Parasocial Interaction between Youtube Beauty Vlogger and Millennial Consumers in Indonesia

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Beauty vloggers are one of the parties that create video content on YouTube, which contains a huge amount of information about the world of beauty. Some beauty vloggers attract millennial-based viewers in very large numbers. The interaction between a beauty vlogger and his/her viewers is called parasocial interaction. This study aims to analyse the antecedents and consequences of parasocial interaction between a Youtube beauty vlogger and his/her viewers, i.e. millennial women. The analysis technique used in this study is Structural Equation Modeling using the SmartPLS software. The study was conducted on 181 female millennial respondents and the results show that the variables of social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, homophilicattitude, and expertise have a significant influence on the formation of a parasocial interaction between the beauty vlogger and the viewers. This study also finds that parasocial interaction has a significant influence on the willingness to share information, brand user image fit, and viewers purchase intention. The findings of this research is expected to contribute to the development of marketing management literature, especially marketing communications based on the use of social media. The findings of this study are expected to be utilised by cosmetics businesses which view female millennials as their target market.

Keywords: *Parasocial interaction, beauty vlogger, millennials, attractiveness, homophilic attitude, purchase intention.*

Introduction

Social media provides a large area for marketers, which allows them to reach the target consumers directly. One of the most popular social media sites among marketers and society today is Youtube. Along with the development of the use of YouTube as a means of expressing creativity, communication, information, entertainment and business, there is also a growth in beauty vloggers. A beauty vlogger is a term stemming from a combination of the word of beauty, that means everything about beauty, and vlogs that comes from the words of video and blog. A beauty vlogger is a term for individuals or groups who create videos about beauty content (Franssen, 2015). They create a video containing a variety of information, ranging from beauty product reviews, makeup tutorials, product recommendations, and so on. Some beauty vloggers have subscribers or viewers of close to 100 million people; the majority of which consists of millennial consumers. The young generations, aged 15-35, generally make up two-thirds of main users and are the demographic who visit Youtube most often; this group watches Youtube videos more than they watch television (Perrin, 2015).

The relationship between a beauty vlogger and viewers can be called parasocial interaction; this is a one-sided relationship (Lee & Watkins, 2016). In each video, there are likes, dislikes, share, and comment facilities that allow a one-sided relationship (parasocial interaction relationship) between the beauty vlogger and their viewers. Through the facilities provided by Youtube, the beauty vlogger can understand what their viewers want and can constantly control the relationship, and it also allows the viewers the ability to provide feedback, input, support, criticism and suggestions to the beauty vlogger, although not all of the feedback they provide will be read or rewarded by the beauty vlogger.

Most beauty vloggers are not celebrities or movie actors/actresses, but they are able to reach up to millions of viewers in every video, these successful beauty vloggers include; Nikkie Tutorials, Michelle Phan, Jeffree Star, Manny MUA, and Jaclyn Hills. They are international beauty vloggers who can afford to reach millions of viewers from all over the world. Thus, beauty vloggers can be called Youtube celebrities (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Beauty vloggers have a unique character that makes them liked, trusted and followed by their viewers (Wu & Sukoco, 2010). Their followers like their trendy looks, photogenic faces, proportionate bodies, friendly personalities, expertise in beauty, as well as the beauty vlogger's way of interacting with the viewers (Franssen, 2015).

The beauty vlogger's capacity to influence the viewers' minds towards the products, brands, and other things shown in their videos causes them to be called an online opinion leader in social media specifically in Youtube (Franssens, 2015). Freberg et al. (2011) reveals that social media influencers are independent parties who indirectly work with the company but discuss the company's products with people (third-party endorser). Social media influencers are able

to shape the viewers' attitude through blogs, tweets, or other social media communication. Today, there are many companies in the beauty industry viewing the potential of beauty vloggers as a marketing strategy, for example, Nyx, Maybelline, Loreal, Sari Ayu, Wardah, Make Over, Laneige, etc.

Beauty vloggers can influence the viewer's attitude towards a brand or product they are talking about in their videos; this is because there is a parasocial relationship formed between viewers and beauty vloggers (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Parasocial interaction (PSI) has been studied extensively in the communication and marketing sciences. This concept provides a basis for understanding the one-way relationship. The findings of a study conducted by Xiang et al. (2016) suggest that this PSI relationship has the potential to influence millennial consumers primarily through social media.

The millennial generation consists of consumers who are highly dependent on the use of technology. They always want to connect and engage with a brand they trust, wherever they are on social media (McCormick, 2016). Based on the research done by Barton et al. (2014), millennial generation consumers are twice as easy to be influenced by celebrities or influencers compared to Generation X, and four times as easy than the baby boomer generation. Thus, this study aims to analyse the antecedents and consequences of PSI on millennial consumers in Indonesia, considering the largest demographic population is in the millennial generation and the increasingly booming cosmetics industry of today.

Theoretical Background
Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial Interaction (PSI) was first introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956). PSI is a phenomenon in the world of psychological and business communication science that refers to the relationship that can form and develop between media users (viewers) and media figures (beauty vloggers) (Horton & Wohl, 1956). PSI refers to imaginary social relationships (Cohen, 1997), similar to an imaginary friendship (Perse, 1990), and the illusion of face-to-face relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956). A PSI is considered a "friendship" between media figures and media users when the media user listens to the advice of media figures as if they were close friends (Xiang *et al.*, 2016; Labrecque 2014). In the context of social media platforms, powered by Web 2.0 technology, users can easily interact with celebrities, media figures or experts. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube has become an indispensable tool for celebrities or media figures to create and strengthen their relationships with consumers and fans (Ballantine & Martin, 2005).

Purchase Intention

Belch and Belch (2004) define purchase intention as circumstances that reflect the buyer's plan to purchase an object for a certain amount, with a particular brand unit, and within a given time period. Consumer purchase intention is formed due to the influence of their attitudes toward brands and their beliefs in assessing the quality of a brand (Belch & Belch, 2004, Handriana, 2017). According to Kotler & Keller (2016), the intention to purchase is a sense of consumer interest in a product or brand that will move the action to buy the product whose value the consumers know. Meanwhile, Assael (2004) explained that the intention to buy is consumers' tendency to act towards an object. Thus, the buying intention is referred to as planned purchases, which are the result of high involvement and complex decision-making.

The Influence of Social Attractiveness on Parasocial Interaction

One of the factors influencing the formation of parasocial interaction is the attractiveness inherent to and owned by media figures (Shimp, 2007). Lee & Watkins (2016) mentions that attractiveness is defined as interpersonal attractiveness, which is divided into two forms: physical attractiveness and social attractiveness. Social attractiveness, such as high self-esteem, positive attitude, good personality and vlogger friendliness, will influence the formation of parasocial relationships with the viewers (Lee & Watkins, 2016). From the explanation, then the hypothesis is made as follows:

H1: Social attractiveness influences parasocial interaction with Youtube beauty vloggers

The Influence of Physical Attractiveness on Parasocial Interaction

Physical attractiveness is a form of interpersonal attractiveness based on outward physical appearance that can be seen directly, such as proportional body shape, beautiful facial features, fashion style, etc. (Shimp, 2007). Silvera and Austad (2004) state that physical attractiveness is one of the source model forms that can be used as an effective benchmark to determine the right endorser figure. Therefore, the physicality of the vlogger's figure seen in the video is an important aspect that needs to be possessed in forming a strong parasocial relationship, so as to attract the viewers, to give the impression of beauty and to generate the viewers' desire to "get to know" the vlogger figure more closely (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Thus, the hypothesis is follows:

H2: Physical attractiveness influences Youtube beauty vloggers' parasocial interaction

The Influence of the Homophilic Attitude on Parasocial Interaction

Lee and Watkins (2016) also found that homophily influences the relationship of parasocial interactions. A homophilic attitude is a must-have for a public figure, as it can improve closeness, mutual understanding, and intimate emotional relationship with the group. When the vlogger has a strong homophilic attitude with his/her viewers, this imaginary parasocial interaction will be formed because there will be common interests, where the vlogger and viewers will feel "close" to each other over similar interests in something (Xiang et al., 2016). Based on the above description, the following hypothesis is made:

H3: A homophilic attitude influences parasocial interaction with Youtube beauty vloggers

The Influence of Expertise on Parasocial Interaction

The Expertise variable from media figures in providing information to viewers positively establishes PSI relationships with media users (Xiang et al., 2016). Xiang et al. (2016) also reveals that expertise is one of the attributes that must be owned by celebrities, and public figures, so they can be regarded as a qualified endorser. People known in the community as public figures need to believe in, follow and approve of the opinion of the character in their decision-making in the future (Shimp, 2007). Thus, the hypothesis is as follows:

H4: Expertise influences the parasocial interaction of Youtube beauty vloggers

The Influence of Parasocial Interaction on the Willingness to Share Info

The information owned by consumers will generally be distributed through various media, such as word of mouth (WOM), print media, radio, and the most famous media today - social media (McCormick, 2016). A study done by Labrecque (2014) and Fromm and Garton (2013 found that parasocial interaction influences consumers' willingness to share information about a brand to others and also influences consumer loyalty to the brand, both with the factor of interactivity and openness of media personality to the media user. Based on this description, the hypothesis is as follows:

H5: Parasocial interaction with Youtube beauty vloggers influences the willingness to share info with millennial consumers

The Influence of Parasocial Interaction on Brand User Imagery Fit

Generally, individuals tend to be happy comparing upward (upward comparison) against themselves with others whom they think are better than them and comparing down with others whom they think are worse than they are. Individuals also always compare themselves with their close friends or others who have similar outlooks and common values; they always want to be part of the group by following what members of their group do. Thus, in the context of upward comparison, when a beauty vlogger that has a strong parasocial interaction relationship with the viewers, all the products that beauty vlogger uses will be perceived by the viewers as having a high value to themselves (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Stavrou, 2018). Thus, the hypothesis is as follows:

H6: Parasocial interaction with Youtube beauty vloggers influences brand-user-imagery fit

The Influence of Brand User Imagery Fit on Purchase Intention

If viewers see the brand as the best-suited brand (brand-user-imagery fit), or viewers can see themselves matching the brand spoken of by the youtube vlogger, the viewers' purchase intention against the brand will increase (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Based on the explanation above, the hypothesis is as follows:

H7: Brand-user-imagery fit influences millennial consumers' purchase intention

Research Method

The exogenous variables in this study include: social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, homophilic attitude, and expertise. The endogenous variables include: parasocial interaction, willingness to share info, purchase intention, and brand-user-imagery fit. The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. The respondents selected are those who meet the following criteria: (1) Women; (2) Aged 17-25; (3) Possessing smartphones and active on social media, especially Youtube (minimum access to social media of one hour per day); (4) Often watching the beauty vlogger on Youtube and following the beauty vlogger on social media. Meanwhile, the data of the questionnaires distributed are analyzed by using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique with Smart Partial Least Square (SmartPLS) software.

Result and Discussion
### The Evaluation of the Outer Model

In the outer model evaluation, the validity and reliability test of the construct is done. Testing the convergent validity is based on the value of the loading factor. An indicator is said to meet convergent validity if it has an outer loading value> 0.5. All the loading factor values of all research variables are > 0.6. Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs in this study meet convergent validity.

Next is the discriminant validity test that measures the extent to which indicators are different from the indicators of other variables. The discriminant validity test is done by looking at the value of cross-loading. An indicator is said to meet the discriminant validity if the value of the cross-loading indicator on the variable is the largest when compared to other variables. Each indicator has the largest loading factor value in the variable itself compared to other variables. It can be stated that the indicators used in this research have good discriminant validity value in constructing their respective variable constructs. In testing the reliability of the construct, if the value of composite reliability was > 0.7, then the variable is stated to have fulfilled the construct reliability. The composite reliability of all the research variables has a composite value of > 0.7. Thus, in this research model, each variable has met the composite reliability.

The Inner Model Evaluation

The inner evaluation model will be explained by the Goodness of fit test using R Square value and the hypothesis test.

Figure 1. The Inner Model
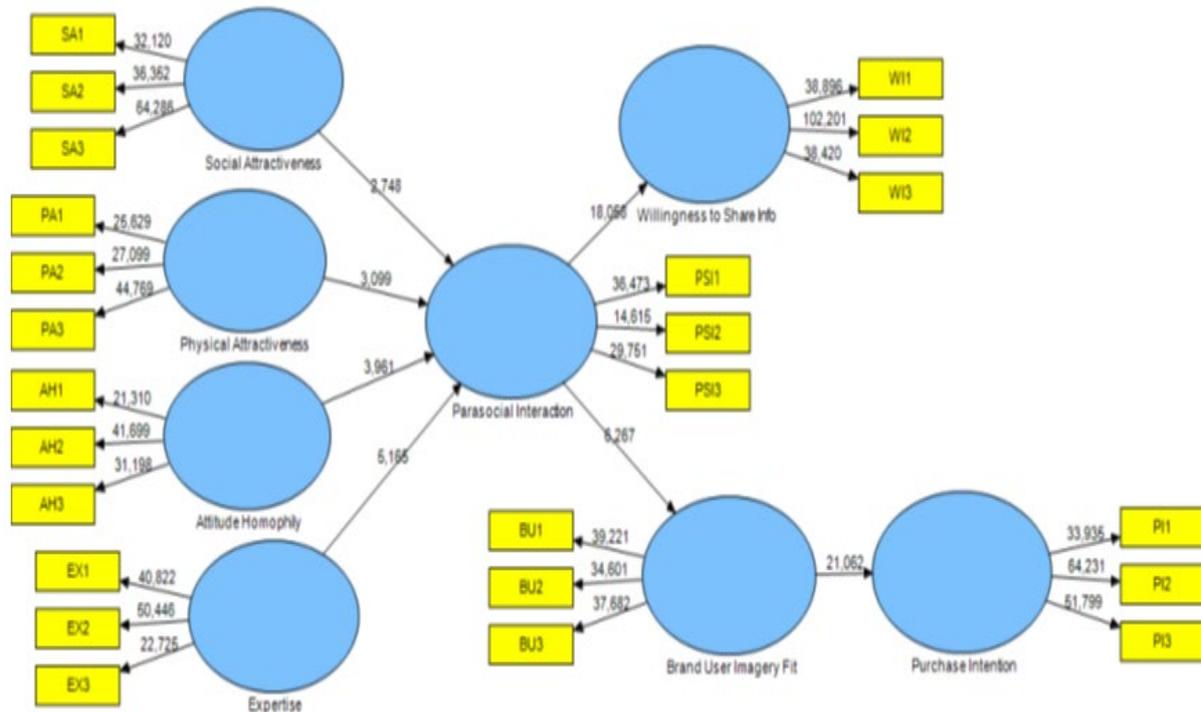
The Goodness of Fit Test

The assessment of the goodness of fit is based on the R-square value generated from the PLS estimation for each path. From Table 1, it is known that the R-Square value for the parasocial interaction variable of 0.782091, meaning that the social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, homophilic attitude, and expertise variables can explain the parasocial interaction variable of 78.21%, while 21.79% is explained by variables outside the research model. The same meaning also applies to the willingness to share information, user brand imagery fit, and purchase intention variables.

Table 1: R-Square Value

Variables	R Square
Parasocial Interaction	0.782091
Willingness to Share Info	0.536672
Brand User Imagery Fit	0.260902
Purchase Intention	0.555305

The Assessment of Goodness of Fit can be known from the value of Q-Square which has the same meaning with the R-Square (determination coefficient); the higher the Q-Square value then can it be said the model getting fit with the data?

The result of the Q-Square calculation is as follows:

= 1- (1-0.260902). (1-0.782091). (1-0.555305). (1-0.536672)
= 1- (0.739098) (0.217909) (0.44395) (0.463328)
= 0.96681606

From the result, we obtained the Q-Square value of 0.966816, which means that the diversity amount of research data that can be explained by the research model is 96.67%, while the remaining 4.33% is explained by other factors outside the model. Thus, the model in this study has a good Goodness of Fit. The research hypothesis can be accepted if the value of t-statistics > 1.96. The following is the influence coefficient and t-statistics generated inner model.

Table 2: Path Coefficients & T-Statistics

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	Original Sample	t-statistics	Remark
H1	Social Attractiveness → Parasocial Interaction	0.205623	2.902261	Significant
H2	Physical Attractiveness → Parasocial Interaction	0.251838	3.373126	Significant
H3	Homophilic Attitude → Parasocial Interaction	0.263029	3.886420	Significant
H4	Expertise → Parasocial Interaction	0.299014	4.971451	Significant
H5	Parasocial Interaction → Willingness to Share Info	0.732579	19.943377	Significant
H6	Parasocial Interaction → Brand User Imagery Fit	0.510786	7.130152	Significant
H7	Brand User Imagery Fit → Purchase Intention	0.745188	21.292938	Significant

The Influence of Social Attractiveness on Parasocial Interaction

Based on the first hypothesis tested (H1), it can be concluded that the social attractiveness variable influences the parasocial interaction variable. In this study, it is explained that high social attractiveness will increase the possibility of establishing a parasocial interaction relationship between the beauty vlogger and their viewers. The influence of social attractiveness on parasocial interaction can occur when viewers assume the video content

created by the beauty vlogger is interesting and entertaining because of the beauty vlogger's attitude factor, positive personality, friendly behaviour, speech, communication style and confidence. This will encourage the viewer's desire to get closer to the beauty vlogger by following all the beauty vlogger's activities on social media and watching all their videos.

The findings of this research are in line with research findings conducted by Lee & Watkins (2016), that social attractiveness influences parasocial interaction. The research done by Lee & Watkins (2016) found that social attractiveness is one of the interpersonal attractiveness features which become important factors in the formation of a parasocial interaction between the vlogger and the viewers. In addition, according to Shimp (2007) in the TEARS model, attractiveness is one of the most important attributes an influencer must possess so that others are willing to listen to or even trust/follow their opinion.

The influence of physical attractiveness on parasocial interaction

Based on the second hypothesis tested (H2) it can be concluded that the physical attractiveness variable influences the parasocial interaction variable. It means that when the viewers assess the physical attractiveness of a beauty vlogger figure as high, then the possibility of forming a parasocial interaction relationship will be greater. Viewers see the beauty vlogger as the right beauty figure to trust or follow. The influence of physical attractiveness on parasocial interaction can occur because the respondent thinks that physical attractiveness is an important aspect that a beauty vlogger needs to have, as the main function of cosmetic and beauty products is to make women feel more beautiful; hence the appearance factor, clean face, beautiful or photogenic look, healthy bodies, fashionable and trendy dress styles are factors that beauty vloggers need to have to establish a parasocial interaction relationship with the viewers.

The findings of this study are in line with research findings conducted by Lee and Watkins (2016), that physical attractiveness influences parasocial interaction. The research explains that the vlogger's physical attractiveness will reinforce the possibility of establishing a parasocial interaction relationship between the vlogger and its viewers, as viewers feel they want to look attractive or pretty like the vloggers they watch. Therefore, they are willing to follow and trust the vlogger's opinion on a product or brand they review in their videos. The findings of this study also support findings from the research conducted by Shimp (2007) and Silvera and Austad (2004).

The influence of a homophilic attitude on parasocial interaction

Based on the third hypothesis tested (H3) it appears that the homophile attitude variable influences the parasocial interaction variable. This means that when viewers see similarities

between the beauty vlogger figure and themselves, either in the form of beliefs, thoughts, tastes, hobbies, social status, education or interest in a particular object then the possibility of forming a parasocial interaction relationship will be greater. This is where the viewers will see the beauty vlogger as a 'friend' figure that they can trust or follow, because of some similarities. The influence of a homophilic attitude towards parasocial interaction can occur because of the emergence of common interests, where the beauty vlogger and the viewers feel 'close' to each other on the basis of the similarity of interests in a thing that is equally liked and in which they are both interested in the field of beauty. The results of this study are in line with research findings by Lee and Watkins (2016), Xiang (2016) and Shimp (2007).

The influence of expertise on parasocial interaction

From the results of H4 tested, it can be concluded that the expertise variable influenced on the parasocial interaction variable. In this study, it is explained that when the viewers assess the beauty vlogger figure they see he/she has the competence, expertise, and ability to provide information about the beauty niche, then the possibility of forming a parasocial interaction relationship will be greater. Viewers see the beauty vlogger as a trustworthy figure and respect, or approve their opinion. The results of this study support the results of studies conducted by Xiang (2016), Silvera and Austad (2004) and Shimp (2007).

The influence of parasocial interaction on the willingness to share info

Based on the fifth hypothesis test (H5) it can be concluded that the parasocial interaction variable has an influence on the willingness to share information variable. This condition indicates that when the viewers feel a greater 'imaginary friendship relationship' formed among the viewers with the beauty vlogger figure they like, the more the viewers want to share the information they get from beauty vloggers with others. When viewers feel 'close' and believe beauty vloggers to be their own friends, t, then the viewers want to share the information they get about the products and any good or bad reviews from the vloggers with others. The willingness to share information variable is the tendency of consumers who always want to share all aspects of life experience with others, which aims to help others in decision-making in the future. The findings of this study are in line with the research findings that have been done by Labrecque (2014), and Fromm and Garton (2013).

The influence of parasocial interaction on brand-user-imagery fit

Based on the testing of the sixth hypothesis (H6), it can be concluded that the parasocial interaction variable influences the brand-user-imagery fit variable. In this study it is explained that when the viewers feel there is an 'imaginary friendship relationship' formed between them and the beauty vlogger figure they like is that of a close friend, then they will see any cosmetic

brand product the beauty vlogger likes or matches, and constitute brand products that also fit and can describe the viewers (brand fit). The brand-user-imagery fit variable is a picture in the consumer's mind assessing the value of a brand or product, whether the brand is appropriate and can describe themselves or not (Lee & Watkins, 2016). The findings of this study are in line with research findings by Lee & Watkins (2014) and Fromm and Garton (2013).

The influence of brand-user-imagery fit on purchase intention

Based on the last hypothesis tested (H7), it can be concluded that the brand-user-imagery fit variable influences the purchase intention variable. In this study, it is explained that the better the viewers assess a brand's product as to whether it can provide an image in accordance with the image that the viewers want (self-concept), the greater their willingness to purchase the brand product. This is because the brand-user-imagery fit is one of the aspects consumers consider when making purchasing decisions (Freberg et al., 2011). The findings of this study are in line with research findings by Lee & Watkins (2014), which state that brand-user-imagery fit influences the purchase intention variables.

Other findings in this research, namely parasocial interaction formed between beauty vloggers and the viewers, will have an impact on purchase intention with the existence of the brand user imagery fit variable. This means that the strong interaction of a parasocial relationship will lead to consumer purchase intention, if the product offered can provide value or image in accordance with the consumers' self-concept perception. If a brand offered by a beauty vlogger can describe an appropriate value (brand fit) for an image that consumers want to build, the more likely it is for consumers to purchase the products they offer. Managers can take this into consideration when creating marketing strategies targeting millennial consumers. Companies must be able to build the image that best describes their target consumers on the brand they will offer, such as selecting a brand ambassador from influencers who are being modelled by their customers (artist, singer, model, beauty vlogger) or create a dynamic, interesting, up-to-date ad, but keep it classy.

The other findings are the relationship of the parasocial interaction formed between the vlogger and the viewers affecting the viewers' desire to share the information they give to others. This can be considered by company managers: when the opinion leader figure in this study is a beauty vlogger who offers a good or bad statement for a product to the viewers, then the viewers will automatically also share the information with her/his friends. The impact can be profitable and also detrimental to the company; when the statement given by the beauty vlogger on a brand is good, this word-of-mouth marketing strategy helps companies effectively market their products for free and to their targets, because the viewers automatically also want to share the information with other people. However, if the review given is negative, it will hurt the company in the future, because their target consumers also share the negative information about

the brand according to their opinion and online opinion spread which can be negative. So managers who decide to target millennial consumers as much as possible run good relationships with influencers or opinion leaders from their target market. In this case the beauty vlogger figure, by ensuring influencers like the company or brand being offered to their followers (viewers), such as inviting influencers for joint meetings in product brand launches, providing good public relations brands, etc.

Conclusion

The seven hypotheses tested in this research are all supported. It can be concluded that the factors which cause parasocial interaction between the beauty vlogger with the viewers are social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, similarity, and expertise possessed by the vlogger figure. This is because these factors can draw the viewers' attention to want to 'get to know' their favourite beauty vlogger figure, by watching all of their videos, following them on social media other than Youtube, trusting their opinions, the desire to keep in communication and ' closeness', etc. These findings can help managers decide who the right person is to use as a promotional medium (endorser or brand ambassador) if their target is millennial consumers; using a beauty vlogger that meets the factors above will provide an effective and efficient marketing strategy. Beauty vloggers have built strong parasocial interaction with their viewers, making the vlogger a strong online opinion leader. So anything that the beauty vlogger uses, recommends, and likes will be believed and followed by the viewers, which will benefit the company.

This study describes millennial consumer behavior that relies heavily on the use of smartphones and the internet for purchasing decisions and where consumers will look for a figure (opinion leader) that they trust and love on the internet to follow, which in this study is a beauty vlogger for women consumers who like cosmetics and beauty products. This study explains which factors influence the formation of the parasocial interaction between beauty vloggers and the viewers, as well as the consequences or impacts arising from the parasocial interaction with millennial consumers. Therefore, the findings of this research are expected to become one of the references or discourse in developing marketing management science, especially in the field of parasocial interaction in determining the marketing strategy in social media.

This research focuses solely on the millennials, and female consumers, because the object of the research is cosmetic beauty products; so, for further research, it is advisable to look for a universal product that can be used by both women and men, such as food and fashion, to expand the distribution of respondents. Finally, this study focuses on the parasocial interaction formed by beauty vloggers on the Youtube social media platform with its viewers. So for the next research, it is suggested to use other forms of parasocial interaction relationships of influencers

in certain media, for example, beauty bloggers on Instagram, traveller vloggers, food bloggers, celebrities, etc.

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