NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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MASTER'S PROGRAMME

MASTER'S THESIS

HOW YOUTUBE VLOGGERS AND REFERRALS INFLUENCE THEIR AUDIENCE'S PURCHASE INTENTION OF FASHION/BEAUTY PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, social media has become an avenue of advertisement for most organizations. Day in and day out, the patronage of these social media sites increases and as such, most organizations are now investing a lot of money in reaching their target market online. Among the thriving social media sites is YouTube which is currently the second most accessed website on the internet. Because of the interactive features of the YouTube site, some YouTube uploaders also known as vloggers, YouTubers or content creators are "interacting" with their audiences and most of them are well known in the YouTube community. With the influence that these vloggers have on their audiences, they have become of great benefit to marketers who in addition to their existing promotional activities, rely on these vloggers to reach their target market. This research seeks to find out the influence that vlogger activities and referrals have on the purchase intention of their audiences with regards to fashion and beauty products. The para social interaction theory first discussed by Horton and Wohl in 1956, and in recent times used by some researchers to study the YouTube community, was integrated into this research. The proposed method of data acquisition for this research is a semi-structured interview. The results of this research will provide a rich source of information that can be used by other researchers to conduct further studies in this uprising but understudied conversation. Advertisers and vloggers would also benefit from the results of this research since the data will be from the audience that these advertisers and vloggers target and interact with, respectively.

KEY WORDS: YouTube, Vloggers, YouTubers, Referrals, Vlogger activities, Purchase Intention, Fashion, Beauty, Products, Parasocial Interaction (PSI), Audience

ÖZ

Yıllargeçtikçe, sosyal medya çoğukuruluş için bir reklam caddesi haline geldi. Gün içinde ve devamında, bu sosyal medya sitelerinin himayesi artar ve bu nedenle, çoğukuruluşşuanda online hedef pazarlarına ulaşmada çok para harcıyor. Başarılı sosyal medya siteleri arasında, şuanda internette en çok erişilenikinci web sitesiolan YouTube bulunmaktadır. YouTube sitesinde yer alan etkileşimli özelliklerden dolayı, bazı video paylaşımcıları olarak da bilinen vloggers, YouTubers veya içeri koluşturucuları kitleleri ile "etkileşimkuruyor" veçoğu YouTube topluluğunda iyi biliniyor. Bu vloggerların izleyicileri üzerindeki etkisiile, mevcut tanıtım faaliyetlerine ek olarak, bu vlogger'lara hedef pazarlarına ulaşmak için güvenen pazarlamacılar için büyük fayda sağlamış oldular. Bu araştırma, vlogger etkinliklerinin ve yönlendirmelerinin, moda ve güzellik ürünleri ile ilgiliolar akizleyicilerinin satın almani yeti üzerindeki etkisini bulmayıa maçlamaktadır. 1956'da Horton ve Wohltarafından ilk keztartışılan para sosyal etkileşi mkuramı ve son zamanlarda bazı araştırmacılar tarafından YouTube topluluğunu incelemek için kullanılan buçalışma, bu araştırmaya entegreedilecektir. Bu araştırma için önerilen ve ritoplama yöntemi, yarıya pılandırılmış bir röportajdır. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları, diğer araştırmacılar tarafından daha ile riçalışmalar yapmak için kullanılabilecek zengin bir bilgi kaynağısağlayacaktır. Veriler, bu reklam ve renlerin ve vloggerların hedeflediği ve etkileşimde bulunduğuizleyicilere ait olacağı için, reklam ve renler ve vloggerlar da bu araştırmanın sonuçlarından faydasağlayacaktır.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: YouTube, Vloggers, YouTube kullanıcıları, Yönlendirmeler, Vlogger etkinlikleri, Satın Alma Niyeti, Moda, Güzellik, Ürün, Parasocial Interaction (PSI), HedefKitle.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives an introduction to this study. It starts with the background of the study, explains the purpose of the study, the research questions and the contributions that this study provides to existing literature in the research and academic field, as well as the practical field. This chapter finally summarises the various chapters that are present in this research material.

1.1 Background of This Study

Fashion has always been with humans although it has evolved through time. People have been sharing information and rely on what others have said about certain products before they actually buy them, that is the traditional word of mouth (Anderson, 1998). However, with the increase in the usage of social media sites, people are able to access these products' information on the internet (Hsu et al., 2014). Among the various social media sites that consumers find product information is YouTube.

YouTube is the most visited online video streaming site which allows users to upload or stream videos online and it has attracted a lot of users since its inception in the year 2005 (Reino et al.,2016). Videos have been labelled as the best medium of communicating with customers since it conveys a more understandable message that

customers can trust and YouTube is a great medium to send these messages (Safko et. al, 2009; Montopoli, 2006).

Most marketers are currently channelling a great amount of their advertisements to YouTube, because of the growing number of its users (Reino et. al, 2016). This is because a majority of the young adults that these marketers are targeting are active users of the internet and previous researches showed that YouTube is the second most visited website with over one billion of hours spent on YouTube, making it one of the best places to advertise on the internet (Alexa, 2017).

The participatory culture on YouTube that allows uploading, viewing, sharing and commenting on YouTube has been a contributing factor for the growth of YouTube (Gauntlett, 2013; Bugress et al. 2009). This participatory culture is possible on YouTube because it is an avenue where people can share their experiences and opinions with others and be heard, engage with others and feel connected (Jenkins, 2009).

Among the people that upload contents on YouTube are the beauty and fashion vloggers. These vloggers upload content about new trends, "do-it-yourself tutorials" popularly referred to as "DIYs", product reviews among others. Beauty and fashion vloggers are content uploaders who vlog about beauty and fashion products such as make-up tutorials and cosmetics, hair and nail products, skin care products, clothes and other fashion products (Pixability, 2014). Their audiences tend to believe them more than they believe messages from organizations. Beauty vloggers on YouTube are also perceived by their audiences as more trustworthy, knowledgeable and credible than traditional celebrities (Rahmi et. al, 2017). These beauty vloggers are known to make reviews about products they use sometimes positive and at other times negative, which further increases their credibility in the sight of their audiences (Garcia, 2016). Marketers believe that the more evaluations and consistency in the evaluations of an organization's product, the trendier that product will be (Park et al, 2007). They are therefore encouraging these beauty vloggers to evaluate their products by sponsoring them. An example of a YouTube beauty vlogger sponsored by an organization is the famous YouTube vlogger Michelle Phan who had over four million and five hundred

thousand (4.5 million) subscribers as of 2013 and currently (2017) has almost nine million subscribers (Quek, 2013).

Various research has been made with regards to social media and its influence on consumers. There has also been research about the use of YouTube specifically as a social media platform. Researchers have studied the influence of YouTube vloggers on the perception of fashion products (Lee et al, 2016), how luxury brands use YouTube to promote brands, feminism in YouTube videos among others.

As of August 2017, beauty vlogger Yuya from Mexico, had the most subscribed YouTube beauty channel (Statista, 2017). With her account running since the year 2009, Yuya has uploaded almost 400 videos and has over nineteen million (19,000,000) subscribers. Her videos are recorded using the Spanish language and she makes videos about anything related to beauty. Some other top beauty vloggers are Michelle Phan, Zoella, Bethany Mota, among others. They are constantly faced with competition from several other beauty vloggers and business beauty vlogs in the "online beauty community". This is because on a daily basis, new beauty vlogs are created, each bringing in something new or improving on what has already been uploaded by the existing beauty vloggers (Rea, 2015).

1.2 Purpose of the study

The online or digital beauty community is a growing phenomenon and it has a large number of viewership and participation on the YouTube platform, and it is part of the one hundred (100) most viewed channels on YouTube (YouTube, 2017)

Though several researches have been made about YouTube and YouTube vloggers, they are still limited. This research therefore intends to explore how YouTube vloggers and referrals influence the purchase intention of beauty products. Vloggers sometimes post referral links to organization's products that leads audiences to organization's website or YouTube channels of organizations (Dehghani et al. 2016; Trusov et al. 2009). Sometimes the vloggers are employees of the organizations who run tutorials or videos of the organization on YouTube. YouTube has been labelled as the leading referral

driving site Accesswire (2014). However, research on how YouTube referrals influence purchase behaviour is still limited. Therefore, as part of this research, the role of referrals in the purchase intention of fashion products would be explored. There have been researches on how YouTube Recommendations and YouTube vloggers influence purchase decisions (Rahmi et al., 2017; Lee et al. 2016; Ananda et al. 2016). However, those researches were not specific with the different aspects of YouTube vlogs, such as the activities of the YouTube vloggers and the referrals that the vloggers make, either by word of mouth or by posting the links that lead to business websites or online stores (Duyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2015). Recommendations may fall under vlogger activities and as such is different from referrals (Duyen, 2016). The purpose of this research therefore is to explore how:

- Referrals from YouTube vloggers influence purchase intentions of their audiences,
- YouTube vlogger activities influence purchase intentions,
- The role of credibility in the YouTube community with regards to vloggers, and also
- Whether YouTube Referrals have more influence on purchase intentions than YouTube vlogger activities or if the opposite is true. That is; YouTube vlogger activities have more influence on purchase intentions than YouTube Referrals do.

1.3. Research Questions

With this gap in the research that needs to be filled, the questions that this research seeks to answer are as follows:

1. What makes a YouTube vlogger credible to the audience?
2. Does credibility affect the audience' trust in the vlogger activities?
3. Does credibility affect the audience' acceptance of referrals?
4. How do referrals influence the purchase intentions of the users?
5. How do vlogger activities influence the purchase intentions of their audience?

To aid in answering these questions, the Para social Influence theory would be integrated into this research. The parasocial influence theory has been used to explain the relationship that exists between media users and media stars, in this context YouTube users and YouTube vloggers respectively (Stever et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2016; Beytin, 2017). This relationship established from previous studies would be used to explore and to understand what really influences purchase intention of YouTube media users. A semi-structured interview will be used to gather information from audiences in order to gain a richer understanding of how audiences react to vloggers and referrals and how it influences their purchase intention of fashion products.

1.4. Importance and Contributions of This Research

This research is relevant because of the rise in the use of social media especially YouTube. The writer of this research believes that every marketer should be wherever their target market is, in order to be sure they are really reaching their target. YouTube is where most people spend their time on the internet. Among the people that use the internet are the people that these advertisers are targeting. It is therefore important to reach these target markets where they can be found but knowing how to reach them is as important as being present itself (Pixability, 2014). This is because even though there are a large number of people, they still choose what they want to watch.

YouTube has influenced 53% of all purchases according to Sands (2014) and it has influenced more purchases than the traditional television produces (Google, 2014).
Since these vloggers have the ability to attract viewers, sometimes more than the organization's vlog could possibly attract, it is important to understand the relationship that really exists and the factors that make it possible for vloggers to influence purchase intention. Knowing how referrals work to influence purchase intention would therefore be beneficial to the organization, in that they would know how to channel these referrals to make the most out of it (Garcia, 2016).

The results of this research would also add to the body of knowledge that is currently existing in the social media marketing field with regards to the YouTube website. From

the results of this study, recommendations would also be made for future researchers, so that the on-going debate may broaden the knowledge base currently available.

1.5. Outline of the Chapters

This research is divided into a total of seven (7) chapters. **Chapter one** is the introductory chapter and it opens the way for this research. It presents the context of this research by explaining how the beauty and fashion industry became digitized and how YouTube is an avenue for these beauty communities. It also explains the purpose of this research and the gap that this research intends to fill. The research questions are also outlined in this chapter and the possible contribution this research provides.

Chapter two of this research is the literature review that this research is based on. The literature review explains previous literatures on YouTube as an advertising tool, YouTube referrals, credibility of vloggers, vlogger activities, vloggers, vlogs and how vlogs work, the parasocial interaction theory and how YouTube vloggers and referrals influence purchase intentions of their audiences.

Chapter three of this research expounds the model and hypotheses for the research. It presents a simple and understandable model and hypotheses and it explains why the model and hypotheses are important for answering the research questions and fulfilling the purpose of the research.

Chapter four presents the methodology of this research. It explains the research method of acquiring data for this research, which is a semi-structured interview, the sample size, sampling technique and the research design in general.

Chapter five presents the results that were acquired during the interview using the qualitative content analysis (QCA).

Chapter six presents the findings and discussions that resulted from the result of the interviews.

Chapter seven is the final chapter and it gives the final conclusion, recommendations, limitations, final remarks, and it closes this research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is about the review of literature from previous studies relating to this research. It gives a background information about fashion and beauty vlogging, advertisement on YouTube, referrals, vlogger activities, vlogs, vloggers and how vlogs work, the parasocial interaction theory and how YouTube referrals and vloggers influence purchase decisions. This is to help the reader understand the various concepts related to this research and to make it easier for the reader to understand the researcher's basis for collecting and analysing data.

2.1. Fashion and Beauty Vlogging

The beauty community has been described by Pixability (2014) as a community consisting of hair, nail care products and maintenance, skincare products and maintenance, perfume, make-up and anything that is perceived as having the ability to enhance one's beauty. Nguyen (2015) also describes the beauty community as consisting of natural products, beauty products and beauty routines.

According to Rhode (2010), beauty increases one's chance of being hired among a list of applicants in the job setting and it also improves how people relate with the "beautiful person". The media has had its way in portraying beauty in a way that has influenced the perception of individuals, especially women, on what and who is considered beautiful, or not beautiful, and this has always put pressure on individuals to act, look and be a "certain way," in order to feel or consider themselves beautiful (Policy et al., 2004).

Kilbourne (2010) asserted that magazines had managed to tune the minds of some of its readers, majority being women, to assume a specific type of body figure as being the ideal body type and as such, those readers try to modify their bodies to have that ideal body, whereas those models in the magazine may not even be that perfect. In addition to this, Yan et al. (2014) in their research explained that magazines used to be the main source of beauty information for most women in most countries in the past, in that, these magazines described, pictured and featured what "the ideal beauty" is or should be, which influenced and formed an idea of how people perceived beauty and then gave women tips, things to do, and tutorials on how to be like the ideal beauty that was featured in those magazines. Yan et al. (2014) further explained that women from different countries blindly copied the definition of beauty that was given in the magazines of different countries, emphasizing that, it was wrong and that, beauty was defined differently, based on the cultures of the people that those magazines were serving and even sometimes biased, based on the magazine's own viewpoint of what beauty is.

In this era of beauty consciousness, people are constantly finding new ways to look beautiful by finding the right products and the best matching cosmetics. A section of these people look online for information about these products and the other section also need a platform to share their experiences from using some of these products and beauty blogs and vlogs have provided the needed platform (Wang, 2015).

The influx of social media and online forums however, have provided an avenue where people meet for social support from other participants of those forums, so that they could improve their self-confidence and reduce the pressure of not feeling beautiful (Kim, 2009). These forums are used by some of the members to share information, advise, give moral support and sometimes are even used to share personal experiences, while others also use these forums to improve their self-confidence through the sense of belongingness they feel by being part of those forums. Nianiou (2016) in a research articulated that fashion blogs have become the main source of information and influence for women on social media platforms. Nianiou (2016) further explained that these fashion blogs are not just used for finding new trends or finding new and desirable

things but are also used as a link between viewers and online stores and as such, fashion blogs have increased purchases.

The beauty community became digitized due to the influence of the internet and the ease associated with gaining information online and also with the introduction of online shops (Ananda et al., 2016). Rea (2015) explained that the introduction of web 2.0 has allowed the beauty community to get closer, in that they are able to share and receive beauty information online, and that YouTube was the biggest platform that brought these content creators and audiences together under an umbrella. This was because YouTube offered a platform that allowed for interaction between people who uploaded video contents, that is : those who explained beauty tricks, those who made reviews about beauty products and answered questions, those who shared their experiences, and it also allowed for people who were looking for those information to get access to these uploaded videos as well to give their own opinions, suggestions and share their own experiences under the comment section of those uploaded videos. This brought the beauty content creators and users closer together. Rea (2015) also purported that the beauty community formed one of the biggest communities on YouTube because there were several YouTube beauty channels featuring a great number of beauty vloggers who were found in the first 100 most subscribed YouTube channel in the year 2015. According to Weare (2016), YouTube is a digital extension of the beauty community.

A report by Pixability (2014) articulated that over nine billion views were made with regards to make-up videos on YouTube and most of the make-up videos were those uploaded by YouTube vloggers and that for every month, there was a two hundred percent (200%) increase in viewership of make-up videos. Pixability (2014) also reported that YouTube was changing the beauty industry, and that customers would rather go to YouTube vloggers for product information and recommendations rather than fashion brands or visits to the traditional beauty stores, mostly because these audience of the vloggers have overtime, learnt to trust the word of vloggers over those of brands and felt that brands were commercialized and every advertisement they air is to lure them (the customers) to make a purchase, whereas the beauty vloggers were mostly neutral and would only talk about a product as it is with a clear intention.

There are also beauty networks on YouTube that air a multiple of channels of different beauty vloggers as if it were some form of “online television” and an example of those networks is Michelle Phan’s “ICON”, which airs about twenty (20) different beauty channels and serves as a marketing agency for beauty brands on YouTube (Weare et al.,2016).

2.2 YouTube as an advertising tool

YouTube is a video sharing website that was introduced in the year 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim, that made it easy for people with little or no knowledge about the internet to stream videos on the internet with ease (Hanke, 2015). In the year 2007, YouTube launched a localized and customized version of YouTube in seven different countries that made it possible for the residents of those countries to access YouTube in their local languages (Suciu, 2007). Currently, there are eighty-eight (88) different local versions of YouTube in eighty-eight different countries (YouTube, 2017), making it easier for more people to use it.

According to a research conducted by Burgess et. al (2009), YouTube was ranked in the first ten most viewed websites on the internet in the year 2009 and as at September 2017, YouTube was ranked number two on Alexa’s list of five hundred (500) most popular and visited websites in the world (Alexa, 2017).

Due to YouTube’s popularity as one of the best video sharing websites in the world where people share videos with people whom they may or may not know, and sometimes, how videos spread to places the video uploader never intended or expected it to reach (Hof, 2006; Montopoli 2006; 2009), YouTube provided an analytic tool that made it possible for video content uploaders to track their videos, the number of people it has reached and even allow comments from their viewers (Shields, 2009).

Between the years 2005 and 2015, about two-thirds of the YouTube channel users consisted of the young generation within the eighteen (18) years to thirty-four (34) years age range which represented 65% of adults (Perrin, 2015). Because of the popularity and use of this YouTube website, most companies put a lot of effort into the design and

creation of their advertisement on YouTube (Nielson, 2012). This is because, on the average, YouTube viewers spend one billion of hours consuming YouTube videos in a single day (Gordon, 2017) and this has heightened marketer's quest for advertising on YouTube, since most people would rather watch YouTube videos than spend time on the traditional media which was the predominant method of advertisement for most brands in the past (Reino et al. 2016).

As at the year 2007, YouTube was a concealed advertisement method, where just few companies advertised directly to their audiences and also to prospective customers (Freeman et al. 2007). According to the research by Freeman et al. (2007), these companies that advertised on YouTube at that time included tobacco and alcoholic industries and they used the YouTube platform to maintain their existing customers and also to attract new customers. This sequence was however changed as the years passed by and the world of YouTube witnessed luxury fashion brands such as Chanel, Dior and Burberry, using the platform as a means of advertisement (Shields, 2014).

The apple iPhone-X advertisement was the number one on the YouTube ads leaderboard in September 2017, followed by some other advertisement uploaded by creative advertisement agencies and this shows how advertisements on YouTube have transformed overtime, from being concealed into an open one, making room for the big brands as well as the small ones (YouTube ads leaderboard, 2017). YouTube advertisements are sometimes placed on the home pages of the users and at other times they are purposefully placed in the videos the users watch, based on content relatedness (Bergen, 2014).

Dehghani et al. (2016) explained that "in-stream" advertisements and "in-video" advertisements are the two main types of advertisement on YouTube. They explained in-stream ads as those that allows users to watch the ads for at least 5 seconds after which the user can then decide, to either continue watching the ad or skip it to their original videos. These in-stream ads prevent users from watching their own videos since it replaces the videos the users are currently streaming, till the allotted time is over. They also explained the in-video advertisement as those ads that appear at the lower end of the

videos the users are streaming and these type of ads can either be minimized by the viewer or closed totally.

Some brands use YouTube for their marketing and advertising, by setting up YouTube Channels that they use for advertising to their existing and prospective customers (Nashmi et al. 2017). The research of Nashmi et al. (2017) proposed that companies who take up this form of marketing, that is YouTube marketing, should have creative, entertaining and engaging contents, in order to make the video go viral. The article however concluded that, this form of advertising takes time, is very difficult and that it is better to sponsor vloggers to advertise since they seem to be in charge of the YouTube domain.

In a research by Ivanova (2017), YouTubers, also known as YouTube vloggers, were described as "influencer marketing tools" with numerous unique benefits including making friendly advertisement. The friendly advertisement described by Ivanova (2017) is a type of advertisement that YouTubers carry out on behalf of organizations. According to the research, these friendly advertisements are more likeable and more neutral to the audience of these YouTubers than the advertisement placed by the organizations themselves. Ivanova (2017) further explained that the creativity of YouTubers in those friendly advertisement was what resulted in the right response that they achieved from their audiences.

The beauty community has not been left out in YouTube advertisements. Fischer (2014) explained that beauty and fashion companies are contacting YouTube vloggers to advertise their products. According to Fischer (2014), an example of those fashion companies that contacted beauty vloggers in the year 2009 is "Seventeen Magazine". Beauty products have therefore not been left out in the YouTube Community. Another example is Michelle Phan, a famous beauty vlogger in the year 2013, who started advertising and running her own cosmetic line from L'Oréal (Quek, 2013).

It is in light of this YouTube advertising that led Gupta et al. (2016) to conduct a study on advertising beauty products on YouTube. In the research, Gupta et al. (2016) explained that, marketers have realized how useful it is to use YouTube in the

advertising of beauty and fashion products, and that marketers anticipate a further improvement and usefulness of the YouTube site as an advertisement tool as time goes on.

2.3 YouTube referrals

Referral marketing has been in the system for a long time and it has been described by Nosrati et al. (2013) as marketing by taking advantage of word of mouth. That is, when marketers use the word that is given by existing customers to win other customers to their business, by strategizing their marketing plan in such a way that will motivate existing customers to speak in favour of their brand. In the research (Nosrati et al., 2013) further explained that referrals could take place online and in that case it is referred to as online referral marketing, and these referrals can be tracked and accounted for. Several researchers have often interchanged the word "referral" with the phrase "word of mouth" (Kumar et al. 2010; Trusov et al. 2009; Ahrens et al. 2012). In their article, Kumar et al. (2010) explained referrals as when an organization receives new customers, by reason of the influence of old customers. That is, new customers that are introduced to an organization's brand, service or product by existing customers. They further explained that satisfied existing customers influence the choice of a new customer, when the new customer intends to make a purchase.

Ahrens et al. (2012) in their research, classified word of mouth into offline and online. They then referred to online referrals or word of mouth as e-referrals. They explained that e-referrals take place on blogs, social networks, electronic mailing systems and is usually by customers who out of their own will give opinions about a brand or product, or it could be an organization inspired e-referral which is conducted for a benefit. Ahrens et al. (2012) also asserted that incentivized e-referrals play a big role in the acquisition of new customers and they suggested that organizations allocate a special budget to that effect, explaining that there should be incentives for those doing the referrals and incentives for those referred as well.

This research by Ahrens et al. in 2012 supported the research findings of Trusov et al. in 2009. Trusov et al.'s (2009) research purported that new customers are acquired on social networking sites by reason of referrals, and that referrals on social sites were

available to audiences over a long period of time. The research further gave a definition for referral programs as tools provided by organizations online that made it possible for their current customers to refer other people such as friends or family. The research also explained that these tools used may be links that direct people from one site to another site, mostly to business websites.

Referral links can also be described as an online system that is used by businesses and other people apart from the business to refer people to an organization's website, online stores, sometimes for a compensation and the aim of the referral is to increase sales (Bezos et al., 2008). In their publication, Bezos et al. (2008) explained that these individuals and business associates who refer people to the business websites, are taught how to create links that will refer people to the organization's website. They further explained that tutorials, reviews, recommendations and other activities by the individuals and the business associates are used to attract customers and from there, they create links that would take people from their pages to the website of the organization and the product that is being discussed. Nguyen (2015) also explained referral links as when YouTube vloggers post links to company websites so that the audience can get access to the product that was shown in the vlog.

When it comes to referrals, videos are a good way of engaging people and leading them to different websites (Garcia, 2016). YouTube is a video sharing website and to make an upload on the site, it has to be a video (Forsström, 2016). According to Sykes (2014), four people out of ten, who watch fashion videos, move on to either the traditional store or the online store and therefore videos are the best when it comes to driving sales in fashion and beauty marketing.

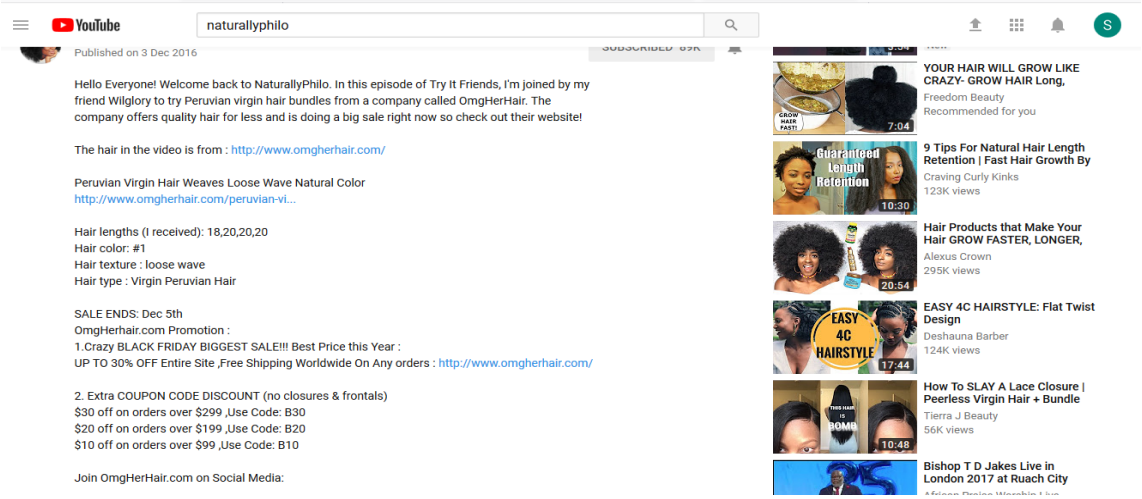
YouTube referrals basically may be linking tools in the form of in-stream or in-video advertisement that are placed on the user's screen that direct viewers from YouTube to other sites, or referral links that are placed below vlog posts or on a part of vlog posts (Dehghani et al. 2016; Trusov et al. 2009). YouTube referrals may also be word of mouth referral from vloggers or audiences also described as e-referrals (Lindgreen et al., 2013).

In an article published by Accesswire (2014), YouTube is the best social media referral site and it produces the highest referrals to business websites. The article added that, the reason YouTube drove most referrals to business websites was because YouTube viewers were highly engaged, explaining that videos were a good way to keep people engaged and YouTube being a video website, added to their ability to keep people engaged.

YouTube referrals could be from a company-owned YouTube channel or an individual upload that is from YouTube vloggers (Forsström, 2015). According to the article, Forsström (2015) further explained that, YouTube videos have to be interesting, informative and of high quality and these are some of the factors that drive people to business websites and draws potential customers to the organization. The same article also explained that referral links are those "clickable-links" that the video uploader, which may be YouTubers and sometimes company owned channels or vlogs put up, sometimes in the course of the vlog post, or in the description box that is usually under the video, that leads people from YouTube to other pages and websites.

Below is an image showing how YouTube vloggers post referral links in the description boxes under their video uploads.

Figure 1: an image of a referral link in a YouTube beauty Vlog posted by NaturallyphiloSource: Naturallyphilo. (2016, December 03)



In the vlog post, “Naturallyphilo”, a YouTube beauty vlogger made a review about a hair product and after that, she offered to give a link in her description box that will aid her interested audience to purchase the hair product. In the image, this can be seen: “The hair in the video is from: http//www.omgherhair.co/”. She clearly gave the link to the online store of “OMGHERHAIR”, where her audience could purchase the hair used in the video. In the image above too, there were coupons and discount codes for those who were referred by this YouTube vlogger, Naturallyphilo. These discount codes are there to encourage the audience to make a purchase.

2.4 Vlogger activities

Vloggers have a wide range of activities that may include speaking about their personal lives and the things happening in their lives as well as making reviews about products that they have used in the past or are currently using (Lee et al., 2016). The YouTube vloggers in the beauty community have been noticed and described as trend creators or setters (Duyen, 2016) and people go to YouTube just to know about new trends from these vloggers.

Zanatta (2017) also listed some of the vlogger activities as advertising and making sales for businesses, going on tours and making videos about those tours, going on shows and making vlogs based on the shows, as well as signing movie and book deals.

Vlogger activities on YouTube include the following:

2.4.1 YouTube vlogger Reviews

In a research, Garcia (2016) explained YouTube reviews as “persons making critical analysis of products or services on their YouTube channels”. The research further explained that most consumers search for product reviews on YouTube in order to guide their purchase, and that most of the audience of YouTubers search on YouTube for reviews of products rather than paying attention to company and brand advertisement. Reviews, according to the research, also included comparing different products, giving the qualities, accessories, benefits and disadvantages of products among other useful product information. Duyen (2016) also explained review as vloggers giving useful information about a product they have used, so that the audience could make a decision

as to whether the product will work for them or not and also to aid the audience choice as to the exact product they are getting.

2.4.2 YouTube vlogger tutorials

Garcia (2016) described tutorials on YouTube as a “step-by-step” guide to doing things. The research purported tutorials included the very popular do-it yourself videos, better known as D.I. Ys, showing the audience how to use certain products, and taking the time to explain how to do certain useful things. Miller (2009) in an article explained that YouTube tutorials should be useful enough and provide practical steps that the audience can follow to reproduce the exact or similar result that has been shown in the vlog.

2.4.3. YouTube vloggers’ personal life

These are the most common vlogs on YouTube and it involves the vloggers making videos about their personal lives that makes their audience see some aspects of the vlogger’s life (Sykes, 2014). Christian (2009) also explained that some vlogs are about stories that happened or are currently taking place in a vlogger’s life.

2.4.5. Vlogger recommendations and advertisement

Montes (2015) explained that vloggers earn a lot by advertising for companies in their vlogs. Duyen (2016) explained that, by just mentioning a name of a product in their vlogs, which serves as recommendations, vloggers are paid by the company for whom they advertised or recommended products for.

2.5 Vlogs, Vloggers and how Vlogs work

Vlogs are video blogs which feature an individual behind the camera, who addresses an audience usually taking a form like skype videos (Biel et al., 2011). The word “VLOG” is basically a video blog. A blog is a way of uploading web pages with information, news, images, articles and other things which interests the uploader, often referred to as blog post (Chaffey et al., 2006). These blogs help people to upload things that interests them and offers a platform for interaction, commenting, sharing ideas and online social activities, which dissolves physical and social barriers (Tang, 2006; Kiesler,

1986).Therefore, a video blog can be explained as a blog post in the form of a video (Duyen, 2016).

Vlogs can also be described as conversational videos that are uploaded by users of the YouTube website, which allows for conversations, invites participation and allows for interaction between the uploader and the audience that happens by comments of the audience and responses by the uploader (Burgess et al., 2009).

Luers (2007) classified vlogs on YouTube into three groups, the first being personal blogs, the second being news shows vlogs and the third being entertainment vlogs. Molyneaux et al. (2008) also gave five forms of vlogs, personal vlogs, entertainment vlogs, YouTube vlogs, public vlogs and technological vlogs. Molyneaux et al. (2008) explained that personal vlogs are those that cover the life and activities of the vlogger, entertainment vlogs are those that cover movies, comedy and other exciting things, YouTube vlogs are those that allows for questioning, answering and discussion between the vlogger and the audience, public vlogs are those that cover news, information and things in the society and technological vlogs are those that cover information about technology, its use, new additions and others. Christian (2009), a researcher also explained personal vlogs as those that involves an individual who explains situations, events and recent happenings in their lives, mostly in a story form. A vlog could also be a channel created by an organization or brand to market its products, explain the uses of the product, introduce new products and to entertain its customers (Forsström, 2016).

When it comes to the YouTube website, all that is needed is for an interested person to create a YouTube channel, make videos, upload them and share with their audience and this serves as their own “personal page” or domain (Curalate, 2016). Vlogs are in a variety of contexts including but not limited to domestic settings and they have various contents such as fashion, beauty, luxury brands and others, which makes vlogs beneficial to people with different needs, therefore there is an availability of content for everyone (Snelson, 2015). YouTube was labelled the most popular vlog platform in the second year of its inception (Tang, 2006).

The term vlogger refers to people who make vlog posts (Frobenius, 2011). Zanatta (2017), refers to vloggers on YouTube as “YouTubers” or “content creators”. According to her, most YouTube vloggers are average people who upload videos and have gained likes and recognition from people, making them “YouTube stars” that people with similar interests look up to. She further explained that some of these YouTube vloggers partner with organizations and advertise for these organizations. These YouTube vloggers are ordinary people who have been seen and recognized because of their association with the media, that is, they have become part of the demotic turn (Turner,2010). These days, people search YouTube not just for entertainment but for information and instructions and since YouTubers are merging the media world and the world of ordinary people, brands are contacting vloggers to endorse their products to their audiences (Tolson, 2010)

YouTube vloggers are currently being used as marketing influencers in place of traditional celebrities because consumers are easily engaged with these vloggers due to their interactive nature and personalities that the audience can relate to (Dredge, 2016) because, YouTubers are like a more visible, known and “celebrity-like” version of our normal selves (Sedláček,2016). YouTube vlogs thrive on the interaction that goes on between the vloggers and their audiences; that is an upload by the vlogger and the responses by the audience, which helps the vlogger to know what the audiences think about the upload, sometimes driving the vloggers next vlog post and enhancing creativity along the way (Adami, 2009).

Vlogs are means of “spread-ability” in the sense that users take up content from the vloggers, share it and spread it in contexts outside of the vlog setting, making the contents widespread among the people with whom the vlogger’s audiences interact (Jenkins, 2006).

According to Wu (2016), YouTube vloggers sometimes make full vlog posts in order to promote the products or brands of their sponsors for an agreed amount. Wu (2016) advised that, vloggers must not substitute the monetary gains from their sponsors for the trust that their audiences have in them. Wu (2016) further explained that to maintain their credibility, vloggers have to openly announce to their audience that the vlog post in

question is sponsored but however, the vlogger has tried the brand or product and found it to be appropriate. Maintaining credibility is important in keeping viewers and subscribers. Vloggers sometimes make video uploads with similar contents with or without sponsorship, which makes it difficult for the audience to differentiate between sponsored vlogs, thereby clouding their judgements of products. This led policy makers to demand from vloggers, full disclosure of their sponsorship in any video that they upload (The Guardian, 2014).

YouTube vlogging according to Lindblad (2013) helps if the vlogger wants to review a product in a most natural setting and relate with their audience in an authentic manner, that brings their audiences closer to them and this is of benefit to both the YouTuber and their audience because it does not only bring them together but it also makes the audience pay a little more attention to what is being said and done by the vlogger. Smith (2014) used the "Captivation" term of Alfred Gell (1998) to explain how vloggers need to keep their audience engaged. Smith (2014) explained that vloggers should strive to keep their audience engaged by captivating them, by way of exhibiting things that the audience can relate to and can reproduce.

According to Bugress et al. (2009), the most successful YouTubers are those who make a constant effort of responding to comments of the audiences, acknowledges the suggestions of their audience, and keep their interactions active. In a research, Aran et al. (2014) also proposed that in order to be successful on YouTube, vloggers must not only concentrate on the message of the vlog but that, in addition to the message, their persona, body language, the tone of their voices and facial expression must go along with what they are saying. The article further explained that quality videos are what sell most on YouTube, along with great background and a touch of the editor's hand.

The following is an image of the top ten most subscribed beauty channels on YouTube:

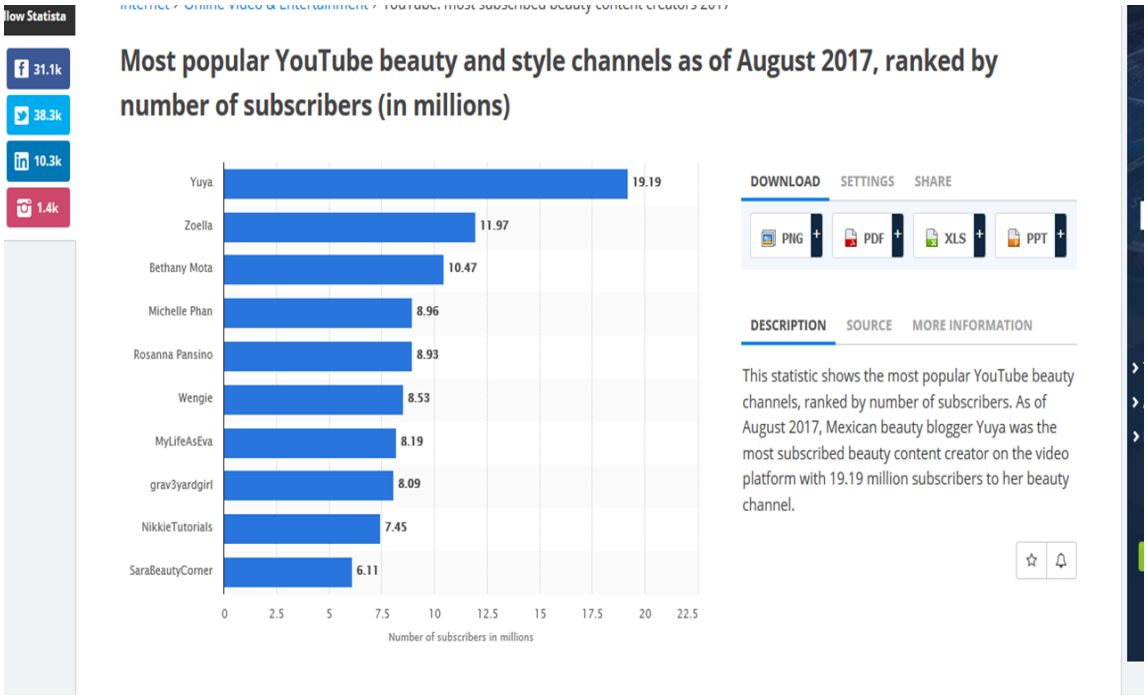


Figure 2: top ten most subscribed beauty channels on YouTube as of August 2017Source: Statista (August, 2017)

From the statistics shown in the figure 2, Yuya was the leading YouTube beauty vlogger with nineteen million, one hundred and ninety thousand (19.19 million) subscribers as of August 2017. Zoella followed Yuya with a total of eleven million, nine hundred and seventy thousand (11.97 million) subscribers, then Bethany Mota with ten million, four hundred and seventy thousand (10.47 million) subscribers came after Zoella. Michelle Phan was fourth on the list with eight million, nine hundred and sixty thousand (8.96 million) subscribers and she was followed by Rosanna Pansino with eight million, nine hundred and thirty thousand (8.93 million) subscribers. Then came Wengie with eight million, five hundred and thirty thousand (8.53 million) subscribers. This was followed by MyLifeAsEva with eight million, one hundred and ninety thousand (8.19 million) subscribers. Eight on the list was grav3yardgirl with eight million and ninety thousand (8.09 million) subscribers, followed by NikkieTutorials with seven million, four hundred and fifty thousand (7.45 million) subscribers. The tenth YouTube vlogger on the list of the most subscribed beauty vlogs was SaraBeautyCorner with six million, one hundred and ten thousand (6.11 million) subscribers (Statista, 2017)

The figure below is a tracking of Yuya, the Mexican beauty vlogger who topped the chart of the most subscribed beauty channels on YouTube.

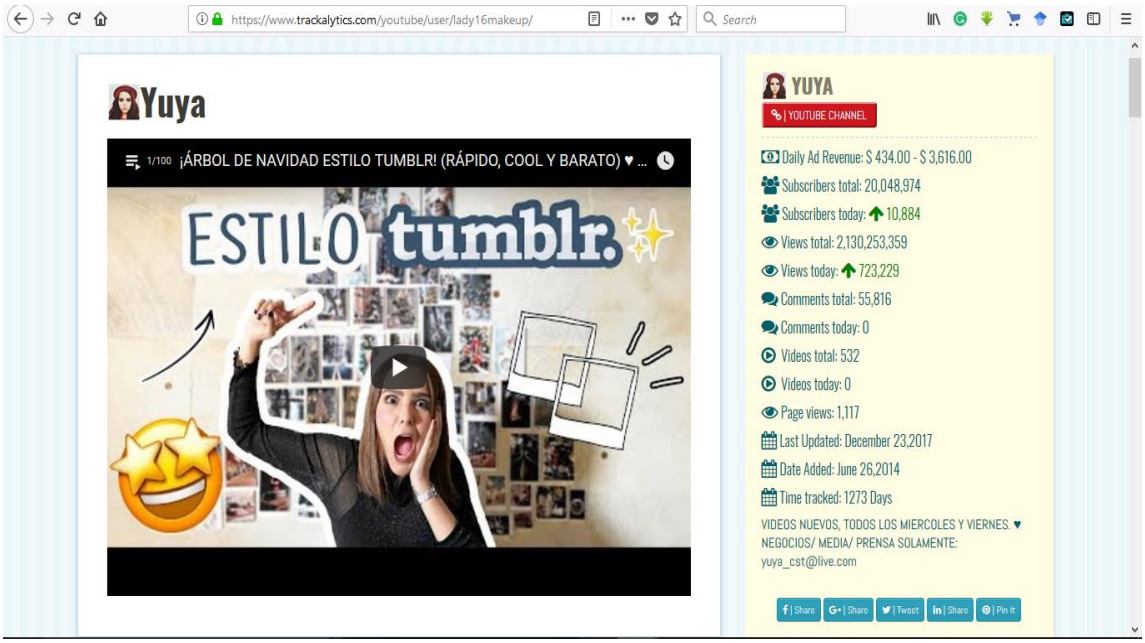


Figure 3: an image showing the tracking of Yuya's YouTube channel

Source: Trackalytics (December 23, 2017)

Through her channel on YouTube, Yuya earns between four-hundred and thirty-four dollars to three thousand, six hundred and sixteen dollars on a daily basis, just from advertisement. With her subscriptions hitting over twenty thousand and over ten thousand increase in subscribers just on the 23rd of December 2017 and a total of over two billion views on her vlog posts. She had a fifty-five thousand, eight hundred and sixteen comments on her vlogs and five hundred and thirty-two video uploads. This was a tracking that took the Trackalytics team one thousand, two hundred and thirty-three days. (Trackalytics, 2017).

2.6 The parasocial influence theory (PSI)

The parasocial influence theory was first discussed by Horton et al. (1956). The parasocial experience is when people feel an "illusionary" connectedness to media figures and assume closeness to these figures based on the interaction that they sometimes have with these media figures (Labrecque, 2014). This feeling of

connectedness makes media users relate with media figures as friends just as they relate with their friends in the real world. Media users sometimes want to associate with media figure and assume that they belong to the same social world and try to share information with these media figures (Lee et al. 2016). Just like it happens in the real world, the PSI relationship is built over time as media users gradually build trust for media figures. Social media has increased the creation of these PSI relationships as it allows for easy interaction between media personalities and media users (Stever et al. 2013).

Lee et al. (2016) asserted that the relationship that exists between YouTube vloggers and their audiences can be explained by the PSI theory. From their research, they explained that the vloggers by sharing an aspect of their lives that "normal celebrities" do not share with their fans under normal circumstances, enhances the trust and feeling of connectedness and a sense of similarity that the audiences have towards these vloggers. They further explained that media users are attracted to media figures who they perceive to have similarities with in terms of belief, physique, education, background among other things. They concluded that high PSI with vloggers had a positive influence on audience's perception of products and that a positive perception led to purchase intention.

Mostly, the relaxed nature of the YouTube videos and how the vloggers share their experiences, personal stories and encounters with their audience, makes the audience feel relaxed around the vloggers and make the audience feel like though they were a part of the vlogger's life (Colliander et al. 2016). This also develops an imaginary friendship between the vloggers and their audience, better known as fans.

O'Neil-Hart et al. (2016), in their article "Why YouTube stars are more influential than traditional celebrities," reported that the friendly nature of YouTube vloggers, who are referred to in the report as YouTube stars, and how they communicate with their audience was one major reason these YouTubers were more influential than the traditional celebrities. The article further asserted that about seventy percent (70%) of the young population felt they had a better relation with these YouTubers than the traditional celebrities and as such it was easier to believe endorsements from the YouTubers than those from the traditional celebrities.

The PSI relationship is usually a one-way relationship and sometimes the individuals (media users) are not aware of it. According to Beytin (2017), the PSI relationship can be explained by the social comparison theory, as well as the social identification theory which are affirmed to have a significant influence on PSI.

2.6.1. Social comparison theory and PSI

The social comparison theory according to the explanation given in the research of Beytin (2017), is the attitude that people have towards others, which is influenced by their physical and social attraction and attitude-homophily. Beytin (2017) explained that YouTube audience tend to share a feeling of connectedness to the YouTube vloggers, because of their attraction to the vloggers and perception that they would like to look like the vlogger and this was one explaining factor to how PSI is created on YouTube. Beytin (2017) supported this argument with previous studies including Cohen (2001) "Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters".

2.6 How Referrals and Vloggers Influence Purchase Intention

Purchase intention was explained by Ananda et al. (2016) as when an individual critically assess a product and thereafter decided to make a purchase. There has been a proven record of how referrals affect customer behaviour (Buttle,1998). According to Park et al. (2007), the more positive referrals a customer receives, the higher the chance of the customer purchasing from the referred organization. Most people like to find out about a product before making a purchase and these people most likely would resort to referrals and recommendations rather than an organization's advertisement (Chow, 2012). Chow (2012) further explained that videos are a good way of referring potential customers on the internet and it influences the final buying decision of individuals. The report of Sands (2014) was that YouTube videos had been the motivation for about fifty-three percent (53%) of purchase intention.

Credibility is essential if YouTube vloggers want to have influence on their audiences. Gupta et al. (2012) explained that a credible person is someone who can be trusted and believed by others. Credibility can also be described as features of a person that makes

the message they are carrying acceptable to the listener (Rahmi et al., 2017). A credible person is someone whom people can comfortably trust without the fear of being betrayed or disappointed (Gupta et. al, 2012). Friis-Jespersen (2017) reported that, credibility is essential if an individual want to be an endorser of a brand or product, explaining that trustworthiness, attractiveness, tie-strength, homogeneity and expertise all added up to make an endorser credible. The credibility of the endorser in this context, a YouTube vlogger, influences the audiences' endorsement of the brand or product in question. With regards to YouTube vlogger's credibility and its influence on purchase intentions of their audiences, a research was conducted by Ananda et al. (2016). They argued that consumers become familiar with vloggers as they keep watching them and as time goes on this familiarity births trust in these vloggers as explained by the parasocial interaction theory. This trust that the audiences have for the vloggers therefore gives them some credibility in the minds of their audiences. They also concluded that credible vloggers have a significant influence on the purchase intention of their audiences. Credibility affects how the audience of a vlogger receive and accept messages, referrals and the vlog activities that are being shown by the vlogger, especially when the vlogger discloses that she or he is being sponsored by a brand whose product is being used in the vlog, being recommended or being reviewed (Carr et el. 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016) Ananda et al. (2016) also concluded that credibility of YouTube vloggers had influenced purchase intention of their users.

In their research, Luu et al. (2016) reported that YouTube reviews by vloggers had a significant influence on the purchase decision of customers. A research conducted by Lee et al. (2016) examined "the influence that YouTube vloggers have on consumer luxury brands perception and intentions" using the para social influence theory as basis. According to the results of the research conducted, it was concluded that the audiences of YouTube vloggers who had actively watched the uploaded vlogs of brand reviews of the luxury brands had a higher purchase intention than those who had not watched the reviews. The para social interaction also influenced how the audiences perceived the brands, in that, they sub-consciously endorsed the brands. Lee et al. (2016) therefore suggested that YouTube should be used for promoting brands and products through the help of vloggers who created a para social interaction with their audiences and

influenced their purchase intentions. This proposition by Lee et al. (2016) was supported by the report of O'Neil-Hart et al. (2016) which asserted that the communication between YouTubers and their audiences have overtime built up some form of a community with its own values and trends, making the YouTube vloggers some form of role models that those in the community look up to and take their words seriously. O'Neil-Hart et al. (2016) further explained that as a result of this, YouTube vloggers tend to have more views on their vlogs than the traditional celebrities have on their uploaded videos on YouTube. The article concluded that YouTube vloggers influenced majority of purchases than traditional celebrities and that is as a result of the para-social interactions they had with their audience.

In their article, Dehghani et al. (2016) concluded that YouTube advertisements affected brand awareness of products and that brand awareness led to purchase intention of consumers. Moran et al. (2014) purported that recommendations affected consumer decisions. Edwards (2015) suggested that organizations make use of YouTubers as a means of reaching their target market since YouTubers are strong influencers of these target audience. Lepistö et al. (2017) in their research explained that when audiences of YouTube vloggers deemed them as credible, they automatically believed in the organizations as well. They further asserted that YouTube vloggers had a significant influence on the purchase intentions of their audiences and that they had the power to change the minds of their audiences to make them buy things they originally did not intend to buy. Referrals could be made by YouTube vloggers who post the links to websites of organizations under the vlogs they have posted and these referral links are mostly links that enable audiences to purchase products that the YouTubers used in their vlogs or products that are recommended (Trusov et al. 2009; Lindgreen et al. 2013). Audiences believe that the vloggers have expertise in the subject they are vlogging about and as such they sometimes ask questions about certain products to use. These vloggers either respond to the questions under the audience' comment with a referral link to purchase the product or they make a whole new vlog to answer the audience if most of the questions were alike. They make room for audiences to shop online (Sykes, 2014). The acceptance of referrals can be explained by the conclusion from the research by Mir et al. (2013), that the credibility of YouTube vloggers, determines the consumer's

behaviour and the audience's purchase intention. Hung et. al. (2011) also purported that source credibility determined whether the audience will act on the recommendations they received from the source. To that, Perloff (2013) asserted that, audience are likely to accept an individual, in this context a vlogger's recommendations, if they perceive the vlogger to be credible.

In summary, YouTubers have a significant influence on the purchase intentions of their audience. Through the reviews, advertisement and their activities, they are able to influence their audience to accept a brand, a product and trends. However, this influence is possible if the audience deem the vlogger as credible. This credibility is also influenced by the relationship the audience build with the vlogger, also known as the parasocial interaction.

CHAPTER THREE

MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

3.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the model and hypotheses that was used to guide this research. It explains how the model was formed based on previous research conducted by other researchers. This chapter shows how the hypotheses were formed and it also explains why the variables for the model can be used to answer the research questions.

From the literature review, this study's model is presented as follows:

3.1. Model

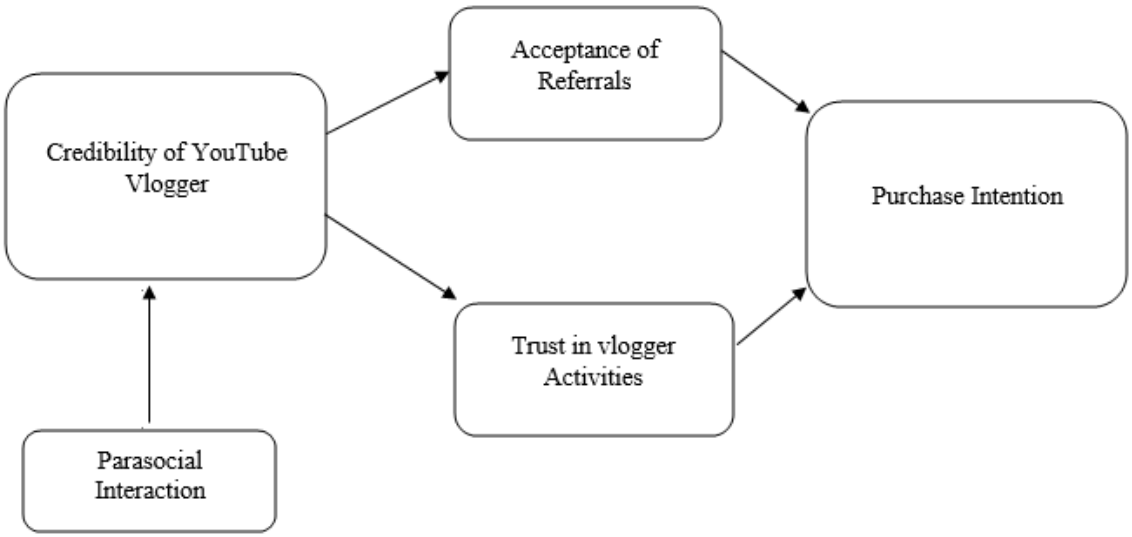


Figure 4: Conceptual model for this research

From the literature review, credibility of the YouTube vlogger was influenced by the trust that the audience developed for the vloggers as a result of the parasocial interaction between the vloggers and the audience. The credibility of the YouTube vlogger that was

influenced by the parasocial interaction, led to the audiences' acceptance of referrals from vloggers and also led to trust in the vloggers' activities. The acceptance of the referral and the trust in the vlogger's activities is the leading factor for purchase intention of the vlogger's audiences.

3.1.1 Parasocial Influence

From the literature review in the previous chapter, this research made reference to how the parasocial influence theory has been used to explain the relationship between vloggers and audience (Lee et al., 2016; Colliander et al., 2016). The parasocial influence as a variable is to help the researcher understand how the credibility of the YouTube vlogger is formed.

3.1.2 Credibility of YouTube Vlogger

Credibility is when a source is considered trustworthy and worth believing according to Gupta et al. (2012). Credibility of YouTube vlogger is important in order to understand why an audience will accept some referrals, recommendations, reviews among others, and why they will not accept others. According to research, when a vlogger is considered to be credible, it is easier for the audience to accept the message the vlogger carries (Mir et al., 2013; Hung et al.,2011).

3.1.3 Acceptance of Referrals

Acceptance of referrals may be explained as the situation in which a vlogger's audience deems the referral of the vlogger worth following, and then goes ahead to follow the link. Referral links are put up by YouTube vloggers that links the audience from the vlog post to online stores, websites, other vlogs and more (Nguyen,2015). If the audience actually click on this link that has been put up by the vlogger, then it can be said that the audience have accepted the referral. This variable is very important because without it the referral aspect of this research's topic cannot be answered. This research cannot exist without this variable and the next variable "trust in vlogger activities". It serves as a mediating variable between the credibility of the YouTube vlogger and the purchase intentions of the audience. Before credibility can influence the purchase intention of the audience, there must be an action before it (credibility) actually does. So

between credibility of vlogger and the purchase intention is the acceptance of the referral.

3.1.4 Trust in Vlogger Activities

Trust is the intention by a person to rely on what another person is saying and taking the side of vulnerability because of that decision (Colquitt et al., 2007). Trusting in vlogger activities therefore can be explained as when an audience relies on the vlogger's activities as believable. If the audience does not trust the vlogger's activities, then that would mean they will not accept the message it is carrying. If they do not accept the message, then the audience will not be affected by the message in the vlog, which means that their purchase intentions would not be influenced (Friis-Jespersen, 2017; Carr et al. 2014). This variable is important in order to answer the part of the research topic that deals with the influence of the YouTube beauty vlogger. It serves as a mediating variable between the credibility of the YouTube vlogger and the purchase intentions of the audience.

3.1.5 Purchase Intention

When an individual consciously decides to buy a product, it is referred to as Purchase intention (Wang, 2015). This is the dependent variable for this research. Purchase intention of a vlogger's audience is dependent on whether the vlogger is considered credible and the audience trust the vlogger's activities and then act on the message given. This also affects the acceptance of the vlogger's referral. This is important in order to fully explore this research's topic. Without this variable, there will be nothing to measure the influence of YouTube vloggers against.

3.2. Hypotheses

The Hypotheses retrieved from the model and the literature review in the previous chapter are:

H1- PSI influences the credibility of YouTube vloggers

H2- Credibility of vlogger leads to acceptance of referrals

H3-Credibility of YouTube vlogger leads to trust in vlogger activities

H4- Acceptance of referrals leads to purchase intention

H5- Trust in vlogger activities influences purchase intention

3.2.1 PSI influences the credibility of YouTube vloggers

From previous research regarding the YouTube community, the Para social influence theory has been used to explain the relationship that exists between the vloggers and the audience (Lee et al., 2016; Colliander et al., 2016). YouTube vloggers are being contacted by several companies to partner with them in their marketing because it is articulated that YouTube vloggers are more believable and have more influence than the traditional celebrities that these organizations used for their marketing in the past (Fischer, 2014; Dredge, 2016). The Para social influence theory has been used to explain how the audience of vloggers form an imaginary friendship with the vloggers based on the similarities, relatedness or attraction they have towards the vlogger (Colliander et al.,2016; Beytin, 2017). The relationship that the vloggers have with the audience and the relaxed, friendly and relatable nature of the vlog makes it easier for the audience to believe in the vlogger and anything the vlogger says (Ananda et al.,2016). Several researchers have attributed the influence of YouTube vloggers to their easy-to-go nature and relationship with their audience which makes them credible (Wang,2015; Ananda et al.,2016).

This hypothesis will aid the researcher in answering the first research question:

1. **What makes a YouTube vlogger credible to the audience?"**

If the hypothesis is proved to be true, then it would mean that para social interaction influences the credibility of YouTube vloggers. If that is the case, then the question of what makes a YouTube vlogger credible to the audience can be answered as: Parasocial interaction makes a YouTube vlogger credible to the audience. This will support the research findings of Wang (2015) that, there is a relationship between credibility and Parasocial influence.

3.2.2 Credibility of vlogger leads to acceptance of referrals

In a research, Friis-Jespersen (2017) explained that, the credibility of vloggers, led to the endorsement of a brand in the minds of the audience. He further explained that the likelihood of a brand's endorsement is increased when the vlogger is perceived as credible and that it is true for the opposite as well, that is, when a vlogger is considered

as not credible by the audience, the brand will not be endorsed by the audience. Research has proven that, when a message source (YouTube Vlogger) is considered credible, it is easier for the message recipient (YouTube vlogger's audience) to accept the message and be influenced by it (Carret el. 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). The message of the vlogger takes the form of vlog posts and referrals as was explained in the literature review.Applying this to this research, if the audience deem the vlogger as credible, they would accept the vlogger's referral.

This hypothesis is useful in answering research question two:

2. **Does credibility affect the audience' acceptance of referrals?**

If the hypothesis is proven to be true, then the question can be answered as credibility affects the audience acceptance of the vlogger's referrals. This hypothesis is important to understand the antecedents of the acceptance of referrals and the long run effect on the purchase intentions of the audience. This

3.2.3 Credibility of YouTube vlogger leads to trust in vlogger activities

Vlogger activities as explained in the literature review refers to the various activities that the vlogger performs in the vlog including recommendations, tutorials, tours, review, sharing an aspect of their lives among many other things (Lee et al., 2016; Duyen, 2016, Zanatta, 2017). Rahmi et al. (2017) explained that credibility of a vlogger made their message acceptable to the listener. Perloff (2013) also asserted that audience will trust a vlogger if they believed the vlogger was credible. Perloff (2013) explained that when a vlogger is expert in what they do and are trustworthy, they will be considered as credible. Mir et al. (2013) also asserted that the audience of vloggers believed that the vloggers were expert in what they do and that this led to their audience trusting the vloggers. Mir et al. (2013) further expounded that this had an influence on the consumer (audience') behaviour and their attitude towards the message (vlogger's activity).

If this hypothesis is proved to be true, it would mean that when the audience of YouTube vloggers perceived them to be credible, they have an open mind towards what the vlogger is showing in the vlog. This hypothesis will answer question three:

3. **Does credibility affect the audience' trust in the vlogger activities?**

This question can then be answered as credibility affects the audience' trust in vlogger activities.

Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 are the antecedents to the 4th and 5th hypotheses which are the driving cause for this research. In other words, they are there to better understand how the purchase intentions of audience are influenced by the vloggers.

3.2.4 Acceptance of referrals lead to purchase intention

Hung et al. (2011) explained that source credibility determines how a person accepts a message and how the person acts with regards to that message. If an audience accept a referral from a vlogger, then they would act on it. YouTube has been tagged the best referral site according to Accesswire (2014). This however includes all referrals and not just vlogger referrals. The aim of referrals is to increase sales (Bezos et al., 2008). YouTube referrals lead the audience to company websites, other vlogs, online stores among others (Sykes, 2014; Nianiou, 2016). Mir et al. (2013) elucidated that if the audience found the YouTube vlogger credible, they would accept the vloggers message and it may lead to a purchase.

After testing this hypothesis, if it is proven to be true, it would solve the fourth research question:

4. **How do referrals influence the purchase intentions of the audience?**

This research is exploratory and as such answering this question does not mean that, it is the final determinant but that referrals also lead to purchase intention. Exploratory research does not give a conclusive result but sets the pace for more research to be conducted to expand the knowledge available. This hypothesis will aid the researcher to find things out from the respondents of the research, in order to answer the fourth question of this research.

3.2.5 Trust in vlogger activities influences purchase intention

In the previous chapter, reviews, tutorials, D.I. Ys, recommendations among others were explained as examples of vlogger activities. Reviews according to Luu et al. (2016),

sometimes led to purchase of the products that were shown in vlogs. Moran et al. (2014) also explained that the recommendations of vloggers had a significant influence on the decisions of the audience. According to a report by Pixability (2014), people trusted the beauty vloggers than they did with Fashion brands and instead of visiting traditional shops and paying attention to fashion brands, they would rather watch beauty vloggers, in order to inform their purchase decisions. Ananda et al. (2016), also asserted that credibility of a YouTube vlogger, which makes their audience trust them, had influenced the purchase intention of fashion products.

This hypothesis is to aid the researcher answer the last research question:

5. **How do vlogger activities influence the purchase intentions of their audience?**

To answer this question, the responses of the interviewees will be used. If this hypothesis is proven to be positive, it would not only mean that trust in vlogger activities influences purchase intention. But it will also help the researcher to understand how those activities influence the audience' purchase intentions.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0. Introduction

This chapter explains the research design, the qualitative nature of this research, the methods that were used in gathering this research's data, the sample size and the sampling procedure. It also explains the research instrument which is a semi-structured interview, the content of the interview, the method and procedure of the analysis. The last section of this chapter explains the ethical consideration of the research.

4.1. Research Design

The research design is an important part of the research which explains how the researcher intends to answer the research questions, how data will be collected and analyzed, as well as ethical issues (Saunders et al., 2015). In designing a research, the researcher needs to assess their personal skills, expectations, the purpose of the research including the access to data (Thomas,2013).

This research is qualitative in nature. The approach to theory formulation is a bridge between the inductive approach and the deductive approach and is therefore abductive. The research also took the design of exploration, in that, the research sought to explore the "how" of the topic at hand.

4.1.1 Research Method

The nature of this research is qualitative. Qualitative research is usually interpretive and it allows the researcher to make meanings subjectively. Its data collection takes place in a natural setting that builds trust with the participants and allows for a rich source of

information (Denzin et al., 2011). In qualitative studies, the researcher explores and analyses a situation, problem or human behaviour, by taking the side of the people who are being research, to see and understand things from their viewpoint (Bryman, 2004).

The reason for choosing a qualitative research was because of the aim of this research. The aim of the research was to understand how the purchase intentions of audience were influenced by YouTube vloggers and vlogger referrals. The researcher wanted to understand the influence of YouTube vloggers, from the viewpoint of the audience. This is because the audience were those who were being influenced and to better understand how they were being influenced, the researcher had to take the position of the audience to better understand this situation.

Another reason for the choice of a qualitative research is the openness and flexibility that it allows for the researcher to get the right information in a most natural setting. The influence of YouTube vloggers is still a rising topic that has not been adequately explored and understood. There is still information that needs to be made available in this uprising debate that has still not surfaced yet. It was therefore important that this research made use of the qualitative research method, which allowed for collecting a rich source of information that the quantitative research may not provide. This is because qualitative research makes it possible to get extra information that surface up during data collection due to the openness of the data collection procedure (Bryman, 2004). With these reasons, the qualitative method was the best method for the purpose of this research.

The purpose of the research was exploratory. The explorative nature of the research was because the researcher sought to understand the events in the YouTube environment and how the audience were influenced. The study was conducted to know how one event led to the other, therefore, it was explorative.

The research is also abductive. Most qualitative researches are often inductive, meaning the researcher use the research to introduce new theory. Saunders et al. (2015) however explained that, practically, most qualitative researchers would rather use the abductive approach which is a combination of the deductive approach usually used for quantitative data and the inductive approach usually applied in the qualitative research.

The abductive approach to theory development deduces theories from previous researches and induces suggestions at the end of the research. This study made use of theories from previous literature and it made inferences at the end of the research.

4.2 Data Collection

This section explains how the data for this research was collected. It briefs the reader about the research instrument, the content of the interviews, the participants of the interview, how they were sampled.

4.2.1 Research Instrument

The instrument for this research was a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is less formal, more open, and more flexible but still allows the interviewer to guide the course of the research, thereby ascertaining the required data from the interviewee (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

The choice of semi-structured interviews as the research instrument was influenced by the topic and the purpose for this research. This research is qualitative and therefore allows for a rich source of information. However, it is also explorative and seeks to explore the vlogger-audience influence. It is therefore important that the choice of instrument fulfils both the research method requirement and the purpose of the research. A semi-structured interview allows for a rich source of information, while directing the research in a way that can provide the required data that would help in exploring the vlogger's influence on the audience adequately.

4.2.2 The Interview Questions

The choice of the interview questions must match up with the purpose of the research (Saunders et al., 2015). The interviews for this research were guided by key questions that were centred on the themes for this research and there were follow up questions too. The main questions were inevitably asked but the follow up questions depended on the responses that the interviewees gave.

There were a total of seven pre-set themes that guided the setting of the questions. The themes came up from previous literature that are related to the topic of this research.

The first themes of this research centred around the background of the participants, that is their age, country of origin and their gender.

The second theme for this research was centred around the frequency with which they watched beauty vlogs on YouTube. This was to explore how often they watched beauty vlogs, what content of the beauty vlogs they were interested in and why they watched.

The third theme was centred on how audience perceived and understood the credibility of YouTube vloggers. This was to explore how audience felt towards vloggers and why they would pay attention to one vlogger and not pay attention to another vlogger.

The fourth theme that guided the research was on how audience built parasocial relationship with the beauty vloggers and how it influenced their credibility.

The fifth theme was centred on what triggered the audience to buy products they saw in a beauty vlog. This was to aid in answering the research question and to explore one aspect of the topic in this research.

The sixth theme was centred on the acceptance of referrals that led to purchase. This was to aid the researcher explore the second part of the topic that was dealt with referrals.

The last theme dealt with the greatest influencer when it came to beauty vloggers. It compared vlogger activities and referrals. It was to explore which among the two (vlogger activities and referrals) had most influence on their purchase intentions and why.

The last question in the interview guide made room for the interviewees to make suggestions and add their voice to this uprising debate. Therefore, there were additional themes that came up, that did not fall under the seven pre-set themes.

4.2.3 Participants and Sample size

The participants of this research were young ladies between the ages of eighteen (18) years and thirty-four (34) years. The choice of this age sample was because from research, it is asserted that the highest population of active YouTube age group falls within this age range (Perrin, 2015). In addition to that, this is the age range that is more

interested in beauty and fashion products. The participants also had to be active on YouTube and must watch beauty vloggers. If a person was within the 18 to 34-year age range, was active on YouTube, actively watched vlogs but did not watch beauty vlogs, they were disqualified from this research.

The sample size for this study was limited to ten participants. This is because, due to the richness of information that is acquired through semi-structured interview and the in-depth analysis that needs to be done, qualitative research allows for a small sample size (Saunders et al., 2015). After interviewing ten respondents, the researcher felt that the data had reached saturation. Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) explained that after an interviewer no longer gets new information from conducting new interviews, the data has reached its saturation point and there was no need to carry on further studies. This is what prompted this research to end the interviews after the tenth respondent.

4.2.4 Sampling method

In choosing a sampling method for a qualitative research, the focus lies on whether the respondents meet the research's theoretical need and adequately represents the population for the research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The snowball sampling method was used for this research. The snowball sampling is the non-probability sampling method where one respondent is identified and chosen by the researcher and then the respondent leads the researcher to other respondents who fall within the sample population. These respondents keep leading the researcher to other respondents until the researcher feels the data has reached saturation. The choice of the sampling method was influenced by the research topic. The research topic is an uprising one and even though most people are exposed to social media, not everyone watches YouTube. Those who watch YouTube may also have different interests and as such, may not watch beauty vloggers. It was therefore a closed population and required that the researcher uses this method in order to get to the needed respondents.

4.2.5 Data collection procedure

The data collection started with a pilot test. The researcher conducted an initial interview to test the questions to make sure that they were sufficient to answer this research's

questions. The interviewee for the pilot test was selected after the researcher made enquiries from reliable sources to aid in selecting a respondent who fell in the required sample population. After the pilot test, the questions proved adequate so the researcher continued with the next respondent for the interview. The next respondent for the interview was introduced to the researcher, by the initial interviewee.

The interview process started with exchanging pleasantries. The researcher then went on to provide the interview consent form to the respondents. The consent form briefed the respondents on the purpose of the research, what was required of them and the ethical considerations. After going through the consent form and agreeing to be interviewed, the researcher took time to go through the interview with the help of the interview guide. The response of the interviewee was what prompted the interviewer's next question. The interviews lasted between twenty-five to forty minutes.

The interview was documented in writing, better known as note taking. Therefore, there was no need for transcription. Saunders et al. (2015), explained that, note taking makes the interviewee feel their responses are useful and beneficial to the interviewer, hence, they put in their best. The researcher with the help of an interview record sheet, put down on paper what the interviewee said by putting them down in short hands and then typing them up in full words afterwards.
After the interview, the researcher read over the interviews over again, to understand the concepts and also to draw the themes out. After finding out the themes and reporting the data, the research continued to the stage of analysis.

4.3 Analysing the data

The method of analysing the data must match up to the research method and also the data collection method (Jiao, 2015). This means that the choice of either qualitative or quantitative method determines how data will be collected and how it will be analyzed.

Graue (2015), explained that, in a qualitative data analysis, there are four steps involved. The first step is the collection of the data, the second step is reducing the data into a more manageable form, the third step is displaying the data, linking up the themes and the last step is drawing conclusions.

In order to make a good analysis, the data should be categorized and ordered so that the needed information can be easily recognized and used for the analysis (Kauppinen et al., 2017). The data have to be grouped. According to Kauppinen et al. (2017), in analysing qualitative data, the non-verbal actions of the interviewees should be considered as well as their motives behind the responses they gave.

The analysis method for this research is the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). The QCA is a method of analysing qualitative data that allows for content reduction and organization, which helps to interpret the data in a meaningful way (Lepistö et al, 2017). Content analysis is flexible and is a good way of analysing qualitative data, especially with abductive theory.

The researcher read through the written down notes several times to get acquainted with them. After that, the researcher started putting the information under the pre-set themes. There were additional themes that came up that did not fall under the pre-set theme. They were also grouped and were used in the analysis as well. The documentation of the interview was note taking. It was therefore easier to put the data together since it took away the extra sheets that transcribing recorded audios presented. This was done to reduce the bias that qualitative data presented most of the time. When it comes to qualitative research, the researcher plays a big role in the collection of the data, the analysis of the data and the results of the research. It is therefore important that the researcher takes steps to reduce the bias that is caused as a result of their involvement.

4.4 Ethical reflexion

This research kept the privacy of the interviewees confidential. The interview consent form which was presented to the interviewees included the purpose of the interview, what was expected from the interviewees, the confidentiality of their personal details and response, participation and withdrawal. The respondents to the interview were given the option to opt out of the interview before the interview began or before the data was presented. With regards to the confidentiality of their personal details, their names were not disclosed but instead, the respondents were labelled with alphabets for easy identification. However, no respondent declined the interview because of the ethical steps taken by the researcher before the interview began.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.0 Introduction

The results from the interview are presented in this chapter. The responses were grouped into themes and they were presented as such. There is an introduction to the themes to aid the reader understand why they were put into those themes.

5.1 On the background of the respondents

The respondents to the interview were aged from eighteen years to thirty-one years which falls within the age range that was required for the research. They were from different nationalities and as such they gave the responses from their various nationalities. The respondents, were mostly international students studying outside of their home countries and as such, had mixed up with foreign students from different countries. They have therefore had experience from their friends who watch beauty vloggers from their various countries.

5.2 Frequency of use and viewed content

The frequency of use of YouTube has to deal with the number of times the respondents watched beauty vloggers on YouTube. The frequency of use determined how committed they are to spending their time on YouTube and it also determined how much influence YouTube vloggers could have on them.

Most of the interviewees were frequent users of the YouTube platform and had actively watched beauty vloggers. Some of them watched them so much that they could not tell how many times they watched it in a week. Respondent B said "*I watch vlogs frequently …*"

Respondent I also answered that she watched vlogs very often and could not say the number of times she watched beauty vlogs on YouTube. There were other respondents who watched beauty vloggers between three to five times a week. Respondent C when asked how many times she watched beauty vloggers on YouTube, answered "*About five times in a week".* Another participant of the research, Respondent G, answered:

> "*At least three times a week. Sometimes it is more but mostly around three times in a week."*
>
> ***Respondent G***

This response from Respondent G, suggests that the least time spent on vlogs in a week is three times. There were other respondents who however watched vlogs around two times in a week. An example is respondent F "*About once or twice a week".*

Most of the respondents proved to be regular audience of YouTube beauty vloggers and the average time spent watching vlogs were at least three times in a week. There was one respondent who watched vlogs but not that frequently as the other nine respondents. Her response to the number of times she watched beauty vlogs was

> "*Not much, but once in a while. Sometimes it is very consistent. When I need information regarding a problem, I watch it a lot. But at other times I just watch them but not frequently".*
>
> ***Respondent J***

The consistency of her view depended on her having a problem and needing a solution from beauty vloggers on YouTube. When she needed information, she is consistent with the view but when she is not in need of any information, she watches them but not that frequently.

The content of what the respondents watched was also important to this study. Therefore, the interviewer asked the question of what the respondents watched on YouTube and why they watched them. The response the respondents gave varied, however there were still similarities in their interests, even though all of them watched beauty vloggers for their personal beauty needs. What run through most of the responses were face and hair related, make-up and natural remedies, for fun and also to check for new trends.

Respondent A's reasons for watching beauty vlogs was to keep her body in shape, for her face and make-up. In her words

> "*I started watching beauty vlogs because I wanted to get in shape, get a smooth face, know how to do my make-up and also to get that hour glass shape I always wanted".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

Respondent B's reasons for watching beauty vlogs had to do with getting natural hair and makeup information, as well as getting to know the products that are used in the vlog. In her response she said

> "*I watch vlogs frequently because I am transitioning my hair and I need more information. I sometimes watch vlogs to check their makeup, eyebrows and their pencils".*
>
> ***Respondent B***

This respondent uses beauty vloggers as a source of information to take care of her hair. Respondent C also watched beauty vlogs because of her hair and her face. She said she watched beauty vlogs,

> *"Usually because of my hair. I am a natural and I need natural remedies to treat my hair. I also watch natural remedies for face as well"*.
>
> ***Respondent C***

Respondent D gave her reasons for watching beauty vlogs as

> "*I want to know how to style my natural hair. And also when I have braids, I check to know how to style them".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

Respondent E, watched beauty vloggers for fun and usually watches natural hair vlogs. She is frequent on YouTube but is moved by the captions of the vlogs. In her words, she said

> "*When I go on YouTube and I see the caption and it is interesting, then I watch it. I usually watch natural hair vlogs".*

Respondent G's reasons for watching beauty vlogs was for fun, for her hair, for her face, to get information from beauty vloggers and to know what is trending. She responded

> "I *usually watch them, both for information and fun. I get to learn, get insights on certain things like how to know my natural hair type, what oils to use for that type of hair, what to do and what not to do. And also, when I have a problem with my oily face, I get the information I need from beauty vloggers. It's also for fun, when I get to see what is trending and its fun trying it out with my friends".*
>
> ***Respondent G***

Respondent H watched vlogs to see new trends. She said "*To catch up on trending things".*

Respondent I watched vlogs because she was a make-up artist and the vloggers were like teachers whom she learned from. She said

> "*I am a make-up artist so I am interested in makeup videos. I learn a lot, especially about make-up products".*
>
> ***Respondent I***

Respondent J responded "*I watch make-up videos, hair related videos most".*

From the question that was asked with regards to the second theme which is the frequency of watching beauty vlogs on YouTube and the contents that they (audience) watched, hair and make-up related vlogs seemed to be the most watched beauty vlogs. Most of the respondents sought information from YouTubers on how to keep and maintain their hair because they felt the YouTube vloggers were expert in what they did.

They also watched make-up videos because they felt there was a lot they could learn from beauty vloggers. Others also watched beauty vloggers because they wanted information. This shows one way in which people look for information online. The YouTubers in this instance served as the source of information to some of the audience. The issue of watching YouTube vloggers to know what is trending, also shows how YouTubers have carved a name for themselves when it comes to creating, showing and leading trends.

Another section of the interviewees also watched YouTube beauty vloggers because they felt they could get natural remedies and solutions to their beauty problems.

5.3 How audience perceive the credibility of vloggers

Credibility of YouTube vloggers determine how their messages will be accepted by the audience. The third theme for this research was centred on how the audience perceived a person as a credible YouTube beauty vlogger. The audience were asked who they considered as a credible YouTube vlogger. This was used to understand how audience perceived one vlogger to be credible and considered another vlogger as not credible. The responses that came up were similar.

Most of the respondents considered a credible YouTube beauty vlogger as someone who had results. Respondent A explained that

> "*I consider a vlogger credible if after applying what they talked about in their vlog, you get the results you required".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

To respondent A, a beauty vlogger is credible if they give ideas and recommendations that helps the audience to achieve the results that they want. That is, if a vlogger gives ideas and recommendations, or tutorials on how to achieve a look, solve a beauty problem or achieve a result, and on applying what the vlogger said they get the results promised, then the vlogger is perceived as credible.

Respondent C answered

> "*I usually check the before and after results of the skin of the vlogger to determine their credibility".*
>
> ***Respondent C***

Respondent C also looked at the results the vlogger achieved rather than what she as an audience achieved. Even though she also used the results to determine credibility like Respondent A did, she however focused on the vlogger's results rather than hers.

Respondent E also said

> "*Naturallyphilo. Because her information is useful and her tutorials give results. She tells you things that works and she gives specifics".*
>
> ***Respondent E***

Respondent G also said "*If they tell me something and it works, then to me, they are credible".* This means the credibility of the YouTube vlogger depended on achieving the expected results.

Respondent H's response was "*Someone who can show results for his/her post".*

Respondent I also responded "*... beauty vloggers who put up pictures of their clients are credible to me".* This means that when she sees the pictures of the results of a vlogger's work on a client, then to her, the vlogger is credible.

Respondent J also added that

> "*If I see the results and it looks good, I feel the vlogger can be trusted".*
>
> ***Respondent J***

Among the ten interviewed respondents, seven of them used results as one of the basis to judge a vlogger's credibility.

Most of the respondents also judged the credibility of YouTube beauty vloggers based on the number of subscriptions a vlogger had, the number of likes and views on a video and the number of comments under a vlog post. Five respondents attributed their perception of a vlogger's credibility to this.

> "*Another thing I use to check credibility is a beauty vlogger who has a lot of followers and viewers".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

Respondent D's response was

> "*I check the number of viewers the vlogger has".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

To this, Respondent F also answered

> "*I consider the number of subscribers, the number of views, the number of likes".*
>
> ***Respondent F***

Respondent G's response was "*I also look at the number of subscriptions and comments".* And the comment of Respondent H was "…*and the number of likes on the vlog".*

The recommendations of friends also added to the credibility of YouTube vloggers in the minds of their audience.

According to Respondent A,

> "*… also a beauty vlogger recommended by someone is credible to me".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

This means when someone recommends a vlogger to her, she thought the vlogger must be good enough to have been recommended by someone. It therefore made the vlogger credible to her. Respondent H said "*Vloggers recommended by my friends…"*

The products the vloggers use was also another factor that affected their credibility to some of the respondents. Respondent B felt that, if a vlogger used the products she was used to and know, then it affected how she viewed the vlogger. In her words she said

> "*I like her because she uses regular products that I know, unlike others".*
>
> ***Respondent B***

Respondent D also felt that a vlogger's credibility is determined by the quality of products the vlogger used. She said "*I also check the products the vlogger uses".*

Respondent I, in her response explained that she felt vloggers were more credible if they "*have their own products* ". She explained it by giving an example. In her example she said

> "*There are some make-up artists, who have their own make-up line".*
>
> ***Respondent I***

Expertise in what they do and how they carry on their presentation, is also a factor that affected the audience's perception of a credible beauty vlogger. Respondent B explained that if a vlogger is natural and does the right things without exaggerating them, then she considered the vlogger to be credible. She mentioned the name of her favourite beauty vlogger and said

> "*Also, she does not overdo things. She does not also confuse me like the others do".*

Respondent B

The way a vlogger carries out the presentation also determines their credibility. The vlogs should be understandable, not exaggerated and must not be confusing.

Respondent E also explained that her favourite beauty vlogger

> "*…tells you things that works and she gives specifics".* She also added that "*the way she presented her routines like how she tells you how to trim your hair at least every six months and the hot oil treatments and all"*

Respondent E

Respondent G also added that "*If a vlogger is expert in what they do",* then they are credible. The expertise and mode of presentation also affects how a vlogger's credibility is perceived.

Some of the respondents also attached credibility of YouTube vloggers to how popular they were. Respondent H when she was asked who a credible vlogger is, answered that "*Someone who is popular in the beauty community".* So being popular in the beauty community, gave a good standing to a beauty vlogger.

Respondent I also added to that. She said "*A vlogger who is famous",* is credible.

The characteristics of beauty vloggers also influenced how the audience perceived them to be credible. Respondent D said "*The vlogger's accent too"* added to their credibility. She also said "*And if the vlogger is beautiful and presentable".*

Respondent G also added that "*Their appearance also matters".*

Respondent E, in her response explained that

> "*A beauty vlogger once inspired me to really cut my hair and I did. The way she looked was so nice. The way she presented herself".*

Respondent E

Respondent I also explained that when a vlogger is consistent in uploading vlogs, she tends to gain her credibility. Respondent J also added that a credible vlogger must be confident. In her words, "*A credible vlogger is someone confident in what they are saying".*

One interesting factor that was raised by respondent F had to do with the Ethnical background of the vlogger. In her words she said that "*I usually look out for black women from Africa".* To her, the ethnical background of the vlogger made it easier to trust them. Therefore, she specifically searched for the people who had the same ethnical background as her.

5.4 How PSI influences credibility of YouTube Vloggers

The fourth theme for this research centred on how the audience built the PSI relationship with the vloggers and how it influenced the credibility of YouTube beauty vloggers. In getting the needed information for this theme, the questions were divided into sub categories that were more understandable to the respondents who were not familiar with the technical terms. The respondents were asked questions that explained how the PSI relationship was formed. The respondents were asked if they felt they had watched any beauty vlogger they felt they could relate to base on similarity, experience and other things. All the participants for the interview except one all answered to the affirmative that they had in one way or the other related with some beauty vloggers.

Respondent A answered that she has not really encountered a beauty vlogger that she felt she could relate to. She however stated that

> "*I usually watch the beauty vloggers because I want to look good, just as they also want to look good".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

She also explained that, the vlogger was not really important to her but the message that was being shared was what she needed. In her words she said

> "*Sometimes, I do not even like the beauty vlogger but I still watch the vlog because I need the information".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

She was asked on what she thinks about the audience who communicate with the beauty vloggers on YouTube. To that, she answered that

> "*I do not really comment or ask questions in the comment sections of the vlogs but I think that it is a good thing for beauty vloggers to ask their*

followers to make comments, suggestions and even ask questions. Because it helps them to keep their followers."

Respondent A

She was asked how she thought it increased the credibility of the vlogger and she answered

"*If the beauty vloggers are able to correctly answer their audience's questions or make an entire new vlog post to answer those questions from audiences, it means that they are really knowledgeable on the issue at hand and that to me, increases their credibility".*

Respondent A

Respondent A's response when summarized, can be presented as "if vloggers communicate with their audience and take the time to give the needed responses to their audience, they will be considered credible".

Respondent B however, felt she could relate to some vloggers based on the products that they used. She said

"*There are vloggers I follow because they use regular products that I know. For example, the normal styling gels, the normal shampoos, the bobby pins".*

To her, she related to a vlogger, if the vlogger used the "normal" products she knew. She also added that

"*If I try what the vlogger says and it works for me, then I consider the vlogger credible".*

Respondent B

She first formed the relationship with the vlogger based on the similarity of the products that they use. However, the credibility of the vlogger according to her, occurs after she gets results from what the vlogger says.

Respondent C also said she related with a vlogger based on a similar problem she had with the vlogger. She said

"*I saw someone who had pimples and black spots. So when I saw the before picture and it was like what I had".*

Respondent C

She also said

> "*She (vlogger) used natural remedies like honey and Colgate. They were things I had at home and they were not chemical based but natural".*
>
> ***Respondent C***

The interviewee was a health conscious person who believed in natural products than drugstore products. She therefore preferred vloggers who used natural products in their vlogs. She added that what made a vlogger credible to her was the results she got from applying what the vlogger said in the vlog post. She explained further with this example

> "*Usually, they give a timeframe that the process will work for you, and say for example, that do it three times a week. So if within the time frame, it works, then the person to me is credible. How the vlogger does the presentation also affects their credibility"*
>
> ***Respondent C***

Respondent D also felt related to some beauty vloggers based on the choice of products they both shared. In her response she said

> "*If we are using the same product. For example, I bought a product and I did not know how to use it so it's like we all had the same product".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

She also added that because she (the respondent) had a good taste in products, if a vlogger uses the same product as her, then to her, the vlogger was credible. She put it as

> "*Because I buy good things, if a vlogger uses the same thing, then it means she is credible".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

She related to vloggers based on the similarity in the taste of products they used. She explained that if the vlogger was able to buy quality goods then the vlogger is credible. So she only paid attention to vloggers who used quality products.

Respondent E's response to whether she felt related to any beauty vlogger was yes. She explained that she had problems that the vlogger had faced before. This made her feel that the vlogger understood how she felt. In her words she said she felt related to

> "*Some beauty vloggers who had experienced heat damage due to hair dryer. I had also experienced heat damage due to my hair dryer so I felt they knew how I felt".*
>
> ***Respondent E***

This was what created the connection. They had experienced something similar which had affected them as women. It was therefore like having someone sympathize with you because they had been in your shoes before. When she was asked how that affected the credibility of the vloggers, she answered

> "*The vloggers gave remedies and when I used it, it worked so it made them credible to me".*
>
> ***Respondent E***

From respondent F's response, she had also felt related to some vloggers at some point. She explained that

> "*There is a lady from Zimbabwe called R... L…. Because of her skin tone and her facial structure and other features, I feel we are similar. And her nationality also adds to how I feel related to her. She even speaks my language and makes remarks that I can relate to".*
>
> ***Respondent F***

To her, she finds vloggers from her country more relatable. She also related to the vlogger because she felt they had similar features and skin tone. To add to that, she explained that the language and remarks were so familiar to her and made her feel the vlogger was real. When she was asked how that added to the credibility of the vlogger, she answered

> "*I feel because she speaks my language and some other things she does, she is authentic and realistic".*
>
> ***Respondent F***

Respondent G's relatedness to a vlogger was based on a shared problem. She said

> "*One beauty vlogger had a problem with a nose piercing which I encountered".*
>
> ***Respondent G***

She also related to beauty vloggers who she thought had a similar personality as hers. Her words were "*Then I also found a couple with the same personality as me".* She was then asked how that added to the credibility of the vloggers and she answered "*It makes them more credible to me and I want to follow them all the more.*" She had already developed interest with them but getting to know them and relate to them in the way she did through the problem they shared and the similarity in their personality gave them more credibility than they had before.

Respondent H also said she felt related to some vloggers based. She explained that because they had the problems and the vloggers were able to solve those problems, it made them credible to her. She explained

> "*Because the vlogger had experienced a similar problem as me and was able to solve it, I felt they were credible".*
>
> ***Respondent H***

Respondent I's response was "*Yes. E… S... She is young, tiny, ambitious and fun. I think that's how I am."* From her response, it is evident that she totally adores this vlogger. She felt they had a similar physique and personality. The tone of her voice and her expression during the interview was that of excitement when she was talking about this vlogger that she totally admired. In answering how she felt it added to the vlogger's credibility, she said

> "*The fact that she is young and has achieved much makes me like her. She is really good at what she does".*
>
> ***Respondent I***

Respondent J also felt she could relate to vloggers. She said

> "*I have these rashes in my back. I thought I was the only one with it till I saw a vlogger who had a more severe form than I had. And surprisingly, she was able to solve it. And the remarks the vlogger made were exactly how I felt about the rash".*
>
> ***Respondent J***

From the response she totally felt connected to the vlogger because she felt that the vlogger had been where she was before. When she was asked how she felt it added to the credibility of the vlogger, she answered that

> "*Because I knew the vlogger shared my problems and my emotions, it made me believe in what she was saying because she has been in my shoes before and has overcome it. And she showed her before and after pictures and the healing was evident."*
>
> ***Respondent J***

From the results of the interviews under this theme, majority of the respondents answered that they related to the beauty vloggers in one way or the other. There were different reasons they related to the vloggers, however, nine out of ten people related to the vloggers. They also admitted that as a result of the relatedness they felt towards the vloggers, they saw the vloggers as more credible.

5.5 How vlogger activities influenced purchase

In order to answer the question of how vlogger activities influenced the purchase intentions of their audience, the fifth theme was set. The questions that were used to gather this information from the respondents were open enough in order to get their most honest answers. The responses varied from person to person, however there were some similar responses. The analysis in this section will start from the responses each interviewee gave and then from there, continue to the similar answers that came up.

Respondent A's response to what would make her buy a product she saw in a vlog was

> "*If the beauty vlogger sounds convincing enough, I would buy it. If I am also desperate to solve my problem, say, I have pimples on my face and I think the product the vlogger is talking about can help me, I will buy that product".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

This meant if she really needed the product and the vlogger could convince her that it would work for her, she would buy it. She also added

"*But I don't usually buy the products because they are usually expensive. But I once tried natural available products for my face. I bought lemons and baking powder to apply to my face".*

Respondent A

Even though she would like to buy things because the vlogger recommended it, she still does not, because to her, she feels the products used in the vlogs are expensive. She has however made purchases on things that to her, are less expensive. She bought natural products due to a vlogger's recommendation. She however sought for more information from Google before proceeding with the purchase,

Respondent B had also been influenced to make a purchase due to what she saw in a YouTube beauty vlog. She said

"*It was coincidental that I bought it. I did not intend to buy it but I had gone to a shop to buy mascara and pencil. So when I saw that brand, I remembered I had seen it in the vlog, so I decided to buy that one."*

Respondent B

She had previously watched the vlog but did not make the purchase. But after a while, she needed to make a purchase and after getting to the shop, she recalled that she had seen a brand she had seen on YouTube. The vlogger therefore had a hand in her choice of buying that particular brand.

Respondent C did not believe in buying products recommended by vloggers because she thought it was a risk. She said

"*I don't mind spending money on my hair and skin but buying products in vlogs is a risk. Because different products work differently on different people."*

Respondent C

Despite this however, she agreed that, she has bought a product that was recommended by a vlogger before. She added that she preferred natural products that were found in her kitchen because she believed they would not harm her. She put her response this way:

"*I do not buy things I do not use in my kitchen. Because I know those things that are good for the health, would be good for the skin".*

Respondent C

From her response, it was evident that she had been influenced by beauty vloggers to do some purchasing at a point in time. Her purchase however was in line with what she believed in, or in other words, her acceptance of the vlogger's recommendation was based on her personal choice in products.

Respondent D admitted that her purchase intention was influenced by vloggers sometimes. She however said that before she makes a purchase, she checks

> "*...how well it suits the vlogger. Example if the vlogger has the same shade or skin tone as mine and the product suits the person. I also check the number of comments on the product under the vlog".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

She uses the vlogger's activity and something extra, which is the comments under the vlog to make her purchase decision. She added "*I bought them straight away because the outcome of the vlogger using it was great".* This meant that her entire purchase journey way influenced totally by the vlogger.

Respondent E had also made purchases based on recommendations and tutorials she watched from beauty vloggers. She explained that her decision was influenced by

> "*the rate at which it produces results on the person's hair. Especially when we have the same type of hair texture."* She also added "*I looked for more information from google for what the products are really made of. The nutrients and other components and the effect the products will have on my hair. After that, I went to buy it".*
>
> ***Respondent E***

In this case, she had been influenced by the vloggers to make a purchase. However, she still had to search for more information because the vlog post was not sufficient. She therefore went in search of more information about what the product in the vlog was made of. Then from there she made the purchase.

Respondent F said that she will buy a product, just because a vlogger recommended it. She admitted to buying a product she saw in a vlog but before the purchase, she asked her friends about it and also searched about it on google. In her words she said

> "*I would buy the product because of the YouTuber's recommendation... I looked for it on google and asked my friends about it".*
>
> ***Respondent F***

Respondent G's purchase intentions were however influenced by

> "*The testimonials from those who have used the products before. What they say after they have used the products, whether it was good or not, how they enhanced it or improved the product".*
>
> ***Respondent G***

She specifically searched the comments section under the vlogs before she proceeded with the purchase. She also said that before she made a purchase,

> "*I looked up for more information everywhere mostly on YouTube. If it was the first vlog I have seen the products in, I go in search for more information. But if I have seen it before and just had my doubts about the product, the reviews on the vlog may seal the deal for me."*
>
> ***Respondent G***

With this participant, the decision to make a purchase was gradual. She was influenced by both the vlogger's activity and the comments of the audience. To her, seeing the products in different vlogs amplified her desire to get the product. But when she still has doubts, she checks the reviews from other audience.

Respondent H was hardly influenced by the vlogger activities. She had never been influenced by a vlogger to make a purchase. When asked what would make her buy a product she saw in a vlog, she said that "*Reviews about the product from those who have used it before in the comment section".* Clearly, her decision to make a purchase was not influenced by vlogger but the whole activities including the comments of the other audience.

Respondent I said she would make a purchase "*If I have heard about it before, and if it's cheap".* She added that "*If I saw someone who is classy using it, then I know it is something I can't buy".* This has to do with her perception that classy YouTube vloggers only used expensive products. In this case she would declare the product out of bounds to herself because she felt it would be as expensive as the vlogger looked. She admitted to making a purchase based on vlogs she had watched. She said

> "*I saw the product when passing by a shop and I bought it because I had seen it in the vlog."*
>
> ***Respondent I***

She also explained that

> "*With other products, I asked friends and other make-up artists. Because some of the products online are not as they look and work in reality.*"
>
> ***Respondent I***

So even though a vlog activity had influenced her to make a purchase before, it was not always the case. She still had doubts about certain products and will seek for more information before making a purchase. The vloggers however, were still involved in the decision process.

Respondent J's response to what would make her buy a product she saw in a beauty vlog was

> "*If I really need the product and the product seemed to work well on the vlogger, I would buy it.*" She also added "*If I consistently see the same products in different vlogs and other places too, I may consider buying it*".
>
> ***Respondent J***

This means that sometimes the purchase intentions of the audience is not influenced by just one vlogger. She admitted to making a purchase that was influenced by vlogger activities.

She stated

> "*I bought this product because I had seen it in about two other vlogs. And all the vloggers who used it had great results, so I believed it would be good and fortunately, it turned out to be good.*"
>
> ***Respondent J***

This respondent was influenced by vlogger activities in her purchase but her decision is mostly influenced by multiple vloggers and vlogger activities.

With this information from the interviewees, it is evident that the purchase intentions of most of the respondents were influenced by the vlogger activities. Even though it influenced them in different ways, they were still influenced. One respondent however, was not influenced by vlogger activities in her purchase decisions.

5.6 How acceptance of referrals influence purchase decision

The sixth theme was centred on how the acceptance of referrals influenced the purchase intention of audience. This was used to answer how the referrals posted by vloggers were accepted by the audience and to know if it influenced their purchase intentions.

Respondent A's response to what would make her accept and follow a referral was

> "*If I really need the product and I have the money to buy it, I will follow the link but I have never followed a link before, because I do not pay attention to them".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

She had never followed a referral link before and that was because she never paid attention to them. It therefore had no influence on her.

Respondent B's response was

> "*If I do not know the product I will follow the referral to know more about it. If I want to follow the tutorials that was shown in the vlog I will follow the referral. But if I already know the product, there is no need to follow the referral".*
>
> ***Respondent B***

She answered too that she has not really followed a referral before. Therefore, it clearly had no influence on her.

Respondent C's response was

> "*I would follow it when I really need to buy the product shown in the vlog. When I want to know more about the product and when I have nothing to do."*
>
> ***Respondent C***

Respondent C too, had never followed a referral link and therefore it had no influence on her purchase intentions.

Respondent D responded

> "*If I have enough time. If the product is something I have been looking for. And if they are having sales. No I have never followed a referral because I was not interested".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

She had never followed referrals because she was not interested in them. Therefore, she was also not influenced by vlogger referrals.

Respondent E also answered that she had followed a referral link before. She even tried to make a purchase through a referral link posted by a vlogger. She explained her reason for following a vlog as

> "*There was a time that black Jamaican oil was all over YouTube and I wanted to purchase it so I followed a referral link".*
>
> ***Respondent E***

With regards to this respondent, she actually accepted a referral from a vlogger and tried to make a purchase. The referral therefore had an influence on her purchase intentions.

Respondent F's response was "*If I feel I need to discover or learn more, I follow the link".* She also added that she had followed a referral link before but she did not make any purchase. In her words she said *"But I did not buy anything because I was just curious and did not intend to buy."* With regards to this respondent too, even though she accepted the referral, it did not influence her purchase intentions. This was because her reason for following the referral was not for purchase but out of curiosity.

Respondent G's response for what would make her follow a vlog was

> "*I follow them if they missed some things in the video. Example, the list of all the names of products and where to get them, etc. I may also follow them if I want to share the information to others. A written down information is easier and cheaper to share than a video".*
>
> ***Respondent G***

She was asked if she had followed a referral link from a vlogger before and she said "*Yes, I have visited websites of businesses and online beauty stores. But I did not buy anything because most of the things online are expensive."* Respondent G accepted a referral link from a vlogger. However, it did not lead to a purchase because to her, the products were expensive. This means that, if the products were within the price range that she could afford, she would have moved on to purchase it.

Respondent H's answer for accepting a referral was "*If I want to see more about the video and get more information."* She was asked if she had followed a referral from a

vlogger before and she answered "*Yes, I have followed links before. But I did not make a purchase".* Even though this respondent had followed a link, she did not make any purchase.

Respondent I's response was "*If I need more information about the product, if I am being inquisitive, if I am not satisfied with what I have seen so far."* She was also asked if she had followed a referral link before and she answered *"Yes, I have but I did not make a purchase".* This respondent also accepted a referral link but did not make any purchase.

Respondent J's response to what would make her accept a referral from a vlogger was "*If I am curious and I want to find out more information about the product. If I want to satisfy my curiosity."* She admitted that she had followed a referral from a vlogger before. In her response, she said

> *"I have visited about two online stores. The vlogger used a very nice hair in her video and she said there were other nicer hair in her video and she said there were other nicer hairs that are available in the online store. I was just curious. I did not make any purchase".*
>
> ***Respondent J***

This respondent also followed a referral from a vlogger but did not make a purchase because she was just curious and did not intend to purchase.

The sixth theme was to find out if acceptance of referrals influenced the purchase intentions of the audience. From the ten respondents of the interview, six of them admitted to have followed a referral from a vlogger at a point. Four also said they had never followed a vlog. Among the four that never followed a referral, two said they did not follow referrals because they never paid attention to them. Among the six that followed the vlog, none of them actually made any purchase. However, some of them had intended to purchase but for reasons such as a decline in their card and the high price of the products, they could not complete the purchase. Other respondents did not make any purchase because they followed the referral based on their curiosity but not intending to make a purchase.

5.7 Comparing the influence of vlogger activities and the influence of referrals

The seventh theme for this research compared the influence of vlogger referrals and the influence of vlogger activities. The responses went in favour of vlogger activities. Nine out of the ten respondents said that vlogger activities had more influence than referrals did. Only one respondent was of the view that referrals had more influence than vlogger activities.

Respondent A, who said she believed referrals had more influence than vlogger activities explained

> "*I think the referral links help you to get more information about the product and can sometimes even help you get different reviews from other people aside the vlogger which would help you make a better choice. Sometimes, you get to see other products other than the ones that the vlogger talked about".*
>
> ***Respondent A***

The other ten respondents also gave interesting answers as to why they thought vlogger activities had more influence than referrals. Respondent B, D, and Respondent G thought that vlogger activities provided more information than the referral links. They said:

> "*I believe vlogger activities. This is because the reason for searching for the video was to answer a question. Referrals are like extra information but not the main reason for visiting the vlog".*
>
> ***Respondent B***

> "*Vlogger activities influences most. Because I wanted to buy a product from Aliexpress online. The review helped me to know what I was buying based on the review".*
>
> ***Respondent D***

> "*I would say the vlogger activities because some vlogs do not have any links but provide sufficient information".*
>
> ***Respondent G***

They felt that vlogger activities on their own provided sufficient information and that's what they needed. Respondent E also said

> "*The vlogger activities are the most influential. Because they give details especially the "D.I. Ys". I sometimes do not get the exact things so I get something similar to her products then follow the process, then from there, I get my results".*
>
> ***Respondent E***

Respondent C wanted not just the vlogger activities but the whole package that it came with, that is the comments from the other audience. She said

> "*Because apart from the vlog itself, people go to check the comments before buying. Example when am buying cloths. People comment under vlogs and tell how the recommendations of the vlogger worked. So this makes the vlog more real. It feels more real when there are comments from other people who used the product or followed the tutorial."*
>
> ***Respondent C***

Respondents F and J also thought vlogger activities had more influence because they did not pay attention to referrals. Respondent F said

> "*The vlogger activities influence my purchase intention most because I would want to use the products the vlogger uses. I don't usually pay attention to referral links".*
>
> ***Respondent F***
>
> "*I think the vlogger activities because I do not really pay attention to referrals most of the time".*
>
> ***Respondent J***

Respondent H's reason for choosing vlogger activities over the referrals was because she wanted to see how the product worked on a person. This is what she had to say

> "*I believe vlogger activities. This is because you get to experience the end results of the product. That is, you see how the product works on a real person".*
>
> ***Respondent H***

At the end of the interview, it was evident that vlogger activities seemed to have more influence on the purchase intentions of the audience than referrals do.

5.8 Additional themes from interviews

In chapter four, this research explained that there were additional themes that came up during the course of the interview that did not fall under the seven pre-set themes. The two most significant themes that came up during the interview had to do firstly with the mode of presentation that the vloggers put up. The second theme had to do with how to improve the acceptance of vlogger referrals.

5.8.1 Presentation

This was an issue that seemed to bother the audience of beauty vloggers a lot. Four participants made similar comments with regards to how vloggers did their presentation in their vlogs. Respondent B explained that vlogging is effective but there were too many vloggers now. She also said

> "*Sometimes vlogs are very boring. Vloggers should be creative and they should brand themselves. They should not do things everyone does.*"
>
> ***Respondent B***

It meant that the audience wanted more content than what they have been seeing every day. Respondent D also said

> "*The vloggers should talk less and go straight to the point. They should improve their video quality as well*".
>
> ***Respondent D***

To her, vloggers talked too much and therefore needed to reduce that, to make their presentations worth listening to. She also added that the video's quality should be improved. Respondent G also said

> "*Vloggers should get straight to the point. It's boring to spend five minutes saying "unrelated things". It makes us skip the information and they lose subscriptions.*"
>
> ***Respondent G***

Respondent G's response was similar to the thoughts of respondent D. Respondent G however added that, vloggers should avoid click baiting. She said it is better to put up pictures that actually matched the presentation in the vlogs. She said

> "*In addition, they should avoid click baiting. The moment they do that; their vlog loses credibility. Say, the vlog says how to get rid of acne and*

there will be a preview of this person with very bad acne. You click and view the vlog, only to find that the vlogger has just 5 small pimples".

Respondent G

Respondent I also suggested that vloggers should be livelier and add music to their background.

In summary, the audience of vloggers think that vlogging is not for everyone, as such, not everyone should vlog. They also added that, the vloggers should not beat about the bush before bringing out the main purpose for creating the vlog post. They preferred vloggers to go straight to the point. They also did not like to be misled into believing that a vlog contained a particular content but on opening it, they find a different content, that is, they disliked click baiting. They also suggested that vloggers should be creative and make new contents that has not been created by other beauty vloggers.

5.8.2 How to improve referrals

This theme also came up in four different interviews. This was something that the interviewer sought to know because most of the audience said they did not pay much attention to referrals from vloggers. The interviewer then asked the respondents what they thought could be done to improve the acceptance of referrals. Their responses are as follow:

"*to improve referrals, they should take a screenshot of the link page and attach it to the link. It would attract more people to watch it, rather than the link alone"*

Respondent D

"*I recommend that the vlogger should keep some information and keep the viewers in suspense so that the viewers would click the links to get the full details"*

Respondent E

"*Vloggers have to emphasize the importance of referrals and why we should follow them";* Respondent I also added "*If vloggers really want to make their audience follow referrals, then they should keep the audience in suspense. So that they would follow the link".*

Respondent F

In summary, the audience suggested that, in order to increase the acceptance of referrals, vloggers had to make the referrals catchier by adding pictures of the page and the things available there. They (vloggers) also had to keep their viewers in suspense so and finally, vloggers have to emphasize why the audience need to follow the links".

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this research. In this chapter the results from the research are not only discussed but also used to test the hypotheses and to answer the research questions. Most qualitative studies do not use models, previous literature or even hypotheses. This is because it is difficult to test hypotheses using the qualitative method. It is however allowed to have a hypothesis if the research promises to answer those hypotheses. This research therefore chose the abductive research design of using previous theory and literature and then adding the findings of the research to existing literature.

6.1 Summary of the results

The table below summarizes the results from the interviews that were presented in Chapter five.

Frequency of watching beauty vlogs	Nine out of the ten respondents were very frequent. The other one respondent's frequency depended on her need to solve a problem
Content the respondents watched	They watched hair vlogs (natural, braided, styling), make-up, D.I.Ys, facial treatment, body fitness vlogs,
Reasons for watching	For information, to look beautiful like the vloggers, to learn, to know what's trending and for natural remedies solution to their problems.
How audience perceive the	Someone who had results, someone's who's

credibility of vloggers	recommendations gave results, number of subscriptions, likes, views and comments under a vlog, someone recommended by others, familiarity or quality of products vlogger uses, vlogger's expertise, popularity in the beauty community, vlogger's characteristics (appearance, accent, confidence) and ethnical background of vlogger (country, language)
How vloggers formed PSI with audience and its influence on credibility	Nine out of the ten respondents admitted that they had related with vloggers at some point. All the ten thought PSI influenced credibility
How vlogger activities influenced purchase	All ten participants were influenced by beauty vloggers in a way. But just nine of them had been influenced to make a purchase.
How acceptance of referrals influence purchase decision	Four out of the ten respondents had never accepted a referral. Six of them had followed vlogs but did not make any purchase though some of them had intended to purchase
Comparing the influence of vlogger activities and the influence of referrals	Nine out of the ten respondents felt that vlogger activities had more influence on them than referrals do.
Additional themes from interviews	On presentations, the audience asked that vloggers be creative, straight to the point, improve video quality and avoid long presentations. On how to improve the impact of referrals, the audience said vloggers should emphasize its importance, make them catchy and also keep their audience in suspense so that they would follow the referral links.

Summary of findings

6.2 Testing the hypotheses

This section discusses the hypotheses of this research and how the results were used to test them.

6.2.1 PSI influences the credibility of YouTube vloggers

The first hypothesis for this research was that the Parasocial Interaction between the YouTube vloggers and their audience influences the credibility of the vloggers, in the eyes of their audience. From the interview, nine out of the ten respondents admitted that they had felt related to the vloggers they watched on YouTube. They related to these vloggers on the basis of similarity in their character, experience, problems, personality, ethnical background, language, believes. These reasons are what translated into a feeling of relatedness that created the Parasocial relationship between the audience and the vloggers. From the results of the interviews, all the ten respondents felt that due to this relatedness between them and the vloggers they watched, they viewed the vloggers as more credible. They responded that that feeling of relatedness made the vloggers more trustworthy, hence their credibility. Therefore, the first hypothesis (**H_1**) of this research which states that PSI influences the credibility of YouTube vloggers was supported.

6.2.2 Credibility of vlogger leads to acceptance of referrals

The respondents of the interview were asked what would make them follow (accept) a referral link. Among the ten respondents, six had followed referral links before. Most of the respondents that had followed the links gave their reasons for following them as, they wanting more information about what the vlogger had said, the products they had shown and also because they had seen the products in several other vlogs. From the question that was asked about who the audience felt were credible, some of the things they used to judge who a credible vlogger is, were the results of the vlogger. All the other reasons were things (number of likes, subscriptions, views, vlogger characteristics) they checked before they watched the vlogs or while watching the vlog. If those things were not present, they felt the vlogger was not credible and they did not pay attention to the vlog. This means that they would not watch the vlog at all, or would not watch it to the end. Some of the interviewers said they believed the vloggers would only give a referral if they (vloggers) knew it would be of benefit to the audience. The reason the

audience watched the vlogger and decided to follow the referrals was because they trusted the vlogger. Therefore, the second hypothesis (**H_2**) for this research was supported. And the second research question **(RQ2)** was answered. The credibility of the YouTube vlogger affects the acceptance of referrals.

6.2.3 Credibility of YouTube vlogger leads to trust in vlogger activities

The third hypothesis (**H_3**) for this research was "credibility of YouTube vlogger leads to trust in vlogger activities". From the interview, the respondents gave reasons that made them see a vlogger as credible or not credible. As it was explained in the previous section, the reasons the audience gave that made them see vloggers as credible were divided into three. There were reasons before watching the vlog, while watching the vlog and after watching the vlog. There were credibility factors they checked before watching the vlogs. Those factors had to be there before the audience will watch the vlog. While watching the vlog, there were other credibility factors that the audience looked out for, that will keep them watching the vlog, even to the end. When those factors were not present, then the audience did not watch the vlog till the end. The respondents also said they had to see the end results of the vlogger or the results they get from applying what the vlogger said, before accepting them as credible. This means that there was some form of perceived credibility before watching the vlog and while watching the vlog that made the audience want to watch the vlog till the end. After the vlog had ended, the results the vlogger achieved, also made the audience accept the vloggers as credible. This means the before, during and after factors, that the audience used to judge the credibility of the vlogger affected their trust in those vlogger activities either before, during or after watching the vlog. With this, the third hypothesis was supported. The third research question (**RQ3**) has also been answered. The credibility of vlogger affects the audience' trust in the vlogger's activities.

6.2.4 Acceptance of referrals lead to purchase intention

The fourth hypothesis (**H_4)** for this research was "acceptance of referral leads to purchase intention. The interviewees were asked if they had followed or accepted referral links before. Six out of the ten respondents said they had followed referral links. Among those six that accepted the referral, some had intended to make a purchase.

Others did not intend to make a purchase but were just trying to satisfy their curiosity by following the referral link. With this, the fourth hypothesis is supported but not entirely. This means that acceptance of referrals does not always lead to purchase intention but sometimes, it does.

6.2.5 Trust in vlogger activities influences purchase intention

The last hypothesis for this research, **H_5**, was "trust in vlogger activities influences purchase intentions. From the research, the audience were asked why they would purchase a product they saw in a vlog. Their answers were if the vlogger sounded convincing, if the vlogger looked credible, the results of the product on the vlogger, reviews under the vlog post among others. Out of the ten respondents, nine of them had purchase products they saw in a beauty vlog. This means that those factors that the audience demanded before they made were available, before they made the purchase. Even though some of them still looked for more information from other sources before making the purchase, the intention to purchase was planted by the beauty vloggers. With this results, the fifth hypothesis for this research is therefore supported.

6.3 General Discussion

This section also discusses the research findings and through the discussion, the research questions are answered.

Credibility of a person according Gupta et al. (2012), makes them worth trusting and believable. It also makes a person's message acceptable to the message's recipient (Rahmi et al., 2017). The interviewees were asked for the factors they considered to label a beauty vlogger as credible or not credible. The first factor that the respondents used as their basis were the results of the vlogger. If the vlogger did a tutorial or used a product on themselves or someone featuring in the vlog, the end results determined their credibility, in the eyes of the audience. In addition to that, the audience expect that when a vlogger gives a recommendation or tutorial in a vlog and they apply it, it should give the same or similar results as the vlogger had.

The second factor for judging credibility of the vlogger was the number of subscriptions, number of likes, number of views and the comments under the vlog post. When the number of subscribers are high and the vlog has a high number of views, it makes it look

credible. When there are comments under the vlog, it makes the vlog look real and credible.

The third factor is the recommendations from people the audience know. The respondents explained that if a vlogger is recommended by someone they know, then the vlogger is credible. That means the vlogger had to be credible to have been recommended by someone.

Another factor was the products the vlogger used. If the vlogger used quality products, then they can be trusted. If the vlogger also uses products that are familiar to the audience, then they were considered to be credible. This can be explained by the assertion of Ananda et al. (2016) that there is an impact on the minds of people if they meet a product they have seen before. Another factor that affects the credibility of a vlogger is the expertise that the vlogger has. When vloggers show expertise in their videos and are confident in what they are saying, they tend to be labelled credible by the audience. The source credibility model defines credibility as the trustworthiness and expertness of an individual (Perloff, 2013). This explains why the respondents labelled expert vloggers as credible. The popularity of the vlogger in the beauty community was also a factor used by the respondents to locate a credible beauty vlogger. They explained that, if a vlogger had carved a name in the YouTube beauty community, then to them, the vlogger is credible. The characteristics of the vlogger also played a part in the credibility of the vlogger. If the vlogger had a great personality, a nice accent, has confidence and was beautiful, they were considered to be credible. The ethnical background of the vlogger also determined their credibility to some of the audience. This is because they intentionally looked for people who share the same ethnical background as they are. The parasocial relationship also tends to influence the audience' perception of a vlogger's credibility. During the interview, the audience answered that they have related to YouTube vloggers in a number of ways. They admitted that the relatedness they felt towards the vloggers, further increased the credibility of the vloggers in their eyes. With this findings and explanation, the first research question (**RQ1**) of what made vloggers credible in the eyes of their audience was answered.

When it comes to answering the research question four (**RQ4**), "How do referrals influence the purchase intentions of the audience?" it is explained as follows. The interviewees were the sample representation of the total population of the YouTube audience, for the purpose of this research. The interviewees were frequent users of the YouTube website and they frequently watched beauty vloggers on YouTube. They watched the vlogs because they wanted beauty information, to solve their beauty problems, for fun, learning, and also to know what is trending. These YouTubers have become a source of information (Lepistö et al., 2017), beauty advisors and teachers, as well as trendsetters in the beauty community (Nianiou, 2016). These audience sometimes watch beauty vloggers who have similar personalities, characteristics, physique, language, ethnical background and other attributes that made them feel related to these vloggers in some way. This feeling of relatedness becomes a point of connectedness between the audience and the vloggers. Coupled with the admiration and the audience trying to look or be like the vloggers, the parasocial relationship is formed. This supports the assertion of Wang (2015), that, women tend to create a parasocial relationship with vloggers they want to look like. The parasocial relationship that is formed gives the YouTube vloggers, some form of influence on the audience. Due to the PSI relationship, the audience tend to believe in the vloggers and what they say. The audience believed that the YouTube vloggers will not refer them to wrong places but to right places. Majority of the respondents to the interview had followed referrals before. However, they did not make any purchase. Some of them also intended to make a purchase but due to certain reasons, the purchase did not go through. The YouTube vloggers had an influence on the purchase intentions of the audience. So when it comes to the research question four, how referrals influence the purchase intentions of audience, this is how they are influenced.

The research question five (**RQ5**), was "How do vlogger activities influence the purchase intentions of their audience?" From the parasocial relationship that the audience form with the YouTubers, the YouTubers tend to have an influence on the audience. The audience then trust in the YouTube vlogger's activities. That is the recommendations, reviews, remarks, tutorials and the others. They then want to be like the beauty vlogger and look like the beauty vlogger so they try to follow the footsteps of

the vlogger by trying the tutorials and recommendations of the vloggers and also buying the products that the vloggers use. From the interviews, most of the respondents had purchased products that they had seen in vlogs. Others had also bought alternatives since they did not find the exact products they saw in the vlog. Some of the respondents had purchased the product right after watching the vlogs. Others also bought the products by coincidence because they recalled that they had seen the product in the vlog before. Yet still, others also look up for more information from other sources before buying. So sometimes, the purchase intentions of the audience are influenced immediately they watch the vlog and then they decide to buy right after watching the vlog. At other times, there is no intention to buy the product immediately after watching the vlog, but when the need for the product arises, there can be an influence on the purchase intentions of the consumer (audience), when they recall a product they have seen before in a vlog. This is because consumers will always like to base their purchase decisions on the suggestions of others in order to reduce the risk of purchase (Hsu et al., 2013). It can also be explained as the internal information that drives a consumer's purchase intention (Lepistö et al. 2017). Some of the respondents also sought for more information before the purchase. Some of them will consider the comments of other audience under the vlog post in order to inform their purchase decision. Some of them will also look for more information from other vloggers before making the purchase decision. Some of them will also ask their friends about it before making the purchase. In spite of all these aforementioned factors, their purchase intentions are still influenced by the vloggers. This is because the intention to purchase is what led them to find out more about the product and the intention to purchase was placed by the vlogger.

The research was therefore able to test the hypotheses that were formulated before the research began. All the research questions were also answered perfectly. Therefore, this study fulfilled the purpose for which it was initiated.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This is the final chapter of this research and it concludes on the findings of this research, the research's implications for YouTube beauty vloggers, audience and the managerial implications. The limitations of this research and the recommendations for future research is also included in this chapter

7.1 Final Summary of Results

The average lady between the ages of eighteen to thirty-four years finds their beauty information, solutions to their problems and new trends from YouTube beauty vloggers. YouTubers have become a source of information for most ladies and the results from the interview confirmed it. Most ladies seek product information, tutorials, Do-it-yourself (D.I. Ys), recommendations and reviews from beauty vloggers on YouTube. Most of them also watch beauty vloggers when they need a solution to a beauty problem they are facing. Beauty vloggers have also become trendsetters in the beauty community. The respondents to this research also stated that they watched vlogs because they did not want to miss new trends. So YouTubers are sources of information, problem solvers and trend setters in the beauty community.

The YouTube beauty vloggers have become mentors, teachers and influencers of young ladies within this age range (between the 18-34 years). Most of the ladies said they watched vlogs because they wanted to look like the beauty vloggers. Others thought the beauty vloggers knew things they did not know and as such they paid attention to these vloggers to stay informed. It was evident that these ladies admired the vloggers and

wanted to match up with the beauty vloggers. The beauty vloggers have now become mentors and teachers. This is because they mentor and teach these ladies, so that they can achieve the look they want. They have become influencers because they have a significant influence on the perceptions of their audience when it comes to product. Most of the respondents had taken a particular decision without even realizing that they had been influenced by these vloggers.

The parasocial relationship between YouTubers and their audience is built overtime. It however starts by the feeling of relatedness that is born through the similarity in personality, characteristics, experiences, problems, the natural aura around the vloggers and other factors. The relationship does not just happen. And the audience do not realize they are building this relationship with the vloggers. However, as they keep being exposed to the vloggers, they tend to get closer to the vloggers and then start paying more attention to them.

The parasocial interaction improves the credibility of the vlogger from the audience' angle. This parasocial relationship gives the vlogger some influence on the audience. All the respondents in the research believed that their feeling of relatedness to the vloggers made them to trust the vloggers more. Sometimes the audience are influenced indirectly by the parasocial interaction between the YouTuber and other audience. This happens when the YouTuber interacts with other audience and responds to the comments of those audience. At other times the positive comments of the other audience also influence how the other audience perceive the vloggers. Some of the respondents said a vlogger is more credible to them, if there are comments under their vlogs or they (vloggers) have responded to the comments of their audience.

The credibility of the vlogger influences the audience' acceptance of referrals and trust in the vlogger's activities. When the audience consider a vlogger credible, they will watch the vlog and they easily accept the message of the vlogger. Some of the respondents of the interview believed the vloggers would only refer them to places the vloggers thought was worth it. It was therefore not a problem following the referral links by those vloggers. The audience also trusted in the vlogger activities if they felt the vlogger was credible. Some of the audience looked out for credibility factors before

watching a vlog, while watching the vlog (vlogger activities) and after watching the vlog (results). The credibility of the vlogger determines their trust in the vlogger's activities.

The trust in vlogger activities influences the audience' purchase intentions on a very high note. The acceptance of referrals also influences purchase intentions but on a very low note. The audience took steps to put what they saw in vlogs into action if they felt the vlogger was credible. Almost all the respondents had made a purchase due to the influence of YouTube vloggers. Some made purchases without looking for more information from other sources. Others made purchases after searching for more information. Some also did not even decide to purchase but got to purchase the product after recalling they had seen them in the vlogs. Vloggers have a very significant influence on purchases. Some of the audience do not even realize how much of an influence the vloggers have on them. Another issue that came up is the influence that comes from multiple vloggers. Some of the purchase intentions had been influenced by not one vlogger, but multiple vloggers.

The audience prefer vlogger activities to referrals and the vlogger activities has more influence than referrals. Most of the audience do not pay attention to referrals. Vlogger activities influences purchase both consciously and unconsciously. Sometimes the influence towards the purchase does not come from just one vlogger but many vloggers. But referrals on the other hand did not have that much influence as compared to the vlogger activities.

7.2 Practical implications

The result of this research is very important to the YouTube beauty community, advertisers, and the audience and for the YouTube website. The details of the implications are below.

7.2.1 YouTube vloggers

YouTube vloggers have to be real as much as they can. This is what makes them more likeable than the traditional celebrities. The more natural they are; the more audience love them. This is because the audience are drawn to them based on their authenticity. They should try to be creative, as the interviewees suggested. They should not copy

other vloggers but rather they must be creative enough to make vlog posts that does not contain the same contents as others. When it comes to their appearance, vloggers should try to look presentable and confident since this makes them credible to the audience. YouTubers should strive hard to be credible in the eyes of the audience. This is the key to have influence on them. They should also know that the audience look up to them as a source of information and trendsetters. They should constantly improve themselves so as to keep their place in the YouTube beauty community. This is because there are new beauty vloggers constantly. One of the participants also desired to become a beauty vlogger on YouTube. If the vloggers do not improve themselves, they will soon be considered boring and they will lose their credibility. If YouTubers take their vlogging seriously, they would be able to make money on YouTube from advertisers, referrals and their vlog posts. They must at all cost avoid click baiting. They should not try to lure people to their vlogs by posting pictures that are unrelated to their vlogs. They tend to lose credibility if they do that. They should also emphasize the importance of their audience following referrals and be creative about how they post referral links so as to attract the attention of the audience. They should also keep their audience in suspense in order to let them follow the links. In summary, the vloggers should know that their credibility is influenced by the parasocial interaction they have with the vloggers. Once vloggers have the trust of their audience, they can influence their purchase intentions.

7.2.2 To the audience

The audience have to realize that their purchase intentions are influenced consciously and unconsciously by the vloggers. They therefore have to be critical and selective of the type of vlogger they follow. Aside that, there are vloggers who are uninformed. They should be careful in the selection of the person they want to get information from. Relating to a vlogger does not necessarily mean they are credible. They should take a lot into consideration before paying attention to a vlogger. They can watch different vloggers in order to make their final judgements.

7.2.3 Managerial implications

Advertisers, marketers and firms that intend to reach their target market on YouTube will need to make use of vloggers. This is because, from the research, vlogger activities

had more influence than referrals. It is therefore logical to make use of the vloggers. They have to collaborate with the vloggers and find ways to make the referral links catchier. This is because some of the respondents said they do not pay attention to these referral links. Hence, it had no influence on them. In selecting a YouTube vlogger for influencer marketing purposes, an organization needs to find a vlogger who is credible. The organizations can go through the findings of this research so as to know some of the factors that can be used to judge the credibility of the vlogger, from the viewpoint of the audience. This research also found out that some audience' purchase intention is not influenced by just one beauty vlogger but by different vlogs. They should therefore not concentrate on one vlogger, but find different vloggers so that the product will be further validated by the audience. Because the more reviews a product gets, from different vloggers, the more the chances of its purchase.

7.3.4 Implications for YouTube as a website

The number of vloggers keep increasing and the number of viewers (audience) also keeps increasing. More organizations are turning to YouTube now for advertising. However, from previous research, Company owned channels do not get the needed job done. From this research too, the referral links seem not to get the job done. YouTube as a website should find creative ways to make referrals look catchier. They can collaborate with the vloggers and companies to create a more effective referral system. These referrals do generate a lot of money and they will be profitable to the YouTube website, vloggers and the organizations involved.

7.3.5 General implications

From the research, it also emerged that most of the respondents preferred natural products as compared to the processed ones. There seemed to be an interest in natural remedies and solutions to problems. This is a trend that needs to be researched since it may lead to a decline in the purchase of processed products in the near future if it becomes a norm among young ladies. This is because YouTubers are seen as trendsetters. Therefore, if they become more health and nature conscious, then their audience will be influenced in the same way.

7.3 Limitations of the study

The first limitation to this study is the sample size. The number of respondents to the interview was ten people. Even though the researcher took steps to get a wide range of people from different nationalities, the sample size is still not enough to generalize for the whole audience population. Therefore, this research cannot be generalized to the whole population.

The second limitation to this study is the method of research which is qualitative. The qualitative method of research is mostly biased to the researcher because the researcher plays the role of the research tool, data analyst and other functions that a quantitative method uses software and standardized systems to analyse. This reduces the reliability of the research.

The third limitation is that even though the interview process was thorough, some of the answers were not broad enough. The researcher tried to get as much information from the interviewees as possible. However, some information was still not broad enough.

The fourth limitation is that, due to the fact that this topic is an uprising one and not much research has been conducted in this field, a reasonable amount of the research literatures that were used for the reviews were not academic ones.

The fifth limitation has to do with the gender of the sample population. The sample size took into consideration only females. The sample did not factor in men and the other sex. This was therefore another limitation of this study.

7.4 Recommendations for future researchers

This research recommends that future researchers use the same topic for this research but with a larger and more diverse sample. The researcher can take the qualitative method with a larger sample size, or a quantitative method entirely.

Future researchers can also examine “how multiple vloggers influence the purchase intention of audience”. Instead of examining the influence of a single vlogger on an individual, the collective influence of vloggers should be measured.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Opening Question

1. How often do you watch beauty vloggers on YouTube?
2. Who would you consider a credible beauty vlogger?

On Parasocial Interaction

3. Have you watched any beauty vlogger that you felt you could relate to (Example, based on similarity, experience and others)?

Follow up question

3a. In what ways do you think it adds to their credibility?

On purchase

4. What would make you buy a product you saw in a YouTube beauty Vlog?

Follow up question

4a. Have you ever bought a product you saw in a YouTube beauty Vlog?

4b. Did you buy the product straight away or after looking up more information from other sources?

On referrals

5. What would make you follow a referral from a YouTube beauty vlogger?

Follow up question

5a. Have you ever followed a referral from a vlogger such as look up more information about the product or visit an online beauty store?

5b. Has it ever led you to make a purchase?

Closing question

6. In General, between referrals and vlogger activities (recommendations, reviews, tutorials and other vlog activities that do not fall under these three), which one would you say influences your purchase intentions most and why?
7. Would you like to add any additional information that is related to this topic but was not covered in the interview?

APPENDIX II

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES -MARKETING DEPARTMENT MASTER'S PROGRAMME, NOVEMBER 2017

Interview Consent Form

Dear participant, this form is being given to you, to seek your approval as a participant for this research. Kindly go through it before confirming your acceptance to partake in this research.

The purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is to find out how YouTube vloggers and referrals influence their audience's purchase intention of fashion/beauty products. For this purpose, the researcher seeks to gather data from the audience of YouTube vloggers, how they have been influenced by YouTube vlogger activities and vlogger referrals in their purchase intentions.

What is requested in this research

With your permission, you will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview consists of a series of questions pertaining to the purpose of this research. You are required to share your opinions on the topic. There are no right or wrong answers, as this is a research to gather your opinion as an audience of YouTube vloggers. Your earnest response to the interview questions would be of great importance to this research. If you find it acceptable, the interviewer would like to take notes in the course of the interview.

Duration and anticipated risks

The duration of this interview is between 25-40 minutes and there are no anticipated risks associated with the interview.

Benefits of this research to the participant

This interview gives the participant the opportunity to be heard. It feels good to know that your opinions are being heard by other people and would help in solving questions that relate to you and the vloggers you watch.

Confidentiality of your response

Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the course of this interview. Any response you decide to be kept confidential will be kept confidential. You can decide to refuse responding to any question that you feel is inappropriate.

The response you permit to be used will be put together and used for my final year thesis in Marketing Management at the Near East University. This may be used in the future for referencing, however, your confidentiality will be respected and only the responses that are available in my final report would be made available.

Participation and Withdrawal

With this elaboration, you can confirm your approval in this research. You may also choose to refuse participation in this study.

If after the interview has taken place, you decide to decline participation, you may withdraw from it before the research is finalized.

Agreement: I have read through the consent form and I understand the purpose of this research. I understand that I would not be held to any penalty if I withdraw at any time before the research is finalized. I hereby agree to participate in this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (print): _____

APPENDIX III

SAMPLES OF INTERVIEW REPORT

Interview 2

Name: Participant B **Gender**: F **Country**: Nigeria **Age**: 28

Interviewer: How often do you watch beauty vloggers on YouTube?

Interviewee: *I watch vlogs frequently because I am transitioning my hair and I need more information. I sometimes watch vlogs to check their makeup, eyebrows and their pencils*

Interviewer: Who would you consider a credible beauty vlogger?

Interviewee*: DIYdose. I like her because she uses regular products that I know, unlike other. Also, she does not overdo things. She does not also confuse me like the others do*.

Interviewer: Have you watched any beauty vlogger that you felt you could relate to (Example, based on similarity, experience and others)?

Interviewee: *Yes, I have. There are vloggers I follow because they use regular products that I know. For example, the normal styling gels, the normal shampoos, the bobby pins.*

Interviewer: In what ways do you think this adds to their credibility?

Interviewee*: If I try what the vlogger says and it works for me, then I consider the vlogger credible*.

Interviewer: What would make you buy a product you saw in a YouTube beauty Vlog?

Interviewee: *If I really need the product and the beauty vlogger looks credible, I would buy it.*

Interviewer: Have you ever bought a product you saw in a beauty vlog?

Interviewee: *Yes, I have. I bought mascara and Pencil*

Interviewer: Did you buy the product straight away or after looking up more information from other sources?

Interviewee: *It was coincidental that I bought it. I did not intend to buy it but I had gone to a shop to buy mascara and pencil. So when I saw that brand, I remembered I had seen it in the vlog, so I decided to buy that one*.

Interviewer: What would make you follow a referral from a YouTube beauty vlogger?

Interviewee: *If I do not know the product I will follow the referral to know more about it. If I want to follow the tutorials that was shown in the vlog I will follow the referral. But if I already know the product, there is no need to follow the referral*

Interviewer: Have you ever followed a referral from a vlogger such as look up more information about the product or visit an online beauty store?

Interviewee: *Not really*

Interviewer: In General, between referrals and vlogger activities (recommendations, reviews, tutorials and other vlog activities that do not fall under these three), which one would you say influences your purchase intentions most and why?

Interviewee*: I believe vlogger activities. This is because the reason for searching for the video was to answer a question. Referrals are like extra information but not the main reason for visiting the vlog. I sometimes search in vlogs for products like detanglers, lipstick and others but I would not use an online shop because I prefer a traditional store.*

Interviewer: Would you like to add any additional information that is related to this topic but was not covered in the interview?

Interviewee: *Yes. Vlogging is effective but everyone is vlogging now. Sometimes vlogs are very boring. Vloggers should be creative and they should brand themselves. They should not do things everyone does. They should make vlogs that will not be just for finding information but for entertainment too.*

Interviewer: Thank you for giving me your time

Interview 4

Name: Participant D **Gender**: F **Country**: Ghana **Age**: 25

Interviewer: How often do you watch beauty vloggers on YouTube?

Interviewee: *Very often. Around four (4) times a week. I want to know how to style my natural hair. And also when I have braids, I check to know how to style them.*

Interviewer: Who would you consider a credible beauty vlogger?

Interviewee*: Someone who has video quality. I also check the products the vlogger uses. I check the number of viewers the vlogger has. The vlogger's accent too. And if the vlogger is beautiful and presentable.*

Interviewer: Have you watched any beauty vlogger that you felt you could relate to (Example, based on similarity, experience and others)?

Interviewee: *Yes. If we are using the same product. For example, I bought a product and I did not know how to use it so it's like we all had the same product.*

Interviewer: In what ways do you think this adds to their credibility?

Interviewee: *Because I buy good things, if a vlogger uses the same thing, then it means she is credible. And sometimes vloggers give the viewers giveaway codes to stores that are having promotions. It makes the vlogger credible to me.*

Interviewer: What would make you buy a product you saw in a YouTube beauty Vlog?

***Interviewee*:** *I check how well it suits the vlogger. Example if the vlogger has the same shade or skin tone as mine and the product suits the person. I also check the number of comments on the product under the vlog*

Interviewer: Have you ever bought a product you saw in a beauty vlog?

Interviewee: *Yes. I bought ecostyler gel, flaxseed, flexi rods and some other things.*

Interviewer: Did you buy the product straight away or after looking up more information from other sources?

Interviewee: *I bought them straight away because the outcome of the vlogger using it was great.*

Interviewer: What would make you follow a referral from a YouTube beauty vlogger?

Interviewee: *If I have enough time. If the product is something I have been looking for. And if they are having sales.*

Interviewer: Have you ever followed a referral from a vlogger such as look up more information about the product or visit an online beauty store?

Interviewee: *No I have never followed a referral because I was not interested.*

Interviewer: In General, between referrals and vlogger activities (recommendations, reviews, tutorials and other vlog activities that do not fall under these three), which one would you say influences your purchase intentions most and why?

Interviewee: *Vlogger activities influences most. Because I wanted to buy a product from Aliexpress online. The review helped me to know what I was buying based on the review. I bought perm rods and did not know how to use it so I looked on YouTube for information on how to use it.*

Interviewer: Would you like to add any additional information that is related to this topic but was not covered in the interview?

Interviewee: *The vloggers should talk less and go straight to the point. They should improve their video quality as well. And to improve referrals, they should take a screenshot of the link page and attach it to the link. It would attract more people to watch it, rather than the link alone.*

Interviewer: Thank you for giving me your time

Interview 7

Name: Participant G **Gender**: F **Country**: Zimbabwe **Age**: 26

Interviewer: How often do you watch beauty vloggers on YouTube?

Interviewee: *At least three times a week. Sometimes it is more but mostly around three times in a week. I usually watch them, both for information and fun. I get to learn, get insights on certain things like how to know my natural hair type, what oils to use for that type of hair, what to do and what not to do*

And also, when I have a problem with my oily face, I get the information I need from beauty vloggers. It's also for fun, when I get to see what is trending and its fun trying it out with my friends.

Interviewer: Who would you consider a credible beauty vlogger?

Interviewee*: Breanna Butter and Khichi beauty. If a vlogger is expert in what they do. If they tell me something and it works, then to me, they are credible. Their appearance also matters. I also look at the number of subscriptions and comments.*

Interviewer: Have you watched any beauty vlogger that you felt you could relate to (Example, based on similarity, experience and others)?

Interviewee: *Yes. One beauty vlogger had a problem with a nose piercing which I encountered. Then I also found a couple with the same personality as me.*

Interviewer: In what ways do you think this adds to their credibility?

Interviewee: *It makes them more credible to me and I want to follow them all the more.*

Interviewer: What would make you buy a product you saw in a YouTube beauty Vlog?

Interviewee**:** *The testimonials from those who have used the products before. What they say after they have used the products, whether it was good or not, how they enhanced it or improved the product.*

Interviewer: Have you ever bought a product you saw in a beauty vlog?

Interviewee: *Yes. I bought hair oils*.

Interviewer: Did you buy the product straight away or after looking up more information from other sources?

Interviewee*: I looked up for more information everywhere mostly on YouTube. If it was the first vlog I have seen the products in, I go in search for more information. But if I*

have seen it before and just had my doubts about the product, the reviews on the vlog may seal the deal for me.

Interviewer: What would make you follow a referral from a YouTube beauty vlogger?

Interviewee*: I follow them if they missed some things in the video. Example, the list of all the names of products and where to get them, etc. I may also follow them if I want to share the information to others. A written down information is easier and cheaper to share than a video.*

Interviewer: Have you ever followed a referral from a vlogger such as look up more information about the product or visit an online beauty store?

Interviewee: *Yes I have visited websites of businesses and online beauty stores. But I did not buy anything because most of the things online are expensive.*

Interviewer: In General, between referrals and vlogger activities (recommendations, reviews, tutorials and other vlog activities that do not fall under these three), which one would you say influences your purchase intentions most and why?

Interviewee: *I would say the vlogger activities because some vlogs do not have any links but provide sufficient information on their own. So if the vlog communicates effectively, then it's sufficient on its own.*

Interviewer: Would you like to add any additional information that is related to this topic but was not covered in the interview?

Interviewee: *Vloggers should get straight to the point. It's boring to spend five minutes saying "unrelated things". It makes us skip the information and they lose subscriptions. In addition, they should avoid click baiting. The moment they do that; their vlog loses credibility. Say, the vlog says how to get rid of acne and there will be a preview of this person with very bad acne. You click and view the vlog, only to find that the vlogger has just 5 small pimples.*

Interview 8

Name: Participant H **Gender**: F **Country**: Ghana/USA

Age: 27

Interviewer: How often do you watch beauty vloggers on YouTube?

Interviewee: *About twice a week. To catch up on trending things*.

Interviewer: Who would you consider a credible beauty vlogger?

Interviewee*: Someone who can show results for his/her post. Someone who is popular in the beauty community. Vloggers recommended by my friends and the number of likes on the vlog.*

Interviewer: Have you watched any beauty vlogger that you felt you could relate to (Example, based on similarity, experience and others)?

Interviewee: *Yes, I have*

Interviewer: In what ways do you think this adds to their credibility?

Interviewee: *Because the vlogger had experienced a similar problem as me and was able to solve it, I felt they were credible*.

Interviewer: What would make you buy a product you saw in a YouTube beauty Vlog?

***Interviewee*:** *Reviews about the product from those who have used it before in the comment section.*

Interviewer: Have you ever bought a product you saw in a beauty vlog?

Interviewee: *No. I have not*

Interviewer: What would make you follow a referral from a YouTube beauty vlogger?

Interviewee: *If I want to see more about the video and get more information*.

Interviewer: Have you ever followed a referral from a vlogger such as look up more information about the product or visit an online beauty store?

Interviewee: *Yes I have followed links before. But I did not make a purchase*

Interviewer: In General, between referrals and vlogger activities (recommendations, reviews, tutorials and other vlog activities that do not fall under these three), which one would you say influences your purchase intentions most and why?

Interviewee*: I believe vlogger activities. This is because you get to experience the end results of the product. That is, you see how the product works on a real person.*

Interviewer: Would you like to add any additional information that is related to this topic but was not covered in the interview?

Interviewee*: None for now*.

Interviewer: Thank you for giving me your time