

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta  
Degree Programme in International Business

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## **Beauty bloggers' influence on Vietnamese young consumers**

## **Abstract**

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Beauty bloggers' influence on Vietnamese consumers, 60 pages

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The objective of this thesis was to examine the effect of beauty bloggers towards Vietnamese consumers.

The theoretical framework was built up by collecting data from academic books, online articles and newspapers as well as precedent research. The consumer decision process model of P. Kotler was emphasized and related factors were presented respectively. Information for empirical data was gathered by both qualitative and quantitative research, mostly through the web-based survey and topic discussion.

The results of the study show that bloggers have a general positive impact on Vietnamese consumers. However, due to certain factors, the valuable trust of customers is threatened to lose. Therefore, the bloggers themselves are needed to work on this issue. Some suggestions of the author were raised and bloggers' adjustments should be made to develop a stronger and more effective reputation.

Keywords: blog, blogger, social media, consumer behaviour.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Study background

In the industry of cosmetics retailing nowadays, the Internet and social media have a significant role in customers' purchasing behavior and their decisions. It is becoming a must for companies to build a powerful social media system in order to maintain a strong position in consumers' mind as well as to gain other advantages of being present in various kinds of platforms. One of the platforms that are spreading great influence on consumers to be considered is blogs.

This thesis will focus on beauty bloggers and the way they affect Vietnamese young consumers' buying behavior. Blogging was not that popular among the Vietnamese during the past years, but there has been a dramatic change recently since a lot of new blog portals were opened, especially in beauty industry. Not only individual readers can take benefits from these blogs but also a number of companies do, thanks to the collaborations of bloggers and business, which seems to become very common these days. Working together gives the companies an opportunity to introduce their products and engage with more customers in order to strengthen their brand position. (Nguyen 2015.)

It is reported that Vietnam is rapidly moving online, with the Internet penetration of 49,063,762 people, accounting for 52% of the population (Internet Live Stats 2016). The young generation seems to be the most active group, since 95% of the population in the 15-24 year age group being counted as internet users (Evans 2015).

According to a research on Vietnamese Consumers' Online Behaviors in 2014 carried out by TNS and published by Google, in Vietnam, 93% of people use Internet for information navigation, amongst which products searching accounts for 69%. In addition, 54% of Internet users have a habit of reading blogs and reviews when looking for a needed product (Truc 2014). Another interesting figure regarding to Vietnamese online behavior is that 58.2% of the Vietnamese people from different ages prefer personal blogs to official news. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of people moving online for daily

information update, which indicates the changes according to the world's trend. (VOA 2015.)

On the other hand, Vietnam is a greatly potential market for beauty industry. According to Vietnam's Chemical Cosmetic Association's data, there are over 430 leading cosmetic companies for sale in the country, of which 90 percent is well-known foreign brands. Besides, the Vietnamese purchasing power has risen steadily recently. With a population of over 90 million, half of which are women who have the desire to use better products when the economic conditions are developing, it can be seen that the growth is mainly driven by younger professionals, who have increasing expendable income, and want to spend on good quality but affordable products. (VietBao 2012.)

Using beauty bloggers as an effective marketing tool in the best way still seems to be a question for companies to market their products. On the other hand, the shortage of information on customers' reactions to blog may cause some drawbacks in marketing attempt.

Vietnam cosmetics industry is having enormous potentiality, therefore understanding customers' behaviors as well as how to adopt bloggers effectively in marketing strategies to create brand awareness is compulsory for any company who aims at Vietnamese customers or wants to emerge into Vietnamese market.

## **1.2 The purpose of the thesis**

The main purpose of the thesis is to examine how companies can use beauty bloggers to reach young Vietnamese consumers. In order to do that, the author will analyze how beauty bloggers impact on the purchasing behaviors of Vietnamese young female consumers at the moment and find out what attracts blog viewers, from real survey, reports and other additional sources for better understandings of the readers. Afterwards, some personal suggestions from author on how companies can take advantage of blogs and cooperate with bloggers will be given.

The report will be sent to the marketing department of NHU THUY Pharmacy and Cosmetics, where the author was trained in the first internship period, as a supporting reference for their future marketing strategies. Parts of the study result of will be translated into Vietnamese and published on BrandsVietnam – a comprehensive portal of brand and marketing in Vietnam in the end of May, to help any company who are doing business in the beauty industry in Vietnam or new companies who aim at creating awareness amongst Vietnamese beauty consumers. The thesis will also be a constructive reference for market analysis and further researches.

### **1.3 Scope and limitation**

The study includes real statistics and analysis about beauty blogs, beauty bloggers and their relevance to the world of e-commerce in cosmetics industry. Some examples of well-known blogs will be given and features that make them successful will be discussed.

The study does not discuss how to create a blog and blog management. Moreover, this thesis will only focus on personal beauty blogs; therefore, political and governmental blogs will not be mentioned.

In general, thesis will contain both theoretical and empirical parts. The scope of this thesis is limited in beauty blogging only. This thesis will also introduce top 5 popular beauty bloggers amongst the Vietnamese readers and kinds of blogging contents which catch viewers' attention the most.

### **1.4 Research question**

Analysis included in this thesis will base on one main research question which is: How can companies in cosmetics industry make use of beauty bloggers as an effective marketing tool?

In order to answer research question, there will be four sub questions as following:

1. Beauty bloggers – who are they?
2. How do the consumers make decisions?

3. How do beauty bloggers have an effect on Vietnamese consumers' buying decisions?
4. How to make use of bloggers to market products? (Author's opinions and suggestions, literature based+ research result based.)

### **1.5 Theoretical aspects**

The theoretical part of the thesis is divided in three parts.

The first section studies social media marketing, including definition, classifications and the differences between social networking sites and social media sites.

The second part focuses on describing the concepts of blogging, including definition and history of blog, bloggers and the development of blogging in Vietnam, with the case study of Michelle Phan for illustration.

The last part of the thesis concentrates on consumer behavior, from defining its meaning to examining the decision process making models. Effects of bloggers as an electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) are investigated as well.

Books, e-library, previous research and other information sources from the Internet are the main sources for the theoretical part.

The empirical study is implemented by applying both qualitative and quantitative method; an online survey is used to collect the data amongst Vietnamese participants in form of a questionnaire. It is posted in biggest beauty forum in Vietnam – Webtretho.com as well as beauty groups on Facebook, which are Changmakeup and Fierybread. Results are analyzed using SPSS system and Microsoft Excel for the research.

On the other hand, a discussion will be raised in beauty forum Webtretho in form of topic. Members are encouraged to tell more detailed about their experience, how they feel, what they think and why they make certain choices. The idea is to see what emotional reactions people have to bloggers marketing and what they associate with.



The purpose of the inquiry is to survey the demographic and psychographic of Vietnamese blog readers then reveal what attracts the blog users and what companies should avoid, in order to be more appealing to consumers. There are two chapters involved in empirical research, which give answers for the following issues:

- How do beauty bloggers have impact on Vietnamese consumers' buying decisions?
- How to make use of blog and bloggers to market product? (author's opinions and suggestions based on the results of research done as well as literature sources)

## **1.6 Research method**

Both qualitative and quantitative method are used in this thesis.

Qualitative method using grounded theory is based on empirical data. The thesis will use observation and open discussion to access qualitative data. Observation is already done by author through Vietnamese consumers around and from the practical training time as a customer service staff in beauty industry. All information and statistics supposed to support the thesis are collected and accepted to be used for this thesis. Besides, an online discussion will be raised in the biggest beauty forum in Vietnam in form of open questioning which requires the respondents to tell more detailed about their experience, feelings and reasons why they make certain choices.

Quantitative research method is accessed by using existing researches, data and statistics gathered from the Internet sources, books, etc. In addition, an online questionnaire is used to collect the data. The purpose of the inquiry is to survey the demographic and psychographic of Vietnamese blog readers and how much extent are their decisions affected by bloggers.

This thesis does not include any specific case. However, Michelle Phan and the top 5 popular beauty bloggers are used for illustrating th purposes.

## 1.7 Thesis structure

Figure 1 is the structure of this thesis

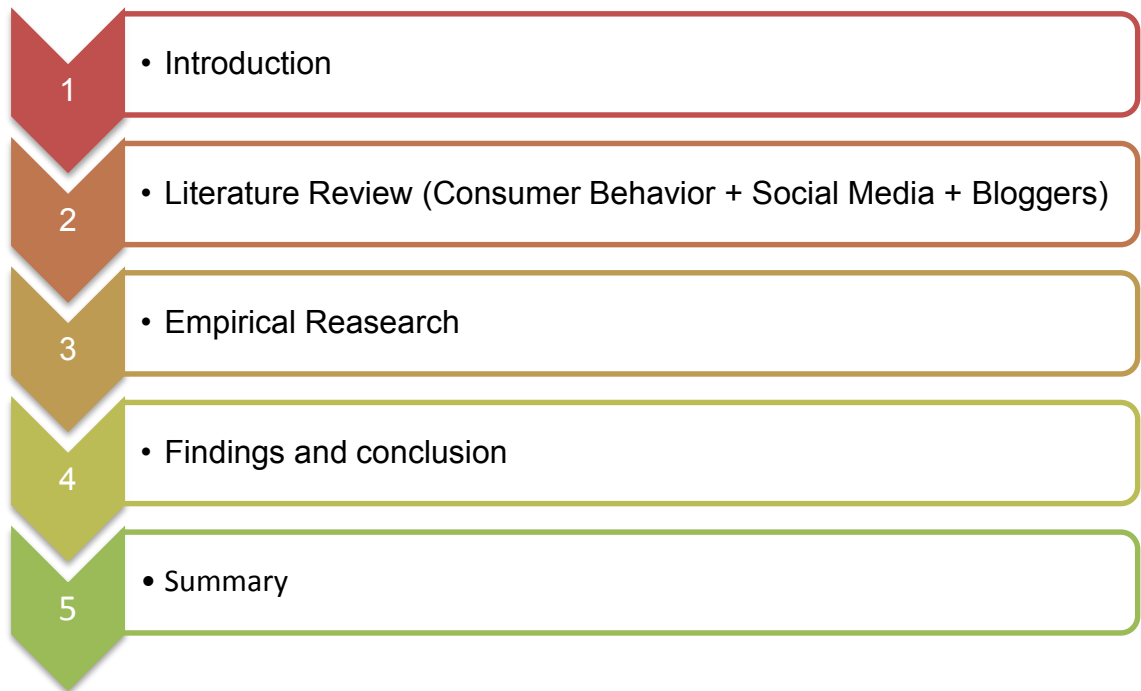


Figure 1 The structure of the thesis

Generally, the thesis consists of two main parts which are theoretical framework and empirical research with author's assessment and measurement.

## 2 Social media

Without doubt, the term 'social media' is definitely not a new concept in the field of marketing nowadays. Social media is reaching its greatest popularity at the moment thanks to its vital role as well as its rapid rising speed. To appreciate how social media was developed and has contributed to the marketing, let us take a deeper look at the theoretical background of this phenomenon, coming from the definition to different social sites in the classification in general.

### 2.1 Definition and characteristics

According to Andreas M. Kaplan and Micheal Haenlein (2010, p. 61), 'social media' is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that built on the

*ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content*". In simpler words, it can be understood that social media is about the connection between users, content and communication technologies within a specific website or around the internet wide.

Before investigating into the classification of social media sites, it is necessary to understand the general characteristics of the social media.

Stephan Dann and Susan Dann (2011) indicate that social media is composed by three main elements: communications media, content and social interaction. The relationship between them is illustrated in the Figure 2 below.

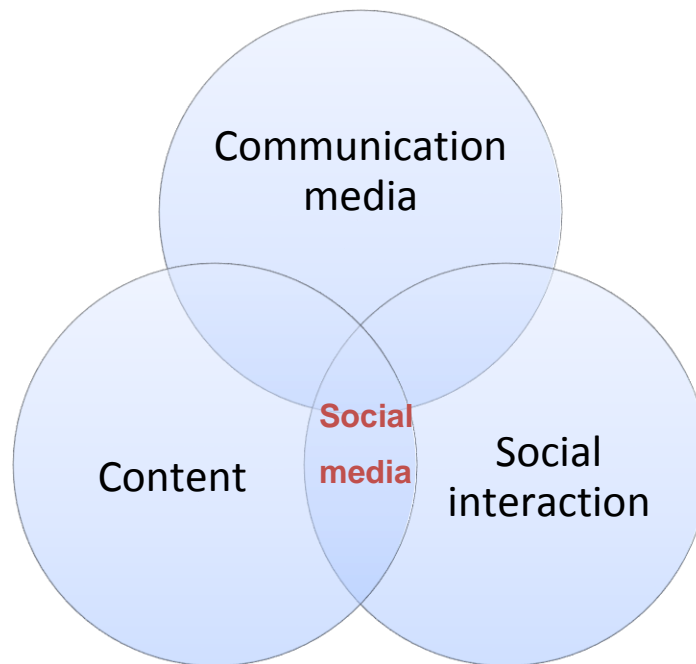


Figure 2 Social media components (Dann & Dann 2011, p. 345)

As can be explained from Figure 2, communications media refers to the virtual infrastructure that makes it possible for content and social interaction to exist together at the real time. This involves in delivering and receiving data or information between users. (Dann & Dann 2011, p. 345.)

Content can be seen as the reason that brings the readers to the site at the start. Content in this case exists in different forms such as music (MySpace), photos (Flickr), news of friends (Facebook) or video clips (Youtube). Based on

the content, the sharing value is created which results in the community interaction. (Dann & Dann 2011, p. 345.)

Social interaction is the contact between users either directly via the site, third party applications (Tweetdeck) or other means of time-independent interpersonal engagement (blogs). Time independence removes the distance barrier from the social interaction, which makes it more flexible in the terms of time and space for all of the users. (Dann & Dann 2011, p. 345.)

## 2.2 Classification

Based on the definition given, two professionals Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 62) propose a category of different social media services, which includes blogs (e.g. Wordpress), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), content communities (e.g. YouTube), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft).

It is compulsory for companies to understand the functions of each service in social media to select the most suitable one to apply to their marketing strategy. Therefore, here is the list of sites with primary contents described that is worth taking a look (Table 1).

Site	Address	Function	Content
<b>Blogger</b>	www.blogger.com	Commentary	Hosted blogging
<b>Delicious</b>	www.delicious.com	Social bookmark	Meta tags, content discovery
<b>Instagram</b>	www.instagram.com	Image hosting	Images, tags, contents
<b>Facebook</b>	www.facebook.com	Social network	Groups, advertising

<b>Flickr</b>	www.flickr.com	Image hosting	Images, tags, contents
<b>Livejournal</b>	www.livejournal.com	Life streaming	Personal experience
<b>Twitter</b>	www.twitter.com	Life streaming	Short messaging system
<b>Youtube</b>	www.youtube.com	Video hosting	Video
<b>Wordpress</b>	www.wordpress.com	Commentary	Hosted blogging

Table 1 The social media sites list (Dann & Dann 2011, p. 364)

From the Table 1, it can be concluded that social media sites are playing a lot functions in the field of e-marketing these days. It is of great importance for the companies to define the right sites which their targeted customers are possibly using and the sites to their internal use to bring the products or services to the market.

### 2.3 Social media sites vs. social networking sites

Based on the findings of Dahl (2015), the definition of social media includes various social sites which can be divided into two groups due to their differences in usage.

The first group, *social media sites*, contains sites that emphasize on sharing of user-generated content in particular while the interactive aspect between people can be optional. Users in this group are also not necessarily personally known to each other. Some typical examples for this group are Youtube (founded in 2005) and Trip Advisor (founded in 2000). (Dahl 2015, pp. 2-4.)

The other group is *social networking sites*. This group points out the core significance of the perpetual interaction between users, which can be clearly

seen in such sites like Facebook (founded in 2004) and LinkedIn (founded in 2002). (Dahl 2015, pp. 2-4.)

To have a better clarification of social media sites and social networking sites differences, it is worth to take a look at a detailed definition of SNSs provided by Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison (2007) in which social networking sites are described as

*web-based services that allow individuals to (a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, (c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system and (d) create and share content.* (Boyd & Ellison 2007, p. 211.)

As stated by Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites are considered as specific subgroup of social media sites, especially when they rely on social media technologies to point out the share of generated content. Therefore, it is obvious that social network sites, or SNSs, are a form of social media which not only enables content creation and self-presentation but also focuses on sharing and connecting with other users. (Dahl 2015, p. 3.)

Nonetheless, the intended audience of social media sites and social networking sites is different due to the various purposes of the users (Dahl 2015, pp. 2-4).

On the other hand, there are sites that can belong to both social media and social networking group, since their functions – sharing or interacting / both, are dependent on the users. A case that can be examined here is that a blogger can use Wordpress – a blog platform that powers 25% of the Internet, to show user-generated pictures and share information with unknown readers who anonymously visit the blog, at the same time they can make use of the site as a way to share pictures and keep contact with known friends or other relatives or family members thanks to the blogroll function in Wordpress. (Wordpress n/d.)

By using popular social websites, Figure 3 shows the differences between social media and social networking sites.

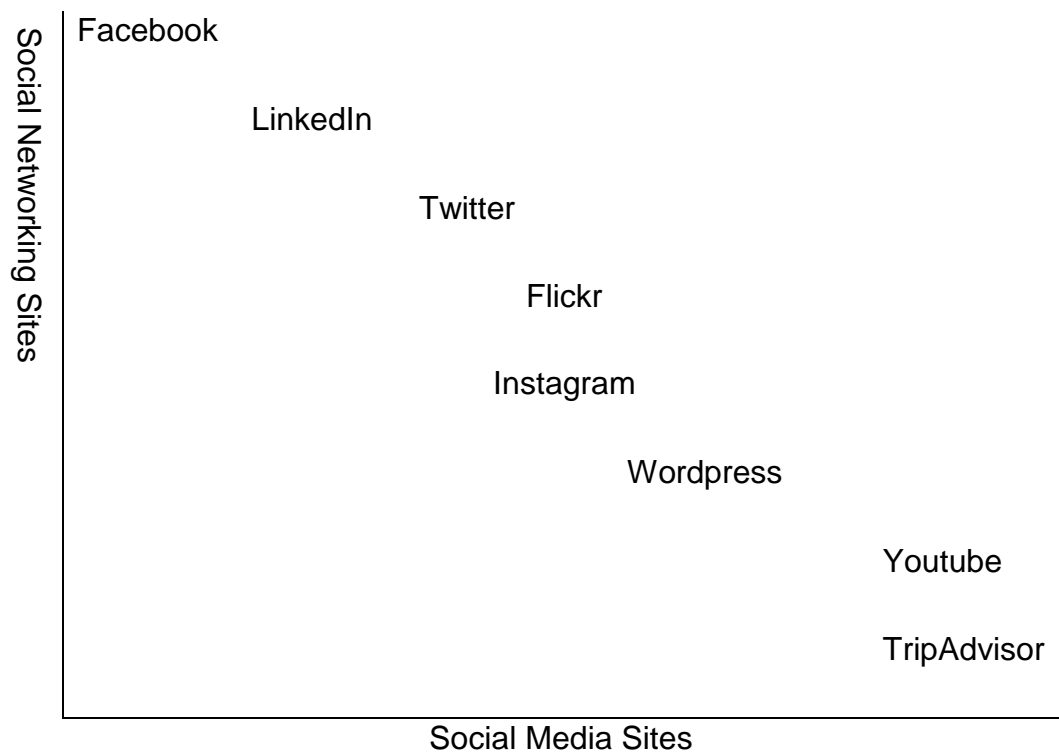


Figure 3 Taxonomy of social media sites (adopted and modified by the author from Dahl 2015, p. 3)

It can be pointed out from the Figure 3 that, there are three categories of sites.

- Social networking sites – focus on social networking between users knowing each other, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter.
- Social media sites – emphasize on the user-generated contents whereas the users may not have any personal relationship. Examples here are Youtube and TripAdvisor.
- Mixed sites – can be considered as both social media and social networking sites, depending on the users, such as Flickr, Instagram and Wordpress.

These days, the SNSs are getting more and more popular for communication among friends, between celebrities and their fans, and also between clients and companies. As it can be seen, social networking sites have been easily adapted to marketing and promotional purposes.

Facebook and Twitter are assumed as the most typical examples of SNSs since these sites have gained a lot of attention (among internet users and other media) due to their use by famous people all over the world from celebrities to politicians (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Official Twitter account of President Barack Obama (Twitter 2016)

Figure 4 shows that the U.S. President has been running an official social networking account on his own, which has gained a great popularity with over than 71 million followers worldwide. The followers make use of Twitter to see his daily activities; vice versa the President takes advantage of the social networking site to interact with all the citizens.

### 3 Blog

*The ease and appeal of blogging is inspiring a new group of writers and creators to share their voices with the world.*



(Anonymous)

This part provides the readers a framework of an internet phenomenon which is associated greatly in the digital and social media- based communication nowadays – blogs. It is certainly undeniable that communication has experienced a dramatic change in recent decades thanks to the rapid development of new technologies. For deeper understanding on how blog evolved and how it has contributed to the communication landscape transformation, it is obviously worthy to take an overview look at the definition of the terms ‘blog’ and ‘bloggers’, then followed by the history of blog establishment before examine the effects of blog and bloggers in the beauty industry through a case example of Michelle Phan – a successful beauty blogger – to illustrate the influence of bloggers on the beauty industry.

### **3.1 What is a blog and a vlog?**

Blog is by no means a new phenomenon. Blog, or weblog, was founded in 1994 as an electronic method of recording events. Blogging soon became extremely popular at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> decade. Since then, it has become one of the foundations of the social web. (Builtwith n.d.) The history of a blog will be portrayed more detailed in the next part.

There are various definitions of the term ‘blog’. According to Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Johnston and Mayer (2006, p. 387), blog is described as “an easy method of regularly publishing web pages which are best described as online journals, diaries or news events listings. They may include feedback (trace-back) comments from other sites or contributors to the site. Frequency can be hourly, daily, weekly or less frequently, but daily updates are typical.”

A blog is made of one or many *blog posts*. A blog post is an item containing texts, images or video which is written and posted by the author of that blog, in other words, the *blogger*. The blogger is the one who is writing and maintain the blog. (Wright 2006, p. 7.)

Another format of blog, which is becoming more popular nowadays, especially in the beauty industry, is *Video blogging* or “*vloggin*” in short. Vlogging can be

seen as a blog post published in form of a video clip. It is a great way when a blogger wants to show the readers some product in details, such as how it looks like from outside and how the texture inside is. Vlogging is also useful when the bloggers want to become closer and more comfortable with their viewers since it can bring the feeling of “real human being” interaction. This will create trust from the viewers to both the bloggers and the product they are reviewing because in this case, the video makes it possible for the viewers to see and listen to the review at the same time, not only read words and forget then. (Lindblad 2013, p.3.)

### 3.2 History of blog

The foundation of blog started in 1994 as an electronic method of recording events. In the early days, several engineers firstly took part in creating platforms, which allowed users to create their own “blogs” and share with their friends as well as the community. In the 21<sup>st</sup> decade, blog managed to gain its extreme popularity, which laid the foundations of the social web. (Builtwith n.d) The history of blog from the early day till its developed period is portrayed briefly in Figure 5.

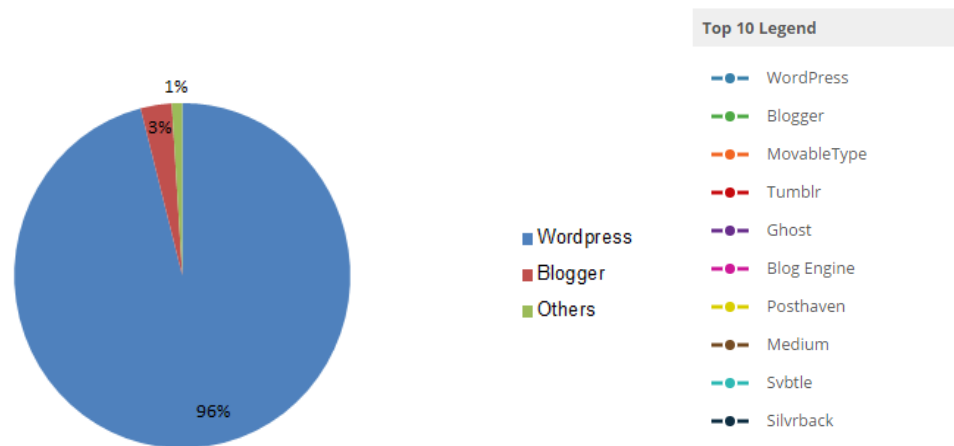


Figure 5 History of blog development (Chapman 2011)

Back to further past, the story started with the creation of Usenet in 1979, which was seen as a discussion platform for Internet users to post their messages publicly (Bonnett, 2010). This was the fundamental base for the social media development afterwards when a social networking website called “Open Diary” went online in 1998. This website added the ability for the Internet users to publish their diary entries both privately and publicly and connected writers. The term ‘weblog’ appeared approximately in the same time period, as did its abbreviation ‘blog’. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.) According to Chapman (2011), the first blogpost was released in 1994 by a student of Swarthmore College, Justin Hall, referring to his homepage Links.net. In 1997, the term ‘weblog’ was born by Jorn Barger, the owner of the early blog Robot Wisdom. “*Weblog means logging the web*”, stated Barger. Two years later, ‘weblog’ was shortened to ‘blog’ by Peter Merholz. Within 5 years, ‘blog’ became the word of the year due to its tremendous popularity in 2004. (Chapman 2011.)

In 1999, the formation of the platform Blogger by Evan Williams and Meg Hourihan at Pyra Labs brought blog to a new development. According to Jesse James Garrett (1999), there were only 23 blogs on the Internet in that year. 7 years later, 2006 witnessed an incredible expansion in the total number of blogs, when it reached the amount of 50 million blogs published. (Chapman 2011.)

WordPress is the most popular blog platform on the internet nowadays, with both an online hosted version and a downloadable self-installing version (Builtwith 2016). Graph 1 demonstrates the using rate of the blog platform websites in worldwide countries.



Graph 1 Statistics of websites using blog technologies worldwide (Builtwith 2016)

As it can be seen from Graph 1, Wordpress accounts for 96% amongst all of the blog platforms. Therefore, Wordpress can be considered the most popular publishing online platform, which powers over 25% of the internet (Wordpress 2016).

In the field of marketing nowadays, blogging is becoming a popular communication tool, a marketing technique, a listening device as well as a means of direct interacting with customers on a global scale (Wright 2006).

### 3.3 Beauty bloggers/ vloggers – who are they?

There is no official definition of what beauty blogger exactly means. Based on the blogger function, it is possible to define in a simple way that ‘beauty bloggers’ are people who share their experience in beauty area in a blog platform. They interact with the readers by giving great beauty advice, awesome pictures and video concerning their thoughts and experiences on beauty and personal care products. (Nguyen 2015.)

Meanwhile, ‘Beauty Vloggers’ are those beauty influencers who share their reviews through recorded video clips instead of blog posts. These days there are a huge number of beauty vloggers clips that we can find anywhere from their blog page to the Youtube channels. (Nguyen 2015.)

Whatever platform the blogger use to contact with people, user-generated content is still the main factor which creates and encourages the interaction between bloggers and internet users (Figure 6).

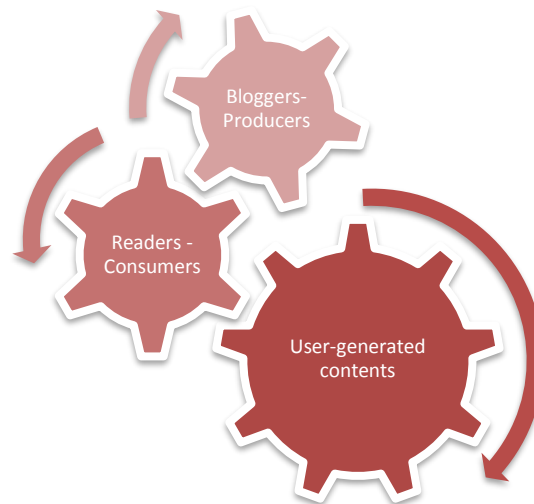


Figure 6 Bloggers and readers connection via user generated content

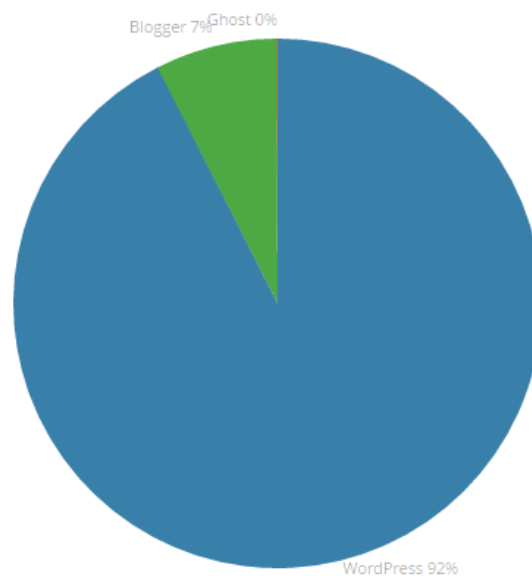
User-generated content is believed to be the greatest marketing sensation of this decade. Bloggers are the one who produce information by telling their opinions about brands, products and companies in their social websites while the readers are the one who consumes those contents. Internet today is becoming more of a social and interactive medium, not only a one-way transmission of information between consumers and producers as it used to be. (Solomon 1995, p. 43.)

### **3.4 The development of blogging in Vietnam**

Together with the development of blogs all over the world, nowadays, the number of beauty blogs and beauty bloggers is rapidly increasing in Vietnam. Most of the popular bloggers are Vietnamese students who are studying or living in foreign countries, besides the new ones who live in Vietnam. In general, those bloggers use the combination of many social media platforms to support each other, not only blogs. Some of platforms usually seen are Youtube,

Wordpress, Instagram and Facebook. They can use Facebook to interact with more followers and Wordpress to express their opinion in details or post intensive reviews with pictures on the page. Instagram is where the bloggers updated their pictures of daily skincare products. Most of beauty bloggers in Vietnam also work as Vloggers as well with their high subscribed channel on Youtube. (Nguyen 2015.)

Below are some figures of Wordpress use rate amongst other blogging platforms in Vietnam (Graph 2 & Table 2).



Graph 2 Statistics for websites using Blog technologies in Viet Nam (Builtwith 2016)

Top in Blog usage in Viet Nam · Week beginning May 09th 2016	
Name	.VN %
WordPress	92.49%
Blogger	7.46%
Ghost	0.06%

Table 2 Statistics for websites using Blog technologies in Viet Nam (Builtwith 2016)

As can be seen from Graph 2 and Table 2, Wordpress accounts for a large percentage of distribution of the websites using blog technologies in Vietnam (over 92%). There are only two other websites still in use: Blogger and Ghost, which represent 7.46% and 0.06% respectively.

Below are some examples of several famous bloggers in Vietnam who have a high number of views/ followers in various platforms.

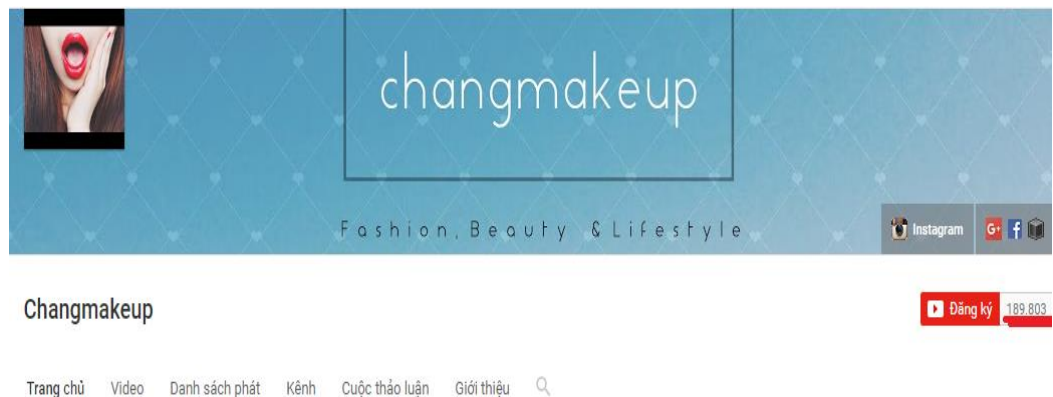


Figure 7 Vietnamese Beauty Blogger Changmakeup's Youtube channel with 180,000 subscribers (Changmakeup Youtube Channel 2016)



Figure 8 Vietnamese Beauty Blogger Michelle Phan's Youtube channel with over 8 million subscribers. (Michelle Phan Youtube Channel 2016.)



Figure 9 Example of a high view beauty blog page (Phuongdungreview 2016)

Changmakeup (Figure 7) is a blogger recently rising to fame, starting by her popular lipstick swatch videos in Youtube. So far she has more than 189,000 subscribers on Youtube together with 532,000 followers on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/changmakeup/?fref=ts>).

Besides, Figure 8 shows the Youtube channel of one of the most famous beauty vloggers in all over the world, Michelle Phan. She is the first American-Vietnamese beauty v-logger who has co-worked with famous worldwide brands such as Lancome, SK-II as well as set up her own brand, EM cosmetics. Phan's Youtube channel has a considerably impressive number of subscribers - over 8.5 million.

Lastly, Figure 9 demonstrates an example of a Vietnamese blogger who just writes blog spots without any video clip. However, thanks to the quality of her writings, the blog has such a great total of views, more than 4 million.

### 3.5 Effect of bloggers in beauty industry

#### 3.5.1 Beauty blogger as an information source

Beauty bloggers, especially those who are actually into this work, are people sensitive with the trend of beauty, such as which product is going to be released, which trend is on top or which ingredients are leading the market, then share with readers about them. (Nguyen 2015.)

Another popular and practical method of information providing is review. The blogger will tell readers their experience about a product they have used, so that the readers will have general knowledge about that product to decide



whether it is suitable for their skin and to purchase or not. It is undeniable that this is an extremely useful social media channel which gives you honest and valuable information than the traditional advertisement. (Nguyen 2015.)

The area of beauty blogging is expanding rapidly and playing more and more important role as a source for consumers to inform themselves about beauty and personal care products (Nguyen 2015).

### **3.5.2 Beauty bloggers as an indirect marketing tool**

According to the Zoe report, the top beauty bloggers and vloggers on Youtube can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars per year (Montes 2015). The money is coming from brands paying for ads on their sites or paying the bloggers to endorse their products in various ways. A beauty label might make use of a beauty blogger to try their products and tweet and blog about them; or to serve as a sponsor in their campaigns and post the images on their blog; or to simply endorse a product the way a celebrity would, by tweeting about it or posting about it on their site. On the other hand, beauty Vloggers even make more money in an easier way depending on the number of views for their Youtube video clips. (Andrews 2016.)

As mentioned above, beauty bloggers can mostly have a direct or indirect impact on the cosmetics industry. A blog is a form of social media and a communication channel which spreads messages globally. Via this channel, bloggers can express their opinions and influence the way in which certain brands or products are presented. Moreover, blogs can lead new trends to the industry or discuss some issue which companies may not want to have public discussions such as ethics or environmental factors. (Penttala & Saarela 2012, p. 14.)

Nowadays, influential beauty bloggers make product advertisement on their web pages by just simply mentioning about a product and their brand. Thereby, beauty blogs can also be seen as a form of indirect product advertisement not only because of the content of the text and images posted by the blogger, but as they include links to company web store where the type of products blogged may also be purchased. (Nguyen 2015.)

At the present, a lot of brands in the beauty industry would like to be acknowledged by hot bloggers. There are several reasons such as brand awareness, product introduction or company reputation. The company can catch attention of a blogger by giving free samples to them, or inviting the hot bloggers to events such as product launches or bloggers meeting (Figure 10).

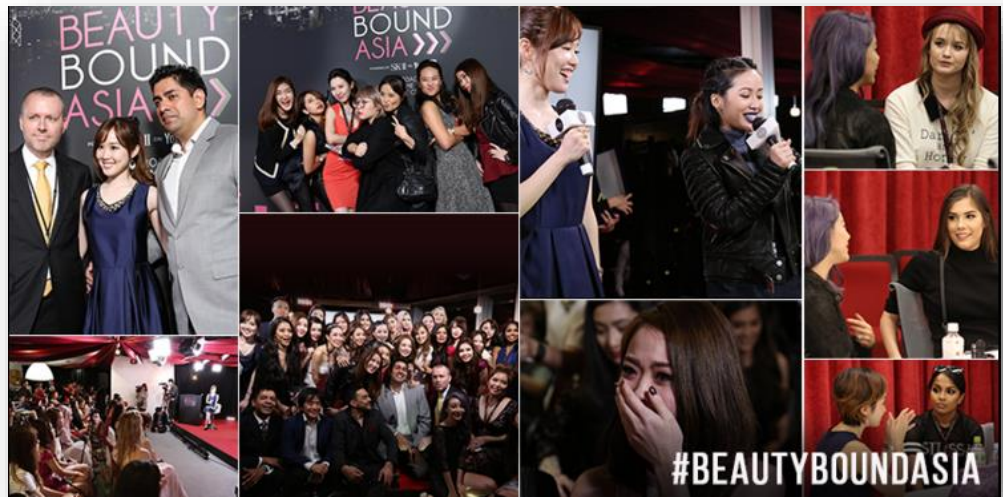


Figure 10 Beauty bloggers gathered at an event launched by brand SK-II (BeautyBoundAsia 2015.)

Beauty Bound Asia was a competition launched by SK-II in 2015. The aim of the contest was to discover and cultivate the next generation of online beauty creators. It opened to all legal residents of 11 cities where the contest took place including Tokyo, Seoul, Osaka, Taipei, Hong Kong, Manila, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, and Sydney. Top YouTube stars and beauty bloggers were invited to come to support by offering skill-building workshops for Beauty Bound Asia finalists. (BeautyBoundAsia 2015.)

### 3.5.3 Beauty bloggers as trend creators

Influential beauty bloggers may also create new trends through their blogs and inspire marketers for their products. An example that should be examined is the collaboration of BECCA and Jaclyn Hill, a famous Florida-based beauty vlogger, to introduce a best seller beauty item of this brand “Champagne Pop” (Figure

11). According to MimiChatter, this limited edition highlighter broke the record of Sephora's most purchased product on its first day of release in the U.S. (Fraser 2015.)



Figure 11 BECCA x Jaclyn Hill collaboration in “Champagne Pop” (Fraser 2015)

In the photo above is a limited edition highlighter shade “Champagne Pop” by brand Becca teaming up with Youtube beauty vlogger Jaclyn Hill. Hill is a successful American beauty vlogger who owns a total of more than 3 million subscribers on her Youtube channel. Thanks to her great popularity in the beauty online community, this co-operated product has spread wider and still been in the best seller product of Becca so far. (Fraser 2015.)

### 3.6 Case study: Michelle Phan

One of the most popular bloggers in Vietnam in recent years is Michelle Phan (Figure 12). She is a successful American Vietnamese beauty blogger with the total of 8.459.429 subscribers on her Youtube channel (March 2015). Her vast blog popularity has caught the attention of different beauty brands globally and has made her become a celebrity. (BrandsVietnam 2015.)



Figure 12 Michelle Phan with her own cosmetics brand EM. (Ichi 2015.)

Michelle Phan is a Vietnamese girl born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1987. Since the last year of high school, Michelle realized that she not only liked to paint on the paper but also to paint face, which was called ‘*make-up*’. The hobby gradually developed to the point that, for the first time in her life, instead of pursuing the profession of doctor – as the wish of her mother, Michelle decided to go to Ringling College of Art and Design. And 7 years later, in 2014, at this school, she was awarded an honorary doctorate degree for the glory that she had brought to the school’s reputation. (Ichi 2015.)

Phan started uploading videos of make-up tutorials in Youtube 8 years ago and soon caught the attention of many viewers.

*“My first vlog has 40000 views in one week with hundreds of comments. Then I realized my real passion”,* Phan expressed.

Other examples of how much influence Michelle Phan has on the beauty industry can be seen in the collaboration of her with famous international beauty companies such as L’Oreal and Lancome. She was invited to become the ambassador of Lancome and used their products in her clips. One of her recent achievements is the introduction of her own cosmetics brand called “EMCosmetics” with the help of L’Oreal. Her own start-up company, Ipsy was

established in USA in 2012 also received a well-known reputation amongst beauty consumers. Some people used to have suspicions about its capability of success when there are a lot of big competitors such as BirchBox or Dolla Shave Club. However, Ipsy has proved its ability when there are 1.5 million customers bought the “Glam Bag” beauty box monthly subscription of the company in Canada and US market. The value of the company in the market is \$500 million at the moment. (BrandsVietnam 2015.)

The influence that she built from the social media has contributed greatly to the success at the present of this Vietnamese young beauty blogger. According to the Statsheep’s statistics, she received an average amount of \$500 per video clip, and Phan’s potential earnings can reach the amount of \$3,101,385 (Statsheep 2016).

The impact of Phan can be compared with those of pop singers. Her face has appeared in prestigious magazines such as Seventeen, St. Petersburg Times, Nylon Magazine, Forbes and even Vogue. Phan's life became the constant trips to interview, introduction or cosmetics advertising representative. Besides a number of contracts with a lot of brands such as Beats, Toyota, SanDisk, Audible, Phan also is working as a promotional model for the soft drink Dr. Pepper. Her ambition is to expand her own cosmetics *Ipsy* with the target annual revenues up to 120 million US dollars. (Ichi 2015.)

Another prize of Phan is that she did receive the award 'New Stars' by Women's Wear Daily Biz in 2010. The Marie Claire Magazine of America also honored her as 'the impressive people under the age of 30'. In addition, Michelle used to work as a make-up assistant for the fashion shows of Chris Benz and Michael Kors. (Ichi 2015.)

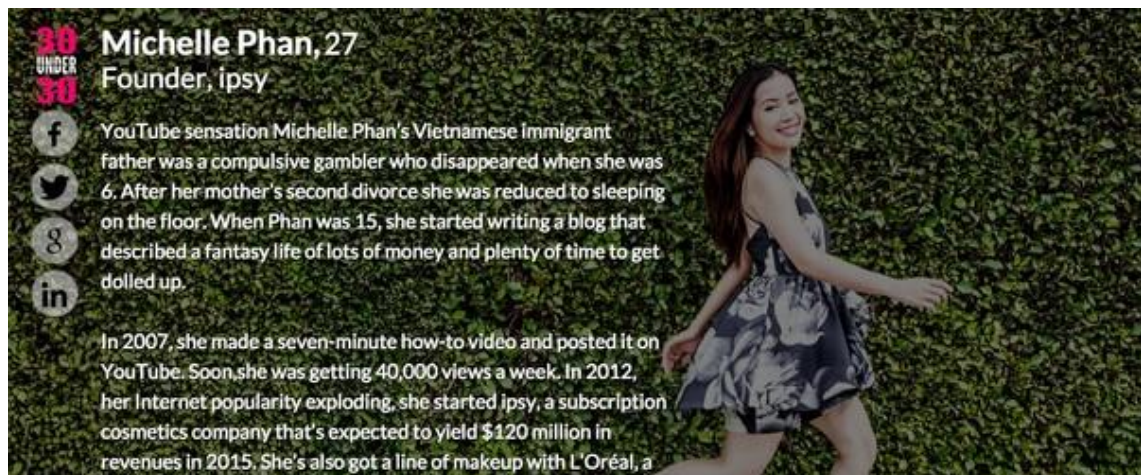


Figure 13 Michelle Phan on Forbes's top 30 under 30. (Ichi 2015.)

Most recently, this Vietnamese girl has been in the list of top 30 young people under 30 years old achieve excellent international success by Forbes. Phan said: "I am really happy to see my dream come true. Now it is the time I inspire women around the world to improve their own beauty." (Ichi 2015.)

#### **4 Online consumer behavior**

This chapter covers some highlights of consumer behavior applied to e-marketing and online consumers such as examining how beauty consumers make decisions of spending their resources (time, money, effort) on a product or service as well as how eWOM affects those decisions.

People, in spite of their different backgrounds, above all, are consumers. We consume food, clothing, transportation, education and other necessities in a regular manner. As consumers, we have a major role in the development of the economy, both national and international since our buying decisions have certain effects on everything, from production, transportation, employment of workers to other engagements in success or failure of an industry. Therefore, it is of vital importance for companies to understand everything about consumers- what they want, what they think, how they work and how they spend their leisure time, especially in the nowadays' emerging market, in order to implement the most appropriate business strategy of raising awareness to

reach an even wider customer base and achieve customer loyalty. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, pp. 8-9.)

#### 4.1 Definition

In the mid-to late 1960s, consumer behavior was still a rather new concept of study. At that time, many theories concerning consumer behavior were originated from economic theories (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, p. 19). The field of consumer behavior covers a lot of ground. According to Solomon (1995), the term *consumer behavior* is explained as *a study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires*. Another definition given by Schiffman & Kanuk (2004), defines consumer behavior as *the process of consumers' searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs*. Compared to the transaction where consumers purchase the items, consumer behavior is more complex as it involves all of the factors preceding the consumers' buying decision, which include what they buy, why they buy it, where they buy it, how often they buy and use it, how they evaluate post purchase and the impact of such evaluations on other future purchases, as well as how they dispose it. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, p. 8.)

#### 4.2 Consumer decision making process

The decision process is a series of sequential steps that people take when they purchase a product or service. Figure 14 and 15 given below demonstrate clearly general stages included in a decision making process.

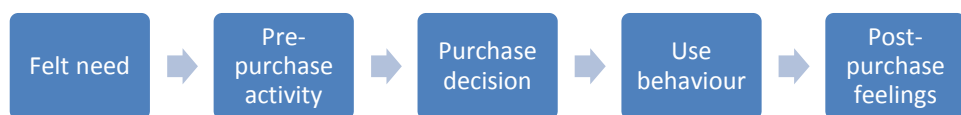


Figure 14 Kotler model of decision-process (Chisnall 1997, p. 196.)



Figure 15 Engel, Kollat and Blackwell 's model of decision-process (Chisnall 1997, p. 196.)

Despite of differences in the models displayed, there are six certain aspects that a decision making process covers.

1. Problem recognition: The decision process starts with a felt need or recognition of problem which is originated from human demand, wants, wishes or motives. In other words, people will seek to purchase something to satisfy end-goals- to solve their problem or to fulfill their need.
2. Search: This is an pre-purchase action following in which consumers will look for the information about the product or service promising to meet their expectation. The purpose of this stage is to reduce the worry and tension caused by the need.
3. Evaluation: In this stage, people will carefully evaluate the products or services that they have discovered in the search stage. Many aspects are taken into consideration, such as the price, availability, usage convenience and appearance. There is a choice criteria created in customers' mind which has effect on their decision.
4. Decision process: Obviously, it is the stage where decisions are made, which can cover some sub-decisions inside, such as method of payment, quantity, favorite brand as well as place of purchase (physical stores or online shopping, for instance).
5. Use behavior: This stage involves in studying the behavior of consumers who bought the product or service needed to be researched. The benefit of this study is to help the companies to understand the needs of customers at the moment as well as provide



some useful guidelines to forecast the consumption trend in the future.

6. Post-purchase activities: The last step is to find out if purchasers are satisfied with the product or service they bought or not. This create an opportunity for marketers to reassure customers, to make them worry-free by some after purchase caring actions such as guarantee and reliability and durability of the product. This will contribute decisively to the long term success of the company with the strong commitment from consumers. (Chisnall 1997, pp. 197-201.)

### **4.3 Word-of-mouth (WOM) and E-Word-of-mouth (EWOM)**

*“Customers will share stories of your sublime service at dinner parties across the country, and that’s better than any billboard.”*

(Marrs 2014)

According to Wollan, R., Smith, N., & Zhou, C. (2010), word-of-mouth (WOM) is one of the most important interpersonal communication methods among varied channels for receiving information. There are various forms of WOM such as traditional offline WOM and Internet facilitated online WOM (eWOM). The traditional WOM requires a direct communication while eWOM does not need an intermediate interaction among people. It allows flexibility and convenience in communication which is separated by time and space.

The core of word-of-mouth concept is to use satisfied customers to promote the company’s business. The aim in word of mouth marketing is to encourage products users to share their experience with friends, family, and any people around them.

Earlier, word of mouth marketing refers to the verbal communication. Today however, with the wide spread of social media communication platforms, word of mouth marketing can be easily found in:

- Facebook likes
- Twitter
- Amazon reviews, Yelp reviews, and similar sites
- customer testimonials
- blog posts

- brand mention
- message forums

The intended receivers of social media feedback— other customers, rather than a company— also make for a much different type of data. Customers get on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, or Wordpress to share with others their experience with a company, in contrast to a consumer’s call to a contact center to complain directly to a company about a product or service. Therefore, in this case, customers make use of social media to talk “about” a company rather than directly “to” it. Because social media feedback spreads much wider and creates more risks to the reputation, it is even more important for companies to listen to what customers are talking about you out there rather than wait for them to contact your service center or other traditional customer interactions. (Wollan, Smith & Zhou 2010.)

The company always needs to listen to the voice of customers to determine the most appropriate actions to improve the customer experience. Then, the customer impact after the changes should be measured by assessing what customers say and do. By following that guideline, companies will get smarter as they learn how to create more and more valuable customer experiences. (Wollan, Smith & Zhou 2010.)

Blog is considered a source of eWOM, since it is made of user-generated content, which is the combination of *word-of-mouth* and *self-created content* to connect people and form the community. It also encourages people to try the products when related to buying and selling. (Dann & Dann 2011.)

The effect of blog and bloggers as an eWOM will be studied deeper in the next part.

#### **4.4 Effect of bloggers as an eWOM on consumer behavior**

According to the result of a survey carried out by Technorati Media in 2013, blogs ranked third in the most influential digital resources list (31%) when consumers make purchases, only behind retail sites (56%) and brand sites (34%). In fact, blogs were found to be the fifth-most trustworthy source overall for information on the internet. YouTube, Facebook and Google+ are the most

popular social properties for consumers. (Technorati Media 2013.)

The survey also concludes that the influence of reviews is much higher than a recommendation from a friend.

Since these blogs are essentially formed to act as a tool for the blogger to be able to post reviews and recommendations for their followers and online consumers, it also acts as a form of marketing that can encourage the consumer to try out products they've never used before. (Technorati Media 2013.)

Another advantage the bloggers have in terms of being a marketing tool is that they can express their opinions, promote discounts and give readers direct links where they bought the product while still maintain a neutral point of view. It can be seen as a type of E-Word-of-mouth. According to research on eWOM carried out recently, eWOM was proved to have higher credibility, empathy and relevance to customers than the information generated by the marketers. Readers, at first sight, do not see blog posts as an aggressive marketing method. As a result, they do not react negatively straight away to this. If the product is promoted directly, consumer might keep ignoring the message which is typical in the internet advertising nowadays. Therefore beauty bloggers become a huge advantage for cosmetics brands thanks for providing an inexpensive but attractive way of marketing for the consumers. (Bickart & Schindler 2001, p. 37.)

Figure 14 provides an illustration of factors that occurred internally as well externally before and after the decision making process.

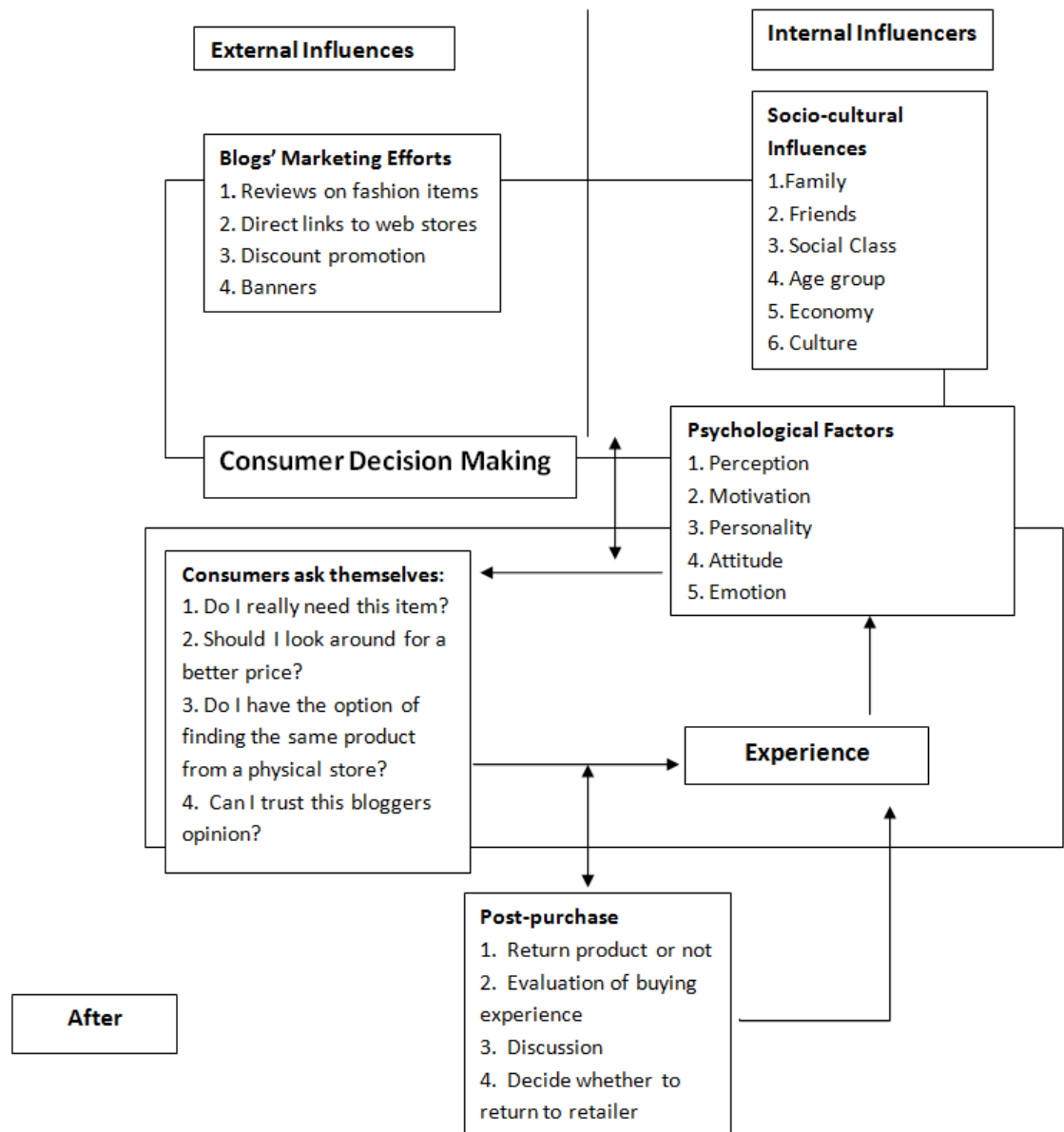


Figure 16 Consumer decision making factors (Penttala & Saarela 2012, p.22.)

The diagram above also illustrates elements such as socio-cultural influences and psychological factors that have an impact on consumers' buying decision. Related to the socio-cultural factors, things like relatives' suggestions, the cultural issues, the economic situation and the age group of the consumer can contribute greatly to whether the consumer trust the blogger's recommendation and buy the product or not. For instance, the youth generation who were born and grown up in the time of computers and internet are more likely to trust the opinions of someone they have never met in real life but just via social media information. Psychological factors such as personality, attitude and emotions

are also things that have influence on the decision making process. (Penttala & Saarela 2012, p. 22.)

Figure 16 above also describes the psychographic characteristics of consumers that occur during the pre-purchase stage. The buyer will examine factors such as if they truly need to make that purchase, whether the item could be found in a physical store to try on first or not and how trustworthy the blogger's opinions are. Since buying new products can be very risky which can cause hesitation of making decisions, consumers need to take a look at experiences of people who have used them to evaluate the possible risks versus the possible positive outcomes before going further with the purchase. (Penttala & Saarela 2012, p. 22.)

After the purchase has been made, the final evaluation is of great importance to express the consumer's opinions on both the buying experience and the trustworthiness of the bloggers who recommend the product. Evaluation can determine whether a blogger is a positive source of information or not. Due to the widely spread popularity of social media, consumers can then tell their experience and share with others, which not only affects the popularity of the products in the future but also spreads the powerfulness of word-of-mouth in the nowadays' world. (Penttala & Saarela 2012, p. 22.)

## **5 Empirical research**

This part of the thesis will focus on the research conduction with the qualitative- and quantitative research method and the validity and reliability mentioned. The result of the study will be coded, portrayed and explained in details.

### **5.1 The research method**

The first essential thing when doing a research is to understand its goal. Based on that, the most appropriate research method should be selected for the project. As in this case, the main purpose is to examine the consumers behaviors towards blogging; therefore, the qualitative research is chosen as it is proved to have links to our research target. On the other hand, the quantitative

methods can provide the researchers the statistical techniques and other logical approach related. It is possible to have a combination of these two methods to both describe details and determine variance as well. (Silverman 2005, pp. 6-8.)

## **5.2 Qualitative and quantitative research**

According to Merriam (2014), a qualitative research is considered the most suitable method for collecting and analyzing data. This method focuses on context meaning and underlying meaning when collecting and interpreting the data. Human is the most appropriate target for qualitative method since its central research activities are interviewing, observing and analyzing. Rather than determining the reason and result, it is important to understand how people interpret their experiences, their feelings and their insightful thoughts. (Merriam 2014, pp. 2-5.)

In this study, the qualitative research method is adopted by using a discussion topic to collect opinions towards bloggers from the users of the forum. The topic is opened in webtretho.com, one of the biggest forums for women in Vietnam. Together with the knowledge gaining from the author's observation from previous related topic on webtretho.com "Must-Know Beauty Bloggers" (Vyle410 2015) as well as from people around, this discussion contributes to explore more about how people feels in details since they can speak more openly compared to the structured research method.

The second research method is quantitative research, which is more about logical, statistical and numeral point of view. Besides the consumers' feelings, it is of great importance to know the percentage or the number of consumers that have various behaviors towards bloggers. It is also necessary to understand the variances between different groups of consumers' opinions. The quantitative method is useful to indicate the connection between numerical interpretation and empirical examination. In general, quantitative research is mainly used in economics, marketing, psychology and in political science. (British Library n.d.)

The quantitative research used in this thesis is in form of a survey with a questionnaire of 15 questions including both open ended and close ended ones.

### **5.3 SPSS**

In this thesis both the qualitative and the quantitative methods have been chosen since it is about understanding and exploring the blogging phenomenon but also to understand how the consumers feels towards the bloggers, which is indicated from the figures. In order to have a deep understanding and an intensive analysis for the results, it is crucial to utilize both research methods. The results will be coded with SPSS and presented with frequency table and graphs, which gives the research a quantitative feature and the reader a better overview of the problem.

SPSS, standing for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, is a software program normally used in quantitative investigations by social scientists. SPSS software is useful in statistics performance, such as:

- descriptive statistics: frequencies, descriptive and descriptive ratio statistics
- bivariate statistics: t-tests, ANOVA and correlation
- numerical outcome prediction: linear regression and logistic regression
- identifying groups: cluster analysis, factor analysis and discriminant scaling (Chen 2012, p. 9)

This research makes use of SPSS's functions, which consist of organizing data, collecting and demonstrating descriptive statistics to analyze and portray the results indicated from those data (Wetcher-Hendricks 2014).

#### **5.3.1 The survey**

The survey was created as a web based questionnaire. The respondents can answer the survey easily by following a link that led to the website. The link was posted on Webtretho forum – the biggest forum for Vietnamese women, and other Facebook beauty groups in Vietnam which were Changmakeup and Fierybread. The period of time for the questionnaire was one month from 3 February 2016 to 3 March 2016. Those pages are operated by high profile bloggers who have hundreds of thousands followers, which can add the ability of catching more attention for response rate. Five high viewed bloggers were contacted to help with sharing the survey links on their blogs, but unfortunately no one responded. The questionnaire can be done by anyone who clicks the

links, but the main target group of respondents is women who are interested in reading beauty blogs and have some insight and opinions about the world of blogs. The targeted respondents expected were mentioned in front of the survey link when posted.

### **5.3.2 The survey questions**

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions and there are three questions about the background of the respondents including age, occupation and gender. The questionnaire was designed in a way that almost every question required an answer. Two of the questions (Q.6 and Q.14) are open ended form which requires the respondents to write about their thoughts. There are 13 close ended questions which enable the respondents choose from ready given answers. There is one question not required to answer if the respondents do not follow any blogger at the moment (Q.6).

The questionnaire was written in Vietnamese. It received 106 responses in one month; with 105/106 valid responses which had all the required questions answered.

Here is the list of questions used.

Hello. I am a last year student of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences and I am making a survey of the influence of the bloggers on Vietnamese young consumers' behavior. I will be so grateful if you can spend 3 minutes to help me to answer this questionnaire. All your answers will be very useful for my upcoming thesis. Thank you so much: X

1. Hello. How old are you?

15-18 years old

19-24 years old

>24 years old

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female



3. What is your occupation?
  - Student
  - Office worker
  - Other employed
  
4. Do you read product reviews? If yes, how often?
  - Always
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
  
5. Do you follow any beauty bloggers?
  - Yes
  - No
  
6. If yes, please list your top 5 favorite bloggers?
  
7. When there is a release of new products, do you read reviews from bloggers about them?
  - Yes
  - No
  
8. Have you ever bought any beauty products after reading reviews from bloggers?
  - Yes, I have.
  - No, I haven't.
  
9. How can bloggers have influence on you?
  - Not at all
  - Less influent
  - Influent
  - Completely influent

10. Which platform of the bloggers you usually read? (Multiple options)

- Instagram
- Youtube
- Facebook
- Personal blog
- Other, which is...

11. Rank the trust you have for: (from 1-5 , 1- least, 5- most)

- Beauty
- Beauty magazines
- Traditional advertising methods

12. Which blog content makes you most interested in?

- Product reviews
- Makeup challenge
- Q&A from bloggers
- Giveaway
- Other, which is...

13. Rank the importance of bloggers in your opinion. (from 1-5, 1-least, 5-most)

14. Any drawbacks of bloggers at the moment? (Open question)

15. How do you think of cooperation of bloggers and brands in marketing?

- Not agree
- Ok
- Completely agree

Original survey link: <https://surveyplanet.com/56b1658e7ded0a752f3fbd07> (in Vietnamese)

## 6 Results analysis and conclusion

### 6.1 Result analysis

This part presents the results of the empirical research and the conclusions that can be withdrawn from them. It is crucial to be aware that the purpose of the survey was to find out how consumers buying behaviours were affected by beauty bloggers. In addition, the aim included examining further behaviors such as the benefits of blogs over other platforms, the reasons why readers follow blogs and what makes them keep returning to the same blogs, which were discussed in the forum topic.

#### 6.1.1 Targeted consumer group

As discussed in the previous chapter the qualitative data was collected from 105 participants in the form of a questionnaire. All the respondents were Vietnamese people and were asked questions that would reflect their buying habits to their making use of blogs.

The first three questions are concentrated on background factors of the respondents, collecting personal information that may help in further data analysis. These questions included age, current occupation and gender of the consumers. The results can be seen in Table 3, Graph 3 and 4 below, which were analyzed by SPSS.

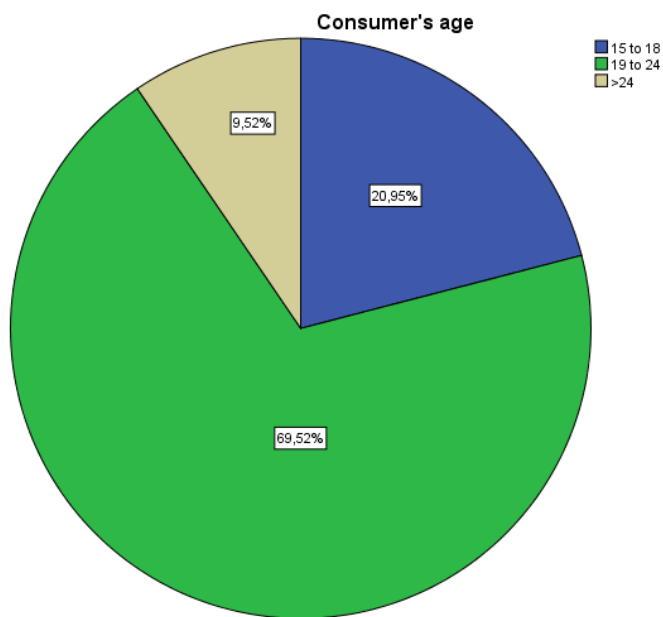
#### Consumer's age \* Consumer's occupation Crosstabulation

Count

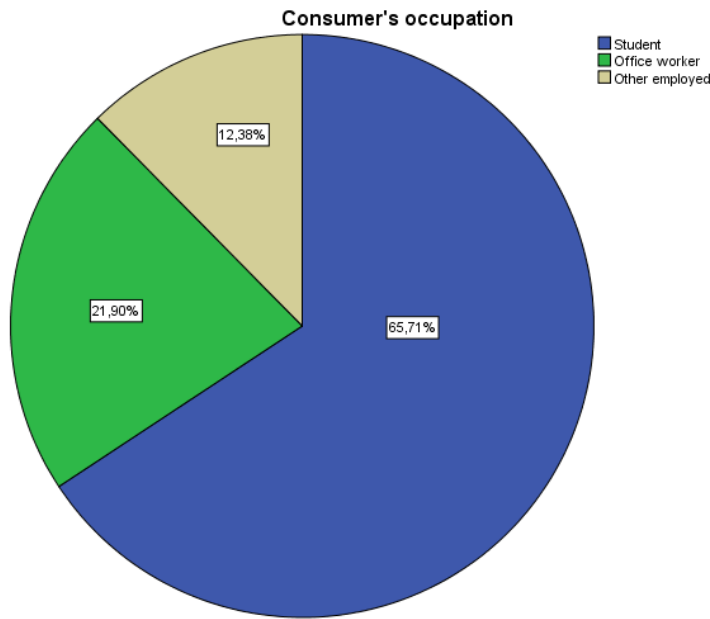
		Consumer's occupation			Total
		Student	Office worker	Other employed	
Consumer's age	15 to 18	19	2	1	22
	19 to 24	46	18	9	73
	>24	4	3	3	10
Total		69	23	13	105

Table 3 Targeted consumers age and occupation

The author decided to divide age into three groups as shown above. The reasons for this is according to the facts mentioned in the introduction, the major age of the most active internet penetration group is from 15 to 24 (Evans 2015). Besides, from 15 to 18 years old, the consumers at that age are mainly students who have first steps into beauty products such as basic essentials. The second group is 19-24 years old, which concludes students and people who are able to work and have extra allowance already. The last group is mature people who are working and may require higher quality in products as they may afford to them.



Graph 3 Respondents' age

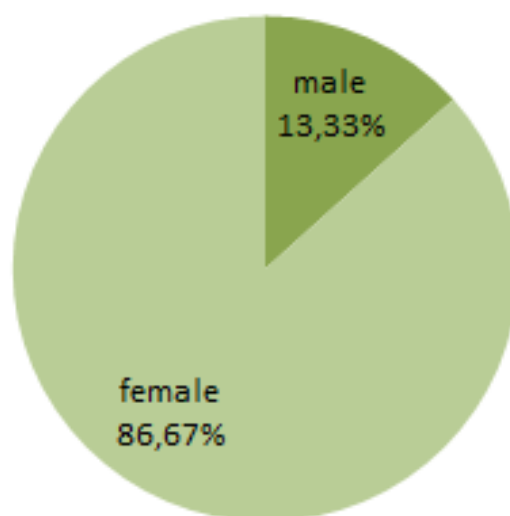


Graph 4 Respondents' occupations

As can be seen from table 3 and graphs 3 and 4, the respondents' major age group was between 19 and 24 years old. 87.61% of 105 respondents were either students who still were in progress of studying or office workers who had their own job. It could be briefly understood that at this age, consumers have enough knowledge and condition to approach more to Internet in general and blogs in particular.

The Graph 5 below portrays the results for the background question "What is your gender?" which is contributed to clarify the major gender for targeted consumer segmentation.

## Respondents' gender



Graph 5 Respondents' gender

The result indicates that most of the respondents who have interest in blogs are female, which accounts for 86.67% of all the 105 survey participants.

Therefore, based on the output of the first three questions, it can be concluded that the major group of potential consumers who are keen of blogging are women between 19 to 24 years old and either students or office workers being educated.

### 6.1.2 Blogging behavior

Question 4. Do you read reviews of products? If yes, how often?

Question 4 reflects the pre-purchase behavior of those consumers. Nearly half of the respondents admitted that they have a habit of reading product reviews very often. The exact numbers of this active group is 49 people, while the total of consumers who selected the “sometimes” option turned out to be rather similar with 45 respondents. Only 11 out of 105 respondents show their being not interested in blogging at all.

The next three questions dealt with bloggers subscription of the consumers.

Question 5. Do you follow any beauty bloggers?

Question 6. If yes, please list your top 5 favorite bloggers?

Question 7. When there is a release of new products, do you read reviews from bloggers about them?

There were 79 respondents saying yes when being asked if she or he is following any bloggers or not. The non-subscribers made up for roughly one fourth of the total responses. The platforms where readers usually read reviews of bloggers from were revealed in the following table.

which platform consumers read reviews <sup>a</sup>	Responses	
	N	Percent
Other	2	0,8%
Instagram	46	18,9%
Youtube	73	30,0%
Personalblog	54	22,2%
Facebook	68	28,0%
Total	243	100,0%

Table 4 Social Media Platforms Frequency Table

This is a multiple choice question to find out the platforms that consumers mostly read reviews from. According to the result portrayed in the table, Youtube is the highest viewed platform amongst others, which constituted for 30% of the total answers. Participants also have found beauty bloggers through other social media platforms when Facebook, Personal blog and Instagram followed respectively with 28%, 22% and 18.9%. There were 2 other answers which mentioned the review parts in online retailer websites. It can be indicated that Vietnamese consumers nowadays prefer watching video blog than just simply reading words. The reasons for this can be understood since YouTube is the second most visited website in the world, trumped only by Google so far (ebizmba 2016). Together with the rapidly growing online audiences of vlogging, or video blogging, most of the bloggers in Vietnam these days tend to be vloggers as well due to two causes. The first one is the sponsor cosmetics

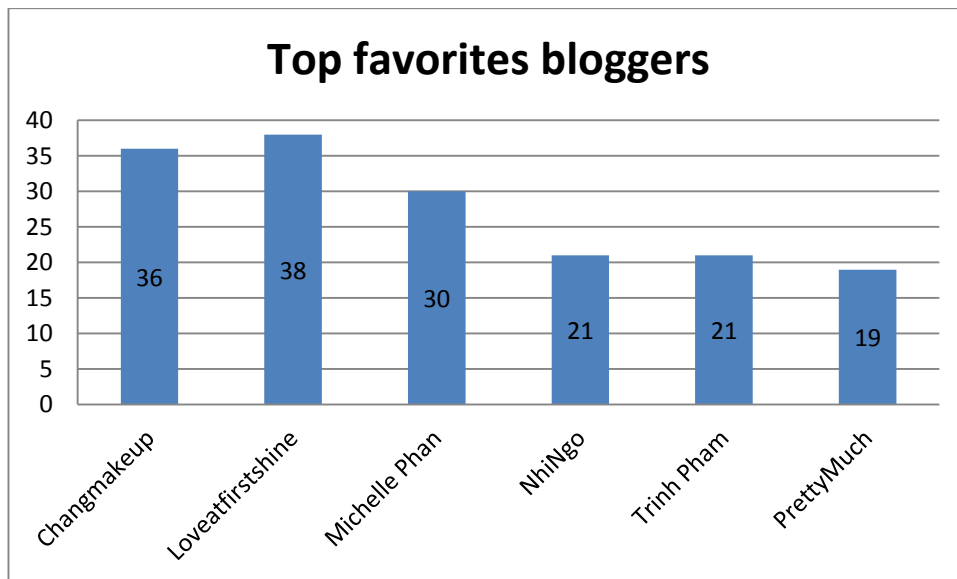
companies make use of these YouTube vloggers to advertise their brands. Another reason, which contributes greatly, is that the bloggers can earn huge amounts of money from Youtube if their videos receive a high view from the audiences, basically over 10000 views required. According to the results, it is possible to for beauty bloggers to work in a combination of platforms, not only personal blogs, to make it more convenient for users to find them out and to create greater popularity for themselves. (Nguyen 2015.)

Based on the output figures of the survey, the top five favorite bloggers shown in the result are ranked as follow:

1. Love at first shine (<https://www.youtube.com/user/loveat1stshinetv>), (<http://www.loveat1stshine.com/>)
2. Changmakeup (<https://www.youtube.com/user/TrangTracy>), (<http://www.changmakeup.com/blog/>)
3. Michelle Phan (<https://www.youtube.com/user/MichellePhan>), (<http://michellephan.com/>)
4. NhiNgo (<https://theskincarejunkie.wordpress.com/>) and Trinh Pham (<https://www.youtube.com/user/trinhtrontrinh>)
5. PrettyMuch (<https://www.youtube.com/user/PrettyMuchChannel>) (<http://www.prettymuch.vn/>)

The Graph 6 below shows the figures of votes for top most read bloggers. Other bloggers mentioned are Pretty Much, Chieclavotinh, GG Reviews, etc. The figure is counted out of 105 repondents





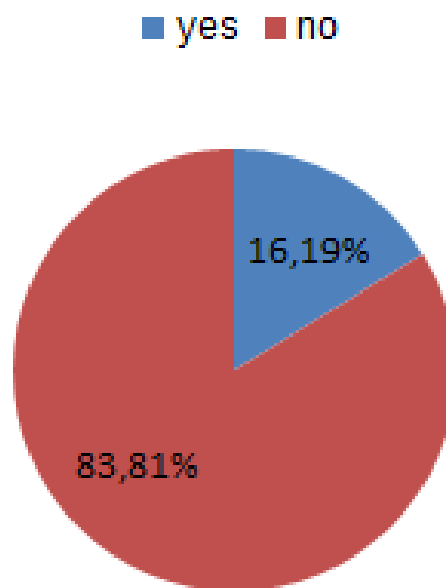
Graph 6 Top favorite bloggers

As it can be seen from the graph 6, Love at first shine was the most popular blogger with the votes of 38/105. The second and third place belonged to Changemakeup and Michelle Phan with 36 and 30 votes respectively. NhiNgo and Trinh Pham got the same vote as 21 to be the forth runner. The last blogger in this list was PrettyMuch with 19/ 105 votes.

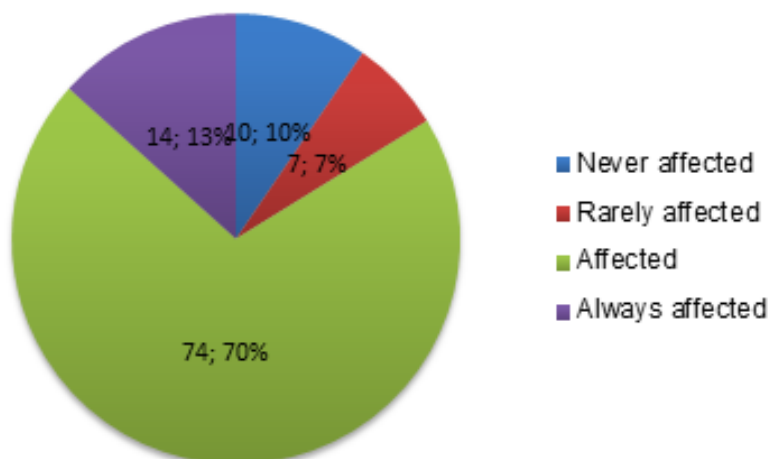
### 6.1.3 Purchasing based on blog recommendations

The rest of questions emphasize the role of bloggers in beauty industry nowadays and how they have impact on the consumers. In question 7, the result showed that 82.9% of the total 105 respondents said they would go online to read reviews from beauty bloggers before they made any decision of purchasing a new product. Amongst that, in question 8, 83.8% revealed that they used to buy some products based on the recommendations of the bloggers. The Graph 7 and Graph 8 below give a clearer illustration on how beauty bloggers affect the consumers purchasing decision.

## Have you ever decided to buy any products after reading a review from bloggers?



Graph 7 Purchasing decisions based on blog reviews



Graph 8 How are consumers affected by bloggers' opinions?

According to the result of question 9, the major of respondents did read bloggers' recommendations when make purchasing decisions, constituting for 88/105 people being affected. This question helped to understand whether the

readers actually use blogs as a source of information before they go purchasing product from stores.

It can be referred that all participants have a fairly positive outlook on the bloggers' recommendations and they tend to rely on blogs for buying-related socializing. Reviews from the bloggers may reduce the readers' hesitation when purchasing products, especially if the brand they intended to buy is a new one for them.

In the question 10, concerning the most attention catching blog content, not surprisingly, reviews of products came first with 69 choices from 105 respondents. Other specific contents referred are trial product give away, Q&A for bloggers and readers interaction, make up challenges, etc.

#### **6.1.4 Importance of bloggers**

Another important aim of the research was to understand what inspires consumers to not only use blogs as a source of information while purchasing products, but also to find out to what extent and why they rely on that source.

When being asked in question 11 to score from 1-5 for the trust of beauty bloggers compared to other sources including beauty magazines and other advertising methods (such as TV ads, radio, websites), beauty bloggers received the highest average score of 3.5 from the respondents. Beauty magazines were the second runner with result of 2.57/5, while other methods had the lowest rank since its average point was only 1.79.

Turning to the importance of beauty bloggers towards the needs of beauty guiding and purchasing for Vietnamese consumers nowadays, respondents were asked to rate the bloggers with a number between 1 and 5 (question 13), where 1 would indicate not useful in buying situations, and where 5 would indicate they saw bloggers as a very useful tool when purchasing products. Then the final score of the bloggers' role was quite similarly with 3.58/5 in average. The lowest rate was 2 and the highest was the maximum 5. No lowest point, meaning 1, was given. It could be indicated that even there were some non-blog-reading respondents; they still considered the role of bloggers more or

less important, not totally unhelpful. Since there were active and inactive blog readers in the total respondents, this answer could be expected. It is a surprise when none of them had seen blogs as a useless tool.

### **6.1.5 Drawbacks of beauty bloggers**

Question 14. Any drawbacks of bloggers at the moment? (Open question)

When investigating in the field of beauty bloggers disadvantages, the most considerable issue reflected by the respondents is some dishonest reviews of bloggers for sponsored products. In that case, the blogger may receive money or free products from the company to write for product introduction. Even though some bloggers do mention if the products are sponsored or not and states that their reviews are still neutral, it still causes suspicion for readers about the honesty of review. According to the result of the survey, 26/45 opinions of bloggers' drawbacks are all about the sponsor bias products and feel of advertising in reviews.

*“Sponsored items can be bias.”*

*“Famous bloggers working for beauty magazines often do PR more than give a neutral review.”*

*“Beauty bloggers should see themselves as a normal user before giving review to any product, to get rid of the advertising feeling.”*

*“They only use sponsored products so their reviews are not trustworthy.”*

*“Sponsored; liars.”*

Some of the sharing from the respondents pointed out the major problem of beauty bloggers these days which is their honesty in review and PR in their works. Other issues mentioned are the quality of the video and the blog content. The audience is requiring more intensive writings and more interaction between the bloggers and followers.

### 6.1.6 How do customers react to the marketing activities using bloggers?

On question 15, the participants were asked to give opinions about the cooperation between bloggers and beauty brand. Most of the respondents (94/105) showed their agreement for the co-working. The minor disagree opinions is believed to be a sequence of the major drawbacks discussed above.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	disagree	24	22,9
	agree	70	66,7
	absolutely agree	11	10,5
	Total	105	100,0

Table 5 How do you think about cooperation between bloggers and beauty brand

Another issue was raised in webtretho discussion forum, is “Why do consumers follow beauty bloggers and what makes them keep coming back to a blog?”

As the results in the figure above indicate, the participants all saw some benefits to using bloggers in the shopping situation. More intensive reasons of why consumers read blogs as a part of purchasing process were analyzed from the topic in forum Webtretho.

*“NhiNgo share all the advanced skincare knowledge in the simple and understandable way. Besides, she uses reasonable price products, which is suitable for students and office workers.” (hij\_lovemoney)*

*“Really useful and knowledgeable. They truly contribute for the beauty community rather than selling themselves for money of sponsor like what beauty magazines do.” (miu\_le89)*

As can be indicated from most of the opinions expressed in the topic, the major reason that attracts readers and keeps them return is the quality of the blog content. Showing good knowledge of skincare, non-PR feeling and nice pictures/ videos are listed as the best attractive points in the eyes of readers.

Once again, advertising for sponsored brand is mentioned as the main cause for readers not want to follow some certain bloggers.

## 6.2 Conclusion

Beauty bloggers nowadays are playing an important role in giving inspiration, knowledge and tips to the beauty consumers. The benefits of bloggers overs other marketing tools can be briefly illustrated by the following SWOT analysis table.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inexpensive and impressive</li> <li>• not giving the first sight of marketing feeling</li> <li>• remain the neutral point of view</li> <li>• interactive and intensive</li> <li>• giving the familiar effect “human like me”</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge may have limit</li> <li>• honesty is suspicious</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• brand collaboration</li> <li>• develop their own brands (for famous and knowledgeable bloggers)</li> <li>• earn great amount of money</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lose readers’ trust</li> <li>• sell themselves for money instead of honesty in their works</li> </ul>

Table 6 SWOT analysis of bloggers over other marketing methods

Nowadays, Vietnamese readers are not easy going with the bloggers as they used to be due to the amount of advertisement in their blog posts. Respondents of this survey commented that the trust and interest for a blogger decrease, if the blogger share ideas of a sponsored brand in every blog with an impartial point of view, this blogger is not reliable anymore. It could be concluded that bloggers are no more a neutral information source, or at least this is what a lot of readers are feeling. The threat of losing readers’ trust for the blogger is

getting higher, so the problem is already here. The issue in the future will be how to convince the readers that the opinion is the bloggers and not the company which is advertising.

## **7 Summary**

This chapter will focus on the summary of the survey result. It will also compare the results to the theoretical part.

Beauty bloggers are here to stay. A blog is seen as an online published diary. However, these days, blogs are becoming more like commercial blogs. Bloggers write less about their own daily activities but more about products or services that they have tried. The humanity of the bloggers is slowly decreasing and it is being replaced by advertisement.

Bloggers are making a lot of money thanks to the advertisement for the products sponsored. Based on the result of the empirical research, the importance of bloggers is staying quite firming in the Vietnamese consumers' mind. As long as the bloggers are not going to sell their humanity for making money, any collaboration between them and the brand can still be acceptable. Since the main outstanding points to attract the readers and keeps them remaining are knowledge of the bloggers, quality of their works and neutral and honest review, companies can absolutely consider cooperate with bloggers who meet all of these expectations.

After that, how are the bloggers going to keep the readers interested with the sponsored brand in a clever way? How is the trust for the blogger going to be kept if almost everything is advertisement? Will the bloggers start to lie about which products are free or from collaborations? These questions above may be solved as issues in the future. At the present, due to the huge advantage of providing an inexpensive but attractive way of marketing for the consumers, beauty bloggers remain to be a beneficial field for companies to exploit and develop.

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