

# HOW DOES THE COSMETIC INDUSTRY USE INSTAGRAM AS A MARKETING TOOL?

Aantal woorden / Word count: 14021

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Masterproef voorgedragen tot het bekomen van de graad van:

Master's Dissertation submitted to obtain the degree of:

Master in Business Economics: Marketing

Academiejaar / Academic year: 2018-2019



## Preface

Having struggled with acne myself, makeup quickly became my source of confidence and YouTube my source of education. I later found myself highly engaged to these “beauty educators” once I started to follow them on Instagram and that is how I discovered the true power of the platform. I saw these influencers grow and create their own brands and businesses on account of Social Media.

The terms “drugstore” versus “high-end” are highly used in the makeup industry. So many makeup reviews can be found on YouTube, where experts do “beauty battles” and compare the performance of low-priced products versus high-priced labels. They even came up with the term “dupe”, which is referred to drugstore products that offer the same color and consistency of a high-end brand.

Therefore, it was really interesting to investigate the different marketing strategies of makeup brands that has different brand positioning, especially on Instagram which is the fastest growing and one of the most engaging Social Media platforms.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Dr. Dirk Van den Poel, Sarah Carron and Matthias Bogaert for supporting my choice of research, trusting my vision and giving me invaluable feedback throughout the writing of this dissertation.

I would like to thank Marie-Noelle Vekemans and Ichraf Bader for taking the time to answer all my questions. The information provided was very crucial for this research.

Special thanks to Avedis, Seza, Harout and Lorig Haleblian, Simon and Garen Manoukian, Pierre Ponsart, Gregory Rangama, Caroline De Plancke, Rand Abou Fakher, Ines Malonne, Romane Mahieu, Patrick Dolan, Quinten Raemakers, Nicolas Voskuil, Basel Al Akkad and Issam Saed.

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## Abstract

This study seeks to explore the different communication strategies used by makeup brands on Instagram. Its goal is to find whether there is a correlation between brand positioning and Instagram marketing. In addition, it examines how luxury brands adjust their traditional marketing strategies to the platform. First, a qualitative research was conducted to have a wide vision on the beauty market and Instagram's role in it. Results suggested that luxury brands employ different communication strategies depending on the media channel used. This is due to the fact that the audiences differ on print and social media, therefore luxury brands rejuvenate their content for Instagram. They also use the platform differently than low-priced brands. For further understanding, a content analysis of six makeup brands from different positioning was done. A total of 1094 posts and stories were analyzed. Results showed that luxury brands publish less content than the rest of the market in the risk of vulgarization, especially when it comes to the stories feature. Additionally, they avoid using explicit selling languages and compared to lower priced brands, they keep a certain distance from their viewers. They are also more careful in associating themselves to others. Moreover, this thesis concludes that there is a correlation between brand positioning and Instagram usage but only to a limited extent.

## 1. Introduction

“I just wanted to thank you all so much to everyone who purchased my fragrance. It was such a successful launch. [...] It’s such an honor that you guys trusted me. I know you will love the scent and I can’t wait for you guys to get it. I can’t wait for you guys to tweet me and talk about how much you guys love the scent when you [...] receive it.” Kim Kardashian West.

In recent years, Social Media has been a game changer for the Beauty Industry. Trends, looks, tutorials, launches and collaborations have never been this ubiquitous. Not only has social networking allowed two-way communications between companies and customers, it has also helped talents from around the world to show up. Makeup artists and brands have built businesses on account of Instagram. For example, Kim Kardashian West, who has 141 million followers on Instagram was able to sell out all 300 000 KKW fragrances (approximately 14million\$) without the need of classical marketing techniques such as handing out testers or being featured in magazines. It is safe to say that, the power of the fastest growing social media application (aka Instagram) cannot be underestimated (Southern, 2018). This is why it has caught the attention of several researchers who have studied the way Instagram is used by brands for maintaining customer relationships and marketing purposes by connecting with them and presenting a more honest picture of their brands (Bergstrom & Backman, 2013).

### 1.1. Problem Statement

Despite the fact that much research has been done, there are opportunities for further exploration around this topic. A first one is the lack of explanation on the way Instagram Stories are being implemented in these strategies. Most studies have focused only on Instagram Feed, such as the study conducted by Çukul, D. (2015), where she analyzed Fashion Branding on Instagram. This lack of further research could be because Instagram added the Story feature only recently and that tracking them on the long run can be difficult



as they expire within 24 hours. Considering different time zones of Instagram users makes the analysis even more complicated.

A second gap is the focus on the combination of Instagram in the Beauty Industry; most of the literature are based on Fashion marketing and not many on Beauty. However, one study was found on the use of Instagram in the Cosmetic Industry, but it focuses on posts only and not stories (Vignisdottir, 2017).

A third gap is the lack of comparison between the Instagram usage of low-end brands and high-end brands. There are studies that explain that in traditional marketing, luxury brands employ different strategies than mass production (Kapferer, Jean-Noël & Bastien, 2009) however, it has not yet been proven whether this difference exists on Instagram.

## 1.2. Research Questions

To accommodate these gaps in literature, this study investigates what type of posts and stories beauty brands publish.

It focuses on creating an understanding whether there is a correlation between brand positioning and Instagram marketing (RQ1), to further comprehend whether luxury brands still employ the traditional luxury marketing strategies in the Instagram era (RQ2).

To do so, we started off with a qualitative research to have a broad vision on the Cosmetic Industry and its usage of Instagram. We have then conducted a content analysis of a selection of low-end and high-end brands. A selection of six international brands was made; two brands within each of the following categories: luxury brands (YSL Beauty and Dior Makeup), professional mid-priced brands (Mac Cosmetics and Anastasia Beverly Hills) and affordable drugstore brands (NYX Cosmetics and Maybelline).

We have not only collected the Instagram posts but also the Instagram stories of these brands over a period of twenty days. We have then analyzed their types, their frequencies and their purposes.

To make this happen, we have used an application called "Repost" on iOS to archive all stories and posts of these accounts in the same day of their broadcast.

Due to limitations, this research has focused on organic content only. Sponsored ads and sales numbers have not taken part in this thesis.

## 2.Literature Review

### 2.1. Marketing in the Cosmetic Industry (high-end versus low-end)

Makeup as we know it, has only been commercially available in the last century. However, applying decoration to the face and body may be one of the oldest global social practices dating back to ancient Egypt and Greece (Eldridge, 2015). Today, cosmetics have become a multi-billion-dollar industry, where a great percentage of women and a small percentage of men apply makeup on a daily basis to hide flaws in the skin (such as dark circles, acne scars, blemishes and discoloration) or enhance the natural appearance of certain facial features (such as lips, eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows) (Cellania, 2014). Some believe that makeup is a self-expression tool and a confidence booster (Benson, 2018), others view it as a form of art where the face is used as a canvas (Lopus, 2017).

Cambridge dictionary defines the word cosmetics as: “substances that you put on your face or body that are intended to improve your appearance:” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a).

Make-up is not the only tool used to improve the appearance of people, other tools such as e.g. skincare are frequently used as well. These items make up a larger industry called the beauty industry which can be divided into five categories (Łopaciuk & Łoboda, 2013): skincare, make-up, fragrance, haircare and toiletries (Table 1)

Table 1 Different sub-industries of the Beauty industry

Category	Description	Product examples
1- Skincare	products that keep the skin healthy and attractive (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-d)	moisturizers, sunscreens, anti-aging wrinkle serums
2- Makeup	“colored substances used on [...] face to improve or change its appearance.” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-b)	foundation, lipstick, eyeliner, mascara
3- Fragrance	“a liquid with a pleasant smell, usually made from oils taken from flowers or spices and often used on the skin” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-c)	eau de parfum, eau de toilette
4- Haircare	products that keep the hair clean, healthy-looking, and attractive (Collins Dictionary, n.d.-a)	shampoo, hair conditioner, hair masks
5- Toiletries	products used when washing or taking care of the body (Collins Dictionary, n.d.-b)	soap, toothpaste

Besides subcategories based on product types, the industry can be subdivided into mass and premium production segments. Mass brands are created in order to sell more products, whereas premium brands carry tangible or imaginary surplus value. These two segments are based on price, distribution channels and brand prestige (Łopaciuk & Łoboda, 2013). Most of the time, mass production is distributed in drugstores (e.g. Di, Brussels) and premium brands in department stores (e.g. Galeria Inno, Brussels). These two segments can be even further divided into: drugstore low-priced brands (e.g. Maybelline, NYX cosmetics), high-end mid-priced brands (e.g. MAC Cosmetics, Anastasia Beverly Hills), and luxury high-priced brands (e.g. Yves Saint Laurent Beauty, Dior Makeup). The price of a 3-4 g red lipstick ranges respectfully in the following way: \$7.00 - \$8.00, \$18.00 - \$19.00 and \$37.00 - \$38.00. An overview can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 Differences between low-end and high-end cosmetics brands

Segments	Mass production		Premium Production			
Positioning	Drugstore brands		High-end brands		Luxury brands	
Brands	Maybelline	NYX	ABH	MAC	Dior Makeup	YSL Beauty
Average price of a red lipstick (3-4g) (via brands global website)	\$7.49	\$8.00	\$18.00	\$18.50	\$37.00	\$38.00
Example of distribution channels in Brussels	Di	NYX store Di	Planet Parfum	MAC Store Ici Paris XL, Galeria Inno	Ici Paris XL, Galeria Inno, Planet Parfum	Ici Paris XL, Galeria Inno, Planet Parfum

The difference between the categories explained in Table 2 can be further manifested physically and visually in the product itself, meaning that when looking at the components of a lipstick, a difference in the design can also be seen. To further investigate this difference, we have collected the product images that previously mentioned companies intentionally chose to represent their red lipstick on their official webpage (Figure 1). From this comparison it shows that, drugstore brands have a very basic lipstick component. High-end brands are one step ahead by having the logo of the brand engraved on the component. Unlike luxury brands, the focus of high-end brands seems to be on the formula and the pigmentation of the lipstick, whereas the focus of luxury brands is on the packaging, where the cap of the lipstick is equally visible as the lipstick itself. They say “luxury is in the details” - When having a close-up look on Dior and YSL’s images, the logo of the brand is discretely engraved on the creamy pigmented texture.

Figure 1 Product example of Drugstore, High-end and Luxury Brands<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Images retrieved from:

<https://www.maybelline.com/lip-makeup/lipstick/color-sensational-creamy-matte-lipstick/siren-in-scarlet>

[https://www.nyxcosmetics.com/pin-up-pout-lipstick/NYX\\_399.html?cgid=lipstick](https://www.nyxcosmetics.com/pin-up-pout-lipstick/NYX_399.html?cgid=lipstick)

<https://www.anastasiabeverlyhills.com/products/lips/>

[https://www.maccosmetics.com/product/13854/52593/products/makeup/lips/lipstick/retro-matte-lipstick#/shade/Ruby\\_Woo](https://www.maccosmetics.com/product/13854/52593/products/makeup/lips/lipstick/retro-matte-lipstick#/shade/Ruby_Woo)

[https://www.dior.com/en\\_us/products/beauty-Y0027830-rouge-dior-y0027830](https://www.dior.com/en_us/products/beauty-Y0027830-rouge-dior-y0027830)

[https://www.yslbeautyus.com/makeup/lips/rouge-pur-couture-lipstick/194YSL.html?dwvar\\_194YSL\\_color=1%20Le%20Rouge&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails#start=1&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails](https://www.yslbeautyus.com/makeup/lips/rouge-pur-couture-lipstick/194YSL.html?dwvar_194YSL_color=1%20Le%20Rouge&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails#start=1&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails)

[https://www.yslbeautyus.com/makeup/lips/rouge-pur-couture-lipstick/194YSL.html?dwvar\\_194YSL\\_color=1%20Le%20Rouge&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails#start=1&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails](https://www.yslbeautyus.com/makeup/lips/rouge-pur-couture-lipstick/194YSL.html?dwvar_194YSL_color=1%20Le%20Rouge&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails#start=1&cgid=makeup-lips-and-nails)

Figure 2 Product example of Drugstore, High-end and Luxury brands with price tags



Despite clearly notable differences, studies investigating the differences between the marketing strategy of a drugstore brand from a high-end brand focused on the cosmetics industry are quite limited. However, in general when it comes to traditional marketing, most luxury brands have at least one thing in common: The 24 Anti-Laws of Marketing or “the Luxury Strategy” created in 1970, by Vincent Bastien, former CEO of Louis Vuitton (Bastien has since authored a book bearing this title). This luxury strategy aims to transform a small family business into a profitable global giant by creating long-selling products rather than best-selling. Chanel’s N°5 perfume is a clear example set forth by Bastien, which launched in 1921 and is still very much in demand today (Kapferer, Jean-Noël & Bastien, 2009).

Below are some of the 24 Anti-laws of marketing that differentiate luxury brands from mass production. The rules that have been chosen to be discussed next are the ones that have helped us make assumptions and build a bridge from traditional marketing to Instagram.

- **Luxury brands do not pander to their customers’ wishes and do not look for consensus** (rule #3 and #24 from 24 anti-laws of marketing).

Listening is a key element in marketing, nonetheless since luxury is a non-necessity made desirable based on emotional values, asking consumers what they want is a contradiction in this respect. When pondering direction, luxury brands avoid seeking customers’

outwards, instead they have an internal discussion to move forward. If the house believes in the next step, they can easily convince their customers as well (Kapferer, Jean-Noël & Bastien, 2009).

Moreover, Social Media is known for its two-way communication power. If a brand seeks customers' feedback on Instagram, they can easily find it in the 'comments' section under a post. All they have to do is ask a question.

Therefore, we can assume that, if luxury brands do not wish to look for consensus on Instagram, they can easily do so by avoiding interrogative sentences in their feed. Consequently, we can further presume that:

H1- Low-priced brands use more interrogative sentences on Instagram than high-priced brands.

- **Luxury brands are psychologically distant, and do not respond to rising demand** (rule #6 and #5 from 24 anti-laws of marketing).

While mass production tries to keep up their supplies with the rising demand, luxury brands follow a deliberate strategy of resisting demand. This evokes perceptions of rarity and exclusivity due to the difficulty of attaining the products (Goodstein, 2005). For example, in some cases luxury brands introduce a product as "limited edition" to communicate a sense of urgency and compel the customer to act.

Moreover, luxury brands are a consequence of meritocracy; they represent a reward and a token of gradual elevation. To preserve this status, a certain distance is taken from the clients to maintain an aura of mystery. If they treat clients as 'best friends', making themselves out to be their equals, they lose this aura and profoundly disturb their offspring (Kapferer, Jean-Noël & Bastien, 2009).



However, Social Media is an effective tool to create transparency and a close relationship with the customers. We can assume that If luxury brands seek being distant and showcase rarity on Instagram, they would post less content especially less stories as this feature is known for building more transparency and intimacy with the viewers (this topic is further discussed). Therefore, we can further presume that:

H2- Low-priced brands use the stories feature more frequently than high-priced brands.

- **When it comes to luxury, the role of advertising is not to sell** (rule #9 from 24 anti-laws of marketing).

In general marketing, it is important to discover a sales proposal, a unique selling proposition and a sales pitch. Whereas in luxury, first comes the dream. The justifications of luxury salesmen are simply post-rationalizations.

Every time a human being buys a luxury product, they destroy a little bit of the equity by increasing the product's visibility and putting it in the public eye. This contributes to its vulgarization. On the contrary, when marketing everyday goods, maximum visibility manifests in an advantage for the market leader as it becomes a reassuring purchase (Kapferer, Jean-Noël & Bastien, 2009).

Nevertheless, A recent study on Consumer motivation and luxury consumption conducted by Wei Shao, Debra Grace, Mitchell Ross (2019) proves that consumers are willing to buy luxury when it is subtly marketed rather than explicitly marketed (Shao, Grace, & Ross, 2019). As Bastien claims, "If luxury is everywhere, the concept is empty".

We can assume that if luxury brands want to avoid explicit marketing on Instagram, they would avoid using straight-forward selling languages and would not heavily impose customers to purchase their products. Therefore, they would limit their use of imperative sentences which leads us to think:

H3- Low-priced brands use more imperative sentences on Instagram than high-priced brands.

- **Luxury brands avoid celebrity endorsements** (rule #16 from 24 anti-laws of marketing)

Using celebrities to promote luxury products can be extremely dangerous. Calling on the services of a star can be equivalent to saying that the brand needs some of this stars' status just to survive and admitting that it has none of its own. Thus, if celebrities are to be used in luxury strategy, they must be used with extreme caution. In mass marketing, celebrities are used as selling agents for new customers to purchase the product through an imitation model, whereas, in luxury, they must be used, when used, as a testimonial for existing customers (Kapferer, Jean-Noël & Bastien, 2009).

Moreover, celebrity endorsements are mostly found on TV and print advertisements. On Social Media, brands tend to collaborate with Instagram celebrities such as fashion bloggers and beauty influencers who usually have a high engagement on the platform and are capable to deliver a brand's message to their audience. There are many ways to collaborate with a blogger on Instagram. One of them is the "regramming" method which is further explained in the literature.

Anyhow, we can assume that if luxury brands avoid celebrity endorsements, they would do the same with bloggers on Instagram and therefore avoid the "regramming" method. As a result, we can further presume that:

H4- Low-priced brands use the "regram" method more frequently than high-priced brands.

Moreover, another strategy that luxury brands employ, but is not part of the 24 laws of anti-marketing is the following:

- **Luxury brands focus on high-end packaging**

Visuals are very important for a luxury brand. High-end packaging and special features are known to attract more attention from potential customers. By realizing the importance of exclusivity, luxury brands focus on minor details which can set the product apart in terms of style, presentation as well as touch and fragrance (Pressfarm, 2018).

In the end, materialism is a powerful force in developing purchase intention of luxury goods (Kamal, Chu, & Pedram, 2013). Therefore, it is no surprise that luxury brands make the best out of their material.

Since so much work is put into packaging, visual component and minor details, (as also seen on Figure 1 Product example of Drugstore, High-end and Luxury Brands) it can be assumed that, as so much attention is given to the finish of a product which sets luxury apart from the rest, luxury brands tend to have their products visible on all of their marketing materials. As for regular brands, where packaging is not as important, they may focus more on the performance of the product to stimulate necessity. For example, they could share content where the focus is on the end-result of the product and not the product itself. In makeup context, this can be manifested in a lipstick shot (for luxury) versus a close up shot on lips (for mass production). Figure 3 is an example retrieved from Dior makeup and NYX Cosmetics' Instagram pages. Moreover, we can further presume that:

H5- High-priced brands use more product shots than low-priced brands.

Figure 3 Example of product shot versus performance shot<sup>2</sup>



Anyhow, contrary to regular goods which quickly adopted e-commerce to reach the mass market, the luxury sector has been slow in embracing the digital revolution, with many industry icons “caught flat-footed”, mainly due to the risk of vulgarization, lack of control over the brand and high structural investment requirements (Rita & Abreu, 2014). Also, as discussed in the 24 anti-laws of marketing, we found out that most of the traditional luxury strategies are contradictive to social media’s medium, where listening and building close relationships are key.

Moreover, today’s social media-crazed culture requires luxury brands to reconsider their strategies. Luxury labels use social networking to attract new clients, provide them an idea of their brand culture and showcase the intangible values that come attached to the purchase of their products. They may also use it as a direct channel of feedback by inviting bloggers, influencers and celebrities to runway shows or product launch events to gain attention from new and existing clients. The visual content that consumers see from a brand’s new collection can drive purchase intentions almost immediately. These establish a wide range of opportunities, but they also originate the huge risk of luxury vulgarization,

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<sup>2</sup> Images retrieved from:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BxkxKeJCyTY/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bx-hcLjD2lf/>

which is a “major trap to be avoided in the process of democratizing luxury” as stated by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) (Rita & Abreu, 2014).

However, despite the risk, more and more brands are integrating social media in their marketing mix and the cosmetic industry has been one of the many industries that learnt how to really benefit from it.

## 2.2. Social Media in the Cosmetic Industry

From early on, marketing of the cosmetic industry has been driven by visual content. Color advertisements in the 1920s significantly facilitated the sales of makeup. This included looks worn by models, make-up tutorials, and celebrity endorsements. TV advertisements started to appear later in the 1940s (Eldridge, 2015). These marketing forms are still very present today, but a shift towards social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, has appeared next to it.

Having been economically unstable since 2002, the cosmetic industry saw its' real peak in 2016. The advancement of digital communications has played a major role in the increase of its global sales, as it has encountered many benefits through the existence of Social Media. These platforms have given brands the power to increase the visibility of their products. The main difference between traditional and social media marketing is the transformation of one-way communication to two-way interaction between brands and consumers where brands have finally been able to carefully listen to the clients and receive feedback (Kalpana Chauhan, 2013). Other than demonstrating customers in step-by-step videos how to properly use their products and doing Q&As brands support their fans by reposting user-generated-content (UGC) meaning that they reward customers for using social media to promote their brand and products, by giving them visibility and showing off their makeup talents to the rest of their online community & followers. This is an effective way to initiate word-of-mouth. Figure 4 and Figure 5 show a reposting example done by NYX on Instagram.

Figure 4 Example of user-generated-content before repost<sup>3</sup>



Figure 5 Example of user-generated content after repost<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Image retrieved from: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BupdwwJF5Tl/>

<sup>4</sup> Image retrieved from: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bw7cK53jQZj/>

Anyhow, as earlier mentioned that the cosmetic industry's marketing has always been driven by visual content, Instagram, with its focus on photos and videos quickly became a popular and appropriate platform for the industry.

### 2.3. Instagram Marketing

If Instagram were a country, it would be the third most populous nation in the world. This is how powerful the photo-sharing app has become in only seven years after its invention. With one billion active users across the globe (Constine, 2018) and 500 million daily users (Etherington, 2017), Instagram has proven its full potential for marketers.

What Instagram does is allowing users to share photos and videos of lifetime moments in real time. It includes a set of colorful filters that are designed for editing images, recoloring them and highlighting. This process is a way to create "mediated imagery" and to enhance the visuals to the viewer (Hellberg, 2015). Therefore, it is an effective tool for brand designing, as companies not only use it for sales promotion but also as an occasion to show the behind-the-scenes of the brand. The stories feature which was implemented on the platform only recently, gave brands the chance to be even more transparent and appear less "filtered" to their viewers (Amancio, 2017). This definitely strengthens the relationship with the customers.

Nevertheless, Instagram's young and female user base gives the perfect opportunity for cosmetic brands to reach them (Smith & Anderson, 2018). However, as mentioned in the introduction, research on the combination of Instagram marketing and the cosmetics industry is quite limited. There is a study that analyses the customer engagement of makeup brands on Instagram but there is limitation on how the stories feature is being implemented in their marketing strategies. A second gap is the lack of comparison between the Instagram usage of low-end brands and high-end brands. As discussed in the literature, we clearly saw that, in traditional media, luxury brands have their own marketing philosophy, however it is not yet been proven whether the luxury strategy is still employed in the digital world.

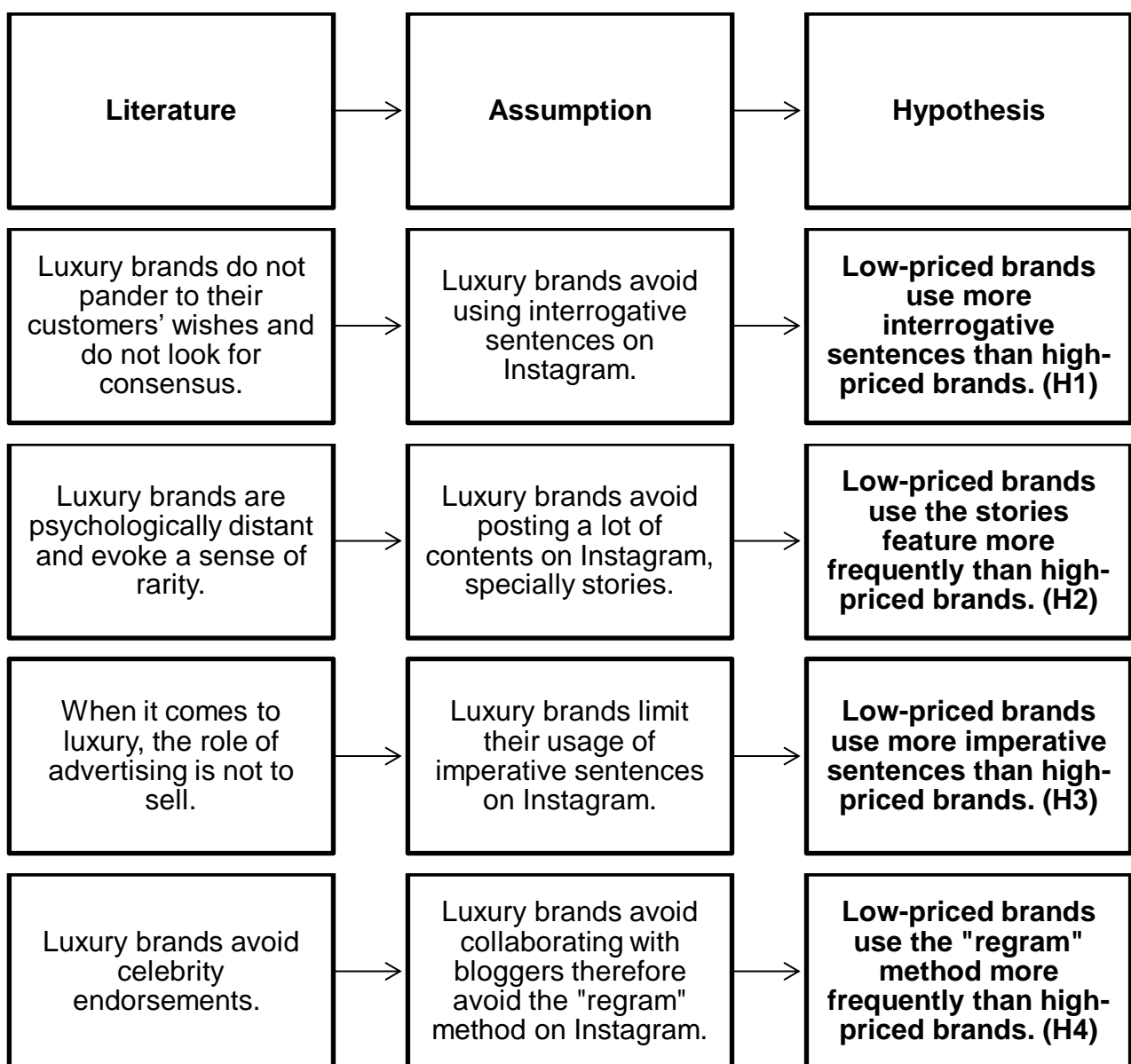
To fill in these gaps, this research seeks to answer the following:

RQ2: Is there a correlation between a brand positioning and its usage of Instagram?

RQ2: Do luxury brands still employ the luxury strategy in the Instagram era?

Based on what has been written, we have come up with following assumptions and hypothesis as seen on Table 3:

*Table 3 Literature, Assumptions, Hypothesis*







## 3. Methodology

For this study, we decided to use two research methods: qualitative research and content analysis. The qualitative research helped us fill in the gaps in the literature, more specifically, on the impact of Instagram in the Cosmetic Industry, the different marketing strategies that makeup brands use on the platform and the reason behind successful Instagram accounts. As for the content analysis, it has helped us find an answer to the research questions and an affirmation to the hypothesis.

### 3.1. Qualitative Research

#### 3.1.1. Study description

The best way to start off our study was with a qualitative research to have a better understanding around the topic in general. The best fit for an interview was a specialist who has been in the Cosmetic Industry for years, who has seen the growth of different brands from different categories throughout the evolution of Social Media, and therefore has built a broad vision on the market. Marie-Noelle Vekemans, a beauty journalist, editor-in-chief and beauty manager for ELLE Magazine Belgium was the perfect match to give us a wide observation on the market. ELLE is the largest worldwide lifestyle magazine of French origin that focuses on beauty and fashion. The interview conducted for this research took place on 27 April 2018, was done in French and consisted of eight open questions as followed:

1. What was the impact of Instagram in the beauty industry?
2. What makes Instagram highly engaging in your opinion?
3. What was the role of Instastories in this evolution?
4. What are the most successful Instagram marketing methods that have been used in the Cosmetic Industry?
5. What is a successful Instagram account?
6. What could be the reason that MAC Cosmetics (a professional mid-priced brand) has the most Instagram followers in the Beauty Industry?

7. NYX Cosmetics (low-priced) and Anastasia Beverly Hills (mid-priced) also have very successful Instagram accounts and they have won popularity on account of Instagram. What made them reach the top?
8. Do you think drugstore brands and high-end brands use Instagram differently? If so, how?

### 3.1.2. Results

According to Marie Noelle Vekemans, Instagram has enabled brands to broaden their target groups and diversify their ways of “touching people”. Instagram has not only shaken the beauty industry, but marketing in general; “The fact that brands had a free tool to reach people around the world with one post and do promotions for free was surreal” says she. The beauty industry particularly saw a massive hit on the platform with a heavy flow of beauty contents and makeup tutorials. The impact of Instagram was enormous, which led companies to stir things up by questioning everything and coming up with new proposals on how to communicate to and touch their audience.

The fact that Instagram is easy-to-use, playful and addictive makes it highly engaging according to Vekemans. She claims that the way Instagram was designed, the vividness of the colors, the easy-pattern of finger swiping is done in such a way that makes users highly addicted. A study she recently came across states that if phones were turned into black and white, the user consumption of social media is decreased by 30%, therefore every color on Instagram has been studied with great precision to keep users the longest on the application as possible. “The crazy thing about Instagram is that if a notification pops up, users click on it and end up staying. Everything [on Instagram] is clickable, and it is so easy to wander from one profile to another, that the activity that was supposed to take two minutes only end up turning into a 35-minutes-of-just-swiping” says the beauty editor. Not only is it an entertainment app, it also allows users to create social interactions. Moreover, Vekemans puts emphasis on two human aspects that explains Instagram’s effectiveness: appearance and voyeurism; People enjoy showing off their best sides and at the same time they enjoy watching another people’s intimacy. She considers Instagram as “the

reality show of Social Media” where every intimate detail whether good or bad is shared, which makes bloggers and influencers very relatable. Vekemans believes that Instagram is the most intrusive Social Media platform, where every detail of somebody’s life is shared to the public. She thinks Facebook is far less intrusive, as accounts on Facebook tend to be more private and limited to friends and family only. It is on Instagram where users share the most.

She also believes that the employment of the “instastory” feature was a “genius move” as it made Instagram even more addictive, intimate and fun. “On one platform, Instagram successfully assembled all the fun features where everything is possible; you can now create private group chats like Facebook, make videos and use filters like Snapchat and so on”. All these features make time passes very quickly on the platform which was all strategically planned out.

Nevertheless, a successful Instagram strategy according to Vekemans is to make good use of all the features provided by Instagram such as using the right hashtags, tagging people and using “instastories”. It is to stay up-to-date to all the new functionalities that Instagram is constantly offering, as they all are very performing to her experience. She explains her point further, by giving the following example: “our team has come to realize that tagging people on our stories gives us double visibility”. She also puts emphasis on “offering a proximity to the viewers by sometimes breaking the institutional image” by following trends relevant to the target group, such as collaborating with bloggers and showing behind-the-scenes. It is also important to note that so much work goes on behind a simple playful photo claims the beauty specialist; a team of easily four to five professionals who constantly think of strategies and examine trends for their magazine’s Instagram page, such as the community manager, the SEO specialist and google analysts. Behind this process several questions are asked such as “what are we going to post next? What are we going to write? Which day and what time are we going to post?”. It is necessary to always stay in line with the brand’s image.

She also affirms that their brand has stopped using Snapchat since the release of the stories feature on Instagram. Another reason for this decision was that the younger user base of Snapchat did not match to their target audience therefore, they currently prioritize Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest. In addition, they have a plan to develop their YouTube channel soon but producing videos requires a lot of time.

When asked about successful Instagram accounts, Vekermans said that CHANEL and Dior (two luxury brands) are inspiring accounts to her taste, as they are capable of “letting the viewers dream” with places and personalities in videos and tutorials. They are brands with a luxurious DNA that are capable to loosen their image on Social Media. To her belief, these brands have completed different strategies on paper versus the internet; they post more extravagant looks and tutorials on Social Media to approach the young audience that is present on these platforms and “they do it very well” she says. “They learnt to adapt and put in place a good mixture of luxury and fun”.

When asked about the Instagram success of MAC Cosmetics (which is a mid-priced brand and has the highest number of followers on Instagram in Beauty Industry), Vekermans explained that the brand employs a didactic approach of communication. She finds that the DNA of the brand is very young, full of pop colors and glitters. “They know how to work their way around trends, but they are also very strong and sharp” says Vekermans. They are all about transformation which leads her to think that their content is very well suited for Social Media. “The success of an Instagram account is the variation of what is shared; to show seriousness, then silliness integrated with intimate backstage moments and sometimes even missteps, all in correlation with the brand’s DNA. I believe that this is a good mix; to make big brands more accessible, to show consumers that a certain photo may look “cute”, but it took us fourteen hours to produce it and at some point it slipped out of our hands and this is what people expect to see on Instagram; the fun and “cool” stuff”.

As for NYX and Anastasia Beverly Hills (who both are popular and international brands today, but have found their success through Instagram), Vekermans theorizes that

similarly to MAC Cosmetics, they target a young audience who is already present on Instagram. She thinks that it is far more complicated for a brand like CHANEL or Dior to find their target on the platform, as their aim is to reach an older audience. The opposite also works, a playful colorful brand like NYX would have a hard time advertising on paper than a classic brand like CHANEL, whose advertising would be far more impactful on magazine where their target group is already situated. “Sometimes brands just don’t find their right target audience on Instagram” says she.

Moreover, according to Vekermans, there is a difference in the Instagram usage of low-priced brands and high-priced labels in terms of “communication strategy”. She states that luxury brands rejuvenate their target audience by changing their communication on certain channels. “For example, when I learnt that Dior is about to launch a range of colorful eyeliners and mascaras, I could already tell that they were going to make videos and tutorials on Social Media and that the content would be the perfect fit for the channel, as the collection is very visual and making a tutorial with a black mascara wouldn’t make a lot of sense. Therefore, yes, I believe that the communication [of low-priced brands and luxury brands] isn’t the same and that is what makes a good strategy; to adapt your content and communication to your different channels and target groups.”

Finally, the beauty specialist affirms that everything is a matter of guidelines. Luxury brands have visual DNAs; therefore, they wouldn’t post content that hasn’t been edited or photoshopped beforehand she says. “their communication is far more controlled which requires a lot of work. Another important factor that they may take into consideration is whether posting a lot doesn’t “drown” people she says. This backs up the rarity rule of traditional luxury strategy discussed in the literature. Moreover, when asked about the difference of Instagram usage between low-priced and mid-priced brands, the editor said that she does not have any answer to that, which is where our study comes in place.

To be able to answer that question we have developed a content analysis research.

## 3.2. Content Analysis

### 3.2.1. Study description

The following content analysis seeks to find answers to the following research questions and an affirmation to the following hypothesis:

RQ1: Is there a correlation between a brand positioning and its usage of Instagram?

RQ2: Do luxury brands still employ the luxury strategy in the Instagram era?

H1: Low-priced brands use more **interrogative sentences** than high-priced brands

H2: Low-priced brands use **the stories feature** more frequently than high-priced brands.

H3: Low-priced brands use more **imperative sentences** than high-priced brands.

H4: Low-priced brands use the **"regram" method** more frequently than high-priced brands.

H5: High-priced brands use more **product shots** than low-priced brands.

To answer our research questions, a content analysis of 476 posts and 618 stories from six different brands was performed. This is an adequate representation of Instagram usage as all selected brands are some of the most successful and popular ones in the industry. The posts and stories were collected over a period of 20 days, from 11 April 2018 to 30 April 2018. For each category, two brands were chosen for the analysis:

- Dior Makeup and YSL beauty for high-priced luxury brands
- MAC Cosmetic and Anastasia Beverly Hills for mid-priced professional brands
- Maybelline and NYX Cosmetics for low-priced drugstore brands

The brands were chosen based on the highest number of followers on Instagram, indicating their popularity, as seen on Table 4.

Table 4 Chosen brands and number of followers on Instagram

Brand categories	Low-priced		Mid-priced		High-priced	
Chosen brands	Maybelline	NYX	MAC	ABH	Dior	YSL
Number of followers on Instagram in million	8.9	13.8	21.8	19.3	5.1	5.8

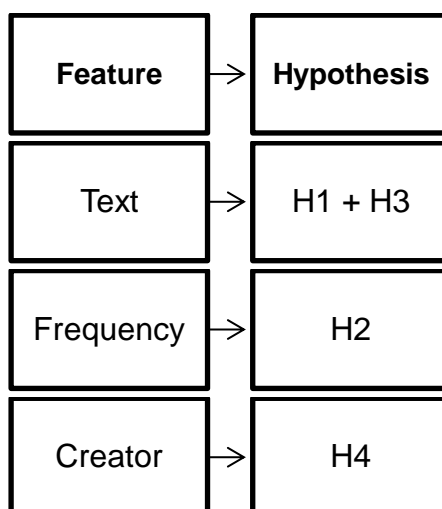
The study sample comprised 1.094 unique contents in total.

### 3.2.2. Factors analyzed

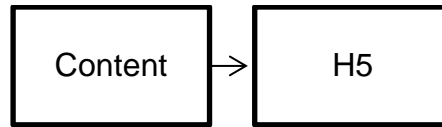
Vignisdóttir (2017) designed a framework measuring brand post popularity on Instagram via number of likes and comments. The features that they developed for the model were “vividness”, “text”, “content”, “creator” and “valence of comments”. Their study investigated the customer engagement of five different brands from the Makeup Industry, therefore a total of 750 posts had been analyzed (Vignisdottir, 2017).

For this study, the model designed by Vignisdóttir (2017) was adjusted to fit for both posts and stories. The factors were further elaborated to have a better understanding of brand positioning and their Instagram usage, as seen on Table 5.

Table 5 Features analyzed







### 3.2.2.1 Text

The “text” factor was developed to discover whether there is a correlation between a brand positioning and its usage of sentences on Instagram. In other words, it is to find an affirmation to the following hypothesis:

H1: Low-priced brands use more **interrogative sentences** than high-priced brands

H3: Low-priced brands use more **imperative sentences** than high-priced brands.

Three variables were developed for this factor:

- **Interrogative sentences:** question-based sentences I.e. “what do you think about this look?”
- **Imperative sentences:** I.e. “buy now!”
- **Neutral sentences:** Any sentence that are neither interrogative nor imperative, therefore declarative, informative and exclamatory.

### 3.2.2.2 Frequency

The “frequency” factor seeks exploration to the following hypothesis:

H2: Low-priced brands use **the stories feature** more frequently than high-priced brands.

This factor is to count the total number of posts and stories published by a brand during the 20 days period.

### 3.2.2.3 Creator

This factor was created to explore the following hypothesis:

H4: Low-priced brands use the "**regram**" **method** more frequently than high-priced brands.

Content on Instagram is either created by the company itself or by other users, the latter activity is as previously mentioned in the literature, called "regramming" and entails that brands copy content posted by other users and repost it on their own brand page. Regramming is a commonly used method in the Makeup Cosmetics Industry (Annika Vignisdottir, 2017). Often, brands mention the **hashtag "#regram"** in the caption of a "regrammed" post to give credit and clearly state that the content was reposted and not created by them. However, this is not always relevant as not all brands follow this instruction.

In this study, posts followed by **the hashtag "#regram"** were automatically labeled as user-generated content, as for the rest, further explorations have been done to prove whether a content is really "regrammed" or not which will be explained further in "other features" part.

### 3.2.2.4 Content

The "content" factor explores the following hypothesis:

H5: High-priced brands use more **product shots** than low-priced brands.

In the literature, it was assumed that high-priced brands tend to have their products visible in their marketing materials. Therefore, we have come up with the following variable: **product visibility**. Contents, where cosmetic products were visible, were automatically labeled as "**contents with product visibility**"

To have a better vision on the difference of contents published by brands from different categories, we have come up with a second factor in this context: **Focus of shot**. Based on the focus of a shot, a content can be labeled as:

- **Face shot:** Face of a model
- **Close-up shot:** Close-up on eyes or lips
- **Product shot:** Only product
- **Skin shot:** Shots where arms, hands and fingers are visible without the face
- **Wide shot:** Landscape, people in full body.
- **Press kit:** Reviews, references and screenshots from websites, pages and blogs

#### *3.2.2.5 Other features*

To explore even further the following research question, we decided to take the analysis even further:

RQ1: Is there a correlation between a brand positioning and its usage of Instagram?

As we ended up having a big data with a lot of opportunities for further exploration, we decided to take a look at the following factors to see whether there is a further difference in brand positioning.

#### *Vividness*

Vividness is a reference to a contents' degree of media richness. It can often be measured by its sensory breadth on the measure of different levels of senses stimulation. Meaning that, low vividness could refer to stimulation of sight only (photo), and high vividness could refer to the stimulation of both sight and hearing (video) (Steuer, 1992).

Videos are useful in brand storytelling, as movement and sound add an extra element to the communication (Gioglio, 2015) and generate far more emotional cues than a photo can (More, 2017).

Anyhow, three variables have been designated for this factor:

- **Photos**
- **Videos**
- **Photos + videos** (in one post)

## Motion

Motion is a factor created in this study during our research. It is to investigate the videos in posts and stories and to learn about their purposes. This factor could help us set up a difference in the way videos have been implemented by brands. It is especially useful for the stories feature, as we mentioned earlier in the literature, that there is a limitation on the way the stories feature is being used by brands.

Below are the variables created for this factor:

- **Tutorial:** the procedure of showing step-by-step the application of makeup on face. (A method commonly used by Beauty influencers and brands on Instagram)
- **Look reveal:** a model showing off the final result of their makeup look
- **Product reveal:** Showing off a makeup product
- **Swatches:** “Swatching” a product on lips or skin (e.g. arms and hands). This is a method commonly used by the Beauty Industry to show the performance of a product. More specifically, to show off how the color of a makeup product would look on skin color.
- **Event:** When a brand gives a sneak peak of an event (e.g. launching event)
- **Backstage:** Behind-the-scenes
- **One-on-one:** When a person talks directly to the camera usually on a selfie mode.
- **Teaser:** Snapshots of a campaign.
- **Repost:** Press kit

- **Getaway:** Taking influencers to a getaway trip to promote the brand

## Mention

As we explained earlier in the “creator” factor part, there is a difficulty to prove whether a content is really “regrammed” or not. This factor could help us define whether a brand associates their posts to other users or tends to completely isolate themselves. Instagram offers the option to mention users. This helps identify someone else in a post or story and provides a link to their profile. Mentioning is done in text and it is always preceded by the symbol @.

## Special effects

Through the years, Instagram adopted some features from Snapchat, such as **animated sticker** and **filters**. They also adopted a feature called **boomerang**, which is a fun way of creating captivating mini videos that loop back and forth. Other variables taken into account for this factor are the usage of **polls** which allows brands to receive votes from their followers and the “**see more**” feature which is a call-to-action option that provides a URL that viewers can easily access by swiping up the story that they are watching. In this context, we decided to also see if low-priced brands tend to use these playful features more than high-priced brands.

### 3.2.3. Results and Interpretation

All analyses for this study was conducted on Pivot Tables on Excel.

#### 3.2.3.1 Text

Our results show that, low-priced brands aka NYX and Maybelline have the lowest percentage of neutral sentences, meaning that around 50% of their sentences are neutral and the other 50% is divided into around 15% of interrogative sentences and 35% of imperative sentences. As for mid-priced brands and high-priced brands, the bigger percentage of their sentences is neutral. All brands have used imperative sentences more

than interrogative sentences (Table 6). Anyhow, when looking at the rank of brands in terms of sentence usage on Table 7, we can see mixed results, especially for interrogative sentences, where both high-priced brands and low-priced brands are ranked as the highest. **This contradicts with the following hypothesis:**

**H1: Low-priced brands use more interrogative sentences than high-priced brands.**

As for imperative sentences, low priced brands have used more imperative sentences than high priced but with a very small difference. As for mid-priced brands, MAC is ranked as the highest in terms of employing imperative sentences and ABH (another mid-priced brand) as the lowest. **Therefore, low-priced brands do use more imperative sentences than high-priced brands (H3), however nothing can be concluded for mid-priced brands.**

*Table 6 Sentences in percentage*

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL	Average
Interrogative	16%	13%	1%	4%	14%	7%	9%
Imperative	33%	38%	8%	40%	27%	33%	28%
Neutral	51%	49%	91%	56%	59%	60%	63%
Total sentences for posts and stories in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Table 7 Brands ranking in terms of sentences used.*

Rank in terms of highest usage	INTERROGATIVE	IMPERATIVE	NEUTRAL
1	MAYBELLINE	MAC	ABH
2	DIOR	NYX	YSL
3	NYX	MAYBELLINE + YSL	DIOR
4	YSL		MAC
5	MAC	DIOR	MAYBELLINE
6	ABH	ABH	NYX

### 3.2.3.2 Frequency

When counting the total number of posts and stories published by brands over a 20 days period, we can see that not only luxury brands have posted less stories, they have also published less content in total. As for mid-priced and low-priced brands, there is no correlation (Table 8). **Therefore, low-priced brands use the stories feature more than high priced brands (H2), however not necessarily more than mid-priced brands.**

Table 8 Total number of posts and stories published by brands

Brands	Stories	Posts	Total
DIOR	22	24	46
YSL	73	61	134
MAC	80	90	170
NYX	112	58	170
MAYBELLINE	163	120	283
ABH	174	123	297
<b>Total</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>1100</b>

### 3.2.3.3 Creator

As expected, and discussed in the “factor analyzed” part, the results show that some brands have completely avoided using the hashtag “regram”. However, the brands that have used it are Maybelline (low-priced), MAC Cosmetics (mid-priced) and YSL Beauty (high-priced). **We can confirm that among the brands that have used the hashtag “regram”, the low-priced brand aka Maybelline has used the hashtag “regram” more frequently than the high-end brand aka YSL beauty (H4).** However, MAC Cosmetics which is a mid-priced brand has used the hashtag “regram” more frequently than both of them with a rate of 47%, as seen on Table 9.

Table 9 Total usage of hashtag “regram” in percentage

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL
Hashtag “Regram”	24%	0%	0%	47%	0%	10%
Total number of posts in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Anyhow, since not all brands have used the hashtag “regram”, we have taken into account another factor to analyses to what extent these brands associate themselves with other users. We can see that NYX and ABH, which have never employed the hashtag “regram” in their posts, have the highest percentage of mentioned posts with respectfully 95% and 98%. Among all brands, **high-priced brands have used the mentioning method the least, meaning that they are more careful in associating themselves to others (Table 10).**

*Table 10 Total usage of the mention feature in percentage*

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL
Mention	69%	95%	98%	74%	54%	48%
Total number of posts in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

### *3.2.3.4 Content*

Results show that Dior (high-priced) and MAC Cosmetics (mid-priced) have the highest percentage of posts with product visibility with a rate of 71%, followed by Maybelline (low-priced) with 66%, as seen on Table 11. Overall, both high-priced brands aka Dior and YSL have high percentage of product visibility, however it is not enough to make a conclusion out of it.

As for the second factor which is the focus of a shot, we can see on Table 12, that the brand that has used product shots the most is Maybelline (low-priced), followed respectfully by MAC Cosmetics (mid-priced), and YSL Beauty (high-priced). **Therefore, this declines the hypothesis that claims that high-priced brands use product shots more frequently than low-priced brands. (H5) However, as seen on Table 11, discussed earlier, a big percentage of high-priced brands’ posts include product visibility.**

Anyhow, an interesting result found on Table 12 is the similarities of NYX Cosmetics and ABH, who both have the highest percentage of face shots, followed by close-up shots.



Despite the fact that the two brands have different positioning, they both are very popular brands on Instagram, who have found their success on account of the platform. It is no surprise that most of their shots include faces and close-ups as they are both known for their transformational makeup looks and tutorials.

Another interesting similarity is between Maybelline and MAC Cosmetics who have the highest percentage of product shots followed by face shots. These two brands also have different positioning, however they both are classic brands that have built their names before the evolution of Instagram.

*Table 11 Contents with product visibility in percentage*

<b>Brands</b>	<b>MAYBELLINE</b>	<b>NYX</b>	<b>ABH</b>	<b>MAC</b>	<b>DIOR</b>	<b>YSL</b>
Product visibility	66%	29%	43%	71%	71%	61%
Total number of posts in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Table 12 Focus of shots in percentage*

<b>Brands</b>	<b>MAYBELLINE</b>	<b>NYX</b>	<b>ABH</b>	<b>MAC</b>	<b>DIOR</b>	<b>YSL</b>	<b>Average</b>
Face	41%	47%	53%	30%	38%	13%	39%
Close up	11%	25%	30%	14%	17%	25%	20%
Skin	2%	7%	13%	6%	13%	8%	7%
Product	43%	14%	5%	40%	13%	36%	27%
Wide shot	4%	7%	0%	10%	21%	18%	7%
Total number of posts in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

### 3.2.3.5 Other factors

To broaden our understanding on what kind of posts and stories the six brands publish and if there are any further correlations between brand positioning and the type of visual content they broadcast on Instagram (RQ1), we have analyzed the following factors:

## Vividness & motion for posts

When it comes to posts, all brands have published more content with low vividness (photos) than videos, as seen on Table 13. The difference is obvious, except for Dior who is closer to the margin with 54% of their posts being photos and 46% videos. No reasoning can be found behind it, as the other high-priced in the study aka YSL has not the same case. Anyhow, when analyzing the motion factor, we can further investigate what kind of videos Dior posts on its feed.

On Table 14, we can see that 58% of Dior's videos posted on their feed is look reveal. The same for YSL. We can also see that tutorials are commonly used by all brands with a 50% average; however, it is mainly concentrated on ABH's feed with a rate of 86%. An interesting result, is the high percentage of usage of "swatching" videos on low-priced brands feed aka Maybelline and NYX Cosmetics. This is not surprising, as "swatching" can be considered a "humble" way of showing a product's performance especially when it is done on skin.

Another interesting point is the heavily adoption of look reveal videos by the two high-priced labels, Dior and YSL.

*Table 13 Vividness of posts in percentage*

<b>Brands</b>	<b>MAYBELLINE</b>	<b>NYX</b>	<b>ABH</b>	<b>MAC</b>	<b>DIOR</b>	<b>YSL</b>	<b>Average</b>
Photo	82%	91%	71%	78%	54%	87%	79%
Video	18%	5%	29%	21%	46%	13%	21%
Photo+Video	0%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Post total in %</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 14 Motion of posts in percentage

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL	Average
Backstage	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	4%
Event	0%	40%	0%	5%	17%	0%	5%
Look reveal	14%	0%	8%	25%	58%	38%	20%
One on one	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	1%
Product reveal	18%	0%	3%	10%	0%	13%	8%
Swatch	18%	40%	3%	0%	0%	0%	7%
Teaser	9%	0%	0%	10%	8%	13%	6%
Tutorial	41%	20%	86%	30%	17%	25%	50%
<b>Posts</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Vividness & motion for stories

As opposed to posts, videos are most popular in the stories feature as seen on Table 15.

When having a look at Maybelline’s stories, we can see a similarity with its posts. Most of its story content is, once more, mostly swatches and tutorials (Table 16). The same goes for NYX where videos focused on events are as present on feed as on stories. This pattern is also found on ABH and MAC’s accounts, where tutorials are as popular on their feed as their stories.

However, YSL and Dior are brands that have different strategies on posts and stories: YSL stories focused on events and one-on-ones, as opposed to its feed and Dior which is the brand that has posted the least number of stories (as mentioned in the frequency part), used the feature to mainly do reposting. MAC has employed the story feature, to show some one-on-one contents in addition to its tutorials.

**All these mixed results, make us realize that each brand has its own communication strategies.**

Table 15 Stories vividness in percentage

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL	Average
Photo	29%	31%	13%	28%	18%	27%	24%
Video	71%	69%	87%	73%	82%	73%	76%
Stories in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 16 Stories motion in percentage

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL	Average
Backstage	0%	5%	7%	0%	13%	0%	3%
Event	13%	28%	4%	9%	0%	41%	15%
Getaway	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Look reveal	3%	3%	7%	19%	0%	2%	6%
One on one	16%	38%	10%	30%	0%	35%	21%
Product reveal	7%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Repost	1%	0%	0%	0%	75%	0%	3%
Swatch	23%	18%	24%	4%	0%	2%	17%
Teaser	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Tutorial	23%	6%	47%	39%	13%	18%	28%
Stories total in %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

### Special effects

Table 17 shows that only MAC, Maybelline and NYX have used the filters feature. Stickers are most common on Maybelline’s account with 74% and present on NYX’s with 26%. Boomerangs have been used by all brands, but Maybelline and NYX have the highest percentage with 38% and 26% and Dior the lowest with 3%.

Moreover, as seen on Table 18, only Maybelline has used the poll feature. As for the “see more” feature, all brands have used it at least once, but it is the most common on ABH’s stories with a rate of 29%, followed by NYX Cosmetics, 23%.

**Anyhow, we can conclude that trendy and fun features are more or less adopted by all brands but are mostly concentrated on low-priced brands’ accounts.**

Table 17 Usage of filters, stickers and boomerangs in percentage

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL	Total
Filter	40%	20%	0%	40%	0%	0%	100%
Sticker	74%	26%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Boomerang	38%	26%	10%	9%	3%	14%	100%
<b>Posts+Stories</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 18 Usage of polls and "see more" feature in percentage

Brands	MAYBELLINE	NYX	ABH	MAC	DIOR	YSL	Total
Poll	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
See more	17%	23%	29%	13%	4%	15%	100%
<b>Stories</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Conclusion

The interview gave us an insight on the combination of Instagram and the beauty industry, a better understanding on Instagram's effectiveness especially for an industry driven by visual content. It also gave us a comprehension on different communication strategies employed by brands to reach their target groups on the platform. We could apprehend that luxury brands in particular adjust their communication strategies to the platform. (RQ2)

The content analysis provided an insight on the communication language of different brands on Instagram (H1 + H3), whether they prefer rarity or overexposure (H2), isolation over association (H4) and seriousness over playfulness. It has also permitted us to see what kind of content they publish on their feed and stories and whether product visibility is an important factor for them (H5).

Finally, it has helped us see on which factors there is a correlation between brand positioning and Instagram usage (RQ1) and to what extent luxury brands employ the luxury strategy on the platform (RQ2).

### 4.2. Discussion

The results show that on Instagram, **luxury brands still keep a certain distance from their consumers by not oversharing and focusing on rarity (RQ2)**. They post less content and less stories compared to other brands.

The biggest percentage of luxury brands' sentences were neutral but that did not stop them from using imperative and interrogative sentences. However, there is no sign of sentences that demand immediate purchase, dissimilar to low-priced brands, as seen on Table 19.

Table 19 Example of sentences used by low-priced brands versus luxury brands

Brands	Low-priced brands	Luxury brands
Interrogative	<p><b>“who’s buying this beauty?”</b> (Maybelline, Day4, Post1)</p> <p><b>“have you tried this palette yet?”</b> (NYX, Day19, Post3)</p>	<p><b>“ready to dare?”</b> (Dior, Day8, Post1)</p>
Imperative	<p><b>“get them all in the US online and in stores at @walmart and @target”</b> (Maybelline, Day6, Post6)</p> <p><b>“leave a [lemon emoji] in the comments if you can’t wait to try these”</b> (Maybelline, Day11, Post4)</p>	<p><b>“Dare to wear this rainbow eyeliner look!”</b> (Dior, Day8, Post1)</p> <p><b>“Take a hint”</b> (YSL, Day3, Post1)</p> <p><b>“stay tuned for more”</b> (Dior, Day5, Post1)</p>

We can conclude that, despite having used interrogative sentences; **luxury brands do not necessarily look for consensus (RQ2)** and that the question-based text that they have used are sometimes even rhetorical.

As for the imperative sentences, it is true that all brands have used them, but we can see that the luxury brands tend to ask users to **“discover”, “follow” and “stay tuned”** rather than **“buy now”**. **Therefore, luxury brands tend to not use explicit selling language (RQ2).**

When it comes to endorsements and associations, we can see that brands have not completely avoided them, however despite using the mentioning method at a high rate, they have always been tagging the same small group of people who are either the face of the brand (aka Bella Hadid in Dior’s case) or the creative director (Peter Philips for Dior).

**Anyhow, we can still confirm that luxury brands are more careful in associating themselves to others, as opposed to low-priced brands.**

**Moreover, we can conclude that luxury brands do employ the luxury strategy on Instagram but on a very particular and limited extent (RQ2).** It has been clear to us that they are adjusting their communication strategies to the Instagram era, as the main audience found on the platform are young people (as discussed in the qualitative research). It was also visible that they are also trying to be relevant by following latest trends such as posting behind-the-scenes contents, sharing moments from their events, doing tutorials, one-on-one videos and boomerangs. Nonetheless, they stay in their limits in the risk of vulgarization.

As for the difference between mid-priced and low-priced brands, the factors that stood out were that low-priced brands have used more interrogative sentences than mid-priced brands and that they have used more playful features such as animated gifs, stickers and boomerangs. **We can say that the cheaper a brand, the more casual the communication (RQ1).**

We also noticed that mid-priced brands shared the most tutorials, look reveals and face shots in their stories, meaning that **they focus a lot on professional makeup application techniques (RQ1).**

#### 4.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite seeing some differences in the brand positioning and their usage of Instagram, this study focused on the most followed brands from each category. For future research, it would be interesting to consider other luxury brands that have less followers, same price range but are more exclusive as CHANEL Beauty or Gucci Makeup (which has launched only very recently in 2019).

Having a small interview with Ichraf Bader, Press Manager of CHANEL Benelux, about CHANEL's Instagram strategy, she said the following:



“There are indeed luxury brands who use the “regramming” method. At this point I don’t know if we will do the same, but I don’t think so for CHANEL. As for the trends, CHANEL will try to communicate differently so I don’t think they will follow the trends. But I don’t know how this will grow in the future.”

This means that not all luxury brands use the same communication methods.

For future research, it would also be interesting to study the way celebrity makeup brands use Instagram for marketing purposes, as they have grown extremely fast on the platform.

#### 4.4. Implications

Instagram is a powerful virtual world that has changed the whole marketing game. Brands that are on the platform are exposing themselves to millions of people every day with no space to make mistakes. As time passes, each brand learns how to adjust their communication strategies on the platform at its own pace.

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## Appendix

### **1. What was the impact of Instagram in the beauty industry?**

Ça a permis de détendre la cible. Les réseaux sociaux c un outil incroyable pour toucher les gens partout dans le monde en un seul post. Ça permet aussi de diversifier la manière dont on touche les gens donc c'est un outil incroyable qui a pas mal secouer mais que le secteur de la beauté, le secteur de marketing en général en tout cas au début c'était des outils qui étaient gratuits donc c'était assez incroyables pour les marques même les media on pouvait faire notre propre promotion tout seul gratuitement et élargir notre cible. Je pense que ça été un facteur incroyable je pense particulièrement en beauté. Je pense que ça n'a pas mal impacte aussi la Food avec les recettes et tout ça mais J'ai l'impression que la beauté les tutos tout ça a explosé. Je pense que l'impact il est énorme ça a été positive et négative forcément ça a demandé à tous les acteurs du secteur que ce soit le marketing ou les médias de remettre en question et d'arriver à proposer des formats différent pour toucher les gens donc un coup de pied dans la fourmilière comme on dit.

### **2. What makes Instagram highly engaging in your opinion?**

Parce que c'est facile, c'est ludique, moi je t'ai dit J'ai pas fait des études de marketing mais J'ai déjà lu sur des blogs spéciaux qui expliquait que les applications comme Instagram sont faite pour nous rendre accro que ce soit design, les couleurs utilisé, la manière de passer les choses avec le swipe etc. que c'est vraiment ca été conçu pour nous rendre accro et donc j'avais lu un truc assez intéressant je sais plus de quel pays c t mais un chercheur avait constaté que si on passait notre téléphone en noir et blanc on diminuait de 30% notre consommation des réseaux sociaux et par ex tous les designs les couleurs tout est étudié avec une grande précision pour qu' on y ail le plus longtemps possible. Le truc avec Instagram qui est dingue c'est que tu reçois une notification tu vas voir un truc et tu restes. Tout est cliquable tu peux passer d'un profil a l'autre et au final ton truc il est dû te prendre 2 minutes à faire tut e rend compte que tu viens de passer 35 minutes a juste a swiper. Ça le rend très addictive parce que c facile, c ludique ça présente qd même comme une application de divertissement ça crée du lien social après l'être

humain qu'est ce qui lest c dans le paraitre on sait qd même aussi montrer le meilleur cote etc. et je pense que l'être humain aussi il est qd même un petit peu voyeur. Je considère Instagram comme la télé réalité des réseaux sociaux cad on partage des choses qui parfois sont très intime quad on a des influenceuses on veut tout savoir de leur accouchement leur bourrelet. On est dans quelque chose très intimiste et en fait ça attire les gens de savoir pas que le bon. Je me suis disputé avec mon mec, je suis malade, J'ai des cernes, regardez mon nez coule et tout, on est dans quelque chose qui n'a aucun sens qui n'a pas d'intérêt mais en fait on est accro parce que c'est du voyeurisme on rentre dans la vie et l'intimité des gens et je pense que ça aussi ça a rendu Instagram très addictive parce qu'avec les stories maintenant c'est vraiment partager l'intimité étranger en fait.

Fb c'est tes amis et Instagram tes followers. Fb c'est moins intrusif (quelqu'un respect pas ton private bubble). Pour moi, Instagram c'est le réseau social le plus intrusif sur lequel on peut voir le plus de détail de la vie des gens parce que c là qu'il partage le plus et que souvent les comptes Instagram moins privet que les comptes fb.

Mon compte Instagram il est publique alors que mon compte fb c que ma famille et quelque contact Professionnel. Je publie des photos intime comme es photo du décor chez moi mon chat. Je partage ça sur fb bcp. Sur Instagram un tt petit peu C'est plutôt la vie parfaite qu'on partage sur Instagram.

### **3. What was the role of Instastories in this evolution?**

Je pense que ça été un coup de génie parce que Snapchat c'est ça qui était cool c'est de faire les vidéos et les filtros etc. que ça rentre dans cette logique de fun de vie parfait de beauté standardisé etc. et ils ont un peu les recouper sur les pieds et donc là on a sur Instagram. Tu peux partager des photos, tu peux partager des boomerangs, tu peux partager des ralentis tu peux partager tt ce qui est de ta tête, des vidéos plus longs, tas des teasers. Sur une plateforme ils ont réussi à rassembler tous les trucs cool. On peut faire des groupes de message privet aussi et ça c'est comme fb et puis ils ont rajouté les vidéos comme Snapchat et les filtros ils ont réussi à rassembler tous les trucs cool et pareil le système est très bien fait tu commences en regardant une story et puis ça continue sans que tu doives sortir retourner et tu peux facilement faire marcher arrière zoomer regarder.

C'est très addictif, le temps passe très vite quand on est là-dessus donc je pense que c'est une technique marketing.

#### **4. What are the most successful Instagram marketing methods that have been used in the Cosmetic Industry?**

Je pense que c'est en proposant sur tt les supports justement. Nous quand on vent a des marques on fait un post Instagram on vent tt maintenant on vent la story on vent si on la publie une fois deux fois la longueur des postes etc. donc la bonne stratégie pour moi c'est de bien utiliser toutes les fonctionnalités de bien utiliser tous les bons hashtags de bien tagger les gens. Par Exemple la si on publie des articles sur les blocus parce que les étudiant son te blocus elle va chercher quelles sont les hashtags qui fonctionne en rapport avec les études avec les jeunes avec la cible donc mtn c vraiment on sait que les outils sont vraiment performant on se rend compte qu'on tag dans une story on a le double de vue que quand on tag pas. Donc la bonne stratégie c de se tenir au courant de toutes les nouveautés et de les utiliser parsk elles fonctionnent et de faire de la photo et de faire les stories, d'utiliser les bon hashtags d u utiliser les bons comptes d'offrir aussi une proximité a la lectrice et ce qu'on essaye de faire aussi pour casser l'image un peu trop institutionnelle parfois de certain media. On ne fera jamais ce que font les bloggeuses parsk c pas notre métier et que nos journalistes vont s'exposer intimement. Il y a des choses on franchira pas dans ces barrières la mais du coup c pour ça que les marques ns demande de collaborer avec des bloggeuses et nous on gère cette collaboration mais c d'essayer, et la bonne stratégie c de toucher les gens avec tout qui fonctionne pour le moment et pour le moment ca inclut les bloggeuses et donc on a très partenariat comme ça après ça sera autres choses et on suivra les tendances et on essaye de rester vraiment à la pointe parsk c ça qui nous permet d'être leader sur la presse belge francophone en tt cas donc voilà mais c bcp de boulot c un cm à plein temps c un gas qui analyse quels sont les tendances et des Professional de référencement .. Derrière un truc qui a L'air ludique et que tt le monde télécharge sur son iPhone en fait le marketing qui y a derrière est très professionnel. Si je dois prendre tt les gens qui bosse sur notre compte Instagram. Tu as la CM, SEO, le gas qui fait du référencement, celui qui analyse google Analytics ils sont facilement 4 ou 5 à réfléchir aux stratégies pour ça fonctionne en plus. Derrière une belle photo qu'on va mettre y a tout un travail avant de qu'est ce qu'on va mettre qu'est ce qu'on

va écrire à quelle heure on va écrire poster quel jour quel heure poster. Donc tt ça on réfléchit et c une vraie stratégie quoi

On a arrêté Snapchat, dès qu'Instagram a lancé [les stories] on s'est rendu compte qu'on n'arrivait pas. C t entrain de reprendre ce publique le surtout sur Snapchat le publique est qd même plus jeune et ns on commence vers les 18, 20. Donc on a privilégié Instagram on essaye d'en privilégier trois gros FB, Instagram, Pinterest on est pas mal dessus et là on essaye de mettre de les boucher d'œil sur YouTube parsk ça on est en retard parsk la production de vidéo ça demande du temps incroyable pour faire une chaine YouTube mais on essaye

### **5. What is a successful Instagram account?**

Chanel, Dior sont des comptes inspirant parsk ils arrivent à faire rêver avec des lieux avec des personnalités qui vont faire des vidéos, qui vont faire des tutos. Moi je suis passionnée de make-up et qd je vois une story Dior avec Peter Philips qui va commencer à dire hello Guys Im in new York city et qui commence à faire son make-up je suis la wow Jai Peter Philips qui me parle DS mon téléphone quoi. Ça me fait rêver. Ils mixent l'institutionnel et la c qd même des marques qui ont des ADN de luxe et ils arrivent à décoincer leur image sur les réseaux sociaux. Et je trouve que vraiment ils ont une autre stratégie du papier à internet avec des tutos bcp plus extravagant avec une approche des clients bcp plus jeune parsk la cible sur les réseaux sociaux c plus jeune et je trouve qu'ils font ça bien. D adapter, ils restent du luxe et en même temps y a des tutos y a juste des produits y a des lieux incroyables y a des célébrités. Je trouve que c un bon mix. Moi j'accroche bien ce genre de contenu. C des grosses marques y a eu moyen 10 personnes qui s'occupe de ces comptes

### **6. What could be the reason that MAC Cosmetics (a professional mid-priced brand) has the most Instagram followers in the Beauty Industry?**

Je pense qui ls sont très dans la didactique. Ils font des chouettes story avec des make-up et après sa c aussi l'ADN de mac mais après très jeune, c toujours des couleurs pop, plein de paillette. Ils jouent sur toutes les tendances ils qd même assez fort pointu c impressionnant qd un make-up mac que ce soit un garçon ou une fille commence à faire



son teint et tt tes qd même wow transformation quoi. Et je pense que c aussi ce côté-là. Leur contenu est bien adapté aux réseaux sociaux c une marque qui de toute façon fait jeune. Ils sont sur les défiles etc. mais les produits sont souvent très colorés et tt ça. Donc je pense que le contenu de la marque est particulièrement bien adapté aux réseaux sociaux et pareil ils mixent de tout. y a du fun ils font des postes drôles, ils ment bien ça et je pense que le succès d'un compte Instagram c ca c de se varier de ce qu'on publie de faire du sérieux et puis du faire du drôle faire qd même rentrer dans l'intimité d'un backstage et un truc qui foire et en même temps l'ADN de la marque et je trouve que c ça le bon mix c de rendre c grand marque et c grands mondes médias plus accessible on se rend compte que oui on publiât une magazine il est super beau et tout mais on va vous montrer sur Instagram que cette photo qui est canon on a mis 14 heure pour la faire ça s'est tombé enfin ça rend les marques et les gens plus accessibles et je crois que c ça qui est cool c ca ce qu'on a envie de voir sur Instagram c l'autre cote.. Le côté plus cool.

**7. NYX Cosmetics (low-priced) and Anastasia Beverly Hills (mid-priced) also have very successful Instagram accounts and they have won popularity on account of Instagram. What made them reach the top ?**

Pareil, c des marques qui veulent toucher un publique plus jeune c des marques ou les produits ne sont pas extrêmement cher. Pareil pour NYX y a plein de couleur c tous ce qui est make-up ludique et donc de base leur publique se trouve sur Instagram c plus compliqué je pense pour un Chanel ou pour un Dior d'aller chercher parsk la cible est quand même un peu plus âgé tandis que les jeunes NYX ce qu'ils voient c leur star à la télé dans les séries et tout ça leur parle donc Instagram c devenu relié au contenu qu' on propose et au publique cible qu' on veut toucher. Je pense que par ex NYX aurait peut-être plus de mal à s'imposer hors des réseaux sociaux peut être qu'une pub chanel va plus impacter dans le magazine parsk le publique cible est plus âgé c plus Classique c plus en référence à cette marque alors que NYX c des marques plus jeunes et donc leur publique cible et plus sur les réseaux. Je pense que c ça aussi qui fait le succès. Tu as des grosses marques qui sont de très belles marques mais sur Instagram c pas leur cible. Donc c plus compliqué de les toucher.

## **8. Do you think drugstore brands and high-end brands use Instagram differently? If so, how ?**

Je pense vrmt que la stratégie communication n'est pas la même et la preuve que c'est possible c que voilà les marques comme chanel et Dior ils rajeunisse leur cible en changeant leur communication sur certain support la y a une collection de make-up Dior qui va sortir des eyeliners, des mascaras super coloré etc. direct qd je vois ça je dis au attaché de presse pour ça il faut faire des vidéos il faut faire des tutos pour les réseaux sociaux on sait que c un contenu qui va fonctionner sur les réseaux sociaux parsk c très Visuel faire un tuto avec un mascara noir ça n'a pas d'intérêt donc oui je pense que leur communication n'est pas la même et c ca ce qui faut faire c la bonne intelligence c d'adapter ta communication et ton contenu à tes diffèrent support et chaque support a sa cible

MAC c des défile c des marques qd même international qui rendent des rêves avec des stars

C une question de guidelines, Les grands marques ils ont des ADN visuels. Dior ne va pas juste filmer comme ça sur un coin de table tout doit être lécher, photoshopper, monter. Et je pense que ça de bcp de travail après et ce que quand on post trop les gens ne sont pas trop noyé. Je ne sais pas quelle est la raison pour la quantité. NYX, si le prix est plus cheap tu t'attends à des contenus plus faciles plus girl Next Door. Ou qu'un artiste connu de Dior va dire hey je suis dans la salle de bain. Leur communication est bcp plus contrôlé.

Qd on collabore av chanel, chanel a son propre make-up artiste ... leur identité est trop léché tu ne peux pas juste dire on met un eyeliner rouge. YLS est rock'n'roll et plus jeune Les luxes sortent de leur confort zone sur Instagram pour cibler des jeunes. Rajeunissement de la marque