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Uses and Gratifications of Watching YouTube Beauty Vlogs

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School of Communication

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Uses and Gratifications of Watching YouTube Beauty Vlogs

by

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A thesis submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree in

Communication & Media Technologies

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Master of Science degree in Communication & Media Technologies

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Abstract

YouTube Beauty vlogs is a growing area on the YouTube platform. There are over one billion users who use this platform to watch videos about beauty products and tutorials, and they generate billions of views (YouTube, 2017). This quantitative study employs the uses and gratification theory to understand the needs of people who watch YouTube beauty vlogs on a regular basis and the gratifications they seek. A survey of 426 participants found that YouTube users seek for mostly entertainment and habit gratifications when they interact with the beauty vlogs. The audience's age was found to be a factor in gratifications sought. This was because younger people seemed to have more time to create the habit of watching YouTube beauty vlogs and being entertained by them.

Keywords: YouTube, Beauty, Vlogs, Uses, Gratifications.

Uses and Gratifications of YouTube Beauty Vlogs

YouTube is a popular media platform established in 2005, devoted to sharing user-generated video clips of all types. It has become one of the web's most-visited sites, with over one billion users, and each day these users watch billion hours of video, generating billions of views (YouTube, 2017). YouTube is "the world's most popular online video community allowing millions of people to discover, watch, and share originally created videos" (Jarboe, 2009, p. 1). As YouTube gets visits from people of all ages and from all parts of the world, different types of videos are available to fulfill the needs and gratifications sought by users. A YouTube vlog or a video blog is a type of video where you, basically, record your thoughts, opinions, or experiences, and publish it on the internet (Vlog, n. d.).

Beauty is not easy to define as it is subjective and it concerns matters of taste (Scruton, 2008), but many say, "we know it when we see it" (Brody, 2015, p. S17). Lately, it looks like most people, generally women, old or young, have a fascination with physical beauty and youth. Older people want to look younger and younger people want to fight aging at all cost before it even arrives. Some individuals have the blessing of retaining young-looking skin even with the passing of the years without much effort, while others have to use products and do procedures to help maintain or bring back some of the youthfulness to the skin (Brody, 2015). One thing beauty vloggers do is helping their audience to stay beautiful and youthful by trying out products themselves and recommending things that are aimed to make you look good. Because of the trust the followers have in the beauty vloggers, they do follow the vloggers' advice and a lot of times buy the product they recommend or do whatever they suggest.

Beauty Vlogging is an emerging area on the YouTube platform, considered as a form of media. Many people are creating this type of content to share their everyday lives and

experiences through vlogs. For example, Nicole Guerriero (2,902,645 subscribers, 634 videos),

Carly Bybel (6,165,715 subscribers, 513 videos), Zoella (12,090,636 subscribers, 368 videos),

and Yuya (23,138,744 subscribers, 587 videos) are just some of the successful beauty YouTube

vloggers (Social Blade, n. d.). These beauty vloggers' subscriber count shows that they have

content that satisfies their followers' needs and hence generate revenue. The topic I studied

needed further research to understand how people use the YouTube beauty vlogs and what

gratifications they seek from them.

There are so many types of YouTube videos that people can watch in order to satisfy

different needs. For example, to fulfill the need of surveillance, YouTube offers videos of

documentaries, news, Technology Entertainment and Design Talks, and so forth, which will

provide the knowledge people are looking for. On the other hand, people can watch YouTube

vlogs to fulfill the social engagement need, so they can feel a connection with the vlogger

recording the video, and they can even interact with other viewers in the comments section. With

vlogs, both creators and viewers want to make communication more natural, more effective, and

more engaging (Biel & Gatica-Perez, 2012, p. 41). The viewers like to engage with the vloggers

because they want a parasocial connection, even though it is totally a virtual experience. "The

richness of expression and the diverse content of vlogs, spanning issues from personal diaries to

commentaries on everyday life or world events, makes them appealing to a wide audience"

(Aran, Biel, & Gatica-Perez, 2013, p. 201).

According to uses and gratifications theory, people do choose their preferred media

platform, from among the existing ones, to fulfil a specific need (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch,

1973). Using the uses and gratifications framework, this study posits that viewers of beauty

YouTube vlogs are strategically subscribing to certain YouTube channels for specific uses and

gratifications. I conducted a survey to understand the needs of the viewers and the gratifications they seek. Some of the variables I evaluated are in what language they prefer to watch the vlogs, the duration they prefer per vlog, and around how many vlogs the person watches. This last variable is to help me determine if the users consume the content frequently or not.

Evolution of YouTube and Vlog History

YouTube was officially launched in 2005. Before that, people needed to have expertise in order to upload a video to the web. With YouTube, it became easy for people to share video content over the internet as the platform was so user-friendly (Mjos, 2012). In 2006, it was acquired by Google, where they started adding the advertising concept on YouTube videos (Burgess & Green, 2018). With advertisers paying money to play their ads on the YouTube videos, it became more important for content creators to project better quality images. For that reason, in 2008 YouTube started to allow 720p HD uploads (YouTube Goes HD, 2009), and in 2009 it supported 1080p uploads to keep up with technology (YouTube Adds 1080p HD, 2009).

A vlog is a blog in a video medium. Adam Kontras was known as the first person to create a vlog in January 2000, as he added a video of himself smuggling his cat into a hotel with a "No Pets" policy, to his actual blog post. After 2005, with the launch on YouTube and its user-friendly platform, more people are flipping their cameras to record themselves talking about a topic or their day and uploading it to the web (Maslanka, 2017). In 2007, Michelle Phan was known as the first person to do makeup tutorials for a living (Encinias, 2018). Later, other people joined the trend of beauty gurus and started to do beauty videos and beauty vlogs on YouTube.

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Theoretical Perspective

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The uses and gratifications theory explains how people use media to satisfy their specific needs and seek gratifications. This theory asks the question "what do people do with the media?"

instead of "what does the media do to people?" (Katz, 1959, p. 2). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) proposed that the uses and gratifications theory suggests that the users of media choose what platform they want to use, in order to fulfill their current need, and that they are active instead of passive when responding to the media content. In other words, media-based gratifications are influenced by individual needs.

The reasons why people choose to consume media are diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance (West & Turner, 2010, p. 396). For diversion, some individuals might use media to escape from reality and choose something different to focus on while using media. For personal relationships, some people use media to interact and connect with other people, developing their personal relationships with known or unknown people. For personal identity, some people consume media that will help them support their values and actions. For surveillance, some people use media to get different kinds of information, for example, news and weather, which helps them remain connected with the rest of the world. Later on, Rubin and Step (2000) examined the relationship between motivation, interpersonal attraction, and para social interaction on listening to public affairs talk radio, which can explain consumption of content from a specific creator. It is important to highlight that this study did find that people's attitudes can be influenced by an entertainer, which in the radio world would be the host, and in the YouTube world would be the creator/vlogger.

A habit is "a recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition" (Habit, n. d.). LaRose, Lin, and Eastin's (2003) study determined that the so-called symptoms of Internet addiction might be indicators of deficient self-regulation of Internet usage that contribute to habit formation. If there are no regulations or self-regulations on what

the human being consumes in terms of media, it becomes a habit, which can transform into an addiction.

Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) studied if there was a relationship between users' needs (entertainment and functional) with communication apprehension (social media and Snapchat). The results of the study showed that there was a relationship because there was a functional need for a person who has a high level of communication apprehension to use social media more than someone who has a low level of communication apprehension. Social media and the internet are an alternative forum to communicate, mainly for shy or reserved people.

Abraham Maslow proposed that the human needs are organized in a hierarchy. He stated that when a need was satisfied another one emerged, and so on (Maslow, 1943). Some of the needs Maslow pointed out are safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization, which are in ascending order on the hierarchy (Koltko, 2006). The theory describes human conduct from the perspective of basic needs for survival and evolution. These needs are organized according to their importance for subsistence and their influence to stimulate the person. Other researchers have studied the uses and gratifications theory based on the needs that Maslow established. For example, Lasswell (1948) determined three functions that the communication process performs in society: "(a) surveillance of the environment, disclosing threats and opportunities affecting the value position of the community; (b) correlation of the components of the society in making a response to the environment, and (c) transmission of the social inheritance" (p. 228). Lundberg and Hulten (1968) came up with a "uses and gratifications model" that has five elements: (1) the audience is conceived of as active, (2) in the mass communication process, much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member; (3) the media compete with other sources of need satisfaction, (4)

methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves; and (5) value judgements about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms. Because of the popularity the YouTube beauty vlogs have today, that phenomenon needs more research, especially about how people use these types of videos and the gratifications they get from them. Hence, the uses and gratification theory is an appropriate theoretical framework to contextualize this study.

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs apply for all men and woman. Even though I assumed that beauty vlogs are more geared towards women because of the results in my study, it is important to highlight that men do worry about their beauty as well and aging process, in order to remain appealing. For that matter, some of them do consume beauty vlogs as well. Gender does play a significant role in beauty because there are different concerns on which males and females focus more of their attention. For example, for facial details, men tend to "focus on three areas of the face – hairline, periocular area, and jawline" (Keaney, 2017, p. 91), which may not be the same concern for women.

Related Studies

Oliver and Bartsch (2010) did a study to "develop and validate measurements of audience response that represent not only enjoyment (e.g., fun, thrills) but also additional dimensions such as artistic appreciation, meaningfulness, and, ultimately, lasting impression" (p. 59). The results provided evidence that moving/thought-provoking experiences were related to appreciation rather than enjoyment, and fun was more related to enjoyment than appreciation. "Whereas the fun and suspense dimensions are covered by well-established gratification models such as mood management and sensation seeking" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, p. 76), the appreciation part needs

further research in order to take into consideration the emotion and cognition relationship in media use.

Choi and Behm-Morawitz (2017) examined how beauty vloggers can be a potential source of education for adolescent girls and young women and found that they "directly or indirectly teach viewers how to utilize different technologies" (p. 81). Silverblatt and Eliceiri (1997) define media literacy as "a critical-thinking skill that enables audiences to decipher the information that they receive through the channels of mass communications and empowers them to develop independent judgments about media content" (p. 48). Besides sharing beauty and fashion content, YouTube beauty vloggers tend to reveal the process of how they produce their videos, all the way from recording, to editing and uploading the content. The results of this study show that YouTube beauty vloggers are indeed educators for their followers. They are constantly "making an effort to increase their digital literacy skills" (Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017, p. 84), and they transmit that to their followers.

These vloggers also communicate deeper messages in their videos, as they encourage their viewers to love themselves, setting the example. "Consistent with uses and gratifications theory and how media users want to fulfill personal integrative needs, these beauty gurus incorporated self-confidence messages in their videos about loving oneself and embracing cultures" (Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017, p. 84). Some specific things these authors consider in their study is to examine "how do YouTube beauty gurus interact with viewers?" and "what messages are embedded in YouTube beauty gurus' videos?" (Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017, p. 82). They analyzed 102 videos in English language by YouTube beauty gurus, and some of the findings were that these gurus use several ways to engage with viewers such as linking to their websites or blogs and to other social media like Facebook (Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017).

Some of the messages present in these YouTuber's videos were about how to deal with personal conflicts, and also about education, for example learning about other cultures (Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017). These analyses mentioned above are relevant to my study because they help me better understand the relationship the viewers have with the YouTuber, and hence why they consume beauty vlogs.

The study by Dehghani, Niaki, Ramezani, and Sali (2016) identified some interesting motives for why people consume YouTube videos and create a specific purchasing behavior because of them. Some of their hypotheses were "Consumer has perceived informativeness through YouTube advertising, which is positively affecting advertising value" and "consumer has perceived irritation on YouTube advertising, which is negatively affecting advertising value" (Dehghani, Niaki, Ramezani, & Sali, 2016, p. 168). They had 378 students from the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy participate in a questionnaire; 55% were female and 45% male, and only a 83% usable response rate (Dehghani et al., 2016). They concluded that the factors of entertainment, informativeness, irritation, customization, brand awareness, and so forth presented on YouTube videos do play an important role in forming purchase intentions of consumers. This study evaluates how advertising entertainment can enhance consumers' hedonistic needs. The information provided to the viewers in the videos help them fulfill their concerns and reduce their anxiety, which can result in them making a purchasing decision about the product being advertised. The authors argue that, "there is an opportunity for researchers to better understand ad value's factors in the YouTube environment" (Dehghani et al., 2016, p. 171). Beauty vlogs have an important way of advertising because the vlogger merges the product advertising in an almost imperceptible way so the audience does not necessarily know directly that they are being advertised with some product.

Previous studies have explained that vlogs have been used for different things. For example, rural Brazilian communities used vlogs to inspire citizen journalists to construct successful telecommunication centers by themselves (Figueiredo, Prado, Camara, & Alburquerque, 2009). The deaf community uses vlogs as an alternative form of rich communication other than face-to-face. "Vlogging technology also seems to influence the development and use of techniques and styles that are not found or are used differently in face-to-face situations" (Hibbard & Fels, 2011, p. 66). We can refer to vlogs as a video where a person is speaking to invisible listeners, and that activity can help the speaker feel better (Matthews, 2007). It has been found that participants have more interest in watching user-generated video content, like the vlogs, as a way of learning and being aware, and conscious about health information (Molyneaux & O'Donnell, 2009). Using the results from the previously mentioned studies, this project explores how people interact with beauty vlogs and what gratifications they seek.

Research Questions

Uses and gratifications theory posits that the users of media choose what platform they want to use in order to fulfil their current need (Katz et al., 1973). Researchers have found that there are various factors influencing uses and gratifications people seek with different media content. Given these facts, the following questions guide the analysis of the uses and gratifications people seek by watching YouTube beauty vlogs:

RQ1: What type of gratifications are sought by people who watch beauty YouTube vlogs on a regular basis?

RQ2: What role does gender play in consumption of beauty YouTube vlogs?

RQ3: What role does language play in user needs/gratifications?

Methodology

In this study, I employed a survey methodology to answer the research questions. "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2014, p. 155). The survey methodology is appropriate for testing the uses and gratifications theory because it allows for collection of data about people's opinion on how they use media to attain their gratifications. Several demographic variables were evaluated, including age, gender, education, and occupation as "measurement is essentially the process of finding out whether people or media content have more or less of an attribute we are interested in" (Treadwell, 2017, p. 82). Participation was limited to users who are 18 years of age or older, and the gratifications were only measured for those who did watch vlogs.

To collect the data, I used the snowball sampling method, which "consists of identifying respondents who are then used to refer researchers on to other respondents" (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 1). For my study, the questionnaire was distributed online. It was also sent through email, and people were asked to share it with their network. I have a beauty YouTube channel myself, so the survey also was promoted there in a video, so my followers could fill the questionnaire and share it as well. Snowball sampling was a convenient method for data collection as it allowed the sample to be random and the questionnaire could reach out to a variety of demographics.

This study was approved by the Rochester Institute of Technology's Institute Review Board, and the questionnaire remained optional, consensual, and confidential. The sample consisted of 602 respondents to the online questionnaire, 114 of whom did not complete the survey and 62 participants who admitted they did not watch vlogs, leaving a total of 426

participants. I used the Likert Scale to test the gratifications, which is framed as a statement

instead of a question and each statement has its own scale. Likert Scale is measured using 5 to 7

points that go from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," where respondents need to check the

answer that best fits with their level of agreement with the statement (Treadwell, 2017, p. 90).

The questionnaire shared consisted of 12 questions followed by 19 Likert scale items.

Variables Definitions

For this research, four existing gratification scales were modified to fit the scope of the

current study. They are defined as follows:

Entertainment: Watching YouTube beauty vlogs to seek entertainment, fun, and

enjoyment (Whiting & Williams, 2013, p. 364).

Habit: Watching YouTube beauty vlogs to occupy time, because you are used to it, and

maybe have nothing better to do at the moment (Whiting & Williams, 2013, p. 364).

Escape: Watching YouTube beauty vlogs to escape from reality, feel out of the routine

and not worry about daily problems for a while (Blumler, 1979).

Communication: Watching YouTube beauty vlogs to create and preserve relationships.

YouTube beauty vlogs tend to invite you to interact with the vlogger and/or other viewers.

Data Analysis

After closing the survey on Qualtrics, I exported the results to an Excel spreadsheet

where I cleaned the data by deleting the entries that were incomplete. Then, I coded the data with

numbers, that way it could be entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. Once

I had an Excel spreadsheet with just the columns of numbers I had coded, I imported that to the

Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. There, I labeled the variables so when running

the tests, the software could let me know what each number meant.

Data analysis was conducted through factor analysis, scale reliability test, Chi-square test, and ANOVA test using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. A single variable representing each gratification was created by compiling and averaging the corresponding Likert scale items. These new gratification variables were tested for reliability using Cronchan's alpha (see Table A1).

I used factor analysis with Varimax rotation to identify the underlying gratifications. The Bartlett's test of sphericity test was used to check the null hypotheses that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. The rejection of the null hypotheses proves that variables are sufficiently correlated (Chetty & Datt, 2015). In this study, the null hypotheses with a significance value of 0.00 was rejected ($p < 0.05$), thus, the presented data was identified as appropriate for factor analysis. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin identified sampling adequacy with a KMO measurement of 0.946, above the recommended 0.5 value for satisfactory factor analysis to proceed.

A total of three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were obtained, and these factors explained 65.415% of the total variance. However, after analyzing the scree plot, factors 2-3 were determined unsuitable for this study and were eliminated. Factor 1 remained, which explained 49.265% of the total variance. The factor matrix loadings were then examined to determine the highest loading of each item. Factor loadings above 0.5 were considered significant for this study. Considering this, 9 of the 19 items with a factor loading value above 0.5 were used to construct the two factors for gratification (see Table A2).

Results

Of the 488 participants ($N = 488$), 96% identified as female and 4% male. The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-24 (62%), and 25-34 (31%), with the remaining being 35 years or older (7%). The education level varied primarily between those with high

school degrees with diploma or equivalent (27.5%), some college credit, with no degree (23.8%)

and bachelor's degree (21.1%). Respondents were either mostly students (43.9%), or employed

for wages (30.7%; see Table A3).

The most popular type of vlog watched by the participants of my survey are the beauty

and lifestyle vlogs (76.8%). This makes sense because most of the participants were recruited

through my beauty YouTube channel and the similar networks my followers shared the survey

with. According to my results, these people prefer to watch vlogs between 4 to 7 minutes long

(35.9%) and 8 to 11 minutes long (25.0%). Most participants prefer to watch between 4 to 10

vlogs per week (43.6%), while others prefer to watch less than 3 vlogs per week (26.4%).

To answer RQ1 which looks at what type of gratifications are sought by people who

watch beauty YouTube vlogs on a regular basis, the two factors, or gratifications for watching

YouTube beauty vlogs, obtained from the factor analysis were labeled as followed:

Factor 1 - Entertainment

Factor 2 – Habit

Entertainment – The five items on this factor deal with how people consume beauty vlogs

personally. Items include "I like watching beauty vlogs" and "I am more likely to watch a

Beauty Vlog when I am in a waiting situation."

Habit – The five items on this factor deal with people watching beauty vlogs because it is

something they are used to doing, or it is part of their routine. Items include "I watch beauty

vlogs because it's part of my routine" and "I watch beauty vlogs because I always see the ones of

a specific vlogger."

After running some Chi-square tests, the results demonstrated that there is no significant

relationship between:

- People's gender and the number of vlogs they watch per week ($p = 0.053$)

- Language people prefer to watch vlogs in and the number of vlogs they watch per week ($p = 0.069$)

- People's education level and the number of vlogs they watch per week ($p = 0.201$)

- People's age and their preferred duration of the vlogs ($p = 0.635$).

After running one way ANOVA tests, the results demonstrated that age was a significant factor in the entertainment gratifications achieved ($p = 0.000$). The Tukey test determined that the mean of people who reported to be between the ages of 18-24 years old was higher than the one for people between ages 25-34 years ($M = 2.633$) and higher than the one for people over 35 years old ($M = 4.988$).

Additionally, the ANOVA test showed that the education level was a significant factor in the habit gratifications achieved ($p = 0.014$). The Tukey test determined that the mean of people who reported to be high school graduates was higher than the one for people who reported to have a master's degree ($M = 5.828$), and the same happened for people who reported to have some college credit with no degree ($M = 5.735$). Age was also a significant factor in the habit gratifications achieved ($p = 0.003$). The Tukey test determined that people who reported to be 18-24 years old had a higher mean than the ones with 25-34 years old ($M = 1.700$) and 35 or older ($M = 2.864$).

For RQ2 that stated "what role does gender play in consumption of Beauty YouTube Vlogs?" I could not run tests to identify significant differences between people's gender and the Entertainment or Habit gratifications because my data was skewed towards the female population.

For RQ3, which stated "what role does language play in consumption of YouTube beauty vlogs?" the language people prefer to watch vlogs was not a significant factor in the entertainment gratifications achieved. Even though $p = 0.006$, the Tukey test determined that the significant difference reflected on the one-way ANOVA test was coming from the "Other language" category from the questionnaire that did not have enough answers to be taken into consideration ($M = -3.454$).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to evaluate why people watch YouTube beauty vlogs and the gratifications they seek from them. The results of the study support the uses and gratifications theory and show that people seek entertainment and habit gratifications when they watch these types of videos. The findings of my study determined that younger people, individuals between the ages of 18 to 25, are more likely to report both entertainment and habit gratifications than those who are 25 years old and older. This makes sense because usually the older a person gets the more likely they are to have other things to occupy their attention, reducing chances of high gratification from watching YouTube beauty vlogs. Also, as older people tend to have less time to sit down and watch these types of videos, they do it less frequently and enjoy it less than younger people. Dehghani et al. (2016) found in their study that one of the factors for why people watch YouTube Vlogs is entertainment. So, these younger people from my study, who seem to seek entertainment out of these types of videos and watch them for habit, are the ones that might be more influenced by the YouTubers they follow to make purchasing decisions, as mentioned by Dehghani et al. (2016).

People with a lower level of education, for example high school graduates, reported higher habit-based gratification for watching YouTube beauty vlogs than people with higher

education, for example people with a master's degree or even college credits. A similar explanation to the entertainment gratification is plausible. Younger people with a lower education level have less responsibilities, so they can spend more time watching YouTube beauty vlogs and they can do it more frequently and enjoy it the most. These findings go hand in hand with Choi and Behm-Morawitz's (2017) study, who found that YouTubers share lifestyle and technology knowledge with their viewers in their videos. The younger audience have more time to sit down to see, process, and understand the knowledge they get from the videos and put it into practice. Usually, younger people are more likely to devote this time compared to older people. Older people have more responsibilities and less time to devote to watching YouTube beauty videos.

The contributions of my study to both the uses and gratifications theory and the YouTube vloggers is the relationship between them. The results of my study determined that age is an important factor on who engages with the content shared and what kind of gratifications they seek, in this case entertainment and habit gratifications. With this information, vloggers can modify or add some details in their vlogs so they can fulfil more gratifications of the people who watch them, which can increase the engagement from their subscribers. Something interesting to note is that the escape and communication gratifications did not appear to be significant. People watch YouTube beauty vlogs to receive specific information and maybe make some decisions with the acquired knowledge. This could explain why people do not get communication gratifications from watching these videos, as they do not intend to communicate back and forth with the vloggers or the community. The same thing happens with the escape gratification; it seems like people watching YouTube beauty vlogs are looking for specific information, not necessarily to escape from reality.

Many of the YouTube beauty vlogs present the vlogger talking directly to the camera (their viewers) about beauty products or brands, adding the thoughts, opinions, and experiences they have had. Many times, they record these videos as a formal and structured review, which many viewers take as reference in order to try something out or just to see what that person that they consider an expert in the field thinks. Other times, they record the videos more informally, where they might not give specific details of the product or brand, but they do mainly give their thoughts and opinions about the products they are talking about.

Some of the human needs proposed by Maslow (1943) in the hierarchy of human needs are esteem and self-actualization. Many beauty vloggers include in their videos messages of self-love and acceptance, which is something that helps the viewers with their self-esteem and is a breath of fresh air for them if they are going through some tough times. These content creators provide entertainment and actualization regarding the beauty industry with their videos, which is something sought by many. Given that these videos are entertaining, they can become part of an everyday ritual for some people, or they can become a habit, which is a repeated thing or behavior that might become unconscious and learned through repetition. If the content created by the vloggers and received by the viewers is considered good, helpful in some way, and positive, the behavior of the viewers can be positively impacted.

LaRose et al. (2003) determined that the lack of regulation of usage leads to a habit of using the Internet and social media, which can become an addiction later on if there is no self-regulation. As the age came to be a significant factor in my study, I conclude that it is an important fact to monitor the time spent by the younger demographic watching this type of videos. If this is not observed and/or controlled, that younger demographic can become addicted, and hence this can harm them for abandoning their responsibilities. Nowadays, there is a

constant need of pretending to be physically perfect, that way people can deceive others into

thinking they are happy and they have a perfect life and physique, when they do not. YouTube

beauty vlogs can be both helpful and harmful in this regard. As mentioned before, many beauty

vloggers are fighting against showing like their life is 100% perfect so their followers can relate

to them, feel more empathy, and hence get more engagement. But, there are some other vloggers

who do not realize the harm they can do to their followers by pretending to be "perfect." They

can cause self-doubt and low self- esteem to the people watching their videos because viewers

take the vloggers as their role models, so they might aim for perfection, when it does not exist. If

Internet and YouTube videos are consumed consciously they can be a great ally. Nowadays the

beauty industry is growing so much, so if younger people get interested in learning about it

responsibly and becoming part of it, YouTube beauty vlogs can be a very good tool.

Even though YouTube beauty videos are watched by men and women, these types of

videos are more geared towards a female demographic. People who follow the beauty trends and

share them among the media are mainly females, although nowadays there are a lot of male

beauty vloggers/influencers with whom male viewers can relate. Because of this, both genders

can take advantage of these YouTube beauty vlogs phenomena to inspire and educate others.

It is intriguing how vloggers actually are a potential source of education for people, as

studied by Choi and Behm-Morawitz (2017). Vloggers have the power of being educators for all

the users watching them constantly. This is because consuming YouTube beauty vlogs can be a

habit for the people who watch these types of videos frequently. Vloggers become opinion

leaders with a strong voice heard loud and clear by their audience. The "influencer" concept is a

newer approach to the "opinion leader." With the rise of the internet and all it has developed with

it, "some users/persons have a high capacity to influence the others opinion or lead them toward

a particular topic because of their experience, mentality, pursue goals or probably because their charismatic personality to provoke the emotions of their followers" (Bamakan, Nurgaliev, & Qu, 2018, p. 200). Everybody does not have the ability to provoke in people the type of emotion that makes them want to stay consuming the content they offer. But, the ones who do are heard and trusted even more than bigger companies or brands. This is why nowadays businesses are using these vloggers, influencers, and opinion leaders, to get their message out and to show and teach to the audience whatever they need to, through the content creators. "Popular media have been increasingly portraying and perpetuating fashion blogging as a highly desirable and influential profession" (Erz & Heeris Christensen, 2018, p. 69), many people try to pursue it but not everybody has the same success at it. Many people look up to these beauty and fashion vloggers and that gives them a lot of power and influence, as well as responsibility to keep a good image so they can be positive role models for their followers.

My study results identified the entertainment and habit gratifications obtained by viewers watching YouTube beauty vlogs. Therefore, vloggers can benefit by being constant and original delivering quality content to the users. When vloggers are successful, many brands will want to work with them and will want them to promote their products at any cost. It is important they remain honest about their opinions because that is one important thing people expect to get when they look for these videos. For example, if vloggers transform to just promote products and brands with no honest opinions involved, people might lose the habit of watching the videos and will not find them entertaining anymore because they will become just one more advertising commercial.

Limitations

This study focused on understanding the uses and gratifications sought by people who watch YouTube beauty vlogs. Even though this study had planned to compare the gratifications sought by various demographics, a gender-based comparison was not possible due to the lack of male participants. It was kind of obvious that the major response rate was going to come from females, as beauty videos are generally geared towards women. Also, the survey was shared through my beauty YouTube channel, where the majority of subscribers are female, as well as my Facebook and Instagram, where my followers are majority female. The sample size was small as well because of time restrictions, hence it was not possible to have a better representation of the population of people who watch YouTube beauty vlogs.

The uses and gratifications theory used for this study was developed and evaluated before the social media explosion. Most of the major and original research done about this theory was before the social media platforms existed. For this reason, even though this theoretical framework looked appropriate to do my study, it was a limitation as the origins of the theory were established without the social media knowledge that exists today.

Future Studies

Future studies could recruit a more diverse population, especially men in the survey so the results can reflect the male's perspective as well and the gratifications they get from watching this type of videos. The gratifications obtained from males, if any, can be very different from the ones sought by women. Also, a qualitative study could be conducted by interviewing people who regularly consume YouTube beauty vlogs to understand their motivations for watching this type of videos. Additionally, it would be very interesting to study people from bi-lingual or multi-lingual backgrounds who prefer to watch English-language vlogs. This would be to help us understand if that preference is due to many beauty brands being in the United States

or in countries where they speak English, that way these individuals can get information from more people and faster.

Conclusion

YouTube is a very important and big platform to share user generated video content. It seems like it will continue to grow as more and more people are joining to become content creators for different topics. There are a lot of beauty vloggers on YouTube whom many people trust. We found out that by watching these YouTubers' vlogs people get some kind of gratifications, so these people are constant in consuming that content. At first, the uses and gratifications theory seemed the perfect approach for this study, but at the end the study could have been improved if it was further evaluated with another theory, or if it would have involved also a qualitative research to better understand the specific reasons why people consume YouTube beauty vlogs. It was interesting to study the vlogging phenomenon because it is becoming more popular each day. More people want to share their experiences and build a community of followers who trust them, and they are accomplishing it by sharing their day-to-day life with vlogs.

Online communication has become crucial for everybody. It is an efficient and quick way to get a message to reach many people. YouTube hand-in-hand with social media platforms are the way most of today's businesses are reaching and targeting their audiences. Nowadays, companies are using influencers to help them spread their message and get their products or services known; and what better way than matching the products they create to the influencer's lifestyle so they can show their audience how they incorporate it into their lives. Because of the trust the viewers have in the content creators, they consume the message and maybe even purchase the product or service.

      Online communication is growing over time. I feel it has become the preferred way of communication between the new generation, which makes me think that it is not going anywhere anytime soon. This is one of the reasons why studies like this one are important, because it is necessary to understand the different ways and options there are for people to communicate, and why they do so in that way. If we understand this, it is going to be easier for people and brands to offer the audience information they actually want and enjoy, so they get more gratifications out of consuming content or just communicating with others.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table 1

Reliability

Gratification	Reliability
Entertainment	0.892
Habit	0.827
Escape	0.817
Communication	0.891

Table 2

Rotated Factor Matrix - Gratifications

Factor	Item	Factor Loadings	Reliability
Entertainment	I watch Beauty Vlogs when I am bored	0.791	0.892
	I like watching Beauty Vlogs	0.774	
	I watch Beauty Vlogs to de-stress	0.746	
	I am more likely to watch a Beauty Vlog when I am in a waiting situation	0.743	
	I watch Beauty Vlogs because they make me feel good	0.686	
Habit	I watch Beauty Vlogs because I always see the ones of a specific vlogger	0.681	0.827
	I watch Beauty Vlogs when I have nothing better to do	0.675	
	I watch Beauty Vlogs because it's part of my routine	0.575	
	I watch Beauty Vlogs to see what the vlogger (I am watching) is up to	0.556	

Table 3

Demographic Breakdown

Variable	%
Gender	
Male	4.0
Female	96.0
Age	
18-24 years	62.0
25-34 years	31.0
35 years and over	7.0
Education level	
High school degree or equivalent	27.5
Some college credit	24.8
Bachelor's degree	21.1
Master's degree	8.61
Some high school, no diploma	7.58
Trade/technical/vocational training	6.35
Other	4.06

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Survey introduction.

You are invited to participate in the following survey about YouTube Beauty Vlogs. The purpose of this study is to understand how do people use the YouTube Beauty Vlogs and why do they watch them. Are they seeking for specific gratifications?

The study is being conducted by Katherine Ray, student from the Communications and Media Technologies master's program from Rochester Institute of Technology, School of Communications.

Study purpose.

The purpose of this study is to understand how and why people use the YouTube Beauty Vlogs.

Procedures for the study.

If you agree to complete this survey about yourself and your consumption of YouTube Beauty Vlogs, it should take you 5-7 minutes to complete it.

Payment.

You will not receive payment for taking the survey.

Voluntary nature of study.

Filling out this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey or exit from it at any time.

Survey questions (English).

1- Age:

    A. 18-24 years old

    B. 25- 34 years old

    C. 35-49 years old

    D. 50 years or older

2- Gender:

    A. Male

    B. Female

    C. Prefer not to answer

    D. Other (specify):_____

3- Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

    A. Some high school, no diploma

    B. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent

    C. Some college credit, no degree

    D. Trade/technical/vocational training

    E. Associate degree

    F. Bachelor's degree

    G. Master's degree

    H. Doctorate degree

4- Occupation

    A. Employed for wages

    B. Self-employed

    C. Out of work and looking for work

    D. Out of work but not currently looking for work

    E. A homemaker

    F. A student

    G. Retired

    H. Unable to work

    I. Other (Specify): _____

5- Do you watch YouTube Vlogs?

    A. Yes

    B. No

6- On what language do you watch YouTube Vlogs?
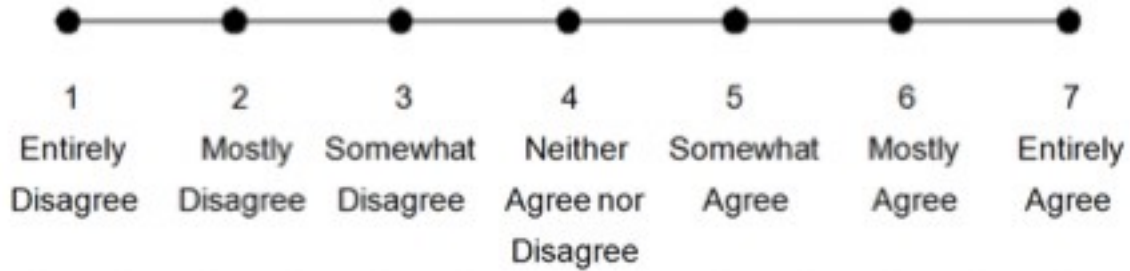
    A. English

    B. Spanish

    C. Other (Specify): _____

7- Do you have your own YouTube Channel?

    A. Yes

B. No

8- How many YouTube Vlogs do you watch per week?

    A. Less than 3

    B. 4-10

    C. 11 or more

9- What is your preferred duration for a Vlog?

    A. 3 mins or less

    B. 4 to 7 mins

    C. 8 to 11 mins

    D. 12 to 15 mins

    E. 16 mins or more

10- What type of YouTube Vlogs you watch the most?

    A. Beauty and lifestyle

    B. Cooking

    C. Comedy

    D. Family

    E. Health

11- Please use the following scale to select the number that best represents how you feel

about watching YouTube Beauty Vlogs for each statement:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Entirely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Mostly Agree	Entirely Agree

Entertainment.

- I like watching Beauty Vlogs: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to de-stress: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I am more likely to watch a Beauty Vlog when I am in a

waiting situation: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs when I am bored: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs because they make me

feel good: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Habit.

- I watch Beauty Vlogs because it's part of my

 routine: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs because I always see the ones of a

specific vlogger: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs when I have nothing

 better to do: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to see what the vlogger (I am

watching) is up to: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs because everybody talks

about them: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Escape.

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to escape from my real life: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7
- I watch Beauty Vlogs to forget about the things I have

to do (at the moment): 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to feel like I am part of the

vlogger's life: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to imagine living the life of

the vlogger: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Communication.

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to interact with the vlogger: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to interact with the community: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to express my opinion (in the comments

section): 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to see what the vlogger thinks

and says: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

- I watch Beauty Vlogs to see other's opinions (in the

comments section): 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12- How do you use the information from the Vlogs you watch?

_____

_____

_____

13- How did you get interested in Vlogs?

_____

_____

_____