Commerce & Friendship

A qualitative study of new value streams created by beauty vloggers through relationship building on social media

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Abstract

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A qualitative study of new value streams created by beauty vloggers through relationship building on social media

Authors: Tavonga Chikwaya & Yichen Zhang

Advisor: Per Åman

Date: May 25, 2018

Background: Social media platforms are evolving to be effective platforms in marketing but due to customers’ scepticism on how they are being approached there is need to be cautious on how best to build relationships towards value creation.

Purpose: To explore within the field of social media influencer marketing to understand how new value streams could be created by beauty vloggers through building relationship with followers (audiences), or the potential customers on virtual market.

Methodology: A qualitative research approach used where research tools as interviews, focus groups and observations have been used to gain an understanding on underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of vloggers and followers.

Findings: The empirical findings indicated that to have mutual connections and understanding between vloggers and followers there is need to build relationships which emanates from engagement, trust and commitment, interaction and communication.

Keywords: Social media, influencer, beauty vlogger, relationship, value streams
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Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will introduce the background of this thesis. The problem discussion will be presented with various theories and knowledge that exist today. Afterwards, the purpose of the study as well as the research question will be presented to the readers. Finally, the gap that we intend to fill in within this thesis will be presented.

1.1 Background of the study

Since the rise of the digital era, the way of interactions and communications between brands and customers have been significantly affected in the past century, the internet along with new technology has created new opportunities for brands to interact and communicate through social media nowadays. According to Fiorella & Brown (2013), the traditional path among companies, brands and customers have been disrupted by social web, which is also currently known as social media. Social media is a platform where users can publish their own contents such as texts, photos or videos, so that they can share their contents and interact with other users (Dickey & Lewis, 2010; Bolton et al., 2013). The amount of user-generated contents has rapidly increased within social media and the impact of user engagement has become more influential to business organizations.

Traditional branding used to be seen as one-way communication and it was oriented by business, additionally there was value (money) exchange between brands and customers. Looking back the history, we observed that the traditional branding was mainly demonstrated by TV commercial advertisements, print advertisements such as magazines, in this regards, brands must pay certain value in order to be promoted and customers were considered as passive recipients of advertisements, they could not directly communicate with the brands. Afterwards, the rise of the digital era has stimulated different online social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter with enormous users. The business marketers started to advertise their products through these new platforms, during this period, the communication form is the same as the last period. However, along with the rise of new social media, a phenomenon that has been coming up and rising very quickly in the past few years, which refers to vlogging. Generally speaking, according to Christian (2009), vlogs are the mixes of blogs and videos, they are created by individuals, real people with real personalities, and those individuals are
so called as vloggers. They tend to build personal interaction with their audiences without any actual value exchange, rather with simply share their thoughts and feelings. By watching their videos, not only can audiences get information about the products, but also they can get inspiration from the vloggers. Within this personable and relaxed atmosphere, it allows audiences to feel more intimate connection with vloggers (Gibson, 2016) and build two-way communication.

Under this context, the growth of social media has provided advanced platforms for vloggers to create and update their videos, the most representative platform is YouTube, which represents the leading and the most influential online video hub for the beauty space, in this regards, beauty vloggers can also be called as beauty YouTubers. In terms of beauty vlogging, it generated beauty-related contents that include beauty products such as cosmetics and skin care products, makeup tutorials with helpful tips. Generally, these beauty-related vlogs show a lot of enthusiasm as well as beauty vloggers’ skills and knowledge. For people who are not familiar with this area, this may seem strange, however, many beauty vloggers from all over the world have gathered a large number of passionate followers in the past few years, some of the vloggers have even reached celebrity status. With their strong appeal towards audiences, they are able to launch their own beauty production line. According to Pixability (2016), there were more than 5.3 million beauty videos on YouTube, and 86 percent of the top 200 beauty videos were made by beauty vloggers, rather than beauty brands in 2016, moreover, only considering the growth in YouTube is already dramatic, with a 65% increase in total beauty views over the years. As the Figure 1 illustrated below, the total views on YouTube in terms of beauty industry has already reached 125 billion views in June, 2016, which reflects the great impact of beauty vlogs on social media than other categories.

![Figure 1: Total relevant views on YouTube by industries in Billions](source)

Source: Pixability (2016)
1.2 Problem discussion

De Veirman et al. (2017) explained that brands have been continuing to abandon traditional advertising techniques that included use of billboards and print advertising, while the focuses are increasingly shifting to influencers to endorse their products and service amid their followers and beyond. This entails that influencers are being regarded as trusted tastemaker in one or several niches (Ibid.). This have been embraced by Pornpitakpan (2004) who mentioned that individuals have the tendency to make evaluations judgements and considerations on information provided by other individuals to be more dependable in contrast to information provided by companies. In this regards, influencers are seen as the individuals who can trigger big impact on social media. Moreover, according to Rey and Romero-Rodríguez (2016), vloggers have become the idol and social influencers with millions followers who watch their channels every day. Tuten and Solomon (2014) mentioned that social media is considered as a way to provide an inexpensive way to interact and engage with potential customers thus making it a valuable tool for marketers. In this regards, social media platforms have allowed bigger opportunities for vloggers to produce and post consistently to attract millions of view with low budget. As stated by Rich (2013), the fascinating part is that the successful vloggers are often those teenagers or young adult who do not have professional experiences and with low budget on making videos, however, they have managed to attract over millions views on their YouTube channels and create big impact towards the market, some of them have succeeded doing this as their job and earning money from it. In this manner, they seem to even do better job than professional marketers.

Navarro and López-Rúa (2016) has recognized that there has been a considerable change within online marketing and therefore, it is essential to adopt the concept of social media marketing. However, it is not just a mere idea, it must be properly strategized and requires active and dedicated actors. In that regard the appearance of influencers on social media platforms and their engagement with online customers are essential tools today for entities that strive to compete and build relationships. Perrey et al, (2013) argued that with the accessibility and exposure of information during this 21st century has been enhanced through digitalization, in this manner, customers are becoming more educated and informed as media users with more critical attitude towards commercial messages. Therefore, it is critical for brands to be cautious on what they intend to influence and making an impact towards their intended customers to create value streams. The new challenge for advertisers has therefore
become taking the type of product or service that they want to promote into consideration in order to select the most suitable influencer with specific focus (De Veirman et al, 2017).

1.3 Purpose of the study and Research problem
The purpose of this thesis is to explore within the field of social media influencer marketing to understand how new value streams could be created by beauty vloggers through building relationship with followers (audiences), or the potential customers on virtual market.

Formulation of the research problem have been supported by Niemi (2015) who mentioned that plenty of mistakes are being made relating to the concept of social media marketing thus impacting the effectiveness of the evolving way of marketing. The author mentioned that social media marketers are focusing mainly on output and ignoring interaction towards relationship building. Grönroos, (2004) further elaborated that if interaction and planned communication between influencers and the audience processes are successfully integrated through various means that capture attention geared towards customers' value processes, in that manner, relationships can be nurtured. Evans (2010) supported by mentioning that participating on social media marketing is not just a mere creation of a page, making a blog post or retweeting and advert. This suggests that there is need to cultivate relationships by either retweeting, replying, sharing, commenting and continually building your network (Niemi, 2015).

The impact that social media influencers have on their audience and followers in terms of shaping their opinions leads us to reflect on the aspect of relationship building since Clark & Melancon (2013) argued that investing in relationships on social media communications marketers and organisations can address customer service issues hence satisfaction. Additionally, improving relationships helps to improve customer satisfaction (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). Therefore, we found that the concept of relationship building seems to be an important factor on social media marketing. In that regards, we observed that the created relationships can be transformed into value and Bettencourt et al. (2014) facilitated in our research formulation that value is not something that things, or even people possess but rather, they possess capabilities that give them value potential. With curiosity to explore on the connected concepts, we intend to carry out a study in the beauty industry courtesy of vloggers as influencers and that lead the formulation of the question which reads as below:
In what ways can beauty vloggers nurture relationships with followers to accumulate new value streams on social media?

1.4 Significance of the study

During writing this research, the authors had in mind the stakeholders that can benefit from reading this research. Besides this research being an academic thesis a few stakeholders have been discovered to as well benefit from reading the script. This has been supported by Van de Ven (2007) who mentioned that readers and users selectively interpret information and use knowledge as it serves their own purposes depending on how it fits in their unique situations.

First, the study has the intention to enrich practically the researchers themselves about the world of social media marketing and have an in-depth understanding of the evolving industry. Second, the study is also targeted to other academic students in the sense that this prepares and makes them understand from a practical standpoint of the nature of social media marketing and the concept of relationship building towards value creation. Third, companies can as well benefit from reading this study in the sense that, discussions done and research data collected and analysed can enable them to make sound decisions in terms of why, how, whom and what social media influencer to engage when promoting their brands and reflect on the concept of relationship building for businesses in creating value. In the end, the study leaves revelation for future researchers to take over the research area and develop it further since we believe some relevant and important facets have been left out in this study.

1.5 Research motivation

The perspective this study is being carried out is on the level from both vloggers and followers (audiences). The authors found the concept of relationship building to be critical despite the level of study. It is important to appreciate that it is essential to build and form relationships for businesses as well as for vloggers in creating value, which can be turned into revenue or profit in a long run. This leads us to explore and make an investigation on ways that beauty vloggers nurture relationships on their profiles towards value creation for represented brands.
1.6 Research gap
As social media influencer marketing is an emergent field, it is rather a new area of study within academic researches and information under this context is changing fast. In this manner, the concept of influencing marketing and how brands measure and optimize social influence to achieve their marketing goals is rather limited (Snijders & Helms, 2014). In addition, however, there are still few frameworks available to measure influence for marketers and this is critical to achieve the success within social media (Littlewood & Bick, 2014). Moreover, there has been relatively little attention paid to the way between the impact of beauty vloggers and this new revenue streams (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). Therefore, our research aims to contribute to the social media influencer marketing field by filling the gap in terms of new value streams created by beauty vloggers through relationship building with followers on virtual market.
1.7 Outline of the study

The research follows the outline below and it aims to provide the readers with an overview and direction on what to expect for the main structure for our thesis.

**Chapter 1: Introduction**
- This first chapter is meant to prepare for readers under the context of this research and it is designed as a foundation to the research problem at hand.

**Chapter 2: Literature review**
- The literature review is meant to provide and support to the research problem theoretically and as a guideline for the following chapter in the sense that views will be highlighted theoretically, as well as being explored and tested further to facilitate making conclusions.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**
- The third chapter includes the research design to introduce to readers in details in terms of how the studies have been concluded from the methodological aspects and allow them to understand how important data was collected and analyzed.

**Chapter 4: Empirical findings**
- This chapter is meant to provide readers with the empirical findings of our main study. The collected data will be presented either in form of in-text analysis or presentations in graphical formats and tables.

**Chapter 5: Interpretation on findings**
- This chapter is intended for interpretation that is based on our main findings and literature review. In this chapter, we reflect back to the research problem and combines the perspectives of both beauty vloggers and audiences.

**Chapter 6: Value streams creation**
- This chapter aims to develop beyond the previous chapter with the aid of a model that is developed by the authors in order to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the research problem and serve as a foundation for the final chapter.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion**
- The final chapter is meant to conclude both theoretical perspectives and implications from practical perspectives for stakeholders to be aware of. This chapter will as well provide suggestions for the future research.

*Figure 2: Outline of the study*
Chapter 2 Literature review

This chapter below will provide an understanding of the theoretical framework that the thesis is built upon, an elaboration of relevant theories will be presented. The presented theories will be used as background in order to furthermore help to build the following chapter. Through literature review, the aim is to clarify and outline the topic of this thesis. As presented previously, the research questions consist of three different components, which are beauty influencers, relationship building and value creation. In this manner, relevant theories will be explored and presented here. All sections will be inspected carefully in order to gain clear ideas on collecting and analysing data further on, in the end answering the research question.

2.1 Social media and influencer marketing

Social media is everywhere nowadays due to the rapid growth of digital market. People can simply use their phones or other electronic devices to connect with the world online, for instance, checking their Facebook account, update photos in Instagram to record their daily life and so on. According to Heidemann, et al. (2012), online social networks has become a worldwide phenomenon. Due to the worldwide explosion of social media usage, businesses have been exerted with pressure to engage in platforms where their intended customers are paying attention and that entail on virtual markets (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Recently, a new term within the social media context has grown fast, which is influencer marketing. Ferguson (2008) considered influencer marketing as a viral marketing technique. However, considering it as a rather new phenomenon, there is a lack of academic definitions and literatures of influencer marketing.

2.1.1 What is social media?

From a literary point of view, social media can be simply defined as any platform that enables media being created and shared by consumers (Dickey & Lewis, 2010). Unlike traditional broadcast channels such as TV, radio, social media enables people to express more freely, and choose the way how they interact with the business. It includes all user-generated service such as blogs, social networking platforms, video sharing sites so that users can
publish their own contents (Bolton et al., 2013). This phenomenon leads to the need for business to focus more on customers, listen to customers' opinions and build two-way communication (I-scoop, 2018). According to Vaynerchuck (2013), social media provides a channel for brands to build a story and share experience with customers in order to increase engagement and impressions. In this manner, brands can no longer in charge of the conversation with consumers, since consumers can positively share and update information at anytime. In order to succeed within social media context, brands must bring themselves closer to customers and engaged themselves into two-way communication.

Over the past decade, due to the greater globalization all over the world and the improved technology in digital market, social media continues to grow and has become one of the most influential digital marketing techniques used today. According to The CMO survey (2017), marketers expected to expand social media spend by 89 percent in next five years. In addition, a recent study has found that more than 80 percent of marketers want to create more video contents in 2017, with Facebook and YouTube being considered as two key channels (DBS-interactive, 2017). Among them, there are 1.4 billion daily active users on average and 2.13 billion monthly active users in Facebook until December 2017 (Facebook, 2018). According to Matney. L (2017), there are over one billion logged-in users visiting the site every month. Moreover, logged-in users spend more than one-hour average per day on watching YouTube just by mobile devices.

![Figure 3: Social media spending as percentage of marketing budgets](image)

Source: The CMO survey (2017)
As the Figure 3 illustrated above, the percentage of marketing budgets spending on social media has been rising continuously, which imply the risen awareness in terms of value within social media marketing. According to DBS-interactive (2017), effective social media strategies will help companies to reach out new opportunities and support customers in new and exciting ways, therefore increase brand awareness and improve the relationship with customers.

2.1.2 Who are influencers?
To begin, a new trend in recent years has risen due to the rapid growth of social media. It has led communication experts to a new type of opinion leader, which called as social media influencer. Under this context, influencers are also referred to social media influencers. According to Brown & Hayes (2008), an influencer was defined as a third party who significantly shapes the opinions and purchasing decisions of other customers. Moreover, influencers were also defined as people with great potential to influence others due to such attributes as frequency of communication, personal persuasiveness or size of and centrality to a social network (Nonprofit Business Advisor, 2015). Keller. E & Fay. B (2016) further defined influencers as ordinary customers, however, they are more likely to find information and share ideas than average people, while doing this voluntarily, they are only passionate about the products or services that they are interested in or identified as good by using their knowledge to give honest suggestion and insights to other people. Social media influencers are considered as playing a powerful role on social media platform nowadays and they are essentially in virtual word-of-mouth marketing, consumers are more likely to have positive perceptions and reactions to information from their trusted influencers, since they see them as friends who give you honest advices. According to Freberg et al. (2011), social media influencers are considered as online leader who use existing online social media platform such as YouTube, Instagram to share information with their followers in terms of the products or services that they have used. During the process of sharing information, the social media influencers are able to influence their audiences’ attitudes through their personal social media channels.
2.1.3 Influencer marketing – the new word of mouth strategy

Concerning the traditional way of word of mouth strategy, it has already existed in the world since people started to exchange information. According to Arndt (1967), he described the classic offline word of mouth verbally as the process of information transmission from one person to another. This strategy has been considered by marketers as the most effective and successful way to achieve ideal sales. With the development of online social media market, it is crucial for marketers to develop new online market tools. Under this background, as the new word of strategy, influencer marketing has risen a lot of attention.

Since the word of mouth strategy mainly focuses on influential consumers, therefore within the online environment, the impact of marketing campaign now is directed to those who are involved in online social networks and have an impact on a larger audience (Duan & Whinston, 2008), which refers to social media influencers. In this manner, as a relatively new concept, influencer marketing has been considered as interesting and hot topic among researchers and marketers. According to Keller & Berry (2003), influencer marketing is regarded as a strategy that mainly uses strategic leaders to push brand information to a larger group of consumers. They further argued that influencers can be used as a tool to promote desired marketing. In this manner, influencer marketing can be seen as the tool to utilize the diffusion of information through social media and it is driven by those key influencers (Bakshy, et al., 2011). Wong (2014) further defined influencer marketing as a tool to identify and use targeted influencers to drive message over bigger market to attract potential buyers. However, having an influence is not only about having many followers, since generally, an influencer is still less well known and has relatively less impact compared with celebrities. In this manner, having an influence is more concerning of building relationship between the influencer and their followers.

2.2 Beauty vloggers as social media influencers

Before the vlogging phenomenon, blogging has been an earlier and more well known concept for people. To define, blogs are web pages for people who would like to share their experiences, daily lives, and ideas in a diary format. These are often described in format of texting, photography and internal links to other sites (Berthon et al. 2012). As presented previously, the growth of social media has provided more advanced platforms for individual
influencers to create and update their videos, especially in YouTube, which represents the leading and the most influential online video hub for the beauty space. This new phenomenon has exploded and challenged many forms of traditional media. In 2014, the business environment has identified “vlogging” as a new marketing method (Stickland, 2015).

To explain, vlogging also refers to video blogging, it represents a way to build connection with other people and a way to express themselves by using social media platform. Moreover, Frobenius (2011) defined people who are doing vlogging are called as vlogger, they are someone who creates contents of the video, they need to talk with themselves in front of a camera and afterwards editing the video then uploads it to internet, where audiences can rate it and make comments below. According to Frazier (2014), this type of videos has become especially common through YouTube channel. Unlike traditional television broadcasting, videos made by vloggers tend to involve face to face communication with audiences. According to Tolson (2010), vlogging allows for both formal and informal changes in the form of speech within the same broadcast, in addition, display, interactivity, and expertise are also explored to help vloggers to create their authentic elements towards followers. In this manner, as social influencers, vloggers have grown as a crucial and effective factor for brands to consider as a marketing tool.

2.3 Relationship building concept

According to Exforsys (2010), relationships are formed due to mutual affiliation between individuals or groups. In that regards, the mutual affiliation can be due to common interests or backward and forward gains from involved parties. The affiliation is also applicable to the evolving social media marketing concept that has been supported by Clark & Melancon (2013), they argued that considering investments in relationship building through social media marketing, customer service issues can be addressed thus value creation. Additionally, building and improving relationships helps to improve customer satisfaction (Farrelly & Quester, 2005).

Holmlund-Rytkönen & Törnroos (1997) emphasized that relationships are usually based on the existence of strong ties that connect actors together. This entails that relationships are built in situations where mutual understanding and connection prevails. Exforsys (2010) went
on to argue that this however needs special attention and there are certain requirements that have to be established for relationships to form. To support that, the core features of relationships formulated by Holmlund-Rytkönen & Törnroos (1997) have been adopted to further elaborate the statement.

Figure 4: Core features of relationships


As the figure shown above, relationships are characterised by the following core features:

The first feature is Mutuality, also refers to Degree of mutuality. Holmlund-Rytkönen & Törnroos (1997) explained that relationships often tend to continue to evolve despite low degree of mutuality due to a number of different kinds of bonds that involve technical, economic, planning, social, knowledge and legal among the parties. The mutual connection among the involved parties could be expressed with concepts such as trust and commitment. Exforsys (2010) further suggested that the shared interest and connection between the involved parties forms the basis of the relationship.

The second feature is Long-term character, also refers to Continuation. Holmlund-Rytkönen & Törnroos (1997) highlighted that relationships tend to evolve over time and often have a well established connection that takes time. In that perspective, they mentioned that time consideration is a factor towards building long-standing relationships (ibid.). The continuity of the relationship and the connection symbolises the strength of the bond between parties involved due to learning effects and built-in-skills for mutual benefits (ibid.).
The third feature is *Context dependence*, also refers to *Embeddedness*. Relationships can be viewed to be highly context bound, which means that their features are highly dependent on their particular set-up (ibid.). Holmlund-Rytkönen and Törnroos further mentioned that embeddedness relates to the idea that all social action and outcomes tend to be affected by the actors’ relations by the overall set up of structure on network relations (ibid.). This suggestion indicates that it is the behaviour of the social media influencers who determine the outcomes of the nature of relationships that they intend to build on social media. It can be argued that negative relations can lead to bad relationships.

The last feature is *Process nature*, also refers to *Exchange, Interaction*. According to Holmlund-Rytkönen and Törnroos, relationships are composed and formed on the basis of different interactions (ibid.). The interaction process consists of a multitude of exchanges and adaptations among the involved parties. The content of exchange in relationships differs depending on the nature of the interaction, this could be products, money, social contacts or information and so on (Håkansson,1982).

### 2.4 Value creation

Amit & Zott (2001) explained that opportunities of value creation on virtual markets that is online tends to be as result of new combinations of information, physical products and services, innovative set-up of transactions and content, reconfiguration and integration of resources, capabilities, roles and relationships among suppliers, partners and customers. The suggestion has also been supported by Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), who argued that product development, strategic decision-making, alliance formation, knowledge creation, and capabilities transfer are value-creating processes examples. To support theoretically, the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, developed Schumpeter’s perspective on value creation, views the firm as a bundle of resources and capabilities (Amit & Zott, 2001) can also be adopted to highlight the essence and importance of possessing capabilities through on an individual level. The RBV entails combining a set of complementary and specialized resources and capabilities, some are heterogeneous, scarce, durable and difficult to imitate thus leading to value creation (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). The concept of RBV in this case is meant to highlight that even under the context of vloggers as individuals who have certain
capabilities and skills that enable them to build relationships towards value creation. Such an assumption motivated the adoption of the theory and presents it relating to beauty vloggers.

Hirvonen and Helander (2001) emphasized that value is always jointly and reciprocally co-created. The statement suggests that there is need for well established relationships and understanding amongst the parties involved and in this case would be the vloggers and the audience. This have been elaborated by Storbacka et al. (1994) through different standpoints in terms of building a good long-lasting relationship with customers, in this manner, there is need to have a good understanding of customers’ perceptions. In that regards the vlogger and audiences or followers’ relationship are taken into consideration. Bettencourt et al. (2014) supported that the customers is no longer viewed as a “target” for value delivery, but rather as a “partner” who actively contributes to value creation.

In the following sections, theories regarding four relevant constructs will be explained below, which are engagement, trust and commitment, interaction, communication, they will be applied here for this study as important building blocks. Through reading articles and books during Masters studies, we managed to identify these four constructs to be relevant to our intended research topic. It is also important to highlight that besides with these theories to be proved as relevant in this study, some other theories can be mentioned relating to relationship building and such can be suggested for future studies.
2.4.1 Engagement

![Figure 5: Customer engagement cycle](image)


Sashi (2012) explained that the process of building customer engagement evolves through a customer engagement cycle. It involves a series of stages as shown above. The cycle begins with a connection either emanating through the traditional offline methods like salespersons and new digital online methods like social networking (Ibid.). Further it has evidenced that social media platforms greatly facilitate and enhance the establishment of connections with a large number and wide variety of individuals (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Sashi, 2012).

Tikkanen et al. (2009) further supported by suggesting that social interaction on virtual markets enhance the provision of information and experiences sharing thus facilitating in value creation. Social networking platforms are fast becoming tools that enable more frequent, faster and richer interactions among much larger groups who are connected as individuals or communities (Sashi, 2012). The interaction and connection transforms to satisfaction. According to Oliver et al. (1997), this is achieved when customer expectations are exceeded and emotions are becoming positive. Satisfaction of customers or followers is a necessary condition for customer engagement. This entail that for customers to be fully engaged, surpassing their expectations are essential hence leading to retention (Ibid.).
Gustafsson et al. (2005) went on to explain that commitment in a relationship has two major dimensions which are affective commitment and calculative commitment. These relates to the level of connection and engagement between individuals and brands. But in this case it relates to beauty vloggers and their audience. With regards to Gustafsson et al., they further opened up that affective commitment is more emotional and usually is a result of trust and reciprocity in a relationship (ibid.). The delighted and convinced customers have audacity to act as third parties to further spread their experiences on other social networks thus spreading the word with positive experiences towards a product or a brand (Sashi, 2012).

Sashi (2012) further explained that customer engagement expands the role of customers through making them co-creators of value. Jaakonmäki et al (2017) argued that in making assessments of social media marketing activities, the rate at which the audience or followers are involved with the posts is measured. According to Paine (2011), this was defined as the engagement rate that is measured in terms of the quantity of responses and interactions that the posts on the virtual markets would have generated from the respective targeted audience. The author went on to elaborate that the calculation of the engagement rate tends to vary across different social media platforms and this can either by considering the percentage of people who react to a post through “liking” it or “commenting”.

Additionally, Hu et al. (2014) explained that social media engagement can be influenced by the creator-related features. Many researchers have studied creator-related features which include the creator’s number of followers, experience, age, sex within a specific social media community (Jaakonmäki et al., 2017). This suggests that despite the level of satisfaction or interaction, followers still have other evaluating mechanisms which push them to be willing to engage with the social media creators. Content features have also been suggested to influence the level of engagement and these can be divided into the categories of text, visual and audio content. Burke et al. (2007) made a research on textual discourse in the online community platforms and observed that a brief group or topic introduction in messages or videos intended to audiences tend to increases community response and acceptance.
2.4.2 Trust and Commitment

Morgan and Hunt (1994) came up with the Commitment-Trust Theory (CTT), which they intended to facilitate the study relational exchanges in relationship marketing. The authors mentioned that the concept of commitment and trust have been theorized to play key mediating roles in establishing, developing and maintaining the relationships between concerned parties (ibid.). Relating to the study at hand, Evans (2010) argued that social media communities involve the concept of commitment and trust and that realistically is not gained overnight or over a short period of time.

Moorman et al. (1993 p. 82) defined trust as “a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence” and this add on to (Berry, 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) argumentation that trust is an essential tool towards building successful relationship. The connection of these notions to the research problem at hand have been put forward by Grabner-Kräuter (2009) who advocated that trust is an essential factor towards building relationships on social networks. In that regards, studies have shown that within the social media platforms generally rules don’t govern the way marketers and their audience interact and with such a condition trust is considered ideal substitute to rules such that an atmosphere that enhance relationship building prevails (Ridings et al., 2002). Therefore, trust is regarded as vital in moulding reliable and socially accepted interactions in conditions where there is an absence of controlling factors (Hashima and Tan, 2015).

Johnson and Garbarino (1999) mentioned that an expectation of trustworthiness between parties involved in interaction results from the ability to perform expertise, reliability and intentionality. O’Mahony and Meenaghan (1997) further supported by mentioning that credibility and expertise are as well elements of marketers that have influence in consumers buying intention. The suggestion by the authors indicates that between the involved parties in the relationship building process towards value creation usually the marketers or influencer or designers of content have the mandate to show traits that enhance trust building in the mindset of the audience. This have been supported by various authors who mentioned that even with the frequency of making posts, videos or content on social media plays a huge role in building up trust and this turns to strengthen the credibility of the marketer or content designer and that this usually depends on person’s features, especially social status (Ledbetter and Redd, 2016). They explicitly mentioned that a notable correlation between the frequency
of making posts and self-disclosure exists and advocated for a balance in an effort to achieve trustworthy on virtual markets (ibid.).

Commitment have been defined as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship” (Moorman et al, 1992, p.316). According to Yen (2009), commitment mediates and leads to continuous participation and involvement within an online community due to the sense of belongingness and bonding with other members that lead to long-term relationships. Through the established connection and trust the audience become willing to invest their time and emotional connection with the influencers and other members, hence continuous knowledge sharing (Usoro et al., 2007).

2.4.3 Interaction

Evans (2010) mentioned that social media marketing platforms are aimed towards holding conversations and sharing experiences. The mutual connection that are established by content creators or marketers enrich the building of relationships towards value creation. Interaction that exists between seller or the influencer and customer which are the audience is fast becoming the locus of value creation and value extraction (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In addition to that, Sashi (2012) argued that constant customer interaction allows the customers or audience to participate in the value adding process thus collaborating with the content creators in creating value.

Bettencourt et al. (2014) added that the customers is no longer viewed as a target for value delivery, but rather as partners who actively and continuously contributes to value creation. These days the internet have allowed influencers or marketers to have a continuing dialogue with their audience, tapping into knowledge sharing within the platforms thus extending the reach and scope of customer interactions. (Sawhney et al., 2005). The interactivity and connection established by content creators on virtual markets greatly facilitates the process of establishing and enduring relationships with trust and commitment between sellers and buyers (Sashi, 2012).
With regards to that Stephen et al., (2017) they highlighted that the influencer’s or content creator activity level have an impact on the receiver’s willingness to interact with the content on the social sites. In their study they mentioned that influencers with high level of activity and interaction are perceived to be more credible. Despite the number of followers, the level of activity and interaction form the sender side have a bearing towards building relationships on virtual markets towards value creation. On that perspective online influence is well about quality and not quantity thus being a factor as well of consideration in nurturing relationships.

2.4.4 Communication
According to the research group Exforsys (2010), two-way communication is an important factor that plays an important role in forming relationship and usually relationships and connection does not exist in cases where there is limited interaction with the involved parties. Clark & Melancon (2013) supported by arguing that the notable decline on the traditional methods of engaging customers symbolises the change in culture in the approach marketers are using in efforts to promote interactive dialogue hence relationship building. Berry, (1995) pointed out that in order to maintain and enhance relationships, a two-way communications approach is necessary where entities involved are in regular contact with one another. This suggests that communication is a necessity that influencers of content creators should consider in efforts to build relationship on virtual markets. This can be in different forms as mentioned by Burke and Kraut (2008) in their study that politeness in terms of responding to the audiences has the potential to build closer relationships and this might as well increase the number of replies in technical groups, however rudeness is more effective in generating replies in political groups. With regards to the study at hand politeness is a consideration for beauty vloggers. Suggestions have been made that with positive experience from direct brand interaction spearheaded by the nature of the marketer through social media markets has the potential to lead to repeat purchases and recommendations (Hudson et al., 2015).

Barwise and Meehan (2010) explained that a focus on building trust and communicating a clear and relevant promise, or benefit to consumers should be continuously improved since this facilitates in relationship building towards value creation. According to Mershon (2012), 85% of marketers have cited that one of the benefits of social media marketing is its ability to engage in continuous dialogues with its audiences. This entails continuous communication on
virtual markets, in this regards, content creators such as vloggers can gain unmediated insights with the potential to foster loyalty through built relationships as well.

2.5 Chapter summary
This chapter’s intention was to facilitate readers in understanding the theoretical perspectives that underlie behind the research question. Social media as a broad concept has been explained in an effort to allow readers to understand how the phenomena have evolved. To dive into the specific industry under this study, beauty vloggers were defined to narrow down and have focused lenses on a specific industry, which refers to beauty industry in this study. The concept of relationship building towards value creation was later explored with a focus on selected theories.
Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter extends from the literature review chapter and seeks to equip readers with the background information concerning research methods and tools that has been used to conduct this study. An outline of the research design, data collection methods, research criteria, sampling methods and the limitations that are relating to the study will be described. Moreover, through this chapter, methods that are chosen to collect data and how these data will be analysed to answer the research question will be described here as well as how participants have been chosen.

3.1 Research Design

To begin, regarding the research design in this research, a variance approach will be developed here in order to study theory (Van de Ven, 2007). Through variance model, it aims to answer ‘what’ questions or the outcome that based on assumption (ibid.). Since the topic of vloggers is rather a new phenomenon, there are not many articles or researches have done in this area, therefore this study will look into the explorative design, which offers a valuable way to ask open questions to define actions and gain knowledge concerning the topics of interests (Saunders et al., 2012), in addition, an explorative design is useful when the research subjects acquire more knowledge. In this manner, an explorative design is applicable for this research since it is argued here that from business perspectives, the knowledge concerning of beauty vloggers’ impact within the market is still rather vague and abstract. In this manner, by exploring vloggers’ impact in terms of nurturing relationships towards new value streams creation, this study aims to clarify the valuable resource of vloggers that can obtain from marketing perspectives.

With an explorative study, both qualitative and quantitative methods are applicable. However, an explorative study tends to rely more on qualitative methods such as interviewing experts based on the topic, participant observations, case studies and so on (Ibid). Thus, the main and primary method for this thesis will be qualitative method. The aim through this method is to gain deep understanding of beauty vloggers’ impact while playing the role as social media influencers. In this manner, qualitative methods are suited well under this context, since they are generally aiming to explore new aspects.
3.2 Research technique

3.2.1 Data collection
In terms of data collection, there are two types of empirical data to collect when conducting a research, which are primary data and secondary data. To explain primary data, it can be simply defined as the new data that is collected by the researchers themselves in order to answer the research question (Wolf, 2016). In addition, using primary data also imply that the data is collected from new sources since there are no previous data existed. In this research, primary data was collected as no previous data exists on the impact of beauty vloggers in terms of nurturing relationships with customers within the value creation process. In this manner, the primary data collection in this research includes a formal in-depth interview with a beauty vlogger called Cecilia Tao combined with multiple personal conversations with her, as well as conducting two focus groups with the aid of a beauty vlogger called Gamu in order to get inside opinions from participants, and get to know what they have experienced as followers and how they feel. Through collecting primary data, it is considered as high-relevance and vital information from both beauty vloggers and followers (audiences), this will help authors to analyse, discuss, and conclude in terms of the research questions in the following chapters.

As mentioned above, interview conduction will be the most important procedure to get rich primary data for this research. According to Kvale (1996, p88), there are seven stages within interview conduction, which are “Thematizing, Designing, Interviewing, Transcribing, Analyzing, Verifying and Reporting”. To explain more, Thematizing refers to the stage that a clear and accurate purpose as well as the description of the research topic need to be investigated, which has already presented and reflected in the previous two chapter, which are Introduction and Literature review. The Designing stage refers to the methodology chapter, which required to be completed before conducting interviews. The following one is Interviewing, it is usually conducted under a specific guide. Within this stage, in order to better record it and prepare for the analysis section, interviews are usually recorded as digital audio. This action refers to the next stage, which is Transcribing, with recorded digital audio, researchers are able to transcribe it from audio speech into written text. Afterwards, the transcribing text will need to be Analyzing, which connects with the following stage, which is Analyzing, this will be in details in the following “Analysis” chapter. After analysis, the researcher will gain finding, however, findings will need to be Verified. In the
end, Reporting the findings of the study will be the last procedure for researchers, which imply that the appropriate, readable form need to be applied to scientific and ethical standards as the primary function for this master’s thesis.

Secondary data is also used in this research in order to complement and support primary data. To explain, secondary data refers to the public data or information that has already been collected by other researchers (Wolf, 2016). By reviewing secondary sources of information, researchers have better chances to obtain background information regarding the research questions, and it is inexpensive (ibid). Moreover, Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) talked that by applying secondary data, researchers can save more time and collect important information. Furthermore, secondary data is helpful because it allows researchers to analyse the information that already consisted, which might provide additional knowledge, interpretation, or conclusions for current research with valuable directions (Saunders et al., 2012). In this research, the secondary sources will be collected and utilized through University database, google scholar as well as relevant web pages.

3.2.2 Method of Analysis
It has been put forward by Richards (2005) that the collection of data in a qualitative research is easy, however transcribing the data afterwards proves to be a challenge since the data volume is usually large in most researches. To circumvent that, the author made a suggestion that it is critical during collecting data and using tools as focus groups, there is need to record and carefully pay attention so that no data is lost. In this research, audio recordings were made during both focus group sessions. Critical points were also written down on each and every discussed aspect. Richards further mentioned that after the data was collected, it can be transcribed such that the analysis process could be easy since each and every discussed aspect will be revealed (ibid.)

With regards to that, throughout the focus group sessions and the interview with the beauty vlogger, data was recorded and written down and was later transcribed to create meaning. Since large amount of data was collected, the transcribing process took 4 days. Upon completion of the transcribing process, there was need to have a form of coding the data so that points from different participants can be connected together, this has also been facilitated by the fact that all raised responses, discussion and points seemed to be related and connected
since participants had a common background. Due to this, it made it easy to connect the pieces together and create meaning. Bryman & Bell (2015) argued that through the coding process, qualitative data can be divided into small parts that belongs to certain categories that are related.

3.2.3 Supporting statement to personal in-depth interview

Important point that need to be stated and clarified here in this study is that one of the author has known Cecilia Tao personally since 2016 before starting this research, in this manner, it can be questioned in terms of objectivity and credibility of this research, in addition, only one personal in-depth interview is not enough to collect empirical results and therefore can cause empirical weak. However, as academic researchers, we have been very cautious while applying methods and we clearly know the boundaries and rules during collecting data to make sure that the whole procedures were communicated well and unbiased, therefore we have confidence to maintain the objectivity and credibility in this research. Moreover, instead of considering it as a negative point, we consider it as a big advantage, since the authors have been able to get access to the beauty vlogger closer with trust therefore obtain consistent and deeper knowledge while the beauty vlogger is more likely to share ideas with us. Furthermore. As mentioned previously, to eliminate the concern of empirical weak in this research, the author has actually already had multiple times of informal conversations with the Cecilia Tao personally and therefore gained extra and valuable information concerning the relevant and key points in this research beyond simply one interview, in this regards, the whole collecting process is not only built upon a single interview, but with a long and consistent process of knowing and understanding Cecilia’s world as a beauty vlogger. In the end, the authors believe that Cecilia Tao is considered as a very representative and significant sample to focus on for this research due to her high popularity, in this manner, we expect to obtain credible and valuable findings from her.

3.2.4 Reasons of separating sender and receiver

Van de Ven (2007) argued that to enhance validity of data collected, it is essential for researchers to define the exact target population from where to collect information. In support to that, we were privileged to be in contact with two vloggers namely Cecilia (Sweden, China) and Gamu (South Africa) in this study. These proved to be the right target sample groups for
our study, however, Cecilia mentioned that she can only facilitate this study by just focusing on her and not to approach her followers due to personal reasons. Since this study is about the concept of relationship building that includes both the vloggers and followers, Gamu facilitated the study to complete the circle by allowing us to approach her followers through her weekly workgroup sessions.

In addition to that, Van de Ven (2007) mentioned that researchers usually conduct their studies in localized and particularistic settings and generalize the findings to the broadest possible domains of theory and population. This can affect the credibility of a study. Having the perspective from Cecilia with Gamu’s followers has broadened the sample population thus increasing the probability of having information from participants in different settings. Moreover, the characteristics of the vloggers were similar despite being in different geographical locations. These aspects included having active social media accounts with number of followers, additionally they both call themselves as makeup artist. The similarities and traits of both beauty vloggers seemed to be same also allowed us to conduct the study. Furthermore, suggestions for future studies will be presented in chapter seven to advocate for a study that beauty vloggers are directly connected with followers.

3.3 Personal in-depth Interview

3.3.1 In-depth interview methodology

From the sender’s perspective, this methodology was designed to obtain and therefore it was conducted through a personal in-depth interview with a beauty vlogger. According to Kvale (1996), interviews are considered as conversations between interviewer and interviewee, which in this study, interviewer refers to the researcher and interviewee refers to the beauty vlogger. Moreover, in-depth interviews are usually held with only one respondent instead of talking with several respondents. This is a formal process, in which the interviewer will ask the interviewee several semi-structured questions. Semi-structured questions are usually designed to be open in order to allow interviewee develop ideas (Harvey, 2018), followed by inquiry into the research questions. This allows the interviewee to elaborate on the problem be encouraged to provide more insight information concerning the subject (Blumberg et al., 2011). Furthermore, with semi-structured questions, the researchers can obtain information if
the interviewee who is considered as expert can confirm the understanding and knowledge that the researchers have already possessed.

### 3.3.2 Conducting the interview

To conduct a good in-depth interview, it is important to plan and prepare well for it and the purpose of this study must always be stated clearly. One formal in-depth interview with a popular beauty vlogger called Cecilia Tao was conducted. Due to disclosure and privacy agreement with the beauty vlogger, the name is given here of her is an assumed name and it has been approved by her. Moreover, to introduce her background briefly, Cecilia Tao is a multi-cultured fashion and beauty vlogger, she is best well-known for her bluntly honest before-and-after makeup videos, until 13th May, 2018, she has over 350k subscribers and a collective 12.9 million views on YouTube, 189k followers on Instagram, and 842k in Bilibili\(^1\). As it can be seen that there is no doubt that her natural personality and professional expertise within beauty have attracted numerous numbers of loyal fans internationally.

To set up the in-depth interview with her, we were very fortunate to get chance and support by Cecilia Tao within her very busy schedule. The interview was successfully conducted on 29th, March, 2018. In order to reduce interviewee’s nervousness and make her feel relaxed and comfortable, the interview was conducted at a rather quiet coffee shop where close to her office.

To formulate the interview questions, the basis of the interview questions is based on the research question that has been stated previously. Moreover, the interview questions are developed to address vloggers’ impact in terms of nurturing relationships in the value creation process with customers. The interview questions are described and can be seen in *Appendix 1*.

\(^1\) Bilibili is one of the biggest video sharing websites based in China.
3.4 Focus groups

3.4.1 Focus group methodology

From the receiver’s perspective, the research was designed to accommodate their views and this was done through conducting focus groups. According to Freitas et al. (1998), it was mentioned that focus group as a research method can be used in conjunction with other methods depending on the research objective. This was concluded to be vital, because through such a method, the audience or followers’ experiences and views about their influencers facilitated to make conclusions on how the nature of relationships is. Having focus groups as a research method facilitates in getting insights on how followers think and what they have experienced and this method proved to be good relating to the concept of understanding how their relationship are like with their influencer hence allowing researchers to pinpoint gaps that exists in nurturing relationships on virtual markets.

Freitas et al. (1998, p.2) further proposed a definition that “focus group is a type of in-depth interview accomplished in a group, whose meetings present characteristics defined with respect to the proposal, size, composition, and interview procedures”. In conducting focus groups, the main aim is to enable researcher to observe and monitor how the discussions and suggestions between the participants evolves as they continuously interact with each other hence giving the researcher views and insights on how points are developed, monitor the development of opinions, feelings and thoughts of the participants (Ahrne & Svensson, 2016). With the continuous interaction of subject at hand, participants can influence them to agree or disagree with each other’s opinions thereby creating a richer image of their reality (Kitzinger, 1994).

According to Freitas et al. (1998), the use of focus groups allows the collection of appropriate amount of data in a short period of time. This method was considered to be suitable method on this study considering the time limit and this was supported by Morgan (1996) who mentioned that focus groups give a richer amount of information in a short period of time. In addition, that focus groups permit a richness and a flexibility in the collection of data that are not usually achieved when applying an instrument individually and as well permits spontaneity of interaction among the participants (Freitas et al., 1998). Below figure elaborates the advantages and disadvantages of applying focus groups:
### 3.4.2 Participant selection

It was explained that the number of focus groups that researchers should conduct in carrying out studies usually depends on the size of the study and the time scheduling and convenience of participants to involved (Saunders et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Considering the time limit of the participants as advised from beauty vlogger Gamu, two focus groups were conducted in collecting data for this study. Additionally, Saunders et al. (2012) highlighted that it is vital to select participants in a study that have similar interests or factors. Both focus group comprised of women and those that are active on social media sites with issues relating beauty makeup. Krueger & Casey (2009) are amongst a number of authors who advocated that at least four but a maximum of 10 participants are enough in conducting group sessions since this gives room to each participant to express their views.

In setting up the focus groups, we were fortunate that the vlogger Gamu was engaged in this study during her face to face weekly sessions with her followers, this facilitated us to engage with the invited participants despite the time factor mentioned to accommodate our study. Both groups comprised of 20 participants and this contradicted with Krueger & Casey (2009) on the number of participants, however it was observed that some members were inactive in participation through the sessions hence having a reduction in the number of respondents. It

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**Figure 6: Advantages and disadvantages of conducting focus group**

Source: Freitas et al. (1998, p.4)
was a privilege to have such groups since all participants had one thing in common that is the issue concerning beauty and being active as social media followers, this aided us to collect information from the correct source. A total of 30 participants were observed to be highly active in both focus group sessions. In addition to that, both groups comprised of women around the age between 23-30 according to the vlogger and nationalities included South Africans, Indians, Zimbabweans and Chinese. Having a pool of participants with different background also enhanced the authenticity of information collected and views that were different.

3.4.3 Guideline and execution of focus group sessions
The focus groups sessions were guided with a set of semi-structured interview questions which were indicated to be open questions such that participants were not limited to give their opinions. Two questions were introduced at the beginning of each session. See Appendix 2, this was meant to make the respondents feel comfortable and they were general questions about their background about social media issues and this was meant to open up the discussion. An open discussion concept was set such that there was a debate and giving of opinions without being formally controlled with the questions. Two focus group sessions were conducted on different days with different participants. 20 participants took part in each focus group and this was done on the 26th of March and 28th of March 2018. Since this was a courtesy call of the vlogger, each session lasted for about 45 minutes. Despite the time limit, all questions intended for participants’ discussion were explored and information was collected through voice recording as well as in writing.

3.5 Participant observation
As mentioned by Kawulich (2005), participant observation can be used in a way to increase the validity of a study, since observations help researchers have a better understanding of the context and phenomenon that lay under different studies. With regards to that, the method was conducted and researchers went on to make observations on the vlogger’s Facebook and Instagram account to verify, make observations and contrast with the results collected during focus groups. Erlandson et al. (1993) argued that observations enable researcher to be able to describe situations using the five senses thus being able to provide a "written photograph" of
the situation under study. Participant observation enables researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities (Kawulich, 2005). Despite having conducted focus group we find this complimenting method to be necessary in this study since this facilitated to monitor the behaviour of both the vlogger and the follower and observe how the concept of relationship building evolved.

Schmuck (1997) supported by suggesting that this facilitates researchers in checking for nonverbal expression of feelings which can be through commenting, determine who interacts with whom, assess how participants communicate with each other and observing how much time is spent on various activities. This proved to be a necessary method in this study since this facilitated us to make observations on some critical issues like the observing the dates the vlogger posts as suggested by one respondent that there is less frequency of posting hence this limits the connection and relationship building between vloggers and followers. To connect data collected during focus groups the researchers find this as ideal and observations were done on different sites mentioned during focus groups which included Switch Beauty, Estella Cosmetics, Make-up by Gamu, MDMFLOW, Mary Kay Beauty Products-Zim and Make-up South Africa.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Within qualitative study, validity and reliability are well-discussed topics. According to Bryman & Bell (2011), validity often refers to the credibility of the results and if the resulted can be generalized. They further explained that there are some difficulties in qualitative research because they are often limited to a few people in a particular place or organization. This study aims to develop better understanding of beauty vloggers’ impact in terms of nurturing relationships in the value creation process with followers. However, it does not aim to generalized the results of the study, rather an indication than a simple fact. Moreover, the methodology has been conducted in a consistent way as well as using transcribing with interviewees permission in order to maintain accuracy.

Reliability often refers to the ability of research instruments to provide stable, consistent results over the time (Stenbacka, 2001). This is usually hard to obtain in a qualitative study.
This research consists of in-depth interview with beauty vlogger combined with multiple times of conversations and focus group as well as qualitative observation, which to a certain degree, can be replicated. In this manner, it has been taken into consideration as a limitation since there is possibility to affect the results.

3.7 Limitations

There are following limitations in terms of the methodology. To start, according to Bryman & Bell (2011), the first limitation is connected with qualitative research that include researcher bias and lack of transparency, in this manner, the empirical findings need to be handled carefully, since the primary data relies on a single beauty vlogger and the chosen research technique is conducted by interview. The second limitation is due to time and location constraints, when conducted the focus group, the sample is rather small and both researchers can only get information through online video chat as the focus group was conducted in Africa where is far away from Sweden.
Chapter 4 Empirical findings

This following chapter of the research project will present the key results and findings that obtained through two perspectives, one is from a semi-structured interview with the vlogger combined with multiple personal conversations with her, as well as complementary data that was collected from secondary sources. The other one was obtained from respondents in the semi-structured interviews as well and conducted through two different focus group sessions combined with findings that gathered through observation on different social media sites mentioned during focus group sessions as supporting evidence. The key results and findings are considered within social friendship between beauty vloggers and followers, it aims to gain deeper knowledge into the impact of beauty vloggers and how they build relationship with followers on social market. Additionally, based on the key components that were discussed in literature review as well as in the interview guide, the core categories of findings between vloggers and followers will both be divided into four constructs, which are Engagement, Trust and Commitment, Interaction and Communication.

4.1 Perspective of the beauty vlogger

In this section, we outline that our key information was gathered through a personal in-depth interview with a beauty vlogger who called as Cecilia Tao combined with the knowledge that the author gained from multiple personal conversations with her, as well as complementary data that was collected through secondary sources including relevant academic researches and web pages. The formal personal interview was conducted on 29th March, 2018, the interview guide with the vlogger is given in Appendix 1. Before looking into the following four categories, the interview was guided with a general opening question, which read as: What brought you to become as a beauty vlogger and what made you keep doing it? As a starting point question to the interviewee, we found it as necessary information to be aware of the background. Cecilia explained that “Personal interest was the biggest factor that brought me to become a beauty vlogger, since I have been enjoying very much of doing makeup and stylist myself” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). She further added that the motivation of her first tutorial video was actually because of people kept questioning her on how she did her makeup. In this manner, she started to put more effort on her social media accounts and afterwards, she realized that doing vlogging and talking with people who likes her makeup made her feel relaxed and interesting, which has motivated her to keep doing this.
In order to reflect more specifically on this research project, we decided to ask the following question to the interviewee, which read as: *How do you consider yourself building relationship with your followers?* To correspond it, Cecilia considered that there was not specific relationship between her and her followers in the beginning. However, she admitted that there were some changes when she started to have more followers, “*At that point, I started to consider myself not only have a friendship relationship with my followers, but also like a leader at the same time since the part of work in my beauty channel is to provide my followers with various beauty tips and suggestions. I feel I do like to consider my followers as friends. For instance, I always end a sentence with ‘I hope you do also have a nice day today after watching it’ in the end of my beauty videos*” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018).

During one personal conversation, Cecilia has ever mentioned her story that since she was a kid and when she just started to become a beauty vlogger, there were always some people who wrote negative comments to her and judge on her original looking without makeup, like ‘you are ugly, you need surgery’. However, she also said “*there were more people supporting me and amazed by how I transformed my face when I started to update my beauty videos, not every girl originally has a pretty face, but I want to take my actions and tell more girls who have relatable experiences as me that we can look pretty as well by doing makeup or even without makeup, live for yourself. I would not forget how I started being a beauty vlogger no matter what will happen in the future*” (personal conversation with Cecilia, 2016). In this manner, Cecilia considered much importance towards building relationship with her followers, for her, her followers are just thousands of girls who want to become prettier, like she does, so she wants to help them, as a teacher, also as a friend.

4.1 Engagement

Followed by the concept of building relationship within virtual market, the major aim for these relevant questions was to find out what is engagement for beauty vloggers and to what levels they are applying this regarding relationship building with followers. Sashi (2012) has put forward that building engagement is the key to building and maintenance of the relationships. It has been considered as the effective way between vloggers and followers to keep the personal dialogues going on. In addition, connection has been considered the first important aspect of customer engagement because it allows the creation of emotional bonds between customers and sellers (ibid). Followed by the interview guide, the importance of
engagement has been supported by Cecilia, she said “I must say this is a very important part for me. When you have been watching someone for a long time, you would start to keep doing that as a routine in part of your life, it is like drug...a joke haha” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018).

In this manner, she emphasized the importance of keeping communication frequently with followers in order to maintain engagement. To apply it, she mentioned that she normally updates pictures once in a day or two days and update videos once in a week, so that her followers would get used to see her, and therefore more people would get more chances to know her as well and become her potential followers.

When we talk about vlogger, what we heard that they are those people who talk with other people through the camera, which makes them look like a crazy person, but this is just too normal for a vlogger, Cecilia has proved this point within a personal conversation. She further pointed out during the interview that the actual importance of doing that, she said “this is the crucial part for me to build connection with my audiences since I can respond my followers’ questions from the comment section and doing it face to face with them. In that manner, me and my followers are actually communicating with each other, even though I know nothing about them, we are directly connected” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018).

To complement what is engagement for beauty vloggers, Franseen. (2015) has collected relevant findings that beauty vloggers increase engagement level by asking questions directly to the audiences like friends, in this regards, beauty vloggers and audiences are connected closely. Based on a video called Beauty & Random Favourites that was updated by a beauty vlogger Tanya Burr in May 2013, she talked in the video that “I have got fashion items to show you and I am obsessed with these, I bought them in May time. I think I bought them in like the first week of May or something. And here they are. How amazing are they right? I know some of you might hate these and think they’re really kind of gross, but some of you hopefully will love them like I do.”

4.1.2 Trust and Commitment

The concept of trust and commitment has been considered as the key to mediate roles in establishing, developing and maintaining the relationships between concerned parties (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Usoro et al (2007) further emphasized that through the established connection and trust, the audience will be more likely to invest their time and emotional
connection with the influencers. Researchers found this concept as the important one in this research because without trust and commitment between beauty vloggers and followers, there is no two-way relationship between them. In this manner, there is need to explore how beauty vloggers perceive this concept. This allowed us to have discussion with the beauty vlogger in terms of her opinions on this concept. For Cecilia, she states that compared with the traditional promotion ways through television or magazines with Photoshop and over beautify images of products, the beauty vloggers are actually showing the real things and share their real using experiences with the followers like real persons. “I believe at this point, people tend to trust us more than traditional commercial ways because we are more real and touchable” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018).

To further reflect on her perceptions on trust and commitment, Cecilia shared her own story with us: “I do know the importance to build trust with people who believes in me, therefore I only recommend products that I think are good, as well as comes to sponsored products, otherwise I will never recommend to my followers. People who have been following me know that’s my way. For instance, recently I had to cancel a contract with a factory that produced makeup brushes with me. I know my followers have been waiting and expecting for it very long. Dissolution of contract would mean that I need to refund a lot money to the factory, however I still made the decision to end it, and I wrote apologize letter to my followers on my social media accounts. The reason why I did it was because I realized that the brushes’ real quality is not good enough for me to sell when I tried their samples, if I sell them, I will feel that I betray my followers and do not hold the commitments with them, I do not want to let my followers down and lose their trust on me. Once I lost, I lost forever. For me it is more important to build a long term relationship with my followers who have been always supported me than earning short term money” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018).

Moreover, Cecilia has shared her opinions in terms of sponsored videos, looking into a previous personal conversation, she talked that when her channel started to become more well-known on social media platforms such as YouTube and Bilibili, the numbers of my followers dramatically increased. In this regards, she got more attention from those beauty brands and she started to have chance to earn money by having collaboration with those brands, or we can understand it as sponsorship, Cecilia also explained the reason why beauty brands want to collaborate with her as ‘high conversion rate’ since vloggers have more specific and target groups that brands want to obtain. As professional vloggers who are doing
vlogging as their job, you do not get money directly from those platforms like YouTube or even no money at all, in that manner, if you want to make money to do it as your career, it is necessary to accept doing sponsored videos. “You know...doing sponsorship is not all about negative things. I considered it as perfect when I can do something that I have personal passion on as well that I can work it as my career and earn money from it as a job, this is attractive, is not it? I think as long as you know what kind of sponsorships you decide to accept according to your criteria and what kind of messages that you are going to deliver to your followers as being a professional beauty vlogger. Time will prove everything whether you keep their trust or lose” (personal conversation, end of 2017).

To complement what is trust and commitment for beauty vloggers, secondary data was collected from academic researcher as well as web pages. Berryman, R. & Kavka, M., (2017) have presented relevant data from a well-known beauty vlogger called as Zoe Sugg, who has impressive 11 million subscribers on YouTube, in terms of trust and commitment, Zoe commented that: “I do do sponsorships with brands, but I would say that I probably turn down ninety percent, because I have built up groups of audiences who trust my opinion. I would only want to talk about something that I am one hundred percent sure that it is worth to recommend”. Cyk, J., (2015) further supported this opinion by conducting interviews with more beauty vloggers. Nilsen, also known as MissGlamorazzi, said that “It is no problem for me to reject brands that do not fit with my vision. I have been working with fewer brands, which means I can focus on building relationships that have long-term potential and have enough space to create my own content.” Another vlogger Michelle Phan, who is considered as the queen of beauty vlogger, has valued at $84 million, including a licensing deal with L’oreal. She talked that “I’m not trying to sell it to my viewers, I would push it on my channel only if I fall in love with it, and it would sell itself”. This proves that an authentic vlogger will never take something just for money, and this is the essential factor for beauty vloggers to build trust with their followers.

4.1.3 Interaction
Interaction activities have been considered as the most essential tools to build a public relationship (Sashi, 2012). In order to better share the ideas on products or tips, it is important to keep interaction between beauty vloggers and audiences. Moreover, interaction has been seen as the important function for social media, that is the reason why there are different
communities have developed through social media. Having this perspective, we found it as important to find out how beauty vloggers perceive interaction and how they apply it. This has allowed us to have discussion with the beauty vlogger and gain ideas from her. Cecilia explained her usual way to interact with her followers, “I usually write something that my followers can actually comment on when I upload new photos such as: ‘It’s a sunny day today, what would you like to do?’; so that they can answer my question in the comment section, afterwards I can tap like to their comments, I believe this helps to motivate my followers being more active” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). Cecilia further added that the interaction also happens when she updates her new makeup tutorial video, she always encourage her followers to update their versions of makeup that was inspired by her makeup videos so that they can share with. In addition, Cecilia mentioned that the contents of her videos are quite various, and sometimes it can be made specifically to respond the needs for the followers, “you know, when you start to have friendship with your followers, the interaction with them happens more naturally. They want to know more about you and I usually got a lot of questions from them, and that was the reason why I made a video with the title of ‘50 facts about me’ in my channel, so that my followers can know me better” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). Regarding her recent interactions with her followers, Cecilia said she has developed more fun ways to interact with her followers, “when I am traveling to somewhere, I usually inform my followers through my social media accounts that I am going to a certain area so that they might have chance to meet me and they can tag me afterwards in social media, I am always happy to see people share it, and afterwards I will tap like to them” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). She supported that this has helped her to create more chances to interact with her followers, not only through internet, but also in real life.

To further complement what is interaction for beauty vloggers, Franseen, (2015) has provided two evidences that showing in what ways beauty vloggers are interacting with audiences. To explain, Zoella, a beauty vlogger has talked in her video called ‘50 Facts about Me’ that “I would love it if you could leave any interesting facts about you, because obviously now you know a lot more about me and I just never know anything about you guys! So do let me know some interesting fun things about you that I can read in the comments.” Moreover, another beauty vlogger called Tanya Burr, talked through her video called ‘Perrie Edwards Makeup Tutorial – One Direction Girlfriend Series’ that “whilst I remember to say this, please leave me comments and tell me what tutorial you would like me to do next, because I always have like a list of videos that I am going to do and I think next week I might do a ‘Get Ready With
Me’, ‘My Morning Routine’ video, because you guys were asking me to do that so much. Let me know in the comments if you would like to see that video.”

4.1.4 Communication
As mentioned previously in terms of the concept of engagement, the relationship between beauty vloggers and followers have been considered as a two-way communication, instead of a single way communication from the traditional commercial way that the message is directly delivered from the brand to their audience. According to the research group Exforsys (2010), a two-way communication is an important factor that plays an important role in forming relationship. Berry (1995) further pointed out that in order to maintain and enhance a long term relationship, a two-way communications approach is necessary where entities involved are in regular contact with one another. In this manner, there is need to explore how beauty vloggers perceive this concept. This allowed us to have discussion with the beauty vlogger with the following question given: How do you consider your followers perceive about your character, your personality and the way you are doing your videos? We consider this question can help us to get more insight of her way to communicate with followers. Cecilia admitted that when it comes to communication with followers, especially within social media, people more tend to choose what they want to see and hear, “I guess my image for them is positive and less lazy than I actually are. There are days that I do not wear makeup, that is not the image when I upload, and when I update photos. So they only see parts of my life, which is in a way, kind of bad, because they are thinking I am a perfect girl, who is doing perfect makeup everyday, but that is not true” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). Cecilia furthermore expressed what she has been considering to have better communication with her followers, “I want to show more real side of me to my followers, I want to let them know that I am not always wearing perfect makeup, that was why I started to make more life vlog. I feel I can show more of my true personality to my followers through it and to have real communication with them. It is not only about makeup skills and products, but also showing how I live, what is my life attitude in normal life, that is more personal and more real. I believe this will help my followers to accept and trust me better and feel like being real friends with each other” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). According to Cecilia, a good communication is never built in a single way, but must be built through two sides, in this manner, as a information sender, she has always been taking the responsibilities to initially deliver her sincerity to the receivers that she would like to talk with her followers, in return,
her followers are more likely to join the communication with her (personal conversation with Cecilia, November, 2017).

To complement what is communication for beauty vloggers, factors such as friendliness, humour that present more real personality provides beauty vloggers with more social attractiveness and create a comfortable atmosphere along with their audiences within communication. Franseen, (2015) provided an example in her research from a video called ‘My Pamper Evening Essentials’ by a beauty vlogger Zoella, she talked during the video that: “The next step is to get into the bath. That’s not difficult. I do not think I will need to talk you through that bit. You put your feet in and you get in. Take your clothes off first. I do not have a shot of myself in the bath because I thought that would be kind of inappropriate. So you can just imagine... actually no, do not do that. That is not a good idea.”

4.2 Perspective of the followers

In this section, we conclude the information that was gathered from the followers’ perspectives with two different focus group at receiver’s level. The reasons behind the collection of data from two different focus groups were to enhance the collection of information from people with different backgrounds in order to collect enough information that is covering all areas within the study that intended to have insights on. Moreover, during the process of collecting data, it has been analysed that the responses from both groups seemed to have similarities and therefore can be summarized together. Before looking into the following four categories, the interview was guided with two general opening questions, which the first one read as: Which beauty social media players do you follow? As to be presented next, both groups seemed to have common beauty vloggers who they follow. Due to similarities regarding the responses, the researchers managed to combine and connect results from both groups and lead to the presentation of results as a collective manner and not splitting the groups. The results are respectively given below in a table form:
As indicated above, a number of vloggers from two focus groups seemed to be repeated. This indicated that there was a form of a connection between participants, which researchers assumed that due to referrals from the other members during their weekly meeting sessions with the vlogger Gamu. In this regards, researchers found it ideal to present that the common vloggers from two groups imply the connection to the research topic on relationship building in the sense that Farrelly & Quester (2005) have explained that good relationships extends to satisfaction and hence create loyalty. The loyalty essence is achieved when a customer refers others towards certain brands or products. In this manner, the participants from focus group one might have made referrals to participants in group two or vice versa.

As the second opening question to the focus group sessions, which read as: What made you to follow them and for how long have you followed them so far? The researchers found it ideal to have background information in terms of the reasons behind that triggered the participants to follow different vloggers. This question intended to find out if there are any possibilities to have relationships that have been built by vloggers. Numbers of responses have been put forward from both focus group sessions and have been categorised under three aspects, which are referrals, vlogger background and vlogger character. According to the responses that given from participants, researchers obtained reflection that the followers can act as third party marketers for products or be referrals. A number of respondents in both sessions have agreed on this. In this manner, it has indicated that the satisfaction of followers towards vloggers can actually promote the name of the vloggers by inviting other followers. Relevant responses are elaborated respectively as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS GROUP 1</th>
<th>FOCUS GROUP 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make-up by Gamu</td>
<td>1. Flormar SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Make-up South Africa</td>
<td>2. Make-up by Gamu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Estella Cosmetics</td>
<td>4. MDMFLOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. MDMFLOW</td>
<td>5. Estella Cosmetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Nyma Tang</td>
<td>7. Make-up South Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Mentioned vloggers*
“I followed most of them because of my friend here introduced to me, she knows that I like beauty things. It has been 3 months now since I followed them and the products that they offered are genuine, and I use them all the time”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

“I have been following almost all my vloggers for about six months now since my daughter introduced these beauty things to me and she said the best way is to check online”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

In addition, the geographical proximity of the vloggers and their background have also been highlighted as the reason behind participants in terms of the selection of different vloggers. Based on the responses given by the participants, there is an indication that the followers consider many features such as the contents background, nationality, accessibility to face to face meetings from creators and so on. Relevant responses are respectively given below:

“I followed them because they are local and we can get to meet them in person like Gamu and I have followed her for about one year now”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

“Most of my vloggers are local, I don't like celebrities, because I feel they are not real, and they are not true representation of what they do”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

“I follow because they are black as well and they know how to do the most suitable make up for us”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

Responses given above as well connected to the vloggers mentioned from the Table 1 above, as verified by the researchers, most of the vloggers are African based. According to participant selection that was presented in chapter 3, the participants were from different nationalities and with regards to their physical location being in Africa, which supported the idea of locality and proximity of vloggers to be considered as a factor in terms of why people choose to follow them.

Moreover, some participants mentioned that the vloggers’ personalities and characters help
them to build loyalty with them. Relevant responses are respectively given below:

“I follow most of them because they are nice and they respond to comments, it feels very connected and you know that you can get to know them more if you ask them”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

“They seem to be experienced and that is why I follow them, and my friend introduced them to me as well. It has been many months now, I can not remember how many, but I feel they are doing a good job”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

From the responses given above, it can be concluded from a different standpoint that the characters of vloggers can influence the public to engage with them. The way the audiences perceive them to be experienced is also a factor of consideration when followers select the vloggers to follow. The picture or image that the vloggers portray on their social sites is evaluated by the followers and this facilitates them in making decisions of whether to engage with the vlogger or not. This indicates the importance of being professional and well presented for vloggers to nurture long standing relationships with the followers towards value creation.

4.2.1 Engagement

This section is guided with the interview questions, see Appendix 2. The major underlying intention for the questions were to find out concerning what followers have experienced as far as vloggers’ engagement towards their social sites. Baird & Parasnis (2011) and Sashi (2012) have emphasized a focal point that social media platforms have greatly facilitated and tended to enhance the establishment of connections. However, there is a gap in terms of to what extends are vloggers applying this or how engaged they are to establish connections towards relationship building. In this regards, our findings indicate that followers monitor the posting frequency of the vloggers. As presented below, relevant responses were quoted from both focus groups:

“I think one problem that I have with some of my vloggers is their posts frequency. I just do not know how they do it and my observation is that they post once a week, for example on
Make-up South Africa, it is rather worse because I do not remember when they last updated their Facebook post, However, Gamu (vlogger) posts at least I think twice a week. I do not have a problem with that and I think it helps to increase the number of followers”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

“Not all of my vloggers show signs of engagement, in this manner, I tend to unfollow them immediately because I think they are showing lack of seriousness and taking for granted to the followers...I was triggered to follow Estelle Cosmetics a while ago by my friend, she referred to me and as well a vlogger who I like used to present there, she is pretty and her age looked the same as me”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

In response to the question in terms of the level of engagement of the vlogger (see Appendix 2), these responses from two focus groups indicated that followers are inclined to follow vloggers with high frequency posting habit on their sites. In addition, as explained by other participants, this is a factor that they use to evaluate the level of seriousness of the vlogger. Moreover, to verify what was presented by participants, as researchers, we found it rigorous to further explore whether what have been said is true before start analyzing. With regards to the above response by participant in group one in terms of low frequency post on Make-up South Africa account, we had a participant observation on its Facebook page and as below shown, the view is verified.
As a supporting evidence, an observation has done and it matched with the responses given from the participant in focus group one. This gave a reflection to researchers concerning the effect on low frequency of posting within relationship building. As it can be seen from Figure 7, the last post on the page was on the 6th of January 2018 and this observation was made on the 26th of March 2018, which indicates an approximate of two months being inactive. This shows a sign of a vlogger who is less engaged in doing or updating their pages.

Moreover, some participants provided their views in terms of having a low post frequency from vloggers is a sign of being immature and lack of experiences. This has supported by a participant who said: “I unfollowed all my previous vloggers and decided to leave with Gamu. The reasons of doing that was because the previous vloggers seem to be not mature and lacked of experience on approaching the followers. I would not want to mention that but it is just bad to misrepresent. Gamu was a referral and she seem to be good and genuine” (Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018). This implied the effect on nurturing relationships on social media since it reduces the connection that could be enhanced when vloggers regularly posts on their pages.

Furthermore, one participant mentioned her experience of being engaged with a beauty vlogger, “It feels a nice experience being engaged with Make-up South Africa, because their
presenters are very beautiful. I love them all besides that they look very experienced and their ages corresponds to mine, which makes it perfect” (Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018). This indicated that engagement is created from both sides that includes vlogger as well as followers. In addition, the appearance of vloggers is also a factor that can promote engagement of followers, because followers are human and their personal preferences can develop without the vlogger being aware of. Bearing this in mind, it becomes a mandate that vloggers should be aware of such followers.

4.2.2 Trust and Commitment

Supported from many scholars and researchers, we assessed that on virtual markets, there are no specific rules and this has brought up the concept of trust and commitment by Morgan and Hunt (1994) to facilitate relationship building within social media. We found this concept ideal in our study because there has to be trust and commitment for beauty vloggers to build relationships with followers. In this regards, it is necessary to explore how followers perceive about this concept. Giving special attention to what Johnson and Garbarino (1999) argued, the expectations of trustworthiness between parties results from the ability to perform expertise, reliability and intentionality. This allowed us to ask questions and evaluate how the followed vloggers are showing those traits towards relationship building.

Several interesting views were aired out during group sessions and have been quoted as below:

“I do not trust those vloggers who are just there to sell products. I would rather believe in someone who represents a single product or brand and sell for weeks. Those who are always changing makeup products and different brands daily...that is a lie, I do not like those vloggers, it is simply commercial then, we know that and we do not expect that. Focus and specialisation is better”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

Looking into the first quote, we concluded that participants agreed on the statement that the followers are aware of the behaviour in terms of what vloggers portray on their pages. This advocated that trust is given to vloggers as experts regarding what they say and do within their social platforms, and this makes them whether to be trusted by followers or not.
Moreover, other participants mentioned that they are aware of the marketing tendencies done by vloggers. Due to that, trust is given to vloggers who truly represent what they do or stand with one brand rather than switching from brand to brand.

In addition to that, posting frequency and responding rates have also been suggested by two participants as an evaluating criterion in defining whether the vlogger is committed or not. The original words have been quoted below:

“Those vloggers who do not post regularly or respond questions show low level of commitment to me. I think a vlogger should at least try to follow up the questions concerning what they posted and it is actually good for creating relations with the followers”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

“I feel connected if a vlogger reply my comment. It is nice and shows that I am recognised by the vlogger. For me, this is well committed of the vlogger because I feel they are not only using us for marketing their products or something else”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

As researchers, we went further to make observations on different pages from vloggers that were mentioned by participants, in order to verified with the objective to assess and present whether what have been mentioned during group sessions is feasible. In this manner, by giving attention mainly to the idea of focus and specialisation from focus group two, the result was adopted from Flomar SA’s instagram page on 29th of March 2018. The image is presented as below:
The observation that was made through assessing the page was that the vlogger focused mainly on Flormar SA branded products throughout her page, which supports a *focus and specialisation* response during the group two session. This corresponds to a respondent who even mentioned that “I find it real when vloggers commit to one brand for a while before switching to another one on their profiles” (Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018). This can be observed from Flormar SA post and it was accompanied by other related brands as written on the post. This is a sign of commitment to one brand and hence being seen as a true representation that facilitates relationship building to followers.

### 4.2.3 Interaction

The reason behind exploring this concept of interaction is because theories have entailed that through interaction and relationships can be built in a long-run and transform to value eventually. Having this theoretical perspective, we found it ideal to include in our focus group sessions, so that we can better understand how the followers perceive or how they expect with regards to the way that they interact with different vloggers who they have been following. This was done to facilitate this study in order to answer the main research problem since the gathered responses would be helpful to find the best possible ways for vloggers to
develop and apply in the future in terms of building long term relationships on virtual markets. As discussed through both groups, we realized that vloggers have tendencies of combining their posts or videos with links to websites or online shops where followers could directly go to purchase relevant products.

Looking into the information that has been gathered from participants, they have proved that some vloggers are more interactive and some are not. In addition, respondent from focus group two went further to describe those vloggers who are less interactive and they are considered as “sleeping vloggers”. The original words from respondents have been quoted below:

“We expect a highly active interactive dialogue. If there are no links to follow or short answers regarding the relevant information of products, I will unfollow those “sleeping vloggers”. I personally think they should not be the traits of vloggers because I consider interaction promotes bonding that makes us to give credit towards the vloggers”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

“I consider it is a problem to me when vloggers post something and do not put more information, because then I will have to ask them again and if the vlogger is less interactive, you can get a reply maybe after four days or even more, which is kind of bad. Moreover, I think audios and visuals enhance us to interact more than just images”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

Afterwards, we went further to observe whether what were suggested by respondents during the group sessions have been done practically by vloggers. Therefore, an observation was done on Flomar SA’s instagram page on 30th of March, 2018. The image is presented below:
As it can be seen from the picture above, the observation corresponds to the response from the focus group, which suggests that there is need for interaction besides with mere presentation of products and their links. Conclusively participants in both group sessions have condemned posts of links and limited information that provided by vloggers as indicated above the Figure 9. It can be seen that there is ‘51 likes’, however, no any comments below the post, which does not promote interaction with the vlogger, additionally since there is no mutual connection, there are less chances of building good relationships. Such have been condemned in focus groups and described as “sleeping vloggers” by one participant. In order to enrich the relationship building, it is vital to promote interaction. To enhance interaction on virtual markets, respondents made suggestions such as using audio and videos to present more, in this regards, interaction could be promoted more between vloggers and followers.

4.2.4 Communication
The last concept is communication. It was also used in this research and the essence of it is to explore how vloggers are applying it relating to multiple theories, which suggested communication as a vital aspect for building relationship. A number of responses were taken
note from the focus groups, which implied that credits were given to vloggers that are consistent and non selective in how they respond to followers. Two relevant responses were quoted below:

“Some vloggers are selective, they have friends or people who they put much attention to, I do not know why but I have observed that with quite numbers of vloggers. We can see that and it does not make the community nice when the vlogger selects typically which person to reply, I know they have many comments to reply but they should at least do it evenly”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

“They typically reply after a while, which is not good!”

(Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018)

With regards to such responses, this defines the personality of a vlogger and as debated within the focus groups that not all vloggers who are like that. Moreover, comments have been given that those who show bad attitudes are not real vloggers, but rather as “pretenders”. Due to the fact that the focus groups were conducted after their workshops with the vlogger Gamu, the participants went on to mention that vloggers who set up face to face meeting with their vloggers are more credible and this improves the relationships within virtual markets, since there will be instant two-way communication.

As researchers we found it important to conduct observations on a number of social sites in an effort to find out whether what participants have suggested was actually happening and attention was therefore given to vlogger whom the participants were conducting the workshop with the vlogger Gamu. Below is evidence in a form of screenshot that from Make up by Gamu instagram page and it was cropped on the 30th of March, 2018.
The observation from Make-up by Gamu’s Instagram page corresponds to the response from focus group 1, which read as: “The vloggers at times are selective to whom the responds to” (26th March, 2018). As noted that the vlogger only gave attention to the sixth person and research entails that the person who got response is a famous radio account. In this regards, throughout the post, it has been noted that the level of communication was limited and rather low.

4.3 Chapter summary

The results and findings from the vlogger and follower perspectives were collected in an effort to find out how the level of engagement, trust and commitment, interaction and communication is evolving on virtual markets. The reason of being to pinpoint grey areas or pointing out where vloggers are doing it wrong or less hence facilitating in suggesting better ways into which they can control their beauty vlogging sites in ways that nurture and build relationships. From the vlogger’s perspective the reason was to understand the concept of relationships and how they are actually implementing relationship building strategies. At the same time from the followers’ perspective, the goal was to understand the perception that they have towards their vloggers relating to the concepts that were introduced towards
relationship building. As presented above, the responses were separated that is from vlogger and followers, however in the following chapter, the analysis will present as combined views that from both vloggers and followers to have a match and gain further understanding of this study.
Chapter 5 Interpretation on findings

This chapter presents interpretation of our main findings in relation to our conceptual framework that was presented previously in this study. The following parts will be guided by four constructs that were highlighted in chapter two, which are engagement, trust and commitment, interaction and communication. It combines the perspectives of both beauty vloggers and followers since the findings have been observed to have connecting standpoints.

5.1 Importance of Engagement

Holmlund-Rytkönen & Törnroos (1997) proposed that relationships usually evolve due to bonds such as socialisation between parties and this facilitates the continuity of relationships. However, for that to exist there is need for mutual understanding and connection which in this study the vlogger and audiences have mentioned. According to Cecilia Tao, when interviewed on how she considers herself on building relationships with her followers, she indicated that she actually considers her followers as her friends and also mentioned that in most of her beauty videos she ends up with a message which reads ‘I hope you do also have a nice day today’” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). The vlogger mentioned this since she feels that there is need to a welcoming and matured representation in building relationships on virtual markets. To support that, findings by Franseen (2015) presented in the previous chapter revealed that beauty vloggers increase engagement level by asking questions directly to the audiences like friends. This promotes continuity of maintaining the followers despite the low degree of mutuality that might be in existence between the vlogger and audience. (Holmlund-Rytkönen & Törnroos, 1997). Additionally, Burke et al. (2007) textual discourse research argued that a brief group or topic introduction in messages or videos intended to audiences tend to increases community response and acceptance. This gesture as well extends to having a closing remark or wish to followers after watching vloggers’ videos.

When Cecilia Tao was interviewed regarding the importance of engagement, she went on to highlight that: “I must say this is a very important part for me. When you have been watching someone for a long time, you would start to keep doing that as a routine in part of your life” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). Cecilia showed an understanding of how she influences people which lead to routine behaviour of followers in emulating all her works. That have been put forward by Brown & Hayes (2008), who argued that an influencer was defined as a third
party who significantly shapes the opinions and purchasing decisions of other customers. Since she mentioned that this is vital for her a follow up question was to understand how. Cecilia mentioned that she normally updates pictures once in a day or two days and update videos once in a week. This indicated an active and engaged vloggers considering the response gathered in the focus group. It was mentioned that:

“I think one problem that I have with some of my vloggers is their posts frequency. I just do not know how they do it and my observation is that they post once a week, for example on Make-up South Africa, it is rather worse because I do not remember when they last updated their Facebook post. However, Gamu (vlogger) posts at least I think twice a week. I do not have a problem with that and I think it helps to increase the number of followers”

(Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018)

The response above from focus group 1 contradicts with Cecilia responds and a conclusion that have been drawn is that for relationships to be built and maintained vloggers need highly active and be experienced. As mentioned by Hu et al. (2014), social media engagement can be influenced by experience as a creator-related feature. Devoting much time on the platform in form of posts enhances the potential of vloggers to create relationship that are guaranteed to exist for a while. This is so because during the focus group sessions it was mentioned that:

“I unfollowed all my previous vloggers and decided to leave with Gamu. The reasons of doing that was because the previous vloggers seem to be not mature and lacked of experience on approaching the followers. I would not want to mention that but it is just bad to misrepresent. Gamu was a referral and she seems to be good and genuine” (Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018). Mosley (2018) supported by mentioning that there is need to share information regularly on social platforms to build sites that are credible hence building relationships. With regular post the chances of keeping followers captivated is high hence increasing the degree of mutuality. This then extends to what Sashi (2012) postulated in his research that customer engagement expands the role of customers through making them co-creators of value. They will act as referrals.

With such a response low level of engagement can be detrimental since followers will interpret the vlogger to be less experienced thus unfollowing them. This can as well be critical if the audience themselves can influence each other. As shown on Table. 1, findings indicated that focus group 1 and 2 had similar vloggers that participants follow and
conclusion made was that they refer each other as one of the response mentions that: “I have been following almost all my vloggers for about six months now since my daughter introduced these beauty things to me and she said the best way is to check online” (Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018). This indicates that followers refer each other and this can as well be when the vloggers are interpreted to be less engaged and inexperienced. As explained earlier followers themselves can act as referrals to each other and Bettencourt et al. (2014) mentioned that the customers is no longer viewed as a “target” for value delivery, but rather as a “partner” who actively contributes to value creation. With this assertion, it is critical for vloggers to bear that in mind that their followers contribute to value creation and vloggers should act accordingly by being engaged (ibid.).

Reflecting further based on our empirical findings, engagement level between vloggers and followers can be affected by their relatable experiences. According to Jaakonmäki et al. (2017), many researchers have studied creator-related features, which include the creator’s number of followers, experience, age, sex within a specific social media community, moreover, Hu et al. (2014) mentioned that social media engagement can be influenced by experience as a creator-related feature. There are many reasons to attract audiences to be engaged into a specific social media community, which can be inspirational, relatable, useful, cautionary, and so on (Khamis et al., 2017). From a personal communication with vlogger Cecilia (2016), she specifically pointed out that “I want to take my actions and tell more girls who have relatable experiences as me that we can look pretty as well by doing makeup or even without makeup, live for yourself”. Looking into Cecilia’s story, she represents those girls who originally do not have a pretty face according to common beauty standard. In this regards, Cecilia’s personal and unique experiences have aroused girls who have relatable experiences as Cecilia and be encouraged to be themselves. Therefore, Cecilia is not only offering the most suitable makeup skills as a leader to help her followers to become prettier, but also providing a relatable experience and positive way to know yourselves better, in the end, her followers can gain confidence and energy from Cecilia and more likely to be involved into engagement. Furthermore, responses from focus groups have also supported the idea in terms of relatable experience. One respondent from group 1 said that “I follow them because they are black as well and they know how to do the most suitable make up for us” (26th March, 2018). Hall-Phillips et.al. (2016) supported this idea by mentioning that people are actively seeking for relatable experiences from other users, and this can enhance social consumer engagement. According to what participant said, due to their relatable experience
in terms of similar background of race, it made them feel friendliness and enhanced them to be engaged with vlogger involuntarily.

5.2 Importance of Trust and Commitment

As mentioned by Moorman et al. (1992) that the enduring desire to maintain a relationship is commitment. That sense of having an enduring effect on something can be explained by Harackiewicz and Hulleman (2010) as individual interest. They mentioned that individual interest in something is more enduring, trait-like and endures over a long period of time. It is usually considered a disposition that individuals take with them from one context to the next.

Reflecting on the response given by Cecilia Tao concerning what made her to be into vlogging. She explained that “Personal interest” as the biggest factor that brought me to become a beauty vlogger (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). Having personal interest as mentioned in doing something can lead to commitment due to personal desire in the respective area. This creates an enduring interest which transforms to commitment hence relationship building. Moore and Loewenstein (2004) argued that having a self-interest in something exerts a more automatic influence than do professional responsibilities. The figure below indicates the argumentation and highlight how automatic processes is characterised and influenced by personal interest as the findings have shown according to Cecilia’s responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Automatic processes</th>
<th>Controlled processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast (due to parallel processing)</td>
<td>Slow (due to serial processing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effortless</td>
<td>Effortful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inscrutable (not accessible to introspection)</td>
<td>Accessible to introspection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Characteristics of Automatic and Controlled Mental Processes

Source: Moore and Loewenstein (2004, p.191)

Findings have indicated that the followers or customers are aware of the tendencies of vloggers when interviewed in the focus groups. It was mentioned by a participant in focus group that “I do not trust those vloggers who are just there to sell products. I would rather believe in someone who represents a single product or brand and sell for weeks. Those who are always changing makeup products and different brands daily...that is a lie, I do not like
those vloggers, it is simply commercial then, we know that and we do not expect that. Focus and specialisation is better” (Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018). This have shown that the followers are aware of the behaviour of vloggers and to build trust towards relationship building it essential to be a true representation of what the vloggers do. With the response it can be explained that the prevailing behaviour of vloggers are falling under the controlled processes as mentioned by Moore and Loewenstein (2004) hence affecting the potential of vloggers to build relationships. Studies explained that since automatic processing tends to occur outside of conscious awareness of content creators, its influence on judgment and decision making is difficult to eliminate or completely correct. This then suggests that having a personal interest as Cecilia Tao increases the potential of her to be committed in vlogging thus building trust with her followers towards building relationships that are long standing. Marriott (2015) supported the response from focus group by suggesting that consistency is the key in building relationships on virtual markets since this tend to build trust with the audiences. As mentioned in the focus group interviews about having a focus and specialisation, this would enable vloggers to instil trust hence increasing the potential of them to be viewed as credible and being real.

Through the interview with Cecilia Tao, it has been observed that the way the vlogger interacts with the outside world defines whether they are committed to their audience or not. Cecilia Tao had a contract with a company to produce face brushes for her followers, however she cancelled the contact with the company afterwards. To explain, she said that: “The reason why I did it was because I realized that the brushes’ real quality is not good enough for me to sell when I tried their samples, if I sell them, I will feel that I betray my followers and do not hold the commitments with them, I do not want to let my followers down and lose their trust on me. Once I lost, I lost forever” (29th March, 2018).

The vlogger’s action indicated her commitment and the understanding of how the inferior brushes could have with her followers. Hoy & Tschannen-Moran (2003) supported her actions by arguing that trust relationships involve risk, reliability, vulnerability, and expectation. It can be viewed that Cecilia Tao took the risk of turning down the company offer in her efforts to maintain her relationship with her followers and that build trust towards relationship building and maintaining. Grabner-Kräuter (2009) advocated that trust is an essential factor towards building relationships on social networks. Moreover, Babar et al. (2006) explained that trust establishment and sustaining is considered to be very crucial for
all business relationships since facilitates increased performance, higher quality deliverables and greater satisfaction in the decision-making process.

In addition to that findings indicated that the followers interpret and define as well the way the vloggers appeal to them, response quoted from a focus group was that: “I feel connected if a vlogger reply my comment. It is nice and shows that I am recognised by the vlogger. For me, this is well committed of the vlogger because I feel they are not only using us for marketing their products or something else” (Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018). This showed that replying to comments made on posts also have an effect to the audiences and can be interpreted as commitment. However, in focus group 1 it was mentioned that: “I think a vlogger should at least try to follow up the questions concerning what they posted and it is actually good for creating relations with the followers” (26th March, 2018). Considering the number of followers and comments being passed on at times this can be a challenge to vloggers since they will be dealing with large numbers of followers but as the response suggests there has to be trial to cover the most comments as possible hence showing signs of commitment.

The need for recognition through being replied on the comments indicates the need for love, affection and belongingness that was postulated by Maslow (1942; 1954) through what he defined as the hierarchy of needs. The figure is shown below:

![Figure 12: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs](image-url)
The sense of belongingness to the social group as findings have shown is through the effort that the vloggers in terms of replying comments and making follow ups to the posts, which have been viewed as well as a sign of commitment by the vloggers. According to the Maslow’s theory, if only that can facilitate to fulfil the needs, it is therefore a very important factor that needs to be taken into consideration by vloggers towards relationship building.

Johnson and Garbarino (1999) made an argumentation that trustworthiness results from the ability to perform expertise, reliability and intentionality. These aspects can be in different ways and as shown in the previous chapter; Zoe Sugg, who has impressive 11 million subscribers on YouTube, in terms of trust and commitment, commented that: “I do sponsorships with brands, but I would say that I probably turn down ninety percent, because I have built up groups of audiences who trust my opinion. I would only want to talk about something that I am one hundred percent sure that it is worth to recommend” (Berryman & Kavka, 2017).

Nilsen, also known as MissGlamorazzi, said that: “It is no problem for me to reject brands that do not fit with my vision. I have been working with fewer brands, which means I can focus on building relationships that have long-term potential and have enough space to create my own content” (Cyk, 2015).

Michelle Phan, said that: “I am not trying to sell it to my viewers, I would push it on my channel only if I fall in love with it, and it would sell itself” (Ibid.).

From the findings presented above, these all proved to be authentic vloggers and they have the mindset that can contribute to nurturing relationships with their followers, as well their behaviour can facilitate in building trust and commitment since they show signs of being experienced and expertise, and more importantly, they can inspire their audiences and keep in touch with them in a very real and truthful way. According to Hashima and Tan (2015), having trust is important in creating and maintaining relationships especially when there is absence of controlling factors. In this regards, being as authentic beauty vloggers, they are superior in terms of creating and maintaining good relationships with their followers.
5.3 Importance of Interaction

Triggered by the development of internet, social media platforms have contributed to holding conversations and sharing experiences among users, in this manner, influencers or marketers are allowed to have a continuing dialogue with their audiences nowadays (Evans, 2010; Sawhney et al., 2005). According to Sashi (2012), the importance of interaction regarding establishing and enduring relationships on virtual market have been emphasized and interactivity has been considered as the most essential tools to build relationships within public organizations. When analysing the data, the importance of interaction has been supported by both beauty vlogger and the focus group.

Looking back the empirical findings, Cecilia admitted the importance of keeping active interactions with her followers, and she added that: “I usually write something that my followers can actually comment on when I upload new photos such as: ‘It’s a sunny day today, what would you like to do?’, so that they can answer my question in the comment section, afterwards I can tap like to their comments, I believe this helps to motivate my followers being more active” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). This shows that Cecilia is taking the initiative to start a dialogue with her followers, as well her questions are usually rather direct and simple to answer, in this regards, it helps to reach a high level of interactivity with her audiences since both sides are involved into this dialogue, and audiences know that the vlogger wants to know them more. Moreover, expectation from the focus groups have also supported the importance of high level of interactivity. One respondent said that: “We expect a highly active interactive dialogue. If there are no links to follow or short answers regarding the relevant information of products, I will unfollow those “sleeping vloggers”. I personally think they should not be the traits of vloggers because I consider interaction promotes bonding that makes us to give credit towards the vloggers” (Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018). Another respondent further stressed her dissatisfaction in terms of low level of interaction, she said:” I consider it is a problem to me when vloggers post something and do not put more information, because then I will have to ask them again and if the vlogger is less interactive, you can get a reply maybe after four days or even more, which is kind of bad” (Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018). Looking into what two respondents said, if the vlogger shows low interactivity towards their audiences, there is no way to build active interaction and the so called ‘sleeping vlogger’ will lose credibility and positive connection their audiences. Sashi (2012) have emphasized that the great impact of high interactivity and
connection on establishing and enduring relationships with trust and commitment between sellers and buyers. Stephen et al. (2017) further highlighted that the influencers active level have an impact on the receiver’s willingness to interact with the content on the social sites. In this regards, those ‘sleeping vloggers’ demotivated their audiences’ willingness to interact and be engaged with them, and therefore the relationship between them becomes negative.

To reach a high level of interactivity, it is important to understand the real needs from customer. Bettencourt et al. (2014) have emphasized that the customers is no longer viewed as a target for value delivery, but rather as partners who actively and continuously contributes to value creation. Looking into the findings, a beauty vlogger called Tanya Burr, talked through her video called ‘Perrie Edwards Makeup Tutorial – One Direction Girlfriend Series’ that: “whilst I remember to say this, please leave me comments and tell me what tutorial you would like me to do next, because I always have like a list of videos that I am going to do and I think next week I might do a ‘Get Ready With Me’, ‘My Morning Routine’ video, because you guys were asking me to do that so much. Let me know in the comments if you would like to see that video” (Franseen, 2015). From what she said, it can be seen that she wants to know what her audiences want to watch, in this manner, her audiences’ wishes are actually taken consideration by her, this helps to motivate her audiences to interact with her because they know she listens to their opinions, and her audiences are along with her to create value together.

Another aspect in terms of interactivity is found from findings, which is about transparency. Macky (2011) argued that transparency promotes interactivity and participation under collaborative Web 2.0 learning environments. Tsay, Dabbish and Herbsled (2013) further explained transparency under the context of social media has integrated business world more transparent and allowed information to be spread quickly through large internet. It was mentioned by Cecilia that: “you know, when you start to have friendship with your followers, the interaction with them happens more naturally. They want to know more about you and I usually got a lot of questions from them, and that was the reason why I made a video with the title of ‘50 facts about me’ in my channel, so that my followers can know me better” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). What Cecilia has done significantly differs her from celebrities, whose personal life are more considered as a secrets. However, as a beauty vlogger, Cecilia is sharing her story with her audiences so that they can know her better, this implies a transparent relationship between her and her followers. Another supporting finding from a
beauty vlogger Zoella has also talked in her video called ‘50 Facts about Me’ that: “I would love it if you could leave any interesting facts about you, because obviously now you know a lot more about me and I just never know anything about you guys! So do let me know some interesting fun things about you that I can read in the comments” (Franseen, 2015). From what Zoella said, she was not only sharing her stories but also encouraged her followers to share as well, which created more transparency within their relationships and promoted interactivity. Both answers have supported that having a more transparent dialogue will contribute to nurturing relationships.

The last interesting aspect in terms of interactivity from findings is that the impact of geographical distance. Laniado et.al. (2017) explained the effect that the geographic distance has on online social interaction, while there is evidence showing that people are more likely to share at shorter distances with closer users. This has been reflected by both the focus groups and the vlogger. One respondent from focus group 1 said: ”I followed them because they are local and we can get to meet them in person like Gamu and I have followed her for about one year now” (26th March, 2018). Another respondent from focus group 2 said: “Most of my vloggers are local, I do not like celebrities, because I feel they are not real, and they are not true representation of what they do” (28th March, 2018). Looking into what they said, the common aspect that they pointed out was the close distance between them and vloggers helped the audiences to draw a real picture of vloggers. Differs from the celebrities who you can usually only see through televisions or magazines, the beauty vloggers are providing a closer way to be connected. This has also further reflected from Cecilia, she mentioned that: “when I am traveling to somewhere, I usually inform my followers through my social media accounts that I am going to a certain area so that they might have chance to meet me and they can tag me afterwards in social media, I am always happy to see people share it, and afterwards I will tap like to them” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). What Cecelia did enhance the closeness with her followers. Precisely due to their close distance, Cecilia is offering a chance for her followers to interact with her not only through internet but also through reality, which in the end increase the level of interactivity more and nurture relationships.
5.4 Importance of Communication

According to Berry (1995), the importance of keeping a two-way communications approach has been pointed out in order to maintain and enhance relationships. As the communication is no longer seen as a single way of communication and oriented by business. Strömsholm (2017) added that communication has been considered as one of the individual assessments of personal brand value on social media. Moreover, Sashi (2012) mentioned that the concept of marketing and customer engagement are both customer-centric approaches that provide customers with priority to determine the value added to meet their needs. In this regards, there is need for personality within the context of social media marketing and it requires a personal approach (i-scoop, 2018). Factors such as friendliness, politeness that present more real personality provides beauty vloggers with more social attractiveness and create a comfortable atmosphere along with their audiences during communication.

The response given by Cecilia has reflected what was presented previously, she said that: “I want to show more real side of me to my followers, I want to let them know that I am not always wearing perfect makeup, that was why I started to make more life vlog. I feel I can show more of my true personality to my followers through it and to have real communication with them. It is not only about makeup skills and products, but also showing how I live, what is my life attitude in normal life, that is more personal and more real. I believe this will help my followers to accept me better and feel like being real friends with each other” (Cecilia, 29th March, 2018). Franseen (2015) also provided an example in her research from a video called ‘My Pamper Evening Essentials’ by a beauty vlogger Zoella, she talked during the video that: “The next step is to get into the bath. That’s not difficult. I do not think I will need to talk you through that bit. You put your feet in and you get in. Take your clothes off first. I do not have a shot of myself in the bath because I thought that would be kind of inappropriate. So you can just imagine... actually no, do not do that. That is not a good idea.” Looking into what both vloggers said, it can be seen that they are actually expressing their personalities to their audiences. What Cecelia did was by making life vlog to show more real side of her life, which helped her followers to get to know her personalities better, such thing like she actually does not wear perfect makeup everyday. In addition, what Zoella did was by using her sense of humor to talk with her audiences, not too serious, but more relaxed, in this manner, it enhanced friendliness within the conversation with audiences.
Negative examples were presented in terms of communication with vloggers from both focus groups, which show that the importance of vloggers showing positive personalities towards audiences. One respondent said that: “Some vloggers are selective, they have friends or people who they put much attention to, I do not know why but I have observed that with quite numbers of vloggers” (Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018). Another respondent added that: “They typically reply after a while, which is not good!” (Focus group 2, 28th March, 2018). According to what they said, the behaviour of being selective by beauty vloggers imply a rudeness impression for audiences. This is the personality that is opposite to politeness, as Burke & Kraut (2008) mentioned in their study that politeness in terms of responding to the audience have the potential to build closer relationships. However, if vloggers select to only answer certain persons and ignore more other comments, which will in the end causes negative effect on building their relationships with audiences. Audiences are not stupid and mean, as one respondent said: “We can see that and it does not make the community nice when the vlogger selects typically which person to reply. I know they have many comments to reply but they should at least do it evenly” (Focus group 1, 26th March, 2018). This showed that within social media and being as beauty vloggers, communication is more personal and emotions are reciprocated, audiences know what they expect from vloggers and if not, they can easily choose to unfollow them. In this regards, to maintain a close bond and delight their audiences, vloggers must take the right mindset towards their audiences to keep two-way communication.
Chapter 6 Value streams creation

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis and discussion based on overall knowledge that we have obtained through previous chapters, with the aid of model that is developed by the authors to provide readers with a bigger picture and a deeper understanding in terms of new value streams created by beauty vloggers through relationship building on social media. This chapter aims to develop beyond mere interpretation on empirical findings, and explore the hidden ‘mechanism’ behind beauty vloggers and serve as foundations for the final chapter.

6.1 The model

6.1.1 Why and how did we develop this model?

To begin, we considered it as necessary to explain to readers in terms of why and how we developed this model. The model was developed from researchers by reflecting on knowledge that has been collected throughout whole master thesis studies. Looking back into the starting point of this study, we have recognized that other than traditional branding ways, there is no exchange value between vloggers and audiences. Under this context, it has been fascinating to see that with such limited budget and lack of professional experience on marketing field, how vloggers have managed to create new value streams into social media market through relationship building.

We considered this model helpful to present since it gives readers a comprehensive and clear picture to show vloggers’ position on social media and illustrate the essential relationships among main stakeholders, in order to find out the how value streams are created by vloggers. In this regards, we have concluded that there are two important stakeholders concerning vloggers, companies and audiences. In addition, this model helps to facilitate and discuss the underlying perspectives from vloggers. Findings have indicated that the vloggers besides being a self representation of how they operate and develop is due to personal interest towards the field within beauty vlogging (Cecilia Tao, 28th March, 2018). On one hand, it has been observed that vloggers can choose to collaborate with companies to promote their products and meet certain expectations from them, this has been supported by Cecilia. She
further pointed out that for those vloggers who see vlogging as their career, it is necessary to accept doing sponsored videos (personal conversation, end of 2017). On the other hand, vloggers who have managed to convince their followers also made a clear indication in this study. Looking through the interviews from focus group, followers have an expectation of having imitate friendship with vloggers and good products that recommended from them, an important reason behind that is they do not want to be exposed directly to marketing gimmicks.

Therefore, as discussed above, we managed to conclude the key relationships into the model that is presented below:

![Diagram of the developed model]

**Figure 13: The developed model**

### 6.1.2 How does the model work?

With the above scenario of being, it has been understood that vloggers often lay between companies and audiences, in addition, vloggers have mandate to serve both ends without compromising the existing relationships. As illustrated in Figure 13, the goal of the vlogger is to maintain the balance when dealing the relationships with companies and audiences, in this regards, it indicates an area that is defined as a ‘Safe zone’ for vloggers to stay.

According to findings in this study, pressure is existing from both ends and vloggers are mandated to play critical roles in balancing the ends that have different expectations towards the vloggers. To explain more, companies are expecting vloggers to promote their products
and help them to increase brand awareness, so that they can sell better; while audiences are expecting vloggers to maintain intimate friendship with them, at the same time to provide them with useful suggestions in order to pick good products. Under this context, as illustrated in Figure 13, if vloggers approach companies too close, which means that they stay in ‘Commercial zone’, the consequence will be that they become pure social media marketers, in that manner, their impression towards audiences will be too much commerce, then they might lose audiences’ trust and end their career as vloggers; if vloggers approach audiences too close, which means they stay in ‘Friendship zone’, in this manner, it does help vloggers to build and maintain intimate friendship with their audiences, however at the same time, mere friendship can not bring actual value towards vloggers, then they might not be able to continue working it as career. As presented in the first chapter, there is no value exchange between vlogger and audiences, which means vloggers can not directly gain any income from audiences. Considering from a realistic perspective, without having sponsorship with companies, the situation will become tough for vloggers who work it as career since they can not get income to maintain it, then they might have to end it. Cecilia commented on this point that: “Doing sponsorship is not all about negative things. I considered it as perfect when I can do something that I have personal passion on as well that I can work it as my career and earn money from it as a job, this is attractive” (personal conversation, end of 2017). Overall, vloggers can not ignore neither companies nor audiences, therefore, the ‘Safe zone’ has been suggested on this paper to be considered as the operating area with boundaries that vloggers need to be cautious about.

6.2 Value streams

This thesis has been aiming to explore within the field of social media influencer marketing to understand how new value streams could be created by beauty vloggers through building relationship with followers (audiences), or the potential customers on social media. As presented previously in the model, there are two important stakeholders concerning vloggers, companies and audiences. The focus point of this thesis has done was towards the side with audiences, however, it is still necessary to take companies into consideration to analyse the complete creation circle of new value streams by vloggers on social media.
6.2.1 Material value exchange

This section places emphasis on the relationship goes between companies and vloggers. We call it as material value exchange because companies and vloggers are exchanging physical value such as actual products and money, this value exchange can be seen as applying marketing. In our study, beauty vloggers often receive beauty related products from different beauty brands, they can choose to show and recommend products or brands to their audiences. In this regards, it helps to increase brand awareness and help companies to sell products more. In return, vloggers can earn money from companies, which formulate this value exchange loop.

However, since this study has the focus point towards the relationships between vloggers and audiences, there is lack of knowledge towards the relationships between vloggers and companies, therefore, we only put forward the basic framework. Moreover, this can be considered as a new direction for the future studies, which will be presented in the final chapter.

6.2.2 Immaterial value exchange

This section places emphasis on the relationship goes between vloggers and audiences. We call it as immaterial value exchange because the value here is not actual, but rather be seen as share ideas and inspirations as friends. Looking into the previous chapters, we have highlighted four constructs that are engagement, trust and commitment, interaction and communication that combines theories and empirical findings to emphasize the importance of relationship building. By developing this long term relationship, it helps vloggers to maintain this intimate friendship with their audiences and develop even larger personal community. In this community, relationships between vloggers and audience are personal and intimate, they are acting as audiences’ friends and providing them with makeup skills and suggestion on choosing beauty products; In return, audiences follow them loyal and expand this community. With larger community, vloggers will get more views and more subscribers, which will present bigger impact that they can obtain towards the market, because audiences are considered as the potential customers for marketers. In our study, beauty vloggers’ audiences are generally people who are interested into beauty skills and products, as presented by Cecilia Tao, beauty vloggers have more specific and target groups, and that is
exact what beauty brands want to obtain. She further described it as ‘high conversion rate’ to explain why those brands want to collaborate with her (personal conversation, end of 2017) and this can be applied to other types of vloggers as well. In this regards, vloggers become more attractive towards the companies, and this triggers the material value exchange between vloggers and companies for business purpose and fulfil the circle of new value streams.

6.2.3 Value co-creation

As presented above, vloggers can co-create new value streams through combining immaterial and material value exchange. Hirvonen and Helander (2001) have emphasized that value is always jointly and reciprocally co-created. In our study, this could be understood as the importance to involve stakeholders concerning vloggers, audiences and companies, to co-create value. The discussion above has indicated the importance for vloggers to maintain balanced relationships with the other two stakeholders, and they can not ignore neither companies nor audiences, or the value co-creation can not be fulfilled. In this regards, vloggers must be cautious of making career decisions and find their ‘safe zone’. This will in the end also help vloggers to achieve their personal ambitions and enables them doing vlogging as personal passion as well as a real job, to a larger context, beauty vloggers are bringing new value streams towards the social media by starting building relationships with audiences.
Chapter 7 Conclusion

This final chapter of the thesis gives a summarized picture of the main findings based on the interpretation and discussion in the previous chapters. A brief recap to the main research question and purpose of this thesis and draw conclusions from the interpretation and discussion. Furthermore, we present the theoretical contributions of the study based on the empirical findings. Practical implications are as well highlighted on the following phase of the chapter with future research suggestions followed by as the last paragraph.

6.1 Back to the beginning

As indicated earlier in previous chapters, the purpose of the study is to explore within the field of social media influencer marketing to understand how the new value streams could be created by beauty vloggers through building relationship with followers (audiences), or the potential customers on virtual market. To circumvent through the study, attention was given to beauty industry. The research question reads “In what ways can beauty vloggers nurture relationships with followers to accumulate new value streams on social media?” was developed by researchers since studies indicated that the concept of relationship building has not not been much considered on social media. The motivation behind to carry out this study was due to the importance of relationship building and maintaining, despite it being on social media but can also be applied into the business world generally.

From the study it has been understood that social media marketing is a trending marketing tool for beauty vloggers and an understanding of the concept of relationships to be critical have been noticed. It can be explained that with poor relationship building skills vloggers are exposed to the risk of losing the trust they have built. In the study this have been indicated through focus groups sessions that followers can easily unfollow a vlogger if they perceive that their connection is not fruitful. To build up the study, four independent theoretical constructs have been used and they are engagement, trust and commitment, interaction and communication. It has been from these theories where the study based on.

Findings indicated that vloggers’ engagement in terms of posting frequency of their videos and pictures is paramount, they have been defined to be an evaluating factor of determining whether the vlogger is passionate about what they do or not. In addressing the research
question with regards to this observation, it can be concluded that in order to build relationships towards value creation, vloggers need to be highly active and increase their posting frequency hence leading to satisfaction of followers. In addition to that, findings indicated and proved that trust and commitment are important especially on social media where there are no rules as explained (Ridings et al., 2002). Participants indicated that they are aware about the marketing principles of some vloggers who misrepresent their followers. To build relationships on social media, vloggers have the mandate to be committed to what they do and to be genuine. This have been observed in the findings that having a focus and specialised philosophy as vloggers can facilitate to build relationships since that creates trust with the followers.

Having an interactive and continuous dialogue between vloggers and followers have been also proved to be important as far as relationship building is concerned. Findings indicated that vloggers who are highly interactive are more credible and this enhance the connection that exists between them with their followers. Less interactive vloggers have been termed to be “sleeping vloggers” and this discourages the process of relationship building. The findings enhanced the answering of the main research question in the sense that the best possible way relationships can be built is through being more interactive and facilitating conversations that are constructive. Lastly, communication is the key towards relationship building on social media and this included the gestures that vloggers use on social media, their attitude and how the respond to comments. It has been understood that the audiences make evaluations as well on how the vloggers response to their comments and unpleasant behaviour as being rude or selective to whom to address can be a big problem towards building relationship. In addressing the research question, it can be expressed that to build relationships ethical behaviour and gesture is important for vloggers towards creating value in the long run with followers.

6.2 Theoretical contribution to the study

In this section, we state our theoretical contribution of this study is based on the existing literatures in relationship building and value creation under the context of social media influencer marketing to study beauty vloggers. In chapter two, we have introduced theoretical perspectives that were generalised and applicable to any social media marketing practices,
however through the empirical findings the study, we narrowed down and focused on beauty vloggers. This study aims to contribute the theoretical stream by providing insight in terms of the ways that beauty vloggers can nurture relationships in the value creation process with their audiences on the virtual market. We managed to fulfil our purpose through collecting data from both vloggers and audiences’ perspectives to gain understanding of what enables the process of nurturing relationship between vloggers and audiences in the social media market and in the end, contribute to bringing new value streams.

As mentioned previously in the first chapter, social media influencer marketing is rather a new area to study within academic. There is lack of knowledge and few frameworks available for brands marketers to measure and utilize the influence of social media to achieve success (Snijders & Helms, 2014; Littlewood & Bick, 2014). Berryman and Kavka (2017) further put forward their concerns that there has been relatively little attention to the way between the impact of beauty vloggers and this new revenue stream while the commercial battle in social media has raised more and more. In this manner, the impact of beauty vloggers in terms of relationship in the value creation process is rather undiscovered. In this study, by analysing the relationship building with four sequences, which are engagement, trust and commitment, interaction and communication, we offered new perspectives from beauty vloggers and audiences to develop long term relationship. Moreover, we developed a model to show vloggers’ position on social media and illustrate the essential relationships among main stakeholders, in order to find out the how value streams are created by vloggers. By combining the knowledge that we have gained on relationship building between beauty vloggers and audiences, we managed to discover the new value steams circle that is created by beauty vloggers on social media.

6.3 Practical implications

As the research question reads, in what ways can vloggers create new value steams through build relationships with followers (audiences) on social media. This simply suggests that the study has direct implication(s) to beauty vloggers. This study enhances an understanding to the best possible ways that the beauty vloggers can adopt to build relationship with their followers under the context of social media. With the findings shown in chapter four and mainly from the receiver’s perspectives, the comments include what the followers’ real
expectation towards vloggers to better prepare in adopting the best ways to handle relations with the target to create value. Suggestions include increasing the posting frequency, being initiators of interactions, showing ethical behaviour and being committed to the routines. With these summarised suggestions, relationship building is valuable and it can be created by beauty vloggers and this have been suggested by a number of followers during the focus group sessions. Moreover, the model indicated a ‘Safe zone’ for vlogger to be aware to stay.

To be able to continue doing beauty vlogging and work it as a career, they can not ignore neither companies nor audiences.

Additionally, the study indirectly contributes and have positive implications to other stakeholders such as beauty related companies, branding marketers and many more. The business world can recognize the potential advantage that beauty vloggers can obtain on their social media platforms and create business value through relationship building with customers, in order to better promote their products. Findings indicate that the beauty vloggers started doing vlogging due to personal interest, in this regards, they tend to be highly credible since they act out of personal liking and this allows them to be more flexible in advertising when they are engaged with the companies to represent their brands. Their nature of being authentic and truthful can be a big advantage to companies to engage with them since they are considered to be talented influencers rather than popular celebrities.

6.4 Future research

Despite having presented the findings and theoretical contributions in this study, we found it ideal to highlight some areas where future researchers can explore and develop other studies relating to the concept of relationship building on social media. The suggestions formed the bases from the findings of this study and from the way this project have been developed.

First, it is important to mention that this study focused on the relationship building of beauty vloggers with the followers but through our findings and with support of Figure 13, it has been observed that beauty vloggers act as ‘filters’ between companies and audiences. Beauty vloggers being between those two would have the mandate to satisfy both without compromising the other. In that perspective, we suggest that for future researchers, it would be interesting to as well explore and find out the best possible ways that vloggers can build
relationships with the companies since they are also important towards creation of value streams. The aim will be to find out whether the same concepts that were highlighted in this study such as engagement, trust, interaction and communication are also relevant or there are some other concepts. We further considered that there is possibility to develop a book for future research that is based on our developed model, in this manner, the relationships among beauty vloggers along with other two stakeholders can all be taken into consideration to explore the whole creation process of value streams.

Second, the role of beauty vloggers reminded us of an interesting point that was mentioned by March & Weil (2005), they put forward that leadership requires ‘plumbing’ and ‘poetry’, where “plumbing’ refers to ‘the capacity to apply known techniques effectively’ and ‘poetry’ refers to the great identity of a leader to “explore unexpected avenues, discover interesting meanings, and approach life with enthusiasm” (p98). In our study, beauty vloggers actually meet these two requirements as being a great leader on social media, to explain, they approach vlogging and their audiences with great enthusiasm, meanwhile, they need to face and deal with the real business world in order to continue their career. This has reflected on what March & Weil said in their book that “a leader must know how to appreciate life and be aware of reality” (ibid, p99). In this regards, this could be an interesting research on investigating the role of beauty vloggers and connect it with leadership.

Third, the study is applied to the concept of relationship building on social media focusing on the beauty industry and findings were recorded. In this regards, to future researchers, the suggestion will the the application of the same research with focus points on other industries that view social media to be an evolving marketing platform. The idea to this suggestion is because our study only focused on one specific industry where probably people have different perceptions to those in other industries. An exploration of the same concept in different industries would contribute in making comparisons of the perceptions of people and industry nature could be differential factor in determining the best possible ways to build relationships on social media.

Fourth, there is need to broaden the sample size of the beauty vloggers and the number of focus group sessions. This study had a primary interview with one vlogger but multiple conversations within the area of beauty persisted due to personal connection with the vlogger. However secondary data was also used to support the primary interview. We found it ideal
for future researchers to have an increase in terms of the number of primary interviews since this will increase and enhance the validity of studies. In addition to that, two focus group session were conducted courtesy of a vlogger in South Africa. The group session had a limited number of participants, in this manner, we can as well suggest for future research that it can be increased, this is because by increasing the number of participants will also imply a wide and increased number of views that will facilitate better in making conclusions.

Lastly, it is important to point out that this study focused and collected information from vloggers who were not directly connected to the focus groups. This was due to the personal reasons with our primary interviewee vlogger called Cecilia Tao. However, similar vlogger with same traits facilitated but allowing us to have contact with her followers. In this regards, for future researchers, the proposition would be to have a study with a specific vlogger where access to followers is granted. Having a sample selection of participants who are directly connected can be interesting and valuable for the research, since they would provide a direct evaluation of the vlogger.
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Appendix:

Appendix 1 – Interview guide with Cecilia

Hej Cecilia! We would like to say thank you firstly for helping us to conduct this interview with you. We are writing our Master thesis about vloggers, and how they nurture relationships in the value creation process within social media. We wanted to talk to you because you are the expert in this area, therefore we would like to get to know some of your knowledge within vlogging. We will ask you several questions around this topic. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer freely.

General questions as starting point:

1. What brought you to become as a beauty vlogger or why did you start doing beauty vlogging? Since when do you start vlogging?

2. Working as a beauty vlogger, please describe generally your working routines.

3. How will you describe the contents/categories of videos in your beauty channel?

4. What values do you see your videos can provide towards the audiences?

5. How do you consider yourself building relationship with your followers?

6. How frequently do you update photos and videos in your social media platform?

7. How do you usually interact with your followers?

8. What do you think the importance of you engaging yourself with audiences through vlogging and how do you do it?

9. How do you think your followers perceive about your character, your personality and the way you are doing your videos?
10. What do you think that you want to improve from your side to build better relationship with your audiences?
Appendix 2 – Interview guide with Focus Group

Hello everyone! We would like to begin to thank you all for participating in our focus group. We are excited to hear about your opinions about the concept of relationship building on virtual markets as we understand you are followers to a variety of beauty vloggers and to be precise form that in our consideration. This group constitute of 20 participants and will last approximately 40 minutes depending on the level discussion and debates in the research theme. Please kindly note your privacy is our concern and will be kept discreet despite there being recordings. The reason for recordings is for our after session evaluation since we might miss some very important points raised through the session. We do value your level of participation in terms of being honesty and genuine in terms of responses you are going to have. In that regards I understand we might have different opinions and everyone in entitled to his opinion which I strongly emphasise that lets comment of respond in positive and constructive way.

Looking forward to hear your responses and I am very excited!

To introduce the concept, general questions were designed and this was meant to create a common understanding of the whole idea of the focus group session and this was meant to enable participants to be comfortable throughout the session. The general questions were:

- Which beauty social media players do you follow?
- What made you to follow them and for how long have you followed them so far?

To dive into the main focus of the group session, the questions were designed in form of a structure that covered FOUR facets towards relationship building and these include Engagement, Trust and Commitment, Interaction and Communication. The main questions were as follows:

**Engagement**

- How engaged is your vlogger on their sites?
- How frequently do they post and how do you perceive this?
- What makes you to engage?
**Trust and Commitment**
- What makes social media influencers trustworthy and honest in its recommendations?
- Do you trust on the opinion of the beauty blogger you follower?
- How do you evaluate the level of commitment of your vlogger on their sites?
- What commits you to follow the vlogger?
- How do the vloggers control the action, behaviour of followers who are provocative since there are no rules?

**Interaction**
- How do you explain the level of interaction and connectedness of your vlogger?
- How active are the vloggers you follow?
- What expectations do you have in terms of interaction between vloggers and followers?
- How do you feel about the information about products represented? Is the information enough for you to proceed and make a purchase?

**Communication**
- How responsive is your vlogger in terms of responding to comments?
- How do you define the level of communication that exists between you and the vlogger?
- What character or personality do your vloggers possess?