

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS: A ROUTE TO BRAND ENGAGEMENT FOR THEIR
FOLLOWERS

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By

Brittany Michael

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OR

Dean
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
University of Saskatchewan
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C9
Canada

ABSTRACT

Social media has had a significant impact on current branding practices. As a result of this changing environment, brand managers are no longer sole providers of a brand's communication messages. Specifically, consumers are now interacting with brands, media, and each other through various social media platforms. A distinct group of people who bring brands and consumers together are Social Media Influencers (SMIs). This research proposes that SMIs act as a route to brand engagement. To study this area, I bring together literature on brand engagement and SMIs and determine if and how, SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. To explore this idea, I used textual consumer comments from YouTube videos and conducted a mixed methods research design, with a focus on Automated Textual Analysis.

Results revealed that SMIs do indeed act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. It is through the trust and honesty that already exists between an influencer and their followers that their followers seek out and consider the Influencer's specific product recommendations. Their followers then take and use these recommendations when making their own purchasing decisions. These results not only advance theory in this area, but also have managerial implications regarding best practices for brand managers working with SMIs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social media is a powerful tool that has an impact on many aspects of marketing strategies. Specifically, brands have begun to utilize social media platforms as media channels to interact and engage with their customers. But perhaps more noteworthy are those users of social media who communicate a brand's message on behalf of the brand – sometimes with the brands' knowledge and other times without. Social Media Influencers (SMIs), *users of social media who have achieved celebrity status and who develop social capital in the form of large followings on social media platforms*, frequently mention specific products and brands and share their personal opinions and experiences with them. This creates a unique environment where brands are not the only source consumers are using to learn about their products and services. The dynamic between brand and SMI is ingrained in the culture of the beauty and cosmetics industry; beauty brands frequently partner with SMIs as a method of marketing their products. Typically, brands will compensate SMIs to discuss, demonstrate, promote, or mention their product in the content SMIs post to their large audiences. A strong connection develops between SMIs and consumers, resulting in a trusting relationship. Evidence of this is found in the comments posted by viewers in response to the SMI's video. Such as the following example:

“I've been watching your videos for the past 5 years now and when I first started I would look at all these gorgeous products you wore and purchase them basically right away because I trust your judgment and artistry so much! Here I am 5 years later, a lot more educated on products, I have my own little freelance thing going on, and I'm still purchasing all the products you talk about because you're so incredible! See you for another 5 years of products” (Jaclyn Hill, Favourites video).

There is evidence that consumers have taken notice and are interested in and attentive to the information being provided by the SMIs regarding specific brands and products. This provides brands with an opportunity to engage with their consumers in a unique manner.

“When you talked about the Marc Jacobs gloss stick in your last video I went out the same day and bought it” (KathleenLights, Favourites video).

However, this relationship that encompasses brands, SMIs, and consumers is relatively new to marketing literature even though this phenomenon has become common practice in marketing strategies in the last several years. Therefore, this thesis will explore the process of brand engagement between consumers and brands in the multimedia and intertwined environment that marketing managers are operating in – specifically, determining if SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer Engagement with Brands

A brand is known as a firm-owned and controlled asset, which can be constructed in consumers' minds through the firm's marketing communication strategies (Gensler et al. 2013). Consumer involvement with brands is fundamental for determining the success of branding strategies. Within this traditional understanding of brand management, firms control and facilitate the conversations regarding their brands. This traditional understanding of brands and brand management is changing because of the current state of the marketing environment. Specifically, there are additional communication channels that falsify the notion that brands are the sole controllers of marketing messages consumers are receiving about the brand (Keller 2009; Winer 2009), as well as whether consumers are engaging with brand related content online at all (Ordenes et al. 2019). Currently, communication channels are becoming increasingly connected and intertwined (Keller 2010; Maslowska et al. 2016); this has an impact on branding strategies implemented by marketers. Consumers in today's marketing environment are observers, initiators, participants and co-creators of brands' marketing messages (Maslowska et al. 2016). Not only do consumers interact with brands directly, but they also interact with the larger environment including other consumers and media (Maslowska et al. 2016). Brand managers operating in this changing environment must strategically decide what channels will most effectively deliver their desired communication messages in a coordinated and cohesive manner.

Consequently, marketing managers no longer have complete control over the messages that consumers receive about their brands, and in what channels they are to receive them (Keller 2009; Maslowska et al. 2016; Ordenes et al. 2019; Winer 2009). The messages a brand sends to a consumer are no longer solely being received through the media channel the brand chooses. For example, the communication path from brand to consumer can easily be derailed from the increasing influence of social media (Winer 2009). A common occurrence is how an advertisement that was designed by the brand to be aired on television could go viral on YouTube after a consumer shares the content with his or her friends. Winer (2009) states two key factors are impacting marketing communication channels – interactivity and digital; consumers are now interacting with the brand, the media, and each other through various social media platforms.

Further, if the advertisement meant to be aired on television goes viral on YouTube, this facilitates a platform where consumers can express their opinions about the advertisement for other consumers to see, where the brand has no control over what is said. Consumers are also no longer bystanders to brand messages and stories that brands choose to tell them; consumers have developed a more active role to become authors of brand stories (Gensler et al. 2013). Gensler et al. (2013) conceptualize brand messages as stories told by both the brand and the consumer, traditional and social media, in a dynamic and changing environment. Consumers and brands are both co-authors, as consumers could add new or different meanings to the desired brand meanings being communicated from the brand. Brands try to create coordinated messages that are aligned across their media channels, but with the introduction of social media, brands have less control over the messages that are being communicated to their consumers.

There are several positive outcomes for brands: brand engagement and self-brand connections. Currently, the concept of brand engagement is inconsistently defined in marketing literature (Maslowska et al. 2016). In Maslowska et al. (2016)'s full review of the current state of engagement literature, they found that marketers define engagement into two broad groups: those with a focus on psychological components and those that focus on behavioral components. One relevant definition of engagement defined by Hollebeek (2011, 790) is, 'the level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in direct brand interactions.' Further, Gummerus et al. (2012) define engagement to include behaviours that go beyond transactions and involve any and all consumer-to-brand interactions and consumer-to-consumer communications about the brand. This understanding of engagement reflects the current marketing environment, as communication between consumers drives many thoughts and feelings regarding specific brands. Keller (2016) conceptualizes different levels of brand engagement as three tiers of consumers: those who are not at all engaged, those who are moderately engaged, and those who are highly engaged. The smallest group is those who are highly engaged with a brand. Brand engagement is an important construct in marketing literature, but the lack of a consistent definition results in confusion and inconsistency (Maslowska et al. 2016). For this reason, as well as to reflect the current changing marketing environment, Maslowska et al. (2016) conceptualized a new approach to understanding brand engagement, the customer engagement ecosystem.

It is known that brands are no longer the sole source of marketing messages being communicated to consumers. The use of other media channels to discuss specific brands, by both the brand and consumers, provide evidence for the need of a deeper understanding of brand engagement. To reflect the interconnected branding environment, Maslowska et al. (2016), conceptualize a new model to discuss brand engagement, the customer engagement ecosystem. This new model for describing brand engagement is necessary to the environment that branding managers are operating in (see figure 2-1 for customer engagement ecosystem model).



Figure 2- 1

Customer Engagement Ecosystem Maslowska et al. (2016)

This model describes engagement using four components: customer brand experience, brand dialogue behaviours, brand consumption and shopping behaviours, where brands and other actors participate to create engagement. Not only does the brand facilitate brand engagement within these four domains, but other actors including consumers and the media have an impact on engagement. The first component to the customer engagement ecosystem, customer brand experiences, is described as the thoughts and feelings that individuals have about a brand. Another component, shopping behaviours, are described as goal-focused and transaction oriented activities. Next, brand dialogue behaviours are all brand-related non-purchase actions, which are focused on the brand, but go beyond transactions. For example, browsing the brands website and viewing brand related videos are brand dialogue behaviours. Lastly, brand consumption occurs when the consumer uses

the brand as intended by the brand (Mellows et al. 2016). Within the customer engagement ecosystem, the elements interact together, resulting in the change of one impacting change on the others. Companies can no longer completely control brand related conversations, but they can play a role in the customer engagement ecosystem to monitor and stimulate them (Maslowska et al. 2016).

Beyond brand engagement, another positive consumer outcome for the brand is self-brand connection. These are the connections that consumers have with brands which are formed as a result of the interactivity between brands and consumers (Hollebeek et al. 2014). Self-brand connections between brands and consumers are integral to understanding how consumers engage with brands in today’s multimedia environment, where brands have more channels than ever to engage and interact with their consumers. Hollebeek et al. (2014) conceptualized self-brand connections with a model and a scale. First, their model describes antecedents and consequences for brand engagement (see figure 2-2 for Hollebeek et al. (2014)’s conceptualization of self-brand connections). In order for self-brand connections to occur, the consumer must be involved with the brand through three domains: cognitive processing, affection, and activation.

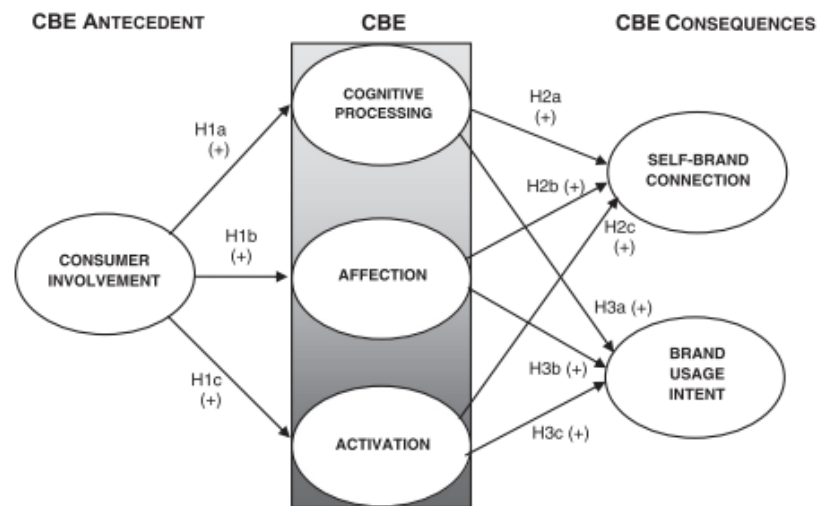


Figure 2-2

Self-Brand Connection Hollebeek et al. (2014)

First, cognitive processing occurs when a consumer considers the brand and reflects how often they actually think about it; affection is measuring the degree of positive brand-related interactions; and activation measures the level of energy, effort, and time spent on a particular brand and consumer interaction. In their model, once the consumer has been involved with the brand along one of these three areas, a self-brand connection between the brand and consumer will occur. The concepts with which Hollebeek et al. (2014) describe self-brand connections are similar to those used by Maslowska et al. (2016) in their description of the customer engagement ecosystem. Both models involve thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding engagement with a brand. However, Hollebeek et al. (2014) quantifies this engagement; they determine that an increase in thoughts, an increase in positive interactions, and an increase in time, energy, and effort will increase self-brand connections. The customer engagement ecosystem describes the types of avenues to engagement, where Hollebeek et al. (2014) quantifies the level of engagement.

Maslowska et al.'s (2016) customer engagement ecosystem reflects the current state of the marketing environment by incorporating both brand actions and other Actor's actions in their ecosystem. It is not only the brand that facilitates engagement, but other consumers or influencers (other actors) who discuss the brand. A significant group of people who fall into this group are SMIs. It is understood that social media is a significant platform for enabling engagement (Harrigan et al. 2018), and SMIs have the ability to enable it even further. Brands do not always have control over the messages this group of people share on behalf of the brand, but by actively engaging with SMIs, brands have the ability to motivate and facilitate conversations to large audiences; this concept is already very common and frequent among SMIs and brands, but it is still being explored in current branding and social media literature.

2.2 Social Media Influencers

SMIs are those individuals who actively create user-generated content that is consumed by large audiences. The recognition of being known as a SMI has not held significant meaning in our society until recently. Social influence is not a new concept, but the influence that certain people have through their user-generated content on social media platforms is. Social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, rely on their users creating content (user-generated content) for other users of the platform to consume and enjoy. Each social media platform

specializes in different media to communicate; for example, YouTube users post videos for their followers to watch, Instagram users post photos for their followers to see, and Twitter users write short (280 character) texts for their followers to read. There are many people who create content on social media, but there is a distinct difference between a typical user/viewer of social media and a SMI. SMIs create and produce content that is then viewed by their followers; the size of their audience can reach into the millions. The concept of SMIs has gained momentum in literature, but there is not one consistent definition. Table 2-1 summarizes the current definitions of SMIs that appear in literature.

Table 2-1

Definitions of Social Media Influencers

Author (s)	Year Published	Definition of <i>Social Media Influencer</i>
Freberg et al.	2010	A new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media. Emphasize a sense of earned social capital.
Booth and Matic	2011	Created an algorithm based on the following variables to pinpoint those users on social media who have substantial influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Viewers per month• Linkages• Media citation score• Industry score• Social aggregate rate• Engagement index• Subject/topic-related posts SMIs are then defined based on the above variables.
Uzunoglu and Kip	2014	Innovative opinion leaders who have wide reach through social media platforms among their ‘online contacts’ (followers of theirs on social media platforms).
Lee and Watkins	2016	Video bloggers (vloggers) on YouTube who have large numbers of followers (millions).

Berryman and Kavka	2016	Those individuals who are seen to have cultural sway, resulting in their endorsement or association with brands/products/services in being considered an advertisement.
Khamis et al.	2016	Individuals who through self-brand practices, become micro-celebrities can emerge as a result of a following evolving into a fan base where an ‘ordinary’ user can find fame online.
Cocker and Cronin	2017	Those users of YouTube who achieve celebrity status (micro-celebrity) and share their daily thoughts, opinions, and experiences through the content they produce and share on social media platforms; here, the means of production and distribution set them apart from traditional definitions of celebrity.
Chae	2018	Online celebrities who exhibit their personal lives to many of followers via social media platforms. Also referred to as micro-celebrity. A new type of celebrity that involves the practice of self-presentation.

Common themes from the existing definitions include: the presence of social capital, opinion leader qualities, self-branding practices, being referred to as a new form of celebrity (therefore those users who have achieved a celebrity-like status), and those who have followings or fan bases via social media platforms with the ability to communicate other brands’ marketing messages. A distinct characteristic of SMIs is their close relationships with various brands; this is where SMI act as ‘other actors’ in the customer engagement ecosystem. SMIs frequently work with brands to create both sponsored and unsponsored content with and about them. Sponsored content is when a brand will offer financial reward to the SMI to mention and discuss their product or service in

the content they share with their followers. For example, in the beauty community on YouTube, beauty brands will sponsor a beauty influencer to talk about a new product that is about to be released; in the video, the influencer will show the functionality of the product to allow their viewers to see the product being used by a real person, who they view to be similar to themselves. The success of the sponsorship depends on the followers of the beauty influencer seeing the product in the influencer's content and wanting to then buy that product. For example, beauty influencer Shannon Harris (Username Shaaanxo on YouTube), created a sponsored video with the brand Clinique, where she featured a new product that was going to be released by Clinique. Shannon told her followers that the video was sponsored and in the video, she only used Clinique products (YouTube Shaanxo 2018). It is also more commonly the case, that SMIs will mention many products and brands in their content that is not sponsored by any of the brands. The nature of beauty videos calls for the influencers to mention several brands while creating one video. These unsponsored mentions still have consequences for the brand. For example, Jane Hertzmark, group president at Estee Lauder, explains that even a product that has been on the market for 30 years has doubled in sales since SMIs from the beauty community have begun mentioning it in their videos (Creswell 2017). The Estee Lauder brand did not compensate these influencers to do this and the increase in sales was from the influencers demonstrating how they use the product. These two practices, both sponsored and unsponsored videos, hold similarities to celebrity brand endorsements, but there are differences that make the SMI situation unique.

2.3 SMIs Compared to Celebrity Brand Endorsers

Brands create marketing messages with the intent to persuade and generate awareness for their products or services. A common and effective form of advertising is incorporating a celebrity to help relay the message that brands intend to communicate to their consumers. Celebrity brand endorsers are often used to showcase the credibility and effectiveness of the message they are communicating (Munnukka et al. 2016). A celebrity is defined as anyone who is watched, noticed, and known by a critical mass of strangers (Sternheimer 2011) and an endorser is a person who recommends or demonstrates a product and acts as a source of information, which influences the acceptability of the message (Munnukka et al. 2016). Putting celebrities and endorsers together creates a construct that has been heavily studied in advertising literature. There are several explanations of the purpose of celebrity endorsers, but an accepted understanding is that celebrities

are viewed as credible spokespersons or opinion experts in the brands they endorse, and this provides consumers with a sense of confidence in the brand's message (Hung 2014). Erdogan (1999) explains the use of endorsers as entities that enhance the strategies determined in a brand's marketing mix. Celebrity endorsers are commonly real people who have significance in our world. For example, in 2016, celebrity Selena Gomez was named the face of luxury brand Louis Vuitton; her advertisements with this brand were shared on the social media platform Instagram (Sokolovska 2016). McCracken (1989) explains celebrity endorsers using a transfer of meaning theory. He states that celebrities hold meaning in our world, and through the product endorsement, these specific meanings are transferred to consumer goods, and eventually to the consumer through these goods. Louis Vuitton purposefully shared the advertisements via Instagram as Selena Gomez, at the time of the advertisement's release, was the most followed person on this platform and this channel would make the most sense in consumer's minds (Sokolovska 2016).

It is evident there are similarities between SMIs and celebrity brand endorsers, but ultimately, SMIs are different from traditional definitions of celebrity. Differences include the nature of the agreement, the production quality involved, and the connection between the SMI and consumers. A distinct difference resulting from the nature of their agreement is from the type of benefit or compensation the SMI receives. Brand endorsements are commonly a large expense for brands as the celebrity endorser is well-paid to transfer his or her associations to the brand. However, SMIs have a more symbiotic relationship, with benefits for both the brand and the influencer. Online influencers have the desire to gain more followers, which could be done by partnering with brands. They also earn money, are gifted products, and ultimately the brand's message gets more reach, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship. Traditional celebrity endorsers are generally not as concerned with gaining more followers on their social media platforms but the monetary reward they receive from endorsing the product. SMIs are also not generally tied to a contract with a brand. The relationship between brand and influencer is limited in time and does not restrict the discussion of other brands on behalf of the influencer. For example, beauty influencer Gabriel Zamora explains that he has relationships with about 20 brands; whether this involves the brand sending free products or Gabriel creating sponsored content with them, he is not tied to only having connections with one brand at a time (Creswell 2017). Along the same line, SMIs often discuss specific brands without the brand having any contact with the influencer. Even though the brand

was not initiating the conversation regarding their brand, it does not diminish the discussion that was had on behalf of the brand. This ties into the fact that brands have less control over the conversations consumers are having regarding their brand. Another difference between SMIs and celebrity brand endorsers is in the quality of the sponsored content produced by the influencer. Unlike in celebrity endorsed advertisements, brand sponsored content produced by SMIs is similar to their other content in the fact it is not professionally produced (Cocker and Cronin 2017). It is consistent with their other content and does not always resemble advertisements created by brands with large budgets. It is the attainable and relatable setting for the content that helps the viewers to see themselves using the products or services the influencer is discussing.

Perhaps one of the most distinct differences stems from the fact that SMIs have a level of trust already developed with their followers; this has an impact on the response to the sponsored content. This dynamic is not always the case with celebrity brand endorsers where not every viewer will be aware of the personality of the endorser. In the case of sponsored content from SMIs, their followers will have a connection with the influencer on some level. This ties into the fact that the personality that the influencer is sharing online is a significant contributor to the relationship their viewers will build with them (Cocker and Cronin 2017). Cocker and Cronin (2017) determine that it is mainly the personality of SMIs that draws their viewers in, and keeps them coming back to consume the influencers' content. This dynamic is a different form of 'product' that the influencer is communicating to their followers. The daily actions of sharing opinions on products, services, and experiences is the source of value that viewers latch onto (Cocker and Conin 2017). Similar to celebrities, SMIs stand out on the basis of their personality; this notion of 'charismatic authority' is integral to the relationship between influencer and follower (Cocker and Conin 2017). SMIs are replacing old definitions of authority and expertise with new forms of representation and knowledge sharing using social media platforms (Cocker and Conin 2017). The personality traits that influencers choose to convey online is what has guided them to be a new understanding of celebrity, and celebrity status. SMIs are a new form of micro-celebrity. This status was achieved through exposure of their content on social media platforms, stemming from their viewers resonating with their personality.

Not only are SMIs different from celebrity brand endorsers, but Kapitan and Silvera (2016) suggest that utilizing specific characteristics of SMIs, such as the fact they generally fit into a certain product category or the fact they are seen as credible sources of information, could result in them being a more effective source to communicate the brands' messages. Since SMIs typically fit into a specialized genre, based on their personal interests, this suggests that brands will be able to successfully match a SMI to a product that makes sense in consumers' minds (Kapitan and Silvera 2016). Kapitan and Silvera (2016) also suggest that digital messaging sources are a better fit than traditional media to the multi-tasking and more distracted audiences, as they are more quickly able to 'like' a brand on Facebook or follow a brand on a different social media platform.

SMIs gained popularity by their followers finding them based on their shared interests; this shared interest originates from the content the influencer is creating. SMIs are often perceived by their viewers to be 'just like them.' This sense of relatability and familiarity facilitates the formation of a relationship between the viewer and the influencer. It is known that people are now seeking more information online and that consumers are specifically looking at user-generated content that is produced by online SMIs; this is the case as consumer generated information about products and services is increasingly being viewed as a credible source of information. When comparing online media sources to traditional media sources in regard to creditability of the marketing messages, online influencers were viewed as more creditable; users discussed they rely on blogs to provide more in-depth and thoughtful information (Johnson and Kaye 2004). Viewers of user-generated content also found user-generated content to be authentic and useful; the content was viewed as an unbiased and objective source for information (Mir and Rehman 2013). Viewers of user-generated content value the opinions and level of knowledge that SMIs share. Consumers want to hear from relatable consumers who they feel they are similar to.

Synthesizing the existing definitions of SMIs and considering how they differ from traditional celebrity brand endorsers, I created the following definition: *SMIs are users of social media who have achieved celebrity status and who develop social capital in the form of large followings on social media platforms.* This status can be used to communicate brands' marketing communication messages and therefore differs from the typical user of social media. The above comprehensive definition of SMI is a necessary next step to studying this area, as the lack of a consistent definition

makes for confusion and inconsistency. It is important to note that SMIs achieve celebrity status through the large followings they built from creating content on social media platforms. Their followers were not drawn from other mediums, such as T.V or film, but originated on social media from creating content – this is a distinct difference to traditional definitions of celebrity. The concept of SMIs is gaining attention in literature, but there is room for this concept to be taken further to more accurately reflect what is currently happening in the marketing environment. It is known that viewers and followers of SMIs find their content to be creditable, authentic, and honest, but with the introduction of sponsored content and immediate relationships with brands, it is unclear how viewers exactly are engaging with the brands SMIs discuss.

2.4 User Generated Content

The content that SMIs post online is titled user-generated content and is a type of content unique to social media. One unique characteristic is that it is generally created without the use of professional production (Cocker and Cronin 2017; Shao 2008; Smith et al. 2012). This quality is congruent to SMIs as they are typically viewed to be relatable and ‘just like us,’ a trait that is not related to traditional celebrities who appear in professionally produced content. User-generated content is valued by those who use it, as it is identified as being easy to use by the viewers and it allows for creators to have complete control over their content (Shao 2008). Through the lens of a uses and gratification perspective, Shao (2008) provides empirical evidence for why people consume user-generated content; these reasons include for fulfillment of information, entertainment, and mood management needs. Users of these platforms participate through interacting with the content, but also with other users to advance their social capacity (Shao 2008). A common reason as to why creators produce their own content is for the purpose of self-expression and self-actualization (Shao 2008). Another common reason for influencers to create user-generated content is to partner with a brand to further communicate that brand’s message. As much of the user-generated content is brand related, this facilitates an environment where this content has the potential to shape consumer brand perceptions (Smith et al. 2012). The fact that the influencer has varying degrees of control over the content they are producing and creating (depending whether the post is sponsored), via user-generated content, is a distinct characteristic of the environment of SMIs. Many of the most successful influencers started out by creating content with any equipment they could find. This lower quality, compared to professional content

produced by traditional celebrities, is what makes user-generated content on social media distinctive to social media platforms.

There are several prominent social media platforms that operate as a result of the user-generated content their users create and post, which viewers then engage with. Some of these platforms include Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Each platform attracts different types of content and users of the platform, which result in each platform having unique characteristics (Smith et al. 2012). For example, Twitter is a micro-blogging site where users post short text to their followers, Facebook is a social networking site, and YouTube is a content community site (Smith et al. 2012). On YouTube, content creators have the freedom and control to post whatever type/genre of content they choose. Many creators use the platform as a means to express their personalities while connecting with their audiences. YouTube is a platform where connections between creators and viewers are made, largely based on the relatability of the creator from the perspective of the viewer (Smith et al. 2012). A study conducted by Voorveld et al. (2018) determined that YouTube is perceived as an entertainment site – a place to stay informed on current topics while passing the time. There are many different genres/categories on YouTube, each unique from the next. As a result, YouTube is coined a content community site for good reason. There are hundreds of communities on YouTube – all having a different topic or industry as the common factor between the members of the community.

One of the most prominent communities on YouTube is the beauty community. This community consists of content creators who create videos pertaining to makeup and other beauty products in the form of reviews, tutorials, hauls, PR unboxings, ‘favourites’ videos, and first impressions. As with many communities on YouTube, this community also has close connections with brands (from small indie beauty brands to large beauty retail giants). SMIs in this community, otherwise known as ‘beauty gurus,’ discuss specific brands in each of their videos; this creates a unique marketing environment that brands have now begun to incorporate into their marketing strategies. For example, the CEO of cosmetic company, Becca Cosmetics, recalls the first time they noticed a beauty influencer having an impact on their sales of a specific product (St. Louis 2016). In an interview, he discusses how Jaclyn Hill, a beauty influencer, mentioned one of their products in a video, and their sales spiked on that product; to solidify this claim, he discussed another time that she mentioned the same product a few weeks later and the sales on that specific product spiked

again (St. Louis 2016). From here, Becca Cosmetics and Jaclyn Hill went on to create their own product collaboration that sold out 25,000 units in Sephora stores in just 20 minutes (Creswell 2017). This example demonstrates the power and influence that content creators have from this community on YouTube. It appears that through the beauty influencers mentioning and discussing specific brands in their videos, their viewers are engaging with the brands. This is an area that has not been explored in literature surrounding social media and content creators, but is an area that could reveal insight into the world of social media and brand engagement.

2.5 Parasocial Interaction Theory

User-generated content is the vehicle to which SMIs communicate with their audiences, but the relationship building happens through the interactions with this content, and this occurs over time with repeated exposure. The trusting relationships that develop between SMIs and their followers is integral to how this group of people are able to influence the opinion of their followers. Interactions through user-generated content is especially important as these two groups have never met face to face, but only through online platforms. It is known that SMIs are seen as credible sources of information, but what is driving these tight-knit relationships? There are several theories that attempt to answer this question; however, parasocial interaction theory (PSI) is the most applicable theory to explain the relationship between SMIs and their followers (Lee and Watkins 2016). Parasocial interaction is a theory derived from communication literature that attempts to explain consumers' relationships with mass media personalities (Horton and Wohl 1956). Feelings of PSI occur when a consumer feels a sense of friendship with someone who they see in the media (Lee and Watkins 2016). Labrecque (2014, 135) defines it as, "an illusionary experience"; the notion of this interaction being an illusionary experience results from the fact that consumers are not in a reciprocal relationship with the media personalities. The relationship is essentially one sided and from the perspective of the viewer.

More recently, PSI has been used to explain close relationships between SMIs and their audiences (Lee and Watkins 2016; Wegener 2017), between typical/average users of social media and their followers (Yuksel and Labrecque 2016), and between brands and their consumers (Labrecque 2014). Strong feelings of PSI are felt between influencer and viewer when attitude homophily and the impression of attractiveness are already present in the relationship (Lee and Watkins 2016).

Attitude homophily is the likeliness that two people will become friends based on similar interests and personal values, and attractiveness refers to both physical attractiveness and social attractiveness (Lee and Watkins 2016). It is important to note that the interests that influencers and viewers share is what facilitated the relationship to develop in the first place. Lee and Watkins (2016) state that if the antecedents of attitude homophily and attractiveness are present, viewers are likely to exhibit feelings of PSI – the feeling of friendship with a media personality. Lee and Watkins (2016) studied PSI between viewers and vloggers (online SMIs on YouTube) and applied this relationship to how it could influence luxury brand perceptions. Results revealed that participants exposed to a vlog (video blog) discussing a luxury brand by a SMI had a higher evaluation of the brand (Lee and Watkins 2016). PSI has also been studied in the context of brands and consumers; that is, consumers exhibit feelings of PSI towards a brand as a result of the brand's messages on social media (Labrecque 2014). Labrecque (2014) found that interactivity and openness were antecedents to consumers having feelings of PSI towards a brand.

It is important to understand that strong feelings of friendship do not occur with every SMI and viewer. Similar to real life friendships, viewers of user-generated content form relationships with influencers who they feel similar to regarding personality, not with every influencer they come across. Lee and Watkins's (2016) conceptualization is extremely beneficial in explaining how SMIs are able to form close relationships with their viewers; their viewers feel as if they are interacting in a real friendship. SMI and viewer have a bond that stems from their shared interests and similar personality traits – this is key in understanding that feelings of PSI do not occur between every SMI and viewer. Once this close connection is formed, viewers of SMIs trust the opinions of the influencers they interact with, specifically regarding certain brands and products they mention. As Lee and Watkins (2016) determined, SMIs were able to influence the perception of the luxury brand in a positive manner. Connecting this to the beauty community on YouTube, viewers who feel as if they are friends with a specific beauty influencer will trust the opinion regarding products and brands that influencer discusses in their video. Returning to the example regarding Jaclyn Hill and Becca Cosmetics – once Jaclyn mentioned one of Becca's products in her video, it was her viewers who then chose to purchase that product, based on the recommendation from someone who they trusted. This example illustrates how powerful the dynamic of viewer and influencer is and how this relationship merits exploration. Just as in real

life, SMIs act as opinion leaders because they have the ability to impact thoughts and actions stemming from the relationships between viewer and influencer.

2.6 Opinion Leaders

SMIs are opinion leaders who share their opinions through creating user-generated content; this includes their experiences and thoughts about products, services, and their everyday lives. This concept reflects Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) description of opinion leaders as they describe them as individuals who are likely to influence people in their daily lives. Katz (1957) extends this definition further to include three common characteristics and behaviours: personification of certain values, competence, and strategic social location. SMIs are generally consistent with the definition that Katz (1957) proposes: they exhibit certain personalities and values and share these with their followers, they have an area of interest that they have become an expert in, and they have a strategic social location, as evident by in their large audiences that consume their content. This evokes a perfect environment for brands to engage both their existing consumers and their potential consumers. Applying opinion leader theory to the marketplace, it is known that consumers influence other consumers. Consumers tend to imitate consumption behaviour they perceive as desirable, obtain information from other consumers in the process of social communication, and seek advice from consumers they view to be knowledgeable (Flynn et al. 1996). SMIs and their followers reflect a relationship where there is the presence of both opinion leaders and opinion seekers; the SMI is the opinion leader and their viewers are the opinion seekers. (Flynn et al. 1996).

Opinion leaders and opinion seekers exhibit a common dynamic that exists on social media platforms. This is demonstrated in a study conducted by Uzunoglu and Kip (2014) who apply Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) definition to online opinion leaders (SMI). In the past, physical proximity was considered essential for the presence of opinion leadership to exist; however, due to the development of technology resulting in ease of communication, direct face-to-face contact is not necessary for an opinion leader to have influence. Uzunoglu and Kip (2014) discuss online opinion leaders in the context of bloggers, but their findings can be applied to online opinion leaders on most social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, etc.). To further define how SMIs are opinion leaders who hold valuable knowledge, SMIs have been compared to 'early adopters,' a

term from the diffusion of innovation model (Uzunoglu and Kip 2014). SMIs in this context have the potential to play an important role for marketing communication messages. Specifically, when a brand launches a new product or an existing product to a new market, SMIs, as early adopters, can share the new product launch to their followers, and in turn increase the reach of the brand's product launch (Uzunoglu and Kip 2014). This example of how online opinion leaders can positively impact brands leads into the main contribution Uzunoglu and Kip (2014) have made; they propose that online influencers act as an intermediary link, a mechanism for exchanging brand messaging information between brands and consumers. Uzunoglu and Kip's (2014) model explains a process beginning with the brand communication source and ends with the SMIs sharing this information with their followers, who then share it with their own followers, etc. Their model is a good starting point for conceptualizing this relationship, but their model is missing how this dynamic then impacts brand engagement and self-brand connection.

It is evident from the literature that the branding environment that marketers operate in is changing. Communication channels are becoming intertwined and this is partly due to the impact of SMIs creating brand focused user-generated content on social media platforms. SMIs are able to influence their followers through the content they create where they share their opinions while simultaneously building trusting and meaningful relationships (PSIs). It is also evident from the literature that consumers are seeking out more information online and trust the opinions that SMIs share. What is missing in literature is how their followers engage with brands that SMIs interact with. It is apparent that SMIs have an impact on the perceptions and opinions of the viewers regarding the brands they are mentioning in their videos; this is through their status as opinion leaders, the PSIs that have occurred, as well as their mutual shared interest that brought them together in the first place. This includes, beauty influencers and makeup lovers. It is also known that their followers trust their opinion about products and services, but what is unknown is how SMIs are able to interact with their followers to serve as a route to engagement between brands and consumers. SMIs are a result of today's interactive and digital environment. It is evident their ability to inform and influence customers regarding specific products and services has had an impact on consumer engagement with brands. By exploring both Maslowska et al. (2016) customer engagement ecosystem's constructs for defining engagement and Hollebeek et al. (2014) self-brand connections constructs for measuring engagement, this thesis will study how SMIs impact

brand engagement. This leads to the following research question: ***How do SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers?*** The key to this question is the idea that engagement with the SMI will lead to brand engagement. Previous research currently does not identify how SMIs are specifically able to influence how their viewers engage with brands through both sponsored and unsponsored content. Therefore, exploring the different avenues to brand engagement as well as different levels to brand engagement, via SMIs, will provide theoretical contribution in this area of branding research.

Figure 2-3 is a model that summarizes what I want to determine with my research question. SMI engagement represents the gap missing in current literature. It is clear that brand actions outside their relationship with SMIs will have an impact on brand outcomes: brand engagement and self-brand connection. The focus of this study is going to be determining whether and how a combined shared interest between SMI and consumer results in brand engagement between the brand and consumer.

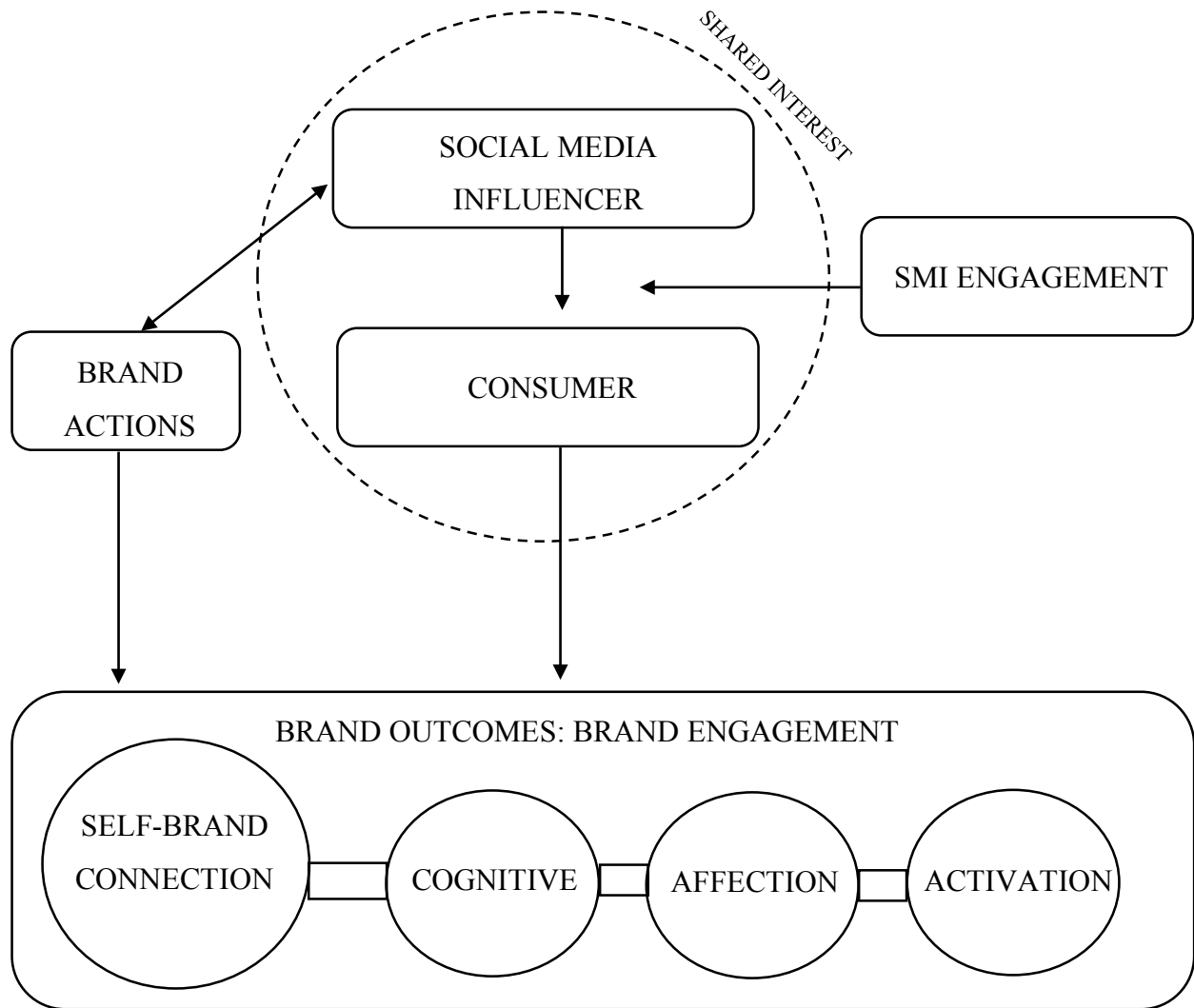


Figure 2-3
SMIs as a Route to Brand Engagement

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

3.1 General Information on Method, Context, and Data: Mixed Method

To determine *how SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers*, I needed to gain insight on how consumers interact with brands that SMIs mention in their content. To do this, my research design involved setting my study in the context of beauty SMIs on YouTube and specifically analyzing the textual comment section for videos from this YouTube community. Beauty SMI's user-generated content consistently mentions specific brands in their content. Since I want to know how SMIs impact different components to brand engagement, it is necessary that a brand is discussed by the influencer in the videos used in my study – beauty SMIs on YouTube allow for this situation perfectly. To understand the connection between SMIs, their followers, and how this impacts brand engagement, I needed to hear from followers of SMIs who already have a connection to and relationship with the influencer. A limitation to existing studies involving SMI, is that it is hard to replicate the environment that viewers and SMIs exist in. This is because relationships between viewer and influencer develop over time after repeated interactions. Therefore, in selecting methods to best answer my research question, I chose a mixed methods analysis with a focus on Automated Text Analysis (ATA). It became quickly evident that dynamic interactions amongst SMIs and viewers would be extremely difficult to recreate in a laboratory/research setting; therefore, it was necessary to find a method to analyze their interactions in their true environment. By using YouTube textual comments as the sample for this study, this allowed me to gain insight into this unique environment to assess the level of brand engagement in the exact environment where the interactions occurred.

Following the guidelines for conducting ATA in consumer research, published by Humphreys and Wang (2018), this method allows for analyzing large text-based data sets without manually analyzing tens of thousands of data points. Further, ATA is a method that comes from the field of computational linguistics; this area of research uses computational power to answer research questions (Humphreys and Wang 2018). Humphreys and Wang (2018) describe ATA, in the context of consumer behavior research, as a lens through which to view consumer thought, behavior, and culture. This is applicable to my research, as I am using YouTube comments as a lens to view and understand consumer thought and behaviour regarding SMIs and brands. It is

important to note that although the term “automated” is used in the definition of ATA, the processes involved still rely heavily on human intervention. This method, when used in the area of consumer behavior, is sometimes referred to as “computer-assisted text analysis” to reiterate the importance of human involvement in this research method (Humphreys and Wang 2018). ATA allows for researchers to gain insight on topics that could otherwise be missed through the use of powerful software tools, which are specifically designed to work with large data sets. The use of ATA in consumer research has become increasingly more popular, fueled by the volume of Big Data, and as a result, the tools and resources required to study in this area are also becoming more accessible (Humphreys and Wang 2018). Even though ATA is becoming more popular and accessible, there is still no agreement on a standard set of methods, reporting procedures, and steps of data inclusion, exclusion, and sampling (Humphreys and Wang 2018). This allows for freedom and creativity on behalf of the researcher when determining the best processes for answering research questions. A common notion in using ATA for consumer research is acknowledging that analyzing text is not the final step, but a first step to understanding the relationships amongst the constructs and variables of interest. This is the case for my research as well. My study is based on using ATA procedures, which I supplement with quantitative and qualitative research methods to further inform my research question, resulting in a mixed methods analysis.

3.2 Collecting the data

YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms, as evidenced by thousands of SMIs who create content in various categories. In the beauty community alone, there are thousands of beauty related channels. In order to narrow down which beauty SMI’s videos I used for my study, I developed an inclusion criteria to start my search; this also acted as a guide to ensure a consistent group of influencers was used in my study. A highly homogenous group of influencers was desired as I did not want any major differences to have an impact on the comments the influencers receive. This step was important to ensure that the comments from each influencer did not have external factors that could cause discrepancies, such as language barriers or a low number of comments and engagement from the viewers towards the influencers. My criteria included: the SMI must be female, from the United States, create similar types of videos (more on this below), and have over 3 million subscribers. After a simple online search using these criteria there were still a high number of influencers that could be included. To narrow down this list, I then searched for articles

online that ranked/ordered top SMIs in the beauty community. I found six online lists (created in popular press articles) that compiled the top influencers in this category, and from these lists I created my own list of influencers who fit my criteria. It was important that I selected those influencers who were well known and respected in the industry, as this would guarantee that the influencers have connections with brands and have experience creating this type of content. From the lists, I tabulated how many times each SMI was mentioned and verified a match to the criteria. Finally, I selected those influencers who appeared on the lists most frequently. Using the existing lists ordering/ranking each influencer also lessened the possibility of bias on my behalf of simply selecting my personal favourite influencers to include in my study. This approach ensured that the most popular and influential influencers were used in my study. From my original list of over 10 highly-successful influencers, four beauty SMIs emerged as perfect matches for the study. They are: Carli Bybel, Desi Perkins, Jaclyn Hill, and KathleenLights; a profile on each SMI can be found in Appendix A.

After selecting the beauty SMIs for my study, I needed to determine a common set of video types across all four of the selected SMIs. This commonality would help ensure consistency in the textual comments for these videos – the sample for my study. Determining a constant set of video types ensured a consistent process was used to collect the comments across each different SMI. Although each influencer creates unique content for her specific audience, there are video types that are common to the beauty community as a whole. Of these common video types, I chose five types to include in my study: current favourites (SMIs talk about specific brand and products they are currently liking), first impressions (SMIs try out new products and share their initial thoughts and opinions), hauls (SMIs share with their audience new products they have purchased or received), reviews (SMIs share their detailed opinion on a specific product or brand), and tutorials (SMIs teach their audience how to achieve a specific makeup look). A detailed description of each video type can be found in Appendix B. Once the types of videos were determined, I needed to ensure that each influencer had posted a video for each video type to achieve the scope for my required sample. To do this, I explored the channels of each influencer and searched for a video that fit each video type. When possible, I used the most recent video (from the time of data collection, July 2018) from each influencer; this was possible for most videos, but there were cases where the videos chosen were slightly older. An older video was used when the influencer had not created

that specific type of video recently. Trends on YouTube change very quickly and finding five videos from each influencer that fell into each type of video was challenging. Therefore, the dataset for my study spanned from December 2017 – August 2018 with the majority of the data collected in July 2018. Additionally, as I am not focusing specially on the impact of sponsored content, the products and brands mentioned in the videos were not sponsored.

As mentioned previously, it was important that there be a level of homogeneity amongst the content of the influencers. Therefore, another factor that I took into consideration were other events that may have been occurring in the influencer's personal life, particularly those events that could be having a significant impact on the comments for the video. For example, SMI Jaelyn Hill announced she was getting a divorce (after much speculation from her audience and the beauty community as a whole) in May 2018. The comment section for any video published around this time (both before and after the announcement) was filled with comments surrounding this life event, rather than comments about the brands and products, which are more typical comments. Instances such as these were taken into consideration when choosing the videos to include in my study. In the end, I was successful in sourcing one video of each of the five types of videos for each of the four influencers, resulting in 20 videos total. The link to each video used for my study can be found in Appendix C.

The next step for data collection was to actually capture/gather the comments from each video. To do this, I scraped the comments using a text scraping program which downloaded the comments from each video into a unique excel file. These raw excel files needed to be cleaned before I could input them into the analysis programs; this ensured they were not clouded with unnecessary information for my study. The information I needed to retain was the comment itself and the user ID of the person posting the comment. I removed any extraneous excel cells that did not contain the required information, including information such as the date and timestamp of the comment as well as how many likes the comment received. Although this is interesting information, it was not required for answering my research question as I was not focusing on the relationship components between the viewers, but the relationship between the influencer and viewer. Two challenges emerged in preparing my raw data for further analysis. The first challenge I encountered when cleaning the data was the presence of blank excel rows. These blank cells in between the comments

were a consequence of the text scraping program; I removed the blank excel rows as they would have negatively impacted my data analysis once the data was put into the analyzing software. The second challenge I encountered was the issue of downloading the emoticons contained in the comments. Many, if not all, of the comments contained emoticons. Unfortunately, I could not find a text processing program that had the capability of both downloading the emoticons and retaining them in the format they were intended to be viewed in. As a result, the emoticons were downloaded in the comments, but they present as symbols that do not hold meaning, rather than the intended emoticons. Therefore, the emoticons could not become part of the analysis and are not discussed further. Once the data had been sufficiently cleaned, the excel files were ready to import into the data analysis software programs. In total, there were 59,613 comments in the cleaned dataset, in 20 excel files.

The last important task for preparing the data for analysis was to organize the data in a manner that would allow me to investigate distinct aspects in my data analysis. To ensure the data was suitable for the various forms of proposed analysis, I organized the data using three different categorizations. All files were in Excel format, with a different number of excel files for each categorization. First, I organized the comments into a file for each SMI, sub-organized by video type (four files); this meant I saved one excel file for each SMI that contained all the comments for each video type (Carli Bybel, Desi Perkins, Jaclyn Hill, and KathleenLights). Second, I organized the comments into a file by video type (five files); this meant I created one file for each video type, and here, all the comments from each SMI for the same video type were saved together (favourites, first impressions, hauls, reviews, and tutorials). Lastly, I organized the all the comments for all the SMIs in a single excel file (i.e. one file that contained all 59,613 comments). Thus, for each of the three overarching categorization methods, all 59,613 comments are included in each, with the third method being the full dataset in a single file. Having these different combinations of data was important for completing distinct aspects of the analysis, as the different parts and programs required the comments in different arrangements.

3.3 Data Analysis Process

To determine how SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers, my data analysis was conducted in 2 parts and used several different approaches. Returning to the guidelines for

conducting ATA in consumer research, there are two operationalization approaches for conducting ATA: a ‘Top-Down’ Approach and a ‘Bottom-up’ Approach (Humphreys and Wang 2018). As well as using the following processes, my personal experience as a viewer of the beauty community influenced the data analysis process. The first part of my data analysis followed the guidelines for completing ATA in a ‘Top-down Approach’ and the second piece of my data analysis is a ‘Bottom-up’ Approach. At the core of a ‘Top-Down’ Approach is analyzing occurrences of words based on a dictionary or set of rules. This operationalization approach has several advantages. One advantage is that the processes involved are easy to execute and understand, even if the researcher has limited coding skills and experience working with computational linguistics. Another advantage is the outcomes are generally easy to understand and allow for intuitive connections to constructs and theories as the various processes are rooted in sociology and psychology practices (Humphreys and Wang 2018).

With this in mind, the first piece of my data analysis was guided by Hollebeek et al. (2014)’s constructs to self-brand connection: Cognitive Processing, Affection, and Activation. This model is a way to quantify brand engagement, a concept in literature that has proven to be challenging. To make sure I was able to answer *if* SMIs act as a route to brand engagement, this theoretical model was critical when designing my analysis process.

3.3.1 Cognitive Processing Analysis Process

Cognitive processing is the first component of self-brand connection, and it refers to how often consumers actually think about brands. In order to determine this aspect of self-brand connection, I needed to determine which brands the SMIs discussed in their videos, and then determine if the commenters mentioned these specific brands in their comments. This allowed me to gain insight into what extent the commenters think about the brands mentioned in the videos. The first step was to compile a list of all the brands the SMIs mentioned in their videos. To do this, I watched each video and noted each brand that was mentioned. Additionally, I also checked each video’s description box. Each video on YouTube has a space where the publisher of the video can write down any information they deem necessary; in the case of beauty SMIs, this is where they often inform the viewer of each brand and product they used or mention in the video. Therefore, I also compared the information in the description box of each video, with the brands noted from viewing

the video, to ensure I did not miss a brand mentioned by SMI. I then organized the list of brands in two ways: first, by SMI and the unique combination of brands that each SMI mentioned and second, by video type where the list of brands was combined into one large list. I then analyzed these lists separately but used the same process for both. I wanted to look at these two different organizing methods to determine if there were differences between the different video types and the number of brand mentions. The next step was to actually determine the number of brand mentions in the comments. To do this, I used the program NVivo to conduct key word searches of each individual brand. I did this for both organizing methods (by SMI and video type) as I wanted to see if the different influencers and video types resulted in a different number of brand mentions. To further this determination, I also calculated a Chi-Square test for independence, using proportions, to figure out if the different video types resulted in a statistically significant different number of brand mentions.

3.3.2 Affection Process

Affection is the second piece of the analysis and it considers how consumers actually feel about brands. To determine this, I first used the software program LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) to determine the percentage of positive and negative emotion in each comment. Then, I finished the analysis in SPSS, using the output from LIWC, to determine if the different video types resulted in different levels of emotion. LIWC is a textual analysis software program designed to provide a method for studying emotional, cognitive, and structural components present in individuals' verbal and written speech samples (Pennebaker et al. 2015). LIWC uses pre-defined dictionaries to count words belonging to certain categories. Examples of different categories include: summary variables – analytical thinking and emotional tone; general descriptors – words per sentence; standard linguistic dimensions; and word categories involving psychological constructs. For example, in the category *positive emotion*, LIWC has categorized words such as love, loyal, fun, and beauty to belong in this group. And for *negative emotion*, LIWC has categorized words such as dislike, boring, and serious to belong in this group. LIWC is a powerful tool that has categorized 6400 words in approximately 90 categories. LIWC allowed me to determine the overall emotion of the comments, which is then used when exploring the affection component to self-brand connection. For this portion of the analysis, I used the data file that contained all the comments from each SMI and video type together, so all of the comments would

be in one file. Once LIWC analyzed each comment to determine their percentages of positive and negative emotion, I used this data in SPSS to run an ANOVA to determine if there were differences among the different video types. I did not conduct an ANOVA determining the differences between the SMI as my research question is focusing on brand engagement, not specific characteristics of SMI.

3.2.3 Activation Process

Activation is the last component to Hollebeek (2014)'s self-brand connection and it determines the energy and effort exerted by the consumer. To assess this, in this context, I chose to look at the total number of comments posted in the videos from unique users, as well as the number of comments from the same users. To determine this, I used the program NVivo to determine the number of unique commenters and the number of repeat commenters. For this aspect of the analysis, having the user ID data field for each commenter was very important, because NVivo has a function which allows for the data to be organized by cases when it is imported. For the imported data, each NVivo case corresponded to a unique YouTube user ID. NVivo then grouped together all comment posted by the same user ID. From this grouping, I determined how many users commented one time, more than one time, and the average number of comments left from users who left more than one comment. By looking at the number of comments, I could determine how much energy and effort was expended regarding the viewers' engagement with the SMI. This will then allow me to understand if the viewers are indeed putting energy and effort into this dynamic with the SMI.

3.4 Results for Top-Down Approach

3.4.1 Cognitive Processing Results

My findings can be divided into three components: Cognitive processing, Affection, and Activation. As stated previously, the first component to Hollebeek et al. 2014's self-brand connection, is the cognitive aspect: how often consumers think about brands. This level to quantifying self-brand connections is done by determining how often consumer's think about the brands mentioned in the videos. This component produced the following results, presented in Table 3-1 and 3-2. Table 3-1 presents the number of brand mentions for each video type and Table 3-2 presents the number of brand mentions per SMI. These numbers validate and confirm that viewers

are in fact thinking about the brands that the SMI are mentioning in their videos. Since the brands that I searched for in the comments are specifically the brands the influencers mentioned, it is clear that the SMI are facilitating the viewers' comments and therefore thinking, about the brands that *they* are talking about. Simply put, the viewers and commenters are thinking about the brands the SMIs include in their videos.

Further, the video type *hauls* has the highest number of brand mentions, followed by *favourites*, *reviews*, *first impressions*, and *tutorials*. This information is important to consider when thinking about the practical application of involving SMIs in marketing strategies. Additionally, it was also determined that Jaclyn Hill receives the highest number of brand mentions, followed by KathleenLights, Desi Perkins, and Carli Bybel. Although each influencer is similar in a general sense (number of subscribers, gender, where they are from), it is clear each influencer has a different impact on how often viewers leave a comment, and therefore, how often a brand is thought about.

Table 3-1

Number of Brand Mentions per Video Type

Video Type	Number of Brand Mentions
Hauls	2842
Favourites	2012
Reviews	1340
First Impressions	1216
Tutorials	632

Table 3-2

Number of Brand Mentions per Social Media Influencer

SMI	Number of Brand Mentions
Jaclyn Hill	4249
KathleenLights	1950
Desi Perkins	661
Carli Bybel	256

From the above results of the number of brand mentions per video type, it appears that the different video types result in a different number of brand mentions. To determine if this difference was statistically significant, a Chi-square test for independence, using proportions (number of brand mentions per video type), was completed to examine the relation between the different video types and the number of brand mentions. Based on the test statistic ($X^2 = 1514$, $df=4$, $p<0.05$), I concluded that the observed differences between expected and observed frequencies differed significantly. Therefore, the different video types are not the same regarding the number of brand mentions they receive.

To illustrate further how viewers and commenters are thinking about brands, Table 3-3 provides examples of comments where viewers are mentioning specific brands. It is commonplace for commenters to mention not only the brand, but the specific products they are discussing as well. The comments below are examples of how typical and normal it is for brands to be mentioned in the comments. There are hundreds of examples to choose from, but these representative comments provide confirmation that viewers do think about specific brands when watching beauty influencers on YouTube.

Table 3-3

Examples of Comments Where a Brand is Mentioned

SMI	Video Type	Comment
Carli Bybel	Haul	“I am obsessed with the tatcha primer! I use it every day and it has made a huge difference in my makeup application! Definitely worth every penny!”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“I have been loving Mac strobe cream at the moment and the soft glam pallet by abh and the Jaclyn hill pallet of course”
KathleenLights	Favourites	“I just picked up the lighter essence highlight but haven't tried it yet! I recently bought a wet n wild highlight in blossom glow...gorgeous!! I'm also finally starting to realize how much I love the colourpop foundation and loose setting powder combo. love your videos!”
KathleenLights	Favourites	“I love the Colourpop Jelly eye shadows! I recommend them 100%.”
Desi Perkins	Favourites	“The Lancome stick Foundation is my favorite Foundation ever! It doesn't get enough recognition it's better than the makeup forever Ultra HD stick in my opinion!”

As revealed from the results above, there are hundreds and often thousands of comments that mention a brand. For the viewers, writing in the comments about the brands that the SMIs are talking about, is a way for them to be included in the overall experience. They have put themselves in the situation where they feel included because they know and understand what the influencer is talking about. These results provide strong evidence that the cognitive component to self-brand connections is being met in this scenario, with hauls and favourites receiving the most brand mentions. SMIs talk about specific products and brands in their videos, and their viewers then mention these specific brands in their comments. It is through the SMIs that the viewers are thinking about brands while they are consuming this type of user-generated content.

3.4.2 Affection Results

The next component to Hollebeek et al. (2014)'s self-brand connection is the affection component. Quantifying brand engagement at this level involves how consumers actually *feel* about brands. To determine the emotion the viewers are feeling in their comments, I looked at the positive and negative emotion percentages from the LIWC output for each comment. This provided me with a percentage of both positive emotion words and negative emotion words for each comment. Once this first step was completed, I calculated the mean of each video type to gain a general idea of the emotion in the comments per video type. Once again, it appeared the different video types resulted in different means, but to determine if this difference was statistically significant, I conducted a one-way analysis of variance for both positive and negative emotion, comparing the different video types: favourites, first impressions, hauls, reviews, and tutorials. Because I was using the data from the LIWC output, I once again needed to prepare/clean the data before I could put it into SPSS to be analyzed. Further, as LIWC provides a percentage of positive and negative words for each comment, not every comment resulted in a percentage. This was the case when the comment did not contain any words that LIWC has included in their positive emotion and negative emotion pre-defined dictionaries. For example, the following comment was given a value of '0' for both positive and negative emotion: "Jaclyn, how long have you kept some of your palettes? Not like the shade and light palette which you seem to go through a lot, but for example, how long is the shelf life on the Morphe palettes or the Nars palette?" Therefore, when a value of 0 was given to a comment, I treated this comment as a 'missing value' in SPSS, so it would not skew the data to misrepresent the results.

The results of both positive and negative ANOVA, between-subject tests, were significant at $p < 0.001$. Below in Table 3-4 are the descriptive statistics for positive emotion. This table presents the number of comments (N), the mean percentage for positive emotion for each video type, and the standard deviation. Table 3-5 has the same information for negative emotion for each of the video types. For both Table 3-4 and Table 3-5, the number of comments (N) does not equal the total number of comments for each video type, as those comments that did not receive a positive or negative emotion percentage were treated as missing values and were not considered.

Table 3-4

Positive Emotion on the Different Video Types

Dependent Variable		Positive Emotion	
Video Types	N	Mean %	Std. Deviation
Tutorial	5434	15.52	14.19
Review	12587	15.20	11.59
First Impressions	6586	14.11	11.98
Haul	10730	13.46	9.99
Favourites	5786	13.45	11.12
Total	41114	14.37	11.61

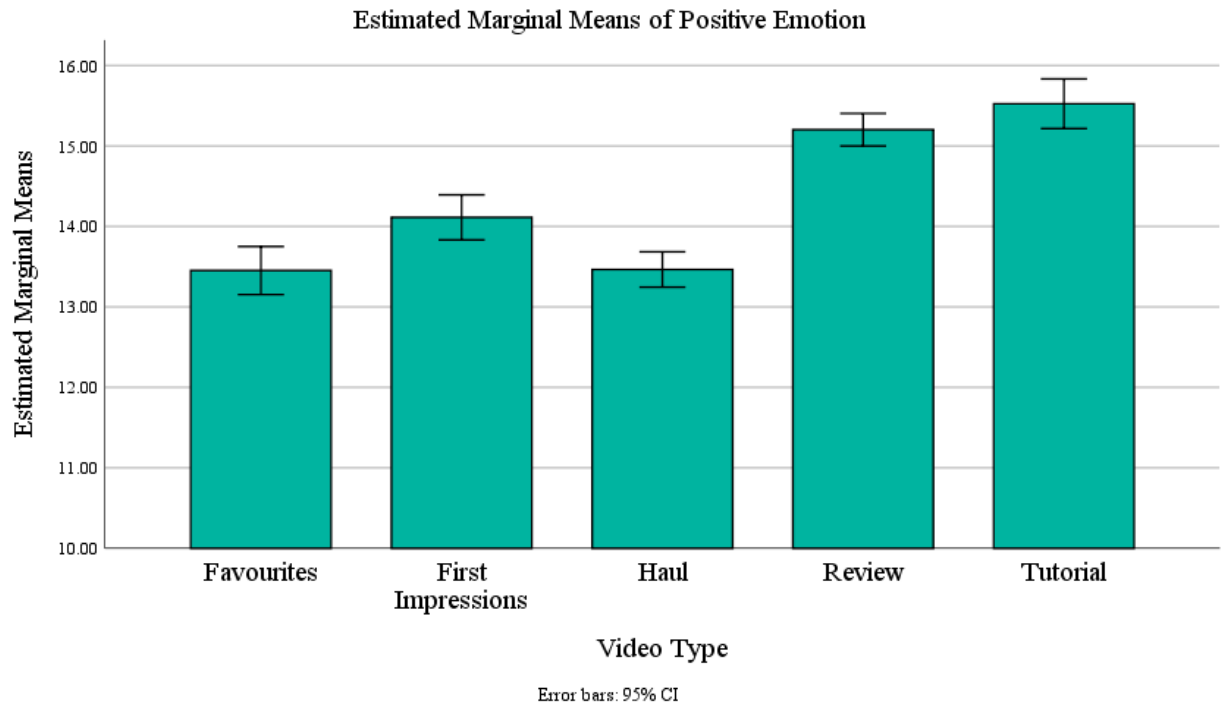


Figure 3-1

Estimated Marginal Means of Positive Emotion with Error Bars

Table 3-5

Negative Emotion on the Different Video Types

Dependent Variable		Negative Emotion	
Video Types	N	Mean %	Std. Deviation
Tutorial	1322	8.49	9.92
Review	4199	7.51	7.83
First Impression	1729	7.30	7.39
Favourites	1456	7.05	7.54
Haul	2732	6.85	6.41
Total	11438	7.38	7.71

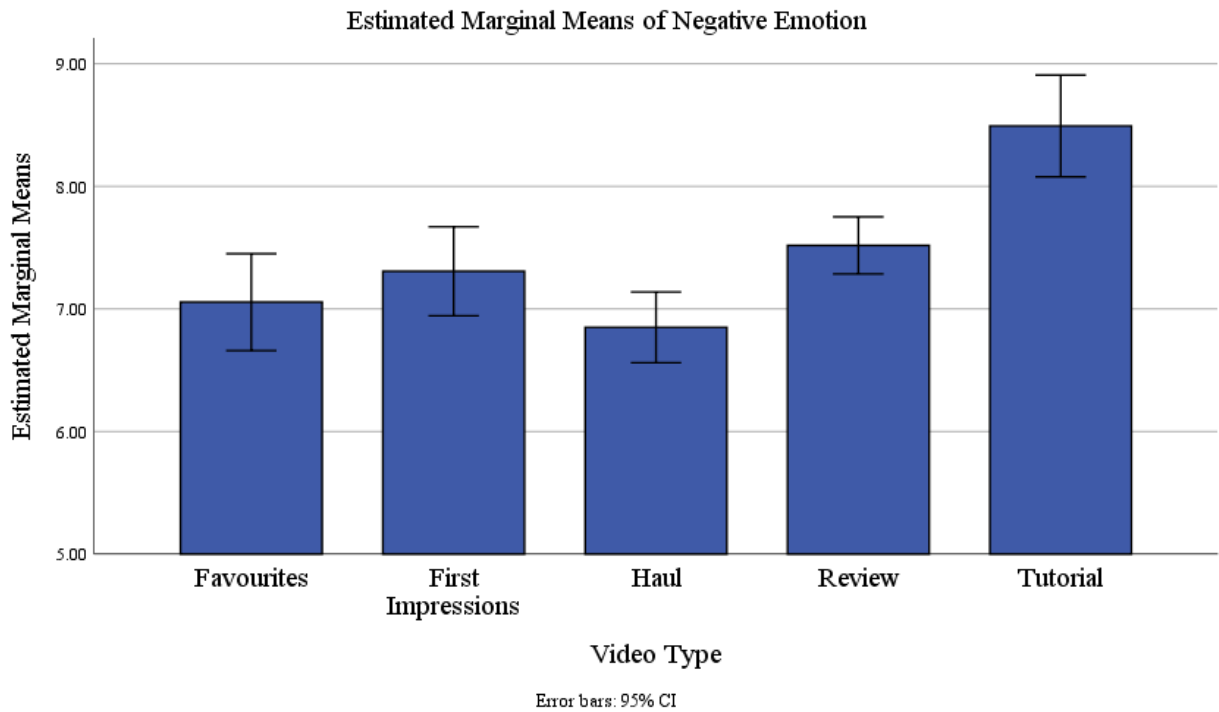


Figure 3-2

Estimated Marginal Means of Negative Emotion with Error Bars

As both ANOVA tests were significant, this reveals there are differences between the video types regarding both positive and negative emotion. To determine which video types resulted in statistically significant differences, a Bonferroni post hoc test was conducted for positive emotion and negative emotion.

The results of the Bonferroni post hoc test for positive emotion revealed that all video types were statistically different from each other, except the following two pairs: Favourites and Hauls, and Reviews and Tutorials – these pairings did not produce significant results. This shows that the different video types do result in differences in positive emotion. Further, not all video types result in the same level of positive emotion. Reviews and tutorials have the highest level of positive emotion with means of 15.20 and 15.52 respectively, and Hauls and Favourites have the lowest means of 13.46 and 13.45 respectively. This reveals that Reviews and Tutorials result in stronger positive emotion than Hauls and Favourites, with First Impressions sitting in the middle with a mean of 14.11.

The Bonferroni post hoc test revealed different results when looking at negative emotion for each video type. This comparison of means revealed that regarding negative emotion, Tutorials are statistically different from every other video type and Reviews and Hauls are statistically different from each other. This shows that regarding negative emotion, there were fewer significant pairings than positive emotion. Tutorials have the highest level of negative emotion, with a mean of 8.49 and Hauls have the lowest level of negative emotion with a mean of 6.85. This reveals that viewers who comment on tutorials have stronger negative emotion than when watching and commenting on any of the other video types.

This portion of the analysis further confirms that SMIs are acting as a route to brand engagement for their followers. Looking at the LIWC output for positive and negative emotion, this demonstrates that the comments do contain emotion. Viewers are expressing both positive and negative emotion towards brands in their comments. This existence of emotion further heightens the formation of a self-brand connection on behalf of the viewer, which was assisted by the SMI.

3.4.3 Activation Results

The final component to Hollebeek et al. (2014)'s self-brand connection is activation; activation is considering the energy and effort exerted by consumers regarding the brand. I looked at the number of comments on the videos from unique users and repeat users as a reflection for energy and effort exerted. Table 3-6 presents a chart displaying the number of users who have left 1 comment, as well as those users who left more than 1 comment, and for these users, the average number of comments they left for the different video types. Table 3-8 contains the same information for each SMI. Table 3-7 and Table 3-9 contain the percentages for how many users left 1 comment and how many left more than one comment for each video type and SMI respectively.

Table 3-6

Number of comments per Video Type

Video Type	Number of comments / same User ID	Count of Users	Total # of Comments / Video Type	# of comments for those who left >1	Average # of comments for those who left >1
Favourites	1	7603	8763	1160	2.30
	2+	504			
First Impressions	1	8497	9813	1316	2.26
	2+	582			
Haul	1	13138	15291	2153	2.21
	2+	974			
Review	1	14869	17253	2384	2.22
	2+	1070			
Tutorial	1	7295	8487	1192	2.31
	2+	516			

Table 3-7

Comment Percentages for Each Video Type

Video Type	Percent of users who left 1 comment	Percent of users who left more than 1 comment
Favourites	94%	6%
First Impressions	94%	6%
Haul	93%	7%
Review	93%	7%
Tutorial	93%	7%

Table 3-8

Number of comments per Social Media Influencer

Social Media Influencer	Number of comments / same User ID	Count of Users / number of comments	Total # of Comments / SMI	# of comments for those who left >1	Average # of comments for those who left >1
Carli Bybel	1	3812	4860	1048	2.55
	2+	411			
Desi Perkins	1	6210	7714	1504	2.36
	2+	637			
Jaelyn Hill	1	26779	36701	9922	2.38
	2+	4161			
KathleenLights	1	7684	10337	2653	2.40
	2+	1103			

Table 3-9

Comment Percentages for Each SMI

Video Type	Percent of users who left 1 comment	Percent of users who left more than 1 comment
Carli Bybel	90%	10%
Desi Perkins	91%	9%
Jaclyn Hill	86%	14%
KathleenLights	87%	13%

As we can see, there is activation happening between SMI and their viewers. Through a comment, we can see the viewers are exerting energy and effort to engage. Further, the majority of users who comment on the videos only leave 1 comment; this is apparent in all the different video types, as well as the different social media influencers presented in Tables 3-7 and 3-9. Regardless of the type of video or the SMI, the average number of comments for those users who commented more than once is very similar across all categories. These results also confirm that each video type and SMI are similar enough and there are no outlying characteristics that would skew the data and result in a misrepresentation of the results. The results below further exemplify that the theoretical model is working; viewers are exerting energy and effort as a result of them leaving a comment on the videos.

Lastly, this portion of the data analysis provides evidence and theoretical support that SMIs do indeed act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. This part is regarding the last construct to self-brand connection, activation, or behaviour. Hollebeek et al. (2014)'s three components for quantifying brand engagement are present in this setting; viewers are thinking about brands (cognitive processing), feeling emotion towards brands (affection), and exerting energy and effort towards brands (activation). Together, these three components provide convincing evidence that viewers are engaging with brands as a result of the SMI. It is through the SMI's user-generated content, which has a focus on brand involvement, that viewers are engaging with brands. Although the above constructs confirm that the theoretical model is working, it does not answer the portion of the question, *how* SMIs act as a route to brand engagement; it is just

confirmed that they are a route to brand engagement. To answer this portion of the research question, additional analysis was conducted.

3.5 Method for Second Part: Bottom Up Approach

To further inform my research question, I conducted additional analyses to explore *how* SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. The process for this piece stems from the results from the first phase and was guided by the Bottom-Up operationalization approach described by Humphreys and Wang (2018). The Bottom-Up approach differs from a Top-Down approach as it involves examining patterns and themes in text first, and then moves towards providing theoretical explanations (Humphreys and Wang 2018). The results from the first piece of my data analysis revealed that my theoretical model is working and SMIs *do* act as a route to brand engagement, and the second piece of my analysis was to take these results a step further and begin to explore *how* SMIs act as a route to brand engagement.

This part of the analysis is getting to the root of my research question by digging deeper into the comments. To do this, I wanted to create a list of words that I would then conduct further analysis on. As I was not conducting a full qualitative research study on all 59,613 comments, I needed to create a process that would allow me to read the comments that were most relevant to answering my research question. To do this, I again used the program NVivo. I started by conducting a simple frequency analysis of the most mentioned words in all the comments from all video types and SMIs. I read through this list to begin to gain a general understanding of the most mentioned words. When determining which words I wanted to set aside to conduct further analysis on, there were several factors that contributed. First, I simply paid special attention to any words that I thought would be relevant to my topic – brand engagement facilitated by SMIs. This was intentionally broad as I wanted to ensure no key word was missed. I also considered any word that had a key focus in my literature review. For example, trust between viewer and SMIs is a result of PSIs occurring over time; therefore, the word trust was added to the list. Lastly, I also considered any words I thought would be revealing based on my own personal experience as a viewer of SMIs.

Once I had read through the list of words from the frequency analysis and set aside those words I thought would be relevant to my topic, I wanted to ensure I had not missed any key topics or

words; I then supplemented my own analysis with NVivo's auto-coding tool. This auto-coding function automatically creates nodes (categories) on the data based directly from the content in my specific comments. I wanted to see if the auto-coding was going to recognize any patterns or major themes in the data that I might have missed when I conducted my own analysis. I read through each node (category) that NVivo created and added any additional words.

The main goal for conducting the above analysis was to create a process that allowed me to get to the relevant comments that would hopefully inform my research question. The next step was to begin actually reading the comments. To do this, I used the Word Tree function of NVivo. NVivo has a tool that allows you to look at key words in context, in the form of a Word Tree. This means I was able to pick a key word (from my list) and read what words came before and what words came after. This tool was integral to this part of the analysis as it was extremely useful for getting to all the comments that contain the key word; therefore, not only does it allow for key word in context viewing, but it also groups all the comments that contain the key word. From this point, I was able to read all the comments that contained my key words and make conclusions from there.

3.6 Results from Second Part: Bottom-Up Approach

The list of words that I created from the above process is below in Table 3-10. I also included the number of times each word was mentioned in all the comments.

Table 3-10

Key Words and Number of Mentions

Word	Number of Mentions
Love	21984
Honest	2729
Trust	226
Personality	385
Buy + Buying	1300
Bought	511
Purchase	380
Recommend	291
Genuine	158
Appreciated	121
Helpful	119

*All words searched with stemmed words. Ex) Trust + Trusting

The list of words in Table 3-10 were again narrowed down to the following categories to inform my research question: Honesty and Trust; Buying, Buy, Bought, and Purchase; and Recommend. The next step was to then find comments that contained these words. I did not include all the words from the list in the next part of my analysis, as upon further examination, they were not relevant in answering my research question. Table 3-11 – 3-13 contain a few selected comments from these results. I choose these particular comments as typical examples of the sort of comments that contain these words. The full list of all the comments containing all the words is saved in NVivo.

Table 3 -11

Comments Containing the Key Words: Honesty & Trust

Honesty + Trust		
SMI	Video Type	Comment
Jaclyn Hill	Review	“You can't like everything or please everyone that's just life you should never have to feel uncomfortable about your honest opinion on makeup...it's why we watch your channel so we don't waste our money on products that are going to let us down.”
Jaclyn Hill	Review	“I come to the beauty influencer community for honest, professional, considered advice on make-up. Obviously, you have a great wealth of knowledge and experience with make-up, and that's what I personally respect and admire. That's why I value your professional opinion on new (or not so new) products, because it helps me decide where I spend my money and then I want to come back and follow a tutorial on using a product I've purchased...”
Jaclyn Hill	Review	“I like these. I want your honest opinion and seeing it really not work for the very first time was a really fresh thing. Please keep doing this. I trust you and your opinions and I want to know if you don't like things.”
Jaclyn Hill	Review	“I love that you do such honest reviews because I trust your word 100% and I know you are genuine. I cant imagine how hard it is to talk about a product you don't like on camera, specially when you like the brand in general, but that's why I appreciate this even more”
Desi Perkins	Favourites	“I wish she would have posted this video 4 days ago lol now I gotta go return the foundations I bought I only trust your reviews love you Desi!”

Desi Perkins	Favourites	“I trust your opinion in foundation like die hard, what you use always works for my skin and complexion as well. Watched this video yesterday, bought the foundation today...”
Jaelyn Hill	Favourites	“I am sorry to say that..but i don't trust your favorites as you do alot of campaigns and have business with the companies”
KathleenLights	Haul	“I miss when beauty gurus would buy their own makeup and tells us their real opinion. now that everyone gets free stuff I feel like they're scared to say they don't like it cause the company will stop sending them stuff! and what's the point of taking everyone to all these trips!!! that's why they up their prices on products. you're the only youtuber that I can say is still honest with us!!! thanks and keep it up”
Carli Bybel	Review	“Before watching this video, I already knew Carli’s opinion. Her personality would make her be fair even if the product was complete crap. She’s honest, yes, but she’ll undoubtedly want to be kind even if it sucked... but let’s be honest here, that was a LOT of work before she could say it’s good”

Starting with the first theme, honesty and trust, it is evident this is the foundation for the relationship between influencer and viewer to be built on. This was present in my literature review as a distinguishing characteristic of SMIs, and it is present in the comments seen above. Viewers are mentioning that they come to the beauty community for the honesty about specific makeup brands and products. It is frequently mentioned as an important component to engaging with SMIs; it is because the influencers are sharing their honest thoughts and opinions that their viewers trust their personal experiences. The viewers also mention they are appreciative of the honesty shared as they take the opinions the influencers share into account when making their own purchasing decisions. It is also important to mention that not every viewer feels the influencers are sharing their honest opinions. This is seen in a few comments when the key word honesty and trust is mentioned. These different perspectives regarding honesty and trust outline that there are viewers who do not fully trust that the influencers are sharing their true opinions; some viewers feel the

influencers are lying about the product's functionality to maintain positive business relations with the brand. Although there are some viewers who feel the influencers are being less than honest, this is not the majority. The widely held notion is that the viewers feel a sense of connection with the influencers through the honesty and trust that exists between them.

Table 3 -12

Comments Containing the Key Words: Recommend

Recommend		
SMI	Video Type	Comment
Desi Perkins	Favourites	“Loved it Desi !!! With your Recommendation I actually bought the NARS foundation and Absolutely love it #Desimademebuyit And we are the same shade Barcelona.”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“Going to MAC to buy that color!! Thanks for the recommendation!”
KathleenLights	First Impressions	“Yessss! I’ve been searching for a soft mascara like that! Thank you for the recommendation, Kathleen (:”
KathleenLights	Haul	“I bought the laura mercier translucent powder and the born this way concelar that just came out as well as the UB eyeliner per your recommendation in the shade mainline lol! I havent tried them out yet but im so excited too!”
Jaclyn Hill	Review	“Id rather you give an actual review as opposed to not saying anything or just saying you like it when you really dont. To me people spend their money based on your reviews so you should be honest if its crap or not. If u get thrown off pr so what u can afford it. We have to spend our own money on it and it would suck for us to buy it on your recommendation and then the product sucks.”
KathleenLights	Favourites	“I’m super fair and I’ve been using the original Essence highlighter as a bronzer since I bought it off your recommendation forever ago and I LOVE it like that!”
Carli Bybel	Favourites	“Yay! I love hearing your favorites, I’ve bought so many of your recommendations bc I know they will work!”
Desi Perkins	Favourites	“I am about to buy a new foundation and had no idea what to buy, thank you for the advice and recommendations”

Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“So three years ago, I watched your favorites list. I actually spent time pausing your video and writing the items I wanted in my diary. I bought almost everything you recommend, and even used things on new clients!...”
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The next key word, recommend, provides evidence to support the concept that viewers truly take the opinions the influencers provide very seriously. There are many comments filled with excitement when talking about new products the viewers have purchased, thanks to the influencer. Along with the viewers thanking and showing their appreciation for the influencers, there are also many comments that have a personal aspect to them. This demonstrates how involved the viewers choose to be when engaging with the influencer about specific brands and products. They express how happy they are to hear about a specific product recommendation while sharing their personal experiences with the brands and products in hopes their favourite influencers will see it.

Table 3 -13

Comments Containing the Key Words: Bought & Buy & Purchase

Bought + Buy + Purchase		
SMI	Video Type	Comment
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“Jaclyn is the only YouTuber I will watch and I buy every single thing she loves bc I love her and trust her more than anyone else here on YouTube.”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“Went to Sephora today and just bought the cover FX setting powder from watching this thanks Jaclyn!”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“Can you please do an updated bridal tutorial I need it so bad. I will buy everything you use in that video.”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“You were the reason I bought Nars Chelsea Girls Lip Gloss and hourglass luminous bronzer. Those are still a part of my every day products.”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“After watching your video I bought the Cover FX foundation in P20....love it!!! I’m going to get a neutral color next to mix the two. It goes on so beautifully and flawless, I’m so happy you tried it and I bought it”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“Can you do a review on HudaBeauty as a one brand tutorial? I definitely want to know what you think before I purchase something!”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“I have been trying to decide if I should purchase the Too Faced Foundation. Thanks for helping me make my decision”
KathleenLights	First Impressions	“I love these new series! Its great to hear your thoughts before I purchase new launches”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“I trust your opinion in foundation like die hard, what you use always works for my skin and complexion as well.

		Watched this video yesterday, bought the foundation today hahaha! Gread vid, love you jac”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“You’re the reason why I fell in love with makeup! I bought my first batch of makeup based on one of your videos from years back, a natural go to look using tan pigment from MAC! I bought almost everything you used in that video! I spend \$300ish; no regrets I had no makeup before then! ... Love You”
Jaclyn Hill	Favourites	“Your selling power is INSANE. watching this video I’m like alright yeah looks like I need to set about \$500 aside to buy every product Jaclyn has mentioned. You explain everything so well and sell it to the consumer. Regardless of you being apart of the brand such as morphe or not, you can really make people want the products you talk about...”

Lastly, the words, buy bought purchase, are very revealing regarding the dynamic between influencer and viewer. As the key words here are regarding purchasing behavior, reading these comments allows me to have an inside look at how SMIs truly do influence the buying behavior of their viewers. A key theme here is how the viewers genuinely rely on the information the influencers are sharing in their videos. As seen above, it is common for the viewer to want to hear the opinions of the influencer before they purchase a product. For the viewers, the SMIs have become a part of the buying process when picking out new products. Many of the comments clearly state that the viewers bought a particular product specifically because the influencer talked about it.

From the above comments, it is clear the viewers of beauty related user-generated content enjoy being able to interact and engage with the SMIs as well as the brands involved. From the first piece of the analysis, it is clear that viewers *are* engaging with brands as a result of the influencers, but it was not clear *how* this was occurring. From taking a deeper look into the comments, I was able to explore and uncover a possible explanation to this question.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

4.1 Social Media Influencers as a route to brand engagement

Little is known about whether and how SMIs influence brand engagement. It is evident from exploring the three constructs of self-brand connection (Hollebeek et al. 2014) that SMIs impact brand engagement in all three constructs. Therefore, the theoretical model is working in this context and SMI are facilitating brand engagement through their user-generated content. It is clear that the commenters are mentioning the brands that the SMIs discuss in their videos, which then provides evidence for how viewers are thinking about brands, exhibiting feelings towards the brand, and exerting energy and effort towards the brands.

The first aspect to self-brand connection, cognitive processing, is being met because brand thoughts are triggered and expressed as a result of the influencer's content. It is clear from the comments that when the influencer mentions a specific brand or product, their viewers are then thinking about this specific brand or product. Further, there are many examples of where viewers are simply commenting about specific makeup products and brands. In these types of comments, they mention their favourite products, make comparisons between different brands, and provide their recommendations based on their personal experiences. Most notably, viewers do not comment about makeup in general terms, such as 'pink lipstick' or 'coral blush,' but rather they use the specific product and brand names – just as the influencer does. It is commonplace in this setting for the brand name, product name, and specific shade name to be mentioned within a comment. An example of this practice is seen below:

“Been obsessed with Kylie Cosmetics liquid lip shade Khlo from Khloe's collection, Laura Lee Los Angeles Nudie Patootie palette, wet n wild pearlescent pink blush & Bretman rock's babe in paradise highlight palette.” (KathleenLights, Favourites Video).

Without the influence and platform this might not be the norm. A typical makeup user who does not engage with beauty influencers would not likely be aware of the specific brand or shade of the products they are using, but viewers of beauty influencers are. It is through listening to and engaging with the influencer that consumers of makeup are becoming more informed and involved with the brands and products they use daily. It is part of their experience to discuss the specific brands of their favourite products and to share them with other users who share the same interests.

This interaction enables viewers of SMIs to think about brands in a more specific manner than those consumers who are not consumers of SMI content. Therefore, because of the influencer, their viewers are thinking more about specific products from specific brands than non-viewers.

The affection component to self-brand connections is also being met in this context. Commenters are exhibiting specific positive and negative emotions in the comments they post about the videos, and on average, the comments are more positive than negative. The emotion exhibited in the comments is commonly directed both the influencers and the brands involved and contributes to the influencer's ability to facilitate brand engagement.

Lastly, the activation component is also being met in this context, as evidenced by the many followers who leave comments on the videos. The results revealed there are not only a small number of followers who leave numerous comments, but rather the influencers see engagement from a significant number of their followers. This is seen in the number of comments left on the videos (numbers reaching the thousands) and the number of unique user IDs leaving comments. From these results, it is evident that viewers are exerting energy and effort in engaging SMIs and brands. They not only engage with the influencers, but from the large number of brand mentions in their comments, it is evident that because of the influencer they are engaging with brands.

The results of part one from my data analysis also revealed that different video types have different outcomes regarding brand mentions and emotion. In terms of brand mentions, Hauls and Favourites have the highest number of brand mentions and First Impressions and Tutorials have the lowest number of brand mentions, with Tutorials having half the number as First Impressions. A possible reason for these differences stems from manner in which the SMI discusses the products during the different types of video. Typically in Hauls and Favourites, the SMI is enthusiastic about new products or are describing their very favourite products. It is evident from the literature that viewers feel a connection and sense of a real-life friendship with the influencers (Lee and Watkins 2016). This connection and SMI's enthusiasm resonate with the viewer, and can provide a possible explanation for the above results. A reason why the viewers are commenting more about brands on the Hauls and Favourites videos is they want to own and use the same products the influencers are enthusiastic about in their videos. Owning the same products as the influencer

allows the viewers to feel a connection through the products. The viewers want to maintain and strengthen their connection with their favourite influencers, and this can be done by purchasing and using the same products the influencers are discussing in their videos. This provides the opportunity for the viewers to purchase the same products. However, in Tutorials the focus of the video is slightly different with the make-up application, techniques and ‘look’ being of similar importance to what products the SMI actually chooses to use. A possible explanation for the video type, First Impressions, is that the SMI is providing their initial thoughts on a product, but the viewer may not yet be comfortable that the product will become a favourite of the SMI. Thus, the slightly different focus of these two types of videos results in a different level of engagement by viewers.

In terms of emotion, it was revealed that Reviews and Tutorials have the highest level of positive emotion, with tutorials also having the highest level of negative emotion. This suggests that the video type tutorials, is very polarizing. Viewers are either feeling strong positive emotion or strong negative emotion. Further, it was revealed that Hauls have the lowest level of both positive and negative emotion. These results have a clear managerial implication for working with SMIs. When marketing managers strategize on best practices for working with SMIs, they need to take into consideration the effect the different video types have on their partnership. It is evident that choosing to work with an influencer who mentions a product in a Haul video type, is the safe bet. The viewers did not exhibit strong emotion for this video type. If a marketing manager decides to work with an influencer for a Tutorial video type, this comes with greater risk. The viewers express both strong positive and negative emotion for this video type, but this greater risk could potentially result in a greater reward.

4.2 How SMIs act as a route to brand engagement

As discovered through my research, it is evident that SMIs do act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. This is an area of branding and social media literature where there is a significant gap. To fill this gap, in my original model, I combined existing literature on SMIs and brand engagement to propose the notion that SMIs are a route to brand engagement for their followers. Specifically, I used Hollebeek et al. (2014)’s constructs for brand engagement and applied the constructs in this setting. My research confirmed that SMIs do act as a route to brand

engagement as viewers and followers of SMIs exhibit thoughts, feelings, and behaviours regarding the brands the SMIs mention in their content. Further, my research has not only determined that SMIs *do* act as a route to engagement, but also *how they act as a route to brand engagement*. To illustrate this, I have extended my original model to incorporate these novel insights regarding honesty and trust, recommendations and buying behaviour:

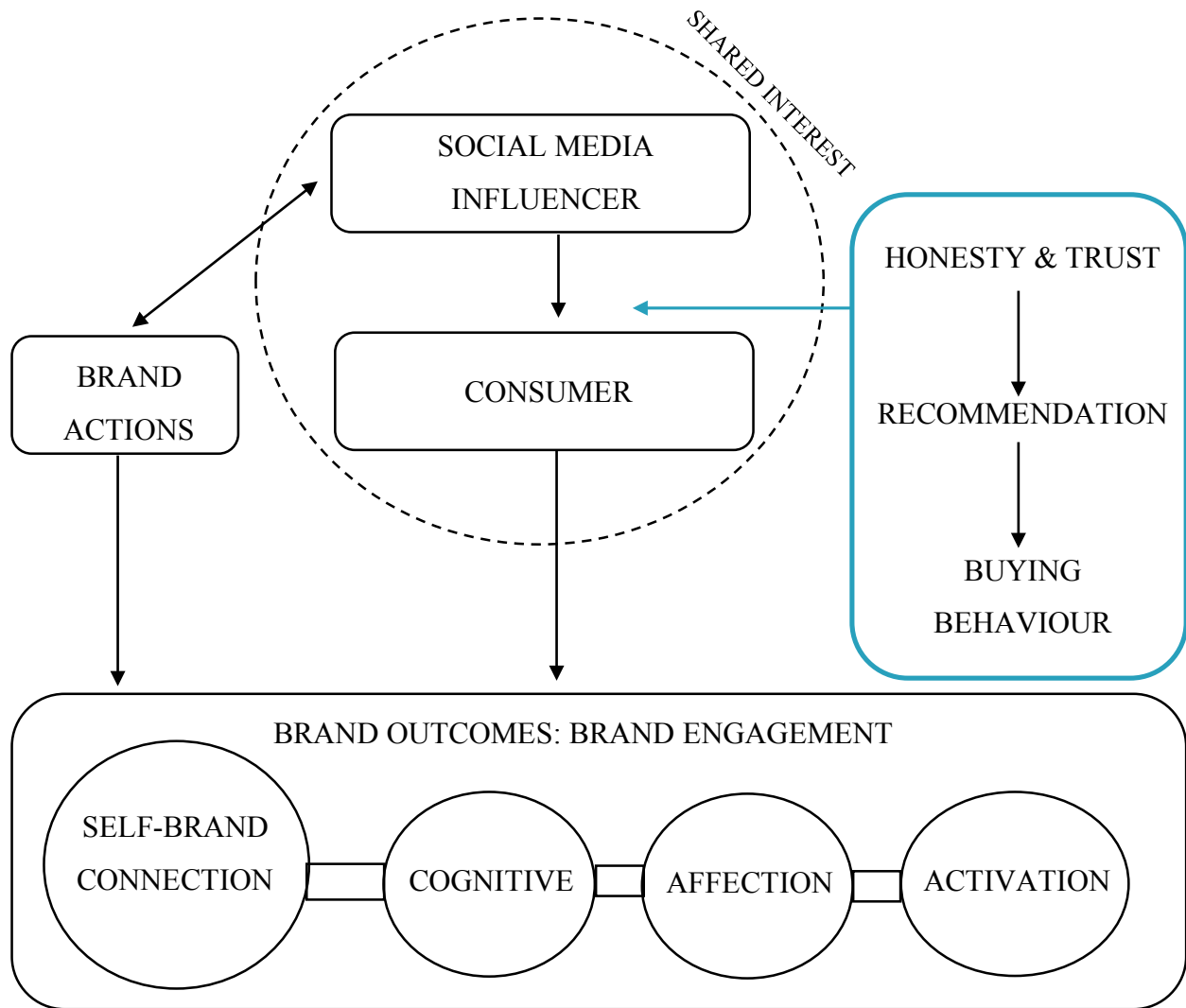


Figure 4-1

SMIs as a Route to Brand Engagement Extended Model

The extension of my original model (outlined in blue, Figure 4-1) illustrates the *how* portion of my research question. The second part of my analysis was when I determined the importance of honesty and trust between SMIs and their followers, and how these relationship components resulted in followers trusting SMI's opinions and accepting their recommendations. These components of honesty and trust, followed by acceptance of recommendations, leads to actual buying behavior by the followers. The fundamental purpose of SMIs creating user-generated content, specifically in the beauty community, is to talk about specific products and brands; these brand-specific conversations are witnessed by followers of their videos, as well as through

comments posted by their followers. It is understood that SMIs build meaningful and trustworthy relationships with their followers. These relationships are built as a result of the user-generated content created by the influencers. The user-generated content then serves as a platform for the influencers to become opinion leaders and for PSIs to occur, which ultimately facilitates these meaningful and trustworthy relationships. These relationships are integral for SMIs to act as a route to brand engagement.

Findings from my research also confirm that marketing managers do not have complete control over the communication messages their consumers receive and take into consideration regarding brands. This is an area of current branding literature that has gained attention in recent years (Keller 2009; Maslowska et al. 2016; Ordenes et al. 2019; Winer 2009). Consumers are now interacting and engaging with brands as a result of user-generated content published by SMIs. Although SMIs often do have relationships with brands, not every product or brand they mention in their content will be from a brand they have a partnership with. SMIs are free to share their opinion, whether it is positive or negative, about any product at any time, and their viewers take their opinions very seriously. This furthers the notion that brands are not in complete control regarding the communications that consumers are receiving regarding their brands. The information that influencers share has a significant impact on their followers' decisions to purchase a particular product or not.

Although my research is set in the context of beauty influencers on YouTube, the results of my study may be generalizable to other contexts. In most communities on social media, there are influencers who create content and in their content mention specific products and brands. There is no evidence to suggest that my findings would not hold when applied to other content communities on other social media platforms, as the only difference in context is the shared interest between the influencer and their followers, not the theoretical concepts.

4.1.1 Honesty and Trust

It was determined from the comments that the viewers value trust and seek out the honest opinions of the influencers regarding products and brands. This is because they trust and rely on them when it comes time to make their own purchasing decisions. This is evident as there are many comments

that explicitly speak to the fact that the viewers only trust their opinion. An example of this is seen in the following comment:

“I wish she would have posted this video 4 days ago lol now I gotta go return the foundations I bought I only trust your reviews love you Desi!” (Desi Perkins, Favourites Video).

This is one example of many comments that contain this message. The viewers clearly state: ‘I only trust your opinion to help me decide what specific product to purchase.’ In this case, the viewer even states she wants to return a product she already purchased and replace it with one the influencer has supported.

There are also many comments that not only thank the influencers for sharing their opinions and experiences, but there are also many comments that ask the influencers for their opinions on other products and brands that were not mentioned in the video they posted their comment on. It is common that viewers request specific videos be made that include specific products. This practice is seen in the following comment:

“Can you do a review on HudaBeauty as a one brand tutorial? I definitely want to know what you think before I purchase something!” (Jaclyn Hill, Favourites Video).

This provides evidence that without honesty and trust, which already exists between influencer and follower, the followers would not be relying and depending on the influencers sharing their opinions. The viewers want to feel validated that their future purchases are accepted and approved by the influencers, as it is their opinions that matter most to viewers who consume user-generated content. This is demonstrated in the comments when viewers are requesting specific videos or specific products be discussed – they want to set themselves up for success when they make their own purchasing decisions. The viewers are requesting that their favourite influencer talk about specific products and brands as they want to see how they perform, from a trustworthy source, before they spend their money on them.

“I have been trying to decide if I should purchase the Too Faced Foundation. Thanks for helping me make my decision” (Jaclyn Hill, Favourites Video).

It is the presence of honesty and trust between influencer and viewer that also allows the viewer to feel more connected to the brands being mentioned. It is common knowledge in the beauty

community that the top influencers have connections and business relationships with brands. But for the viewers, it is through their relationships with the influencers that they feel they have a voice and a connection to the brands. This is because the influencers, people whom the viewers have come to trust, have a relationship with the brand. This is evident in the comments when consumers direct brand related questions at the influencer:

“Jaclyn I feel like you are very close to Morphe and trust you for a genuine answer- on their FAQs it doesn’t say anything about animal testing/selling in places where it’s required - can you clarify whether Morphe is cruelty free and if it tests on animals? I feel like I always see conflicting answers on the internet. Thank you!” (Jaclyn Hill, Tutorial).

The notion of honesty and trust between influencer and viewer often goes further than only discussing specific makeup products and brands. The viewers have also invested their own time and energy into the relationship. The viewers not only have a connection to the influencers, but the influencers also have a connection to their viewers. Not every influencer will share personal details about their lives but those that do facilitate the feelings of trust even further. There are many comments that allude to the viewers caring for the influencers in a similar manner they would for their ‘real life’ friends. Further, there are comments that not only touch on the personal lives of the influencer, but the viewers share personal feelings and thoughts about their own lives.

“Currently re-watching all your videos for the what feels like - 100th time. Your videos give me so much strength, hope and the willingness to do something with my life. Love you Jaclyn, always have and always will!” (Jaclyn Hill, First Impressions Video).

“I have watched you for years now and I still am so inspired and just amazed by you. Four years ago I went thru a horrible relationship with someone and watching you daily just would somehow make it all better. That is what got me first addicted to you and your personality...I know a lot of people say you act different now, but I honestly just see you growing and getting all of your dreams! I think you are such an empowering woman and I will always look up to you. Thank you for being you, and this video was BOMB as always!! I loved the purple behind you!! I’m excited to get your palette for Christmas.” (Jaclyn Hill, Tutorial Video).

This interest in not only their experiences regarding makeup products but also their personal lives, builds the relationship to a deeper level. Many viewers not only follow the influencers on YouTube but also on other platforms where they post additional user-generated content; this includes Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram. This involvement then leads to the viewers strengthening their relationship. Having additional exposure to the SMIs’ content, also facilitates the feelings of closeness their viewers hold.

It is evident from my findings that the viewers exhibit emotions in their comments. These emotions are regarding the products and brands mentioned, but also the influencers themselves. This emotional involvement leads to both negative and positive consequences for the influencer. Along with the many positive comments regarding brands and products, there are also negative comments posted by viewers who feel angry with the influencer. There are comments that clearly state they are frustrated or annoyed with the influencer for working with brands and earning a living as a result. For example, the following comment is a typical example of a viewer feeling frustrated due to an influencer having a close relationship with a particular brand,

“...Sorry but I am just so sick of you and the nonstop Morphe [Makeup brand] plugging. I own some of their products and I don't hate them but I am slowly becoming turned off to them as a company because of YouTube and You. Your channel is all Morphe with the occasional non-Morphe item thrown in and I am so sick of it... I know you are friends with Linda but it is to the point where you are literally choking us with Morphe.... even when [we] don't want any more. Is this the Jaclyn Hill channel or the Morphe channel?” (Jaclyn Hill, Tutorial Video).

These negative comments could be the result of the viewers feeling like a person they see as a friend is using them to make money, as many influencers have business relationships with brands. This not only has negative consequences for the viewer, but also has negative consequences for the brand. In the above comment the viewer even states they are becoming turned off from the brand as a result of the influencers YouTube channel. Although these negative comments do not out-weigh the positive and supportive comments, it is important for both the influencer and the brand to be aware this is occurring.

4.1.2 Recommendation and Buying Behaviour

I determined that it is from the above-mentioned presence of honesty and trust that viewers of SMIs rely and depend on the product specific recommendations the influencers provide in their content. There are many comments that demonstrate it is not a ‘hard sell’ for the followers to want to purchase the products the influencers mention. It is often stated in a humorous manner that the viewers want to purchase every product mentioned in the video, or it is because of the influencer they are low on cash.

“Your selling power is INSANE. watching this video I'm like alright yeah looks like I need to set about \$500 aside to buy every product Jaclyn has mentioned. You explain everything so well and sell it to the consumer. Regardless of you being apart of the brand such as morphe

or not, you can really make people want the products you talk about.” (Jaclyn Hill, Favourites Video).

“I can't wait to start earning enough money so I can finally buy the more high end things you recommend, since I really value your opinion. I got my first TooFaced palette 3 years ago because of you <3” (KathleenLights, Favourites Video).

This selling power then leads to the actual buying behavior of the viewer. Rooted in the honesty and trust, the viewers take the recommendations the influencers provide to heart and make their purchasing decisions accordingly. There are many comments that do not just allude to a potential purchase, but explicitly state: ‘I am going out right now to purchase this product you just talked about.’ For example, the following comment is a typical comment showing the excitement about going to purchase a new product the influencer has mentioned:

“Going to MAC to buy that color!! Thanks for the recommendation!” (Jaclyn Hill, Favourites Video).

The viewers are putting in time and effort regarding their purchasing decisions, and a large part of this is considering the brand and products their favourite influencers are mentioning in their videos. The viewers are confident that because the influencer uses and likes the product, the product will also work for them. This relationship of sharing advice about specific products and brands translates into direct buying behavior on behalf of the viewer. Another example of a typical comment of this nature is the following:

“Went to Sephora today and just bought the cover FX setting powder from watching this thanks Jaclyn!” (Jaclyn Hill, Favourites Video).

On the flip side of this, the influencers also have a direct impact on the viewers’ decisions to *not* purchase a product as well. If the influencer states they do not like a specific product, their viewers often comment about how they are thankful for the influencer saving them money, by not purchasing the product.

“I love the honest review! I loved the way you sectioned it off first swatches, application, followed by the final (extremely apologetic) review. I’d rather know up front if a new launch especially one with so much hype... Was planning on getting the face palette as it spoke to me most, however after this review I won’t be anymore :/ I’d rather save the money then spend it on just packaging alone.” (Jaclyn Hill, Review Video).

The above comment is an example of a typical comment when an influencer provides a less than positive review. Their viewers state how they were going to purchase a product, but because of the influencer's opinion on it, they decided against it. This is a typical comment when the influencer's opinion was that they did not like the product they were talking about in the video. This further exemplifies that the influencer's opinion has a strong direct impact on the buying behaviour of their viewers; they not only can impact a consumer to buy a specific product, but also can impact a consumer to not buy a specific product.

4.3 Managerial Implications

Findings from my research have confirmed that SMIs do act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. This has not only advanced theory and research in this area, but also adds value regarding its practical application as well. Marketing strategies are no longer exclusively being controlled, facilitated, and monitored by the brands creating the communication messages (Keller 2009; Maslowska et al. 2016; Winer 2009). There are now other actors who have power regarding consumer thought and behavior towards brands (Maslowska et al. 2016). Understanding this notion and strategizing with this in mind will help to guide brands toward making informed decisions. My insights can help brand managers to justify their decisions regarding working with SMI, as well as help them to see the value in it. My research has determined that SMIs are acting as a route to brand engagement through the honesty and trust existing between influencer and viewer, leading to a recommendation, which then leads to an impact on buying behaviour on behalf of the viewer. My research has determined that when an influencer mentions a specific brand in her content, her viewers are then engaging with these brands through their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Further, the different SMIs and different video types engender different outcomes regarding brand engagement. The results from my research can help to select, guide, and measure brand engagement when SMIs are involved.

Brands need to understand the dynamic between SMI and viewer to therefore make informed decisions. Specifically, results from my research have stated that the different video types result in different numbers of brand mentions and different levels of both positive and negative emotion. Marketing managers can use this information when creating relationships with influencers. Looking at the specific results could help brand managers to better understand best practices for

working with SMIs. Further, findings revealed that the video type, Hauls, has the highest number of brand mentions. Brand managers could take this information and use it to help inform their decisions. If the brand desires that their products are talked about and discussed by both the influencer and the viewer, then they should partner with influencers to create this specific video type. Additionally, it was determined that tutorials have the highest levels of both positive and negative emotion. Brand managers can take this information and determine if they want to take a risk and partner with an influencer to create this type of video. It is seen as risky because the viewers find these videos polarizing; they either feel very positive about the video, or very negative. Determining which video types fit the marketing strategies for each brand is up to the brand managers, but having this information will help inform this process.

Along with the different video types having different number of brand mentions, the different influencers themselves have differing levels of engagement regarding the number of comments they receive. For example, Jaclyn Hill receives the most comments on her videos, and Carli Bybel receives the least number of comments on her videos. Relative to their number of subscribers (this information can be found in Appendix A), these results are surprising. Carli Bybel has more subscribers than Jaclyn Hill, but it is evident that Jaclyn's subscribers engage with her content more. Brand managers can use this information and determine if factors such as these would have a significant impact on their marketing strategies.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

Although my research has filled a significant gap in current branding and SMI literature, there are several limitations that can be addressed with future research. One limitation of my study is that I did not specifically look at the impact of sponsored content on my results. Sponsored content is a large part of SMIs and their relationships with brands, so future research in this area could have a greater focus on sponsored content and how it impacts brand engagement. I did not consider the impact of sponsored content when creating my study, as the purpose of my study was to first determine if SMI even had an impact on brand engagement as literature in this area is not well established yet; therefore, an interesting next step, is to determine if SMIs still have the ability to facilitate brand engagement *specifically* when their content is sponsored. This would build on the

findings from this study to advance literature as well as have a significant impact on managerial decisions regarding SMIs.

Another area that can be addressed with future research is including a more diverse group of influencers. This could include SMIs who post different types of videos, belong to a different community, men, influencers with more or fewer subscribers, or influencers from other countries, as cultural differences could have an impact on the results. Another area could be to compare micro influencers to the top influencers and determine if my findings continue to be accurate.

4.5 ATA and Consumer Research

It is important to mention the positive implications that my unique methodological research design has contributed to my ability to answer my research question. As mentioned previously, it is challenging to study the relationship between influencer and viewer in a traditional research setting. From the literature, it is known that these relationships are built over time after many repeated para-social interactions (Lee and Watkins 2016). Trying to replicate this dynamic to study the implications could result in findings that do not accurately represent what is occurring in the real world. My method consists of several processes and procedures that allowed me to gain real, and therefore accurate, insight into the world of SMIs and how their followers interact with them, and most importantly, the brands the influencers interact with. Because I used textual YouTube comments posted by real viewers of real influencers as my data, I was able to look at actual behavior of consumers. I did not have to rely on potential or recalled experiences to answer my research question. I was able to analyze real thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding SMIs and how they impact brand engagement. This ability to analyze data from real consumers is a unique and positive consequence of using ATA in consumer research. Not only was I able to look at comments from actual consumers, but I was also able to analyze almost 60,000 YouTube comments; this would not have been possible if manual data analysis procedures were used. The methods used in my study are not only effective in studying in this area, but many other areas of research as well. Using a method that is rooted in automated procedures can help conduct extraordinary research in the area of consumer behavior, but also in other disciplines as well.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The results from this research established that SMIs act as a route to brand engagement for their followers. Viewers who consume SMI's user-generated content engage with brands through their thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is evident from existing literature that the brand environment is changing. Brand managers do not have complete control over what communication messages are being shared with their target consumers or where they are receiving them from. Other actors, including SMIs, have a significant and substantial impact on how consumers are engaging with brands. Current literature is missing this connection. Therefore, my research has filled this gap in current literature regarding social media and branding; specifically, SMIs and how they impact brand engagement. Conducting this research using mixed methods, with a focus on ATA, has allowed me to gain real and accurate insight into this unique environment. Using automated processes at all stages of the analysis provided me with the ability to analyze tens of thousands of comments left by genuine consumers and viewers of SMIs.

Results confirmed that consumers are engaging with brands through Hollebeek et al. 2014's constructs to self-brand connection; consumers are thinking about the brands the influencers mention in their content, feeling emotion concerning brands, and exerting energy and effort regarding brands. I have also determined *how* SMIs impact brand engagement. It is because of the honesty and trust that already exists between influencer and viewer that the viewers seek out and accept the product and brand-specific recommendations the influencers suggest. Consumers then act on these recommendation when making purchasing decisions.

Social media and SMIs have, and will continue to have, a significant impact on current branding strategies. SMIs have created meaningful and substantial relationships with their viewers through the content they publish online. Their role as opinion leaders has solidified their position as key actors in the dynamic and continually changing branding environment.

“You are the Queen! Thank you for doing such an HONEST review on these products... I just LOVE and respect the fact that you are so honest but respectful when you may not particularly want to recommend a product or purchase it. Doesn't mean others may not like it but you could not have said it better. So great to see you and this just makes me want to see more and more of your videos. You can't beat a true genuine honest opinion.” (Jaclyn Hill, Review Video).

APPENDIX A
SMI PROFILES

Name	Jaclyn Hill
Age	28
Location	Tampa Bay, FL, USA
YouTube channel name	JaclynHill1
YouTube Subscribers	5,873,627
Joined YouTube on	September 7, 2010
Total number of YouTube videos	336
Total number of views on YouTube Channel	495,956,928
Twitter followers	1.9M
Instagram followers	6.2M

About Jaclyn Hill’s YouTube Channel:

Description from YouTube channel

Hi I’m Jaclyn Hill from JaclynHill1 on YouTube. I am a professional makeup artist. I’m young, ambitious & full of life. I post makeup tutorials and makeup reviews on all different holidays and themes, like smokey eye tutorials, how to shape and sculpt brow tutorials, challenges/tags, celebrity makeup tutorials like the Kardashians and Jenners along with other celebrity makeup looks, hair tutorials and more! I hope you love my makeup tutorials. Thank you so much for subscribing!

INSTAGRAM: Jaclynhill

TWITTER: Jaclynhill

Most popular videos + views

1. Smokey Cat Eye Tutorial – 15M views – uploaded 2013
2. Get Ready With Me & Kim Kardashian – 9.9M views – uploaded 2017
3. How To – Contour, Blush, Highlight & Bake the Face – 6.8M – uploaded 2016

Name	Kathleen Fuentes
Age	26
Location	Miami, FL, USA
YouTube channel name	KathleenLights
YouTube Subscribers	4,083,013
Joined YouTube on	January 26, 2013
Total number of YouTube videos	923
Total number of views on YouTube Channel	524,756,918
Twitter followers	648.3K
Instagram followers	2.1M

About KathleenLight's YouTube Channel:

Description from YouTube channel

Hey! I'm Kathleen. An oddball Aquarius with a love for all things beauty! I keep it simple on this channel with reviews and tutorials and sometimes I do fun challenges, but for the most part, I stay pretty old school. I upload on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays unless otherwise noted (usually on Twitter so be sure to follow me there). If I am doing a sponsored video, it will be on one of my off days so you get bonus content :)

I absolutely love getting ideas from you guys so please always tell me what kind of videos you want to see in the comments and don't forget to subscribe and click the notification bell to stay up to date with my content.

Most popular videos + views

1. Full Face Drugstore Makeup Tutorial and Affordable Brushes – 15M views – uploaded 2015
2. I Do My Husbands Makeup – 5.6M views – Uploaded 2015
3. Drugstore Dupes for High End Makeup – 4.3M views – uploaded 2016

Name	Desi Perkins
Age	31
Location	Los Angeles, CA, USA
YouTube channel name	Desi Perkins
YouTube Subscribers	3,275,788
Joined YouTube on	August 17, 2013
Total number of YouTube videos	341
Total number of views on YouTube Channel	222,623,688
Twitter followers	741.6K
Instagram followers	3.8M

About Desi Perkin's YouTube Channel:

Description from YouTube channel

Desi Perkins Youtube Ninja • Los Angeles Hashtag #desiperkins

Business inquiries only: info@desiperkins.com

YOUTUBE Subscribe here: <http://bit.ly/desiperkins>

SNAPCHAT: <https://www.snapchat.com/add/desiperkins>

INSTAGRAM: <http://bit.ly/desiperkinsinstagram>

TWITTER: <http://bit.ly/1HDAXJI>

FACEBOOK: <http://on.fb.me/1JN6oRi>

Most popular video + views

1. Eyebrow Tutorial – 16M views – uploaded 4 years ago
2. Kim Kardashian West Makeup Tutorial + New Makeup – 7.3M views – uploaded 11 months ago
3. How to fake big lips/ Kylie Jenner Lips – 6M views- uploaded 3 years ago

Name	Carli Bybel
Age	27
Location	New Jersey, NY, USA
YouTube channel name	Carli Bybel
YouTube Subscribers	6,195,686
Joined YouTube on	June 26, 2011
Total number of YouTube videos	529
Total number of views on YouTube Channel	597,717,012
Twitter followers	569.5K
Instagram followers	5M

About Carli Bybel’s YouTube Channel:

Carli Bybel does not have a description of her YouTube channel posted in her channel information.

Most popular video + views

1. Makeup Mistakes to avoid + Tips and Tricks for a flawless face – 11M views – uploaded 2 years ago
2. How to: Dutch/French braid your own hair – 8.5M views – uploaded 2 years ago
3. Get Ready with me: Lunch Date – 8.4M Views – uploaded 3 years ago

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF VIDEO TYPES

Favourites: In this type of video, the influencer gathers her most favourite products she is using at that point in time. Some influencers make this type of video on a monthly basis (KathleenLights) and others create them less frequently (Jaclyn Hill). The influencers discuss each product and generally gives specific reasons as to why this product is included in their favourite products video.

First Impressions: In this type of video, the influencer tries out new products for the first time on camera. Similar to a review, but less in-depth, the influencer shares her opinion of the product and brand. In this type of video, generally there are many different products and brands mentioned, although there are influencers who will film a first impression video using an entire line of products from one brand.

Haul: In this type of video, the influencer shares recent purchases she has made. Some influencers also include some products she received for free in PR packages; although this is common, it is not the case for every influencer.

Review: In this type of video the influencer focuses on specific products and speaks to their functionality and will generally provide a conclusion of how she feels about the product (whether she likes or dislikes it). In these types of videos, fewer products and brands are mentioned as the influencer focuses on specific products and provides an in-depth description/evaluation of them.

Tutorial: In this type of video, the influencer explains and demonstrates how to achieve a certain makeup look using specific products. Many products and brands are generally mentioned in these types of videos as it is common for the influencer to use many different products to achieve one makeup look.

APPENDIX C
LINKS TO EACH VIDEO USED IN ANALYSIS

Jaclyn Hill

Current Favorites: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zMTRWZMJ-w&t=340s>

First Impressions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhqDto609P8&t=7s>

Haul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUEmukKTDCI>

Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXVm3fhYsEo>

Tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uB_Kx6T3wq4&t=17s

Kathleen Lights

Current Favorites: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWC570VCPgA>

First Impressions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4ulbdJbF6A&t=255s>

Haul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CL2yo9g57p0>

Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7wfHk5rZ4k>

Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct6TDCh2DN0>

Desi Perkins:

Current Favorites: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHSuMZDG2Ic>

First Impressions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwUchGQRXKM>

Haul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7muNLMHyIJg&t=3s>

Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Zmrawegmd4&t=2s>

Tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZsRKxtyY_o

Carli Bybel:

Current Favorites: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3roB_lrFVQ&t=6s

First Impressions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSM4cT0chPU>

Haul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IedgdavtofY>

Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKAy2rWbMKQ>

Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1VdWpIDpjk&t=25s>

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