to as vlogs (video blogs). In this thesis I will refer to vlogging as being videos about the blogger's personal life. Professional content about beauty, tutorials and non-personal related subjects will be referred to as blogging. When looking at Beautygloss's regular professional YouTube channel and her Vloggloss channel which is about her personal life, it can be seen that she receives about the same number of video views on both channels, which is really interesting. Many other beauty bloggers have, in a way, followed this trend. Some also chose to make vlogs, others invented *plogs;* picture blogs. A plog is basically the same as a vlog, only the blogger does not film her entire day, but takes pictures during the day and puts these pictures on her site accompanied by some text explaining what she was doing that day. It makes one wonder whether there are followers who only watch her vlogs without also watching her professional YouTube channel. This trend is seen amongst all the popular beauty bloggers, since they are followed by more people than the less famous/starting out bloggers. So is it that the more popular the blogger is, the more interested the fans are in their daily life?

Another trend that emerged only a few years ago is the start of massive collaborations between well-known companies, television and beauty bloggers. Beautygloss, for instance, is frequently invited to television shows to talk about beauty and/or give her opinion on a beauty-related matter, since she is regarded as a professional. In 2014, she got to publish her own book, Happy Life, which became a number one bestseller on the website bol.com[5]. Furthermore, Beautygloss was the first blogger to host her own party: the Beautygloss Party. This is an event where anyone can buy a ticket to, and enjoy the presence of the blogger next to shopping at different stands, seeing performances or attending workshops. This year, 2015, was the fifth edition of the party and it is attended by thousands of viewers that are fans of this particular blogger. Image 1 illustrates the popularity and immensity of the Beautygloss party. Also, tickets for the Beautygloss party in 2016 are already for sale. One might then wonder

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[5] http://www.bol.com/nl/p/happy-life/9200000026018759/ (date of access 18-06-2015)

whether Mascha Feoktistova has reached a celebrity status.

     As discussed above, it is seen that Beautygloss is a very popular beauty blog in the Netherlands and is therefore a representative case when looking at what kind of effect(s) beauty blogs have on their audience. Also, it is very interesting to see the way companies are starting to see beauty blogs as a new way of marketing, hence the many collaborations they have had.

Image 1: The Beautygloss party. Source: http://glamourmoes.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/20140503_145021.jpg
(date of access: 18-06-2015)

2 Literature review

The following section will contain a literature review focusing on the aspects of the influence a beauty blogger has on her audience when it comes to self-presentation, their personal branding, trustworthiness and credibility and finally some literature concerning blog marketing. At the end of this section the main research question and the accompanying subquestions will be presented.

2.1 Self-presentation

When watching a vlog or reading an article a beauty blogger has posted, one could wonder why they chose to film a particular video the way they did or why they wrote something this way and not another way. Self-presentation is an important aspect in a beauty blogger's life, for it influences how their viewers see them. According to Goffman's (1959) theory of identity and social performance, self-presentation is the intentional component of identity that is maintained through consistently performing coherent and complementary behaviours. This process is also known as impression management. For beauty bloggers, it is important to maintain a positive image that viewers like and can relate to by presenting oneself in a particular way. Beauty bloggers know who their audience is so they can adapt their self-presentation to match their viewers' preferences. This is where viewer interaction comes in, as often the beauty bloggers will ask the opinion of their viewers and they massively react to these questions so the blogger will know what to do and how to present themselves in a desirable manner. Personal vlogging can be a great way to maintain and/or enhance the impression management used by the beauty blogger.

With a shift from blogging purely about beauty-related products and reviewing make-up to filming bits and pieces from the blogger's everyday life, it is interesting to look at the aspect of the private and public self-exposure. What used to be only private is now also becoming public for the viewers. When looking at the case of Beautygloss, it can be seen that since November 2014, she has posted a vlog about her daily life every day. This means she records parts of her day on camera and uploads this on the web for viewers to see. Apparently this appeals to a lot of her viewers, since there are 107.326 subscribers to her daily video channel called Vloggloss (06-05-2015). The way beauty bloggers present themselves in a vlog helps build a certain image because the blogger will show parts of her daily life to which their viewers can relate. It is expected that the more a beauty blogger shows parts of her personal life, the more their viewers will get the feeling of knowing that blogger on a more personal level.

2.2 Personal branding

For a beauty blogger that runs a fulltime blog that is their main source of income, personal branding is a very important factor. According to Montoya (2002), people do not buy products for rational reasons only but also have emotional ones. This is why a brand is important, as it creates an emotional connection with the buyer. In the case of beauty bloggers, the buyer is replaced with the viewer and the brand is the blogger herself. Their goal is to have as many views as possible so that they can gain profit and popularity. Not only is this personal branding important for their viewers but also for companies that want to promote their new products endorsed by a particular blogger. According to Vos, van de Looy and Brouwer (2014), beauty blogger Serena Verbon, creator of Beautylab.nl, has said that she tries to present her in the best way possible so that people will see the best version of herself on social media platforms. She also stated that when she receives a lot of negative responses from her viewers on for instance a photo, she will delete it because she thinks this will affect her personal brand. Serena Verbon's statement goes together with the view of Dutta (2010), who says that social media is of essential value for personal branding and is here to stay. As for promoting their brand and/or self, most beauty bloggers also have give-away contests whenever they reach a certain number of subscribers and some of them even host their own beauty themed parties which their viewers can attend. These kind of interactive events help build emotional bonds between the blogger and the viewers as stated above. Also, all kinds of social media is used extensively by almost every blogger. A beauty blogger these days has a YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and BlogLovin' channel. This backs up Dotta's claim that social media has changed the way people do business.

2.3 Trustworthiness and credibility

One aspect of the job of being a beauty blogger is reviewing products. When a beauty blogger is as popular as Beautygloss, most of the reviewed products are those that are sent to her by companies. The idea is that the blogger gets free products to test and review on their site and the companies get free publicity for their products, meaning companies do not have to spend extra money on marketing once they have sent their product to a blogger. The companies know that if the blogger positively reviews the product, the viewers of that blogger will want to buy that product. This is a technique a lot of companies use, namely celebrity endorsement. It is a marketing technique that makes use of celebrities in advertising their products (Erdogan, 1999). This does, however also lead to companies offering high-end, luxurious products wanting to promote their products while most viewers are teenagers and/or young

adults who, mostly, cannot afford these kinds of products. Also, a popular beauty blogger has a lot of fans who like her and trust her opinion when it comes to beauty products. Cialdini (1984) states that we are more likely to be influenced by the people we like, are similar to ourselves or find physically attractive. In the beauty blogger scene, a lot of (young) women are inspired by, or want to be like their favourite beauty blogger. This is noticeable when looking at the comments the viewers post on articles or videos. It is thus very interesting to test how much viewers actually rely on their favourite blogger's opinion when buying (beauty-related) products, also taking into consideration Zajonc's (1968) mere exposure effect which states that people tend to develop a preference for things and/or people they are frequently exposed to. Therefore, it will be interesting to find out whether there might be a difference between the people who visit beauty blogs more often and those who do not.

2.4 Blog marketing

There is no beauty blogger in the Netherlands that has yet revealed how much money they make with their blog. But since running their beauty blog is a fulltime job and the only source of income, one can expect they make a reasonable amount of money each month. This assumption is based on the fact that the bloggers go on vacations frequently and can afford to buy luxurious products that most people with regular jobs could not afford. This is where blog marketing enters the picture. According to Kirby and Marsden (2006), blog marketing is the use of blogs to promote a brand, company, product or service, event or some other initiative. This definition describes a beauty blog quite perfectly; they review sponsored products, talk about certain brands and most recently, they also collaborate with companies. Because of the popularity of blogs, companies have found a way to exploit this sector, to increase the effectiveness of their online ads by, for example putting their ads on the blog's website (Hsu & Lin, 2007). This is something that has not gone unnoticed for the viewers of the blog. Almost every blog has got a banner on their site for some product or brand, their videos frequently feature commercial ads and collaborations are also seen, such as a dress designed by Beautygloss and produced by the clothing label Josh V. Looking at this, there is no denying that blogs are becoming a very important form of marketing, and companies are well aware of it. Companies have realised that traditional marketing methods are no longer suited for today's consumers, and therefore their interest in blogs as a business tool has grown rapidly (Hill, 2005).

2.5 Research question and sub questions

Taking into consideration the rising popularity of beauty blogs, the case study of Beautygloss and the literature discussed above, the main research question this thesis will be focussing on is 'How and what kind of effect(s) do beauty blogs have on their audience?' This question was chosen to find out whether beauty blogs have an effect on their audience, and if so, what kind of effects they are. The sub questions therefore will be:

- Does personal vlogging increase the feeling of knowing the beauty blogger personally?

- Does check frequency of blogs influence the audience's buying behaviour and their judgement of trustworthiness of the blogger?

- Is the amount of time a viewer has followed a beauty blogger related to their perceived trustworthiness of that blogger?

- Will beauty blogs become as and/or more important as other marketing tools in the future?

3 Methodology

The next part will describe how the research of this thesis came to be and what kind of methods were used for gathering data. The choice for certain methods is explained and an overview is given of the questions and statements used in the questionnaire used in this study.

3.1 Research design

This thesis consists of a case study of the popular Dutch blog Beautygloss accompanied by an online questionnaire. The reason for this choice was to gain some background information about the phenomenon of beauty bloggers and also to find out to what extent research has been done when it comes to the world of beauty blogging. The choice for the questionnaire, was made to be able to answer the main research question, that is to find out what kind of effect beauty bloggers have on their public, looking at trustworthiness, credibility, personality and what influence these factors have on the public's consumer behaviour. An important aspect to be kept in mind is the novelty of the beauty blogger phenomenon, meaning there is a lack of scientific research about this subject, nor are there any theories explaining the phenomenon. The case study therefore provided many interesting insights in the developments and processes of the rise of different beauty blogs in the Netherlands.

The questionnaire was made to reflect these factors and contains questions and statements to test them. The entire questionnaire can be seen in the appendix. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of general questions about the respondent's personal information such as gender, age and education level. Also, this part contained some questions about the respondent's preferences when it comes to beauty bloggers, personal versus beauty related content, social media and viewing frequency (e.g. the number of times a viewer checks a beauty blog). This part of the questionnaire contained 11 questions.

The second part consisted of 16 statements that could be rated on a 7 points Likert scale. This part is where the factors trustworthiness, credibility and personality came in. These factors were chosen to find out what their influence is on the consumer behaviour of the beauty blogger's audience. Some of the statements in the questionnaire could be grouped together when in the same category to draw a general conclusion about them. For instance, the factor influence was tested with the statements 5, 6 and 7; "I have bought a product after a beauty blogger recommended it, at least once", "I have frequently bought a product after a beauty blogger recommended it" and "When I'm in doubt about buying a product, I look up a beauty blogger's review". These statements were grouped because they say something about the influence a beauty blogger has when it comes to the buying behavior of their viewers.

Trustworthiness was tested with statement 2; "A review from a beauty blogger is more trustworthy than an anonymous review" and credibility was tested with the following statement: "A review from a beauty blogger is more credible than an advertisement in a magazine or on TV". To test what influence the personal aspect has on viewers the statements 1, 3 and 4 were used; "It feels as if I know the beauty blogger personally", "I like it when the beauty blogger shows me parts of her personal life" and "I would want to talk to the beauty blogger if I would see her in real life". These statements were chosen to be grouped together because of their personality aspect, meaning how well the viewer thinks they know or like the beauty blogger.

The questionnaire was distributed by means of different social media platforms. As the author was part of a thesis group, the questionnaire was spread and used by two people. This was done by posting the questionnaire on the Facebook pages of both authors, as well as their Twitter feeds. Also, all the beauty bloggers mentioned in the questionnaire were approached via social media with the request to share the survey among their viewers. Of the nine beauty blogs mentioned in our questionnaire, four of them complied with the request on Twitter which helped gain respondents fairly quickly. The ones to comply were Beautylab, MissLipgloss, LiveLifeGorgeous[6] and BeautyAddicts[7]. The other five blogs that were used in the questionnaire were Beautygloss, VeraCamilla[8], Teskuh[9], LooksBySharon[10] and PinkyPolish[11]. The reason these blogs were chosen is because of their popularity (based on the number of subscribers on social media. Table 1 was made to illustrate the number of followers said beauty blogs have, and thus illustrating their popularity.

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[6] www.livelifegorgeous.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[7] www.beautyaddicts.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[8] www.veracamilla.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[9] www.teskuh.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[10] www.looksbysharon.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)
[11] www.pinkypolish.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)

Furthermore, the questionnaire was made with the online survey program Thesistools[12] and was online for two weeks from 30-03-2015 until 13-04-2015. The author's contact information was also included in the questionnaire were there to be questions from the respondents. The questionnaire was in written in Dutch.

	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	Twitter
Beautygloss	85.173	244.000	376.515	66.500
BeautyLab	37.177	77.600	132.508	24.800
MissLipgloss	27.054	55.100	60.616	27.500
VeraCamilla	12.173	122.000	128.429	40.200
Teskuh	10.937	131.000	195.777	55.000
LiveLifeGorgeous	3.436	45.300	58.890	20.280
LooksBySharon	1.372	25.400	43.130	7.698
PinkyPolish	848	14.300	26.020	6.466
BeautyAddicts	876	620	951	1.502

Table 1: Number of followers on different social media platforms on 06-05-2015

3.2 Respondents

The number of respondents that have taken part in the questionnaire is 184, of which 180 were female. Of the 184 participants only 141 also filled in the second part of the questionnaire with the statements, so the data analysed only includes those 141 participants who filled in the entire questionnaire. The age categories that made up the biggest part of the respondents were 16-20 and 21-25, which together covered 75,9% of the respondents. Also, 55.3% of the respondents were in the highest two education levels, HBO and WO. When it comes to occupation, 31,5% of the respondents do not have a job, 54,9% work part-time and 13,6% have a fulltime job.

There were no requirements for the respondents to take part in the questionnaire other than being familiar with beauty blogs, as otherwise filling in the questions would not have been helpful for the results. To ensure this requirement, the introductory part of the questionnaire stated this request.

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[12] www.thesistools.nl (date of access: 18-06-2015)

4 Results

This chapter will discuss the results that have been found while analyzing the data. The overall results have shown that preference is not an indicator for the personality factor, which means that if the respondents prefer personal content, do not necessarily like the beauty blogger more or have the feeling that they know her better. They also showed that the influence of a beauty blogger is higher for people's buying behaviour that have a fulltime job, as there was a significant difference in buying behaviour between respondents who had no job and respondents who had a fulltime job.

What is more, is that bloggers have a greater influence on viewers that check their blogs more frequently but there was no significant correlation found when it comes to trustworthiness and time, although there is a difference between groups (respondents who have been following blogs the longest [5+ years], are more trusting towards the beauty blogger). Also, the results show that viewers trust a beauty blogger more as they check their blogs more frequently. Finally, it is seen that the respondents think beauty blogs are and/or will be more important in the future when it comes to marketing.

4.1 Statements

For all sixteen statements in the questionnaire the means have been calculated using SPSS. The statements and their means can be found in Table 2. Most of the outcomes when looking at the means, were as expected and quite high when keeping in mind a 7 points scale was used and most statements were rated 4 or higher. A mean that was not expected was the one from statement 1 (4.87): 'I feel as if I know the beauty blogger personally'. While the mean is more lenient to a higher number, it was expected to be higher because of the rising popularity of personal vlogs and the type of self-presentation and branding bloggers use to gain likes and popularity. The same goes for statement 10 (4.77); 'When the beauty blogger shows more of her personal life, the reviews become more trustworthy'. The mean of this statement was also expected to be higher because of high amounts of personal vlogging and personal self-presentation nowadays.

Statement 1	It feels as if I know the beauty blogger personally	4.87
Statement 2	I feel like I can trust on the opinion of the beauty blogger	5.33
Statement 3	I like it when the beauty blogger shows me parts of her personal life	5.72
Statement 4	I would want to talk to the beauty blogger if I would see her in real life	5.04
Statement 5	I have bought a product after a beauty blogger recommended it, at least once	5.72
Statement 6	I have frequently bought a product after a beauty blogger recommended it	4.63
Statement 7	When I'm in doubt about buying a product, I look up a beauty blogger's review	5.80
Statement 8	A review from a beauty blogger is more trustworthy than an anonymous review	5.06
Statement 9	A review from a beauty blogger is more credible than an advertisement in a magazine or on TV	5.75
Statement 10	When the beauty blogger shows more of her personal life, the reviews become more trustworthy	4.77
Statement 11	When a beauty blogger reviews a sponsored product, I still believe the review to be honest	4.68
Statement 12	I have bought a product of beauty bloggers, such as their books or products from their web shop, at least once	3.33
Statement 13	I count on beauty bloggers posting a certain amount of articles a day, on set times	4.18
Statement 14	I have the intention to keep following beauty blogs	5.51
Statement 15	I think the beauty blogging scene will keep growing and become more important	5.46
Statement 16	Beauty blogs are/will be an important form of marketing	5.88

Table 2: Statements and their means

The questionnaire also contained several statements about which beauty blog was the respondent's favourite and which blogs are followed by him or her. Table 3 shows that the blogs most mentioned as favourites were Beautygloss (N=32), MissLipgloss (N=23), VeraCamilla (N=19), Livelifegorgeous (N=18), Teskuh (13), BeautyLab (N=9) and BeautyAddicts (N=2). Then, respondents were also asked which beauty blogs they follow on social media. Looking at this, it can also be seen that the most favoured blogs, the ones that were chosen the most as favourite, received the most social media followers.
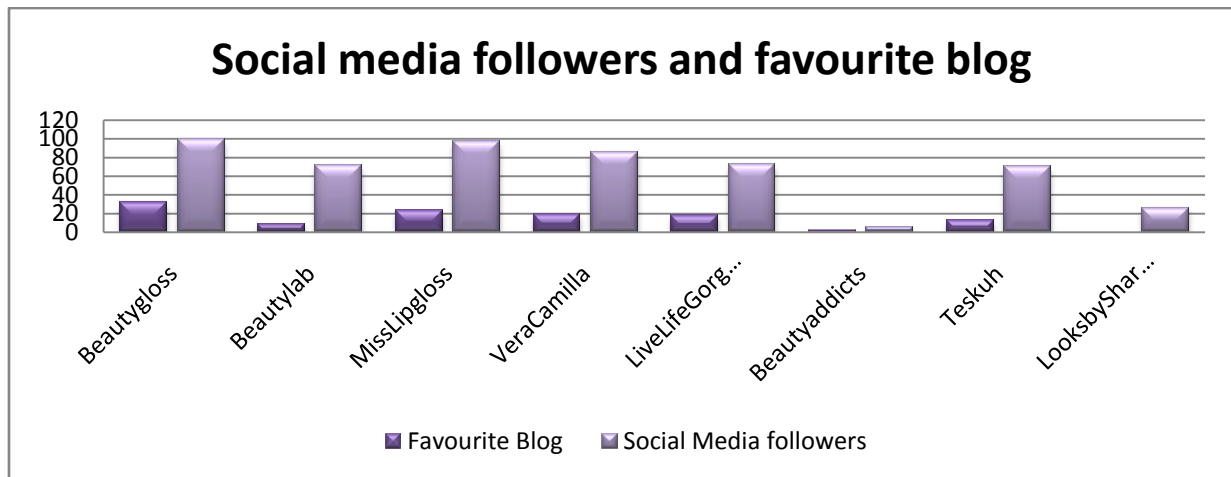
Social media followers and favourite blog

Table 3: Chart of social media followers and favourite blog

4.2 Preference for beauty-related or personal content versus the personality factor.

To test whether there was a link between the viewer's preference for beauty-related or personal content on the beauty blogger's site and the factor personal life (statements 1, 3 and 4), an independent samples t-test and Tukey HSD test was conducted via SPSS. The expected outcome was that respondents who preferred personal content would give higher ratings to the personality statements (1, 3 and 4). This was the expectation because it is expected that the more a beauty blogger exposes herself more personally to the public, the more the viewers would gain the feeling of personally knowing the blogger. Thus, the more personal content is shown to the viewers, the more they would get the feeling of really getting to know the blogger. However, the results show that the preference does not influence the personality factor, which means that if the respondents prefer to see personal content, they do not necessarily like the beauty blogger more or have the feeling that they know her better. Thus, no significant differences were found when it comes to preference and the personality factor. No correlation was found between the factors preference for content and the personality factor. This means that there is no significant connection between the preference for personal content and having the feeling that one knows the beauty blogger personally. This was tested via SPSS's correlation test. An explanation could be that although the viewers might enjoy watching the personal content the beauty blogger provides via vlogs, this does not make them trust the blogger more.

The reliability of the personality factor gave a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.74, giving it a high reliability.

4.3 Influence versus occupation

Statements 5, 6 and 7 (the influence factor) were given to see if they had a connection with the occupation of the respondents. Therefore, to test whether occupation had anything to do with the influence beauty bloggers have on the consumer behaviour of the respondents, an independent t-test, including a Tukey HSD test, was carried out to find the difference between the group of respondents. The respondents either had no job, a part time job or a fulltime job.

The results showed that there was a significant difference in buying behaviour between respondents who had no job and respondents who had a fulltime job. This can be seen in Table 4.

Independent Samples Test

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Statement 5	Equal variances assumed	3,365	,082	-1,937	19	,068	-1,714	,885	-3,566	,138
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,557	17,830	,020	-1,714	,670	-3,124	-,305
Statement 6	Equal variances assumed	1,356	,259	-2,653	19	**,016**	-2,429	,915	-4,344	-,513
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,003	16,688	,008	-2,429	,809	-4,137	-,720
Statement 7	Equal variances assumed	3,476	,078	-1,462	19	,160	-1,357	,928	-3,299	,585
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,884	18,616	,075	-1,357	,720	-2,867	,153

Table 4: Influence versus occupation; difference in groups

Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between the occupation of the respondents and the blogger's influence, r=0.21, p<.025. This correlation is not very strong but it does indicate that as people have a bigger income, thus have a full time job, they are more likely to be influenced by the beauty blogger, and buy more products (Table 5).

Correlations

		Occupation	Influence
Occupation	Pearson Correlation	1	,195[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,021
	N	141	141
Influence	Pearson Correlation	,195[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,021	
	N	141	141

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: Correlation between occupation and influence

4.4 Influence versus check frequency

The factor check frequency stands for the frequency of which a respondent checks a beauty blog. This factor contained eight categories to choose from: seldom, once a month, every other week, once a week, multiple times a week, every day and multiple times a day.

Via a correlational test it was found that the factors influence and check frequency were significantly correlated, r=0.36, p < 0.001. The factor influence consisted of three statements (5, 6 and 7), and these statements were also tested separately against check frequency and they also were significantly correlated, respectively: r=0.35, p<0.001, r=0.31, p<0.001 and r=0.26, as seen in Table 6. All these outcomes are positively correlated, meaning that bloggers have a greater influence on viewers that check their blogs more frequently. This correlation however, is weak. The influence statements were also tested for their reliability and got a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.81, which is very high.

Correlations

		checkfreq	Statement 5	Statement 6	Statement 7	Influence
checkfreq	Pearson Correlation	1	,350**	,308**	,255**	,358**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,002	,000
	N	141	141	141	141	141
Statement 5	Pearson Correlation	,350**	1	,730**	,572**	,899**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	141	141	141	141	141
Statement 6	Pearson Correlation	,308**	,730**	1	,460**	,872**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000
	N	141	141	141	141	141
Statement 7	Pearson Correlation	,255**	,572**	,460**	1	,783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002	,000	,000		,000
	N	141	141	141	141	141
Influence	Pearson Correlation	,358**	,899**	,872**	,783**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	141	141	141	141	141

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Correlation between check frequency and influence

4.5 Trustworthiness versus time

The amount of time respondents have been following a beauty blog was chosen to test whether this factor had anything to do with the trustworthiness of the beauty blogger. It was expected that the trustworthiness of the beauty blogger increases when statement 2 ('I feel like I can trust the opinion of the beauty blogger') was compared to five groups that indicated the amount of time a respondent has been following a beauty blogger, which can be seen in Table 7. There was no significant correlation found when it comes to trustworthiness and time, although it is seen in Table 7 that there is a difference between groups (people who have been following blogs the longest score higher on the means).

The reliability of the factor trustworthiness was also tested and gave a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.80, meaning they have a high reliability.

Descriptives

Statement 2

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
< year	6	3,83	2,229	,910	1,49	6,17	1	7
> year	15	4,93	1,335	,345	4,19	5,67	2	7
2-3 years	50	5,54	1,343	,190	5,16	5,92	0	7
4-5 years	35	5,09	1,687	,285	4,51	5,67	0	7
>5 years	35	5,71	1,274	,215	5,28	6,15	2	7
Total	141	5,33	1,501	,126	5,08	5,58	0	7

Table 7: Differences of trust between groups

A one way ANOVA and Tukey HSD test showed that there was a significant difference ($F(4,136)=2,961$, $p<.05$) between the first and last group; the respondents who have been following beauty blogs for less than a year and the group that has been following them for more than five years, as seen in Table 8.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: statement 2

Tukey HSD

(I) following time	(J) following time	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
< year	>jaar	-1,100	,705	,526	-3,05	,85
	2-3jaar	-1,707	,631	,058	-3,45	,04
	4-5jaar	-1,252	,645	,301	-3,04	,53
	>5jaar	**-1,881***	**,645**	**,033**	-3,67	-,10
> year	<jaar	1,100	,705	,526	-,85	3,05
	2-3jaar	-,607	,430	,622	-1,80	,58
	4-5jaar	-,152	,451	,997	-1,40	1,09
	>5jaar	-,781	,451	,418	-2,03	,47
2-3 years	<jaar	1,707	,631	,058	-,04	3,45
	>jaar	,607	,430	,622	-,58	1,80
	4-5jaar	,454	,322	,621	-,44	1,34
	>5jaar	-,174	,322	,983	-1,06	,72
4-5 years	<jaar	1,252	,645	,301	-,53	3,04
	>jaar	,152	,451	,997	-1,09	1,40
	2-3jaar	-,454	,322	,621	-1,34	,44
	>5jaar	-,629	,349	,378	-1,59	,34
>5 years	<jaar	1,881*	,645	,033	,10	3,67
	>jaar	,781	,451	,418	-,47	2,03
	2-3jaar	,174	,322	,983	-,72	1,06
	4-5jaar	,629	,349	,378	-,34	1,59

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8: Significant difference between first and last group

4.6 Trustworthiness versus check frequency

It was found that there is a significantly positive correlation between the factors trustworthiness and check frequency, r=0.27, p<0.005 (Table 9). This correlation is rather weak, but it does mean that viewers trust a beauty blogger more as they check blogs more frequently. This correlation was tested by binding statements 2, 8 and 9 together for the factor trustworthiness. Looking at the statements separately, statement 2 and 9 were correlated to check frequency (r=0.34, p<0.001 and r=0.20, p<0.25), statement 8 was not.

For a beauty blogger this outcome could mean that as more articles appear online daily, the more frequent a viewer will visit their blog, thus increasing their perceived trustworthiness of that blogger. So if a blogger would like to gain trustworthiness he or she should make sure that their viewers visit their blog more often.

Correlations

		checkfreq	Trustworthiness
checkfrequency	Pearson Correlation	1	,268[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	141	141
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	,268[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	141	141

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Correlation of check frequency and trustworthiness

4.7 Future growth

To find out whether the future directions of beauty blogs were important to their viewers we tested this with statements 15 and 16: 'I think the beauty blogging scene will keep growing and become more important' and 'I think beauty blogs are/will be an important form of marketing'. The means for these statements were respectively 5.46 and 5.88 which is quite high on a scale of 7. This outcome indicated that the respondents saw a future for beauty blogs and think they are and/or will be more important in the future to come. When looking at the case study of Beautygloss it could be an explanation for this outcome, that the viewers of beauty blogs also must have noticed the positive changes blogs are making and how successful and influential they are becoming.

Also, the statements got a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.88 which is very high.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The starting point of this thesis was to find out how and what kind of effect(s) beauty blogs have on their audience. At first, a case study was presented that mainly focussed on the biggest Dutch beauty blog Beautygloss, to give an example of what beauty blogs are about and to make some small comparisons and identify similarities when it comes to this type of blogging. The case study and the introduction also served as a way for the reader to familiarize themselves with the phenomenon of beauty blogs. Furthermore, an online questionnaire was spread via Facebook and Twitter, with the help of several beauty bloggers, to recruit respondents. The results of the questionnaire were all analysed with the program SPSS and the thesis focussed around one main question and four sub questions.

The first sub question of this thesis was 'Does personal vlogging increase the feeling of knowing the beauty blogger personally?' Because of the increase of personal vlogging it was expected that, due to the high exposure of personal content to the audience, the blogger's audience would feel personally connected to their favourite blogger. In other words, it could be that because of those vlogs, viewers have the feeling that they know the blogger on a (more) personal level. This sub question will be answered with a 'no'. No correlation was found between these components. The results show that a preference for vlogging does not increase the feeling of knowing the beauty blogger more personally. So it means that even if the viewers prefer personal content, they do not necessarily like the blogger more or have the feeling of knowing them better and/or more personally.

The second sub question was 'Does check frequency of blogs influence the audience's buying behaviour and their judgement of trustworthiness of the blogger?' This question can be answered with 'yes' and 'yes'. It was expected that when someone checks a beauty blog on a regular basis, that person is more likely to buy reviewed products than someone who does not check in on beauty blogs as often. Results have shown that these factors were positively correlated ($r=0.36$, $p < 0.001$), and thus saying that bloggers have a greater influence on viewers that check their blogs more often. Furthermore, there was also a positive correlation found between the factors check frequency and trustworthiness ($r=0.27$, $p<0.005$). It proves that viewers trust a beauty blogger more when they check their blogs more frequently. This too, was as expected because trust and/or getting to like someone grow when one familiarizes one with something. This finding goes in accordance with Zajonc's (1968) mere exposure effect.

The third question, 'Is the amount of time a viewer has followed a beauty blogger

related to their perceived trustworthiness of that blogger?' can partially be answered with a no, and partially with a yes. Although there was no significant correlation found when it comes to the factors trustworthiness and following time of a blog, it can be seen in Table 7 that there is a significant difference ($F(4,136)=2,961$, $p<.05$)) between the first and last group of respondents: the respondents who have been following beauty blogs for more than five years show a greater amount of trust toward the beauty blogger than respondents who have been following beauty blogs for less than a year. This makes sense because people who have been following a beauty blogger for more than five years are more familiar with the blogger and thus would have more feelings of trust than someone who has just started following the same blogger. This too, is in accordance with the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968).

Finally, the last sub question can also be answered with a 'yes'. 'Will beauty blogs become a more important marketing tool in the future?' The two statements about the future of beauty blogs were rated by the respondents with a mean of 5.67 on a 7-points scale, which is quite high. This score indicates that the respondents believe that beauty blogs are an important form of marketing and that the beauty blogging scene will keep growing and developing itself. This view of the respondents is in accordance with Hill's view (2005) that companies are aware of the growth and effectiveness of blogs as a marketing tool. This can also be seen when looking at the case study Beautygloss that was discussed earlier in this study. Companies are starting to cooperate with popular beauty blogs for marketing purposes and this is an aspect that has not gone by unnoticed by the audiences of beauty blogs as they believe these blogs will become more important when it comes to marketing.

The main question 'How and what kind of effect(s) do beauty blogs have on their audience?' has multiple answers. One effect that is found is that even though the beauty blogger's viewers do not necessarily have the feeling of knowing the blogger more, they are indeed influenced by the beauty blogger when it comes to their buying behaviour and perceived trustworthiness in connection to following time and check frequency. It has been confirmed that respondents who check a beauty blog more frequently are more influenced to buy products and also trust a beauty blogger more than those respondents who do not check blogs as frequently. There was no correlation found between the amount of time a respondent has been following a blog and their perceived trustworthiness of a beauty blogger, although there were significant differences between the group that has been following blogs for the longest time and the group that has been following blogs for the shortest time. Furthermore, it was found that respondents think that there is a future to be found in the marketing aspect of beauty blogs.

5.1 Limitations and strengths

There are some things to be said about the shortcomings of this thesis. First of all, this thesis only made use of information retrieved through an online survey from the audience of beauty blogs and not from the beauty bloggers themselves. This way, the information that was received was from a single sided point of view. A case study about the most popular Dutch beauty blog (Beautygloss) was also done, with a few smaller references to other blogs in comparison, though this was not extensive.

For future research about this topic I would suggest expanding the questionnaire with questions focussing on the aspect of why people follow beauty blogs and what the compelling factor is for them to keep coming back to those blogs. This aspect was not included in the questionnaire used for this thesis. Also, I would recommend interviewing the beauty bloggers' audiences personally for more elaborate and qualitative answers that give more insight in their behaviour. Interviewing the beauty bloggers themselves would also be a very good starting point for a research focussed on their point of view and how they handle the marketing part of their blog, for instance. Finally, it would be interesting to see more elaborate case studies about more blogs and perhaps compare those to see whether the blogs use similar or different kinds of strategies to maintain their popularity. Another interesting case study would be to compare beauty blogs in the Netherlands to beauty blogs in other countries such as the United States or England where beauty blogs (and bloggers in general) are also very popular. It could be a way for bloggers and/or companies to see whether improvements can be made when it comes to marketing purposes and gaining popularity.

Of course there were also strengths when it comes to this thesis. The author's knowledge about the subject of beauty blogs was very elaborate which was very useful during the writing of this thesis, especially for the preparation of the case study. There were also enough respondents (141) to take part in the questionnaire which made for valid results. Also, it can be considered that this thesis is a strength in itself, because of the novelty of the subject. Hardly any research has been done about it, which makes this thesis a good starting point for anyone who would want to do more research about beauty blogs.

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7 Appendix

Hallo!

Wij zijn twee studentes van Tilburg University en wij zijn bezig met onze bachelor thesis voor de opleiding Communicatie- en Informatiewetenschappen. Voor onze thesis doen wij onderzoek naar hoe beautyblogs hun lezers werven en behouden, en waarom beautyblogs zo populair zijn. Deze enquête bestaat uit 10 algemene vragen (leeftijd, opleiding etc.) en daarna nog 15 stellingen. Het zal niet meer dan een paar minuten duren deze in te vullen.

Alvast bedankt!

Karina en Robin

Algemene vragen:

1. Ik ben: man/vrouw
2. Ik behoor tot de leeftijdscategorie: 10-15, 16-20, 21-15, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-50, 50+
3. Mijn hoogst genoten opleiding is: MAVO, HAVO, VWO, MBO, HBO, UNI
4. Ik werk: niet/bijbaan/full-time
5. Hoelang volgt u al beautyblogs?   Minder dan een jaar, 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 5+ jaar
6. Ik check (sommige/bepaalde) beautyblogs: zelden / elke maand / om de week / 1x per week / meerdere keren per week / elke dag / meerdere keren per dag
7. Welke blogs checkt u minstens 1x per dag op nieuwe artikelen?   Beautygloss / Beautylab / Misslipgloss / VeraCamilla / LiveLifeGorgeous / LooksBySharon / PinkyPolish / BeautyAddicts / Teskuh / Anders / Ik volg geen enkele blog actief
8. Welke blog is uw favoriet?   Beautygloss / Beautylab / Misslipgloss / VeraCamilla / LiveLifeGorgeous / LooksBySharon / PinkyPolish / BeautyAddicts / Teskuh / Anders / Ik heb geen favoriet
9. Welke blogs volg je op social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc.)?   Beautygloss / Beautylab / Misslipgloss / VeraCamilla / LiveLifeGorgeous / LooksBySharon / PinkyPolish / BeautyAddicts / Teskuh / Anders / ik volg geen bloggers op social media
10. Bent u wel eens naar een event geweest van een beautyblogger of om een beauty blogger te ontmoeten?   Beautygloss party, Beautygloss weekend, I love beauty event, YouTube Gathering, Meet & Shop LiveLifeGorgeous, Meet & Greets , anders, nee
11. Als u moet kiezen, geeft u dan de voorkeur aan blogs over uitsluitend beauty en/of beautyproducten, of liever persoonlijke blogs?   Beauty / Persoonlijk / Beide

Stellingen:

Wanneer u deze stellingen invult, hou dan uw favoriete beauty blog in gedachten.

1 = helemaal niet mee eens   7 = helemaal mee eens

12. Het voelt alsof ik de beautyblogger persoonlijk ken
13. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik op de mening van de beautyblogger kan vertrouwen
14. Ik vind het leuk als de beautyblogger mij delen van haar persoonlijke leven laat zien

15. Als ik de beautyblogger in het echt zou tegenkomen, zou ik wel een praatje met haar willen maken
16. Ik heb minstens één keer een product gekocht na aanraden van de beautyblogger/na een positieve review
17. Ik koop regelmatig producten nadat ik er een positieve review over heb gelezen door de beautyblogger
18. Wanneer ik twijfel over of ik een product moeten kopen, zoek ik een review op van beautybloggers
19. Een review van een beautyblogger is betrouwbaarder dan een anonieme review
20. Een review van een beautyblogger is geloofwaardiger dan een advertentie in een tijdschrift of op TV
21. Wanneer de beautyblogger meer van haar persoonlijke leven laat zien, komen de reviews betrouwbaarder over
22. Wanneer de beautyblogger een product reviewt dat zij gratis toegestuurd heeft gekregen (een gesponsord product), denk ik nog steeds dat het een eerlijke review is
23. Ik heb wel eens een product gekocht van de beautyblogger zelf (bijvoorbeeld het boek Happy Life van Mascha, het boek Beauty van Cynthia, Serena's stijlgids, een product uit de vroegere webshops van Misslipgloss of Beautygloss, etc.)
24. Ik reken erop dat de beautyblogger een bepaald aantal artikelen per dag plaatst, op vaste tijden
25. Ik heb de intentie om beautyblogs te blijven volgen
26. Ik denk dat de beautyblog wereld zal blijven groeien en belangrijker zal worden
27. Beautyblogs zijn/worden een belangrijke vorm van marketing (net als advertenties in tijdschriften of op TV)