



gisou

Fashion Entrepreneur Exam  
Mrs. Ostinelli

Master Promotion,  
Communication & Media

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# Introduction

For this report the hair care brand, Gisou, founded by Negin Mirsalehi will be analyzed. This research will go through who the entrepreneur behind the brand is, her education, diplomas, and her current jobs. Following this, a PEST analysis will be done, on the country where Negin has lived all her life and where her business was created.

After these two points, we shall dive into the core of this report that will be the brand itself: Gisou. Following the brief history of the brand and its products, this work will focus on the competitive, social and financial successes. These few last points of the research will make it possible to understand the essence of the brand, its positioning and most importantly the financial situation.

These steps done, the report will give a conclusion on Negin Mirsalehi as an entrepreneur and the brand she founded. The findings will make it possible to also understand the strategies adopted by Negin as well as the success that came out of a new business of hair care from the Netherlands.



# 1 Entrepreneur: Negin Mirsalehi



**N**egin Mirsalehi, founder of Gisou, is a 30 years old woman from Amsterdam, the Netherlands. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master in marketing.

Negin became a blogger in 2013 and quickly became one of the biggest online influencers (Saltzman, 2018). In fact, Negin counts 5.4 million Instagram followers and 314'000 subscribers on YouTube. As if this was not enough, since 2015, she manages her own hair care, Gisou.



The hair care products are made with her family's honey called "Mirsalehi Honey". In fact, her bee keeping family has lasted six generations and is the proud owner of the Mirsalehi Garden in the Netherlands (Gisou, 2019). Interestingly, her mother was the one that actually started using the honey as a hair product, since she is a hairdresser (Negin Mirsalehi YouTube, 2019). It is also important to mention that Negin was the main person behind the creation of Gisou, but as we will see later in this report, she has co-founded the brand with her boyfriend: Maurits Stibb (Mirror Mirror, 2017). Furthermore, to add to the importance of Negin as a public figure, she was on the Forbes' list 30 under 30, in 2018 (Saltzman, 2018).

This analysis of Negin puts the first bricks to understanding what she did to create a brand that finds itself among the best hair care brands. Furthermore, we will see that she became the face of the brand and her job as a successful influencer truly affected Gisou, in an extremely positive way.

# 2 PEST Analysis: The Netherlands

**A**s mentioned before, Negin is from the Netherlands and Gisou was created there. The brand is based in Almere, a city not far away from Amsterdam. A PEST analysis table is presented below, to fully illustrate this chapter and help us understand the situation of the country where Negin and Gisou were both born.

Political	Economical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Netherlands is a <b>Monarchical Government</b>. King is: <b>Willem-Alexander</b> and Prime Minister (takes political decisions) is: <b>Mark Rutte</b> (Xpat, no date).</li><li><b>Danger</b> comes from the <b>radical political parties</b>, that are growing and against the EU. Ej: the <b>PVV</b> (Party for Freedom) and the <b>FvD</b> (Forum for Democracy) (David et al, 2019).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The country is an <b>export-oriented economy</b>. With the <b>new trade policies</b> (as for the U.S) and events such as the <b>Brexit</b> becomes a serious <b>threat</b>.</li><li>Economic forecasts say that the economy will be <b>growing slowly</b> for the next few years because the <b>external environment is unfavourable to exports</b> (David et al, 2019).</li><li>One of the <b>top dozen trading countries</b> in the world (export, 2018).</li></ul>
Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Netherlands counts around <b>17 million inhabitants</b> and its capital, Amsterdam is the most <b>multicultural city</b> in the world.</li><li>Up to 40% of Dutch say they have <b>no religion</b> and the rest are mainly <b>Protestants</b>.</li><li>Dutch buy luxury for <b>quality, travelling and real estate</b> (Breukel, 2018).</li><li>They have a <b>good buying power</b> (Satander, 2019).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Everyone in the country can have access to internet and to social media.</li><li>It has an <b>advanced infrastructure</b> concerning <b>transportation of goods</b> but also <b>electronic data</b> (export, 2018).</li><li>The Dutch do well in <b>technological and creative outputs</b> (Holland, 2018).</li></ul>

An interesting fact that can be added is, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2017), that the Netherlands' population sees being an entrepreneur as a good career choice. The country is extremely favorable to the creation of start-ups and businesses. According to the same monitor, women see being an entrepreneur as a good career path as well.

Furthermore, as mentioned below, the main reason businesses are created is because they are opportunity driven, which is exactly the reason behind Gisou's creation.

It is clear that the Netherlands is a country that has a lot of possibilities in terms of money and exports. However, because of external events and new policies, the country might suffer in the future. Nevertheless, the Dutch population has a high spending power and hopefully, this condition will stay as it is for the next coming years, making it possible for new businesses to be created. Economically speaking, without considering any external event, the country is on the right track and entrepreneurship is truly valued positively.

table 6 Entrepreneurial attitudes in the Netherlands, 2008-2017, percentage of adult population (18-64 years of age) that agrees with the statement

item	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<u>entrepreneurship as desirable career choice:</u> "In the Netherlands, most people consider starting a new business a desirable career choice"	85	84	85	83	79	80	79	79	78	81
<u>entrepreneurship is given high status:</u> "In the Netherlands, those successful at starting a new business have a high level of status and respect"	69	67	69	67	65	66	68	65	60	67
<u>media attention for entrepreneurship:</u> "In the Netherlands, you will often see stories in the public media about successful businesses"	61	64	61	62	58	55	56	58	57	63

Source: GEM APS 2017.

table 15 Motivation for the decision to be entrepreneurially active (TEA), the Netherlands, 2008-2017, percentage of adult population (18-64 years of age)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
opportunity-driven motivation	4.3	5.0	6.1	7.0	8.6	8.1	7.6	5.9	8.5	8.3
necessity-driven motivation	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.5	1.1	2.3	0.7
other motivation	0.4	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.9
total (TEA)	5.2	7.2	7.2	8.2	10.3	9.3	9.5	7.2	11.0	9.9

Source: GEM APS 2017.

# 3 Description of the new business: Gisou

In 2015, Negin Mirsalehi founded Gisou, a hair care brand made out of a key ingredient: the Mirsalehi honey coming from her dad's bee garden, next to Amsterdam (Gisou, 2019). The brand started with the famous Gisou hair oil, which guarantees moisture, shine and protection for the hair. Since then, the brand has expanded and now counts more than 10 products, from hair oil to hair perfume passing by a hair comb (Gisou, 2019). Furthermore, the brand has recently changed their packaging, to make it more sustainable, which is a smart move, knowing sustainability is a big concern nowadays.

As mentioned before, Negin co-founded this brand with her boyfriend Maurits Stibb who now takes care of the day-to-day activities of the brand, while Negin takes care of its creative side (Quezada, 2017). It can also be added that despite Negin and Maurits starting the brand together, Negin's parents are also part of the project since the honey comes from her father's bee garden (Negin Mirsalehi, 2019). Gisou seems to be the result of a big family putting all their skills together.



## Competitive success

Gisou's products are said to have as a key ingredient the Mirsalehi honey, however, it is important to note that various other ingredients are present. Even though the products do not have dangerous chemicals, it does have various fragrance chemicals, this is where the brand could be considered quite weak (Incide Corder, 2019). However, in most hair care products such chemicals are found, since fragrance is one of the elements that make people buy the product. Therefore, the brand is following a pattern that is absolutely normal within the cosmetics and hair care industry. The only issue could be its lack of natural ingredients in general, since the only one found is honey, and the dose of it is not as high as expected.

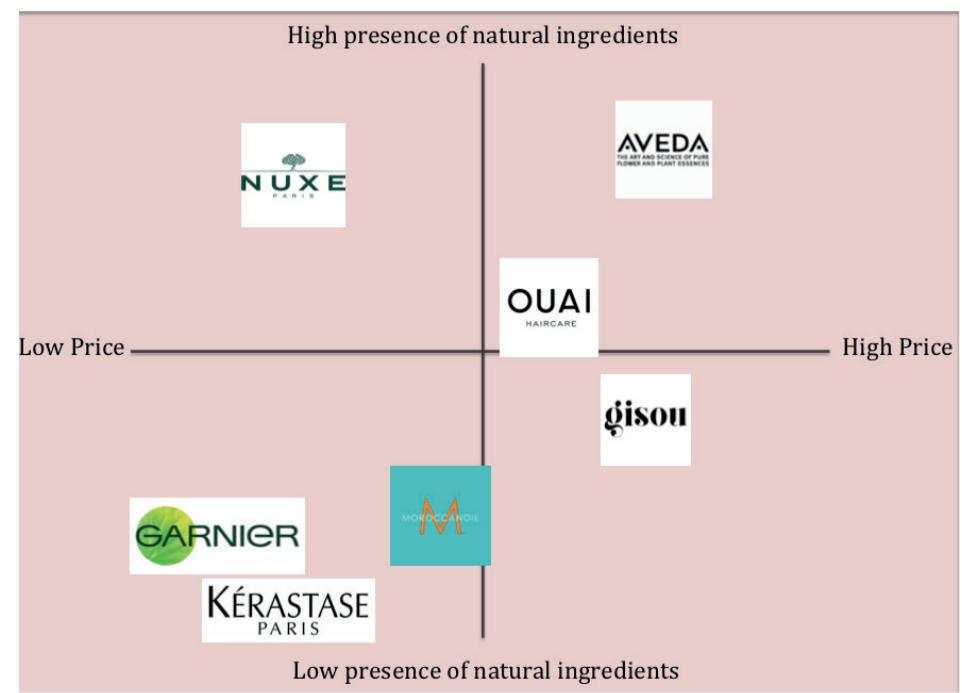
Gisou's prices are quite high for hair care; the prices vary between 30 euros to 100 euros, for 100ml of a product (Gisou, 2019). The brand could be classified among a premium brand, especially compared to the affordable ones such as Garnier.

In the positioning map, on the right, a few hair care brands have been selected to see exactly where Gisou positions itself and its competition. It is also a good way to understand if Negin seized a good opportunity regarding the market, and if her products do feel a gap in the hair care market. For this map, the aspects of price and natural ingredients were taken in consideration. In fact, these two aspects are at the core of Gisou, as the brand says so.

Nuxe and Aveda in terms of the presence of natural ingredients are the most positive ones. The fact that Nuxe is on the cheaper side and Aveda on the more expensive side shows there is choice for any customer. OUAI and Gisou are quite similar but, interestingly, after analyzing their ingredients, OUAI products have many more natural ingredients than Gisou, which truly just relies on its honey as one natural ingredient among many fragrance chemicals, as mentioned previously. Finally, Garnier, Kérastase and Moroccanoil are with the lowest presence

of natural ingredients. This can come as surprising for Moroccanoil because it claims to be made mainly of oil from Morocco and has a higher price tag than the two other brands. The two other brands, Garnier and Kérastase, are cheaper so it could make sense concerning the ingredients.

After this positioning map and analysis of some of the competitors, it is clear that Gisou is in a very restricted sector. It relies a lot on the honey in the product, and the advertising around the brand. However, it seems as if there are too many none-natural ingredients in their products that makes it illogical, considering the price. The price is definitely dictated by the dose of honey in each product and the famous founder of the brand, Negin Miralsehi.



## Social success

The company currently counts around 30 people and its CEO, since April 2019, is Melbert Visscher (LinkedIn, 2019).

There are possibilities for workers to move up within the company. As an example, a young woman called Julia started as an intern within the company and has now moved up to being Negin's personal assistant. Despite both positions being equally hard and demanding, there seems to be a possibility to stay working for Gisou and work in a different sector of the brand or get eventually promoted.

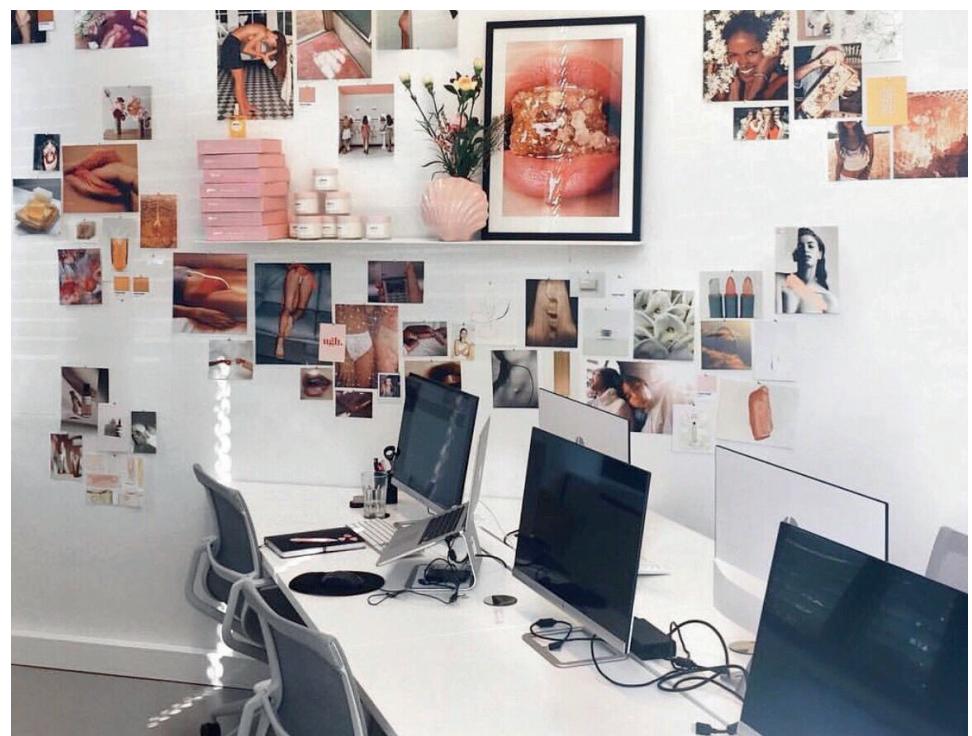
According to the YouTube videos by Negin, the atmosphere and overall interior decor is positive and aesthetically pleasing. A lot of events within the office happen during the holidays, with contests and prizes related to Gisou (Negin Mirsalehi YouTube, 2019). Furthermore, for new employees, a Gisou training trip is organized to the bee garden of the Mirsalehi family, where Negin's father teaches all the aspects of bee keeping to the new employees (Negin Mirsalehi Instagram, 2019). Another aspect about the company is how Negin's team goes with her to all pop-up events. The Gisou team becomes more than employees, they become a big family.



Personally, I find the overall situation for the employees within the company really positive. The actual offices of Gisou seem to be inspiring and a nice place to work in. The numerous elements in the office were carefully thought through and the final look is of high level. Furthermore, the way employees are treated truly reminds me of a family, which I think is key to making employees happy to go to work.

I truly believe that Negin's strategy for her business in terms of caring for her employees as well as the overall office atmosphere is extremely well done.

The next step could be to eventually open another office in the US, where Negin is quite famous or perhaps Paris, in Europe, where most of her pop-up events happen.



## Financial success

Before, getting into the stores and how the brand is promoted, we must underline that Gisou was self-funded by Negin and Maurits, so they do not count any investors.

An interesting number in terms of sales is the one of 2017 where it is reported that Gisou made \$3 million out of sales for that year, a promising amount (Mirror Mirror, 2017). Furthermore, Gisou rents the office space they have in Almere (Negin Mirsalehi Youtube, 2019).

Gisou is mainly sold through the official e-commerce of the brand: Gisou.com. They ship to all countries and according to Negin, sales are 90% made through their e-commerce. However, the brand also sells a few products through the e-commerce Revolve.com. This site actually partners a lot with Negin, as an influencer. Furthermore, Gisou does not have any physical stores but sells in two boutiques. As it can be stated: in 2016, its first retail launch was in Florence, at the Luisa Via Roma store (Mirsalehi, 2016). Following this, in 2017, the products started to be sold

at the Tearose boutique in Milan (Tearose Boutique, 2019). It is therefore possible to see that Gisou has little areas within stores, to sell some of their bestsellers. Interestingly, both stores are very nature oriented and have a delicate aesthetic, which goes perfectly well with Gisou.

Despite having a physical space in these two stores, Gisou also had three pop-up stores in the last year, two in Paris and one in New York. The first one was done with Angelina, a famous Parisian bakery. Together, they created a pastry made of the Mirsalehi honey and for a few days, the bakery in the Rue Rivoli offered the possibility to buy some of the iconic Gisou products as well as this specific pastry. A meet-up was also organized on the first day with Negin (Negin Mirsalehi Instagram, 2018).



Tea Rose Boutique in Milan (Tea Rose Boutique, no date: online)



Negin at Angelina Bakery (Ohmymag, 2018: online)

Furthermore, in June, another pop-up appeared in Paris at the Galleries Lafayette, where the launch for Gisou's new product; the polishing primer, was done. The pop-up lasted also a few days and launched with a Q&A session with Negin at the big department store. Now, the products are still sold at Galleries Lafayette, which adds to the number of physical spaces the brand has in stores.

Recently, a new pop-up was created in New York city during fashion week (Gisou Instagram, 2019). As Negin mentioned in one of her recent YouTube videos, New York is the biggest city in terms of how many consumers buy Gisou. Meaning, New York is the most important market for the brand. Therefore, it was natural to have a pop-up there during fashion week. This pop-up is different to the two others. In fact, Gisou products are sold there but the space reminds us of a typical fast food stop, the whole aesthetics is typical American. Furthermore, the pop-up offered the possibility to refill any Gisou bottle or product; a new element in Gisou's marketing which underlines their desire to truly attract Millennials and Generation Z. The pop-up also had a special honey drink that was possible to purchase and enjoy (Gisou Instagram, 2019) As always, the Gisou team is present at the pop-up and takes care of selling the products to clients. Since Negin was in New York, she of course had a meet and greet the first day of the pop-up (Negin Miraslehi Instagram, 2019)



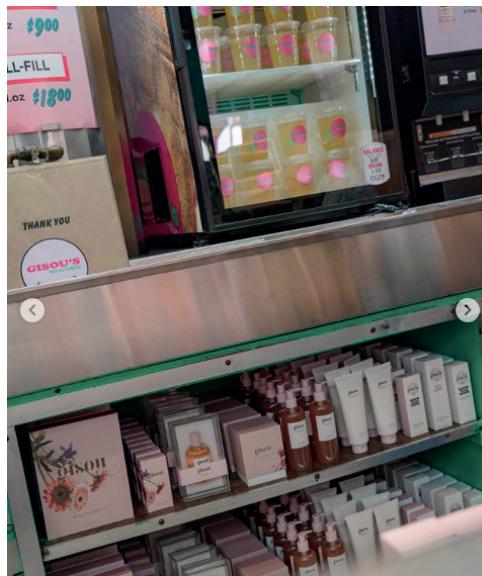
Negin during the Q&A.  
(Gisou Instagram, 2019: online)



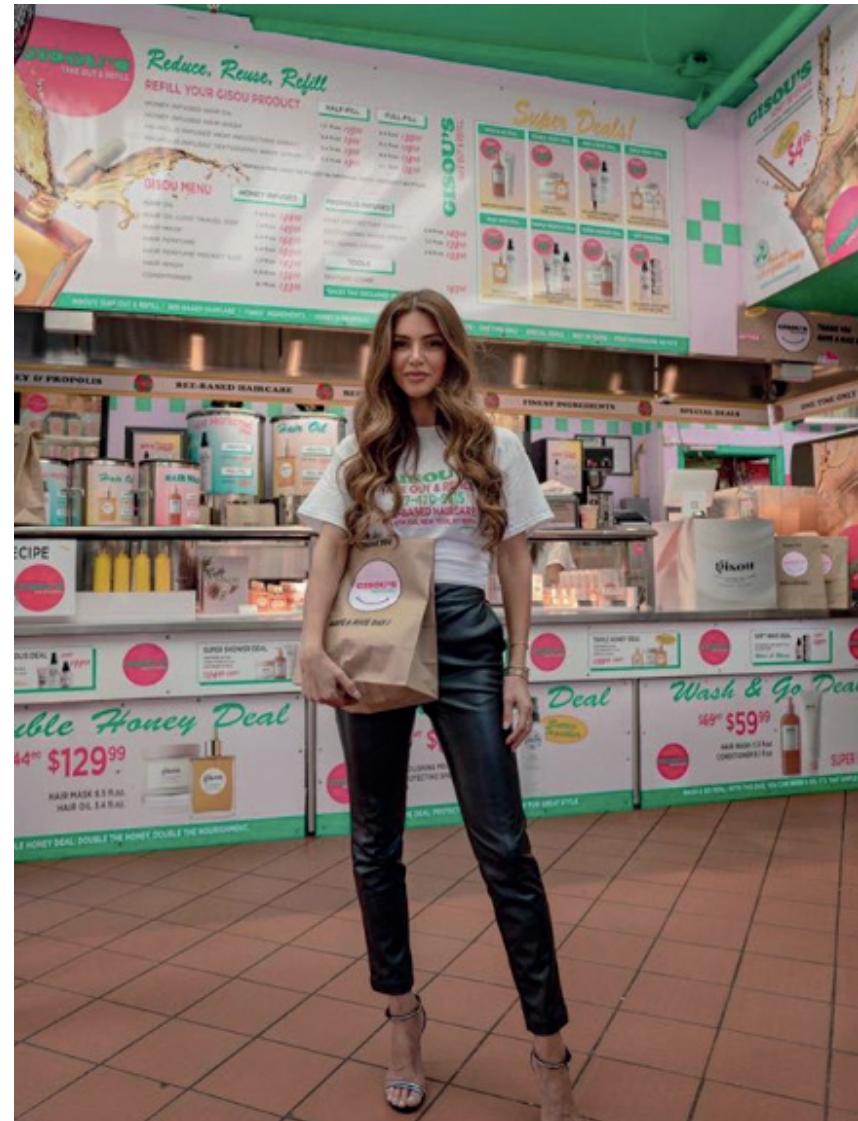
Negin and her team at Galleries Lafayette.  
(Gisou Instagram, 2019: online)



The Gisou team.  
(Gisou Instagram, 2019: online)



NYC pop-up.  
(Gisou Instagram, 2019: online)



Negin at the pop-up.  
(Gisou Instagram, 2019: online)

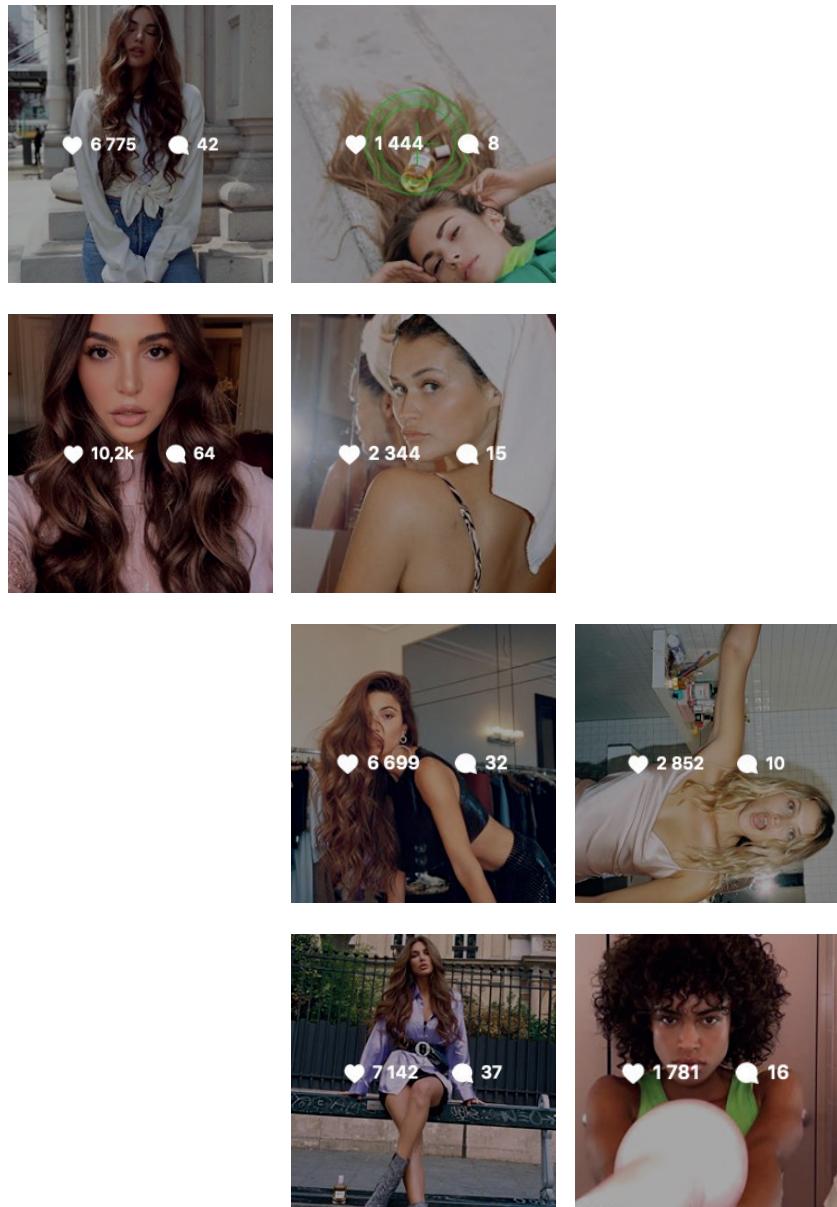
Interestingly, Gisou seems to really be using channels that cost little money. Whether it is done online or through collaborations, the brand does not spend a lot of money on their retail channels. This aspect is certainly thanks to Negin, being a public figure. This element is also seen during pop-up stores, when Negin is there on the first day to promote and boost her products.

In fact, as examples, her Revolve and Luisa Via Roma collaborations, as she calls it, were done through her being an influencer and having worked with them. The brands definitely seem to benefit from win-win situations.

Concerning advertising, Gisou promotes their new products only through Gisou and Negin's social media. Furthermore, she is most of the time modeling for the products, as she is the face of the brand. Despite having other models for some campaigns, Gisou does not put money and risk in the choice of models. It sticks to Negin or unknown models that are used over and over again for their campaigns.

Furthermore, campaigns with Negin are the ones that show the most consumer engagement online. This point is definitely interesting, since it shows that Gisou really relies on Negin Mirsalehi, herself. It can also be added that she is also successful for advertising since her own hair is at the center of attention on social media, and this attracts consumers and followers.

Finally, concerning financial success, it is important to underline that the strategy adopted by the brand in terms of revenues is of selling little amount of products at a high price.



# Conclusion

This research about Negin Mirsalehi and her brand Gisou showed a lot of interesting points about a new hair care business founded in the Netherlands.

As this report showed, Negin truly relies on her own image and hair to promote her hair care brand. Furthermore, the Netherlands is a country that is beneficial to exports, which is exactly what Gisou benefits from. In fact, as we have seen, the brand relies on selling their products strictly online, on e-commerce. This implies a small amount of money put towards any physical space. However, when pop-up stores happen, the hype and success is huge which is what Gisou benefits from as well. By having pop-ups, the brand puts less money towards physical retailing but insures to sell a lot of their products in a short amount of time. Despite the brand being in a tough market, it seems to distinguish itself by the use of honey and being founded by a public figure. We did see the competition for Gisou, but despite this, thanks to the two elements previously mentioned, the brand manages to be successful.

As this work also showed, the condition of Gisou is different from other brands because not only does it uses nearly only e-commerce, a cheap way of selling goods, but it relies a lot on Millennials channels, the target of the brand. Through social media and Negin who is an influencer, the brand promotes itself effectively and at a minimum cost.

Furthermore, the overall atmosphere within the office, is positive and encourages development of oneself in the brand. The next step, as previously mentioned, would be to perhaps open a new headquarter office in the US, to manage the American market. Perhaps, having another space in a retail store in Europe could be beneficial in terms of visibility for the brand.

Nevertheless, Gisou is a promising brand that perfectly targets an influential part of society and Negin Mirsalehi was able to mix her family's heritage with her own success as an influencer, to create a very promising hair care brand.



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