

AUDIENCE PREFERENCE_ ON FASHION AND BEAUTY VLOGGING IN KENYA

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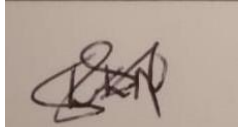
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**A RESEARCH PROECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND
MASS COMMUNICATION (SOJMC) IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD
OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University



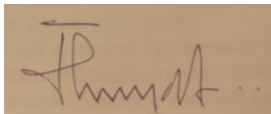
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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my parents, who have always loved me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve. I will forever be grateful for their financial support, their words of encouragement and push for tenacity.

This research project is also dedicated to my husband and son, who have been a constant source of support, inspiration and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life. I am truly thankful for having you in my life.

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I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Almighty God for being my guide in my academic journey. I also wish to thank the management, administrative staff and lecturers at University of Nairobi for their endless support and providing an environment for academic excellence.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to look into the Audience Preferences on Fashion and Beauty Vlogging in Kenya. It has been ascertained that even though vlogging creates a virtual market place and interaction point, there is a vast stimulus that this interaction and content has on the audience that warrants study. The following research objectives guided the study; to establish choices available to audiences with respect to information sources on fashion and beauty; to establish audience perceptions with respect to vlogs as a source of information for fashion and beauty; and to determine audience preferences with respect fashion and beauty information sources. The study was guided by the Technology Determinism Theory and utility theory. The study used content analysis and survey research design for the study as well as a qualitative approach since the research intended to draw out a clear understanding of how vloggers content influence their audience in Kenya. The sample size for this study was reached through purposive sampling where the researcher identified top fashion and beauty vloggers in Kenya whose content was studied. The study mainly relied on primary data and since it was qualitative in nature, it relied on the use of interviews for data collection. Presentation of data involved the mentioning of the key points and themes based on the research questions. This was done with the help of pie charts, bar graphs and frequency tables. Data analysis for the study was done with respect to thematic areas based on the study objectives and as such the data was organized around. After this, interview responses from the vloggers were analyzed qualitatively through inferential statistics. The study findings showed that the consumption of fashion vlogs over the recent years across all demographic groups has increased. There is a similar trend among all the vloggers studied as shown by the increasing number of views another reason for the rise in the level of uptake is the level of personal connection that the viewers create with the vloggers the video types that are most popular as sources of information for fashion and beauty are mainly the videos on fashion styling and make up application since from the figures, they have the largest figures of highest viewed videos and average video views per vlogger. One very major factor influencing the choice of vlogs by respondents as their information source is the high level of accessibility. In more than 50% of the cases, all of the vloggers receive feedback from their viewers and the kind of feedback given by the audience is mainly in the form of requests for other videos addressing certain areas they prefer. Affordability has been cited by many viewers as a reason for their dependence on vlogs for fashion information. There is audience that looks up to the vloggers for information on fashion and beauty trends in Kenya. Consumer preference and dependence on fashion vlogs can be influenced both actively and passively by vloggers through their content as well as through the kind of engagement strategies they use in their videos. To achieve audience engagement and to influence their preferences via vlogging, vloggers can use interaction and self-presentation. After capturing a proportion of viewers on YouTube, it is possible for the vloggers to steer the conversation on their channels through the videos they post and by so doing, they get a number of dedicated consumers of their content. Feedback helps vloggers to know the impact they have on their audience by showing them how well the videos have been received by their viewers. As a recommendation, there is need for vloggers to make videos on subjects that their viewers can properly identify with. This would result in the members of the audience trusting their channels and as a result use them as a source of information for their beauty needs.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

KNBS:	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
PSCGT:	Private Sector Corporate Governance Trust
QCA:	Qualitative Content Analysis
TV:	Television
Q & A:	Question and Answer
DIY:	Do it yourself

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Attitude:** A set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors by customers/ audience toward a particular product or vlog. Also a settled way of thinking or feeling about a product.
- Audience:** This refers to the people who are dedicated to specific video log channels and who consume the content produced by the owners of these channels.
- Beauty:** The resultant outcome of a given mix of fashion choices that lead to increased appeal to the general public.
- Consumers:** These are the users of products and who are the main targets of advertising messages.
- Fashion:** A popular aesthetic expression at a particular time, place and in a specific context, especially in clothing, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, makeup, hairstyle, and body proportions (Kaiser, 2019).
- Perception:** These refer to the views held by the individual members of an audience pertaining to specific trends
- Preference:** This is the inclination towards one thing at the expense of another and in this context, the ability of members of the audience to develop a greater liking for one fashion alternative over another or others.
- Response:** The study has used this term to refer to the level of attention that the audience give to particular videos available on their preferred channels, as well as the actions they take in relation to the vlogs.

Uptake: This term has been used in the study to denote the use of and active involvement in the consumption of vlogs.

Vlogging: This term has been used in the study to refer to the act of creating and sharing video logs that are fashion related on the internet with the aim of informing and influencing the purchasing patterns of the audience.

Vlogger: This term has been used in the study to refer to a person creating and sharing video content that are fashion related on Youtube.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Vlogging as a contemporary practice and its current trends in Kenya with respect to fashion and beauty. It then provides the problem statement, objectives and research questions, the significance, scope and justification of the study.

1.1 Background Information

Internet has been used widely as a pool of information for populations around the world (Ojulo, 2014). In this dispensation, Internet makes it possible for people to direct their opinions through social media and this is done by use of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. In this way, people who concern themselves with the creation of content have assumed the role of leaders as a result of the high level of influence that they have on consumers' minds.

In the current state of our society, majority of the people educate themselves and others through the internet. Fashion and beauty vloggers have thus been inclined to contribute in the creation of fashion-related content to enable members of the audience to comprehend and create a change by themselves (Wright, 2009). Fashion vloggers are viewed as promoters of fashion within society as a result of the crowds that they control with their content. Internet based media is largely impacted on by social needs that the audience seeks to fulfill and which were not provided by the past forms of media. According to Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) audiences mainly make use of mainstream media to gratify their earthly need and identify socialization, entertainment, self-actualization and information needs. According to this line of thinking, consumers of YouTube vlogs are largely attracted due to the human needs that they need satisfied. Viewers personally contribute in communities by commenting, sharing and engaging directly to feel esteemed as this need is very relevant to an extent whereby the importance of societal fulfillment gets satisfied by the internet that is led by the new generation.

1.2 Significance of Vlogs as a Social Media Platform

All over the world, Vlogging, also known as video-blogging has grown to the stature of becoming among the widely held content, especially YouTube. A large number of vlogs available are made up of information covering a vlogger's daily life often presented in a body of visual and textual data that stands out.

Vlogs plays a significant role in creating opinions and sharing information. Vloggers create videos to help the viewers in one way or another. They either educate the audience on different topics or try to teach them something new. Vlogs allows people to be entertained, as well as be informed at the same time. Through vlogs, video content creators are able to formulate a community of like-minded people. You Tube which is the major social media platform used to disseminate vlog content is known to create very strong bonds between vloggers and subscribers (Stelzner, 2012).

1.3 Kenyan Context of Fashion and Beauty

Beauty and fashion industry in Kenya is rapidly growing growing. More people are becoming interested for fashion and beauty products as well as content of fashion and beauty across various digital and social media platforms. The number of consumers of such content is in turn increasing. According to Louise Edwinsson and Annica Nilson (2019) who conducted a study of fashion in Kenya. It was found out that the industry has brought fashion products from Europe and America into the market, and most Kenyans have embraced this and further more explored ways to style the clothes. Fashion and beauty plays a significant role in personal imaging. This can therefore be used to promote positive body image because fashion proactively provides for inclusion of various body types and styles to suit individuals.

Fashion and beauty is also important in the political dynamics. Political leaders receive constant scrutiny and high stakes therefore having a personal grooming routine, wearing your hair a certain way, and various other fashion styles are important to provide a boost of confidence and help create a sense of preparedness. Clothing is one the easiest and fastest modes of communication (Dion Terrelonge 2019).

1.4 Significance of Vlogging to Fashion and Beauty

Fashion has impacted on the economy for a long time and this has been mainly through the clothing segment of fashion and this has been felt through production, making the clothing; distribution; and consumption. It is evident that fashions that are related to clothes change very quickly making it very difficult to follow up (Chung and Kim, 2019).

With the advent of technology, the process of producing clothing and other fashion related materials has been made much easier leading to large scale production of clothing. This has impacted on the overall rapidity of change in the fashion industry. According to (BOF & McKinsey. The State of Fashion Report 2019), fashion as a business is an international enterprise controlling up to 1.3 trillion dollars and in turn creates employment to 300 Million individuals

globally. Due to this therefore, the industry is an important driver of GDP globally. The environment in which fashion companies operate today is very dynamic and competitive, which is subject to sudden changes and increasing uncertainty (BCG, 2019).

The level of interconnection between the fashion industry and the digital world has increased with time. Marketing strategies that are run digitally have become widespread in the process of marketing fashion related products and this has made it possible for companies to reach customers through non-physical means. McKinsey (2019), states that there is an upsurge in sales that are made online and much more improvement is expected in the days to come. This tendency has affected the fashion and luxury segment which is projected to represent about 13% of the total fashion market. The emergence of online shopping has also impacted on the fashion industry. As stated by Statista.it platform, 57% of internet users globally bought fashion-related products online in the year 2018.

In Kenya, a general growth in the fashion and beauty sector has been recorded with the number of major fashion houses growing to approximately 45 major up from 31 in 2015 (Ipsos Synovate Poll on Fashion and Lifestyle). There has also been a change in the way the community views fashion in terms of the various social groups that make up the Kenyan society. This growth has been mainly increased by the high number of online shoppers in Kenya which has close to 2.61 million online shoppers ranking third country with the most online shoppers in Africa. Nigeria and South Africa were placed in first and second places respectively (Shankar, Kleijnen, Ramanathan Rizley and Holland, 2016).

1.5 Value of Vlogging as opposed to traditional media

Globally, as stated by Jacobs (2013), social media has exhibited very high influential properties making it possible for a large number of people to develop attention to a number of fashion events. Liu and Burger (2009) stated that the digital world increases awareness of things that are popular in the industry. In the words of Lee (2016), vlogging has made the fashion industry more visible than it has been in a long time, leading to more informed fashion decisions.

In Africa, the increased use of social media has made it possible for products to be distributed with ease. This has been attributed mainly to vlogging which has become very popular in the continent as well over time. The main catalyst according to Yuda (2013) is trust in the source of information provided by the vloggers who convey the message concerning specific products as consumers view the information provided to them as credible.

In the Kenyan context, the social media has grown at a very high rate with this platform being applied for various uses. According to Kwok and Yu (2013) the social media and vlogging in particular gives more emphasis on the people/ consumers and not the products and this has revolutionized the marketing landscape in Kenya. Vlogging is driven by a direct interaction between consumers and other peoples' experiences about a product and by this, it focuses on the people and not the product (Carmichael and Cleave, 2012). In as much as products can be presented with various qualitative features and promotional tools, what really matters are the comments and appreciations left by the customers and audience at large whose room is provided for by the vloggers, which the traditional media does not offer. Vloggers are able to upload fashion, hair and beauty tips videos frequently and share with people all over the world (Owino, 2015). The viewers are inspired by these videos and even follow the tutorials guiding on fashion and beauty. Many consumers in Kenya also prefer this method of advertising because it makes them a near-real-life experience with the product as they see them used by actual people (Delaney, 2012).

Studies have been done in the area of vlogging and consumers. In their research, Luu and Sebisubi (2016) reported that product reviews by vloggers had a significant influence on the purchase decision of customers. Lee and Watkins (2016) examined "YouTube vloggers influence on consumer luxury brands perception and intentions", The results of the research conducted, concluded that the audiences who had actively watched the uploaded vlogs of brand reviews of the luxury brands had a higher purchase intention than those who had not watched the reviews. Lee et al. (2016) hence suggested that YouTube is essential for promoting brands and products through the content shared by vloggers because they are in a position to interact socially with their audiences and influence their purchase intentions.

This proposition by Lee and Watkins (2016) was supported by the report of O'Neil-Hart et al. (2016) which asserted that through communication taking place between You Tubers and their audiences, they have overtime built up a community with like-minded people who share values and trends, making the YouTube vloggers to be role models within the community.

A good vlog features originality. The vlogger has to be original and confident about their content and presentation hence majoring on their own perspective and ideas (Caron (2017)). Based on these reviews, it is evident that the main thing in vlogging is the definition of the audience. It is important to know the target audience as this helps in the determination of the kind of content to create as well as the language to use in the videos and the method of presentation. It is therefore important to narrow down to a niche and find a target audience then find out the core problems they face, which, in turn, allows one to offer them the information, products, or services that they actually want and need.

A vlog needs to have a brand name which should be unique, but still relatable to the industry. It is important to have a vlog logo, which should be simple enough while and memorable to their audience. Another important thing is to be active on most social media channels which goes a long way in popularizing a vlogger's content (Chen, 2013). Another important thing about vlogging is marketing which entails promoting content and being active on all social media channels, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. A good vlog needs to be trendy. Vloggers need to be up to date with the current trends in order to remain relevant in the market. Vlogs also need to be consistent so that viewers are always provided for. This may go a long way in increasing and entrenching loyalty among followers and fans (Wilson, 2016).

In as much as YouTube, reaches a large number of people who consume their content, audience is not guaranteed. It all depend on the popularity of the channel as measured by the number of subscribers and views on the channel. (Burgess and Green, 2009). Content is very important in vlogs since content is what makes the audience want to follow specific vlogs. Mainly, it is essential that content is based on the needs of the audience hence it is important that a vlogger gets to know their target audience before coming up with content that appeals to that audience. Content is also determined by the prevailing trends. Vloggers follow other vloggers as well as other news sources to find out what is trending at a particular time and this informs the kind of content they create. Fashion vloggers have to create content based on their area of expertise or knowledge.

Vlogs, as opposed to other traditional media, gives the audience room for viewing the content through very rich audiovisual presentation, which features the vlogger's personal life and preferences which by extension gives the viewer room to see the presenter's personality. They provide a person the opportunity to represent a given brand fully since by having someone on screen, viewers will be able to engage on a personal level much more easily. In recent years, more people have embraced watching vlogs, due to the more memorable audio-visual format videos have compared with text-based media (Choi and Johnson, 2005) and their authentic content compared with traditional media (Parnell, 2017). Over 40% of online users watched vlogs every month in the year 2016. (Young, 2016).Vloggers are personal brands (Tarnovskaya, 2017). Vlogging builds engagement and from a marketing perspective, achieving engagement builds and maintains positive relationships between firms and their consumers beyond the product purchase. Since engagement turns customers from passive information receivers to active participants (Schmitt, 2012): they may for instance take part in product development and lead to product success ((Sashi, 2012).

Vlogging bridges the gap between consumers and product creators. The nature of vlogs is one which promotes direct communication and this in itself promotes direct feedback from consumers

who constitute a large part of the audience. Video blogs foster the concept of presence which is related to the evaluations and designs of broad categories of media products (Lee, 2004). Televisions present information concerning products to viewers but vlogs go a step further by giving the audience room to relate with the vlogger as well as with the product at a more personal level (Kim and Biocca, 1997).

1.6 Statement of the problem

It is apparent that the internet plays a very pronounced role in the dissemination of information and is therefore very instrumental in setting trends in various parts of the globe and as such, the concept of vlogging has become a popular trend in most parts of the world (Gordon, 2017). The role played by vlogging of bridging the gap between marketers and consumers of various products has been recognized widely as replacing the traditional ways of selling. It has also been stated that vlogging enables marketers to tailor content to meet the exact needs of the audience (Nguyen, 2015).

Based on the gains that have been made in the area of video blogging, the effects of these sites are expected to be felt right across the fashion industry. Its effects surpass the marketing role it should play and go as far as influencing the behaviour of the audience in major ways. According to Wordstream (2019), worldwide, 40% of internet users follow brands on social media and as a result, these platforms are natural choices for boosting customer loyalty as a large number of fashion conscious people currently rely on online sources for fashion information. A report by Global Web Index (2020) indicates that in the year 2019, 31% of 16-24 year olds stated that they found new products and brands through paid social ads. Sands (2014) stated that YouTube has influenced 53% of purchases and this is much higher than the traditional television.

A number of disadvantages are associated with the traditional media channels, such as short lifespan of content, whereas with vlogs, content is retained on the YouTube channel and audience are able to view the content over a longer period of time. Traditional media does not also provide for instant feedback from the audience which limits the connection of the audience and the content as well as the content creator. Fashion information is fast growing and keeps changing over time and therefore traditional media may be overtaken by the trends. Consumers are avoiding old-style advertisement sources including radio, television, and newspapers, preferring various types of social media as their source of information (Lempert, in Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The realization of the true impact of vlogging on the audience has however been unachievable based on the very many aspects of the audience that are affected, which range from their lifestyles, fashion preferences social affiliations as well as product inclination. As a result of this, despite the large

strides that have been made by vlogging and social media advertising, conventional advertising methods still dominate the marketing scene in Kenya.

According to Global stats (2020), in real life, social media ads and vlogs are the number four-way people find new products in Kenya and they come after word of mouth, TV ads and search engines in that order. This is despite the fact that 87.2% of the Kenyan population is using the Internet ("Internet World Stats", 2020), which implies that phenomenal growth has occurred in digital media. Further, even though vlogging creates a virtual market place and interaction point, there is a vast influence that this interaction between the videos uploaded has on the audience that warrants study. In South Africa for example, according to Social blade (2019), vlogging has gained popularity among the general population and it has revolutionized the consumption of fashion information in the country. In the Kenyan cyberspace, vlogging has gained prominence and importance over the last decades with very little empirical work being evidenced in relation to the audience (PSCGT, 2000). Despite the large pool of information available on the internet and which present users with very many possibilities, fashion magazines such as Vogue, H&S and Woman's Own still have prominence among Kenyan women even though they are costlier compared to online information. Despite the Vogue magazine having a You Tube channel with 8.07 Million subscribers, the magazine has recorded a corresponding increase in the readership of its hard copy throughout the world. The magazine has also partnered with top vloggers to popularize its content but this hasn't impacted negatively on the hard copy of the magazine (Statistica, 2020).

This gives rise to the question as to what informs consumers' access to fashion blogs and whether access to the fashion and beauty content from Vlogs actually results in increased sales figures. This, coupled with the wide influence that TV and other mainstream media still has in advertising, forms the basis for the current study which seeks to investigate audience preferences on fashion and beauty vlogging in Kenya.

1.7 Objectives of the study

- i. To examine the uptake of fashion vlogs as a source of information for fashion and beauty trends in Kenya
- ii. To establish choices available to audiences with respect to information sources on fashion and beauty

- iii. To determine the factors that influence audience choices with respect to fashion and beauty information sources

1.7 Research Questions

- i. How has the uptake of fashion vlogs as a source of information for fashion and beauty been in Kenya?
- ii. What are the choices available to audiences with respect to information sources on fashion and beauty?
- iii. What are the factors that influence audience choices with respect fashion and beauty information sources?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are viewed as likely to impact on the information available to the manufacturers and marketers of beauty products both in the Kenyan market and beyond as a result of the knowledge that will be made available to this group on the special power possessed by vloggers that enables them reach a wider market and influence the perceptions of their audiences towards given products, thereby altering the buying behaviours of consumers.

Vlogging has had a profound contribution to consumption patterns over time. The study will be extensively beneficial to the vlogging community by providing information on the influence they have on consumers of fashion products. In this way, the study will avail information which if implemented will enable improved performance of vloggers in the industry in the form of viewership and coverage for the vloggers in Kenya.

The findings will be very valuable to scholars as it will avail information for literature construction on this topic. By so doing, they are likely to be in a position of conducting successful studies on this, and other related topics in the future by having a clearer view of consumer preferences and purchase intentions.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study investigated audience preferences on fashion and beauty in Kenya. In the study, vlogging is the independent variable while the audience represents the dependent variable. In the study, changes in consumer buying behaviour, consumption patterns and customer preferences and purchase intentions are used as the indicators of consumption. The research was done in Kenya in August and September 2021. The study focused on both males and females within the age group of 20 - 45 years because this age group represents people who are most conscious of fashion and beauty and consume fashion and beauty content via the various social media platforms.

Fashion and beauty vlog content constitute of haul videos in which vloggers proudly show off their “haul,” which are clothes bought during a shopping spree. Other vloggers concentrate on style tips whose aim is to break down fashion and beauty items and information for the viewers. Another area covered by vloggers within this genre is clothing care tips which gives viewers practical ways of doing certain things with regards to fashion and beauty. Fashion vloggers also do videos on style inspiration. Vloggers may also choose to concentrate on giving viewers outfit ideas (Brown & Rachel, 2016).

1.9 Justification of the Study

The project examined audience preferences on fashion and beauty vlogging in Kenya. The fashion industry is driven by perception (Behmer & Bazlova, 2013) and as a result, what customers see other people do may influence their own views towards certain fashion trends. While a number of studies have been done to associate vlogging and fashion, there is a lack of knowledge about the audience vlogger influence in Kenya (Ananda, 2016). In most studies, researchers have looked into the role of vlogging on consumers as a general concept while overlooking such aspects as buying behavior; consumption patterns as well as consumer preferences and purchase intentions.

In the past, consumer awareness has been driven by the mainstream media, mainly television and print media (Ojulo, 2014) but with time, things have changed and consumers are able to get information concerning emerging fashion trends through vlogs which can be accessed through social media. The advent of video logs has revolutionized the whole fashion industry (Lepistö *et al.*, 2017) and despite the major change, there has not been a total shift as the mainstream media still hold the largest portion of the fashion advertising business. This has presented a major need for an investigation into the kind of interaction that exists between the vloggers and their audience hence the current topic of study.

The study findings may shed light on the true value of vlogging with respect to consumption patterns and as a result, relay the true picture of the impact that vlogging has had on consumers of fashion products in terms of buying behavior; consumption patterns as well as audience preferences on fashion information sources. Such information may be used positively by companies involved in the manufacture and marketing of fashion products, market researchers and vloggers alike to aid in the improvement of their operational performance and in relaying information related to fashion and beauty to their targeted audiences.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

With reference to the definition of limitations by Kombo and Tromp (2006), the major limitation in this study was the difficulty of getting data in real time. Since vlogging deals with a virtual audience, the study lacked real-time interaction with information which may have contributed to a large extent in making the study less effective compared to if done with a physical respondent base. The researcher mitigated this limitation by making the questions as engaging as possible to elicit the personal touch.

Another problem faced during the study was that of finding time with the respondents (individual vloggers) for the interviews. This led to a slight delay in the whole data collection process. To mitigate against the effects of this, very regular follow-up of the vloggers had to be done, which involving making appointments at different times for the purposes of finding the most suitable time to administer the interviews.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the literature with respect to this study and highlights the prevailing gaps. It then provides the theoretical framework to be applied in the study in relation to the study variables.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 The Uptake of Fashion Vlogs as a Source of Information for Fashion and Beauty Trends

Vloggers on YouTube have taken the role of marketing influencers and replaced the traditional celebrities and this is since clients find it easy to identify with the vloggers as a result of their interactive nature and behaviors that are easily relatable to the viewers (Dredge, 2016). According to Sedláček (2016), to their audience, YouTubers are considered as celebrities. The reason why vlogging has grown so rapidly is because vlogs thrive on the interaction between vloggers and their audience through the real-time communication that they get engaged in. This means that the responses that the audience gives to the vloggers help them know how the audience views them (Adami, 2009).

Brands associated with luxury fashion such as Chanel, Dior, Burberry, and Prada have employed social approaches whose role is to get involved with consumers (Dhaoui, 2014; Mike, 2014; Park, Song, & Ko, 2011). Social media marketing was first used by Burberry and this gave them an increase of 40% in profits (Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011). Research has been done on social media use for luxury fashion market but it is not enough (Mike, 2014). Transformation has been witnessed in the traditional concept of luxury across the decades. (Ansarin & Ozuem, 2014; Yeoman, 2011). As a result of increasing wealth, consumers have got access to luxury products and this has shifted the views held towards it. Due to this phenomenon, luxury fashion products are not only used by the rich. However, much more people have access to these products (Ansarin & Ozuem, 2014). It has been observed that through online marketing, luxury brands are no longer exclusive because a large group of audiences can get information about luxury products (Heine & Berghaus, 2014; Okonkwo, 2009).

The swift development of social media has seen to it that it provides tools that are sophisticated and which are suitable for doing marketing communications (Edwards 2011). YouTube as a social media channel is used by people for the purposes of posting, sharing, watching and commenting

on the videos uploaded by other users (Mir & Rehman 2013). According to the views of Edwards (2017), based on the nature of the videos uploaded by vloggers, the overall consumer behavior is directly affected and this may be in terms of the products they view as appropriate. This is mainly propelled by the need of the audience to identify personally with the vlogger's views.

In a study done in Mozambique by Ivanova (2012) on the impacts of vloggers on consumer buying behavior, the study was limited to internet users leading to a sample of 500 respondents who were reached through snowball sampling. The study was dedicated to establish the direct relationship between individual vloggers and the buying behaviour of their followers. The study used a descriptive research design and emphasis was laid on the social and physical attractiveness of the vloggers. Based on the findings of the study, it was established that the buying behavior of the audience was affected by the vloggers physical and social attractiveness as well as their convincing power.

Ahrens (2012) investigated the relation between vlogger level of appeal and its influence on consumer buying behavior. The study used a sample of 54 respondents who were made up of fashion product consumers within Nairobi City, Kenya. The aim of the study was to find out if there is a direct relationship between the level of appeal of vloggers and how their audience responds by way of an adjustment to their buying behaviors. The study was based on the impulse buying theory with the underlying assumption that vloggers influence their audience to buy things that they would otherwise not be willing to buy. The study findings indicated a direct relationship between vlogger level of appeal and consumer buying behavior. It was further established that vloggers that had a higher level of appeal had increased influence on their audience.

The use of social media by individuals has also led to the rise of vlogging which is fully made possible by social media platforms (SIMElab Africa, 2019). The use of social media advertising in Africa witnessed a general rise from the year 2016 (Khan (2017)). Social media - particularly in the form of vlogs - has been a game changer. It has brought about the democratization of the fashion industry. According to Coombs (2020), the increase in popularity in vlogging as a way of popularizing products has received a boost in all African countries in almost similar proportions. The following is a comparison of internet and social media usage between Kenya and Nigeria in the year 2020 which can be used as a pointer to the level of vlogging popularity and usage in the two countries.

There were 22.86 million internet users in Kenya in January 2020; the number of internet users in Kenya increased by 3.2 million (+16%) between 2019 and 2020. Internet penetration in Kenya stood at 43% in January 2020. There were 8.80 million social media users in Kenya in January

2020; the number of social media users in Kenya increased by 1.0 million (+13%) between April 2019 and January 2020. Social media penetration in Kenya stood at 17% in January 2020. There were 52.06 million mobile connections in Kenya in January 2020. The number of mobile connections in Kenya increased by 4.2 million (+8.7%) between January 2019 and January 2020. The number of mobile connections in Kenya in January 2020 was equivalent to 98% of the total population (Global Digital Insights, 2020).

Social media users follow brands they admire to learn about products or services, to get updated with company news, to know about recent promotions or to connect with people who have similar tastes as themselves. Some people will also follow a brand as loyal customers who want to communicate with the organization or to reach out for customer service. Some social media users will follow a brand during a marketing campaign or when a brand is mentioned by influencers they like. According to SIMELab Africa (2019), 16, 78% of Kenyans are brand followers. 38.9% of the users aged between 21-25 years old and 30.5% of the 26-25 year-olds follow their favorite brands online. The older social media users are less likely to follow brands on social media, with only 12.2% of those aged between 36-45 years old and 4.9% of the users aged 46 years and above follow brands online. Urban social media users are more likely to follow brands online than their rural counterparts. 55.8% of the urban social media users say that they follow brands online, compared to 44.2% of the rural users.

The system of media has changed in the postmodern world. The shift from professional-made entertainment into more of a part-time created content is clearly observable in the today era of social media and platforms such as YouTube which has greatly promoted vlogging (Serrano Puche, 2017). In South Africa, vlogging has grown over the years with vloggers making videos in which they provide a review about the product and their Instant feedback right on the spot, and many different companies approach the renowned face of the society to promote their product in a large sum of the audience Safko Lon (2012). By its nature, vlogging gives individuals the chance to convey what they know something new about the product and services and what other person wants to know. It likewise empowers individuals to influence others by clarifying their thoughts and confusion related to anything and make them aware about the recent happening (Miles Jason, 2014).

According Serrano-Puche (2017), YouTube, as a channel is growing its status in South Africa, as every minute hundreds of hours of videos, is uploaded to YouTube. This has been promoted by the fact that as much as videos are being uploaded, there is a large audience that is dedicated to searching and watching the content (Statista, 2016). There are plenty of YouTubers in South Africa who have made a name for themselves; Sibumpanza is one of them. He is the winner of the first

Samsung Socialstar competition, for which he and two other contestants travelled to Mauritius from 12-16 November 2015. He started vlogging in 2014. Vloggers, or video bloggers, are people who make personal videos and post them online to YouTube.

There were 85.49 million internet users in Nigeria in January 2020; the number of internet users has increased in Nigeria by 2.2 million (+2.6%) between 2019 and 2020. Internet penetration in Nigeria stood at 42% in January 2020. There were 27.00 million social media users in Nigeria in January 2020. The number of social media users in Nigeria increased by 3.4 million (+14%) between April 2019 and January 2020. In Nigeria social media penetration stood at 13% in January 2020. In terms of mobile connections in Nigeria in January 2020 there were 169.2 million users; the number of mobile connections in Nigeria increased by 12 million (+7.7%) between January 2019 and January 2020. This is equivalent to 83% of the total population (Global Digital Insights, 2020).

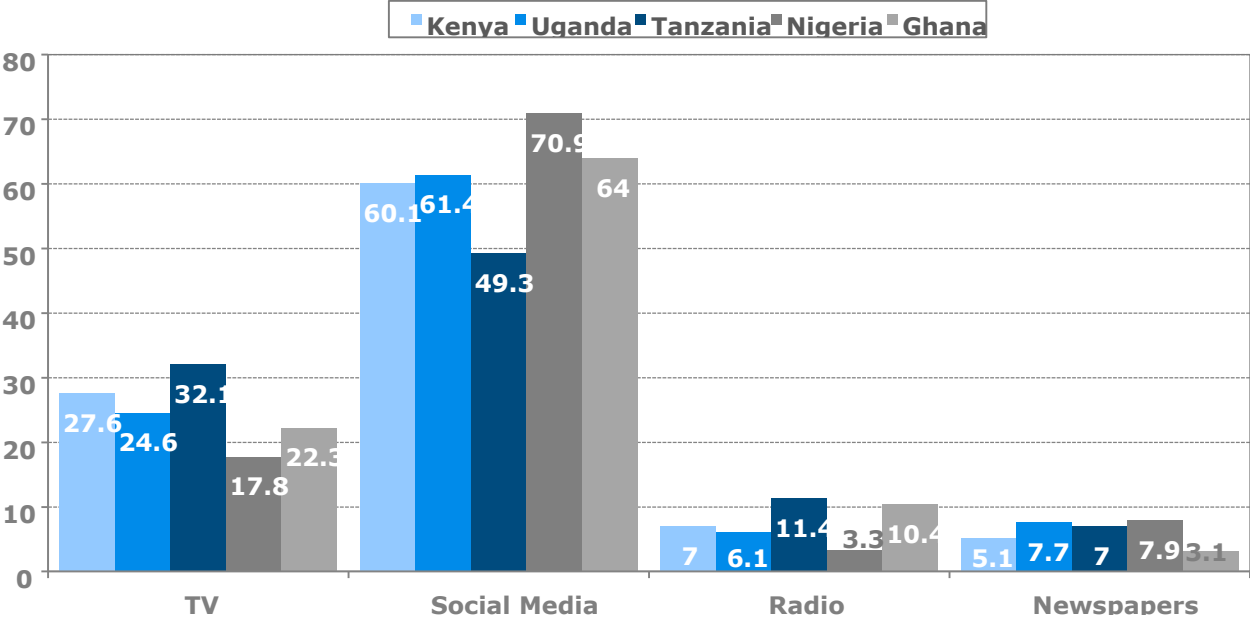


Figure 1: Media Use in Africa

Source: GeoPoll Straw Poll Survey (2017)

According to a study by Geopoll (2017), a comparison was done between five African countries on the use of various news sources and according to their findings, the use of social media has witnessed a general increase in all the countries, irrespective of geo-location or economic

situations. Brodie (2011) states that the increase in social media consumption can be attributed largely to its interactive nature which gives all the participants room to express their opinions and feelings openly.

2.1.2 Choices Available To Audiences With Respect To Information Sources

The perceptions held by the audience has been shown to influence their preference for given products that are presented to them. Another way of triggering the preference of customers in vlogs is the methods used in presenting the message that the vlogger intends to pass to the viewers. There are words that are used by all the five vloggers that have been studied in this research. The words have been presented below together with their intended effects.

Free - elicit the anticipation of getting things without paying for them **New** - people are always attracted to brand-new, latest, and most exceptional goods on the market **Proven** - This term is used as a call for action since it implies the confirmation of the efficiency of the approach **Easy** - People always prefer the simple solution and choose to take the easy path if one's open. Using the word *easy* or its variations like *easiest* in subject lines can very successfully make the audience engaged. **Secret** - People love secrets more than news due to the human incredible curiosity. Secrets may imply profit, exclusivity, intrigue, or valuable information, depending on the context the word is used in. The use of this word shows that the content has the ability to satisfy the reader's thirst for knowledge. **Now** - This word demands an instant response. It lets the audience know that the sharing of something of imminent significance is going on. **Want** - The trigger word "want" was to encourage readers to determine what they wish to have or to help them understand what they really want.

Another way by which viewer perceptions and preferences are triggered in the videos is through the environment in which the videos are recorded. They seek to make their settings as real as possible so that their audience can readily identify with the surroundings and view them as normal regular people, just like themselves. An example is Rosina Sharon when she shoots one of her videos depicting a normal living room setting. This is aimed at making the viewers to feel that she is just like any other person, which increases the level of approval. The results also show that vloggers disclose their surroundings in their videos. By teasing their vlog environment or objects near them, the audience may receive more additional information, such as their life status, plans, living environment, which shapes the perception held by the audience towards a particular vlogger.

Shot, *et al.* (2011) claimed one of the factors that will affect social presence level is intimacy. Intimacy means how realistically a character behaves in media. It can be affected by factors like

eye contact, distance between people and smiling. Böcker and Mühlbach (1993) discovered that different eye contact angles affect intimacy. Increasing eye contact in videos could improve social presence. Facial expressions and gestures in three out of the five the vloggers' videos representing 60% could be determinants which influence their social presence. Vloggers upload videos about products they use or their personal life, thereby increasing traffic from subscribers and anonymous viewers. Consequently, vloggers become what is referred to as YouTube celebrities. The emergence of the vlog and the success of "YouTube celebrities" have provided luxury brands with a marketing tool to connect with consumers and influence their perceptions directly.

Consumption patterns have been defined by Trusov (2009) as the expenditure patterns of income groups across or within categories of products, such as food, clothing, and discretionary items. Lepistö et al. (2017) in their research explained that when YouTube vloggers' audiences viewed them as credible and as a result, automatically believed in everything they said. They further assert that YouTube vloggers have a significant influence on the consumption patterns of their audiences and that they have the power to change the minds of their audiences to make them buy things they have not been buying in the past. YouTube vloggers make referrals by way of posting links to websites of organizations under their videos and these links act as a conduit for enabling viewers purchase products directly (Lindgreen et al. 2013).

A study was done by Molyneaux (2008) on the influence of vlogging on consumption patterns of the audience. The study used multiple regression models by least squares (OLS) to establish the link between vloggers and the consumption patterns of their audiences. The study made use of the stimulus organism response model which states that the stimulus from the environment will influence an individual's cognitive and affective aspect which eventually determines their response. The study showed that vloggers had a positive direct influence on the consumption patterns of the members of their audience. The kind of products that are promoted by vloggers in their accounts influence the consumption patterns of their viewers directly.

Dehghani (2016) investigated the relationship between vlog contents and their influence on the viewers and how this influences their consumption patterns. The study involved a survey of randomly selected internet users who were contacted using electronic questionnaires. The study findings showed that the contents of the vlogs are as crucial as the vloggers themselves. For instance, viewers may watch vlogs for the purposes of gaining new information about particular products or to be entertained by the videos. Additionally, viewers may also be attracted by vlogs due to their creative content and the videos' superior quality. Based on this, the quality of the contents presented to the audience can go a long way in influencing their consumption patterns based on whether they view the content as superior or inferior.

2.1.3 Audience Choices with Respect Fashion and Beauty Information Sources

Consumer purchase intention points to a situation where a consumer has to choose between a number of options of goods or services (Ananda, 2016). Purchase intention has been studied and it is involved with the way in which consumers decide between the choices (Stavkova *et al*, 2008). Many studies that have been done concerning purchase intention have concentrated on the cognitive process. Purchase intention according to Ananda et al. (2016) is when a person does an in depth assessment of a product and later decides to make a purchase and referral has been proved to impact on behaviour (Buttle, 1998).

Social influencers have been credited with the mastery of e-WOM which has been seen as more effective compared to messages emanating from brand marketers. This is because consumers are more likely to trust information from social influencers as more reliable and dependable (Lee & Yuon, 2009). This is clearly related to attribution theory which is concerned with how a person associates an observation to the situation prevailing outside or the person's internal characteristics (Fiske, & Taylor, 1991). When consumers associate the performance of a product to the review they get about the product, their perception of the communicator as dependable increases and this results in increased confidence on the credibility of the review (Lee & Yuon, 2009).

In the study of Forsström, 2016), on social media advertising and consumer purchase intentions in Malaysia, a population of 180 consumers of beauty products were included. The study used the rational choice theory to bring out the kind of interaction that interacts between consumers and the adverts they see in social media. The study based on the view that the form of advertising used on social media was able to influence the intentions of the viewers to buy the products they saw. This also applies in the case of video logs where products are associated with particular individuals who influence the consumers to either purchase or not to purchase the products.

According to Freberg, Freberg, Graham, & McGaughey (2010), social influencers signify third party sponsor who is responsible for molding the views of the audience. The popularity of influencers grows as a result of them being actively involved in sites involved with social networking and their fame grows by engaging in online media such as blogs and internet based videos on sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. This kind of fame makes it possible for the vloggers to change the preferences of their followers. These videos show them as more natural by portraying them as being ordinary people with ordinary lives just as their viewers. This sets them apart from the established celebrities and actors. This kind of perception makes it easy for more people to directly relate to these influencers by watching their content.

There is a general rise in social media and this has been accompanied with a move to a high speed technology driven world whereby communication professionals need to remain up to date with the online conversations to enable visibility of brands in the digital conversation. According to Gillin (2008) did a study which involved the survey of professionals in the communications field and from the findings, 57% believed that the value of social media tools to their activities has increased. They showed that mainly, blogs, online video and social networks are the main tools that are mainly used by their organizations. It was further indicated that the presence of social media influencers increases the chances of brand marketers to join the conversation.

Vloggers play a very important role that lies between model, representative and influencer in relation to the message they pass across. The influence exerted by vloggers on their large audience has the potential of initiating and swaying many important social changes. Vloggers have been associated with the revolution of gender identity as well as awareness raising with respect to societal issues that affect each person meaning that in these areas, they take the place of leaders. Since vloggers are seen as normal people, and appear to be more realistic, they are able to start conversations among their followers while at the same time swaying the feedback to take a given trend within the online community (Martin, 2012; Behmer & Bazlova, 2013). Vloggers also play the role of leading opinions as a result of the kind of influence that they enjoy and this is fostered by the high levels of trust that the audience have in them (Katz & Blumler, 1974).

Martin (2012) states that fitness vloggers have vast knowledge and exposure and it is therefore expected of them to be truthful and reliable. Their audience believe that the information that they pass across in their videos are reliable and should be trusted by the viewers to the point of informing their decisions. Further, the community principle propels the message from person to person, from group to group resulting in a larger area of coverage which translates in a large area of influence. A study was done by Cunningham's and Craig's (2017) and from the study, it was clear that younger people like YouTube more than the way they like TVs because they regard YouTube as more interactive as it gives them room to air their views directly and this way, they are able to pass information to other members of their peers. This is made possible by the numerous approaches used by YouTubers to achieve high levels of engagement with their audience. YouTube videos have some elements of the traditional TV and they offer much more through the aspect of using various elements and formats.

Ofiori-Okyere and Asamoah (2015) indicate in their study, that the choice of the right celebrity for the purpose of endorsing a brand plays a great role and may determine the success or failure of an advertising drive. Colliander and Dahlén (2011) compared the effects of brand publicity pitting social and traditional media. The authors of the study created similar messages, which were written

either in seven popular blogs or seven popular online magazines (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). In the study, 374 responses and the participants participated and who had an average of 27 years. The study conclusions showed that blogs have higher publicity compared to the online magazines (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). From the findings, it was explained that there is a much newer trend that has come up in the media, marketing and consumers in which they are all joined in a relationship that resembles friendship. In this way, people follow a blogger and see the blogger as a friend who is fashionable and provided the blogger is following a certain brand, the viewer also gets drawn to the same brand (Colliander & Dahlén,2011).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Technology Determinism Theory

Technology determinism refers to the general view that technology plays the main role at starting transformation in society. This theory was started by Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), who formulated the causal link between the technology and the society. In the same way, Karl Marx is viewed as the first to elaborate technological determinism by arguing that when there are changes in technology, they influence human social relations and organizations primarily. He also indicated that social relations and cultural practices are determined by the technological and economic base of a given society.

According to Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), the concept called technological determinism represents the promotion of the thought that use of educational technology depends on both the user and the surroundings in which the user exists. Also, it is influenced by technology itself meaning that technologies are not neutral to the learning process but they structure information in a way that affects the psyche of the user and even cause social change. According to the proponents of the theory, society is influenced and shaped by the level of development that is inherent in technology. According to McLuhan the content of the media cannot be viewed on its own without technology of the media itself. The way in which the topic is presented and the audience to which their message is directed affects the nature of the message passed across. According to the theory, transformation can be initiated through a fundamental shift in technology communication and this doesn't only happen in social organization but also in human sensitivities. According to technological determinism, the content carried determines the social system. Technological determinism is built on the idea that technology controls the structure of the rest of society which in turn could be a political theory or idea employed by historical or present-day actors to achieve political or other ends.

According to the theory, technology is communication, an extension of ourselves that allows further reach through time and/or space. All media is therefore either hot or cool depending on the audience or level of interactivity of the user with a given medium. According to this view, hot media is one that people cannot relate to and results in a passive audience and this category has TV and film. On the other hand, animation is considered cool because it engages imagination in the process of bridging the gap between the lines of reality. Video games are cool because it is very interactive hence the user and the content interact as well as the user and the medium.

This study seeks to analyze audience preferences on fashion and beauty vlogging in Kenya and this theory is considered appropriate since it brings out the aspect of motives that drive individuals to select certain media as opposed to others. The relevance of the theory to the study is driven by its emphasis on the role that technology plays in transformation of media. According to Langdon Winner (1986) two hypotheses exist for the technological determinism theory: The technology of a given society fundamentally influences the various ways of existence of the society. Also, changes in technology are importantly and primarily the leaders of change in the society. This implies that technology charts the way followed by society in all activities. As a result, the emergence of fashion and beauty vlogging has resulted from the availability of technology that supports its existence. As a result, it has shaped the way information is passed to the audience about fashion and beauty trends.

2.2.2 Utility Theory

The theory is based on the beliefs held by the theory upon individual preferences. The theory is used to elaborate the nature of individuals as premised on the idea that people can consistently rank the order of their choices with respect to their preferences. The theory was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), also known as the father of modern utilitarian philosophy. Adam Smith (1723–1790), then differentiated between “value in use” and “value in exchange, which implies that each and everybody shows preferences which differ and appear to be hard-wired within each individual. The premise of the theory is the assumption of rationality and it therefore describes all decision outcomes based on the value an individual places on them. Based on this theory, an individual can understand decisions in terms of rationally ordered value levels attached to the outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research studied audience preferences on fashion and beauty vlogging in Kenya and as such, the researcher used content analysis and survey research design. Yin (2009) states that content analysis allows researchers to carry out a detailed investigation of a limited number of subjects in real-life situations. Zainal (2007) adds that this research design can be used appropriately in complex phenomena. Yin (2009) states that content analysis is conducted without separating subjects from their context which was the goal of this study and as a result, the researcher used content analysis research design. The researcher analyzed vloggers' content by examining a small number of representative individuals. However, content analysis research design has been critiqued for the tendency of studying in depth a limited number of cases without being able to generalize to a large population. Yin (2009) however indicates that this can be mitigated by considering the transferability of the research outcome.

3.2 Research Approach

The study used a qualitative approach since the research intended to draw out a clear understanding of how vloggers influence their audience in Kenya. For qualitative analysis, the researcher used in-depth descriptions of the vloggers. The views and comments on the videos within a period of time were also analyzed to identify how they influence the preferences of the audience. Researchers in the past have used multiple ways to extract the content from videos. They have used description for visual or non-verbal factors, such as vloggers' behaviors, camera usage, editing, and even whole narratives, like what happened in the vlog. The adaptation of qualitative content analysis focused on detailed observation of both audio and visual aspects of vlogs. The study generally made use of the methods of transcribing and describing to extract critical video content. Transcription was typically used to extract verbal content, such as vloggers' speech, while describing was mainly used to extract visual or nonverbal content. Using these methods ensured that the study covered both audio and visual aspects of vlogs. However, how content is specifically extracted and interpreted during the analysis differed based on the exploration of the specific research questions regarding content, context, and presence.

3.3 Study Site

This research was done in Kenya. Kenya is found in East Africa with a population of 49 million. The study will be directed towards vloggers and their audiences.

3.4 Study Population

Target population about which information is desired for the study is derived from the population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2007). The population targeted for the study was comprised of vloggers making videos affiliated to fashion and lifestyle and who are based within Kenya. This was informed by the perceived ability of this kind of population to enable the realization of the general objective of the study which was to look into audience preferences on fashion and beauty vlogging in Kenya.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

Sample size is a major determinant of study outcomes especially when the goal of the study is to come up with inferences about a population. The main determinant of the sample size used in a study is the expanse of data collection as well as the need of sufficient statistical power (Saunders, 2016). Purposive sampling was used in this study to get the sample size. The purposive sampling technique is a form of non-probability sampling that is most effective when a researcher needs to study a specific domain with knowledgeable experts within. It involved identification of top fashion and beauty Vloggers in Kenya with the highest number of subscribers, whose content was studied.

No official record exists stating comprehensively the top fashion and beauty vloggers in Kenya. Despite this, the researcher relied on her knowledge of the industry, names suggested in Kenyan and international Blogs and the Ipsos Synovate Poll on Fashion and Lifestyle to know that there are approximately 45 top fashion houses recognized in Kenya. Therefore, out of the forty-five (45) top fashion and beauty vloggers, the researcher purposively picked five (5), based on the number of subscribers, level of activity, brand endorsements and partnerships. The following top 5 fashion and beauty vloggers in Kenya formed a sample constituting 15% of the whole number: For the videos, the researcher randomly picked videos from the vloggers' channels. Videos used in the study covered four years ranging from 2018 to 2019. The researcher used this range to ensure that the videos reviewed in the study are uniform in age.

Rosina Sharon 391,000 subscribers

Rosina Sharon is a beauty vlogger who majors on makeup videos. Her youtube channel was started in July 2013 and she has so far got 23,676,304 views. Besides popularity, there are other important factors that affect performance of a particular channel such as quality of the content provided as well as the content-target audience fit. On average, every video on Rosina Sharon channel has around 40.6K views (Hype Auditor2021).

Wabosha Maxine **189,000 subscribers**

Maxine Wabosha is a young African beauty and fashion vlogger who is among the rising creatives in Kenya. Wabosha Maxine started sharing video content in October 2013 and has so far had 16,501,231 views on her YouTube channel.

Joanna Kinuthia **133,000 subscribers**

Joanna Kinuthia is a social media influencer who has gained fame for her extensive online presence. She has risen to massive popularity for her regular beauty blogging, cosmetic product reviews, and lifestyle videos. She joined YouTube in June 2015 and has so far had 12,660,437 views.

Sheila Ndinda **83,300 subscribers**

Sheila Ndinda is known for her natural hair tutorials, her natural hair journey and product reviews. She also deals with matters to do with healthy skin and fashion. She joined Jun 27, 2012 and has so far had 4,912,332 views.

This is ess **65,800 subscribers**

This is ess, also known as Sharon Mundia does videos on fashion and lifestyle in general. She joined YouTube in October 2013 and has so far had 7,123,766 views.

Joy Kendi **51,600 subscribers**

This is a youtube channel that runs fashion and lifestyle content incorporating everything from food, to fashion, travel and home. Joy Kendi joined youtube in November 2006 and has so far had 3,448,307 views.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Research Instruments

The study made use of primary and secondary sources of data for the purposes of data collection. Generally, data collection was done thematically implying that the collection of data was guided largely by the themes created by the research objectives. The study involved the use of interviews which were administered either directly or via phone calls to the vloggers included in this study. Interview as a data collection method involves presentation of oral verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral verbal responses (Kothari, 2008). Interviews were used for asking questions and for obtaining data from the vloggers. Questions in the interview schedule were re-phrased to be in line with thematic areas required by the study with the aim of enabling the covering of a wider scope of research. The instrument provided reliable and accurate information in an intensive manner that gave satisfactory results. The main areas that were dwelt on by the study included the number of views which were used to show the number of people accessing the vlogs as well as the comments that were

made by the audience showing how they responded to the content provided to them. This way, it was possible to know their perceptions, attitudes and preferences with respect to vlogging.

3.7 Data Presentation Methods

Presentation of data took the form of explanatory narratives based on the research questions. This was used in conjunction with charts and tables to help in the clear understanding of the data.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis is the examination of data collected in a survey and coming up with inferences and conclusions (Orodho, 2009). Data analysis was done using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) which is a method of analyzing qualitative data that aids in the interpretation of the data in a meaningful way (Lepistö et al, 2017). In the process of data analysis, the number of views relating to the videos were looked at in order to ascertain the accessibility to the vlogs. Diversity of opinions were also looked at through the responses available in the comments sections. All this was added to the actual responses given by vloggers which indicated that level of preferences of the audience. Data analysis for the study was done with respect to thematic areas based on the study objectives. In this study, elements in the video content that related to the hypothesized audience preference factors were identified first. After this, the video samples were arranged by the following categories; Question and Answer videos, fashion styling videos, do it yourself videos, hair styling videos and make up application videos. All the videos with the highest views and those with the lowest views were watched in full and in detail for the sake of comparison; and in-depth observations were made to apply any codes properly. After this, interview responses from the vloggers were analyzed qualitatively through inferential statistics. In this step, qualitative data from key informant interviews and in-depth interviews were coded and placed under various themes based on the objectives of the research.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical research refers to research that is conducted with the focus of providing information, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (Hennink et al. 2011; Saunders et al. 2012). In respect to this, the researcher ensured that the data collected from the study was handled professionally and that high levels of confidentiality were observed. Training was also given to research assistant (s) on how to write the information and to remain secretive. The researcher also obtained a letter of approval from The University of Nairobi and a permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter contains a presentation of all the study findings, together with an interpretation of the findings according to the research objectives. The study sampled 5 leading fashion vloggers in Kenya with an aim of reviewing videos from the years 2018-2021. The participants in the study included; Rosina Sharon; Wabosha Maxine; Joanna Kinuthia; Sheila Ndinda; and Joy Kendi. Coding of data was done using thematic analysis coding method. Coding is the process of transforming information that has been collected or observed to set meaningful and unified categories. This includes data being summarized and re-presented to provide a systematic account of the recorded or observed phenomenon. The coding process involved familiarization with data, assigning of preliminary codes, patterns and themes search, theme review, and definition and naming of the themes.

Once the coding process was complete, the results for all five vloggers were compared. There were some consistent patterns across all five vloggers. Theories were then applied from existing research to interpret the data further, to analyze how the identified factors in these patterns could relate to audience preferences. Some interpretations of the video content were also made with other resources, such as the comment sections, video descriptions, the vloggers' other social media accounts, other YouTube channels, or other videos and interviews. Despite the fact that the videos looked into by this study are mainly related to fashion and beauty, the vloggers have varying themes and topics at different times depending on the needs of their audience.

4.1 Presentation of Findings

Below is a brief summary of each of the vloggers who were used in the study;

Rosina Sharon is a beauty vlogger who majors on makeup videos. Her YouTube channel was started in July 2013 (Hype Auditor2021).

Maxine Wabosha is a beauty and fashion vlogger who started sharing video content in October 2013 (Hype Auditor2021).

Joanna Kinuthia majors on beauty blogging, cosmetic product reviews, and lifestyle videos. She joined Youtube in June 2015.

Sheila Ndinda is known for her natural hair tutorials, her natural hair journey and product reviews. She joined Jun 27, 2012.

Joy Kendi bases on fashion and lifestyle content incorporating everything from food, to fashion, travel and home. Joy Kendi joined YouTube in November 2006.

Table 1: Description of Vloggers Used in the Study

Name of Vlogger	Subscribers	Total Views	Average Video Views	Total Videos
Rosina Sharon	551K	29.87 Million	33.93K	149
Wabosha Maxine	211K	17.97 Million	37.83K	329
Joanna Kinuthia	141K	13.52 Million	28.1K	422
Sheila Ndinda	86.1K	5.1 Million	36.22K	65
Joy Kendi	59.6K	3.94 Million	53.5K	89

By reviewing existing research and from observations on the videos, the researcher suggests three levels of vlog content: *main vlog types*, *vlog themes*, and *content elements*. Videos were taken from each vlogger considering the ones with the highest number of views and the ones with the lowest number of views. The videos were categorized into the following categories; Question and answer, fashion styling, Do it yourself, Hair styling, and Make up application.

4.2 Uptake of Fashion Vlogs as a Source of Information for Fashion and Beauty

In order to determine the level of uptake of fashion vlogs as a source of information for fashion and beauty, the videos for each of the vloggers were looked at in terms of the number of hits, therefore total of 120 videos were looked at over the last four years, from 2018 to 2021. This information has been presented on the Figure following;

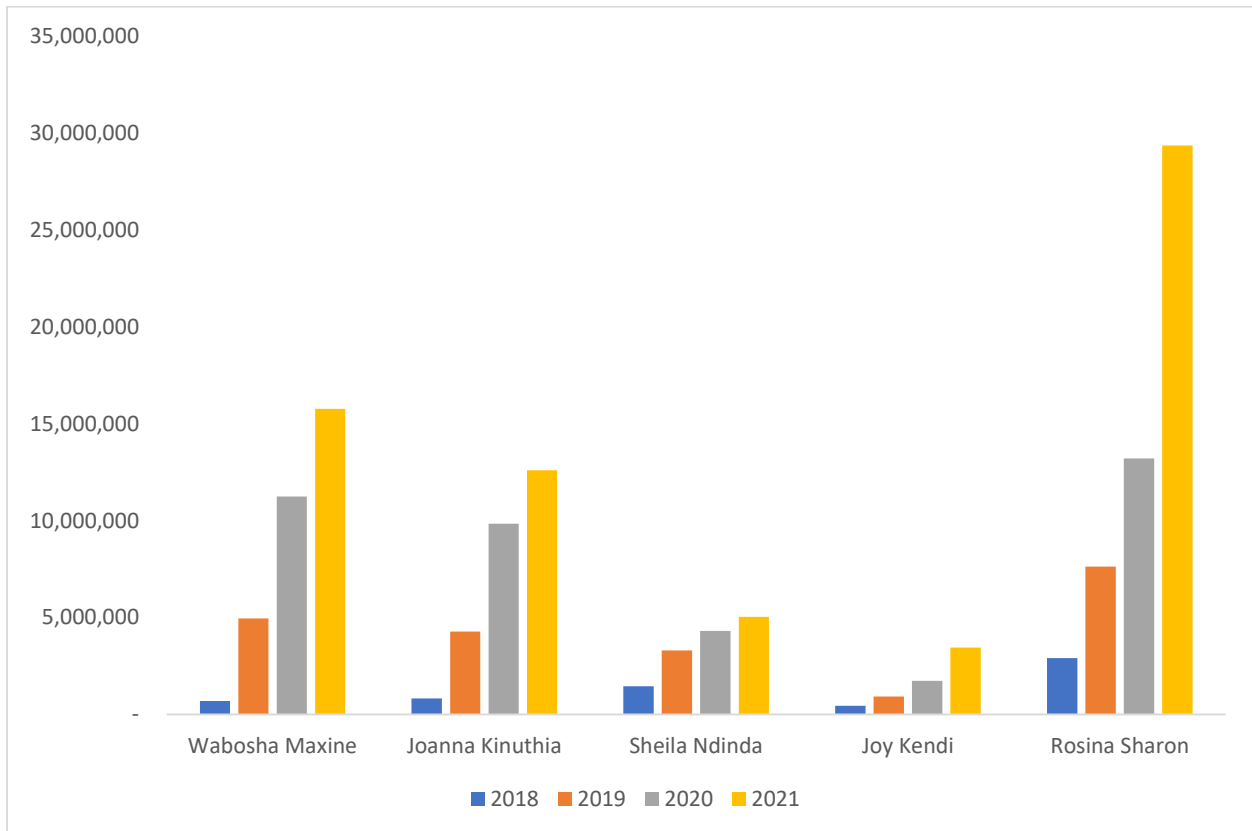


Figure 2: Number of Views between 2018 and 2021

According to the findings as presented on the figure, each of the vloggers has experienced a growth in the number of views in the four years from 2018 to date. This is an indication that the consumption of fashion vlogs over the recent years across all demographic groups has increased. For the fashion vloggers, besides being an open and free tool for relating with their audience and communicating their skill to the audience, social media is also connecting them to potential buyers.

According to information from the respondents, it was ascertained that this growth can be attributed to a number of factors and the most cited was the engaging nature of vlogs as compared to other methods of passing information. Another reason given for the growth and popularity of

vlogging is its ability to connect people from different parts of the world. It was also ascertained that vlogs address content that is relatable to a large proportion of the population. As one vlogger stated;

“I think the reason for this growth is because most people feel confident about the information we give them about fashion and style in general and they see that these are things they can easily do on their own and therefore consider the information they get as legit”

According to the figure, it is visible that over the years, there is a similar trend among all the vloggers studied as shown by the increasing number of views. These show that the number of viewers visiting these channels are also increasing with time, which is a pointer to the increase in the uptake of these fashion vlogs. A higher levels of uptake imply higher popularity and increased viewership of individual videos.

According to the respondents, apart from the views, the responses received from their audience in the form of comments also show that they benefit a lot from the videos and trust the videos for information on matters related to fashion and beauty.

“They tell me in the comments section how my videos have impacted on them. Most of my audience actually give me their real life experiences on how they have used and continue to use information from my vlogs to make their lives better”

Based on the responses, another reason for the rise in the level of uptake is the level of personal connection that the viewers create with the vloggers. This is promoted mainly by the presence of the vloggers as the main characters in person. The fact that they are the ones talking and that they are physically represented in the video creates a form of connection with their audience. Also, in the videos, they mention what they do from a personal point and address their audience as their peers and put themselves at the same level with the audience.

“I am the star in my videos and my audience relate with me at that level. I feel that this has created the rise in the uptake of vlogs. Most of my viewers see me as a Guru in matters relating to fashion and they therefore trust me as a person”

All vloggers in this study also have shared video categories – such as Question and answer videos, ‘Do it yourself’ (DIY) videos, fashion styling videos, Hair styling videos, and make up application videos. These videos are designed by the vloggers to answer specific questions and show their unique life activities or specific challenges as well as showing the audience how certain things should be done while showing them the importance of using various approaches. All these things the vloggers present form the primary narratives of their videos and construct the second, more detailed level of their vlog content contained by their main vlog types as vlog themes. The figures below show which of the vlog categories are most popular and least popular as sources of information for fashion and beauty according to the highest number of views, the lowest number of views and the average views per vlogger by video category.

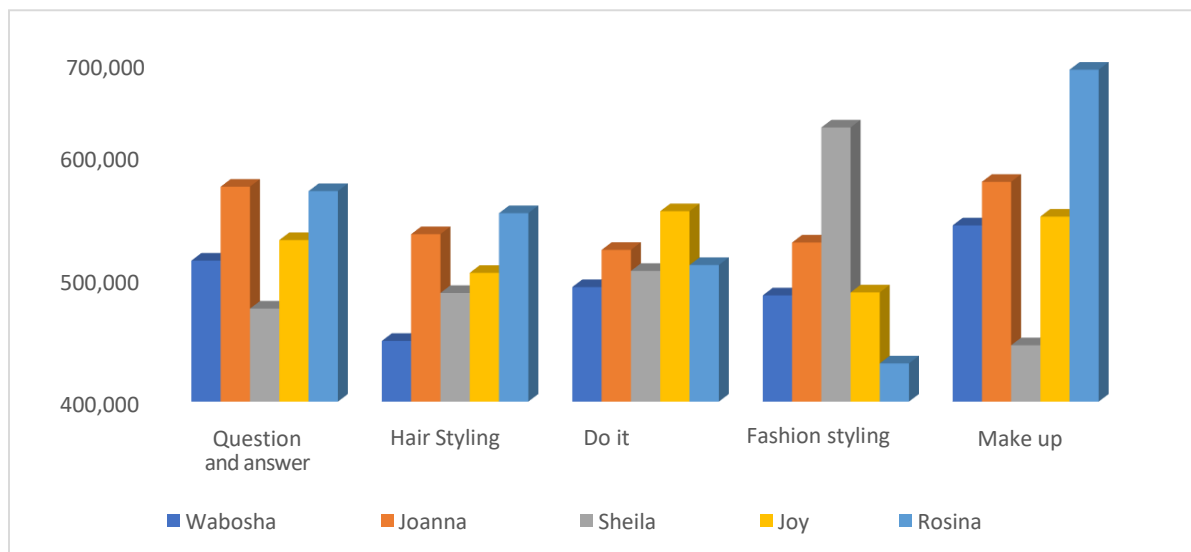


Figure 3: Highest views by category

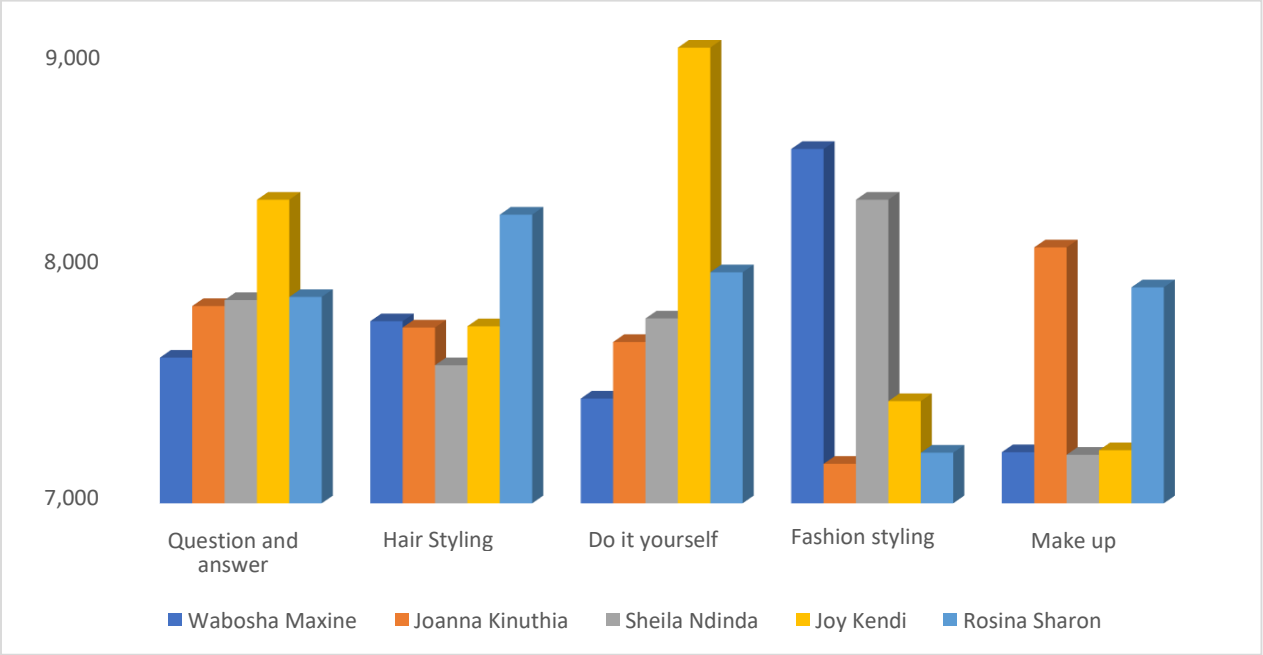


Figure 4: Lowest Views by Category

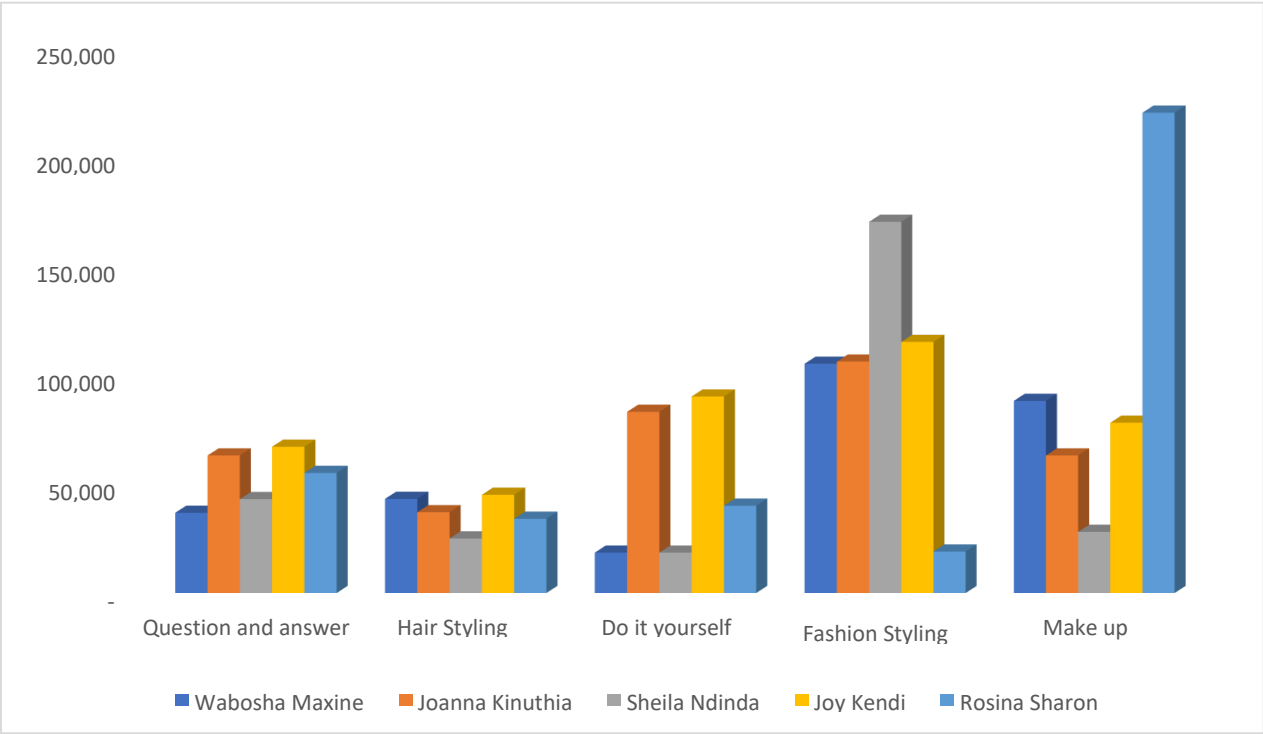


Figure 5: Average views

According to the findings relayed on the three bar graphs above, the video types that are most popular as sources of information for fashion and beauty are mainly the videos on fashion styling and make up application since from the figures, they have the largest figures of highest viewed videos and average video views per vlogger. On the contrary however, question and answer videos, do it yourself videos and hair styling videos are the least popular type of fashion and beauty information consumed by the audience.

According to the responses from the vloggers themselves, their audiences are mostly interested with the fashion styling and make up application videos because of their engaging nature. Also, most of the videos especially on makeup application are seen as trendy as most people are getting to embrace the use of makeup and therefore find these videos useful.

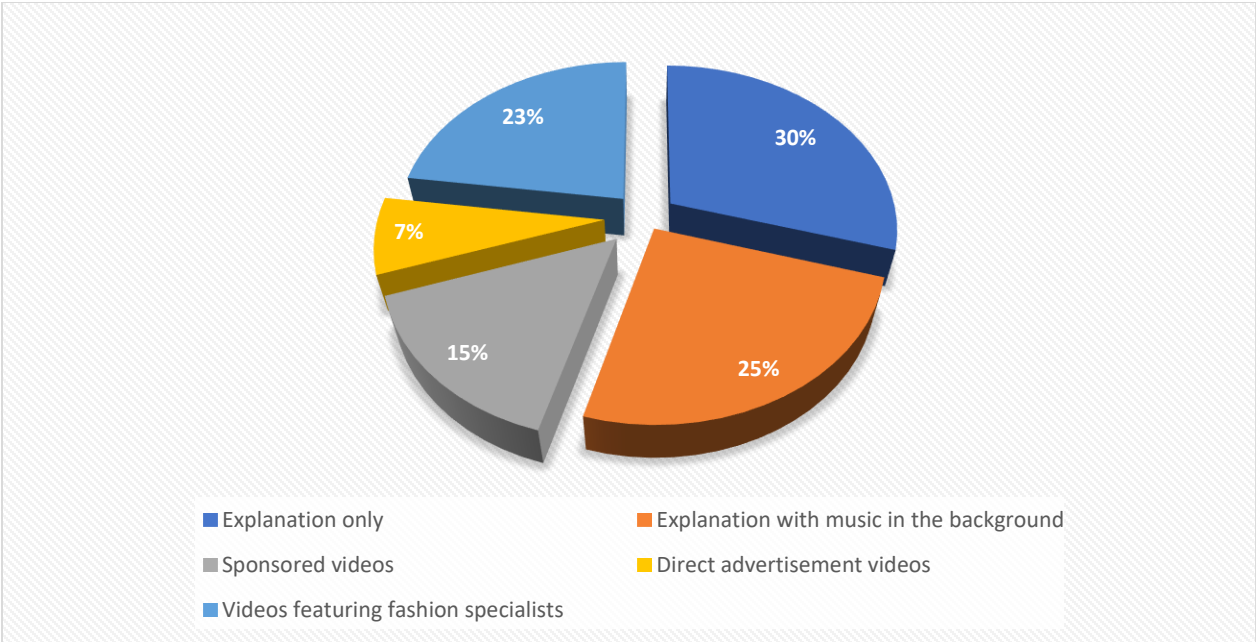


Figure 6: Average Level of Liking In Relation To Video Types

The figure above shows the average level of liking in relation to video types. This was based on the kind of responses they received from their audience after doing a video in each of these types. A total number of 500, 000 responses were analyzed. As shown on the figure, a large number of viewers prefer videos that feature explanations only with the least preferring the videos which are mainly geared towards directly advertising a product. When asked to further explain the reason for this occurrence, the respondents cited the high intensity with which the viewers are seeking for information while trying at all levels to avoid distraction of any form. One of the interviewees had the following to say;

“These viewers do not want to see any other thing apart from what brought them to the channel which is to learn. Even though there are some who want to see new products in the market, most of them are livid when they see any form of promotion in the videos”

The level of uptake of fashion vlogs in Kenya seems to represent a large proportion of the total social media consumption as represented by the number of subscribers that each fashion vlogger has. This information has been presented on the Figure following;

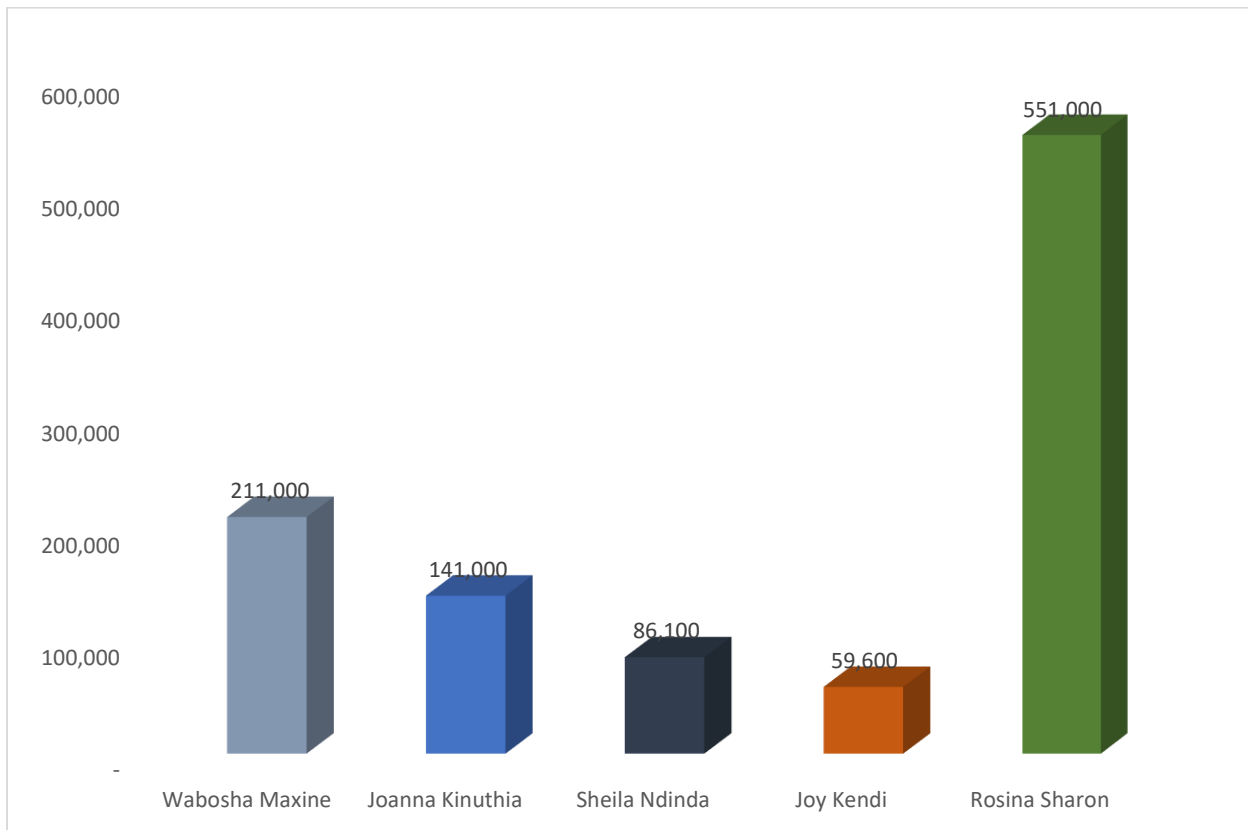


Figure 7: Popularity by Number of Subscribers

Information on the figure shows that to a large extent, Rosina Sharon has the highest number of subscribers as shown by 551,000, followed by Wabosha Maxine who has 211,000 subscribers, Joanna Kinuthia with 141,000, Sheila Ndinda with 86,100 while Joy Kendi has 59,600 subscribers. This difference in the number of subscribers has been mainly attributed to the types of videos that the vloggers specialize in. According to Rosina Sharon, she can attribute her high number of subscribers to the fact that people like makeup videos and therefore intend to learn a lot from her

by subscribing to her channel. She also attributed this to her presence in the other social media platforms which she also uses to engage her audience.

Based on the statement of Dredge (2016) Consumers find it easy to identify with the vloggers because they are socially interactive by nature most of the audience therefore easily relate to this. The YouTube vloggers are hence being used as marketing influencers in place of traditional celebrities According to Sedláček (2016), to their audience, YouTubers are a more visible, known and “celebrity-like” version of themselves. The reason why vlogging has grown so rapidly is because vlogging as a source of information thrives on the interaction between vloggers and their audience through the real-time communication that they get engaged in. This means that the responses that the audience gives to the vloggers help them know how the audience views them (Adami, 2009). The high level of interaction has resulted in a large number of viewers preferring vlogs to other forms of media such as televisions which do not give them room for real-time feedback.

Troscianko, et al. (2012) studied presence levels of the audience while watching movies on large and small screens. They identified that presence level was higher on larger screens particularly when more focus was put on the facial expressions or landscape scenes. It was established that movies can evoke presence in an audience. In a study done in Mozambique by Ivanova (2012) on the impacts of vloggers on consumer buying behavior, the study was limited to internet users leading to a sample of 500 respondents who were reached through snowball sampling. The study was dedicated to establish the direct relationship between individual vloggers and the buying behaviour of their followers. Based on the findings of the study, it was established that the buying behavior of the audience was affected by the vloggers physical and social attractiveness as well as their convincing power. These findings show that other than the actual videos presented to the viewers, their uptake of vlogs is also dependent on the way vloggers present themselves in their videos.

4.3 Choices Available to Audiences With Respect To Information Sources

Audiences perform a key factor in the fashion and beauty vlogs and this is mainly because they determine the success or failure of videos uploaded by either viewing them or failing to do so. Vloggers have played a major role in not only promoting their views to their audiences but also as influencers by swaying their audience to engage with marketing activities, so as to promote themselves and also the brands they endorse. Using one video from each theme from each of the vloggers under study, the following matrix was formed with regards to the kind of comments that were made by the audience.

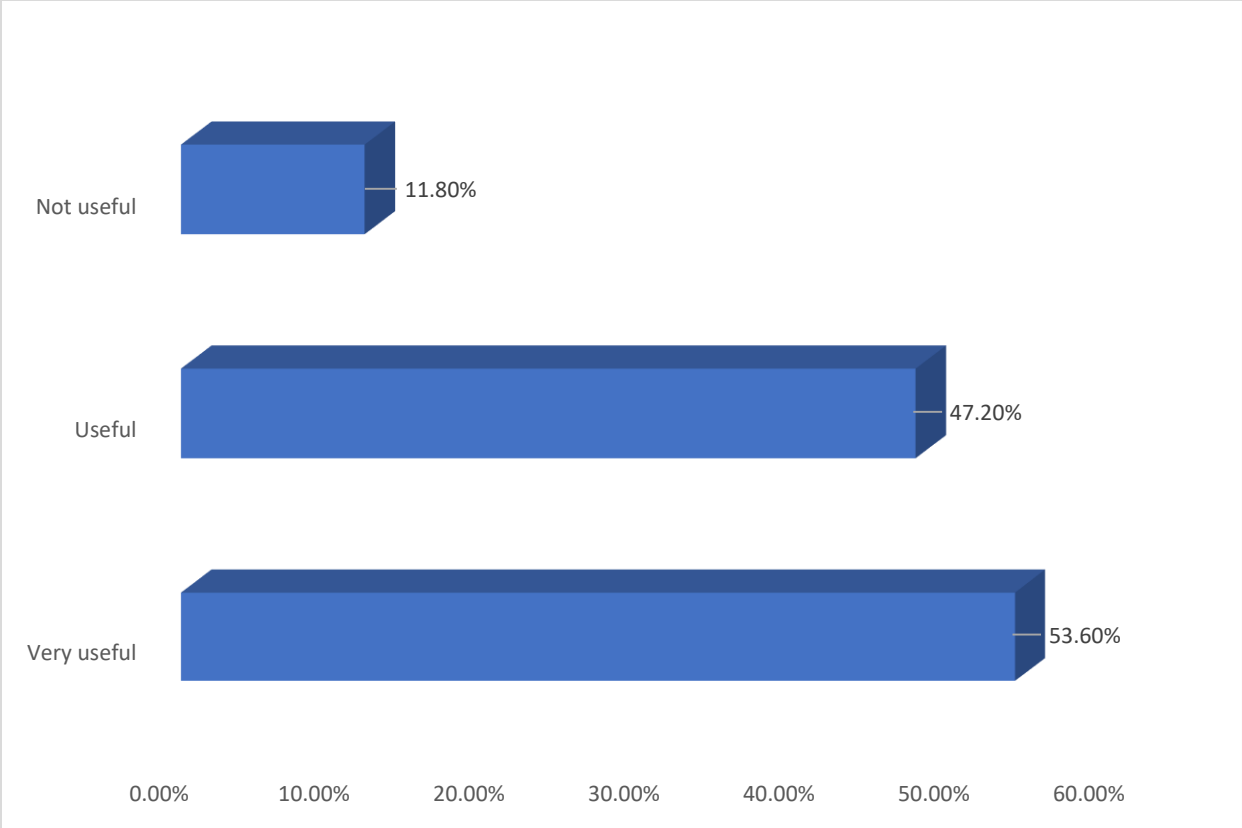


Figure 8: Audience Perceptions with respect to fashion vlogs as a Source of Information

The figures on the chart show that to a large extent, the audience view the vlogs as very useful to them as they provide them with information that they need for the purposes of making fashion-related decisions. These are comments which are aimed at appreciating the vlogger for making the video while stating that they are going to actively use the information they have acquired. This was represented by 53.6% of the responses as a further 47.2% stated that the information was useful to them even though they did not indicate the urge to practically use the information in future. The lowest proportion of the responses in the comments area showed a general lack of interest in the information provided with some critiquing the presentation of the vloggers or pointing out some faults in the videos. This represented 11.8% of the responses. The use of illustrations in the videos under study has been witnessed in various instances whereby the vloggers use a number of ways to show the audience how to properly carry out certain tasks. Wabosha Maxine in a number of her videos, illustrate to the viewers about several ways in which a hair brush is held in order to achieve outstanding results.

As a pointer to the perception of the audience with respect to fashion vlogs as a Source of Information for Fashion and Beauty, the number of subscribers and views as distributed based on the video types is very informative. According to the responses received pertaining to this, the respondents stated that they can associate the rising number of subscribers as well as the ever increasing number of views to members of the audience welcoming the use of vlogs as a way of relaying fashion information. However, the perceptions of the audience may vary depending on the video they interact with and this is indicated by the very low numbers of views that some videos have received. The figure following shows the reasons that were cited by respondents as being responsible for the low views in their videos;

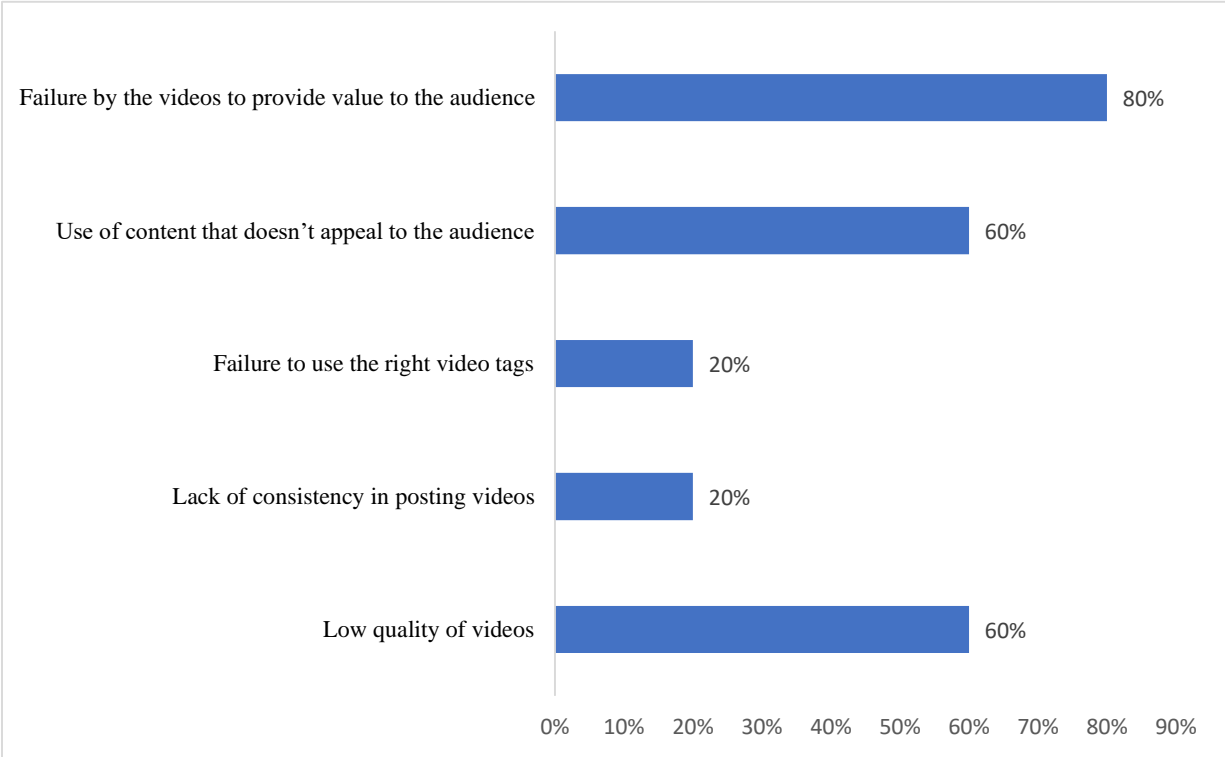


Figure 9: Reasons for Low Video Views

According to the findings shown on the figure above, most of the failures of videos to appeal to the audience can be attributed to the failure by the videos to provide value to the audience. This was according to 80% of the respondents as the least proportion cited failure to use the right video tags and lack of consistency in posting videos representing 20% each. As one of the vloggers indicated,

“When you don't give your viewers what they need, there is no way they are going to dedicate their time and money

watching you. Doing it once can be forgiven but if done repeatedly, the viewers can fully disconnect”.

Selection of words are another approach that influences the way the members of the audience perceive a vlogger. There are words that are sure to bring viewers to the moment and associate actively with the presenter. Based on the study findings, the words used in a video can help in pointing the viewers to a given direction in terms of their perception of the video presented to them. This in turn influences the seriousness with which viewers take the videos presented to them and how well they see the videos as being authoritative enough with relation to providing information on fashion and beauty.

A major style used by the vloggers featured in this study is the use of casual presentation styles as well as using expressions that the viewers find easy to relate with. Too much sophistication in videos works against engagement as the audience starts to feel excluded from the videos and feel that the videos are only meant for the sophisticated members of society. In her videos, Rosina is seen as engaging at a personal level with the audience by throwing in expressions that are used in day-to-day lives by ordinary folk.

Use of suggestive statements point to the intentions of the vlogger to take part in a given activity and by involving the audience, they therefore create a sense of oneness with the audience. They take the form of disclosure of personal information. Suggestive statements, just as self-presentation are a consumer engagement factor in which vloggers disclose their life activities. This is evident in the video by Joanna Kinuthia at the point where she states that she feels like having the particular natural hairstyle herself. This shows the audience that she is also comfortable doing the things that she is presenting to them.

Dehghani (2016) investigated the relationship between vlog contents and their influence on the viewers and how this influences their consumption patterns. The study involved a survey of randomly selected internet users who were contacted using electronic questionnaires. The study findings showed that the contents of the vlogs are as crucial as the vloggers themselves. For instance, viewers may watch vlogs for the purposes of gaining new information about particular products or to be entertained by the videos. Additionally, viewers may also be attracted by vlogs due to their content being creative and the videos' top-notch quality. Based on this, the quality of the contents presented to the audience can go a long way in influencing their consumption patterns based on whether they view the content as superior or inferior.

4.4 Audience Choices with Respect to Fashion and Beauty Information Sources

The choice of the audience regarding their preferred source of fashion and beauty information may be influenced by a number of factors, some of which may be individual factors while others may be related to the vloggers themselves as well as the medium of transmitting the information. According to the findings, it was established that a number of viewers are attracted to vlogs by the variety that is provided by YouTube platform. This means that viewers can access any content including vlogs, celebrities' daily life or their favorite YouTuber's content or story on YouTube platform as per their preference. This information has been presented on the table following;

Table 2: Reasons for Audience choices of Information Sources

Reason for Audience choices of information sources	Frequency	Percentage
Affordability	5	100
Variety	3	60
Accessibility	4	80
Credibility	5	100
Interactive nature	5	100
Peer pressure	2	40

As stated by Sheila Ndinda, another very major factor influencing the choice of vlogs by respondents as their information source is the high level of accessibility. YouTube is highly accessible and this means that users can access content from a number of devices as long as they are internet enabled. This makes access to information less tedious. Viewers and subscribers are

also allowed to express their opinions and suggestions towards the videos on a real-time basis. Compliments and impressions on videos, aids in developing the positive relationship between the channel owner and the viewers.

Information provided on YouTube is viewed as credible by the viewers as a result of the high level of belief that they have on the vloggers. This therefore ensures that they take whichever information is provided seriously. As one of the vloggers pointed out,

“People trust the information I give them and I therefore work very hard to ensure that whatever I give to them represents the truth. This means that I have to do my research properly”

Another reason cited for audience’s preference of vlogs for fashion information is their interactive nature. This is directly related to the fulfillment of the audience’s interactive requests. Four out of the five vloggers featured in this study used this strategy as a way of responding to the viewers’ concerns. They used the Q&A approach whereby they prepared videos in which they answered questions asked by their viewers directly. This can be in the form of questions asked on other platforms which get answered by the vlogger in her video and this gets to further reach more audiences or questions asked regarding a previous video by way of a comment. Vloggers’ behaviour of fulfilling consumers’ requests for new videos and answering their questions may satisfy viewers’ needs and lead to their satisfaction to build a critical bridge towards final engagement.

According to the findings, in more than 50% of the cases, all of the vloggers receive feedback from their viewers and the kind of feedback given by the audience is mainly in the form of requests for other videos addressing certain areas they prefer. Other types of feedback received from the audience are in the form of appreciation citing videos that were done earlier by the vlogger. As a particular example, Joy Kendi received feedback which was a viewer thanking her for uploading a video that was very informative to this particular viewer. The viewers of videos also give feedback on the importance of videos to them personally by highlighting how helpful the videos were to them. Viewers also indicate how well the videos have addressed their needs as well as how much they have benefitted from the videos. In the case of Sheila, one viewer responded by saying *‘your video has really helped me. I don’t know how I would cope without you’*. In one video by Joanna Kinuthia, a viewer stated as follows *‘your video has opened my eyes to the new ways of taking care of my natural hair’*. These responses show that members of the audience appreciate

the vloggers for uploading the videos and can be used as pointers to their choice of vlogs as a source of fashion and beauty information.

Feedback helps vloggers to know the impact they have on their audience by showing them how well the videos have been received by their viewers. According to the findings, the audience responded by showing how well they benefited from the videos posted. 73.4% of the responses showed that the viewers had learnt a number of things from the videos such as hair techniques. A particular video done by Sheila Ndinda received a response to the effect that they have changed their views towards fashion and beauty as a result of her videos as a result of learning something new. A comment left on Joy Kendi's video reads *'I love your detailed videos on how to get dolled up, complete with lists and ratings of the products you use, it helps a great deal when shopping'*. There were similar comments on all the vlogs under study. The feedback received provides a sense of engagement and interactivity, and allows the vloggers to improve on how they package and share fashion and beauty information with their audience.

Affordability has been cited by many viewers as a reason for their dependence on vlogs for fashion information. Much of the information related to fashion is mostly very hard to access and very expensive in nature. For vlogs however, the viewers only need good internet connection and a device meaning that they do not have to pay any other fee in order to have access to fashion information as compared to the other sources which would involve paying huge sums of money to attend classes or seminars. A number of viewers are drawn to vlogs by peer pressure. According to one of the vloggers, from the comments they receive regarding their videos, they are able to tell that some of the people who view their videos just do so for the sole purpose of fitting into their peer groups and to look like everybody else

"You tube is the in thing at the moment and everybody wants to show how well versed they are with technology. This drives some of them to just visit these channels so that they have something to say the next time they meet their friends".

Stever and Lawson (2013) explains that in order to explain the relationship between vlogger and vlog viewers, para-social interaction is appropriate. A previous study (Rubin *et al.*, 1985) argues that viewers will consider vlogger as a more reliable source of information if the interactive relationship are maintained. Emotional responses relate to the relationship between attributes and perception-behavioral responses. According to Freberg, Freberg, Graham, & McGaughey (2010), social influencers denote a type of third-party endorser who plays a role in shaping attitudes of the

audience. Influencers achieve popularity and gain fame through their participation on social networking platforms.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 Fashion Vlogs as a Source of Information for Fashion and Beauty Trends

Each of the vloggers has experienced a growth in the number of views in the four years from 2018 to date. This is an indication that the consumption of fashion vlogs over the recent years across all demographics has increased. For the fashion vloggers, besides being a tool that is easily accessible for public relations and communicating their skill to the audience, social media is also linking them to potential buyers. According to information from the respondents, it was ascertained that this growth can be attributed to a number of factors and the most cited was the engaging nature of vlogs as compared to other methods of passing information. Another reason given for the growth and popularity of vlogging is its ability to connect people from different parts of the world.

Over the years, there is a similar trend among all the vloggers studied as shown by the increasing number of views. These show that the number of viewers visiting these channels are also increasing with time, which is a pointer to the increase in the uptake of these fashion vlogs. A higher levels of uptake imply higher popularity and increased viewership of individual videos. According to the respondents, apart from the views, the responses received from their audience in the form of comments also show that they benefit a lot from the videos and trust the videos for information on matters related to fashion and beauty.

Based on the responses, another reason for the rise in the level of uptake is the level of personal connection that the viewers create with the vloggers. This is promoted mainly by the presence of the vloggers as the main characters in person. The fact that they are the ones talking and that they are physically represented in the video creates a form of connection with their audience. Also, in the videos, they mention what they do from a personal point and address their audience as their peers and put themselves at the same level with the audience. All vloggers in this study also have shared video categories – such as Question and answer videos, ‘Do it yourself’ (DIY) videos, fashion styling videos, Hair styling videos, and make up application videos. These videos are designed by the vloggers to answer specific questions and show their unique life activities or specific challenges as well as showing the audience how certain things should be done while showing them the importance of using various approaches. All these things the vloggers present form the primary narratives of their videos and construct the second, more detailed level of their vlog content contained by their main vlog types as vlog themes. The figures below show which of

the vlog categories are most popular and least popular as sources of information for fashion and beauty according to the highest number of views, the lowest number of views and the average views per vlogger by video category.

According to the findings, the video types that are most popular as sources of information for fashion and beauty are mainly the videos on fashion styling and make up application since from the figures, they have the largest figures of highest viewed videos and average video views per vlogger. On the contrary however, question and answer videos, do it yourself videos and hair styling videos are the least popular type of fashion and beauty information consumed by the audience. According to the responses from the vloggers themselves, their audiences are mostly interested with the fashion styling and make up application videos because of their engaging nature. Also, most of the videos especially on makeup application are seen as trendy as most people are getting to embrace the use of makeup and therefore find these videos useful.

To a large extent, Rosina Sharon has the highest number of subscribers as shown by 551,000, followed by Wabosha Maxine who has 211,000 subscribers, Joanna Kinuthia with 141,000, Sheila Ndinda with 86,100 while Joy Kendi has 59,600 subscribers. This difference in the number of subscribers has been mainly attributed to the types of videos that the vloggers specialize in. According to Rosina Sharon, she can attribute her high number of subscribers to the fact that people like makeup videos and therefore intend to learn a lot from her by subscribing to her channel. She also attributed this to her presence in the other social media platforms which she also uses to engage her audience.

5.1.2 Audience Perceptions on Fashion Vlogs as a Source of Information

Audiences perform a key factor in the fashion and beauty vlogs and this is mainly because they determine the success or failure of videos uploaded by either viewing them or failing to do so. To a large extent, the audience view the vlogs as very useful to them as they provide them with information that they need for the purposes of making fashion-related decisions. These are comments which are aimed at appreciating the vlogger for making the video while stating that they are going to actively use the information they have acquired. This was represented by 53.6% of the responses as a further 47.2% stated that the information was useful to them even though they did not indicate the urge to practically use the information in future. The lowest proportion of the responses in the comments area showed a general lack of interest in the information provided with some critiquing the presentation of the vloggers or pointing out some faults in the videos. This represented 11.8% of the responses.

The use of illustrations in the videos under study has been witnessed in various instances whereby the vloggers use a number of ways to show the audience how to properly carry out certain tasks. Wabosha Maxine in a number of her videos, illustrate to the viewers about several ways in which a hair brush is held in order to achieve outstanding results. Most of the failures of videos to appeal to the audience can be attributed to the failure by the videos to provide value to the audience. This was according to 80% of the respondents as the least proportion cited failure to use the right video tags and lack of consistency in posting videos representing 20% each. As one of the vloggers indicated,

Selection of words are another approach that influences the way the members of the audience perceive a vlogger. There are words that are sure to bring viewers to the moment and associate actively with the presenter. Based on the study findings, the words used in a video can help in pointing the viewers to a given direction in terms of their perception of the video presented to them. This in turn influences the seriousness with which viewers take the videos presented to them and how well they see the videos as being authoritative enough with relation to providing information on fashion and beauty. A major style used by the vloggers featured in this study is the use of casual presentation styles as well as using expressions that the viewers find easy to relate with. Too much sophistication in videos works against engagement as the audience starts to feel excluded from the videos and feel that the videos are only meant for the sophisticated members of society. In her videos, Rosina is seen as engaging at a personal level with the audience by throwing in expressions that are used in day-to-day lives by ordinary folk.

5.1.1 Factors That Influence Audience Choices of Fashion and Beauty Information Sources

A major reason cited for audience's preference of vlogs for fashion information is their interactive nature. This is directly related to the fulfillment of the audience's interactive requests. Four out of the five vloggers representing 80% featured in this study used this strategy as a way of responding to the viewers' concerns. They used the Q&A approach whereby they prepared videos in which they answered questions asked by their viewers directly. This can be in the form of questions asked on other platforms which get answered by the vlogger in her video and this gets to further reach more audiences or questions asked regarding a previous video by way of a comment.

According to the findings, in more than 50% of the cases, all of the vloggers receive feedback from their viewers and the kind of feedback given by the audience is mainly in the form of requests for other videos addressing certain areas they prefer. Other types of feedback received from the audience are in the form of appreciation citing videos that were done earlier by the vlogger. As a

particular example, Joy Kendi received feedback which was a viewer thanking her for uploading a video that was very informative to this particular viewer. The viewers of videos also give feedback on the importance of videos to them personally by highlighting how helpful the videos were to them. Viewers also indicate how well the videos have addressed their needs as well as how much they have benefitted from the videos.

According to the findings, the audience responded by showing how well they benefited from the videos posted. 73.4% of the responses showed that the viewers had learnt a number of things from the videos such as hair techniques. A particular video done by Sheila Ndinda received a response to the effect that they have changed their views towards fashion and beauty as a result of her videos as a result of learning something new. Affordability has been cited by many viewers as a reason for their dependence on vlogs for fashion information. Much of the information related to fashion is mostly very hard to access and very expensive in nature. For vlogs however, the viewers only need good internet connection and a device meaning that they do not have to pay any other fee in order to have access to fashion information as compared to the other sources which would involve paying huge sums of money to attend classes or seminars. A number of viewers are drawn to vlogs by peer pressure. According to one of the vloggers, from the comments they receive regarding their videos, they are able to tell that some of the people who view their videos just do so for the sole purpose of fitting into their peer groups and to look like everybody else

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Fashion Vlogs as a Source of Information for Fashion and Beauty Trends

There is audience that looks up to the vloggers for information on fashion and beauty trends in Kenya. This means that these people look up to the vloggers for current and authentic information on fashion and beauty as is shown by the large numbers of views and subscribers that each and every vlogger studied in this research has. Consumer preference and dependence on fashion vlogs can be influenced both actively and passively by vloggers through their content as well as through the kind of engagement strategies they use in their videos. From the findings, it is evident that all of the vloggers studied above have used content that is strategically styled to create awareness to their audience through their informative nature. A large proportion of the videos produced by the vloggers discussed here are videos that are styled in a way that they tend to present step-by-step procedures of doing beauty and fashion related activities such as make-up application, hair styling, nail polishing, dressing as well as other themes. By addressing these areas, they appeal to a section of the audience who with time, become regulars of their channels.

Overall, the increase in view count can be used as an indicator of increased uptake of a vlogger's videos and this can be contributed by a number of factors. As an example, when Rosina made significant changes to her social and sensory elements, it had a profound effect on the audience. However, it is also evident that that number of views might also be correlated with other things, such as subscriber count (Hoiles, Aprem and Krishnamurthy, 2017). Nevertheless, gaining more views or subscribers may indicate that viewers had a positive experience that involved them in her video content; this could be a sign of high media engagement that is affected by presence and this points to increased uptake.

By looking at the comments made by the audience, vloggers are able to further create content that influences the decisions made by their audience in terms of preferences through viewer management. A large proportion of the vloggers studied in this research, representing more than 80% have multiple online social platforms which are constantly active and which they use to further engage their audience. Viewers can drop their comments on YouTube's comments area or use other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These point to the level of engagement of the audience in the videos done by the vloggers and point to the level of uptake of the videos. Researchers have defined this phenomenon from different angles. For instance, Van Doorn et al. (2010) emphasized that customer engagement has a behavioural focus. They define customer engagement behaviour as 'a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers'. For instance, customers will proactively post messages and information about the brand on their blogs. Sashi (2012) follows the definition from the Economist Intelligence Unit (2007), considers customer engagement as the building of intimate and long-standing relationships between customers and product providers. According to Sashi (2012), this phenomenon displayed by customers expands the role of customers by including them in the value-adding process as co-creators of value.

5.2.2 Choices Available To Audiences With Respect To Information Sources

Vloggers can influence the perceptions of the audience as well as their consumption patterns by influencing the kind of products that they prefer to use as well as the extent to which they are willing to change from what they currently use to what they have seen in the videos as preferred by the vlogger, to the extent to which they are willing to try out whatever has been recommended to them by the vlogger and hence directly influence their consumption. This can be seen from the kind of comments given by viewers on how useful the videos were to them as well as how valuable they find the videos.

According to the findings, it was evident that the responses that were made by the viewers suggested that they have learnt new things from the videos and which they are willing to try out.

Also, the audience states that they have received valuable lessons that if implemented, can help them manage their fashion and beauty related activities more effectively. Vloggers use different conversation methods and speaking styles to involve viewers, which are considered as being another way to increase immediacy and enhance social presence. Thus, the shift from nervous instruction to casual conversation style may change immediacy levels and alter social presence and alter audience perceptions pertaining to the vlogger. This goes a long way in influencing the views of the audience concerning vlogs as a source of information on fashion and beauty.

5.2.3 Factors That Influence Audience Choices of Fashion and Beauty Information Sources

To achieve audience engagement and to influence their preferences via vlogging, vloggers can use interaction, self-presentation, information management, and rewards via their video content as significant factors to achieve audience engagement and influence preferences beyond vlog consumption. However, they also need to pay attention to the situations of factors involved during vlog production that can alter their delivery of engagement factors, namely the context of vlogger, audience, social environment, physical environment, and medium. As media products, vlogs can not only give viewers a consumption experience by involving them in the video, but also drive them outside the video and lead them to connect with the producers to generate a long-standing relationship. Hence, we argue that vlogs are an important medium to encourage audience engagement with vloggers both during and beyond vlog consumption, forming a multi-dimensional audience experience with vloggers.

After capturing a proportion of viewers on YouTube, it is possible for the vloggers to steer the conversation on their channels through the videos they post and by so doing, they get a number of dedicated consumers of their content. Through engagement strategies, vloggers are able to influence the preferences of their audience by creating content that appeals to their needs.

Feedback helps vloggers to know the impact they have on their audience by showing them how well the videos have been received by their viewers. According to the findings, the audience responded by showing how well they benefited from the videos posted. 73.4% of the responses showed that the viewers had learnt a number of things from the videos such as hair techniques. A particular video done by Sheila Ndinda received a response to the effect that they have changed their views towards fashion and beauty as a result of her videos as a result of learning something new. A comment left on Joy Kendi's video reads *'I love your detailed videos on how to get dolled up, complete with lists and ratings of the products you use, it helps a great deal when shopping'*. There were similar comments on all the vlogs under study. The feedback received provides a sense

of engagement and interactivity, and allows the vloggers to improve on how they package and share fashion and beauty information with their audience.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, it is evident that the content of videos presented to viewers goes a long way in influencing their level of uptake of the videos related to fashion and beauty. This should be augmented with information management as a way of providing more information to the customers with the aim of increasing uptake. Information management refers to product providers' use of various resources to keep their customers informed about their products, thus managing the information environment around customers. For instance, in the corporate world, companies can hold events like conferences and other advertising activities to promote new products and services. This is also related to the concept of relevance building (Vivek, Beatty and Hazod, 2018), which includes brand companies providing relevant information that customers need.

There is need for vloggers to make videos on subjects that their viewers can properly identify with. This would result in the members of the audience trusting their channels and as a result use them as a source of information for their beauty needs. Khan (2017) focused directly on the users' motivations for participation and consumption on YouTube and considered information seeking as one of viewers' purposes. Kahn (2017) found that the motivation of finding information predicted liking and commenting on the videos, which relates to the YouTube engagement metrics that allow viewers to connect with vloggers as consumer engagement besides video consumption. A number of Youtubers such as Zugg have used this approach as a way of increasing viewership of their videos.

The vloggers need to be real in the videos to make the audiences to identify with the products they are promoting in their videos. Videos that are aimed at promoting certain products require a certain level of originality so that the audience feels as part of the video. This can go a long way in shaping perceptions. Shot, et al. (2011) claimed one of the factors that will affect social presence level is intimacy. Intimacy means how realistically a character behaves in media. It can be affected by factors like eye contact, distance between people and smiling. Böcker and Mühlbach (1993) discovered that different eye contact angles affect intimacy. Increasing eye contact in videos could improve social presence. Facial expressions and gestures in three out of the five the vloggers' videos representing 60% could be determinants which influence their social presence. Joanna Kinuthia and Joy Kendi feature a number of facial expressions and distinct body expressions in their videos. This is shown by the postures they take while addressing their audience as well as the facial movements.

Vloggers need to listen more to the recommendations made by the audience and act accordingly to them. By doing this, the members of the audience feel that they are valued by the vlogger and may as a result feel obligated to reciprocate this by creating major liking for the videos made while at the same time associating the videos with value. According to Abdul (2018), active engagement and involvement of the audience increases authenticity and makes the audience perceive the videos presented to them in good light. Rosina in one of her videos welcomed recommendations for topics that should be further discussed and gave the viewers room to actively interact with her. This made the viewers feel as part of her team by knowing that their opinions directly influences the videos that she makes. Overall, encouragement of audience reactions in vloggers' videos is mainly presented as asking for viewers to comment on the current video content. These actions may create a conversational environment between vloggers and their audience. Viewers may feel that vloggers care about their feelings or opinions and actively engage with them in conversation, like what is portrayed in the comment sections. Also, social interaction is the motivation viewers have for participation on YouTube (Khan, 2017).

As a factor, the quality of the video made by a vlogger goes a long way in influencing the audience and if vloggers invest in the production of quality videos, the audience will be drawn more to the videos resulting in higher uptake of the videos. This actively influences audience choices. Aran, Biel and Gatica-Perez (2014) categorise properties of vlog styles in three clusters, based on camera shots, features of the video, vlogger's personality, and views, and further acknowledges the importance of video quality in enhancing the perceptions of the audience.

The vloggers should introduce the use of interactive videos by actively involving their viewers in their videos and asking them for ideas for next videos this would also create an aspect of diversity in the videos. When this is achieved, members of the audience get more to choose from, giving room for higher viewership and increased preference for fashion and beauty videos. Also, they should make use of other platforms to advance their conversation with the audience. This should be done using other platforms such as twitter and facebook. By so doing, the members of the audience get more room to make enquiry and suggestions on the videos they have viewed as well as what they would like the vlogger to make. For instance, in one video, Wabosha asked her audience for suggestions about a topic to be addressed in her next video and encourages them to make use of her other social media handles. In response, the audience went ahead to give out their views and suggestions. In return, she makes a video on a topic suggested by the viewers and acknowledges it.

Negative publicity should be actively fought by the vloggers with the aim of retaining viewership and improving authenticity. Vloggers should employ strategies aimed at fighting off and

countering negative publicity and as a way of defending their reputation. For instance, on 14 February 2017, Winkler, Nicas and Fritz (2017) posted a news article in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reporting on anti-Semitic videos posted by Felix Kjellberg (also known as PewDiePie). Following this report, Kjellberg uploaded a video to apologise for his behaviour, but also accused WSJ of attacking him with untrustworthy evidence (PewDiePie, 2017).

5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

Based on the findings, vlogging, despite being a source of good content and information for its audiences, can also act as a source of encouragement and stimulation for the viewers to try out certain products and as a result, influence their preferences in relation to beauty and fashion. It is therefore important that further studies should be done in relation to beauty and fashion using a larger number of vloggers than the number used in this study. Further, more research needs to be done on other topics apart from beauty and fashion in order to find out how vlogging can be used to influence the preferences of the viewers in relation to other products and services.

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APPENDIX I: DATA COLLECTION GUIDE

1. General information

- Number of videos done in the period of 2016-2019
- The rate at which channel has grown over the years

2. Analysis of videos

- Themes of videos
- Content and context of the videos
- The purpose of the videos (intent)
- Word usage in the videos
- Mention of the words fashion and beauty in the videos
- Proportion of the videos aimed at eliciting feelings in the audience

3. Presentation

- How preferences of consumers are triggered in the videos
- How videos are presented
- Types of illustrations used in the videos
- Body language of the presenter (vlogger)
- The extent of use of gestures in the videos

4. Engagement

- Level of viewer engagement
- Number of do it yourself videos done by vloggers
- Suggestive statements included in the videos
- Number of times viewers are encouraged to leave comments
- Number of times viewers are reminded to subscribe per video

5. Viewer Management

- Audience engagement in other online platforms
- The extent to which subliminal messaging is used to influence preference
- Direct mention of the word preference in each video
- An analysis of audience feedback
- Level of conversational engagement of the audience

6. Video Usefulness

- Kinds of feedback given by the audience
- How valuable the videos are to the audience?
- How much help the audience receive from the video?

7. Feedback

- Views in terms of whether the videos were worthwhile as portrayed in the comments
- Feedback pertaining to whether the videos helped the audience learn something new
- Different choices that have been made as a result of particular videos