The Influence of Youtube Beauty Vloggers' Drama on The Profit of Cosmetics Brand

Xuyi Xiong *

Department of Land Resource Management, South China Agricultural University, Guangzhou, China

* Corresponding Author Email: xxysierra@stu.scau.edu.cn

Abstract. In the world of YouTube, a place where fame is cherished, stirring up some disputes or conflicts may be one of the best ways for YouTube beauty vloggers to earn publicity. Disputes and conflicts are commonly generated out of individual distinction, benefits, and other reasons. The disputes and conflicts are widely recognized as drama on YouTube. Famous YouTube beauty vloggers are usually caught in dramas. The dramas trigger discussions across the entire network, spread across multiple platforms, and some vloggers even produce long videos to scrutinize the events. Discussions are not limited to the protagonists, recommended cosmetics products and brands are also a part of the discussion. The discussion brings about more exposure to both YouTube beauty vloggers and mentioned cosmetics products. Characters involved in dramas mostly have signed promotion contracts with great cosmetics companies or have established their own cosmetics brand. The study is aimed to discuss the relationship between drama and profits of cosmetics brands YouTube beauty vloggers collaborated with or endorsed their own cosmetics brands.

Keywords: YouTube Vloggers; Online Drama; Cosmetics; Profit.

1. Introduction

Social Networking Sites emerged in response to shifts in how people communicate. They enable individuals to connect with people who have similar interests, whether for socializing or romantic purposes [1]. Social media, a rapidly evolving form of communication, is built upon Web 2.0 technologies, making it accessible across various devices like phones, tablets, and computers. The advancement of digital audio and video technology has enabled more people to create and share short video clips via social platforms. Additionally, the widespread availability and development of Internet technologies have contributed to the proliferation of social networking sites and web-based audio/video platforms. This global phenomenon signifies that nearly everyone now has access to social media services.

Since the age of Web 2.0 has arrived, the information source has become a two-way communication rather than a single-way provision. The environment allows individuals and organizations to interact and transfer messages from one to another [2,3]. Freshly designed functions of social networking sites like commenting on a product through various forms, make it possible for users to share opinions and acquire aid from kindred spirits [4].

In contrast to conventional segmentation marketing which relies on general consumer attributes such as age, gender, and income, virtual consumption communities like subscribers of YouTube beauty vloggers enable targeted marketing efforts tailored to specific consumer interests. For instance, this could involve attaching a product purchasing link below the headline of a video of a YouTube beauty vlogger's eyeshadow palette unboxing video attracting a community of makeup addicts. Additionally, virtual communities are appealing due to their potential for many-to-many marketing interactions: enthusiasts and consumers congregating in these virtual spaces not only satisfy each other's loyalty and dedication but also play crucial roles as advocates, sharing information and experiences to inform and influence fellow consumers seeking guidance.

2. Drama

2.1. Disputes/Conflicts as Drama

Several scholars would describe conflicts or disputes on social networking sites as divergent views two or more groups have on goals and harm the interests of others to achieve their own [5]. Conflicts in Jehn's literature is associated with suffering negative emotions such as depression, wrath, fright, stress, and withdrawal, while conflicts on social networking sites could also be related to affirmative states [6]. However, conflicts and disputes have also been read as recreation in cyberspace. Positive emotions amid conflicts and disputes online can be understood through the lens of drama. The consumer drama theory describes drama as a narrative crafted by multiple individuals and one audience [7]. The value of the narrative hinges on its capacity to astonish the audience [8]. Conflicts and disputes are captivating when they constantly deny expectations and generate mystery. Conversely, when conflict merely confirms existing expectations, it becomes mundane. Discussions and video blogs on social networking sites are public and accessible to the entire community, making it dramatic.

On Social Networking Sites such as the video platform YouTube, conflicts between YouTube vloggers or disputes stirred by a YouTube vlogger are usually called drama, tea, or beef according to vloggers. Among these versions, the word drama is mostly seen in YouTube beauty vloggers' video blogs. A wealth of views, likes, comments, and shares on occasional conflicts or disputes between the YouTube beauty vloggers illustrates that they are practitioners of the theory. Characters involved in online conflicts or disputes endeavor to impact not only audiences but also their counterparts. Hence, the structure of the conflicts and disputes resembles drama more than conventional storytelling.

2.2. YouTube Drama and Marketing Strategy

With the rapid development of the Internet and the broad application of Information technology, human beings have stepped into the network economic age. Consumption of online markets has emerged as a significant social phenomenon, and increasing attention from acute companies has been attracted. Projections indicate that by 2010, approximately 60% of Fortune 1000 companies with a web presence will either be linked to or host an online community (Gartner, 2008) [9]. Among all social networking sites, YouTube as is considered a promising and user-friendly platform where everyone can be an information source. The latest report on the social media marketing industry interviewed over 2,100 marketers suggests though only 54% of surveyed marketers currently utilize YouTube, a noteworthy 59% intend to enhance their employment of YouTube videos, which represents the highest percentage among all platforms. Moreover, 68% express a desire to gain further insights into organic video marketing strategies on YouTube. 66% of interviewees plan on increasing their use of YouTube videos [10]. The data examines the value of YouTube marketing.

Companies approve YouTube marketing strategies. Various social networking sites are being used by 93% of marketers for promoting products, with 58% indicating plans to increase their investment in social media interactions over the coming year [11]. Global expenditure spent on social media marketing rose from $3.4 billion in 2010 to $5.4 billion in 2011, and projections suggest it will reach $10 billion by the end of 2013 [12]. Collaboration videos with YouTube beauty vloggers occupy a great proportion of marketing investments. Kevin James Bennett, an insider who has worked as a makeup artist and brand consultant in the industry with thirty years of experience, Bennett claimed that during a consultation with a brand, he discussed the possibility of collaborating with a well-known beauty influencer. According to him, the influencer's management team proposed charging $25,000 for a mention of the product within a review featuring multiple brands, $50,000 to $60,000 for a review exclusively focused on the product, and $75,000 to $85,000 for a dedicated negative review targeting a competitor's product [13]. The statement is further proved by Jeffree Star, a beauty vlogger with 15.8 million subscribers. Jeffree Star sent a tweet on Twitter (current name X) on December 18th in the year of 2018 that a cosmetic brand offered to pay him $165,000 for using a new

product in the YouTube video [14]. There has been more than one counterpart in the YouTube beauty industry. Beauty vlogger's powerful influence and great paybacks for marketing inputs drive companies' willingness to collaborate. It could be concluded that dramas or disputes raised by beauty vloggers may have a competent effect within the scope of their cogent publicity.

2.3. Specific Case

Conflict is an indispensable element of online cyber networking dynamics, ranging from contentious messages to status rivalries to baleful campaigns and even harassment assaults. A Pixability report launched in 2014 mentioned that YouTube makeup videos had generated 9.8 billion views [15]. It could be learned from an article that brands are willing to pay famous YouTube vloggers upwards of six figures to produce and post videos to their channels [16]. The brands were not the only ones who detected the huge profit and the great potential of YouTube marketing, everyone wants to join in the business and take advantage of a part of it. Huge celebrities in the industry, such as Jeffree Star (15.8 million subscribers) have established their brand Jeffree Star Cosmetics, Michelle Phan (8.65 million subscribers) EM COSMETICS, Tati (8.22 million subscribers) has established Halo Beauty producing vitamins, etc. Other party of YouTube cosmetics celebrities choose to collaborate with famous companies, James Charles (23.9 million subscribers) launched an eye shadow palette collaborated with Morphe, NikkieTutorials(14.5 million subscribers) co-launched The Power of Makeup collection with Too Faced Cosmetics, Jaclyn Hill(5.52 million subscribers) launched 2 eye shadow palettes with Morphe, etc. In addition to their talents and strong personalities, YouTube cosmetics vloggers accumulate clouts by dramas. On April 3rd, 2019, Jeffree Star posted a video complaining that the Magic Star concealer line of Jeffree Star Cosmetics which is worth 2.5 million dollars was stolen and leaked. The FBI and local police were involved in the investigation according to Jeffree Star [17]. However, a YouTuber D'angelo Wallace suspected the whole story was fabricated since there were no records in the database of LAPD or FBI and the person who was deemed to be arrested claimed that he/she bought concealer from others [18]. No matter how, thousands of review videos on the Magic Star proved the drama nurtured his identity and made the brand more popular. Yet, the impact of such conflict on the social cohesion of these communities remains ambiguous.

3. Parasocial Interaction

3.1. Process Parasocial Interaction Works on YouTube Beauty Vloggers

Parasocial interaction, a term coined in 1956 by Horton and Wohl, refers to a kind of psychological connection derived between audiences and mass media. On the YouTube platform, the top YouTube vloggers aim at cosmetics such as James Charles with more than 23.9 million subscribers, Jeffree Star with more than 15.8 million subscribers, NikkieTutorials with more than 14.5 million subscribers, and other top celebrities in the industry have collaborated with major cosmetic corporations like Too Faced, Tarte, Sephora or have launched their brands. Understandably, the channels owned by these beauty vloggers have rapidly evolved into a distinctive platform for gaining publicity, however, the impact that top beauty influencers can wield on consumers' intentions to purchase is cherished more. The YouTube vloggers share opinions on products, as time progresses, audiences forge deep emotional connections akin to those found in real-life social interactions, especially when they are privy to personal details about celebrities, amplifying the intensity of these relationships. For YouTube cosmetics vloggers, consumers can witness various products being used by a familiar figure, essentially a virtual friend. This friend, often a YouTube celebrity, holds the potential to be seen as trustworthy and credible. Consumers typically rely on the volume of opinions or recommendations from others to assess purchases, aiming to minimize risks and uncertainties associated with buying [19]. Consequently, when a product is widely endorsed by other consumers, it instills a sense of security and confidence in potential buyers, increasing their likelihood of making a purchase.

3.2. Previous Research

Leslie Rasmussen from Xavier University carried out empirical research to examine relationship construction based on parasocial interaction and the effect of YouTube beauty vloggers in 2018. Three questions were proposed in the research. The first research question to test was the occurrence of parasocial interaction between viewers and YouTube beauty vloggers. The second research question to testify was the credibility of YouTube beauty vloggers according to viewers and the influence of YouTube beauty vlogger's popularity level. The third research question to testify was the viewer's purchase impulse on a product recommended by a YouTube beauty vlogger. Rasmussen conducted a between-subjects 3x3 experiment on 270 participants aged from 18 to 27 which represented the target demographic as popular YouTube beauty vloggers are no more than thirty years old and whose viewers are usually in an age group. 91.5% of participants were undergraduates. The research set two groups and a control group. The initial experimental group watched videos from vloggers of modest popularity, typically with subscriber counts ranging from 100,000 to 250,000. The subsequent experimental group viewed videos from immensely popular vloggers, often with subscriber counts of 2 million or more. The control group, on the other hand, watched a cartoon clip of comparable duration to the YouTube videos. Watching cartoon clips eliminates the possibility of parasocial interaction occurring. However, it's worth mentioning that none of the participants reported feeling familiar with the character in the clip. To ensure that participants had not previously watched videos from any of the YouTube beauty vloggers included in the study, they were presented with a random list of twenty vlogger names before beginning the experiment. Participants were then asked whether they had previously watched videos from or were familiar with any of the vloggers. If participants indicated any familiarity, the page would thank them for their time but were unable to proceed with the experiment.

Chi-square analysis answered the first question and demonstrated a noteworthy relationship established between YouTube beauty vloggers and the consciousness of knowing the vlogger. Similarly, a significant correlation was observed between YouTube beauty vlogger popularity and the perception of the vlogger as a friend to the viewer. Furthermore, it showed a significant relationship between vlogger popularity and satisfaction of the speaker's distinctive traits.

Most participants from subsequent experimental groups perceived immensely popular vloggers as knowledgeable (92%, n=83). Likewise, a majority of participants (88%, n=80) in the group with modest popular vloggers identified the speaker as knowledgeable. An isolated sampling test indicated no significant difference between speaker popularity, whether modestly popular (M=1.9, SD=.78, N=90) or immensely popular (M=1.93, SD=.74, N=90) which answered the second question.

A notable contrast in purchase intent between viewers in the experimental groups featuring modest popular vloggers (M=2.8, SD=1.1, N=90) and those with immensely popular vloggers (M=2.4, SD=1.0, N=90); t (178) =1.9, p =.05 was shown. In the modest popular group, 53% (n=48) indicated they were inclined to purchase a product endorsed by the vlogger, whereas, in the highly popular treatment, 68% (n=62) expressed a likelihood to purchase a product endorsed by the speaker.

Findings suggest that there is evidence of relationship development among viewers who follow YouTube beauty vloggers. The majority of viewers perceived these celebrities as credible sources regardless of their extent of popularity, whereas a higher percentage of subjects (68%) indicated they were likely to order a product endorsed by immensely popular YouTube beauty vloggers. Nevertheless, a significant portion (53%) of subjects also expressed willingness to purchase a product endorsed by modest popular YouTube beauty vloggers, underscoring YouTube's effectiveness in fostering relationships and serving as a platform for public relations and marketing. It's worth noting that moderately popular YouTube celebrities also receive public relations packages from companies and engage in brand partnerships [20].

3.3. Correlation Between Parasocial Interaction and Drama

As an unforeseen, astonishing, and captivating recreation, drama naturally garners significant attention, arousing people's curiosity to delve into the origins and repercussions of these unexpected

events. In the process of exploration, viewers not only satisfy their curiosity but also boost the publicity and exposure of YouTube beauty vloggers. A great deal of clouts translates into higher commercial value for the YouTube beauty vloggers and raises the fame of the cosmetics products they endorsed in their videos. Simultaneously, viewers develop their perceptions and inclinations through the drama, forming a parasocial interaction with certain protagonists involved, fostering trust and a sense of friendship although it is virtual and one-sided. In the process of parasocial interaction, viewers have developed purchase intention for cosmetics products featured in vloggers' videos, with Rasmussen's research indicating viewers prefer products recommended by highly popular beauty vloggers. This cyclical process underscores how drama fuels the establishment of parasocial interaction and drives product sales.

4. Conclusion

This article explores the correlation between dramas/disputes and improvement in sales revenue for cosmetics brands, further leading to enhanced profits. By delving into the nature of YouTube drama and analyzing how it influences viewers through parasocial interaction, it is posited that ongoing dramas among YouTube beauty bloggers can effectively promote the sales of cosmetics brands they collaborated with or their own cosmetics brands. In the present era dominated by online commerce, YouTube serves not only as a platform for creating and sharing videos but also as a crucial avenue for product marketing and public relations. Bloggers with varied popularity find certain groups of viewers and possess the ability to convert these viewers into virtual friends. During moments of drama, viewers inclined towards their favored vloggers, akin to supporting friends, are more likely to purchase cosmetics or brands they endorse as a practical form of backing. Simultaneously, the unexpected nature of YouTube drama as a recreation brings higher video views, shares, and discussions, consequently amplifying the publicity of involved vloggers. Based on the finding that people are more inclined to purchase products recommended by more well-known bloggers, it can be considered that YouTube beauty vloggers' dramas contribute positively to augmenting the profits of endorsed cosmetics companies or their cosmetic brands.

References

[1] McKenna K, Bargh J A. The internet and social life[J]. Annual Review of Psychology, 2004, 55(1): 573-590.

[2] Henderson A, Bowley R. Authentic dialogue? The role of “friendship” in a social media recruitment campaign[J]. Journal of Communication Management, 2010, 14(3): 237-257.

[3] Mangold W G, Faulds D J. social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix[J]. Business horizons, 2009, 52(4): 357-365.

[4] Liang T P, Ho Y T, Li Y W, et al. What drives social commerce: The role of social support and relationship quality[J]. International journal of electronic commerce, 2011, 16(2): 69-90.

[5] De Valck K. The war of the eTribes: Online conflicts and communal consumption[J]. Consumer tribes, 2007, 260: 274.

[6] Schwob A. Une approche structurationniste de l’activité de consommation ordinaire: les expériences et la construction du soi des consommateurs dans les forums de discussion en ligne[D]. Jouy-en Josas, HEC, 2011.

[7] Giesler M. Conflict and compromise: drama in marketplace evolution[J]. Journal of Consumer Research, 2008, 34(6): 739-753.

[8] Baroni R. «La Tension narrative. Suspense, curiosité et surprise». Paris, Éditions du Seuil, coll.«Poétique», 2007, 442 p. ISBN 978-2-02-090677-7[J].

[9] Gartner. (2008). Gartner Says More Than 60 Percent of Fortune 1000 Companies With a Web Site Will Connect to or Host a Form of Online Community by 2010. Gartner Symposium. (accessed November 29, 2012), available at http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=770914

[10] Stelzner M. 2023 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INDUSTRY REPORT How Marketers Are Using Social Media to Grow Their Businesses [J]. https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/report2023/

[11] Shaffer J, Garnett M. Monetizing social media[J]. Printing Impressions, 2011, 54(1): 22.

[12] Rao L. Global ad revenues from social networks to reach $5.4 B in 2011; $10 B in 2013[J]. Tech Crunch, 2011.

[13] Luong A. All that glitters is gold: the regulation of hidden advertisements and undisclosed sponsorships in the world of beauty social media influencers[J]. Wm. & Mary Bus. L. Rev., 2019, 11: 565.

[14] Jeffree Star https://x.com/JeffreeStar/status/1074744090107928576?s=20

[15] Pixability. Major Study Identifies Substantial Beauty Industry Disparities on YouTube. https://www.pixability.com/recent-press-releases/study-beauty-industry-youtube-2014/

[16] Walker, R. (2012, July 1). On YouTube, amateur is the new pro. The New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/magazine/on-youtube-amateur-is-the-new-pro.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[17] Jeffree Star, My Concealer Line Was Stolen & Leaked ($2.5 Million of Makeup Hijacked) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ssp_0j4pr6w&t=45s.

[18] YouTube Reuploaded. (2021, April 10) Jeffree Star faked everything about... well, everything. (Dangelowallace REUPLOADED) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6hUFQifdPA&t=1458s

[19] Hsu M H, Chuang L W, Hsu C S. Understanding online shopping intention: the roles of four types of trust and their antecedents[J]. Internet research, 2014, 24(3): 332-352.

[20] Rasmussen L. Parasocial interaction in the digital age: An examination of relationship building and the effectiveness of YouTube celebrities[J]. The Journal of social media in society, 2018, 7(1): 280-294.