Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

by Hantian Zhang and John Lee

1. Introduction

Video blogs (vlogs) are a streamed video media type on a variety of topics including beauty, gaming and lifestyle (Jerslev, 2016). Consumption of vlogs is widespread: over 50 percent of adults in the U.S. were vlog viewers (Nguyen, 2018). YouTube has played an important role in encouraging vlog consumption (Kaminsky, 2010). YouTube allows video bloggers (vloggers) to easily distribute content (Weaver, 2012). Vloggers who operate on YouTube are also called YouTubeStars (Costa, et al., 2020). Some YouTube vloggers have developed large audiences. In 2020, among more than 17 million channels on YouTube, 3,700 vlog channels gained over 10 million subscribers, and another 22,000 channels gained over one million subscribers (Funk, 2020). These popular vloggers could also be seen as influencers, famous among their viewers and with the ability to influence public opinions towards, for example, brands and products (Abidin and Ots, 2021). China’s YouTube vloggers influence is part of a larger culture of online influencers, along with other social media influencers established through, for example, content creation on Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. This trend in this paper is on vlogging, and on YouTube vlogging in particular, while other vloggers’ transitions to influence, are given the same relevance in other platforms.

The achievement of AE with online media, such as vlogs on YouTube, is reflected by active participatory activities by audiences with vloggers including liking and commenting on videos, and the direct consumption of vlog content (Borgeas and Green, 2010; Khan, 2017; McRoberts, et al., 2016). Video blogs (vlogs) are a streamed video media type on a variety of topics including beauty, gaming and lifestyles (Jerslev, 2016). Consumption of vlogs is widespread: over 50 percent of adults in the U.S. were vlog viewers (Nguyen, 2018).

Advancing AE research involving vloggers' common implementation of AE factors to engage viewers on YouTube. These include encouraging viewer interaction for participation and using certain filming techniques to stimulate consumption (e.g. McRoberts, et al., 2016; Ransone, 2019; Zhang, 2019, 2018). CE also fosters customer trust, brand knowledge, retainment and dissemination of a brand via “word of mouth” (WOM — communication between consumers regarding a brand) (Cheung, 2021). CE has been widely used to refer to consumer relationships with brands (e.g. Beckers, 2018; Ohbora, et al., 2021), and consumer relationships with vloggers on YouTube. CE has been defined as an interaction (e.g. viewing content) and consumption (e.g. posting content).

We can argue that these AE factors contribute to vlogger success as reflected by large audience bases. However, these factors have been mainly studied by previous researchers from a creator-viewer perspective. This paper also argues that since all factors that vloggers use to engage viewers, in general, could be seen as CE factors contributing to vlogger success as personal brands. AE can be defined as the building of connections and experiences between online media creators and audiences. AE refers to the building of connections and experiences between online media creators and audiences.

2. AE and CE in vlogging

2.1. Audience engagement (AE)

Shoh (2009) characterized user engagement with online user-generated media as consisting of participation (e.g., interactions between users), consumption (e.g., viewing content) and production (e.g., posting content). On YouTube, user engagement refers to participatory, production and consumption of content on the platform (Khan, 2017). AE is focused on user engagement, and consumption of content on online media platforms.

For vlogging on YouTube, the concept of AE also applies. For example, Borgeas and Green (2010) stressed the importance of conversational features, emphasizing interactions between vloggers and viewers. McRoberts, et al., (2016) identified vloggers' AE behaviors, including interacting with viewers via comments.

We can argue that since all factors that vloggers use to engage viewers, in general, could be seen as CE factors contributing to vlogger success as personal brands. AE can be defined as the building of connections and experiences between online media creators and audiences. AE refers to the building of connections and experiences between online media creators and audiences.

2.2. Consumer engagement (CE)

CE represents consumer behaviors towards a brand beyond purchase and consumption. These behaviors include consumer posting brand-related messages (e.g. commenting, liking and sharing content) and consumption (e.g. consuming content) with a brand (e.g. watching vlogs). CE also encompasses the building of consumer-brand relationships (Jerslev, 2016). CE can be defined as a psychological process (Borden, 2009; Molina and Wilson, 2010). CE is a psychological state that involves cognition (e.g. consumption on the brand), emotion (e.g. attachment to the brand) and behavior (e.g. consumer purchase decision). CE also encompasses the building of consumer-brand relationships (Jerslev, 2016). CE is a psychological process (Borden, 2009; Molina and Wilson, 2010). CE is a psychological state that involves cognition (e.g. consumption on the brand), emotion (e.g. attachment to the brand) and behavior (e.g. consumer purchase decision). CE also encompasses the building of consumer-brand relationships (Jerslev, 2016).

CE can be defined as a psychological process (Borden, 2009; Molina and Wilson, 2010). CE is a psychological state that involves cognition (e.g. consumption on the brand), emotion (e.g. attachment to the brand) and behavior (e.g. consumer purchase decision). CE also encompasses the building of consumer-brand relationships (Jerslev, 2016).

3. Interpreting AE factors via CE in vlogs

Through the lens of consumer engagement theory, this research develops a case study of U.K. vlogger and influencer Zoe Sugg. Zoe Sugg is a popular U.K. beauty vlogger with a large following on YouTube. Zoe Sugg has built her personal brand through her vlogs, which have been widely consumed by her followers. Zoe Sugg’s vlogs have been instrumental in establishing her reputation as an influential vlogger on YouTube. Zoe Sugg’s vlogs have been widely consumed by her followers, and her personal brand has been established through content creation and consistent posting on YouTube.

By exploring vlogger AE using CE, this paper provides an explicit discussion that bridges the gap between CE and vlogging on YouTube. This paper contributes to those areas in the literature that seek to understand YouTube and similar social media creator and influencer practices for their audience bases and their overall successes or failures. CE is crucial in understanding the AE factors and their contribution to vlogger success through the concept of CE — behavioral connections between consumers and brands, beyond purchase and consumption (Bergeas and Green, 2010; Ohbora, et al., 2021). Achieving CE can lead to a high positive relationship between firms and consumers. CE also fosters customer trust, brand knowledge, retainment and dissemination of a brand via “word of mouth” (WOM — communication between consumers regarding a brand) (Cheung, 2021).

Appealing content could be another reason for vlogger AE. For instance, learning and entertainment are two important reasons for teens to subscribe to YouTube channels and consume content (García Jiménez and Montes Vozmediano, 2020; Pires, 2018). Borgeas and Green (2010) stressed the importance of conversational features, emphasizing interactions between vloggers and viewers. McRoberts, et al., (2016) identified vloggers' AE behaviors, including interacting with viewers via comments.

The achievement of AE with online media, such as vlogs on YouTube, is reflected by active participatory activities by audiences with vloggers including liking and commenting on videos, and the direct consumption of vlog content (Borgeas and Green, 2010; Khan, 2017; McRoberts, et al., 2016). CE has been widely used to refer to consumer relationships with brands (e.g. Beckers, 2018; Ohbora, et al., 2021), and consumer relationships with vloggers on YouTube. CE has been defined as an interaction (e.g. viewing content) and consumption (e.g. posting content). On YouTube, user engagement refers to participatory, production and consumption of content on the platform (Khan, 2017). AE is focused on user engagement, and consumption of content on online media platforms.

For vlogging on YouTube, the concept of AE also applies. For example, Borgeas and Green (2010) stressed the importance of conversational features, emphasizing interactions between vloggers and viewers. McRoberts, et al., (2016) identified vloggers' AE behaviors, including interacting with viewers via comments.
Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

Because online influencers share content from different traditions, self-branding is still a "strategy of marketing strategies applied to the individual." (Zoe, 2013) rather than personal branding; vloggers tap into both traditions. This fact is especially true in the U.K., where personal branding is more common in traditional media. That is, they are not only personal brands, but also vloggers. They create value for their audience by sharing their life experiences and offering unique perspectives on various topics. Therefore, we construct our explicit concept of AE in vlogging as:

AE on YouTube usually involves both participation and content consumption (Khan, 2017; Shao, 2009). However, we regard the vlogger's role as comparable to a consumption of brand products. CE also relates to behaviours beyond product purchase and consumption.

In this paper, we consider vloggers as personal brands developed on YouTube and viewers as their consumers of products and videos. For the inductive analysis, we compared coded content to identify specific patterns in the implementation of each AE factor. We then categorized Sugg's videos as two primary approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

We collected links to videos uploaded by Sugg before August 2017 (Social Blade, 2018). Therefore, Sugg is an appropriate case of a self-branded vlogger where the achievement of AE can be seen as a form of CE contributing to her success on YouTube.

In our deductive analysis, we sought to identify engagement factors, derived from CE theory, that we thought existed in Sugg's videos. Three main codes were first developed — interaction, rewards, and information offers — as two primary approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These factors were then used to analyze Sugg's videos. We found that she implemented these factors in her videos.

We then categorized Sugg's videos as two primary approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These factors were then used to analyze Sugg's videos. We found that she implemented these factors in her videos.

4.1. Case study of Zoe Sugg

Zoe Elizabeth Sugg is a U.K. beauty vlogger who also became an influencer via her beauty vlogging creations on YouTube. She started her YouTube channel 4.1. Case study of Zoe Sugg

3. Interpreting AE factors via CE in vlogs

We initially compared critical factors originally implemented by companies for CE with vloggers' common practices for AE in existing studies. We identified three factors contributing to vloggers CE: interaction, rewards, and information offers.

3.1. Interaction

On YouTube, it is common for vloggers to engage audiences via interactions. These interactions include responses to comments and questions from audiences, showing interest in social media videos (Bagus and Grear, 2018; Rasmussen, 2018; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Tarnovskaya et al., 2016). However, Sugg is only one case, and we cannot be sure how typical she is, even as a highly successful influencer vlogger. We then categorise Sugg's videos as two primary approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.2. Rewards

Rewards can be useful to encourage a viewer's channel visits. For example, Sugg not only encourages her audience to subscribe to her YouTube channel but also promotes her other social media platforms (Twitter and Instagram). Therefore, Sugg is an appropriate case of a self-branded vlogger where the achievement of AE can be seen as a form of CE contributing to her success on YouTube.

3.3. Information offers

Offering information to an audience should be important for vloggers to promote not only their channel but also information that might be useful to their viewers. Previous research noted that vloggers promote information such as their social media sites (McRoberts et al., 2016; Tarnovskaya, 2017) as videos. Sugg also offers various resources to keep consumers informed about their products (van Doorn, 2018). This is also reflected in her vlogging (Van Doorn, 2018), which includes companies providing relevant information engaging consumers.

4. Research methods

4.1. Case study of Zoe Sugg

Zoe Elizabeth Sugg is a U.K. beauty vlogger who also became an influencer via her beauty vlogging creations on YouTube. She started her YouTube channel Zoella [2] in 2009 (including beauty videos. Her second channel, Zoella [3] contains videos of her life activities. She has been ranked on the Forbes' Top Influencer List of Comer (2017), and also features multiple social media channels including Twitter and Instagram. It can be argued that the her success on YouTube and becoming a brand kind of influence has helped her (Hoye, 2018), but not a perfect influence on other social media sites (Social Blade, 2018).

According to Social Blade (2018) at http://www.socialblade.com, 3080 of 21 million YouTube channels have over 10 million subscribers. As of 2020, only 708 channels out of over 37 million channels have 10 million subscribers (Forbes, 2020). Subscribing to a YouTube channel "demonstrates that a user desires a continued relationship with the YouTube personality." (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Hence, we consider subscribing to Sugg's channel as an example of a viewer's engagement in building a long-term and intimate relationship (Sashi, 2012) with her as a personal brand.

Therefore, Sugg is an appropriate case of a self-branded vlogger where the achievement of AE can be seen as a form of CE contributing to her success on YouTube.

Sugg's long-vlogging history since 2009 with multiple video types, allows us to analyze her output and extract relationship information. This is essential for analyzing a selected, specific case (Patterson, 1990). We are mainly examining Sugg's videos to demonstrate how the implementation of all factors can be interpreted as CE factors within vloggers' vlogging practices.

We then categorized Sugg's videos as two primary approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This is also reflected in her vlogging (Van Doorn, 2018), which includes companies providing relevant information engaging consumers.

We collected links to videos uploaded by Sugg before August 2017 (Zoella, 2018). Therefore, Sugg is an appropriate case of a self-branded vlogger where the achievement of AE can be seen as a form of CE contributing to her success on YouTube.

We then categorized Sugg's videos as two primary approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, Sugg is an appropriate case of a self-branded vlogger where the achievement of AE can be seen as a form of CE contributing to her success on YouTube.
We then employed CE theory and existing research to see how Sugg’s implementations of these factors contributed to her CE. Some interpretations were made based on other theories, including audience reactions to these implementations, as reflected by, for example, comments under a video.

Interaction
Interaction fulfilment refers to Sugg’s fulfilling viewers’ interactive requests. One typical example was Sugg’s use of Q&A videos, in which she answered viewers’ questions from YouTube comments or social media.

Encouragement of interaction
We identified two main ways in which Sugg encouraged interaction, which could be interpreted as CE factors that correlated with AE for Sugg.

First, Sugg actively encouraged viewers to leave suggestions for video ideas. For example, in a video, Sugg asked viewers to comment about videos that they wanted to see from her during the year: “I really want to know what videos you guys would like to see from me in 2015, so if you have any suggestions for those then do leave those in the comments below also.”

Second, Sugg requested viewer reactions by asking them to leave comments about vlog content. For instance, in a video, she asks viewers about the best time to visit Amsterdam.

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, we established credibility, dependability and transferability by employing the strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Some interpretations were also made based on other resources, including audience reactions to these implementations, as reflected by, for example, comments under a video.

For instance, one month after a hair tutorial requested by viewers in 2014, Sugg posted another hairstyle tutorial. She indicated that its content had been requested by viewers (Figure 1), indicating a co-creation loop. In this loop, Sugg’s creation resulted in further audience requests as an engagement behavioral leading to further fulfillment of interactions.

Sugg’s creating an audience-requested video also provided an example that was similar to co-creation between product providers and consumers in CE (Brodie et al., 2013; Brodie and Hohman, 2011). In co-creation, consumers (audience) provide ideas for product development (video creation).

The implementation of interaction
We identified two main ways in which Sugg encouraged interaction, which could be interpreted as CE factors that correlated with AE for Sugg. These actions are comparable to the corporate use of the facilitative role in marketing to involve consumers in projects or service development for CE (Vivek et al., 2020).

Encouraging consumers in co-creation contributes to CE (Brodie et al., 2013) and also lead to consumer loyalty because of a positive brand-consumer relationship developed during the process (Farhleit et al., 2019).

Therefore, we see an analogous process with Sugg’s videos in which she asks for ideas from her viewers. This resulted in viewers actively commenting in her videos.
Similarly, we found Sugg’s requests triggered viewers to give suggestions in comments, as shown in Figure 2. This is comparable to companies’ marketing efforts in engaging consumers for opinions on social media ultimately affecting CE (Mishra, 2019).

Figure 2: Examples of viewer responses to Sugg’s question about Amsterdam (composite image).

Therefore, encouraging reactions may satisfy viewer motivations and encourage CE through participation beyond video consumption.

Interaction reflection

Interaction reflects how Sugg’s reactions to her audience’s interaction, comparable to other vloggers who acknowledge viewers’ presence (McRoberts, et al., 2016). We found that Sugg notified the audience of her reception of interactions in videos.

For instance, at the beginning of a makeup tutorial, Sugg noted: “Firstly, I just quite like to ask how you are, because I feel like you guys are always asking me how I am, and I think actually quite like to know how you are.”

Sugg and her boyfriend Alfie Deyes also reacted to edited videos that her fans created called “Zalfie edit”.

These reactions may encourage viewers to continue to make creations as their form of engagement with Sugg, we found there were still uploads of fan-made footage on YouTube.
Sugg also expressed her gratitude for audience contributions to her channels in videos including thanking viewers for subscribing to her channel and liking her videos. For example, “Thank you all so much for letting the subscribe button, commenting on my videos, for liking my videos, for trusting me, for just being the most amazing viewers ever.”
Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

We interpret viewers sending messages or creations as consumer-initiated engagement (Vivek, et al., 2012). Sugg’s reactions to audience messages may give viewers the feeling that Sugg not only noticed their engagement actions but also cared about them (Rasmussen, 2018), which positively encouraged them to further engage with her.

Expressing gratitude for consumer contributions on social media is an important strategy for building consumer loyalty and as a starting point for long-term consumer-brand relationships (Shawky, et al., 2020).

Sugg’s interactions and expressions of gratitude created an interaction between the provider (Sugg) and consumers (audience) that is “at the heart of CE” (Vivek, et al., 2012).

By interpreting Sugg’s interactions with her viewers via CE theory, we propose that Sugg achieves CE through engaging her audience via interaction, implemented as interaction initiation, interaction management and reflection.

5.2. Rewards

During video collection and categorisation, we found Sugg offered her audience beauty or fashion products giveaways (Figure 4). We consider these to be a form of rewards commonly used by vloggers (Rybaczewska, et al., 2020).
Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

Figure 4: Sugg’s giveaways (composite image).

Providing these rewards helped Sugg achieve engagement because most of them were conditional rewards. To secure rewards, viewers were required to perform certain actions such as commenting under Sugg’s videos, which in turn encouraged viewer participation (Garcia-Rapp, 2016). These conditional rewards provided viewers with the potential to connect with Sugg beyond mere video consumption. Sugg’s rewards were similar to those provided by companies for CE behaviors (van Doorn, et al., 2010), such as consumer participation via social media sites (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Rewards have also been found to positively influence consumer participation and CE in social media brand communities (Kamboj, 2019; Kaur, et al., 2020). Hence, we regard Sugg’s rewards as a CE factor.

Sugg’s rewards took another form in encouraging viewers to “like” her videos in exchange for more video content. This action was a way of sustaining viewers by suggesting ways to interact with videos, encouraging AE (McRoberts, et al., 2016).

On the other hand, rewards are also used to encourage co-creation between consumers and firms (Huray, et al., 2018; Szymanski, et al., 2005) which in turn can develop CE (Hindle, et al., 2011).

Similar to corporate strategies of giving rewards for co-creation, requests for likes is potentially a co-creation activity (Obilo, et al., 2021; Shobky, et al., 2020). Sugg provided videos as rewards based on viewers’ likes for specific content.

Overall, Sugg used rewards by giveaways and “like for more” as a form of CE that contributed to CE.

5.3. Information offers

We found that Sugg actively offered information to her audience in different ways:
- encouraged her audience to check her other video content (Figure 5);
- promoted content of other vloggers, specifically videos that involved her collaboration with those vloggers; and
- constantly provided information about products that she demonstrated in her videos.

Figure 5: Sugg promoted videos on her second channel on the left side of the screen.

Similar to other vloggers (Garcia-Rapp, 2016; McRoberts, et al., 2016; Tarnovskaya, 2017), we found that Sugg promoted her social media sites for maximized online visibility (Marôpo, et al., 2020).

Sugg used visual “end cards” with links to her other content at the end of a given video (Figure 6). Although she has seldom used these cards since 2015, she still includes information that once appeared on these cards in video descriptions for her audience.

What's In My Bag? (Winter Edition) | Zoella

3,241,994 views

Figure 6: Sugg promoted videos on her second channel on the left side of the screen.
Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

By these actions Sugg acted in a way that was comparable to companion offering of related information, building relevance with consumers for CE (van Doorn, et al., 2010; Vreug, et al., 2018), like providing information about products on social media (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

Seeking information is one motivation for an audience to consume YouTube content (Buf and Ştefăniţă, 2020; Khan, 2017; Pires, et al., 2019). Dolan, et al. (2019) also found that informational content posted by brands on social media contributed to CE behaviors.

Sugg’s offers of information may satisfy viewer motivation and lead them to actively follow Sugg’s updates on the channel for more content as a CE behavior.

Sugg’s active promotion of her social media also connected her audience to other platforms.

6. Conclusion

AE is a common concept used to address creator-audience relationships on media platforms like YouTube. CE is also a common concept that is used to address consumer-provider relationships associated with brand success.

In the context of Vlogging on YouTube, CE and AE have rarely been connected to interpret vlogger success. This paper initially highlighted that gap by applying CE theory to offer a new perspective on interpreting vlogger AE practices on YouTube.

By viewing vloggers as personal brands, we characterized AE as a form of CE manifested by behavioral connections between viewers and vloggers that extend beyond video viewing.

We consider interaction, rewards and information offers performed by vloggers to be critical AE factors for their CE. This interpretation is based on connections between CE factors and common AE practices by vloggers in related research.

We then explored how vloggers’ implementations of these factors could be interpreted as contributing to CE by conducting a study of the YouTube vlogger Zoe Sugg.

Sugg’s AE behaviors that could be interpreted as CE factors:

- Sugg used interaction, with interaction fulfilment, encouragement and reflection.
- Sugg delivered rewards based on her own subject focus, mainly product giveaways, or provided videos as a form of reward by asking for “likes”.
- Sugg also offered related information that viewers may have needed to keep them updated and connected by actively promoting information about video content, social media and products shown in videos.

Based on theories and related research on CE, these AE behaviors are comparable to factors implemented by traditional brands to encourage CE.
Our research takes an initial step in bridge gaps regarding the explicit application of CE theory to vlogging, as inter-tuber interactions on YouTube. The research adds to the existing literature on how AI accounts by YouTube vloggers relate to their audience bases and their success. Our results argue that CE theory can be extended from a provider–customer perspective to an analogous individual vlogger–audience perspective. This study offers researchers a new perspective to understand behaviors by vloggers and similar social media creators and influencers for AI in their content and CE factors. Those factors can develop a vlogger–viewer content creator–audience relationship comparable to a provider–brand consumer relationship. Our research may also help existing vloggers or social media creators understand how their behaviors, strategies or techniques effect viewer experiences relative to CE.

There are certain limitations of our research. First, our results (that Sugg, as host, the prediction of our application of CE theory to approach AI in vlogging are borne out. Hence it may apply to other similar vloggers. However, further research should be undertaken on other vloggers to investigate whether, as at which points, this is so. Also, in the case study, we demonstrated how we can consider vlogs to a wider audience to those performed by traditional TV and film, CE. However, although our results predict that AI factors contribute to vloggers CE, our content to observe the effectiveness of those factors. In addition, our samples from Sugg were gathered in 2017. Assessing those data initially addressed research objectives of the application of CE theory to inter-tuber AI and based on Sugg's practices during that period to which her success had already been built. Moreover, YouTube is a fast-changing platform, so it is the vlog industry. For example, since 2018 Sugg shifted her focus onto her personal channel and channeler, as well as on TikTok (TikTok, 2022; March, 2023).

Future research could focus on more recent vlog industries and practices and compare these with our results. We could find out whether there are similar or new outcomes that could help an understanding of vlogger–audience relationships from the perspectives of CE. Finally, our research interests mainly focused on Sugg’s practices on YouTube, where her popularity was initially recognized. However, Sugg’s activities have extended beyond YouTube, including her beauty brand Zoella Beauty and her founding of the creative agency A to Z creative (Wix, 2018).

These professionalized and commercialized practices have made Sugg very different from mainstream celebrities and brands (Tur-Viñes and Castelló-Martínez, 2019). They may generate engagement that is closer to traditional CE when people engage as customers rather than as YouTube viewers. Further research could focus on the merge between YouTube practice and commodity practices to establish the establishment of engagement.

About the authors
Dr. Harina Zhang is a senior lecturer in media at Sheffield Hallam University. With a PhD in digital media and communications awarded by the University of Edinburgh, his research interests include aspects of digital media including social media, audience engagement, social hyperlinks, participatory cultures and network analysis. His research explores audience engagement with YouTube video blogs (vlogs), YouTube video interactions and general elements of online streaming apps. He is currently exploring including multi-modal, print and Web media productions, as well as in media evaluations and the professional landscape.

Direct comments to: Hantian [dot] Zhang [at] shu [dot] ac [dot] uk

YouTube video networks and gamification elements on online streaming apps. He is currently specialising in teaching audio-visual, print and Web media productions, as well as media evolution and the professional landscape.

is a senior lecturer in media at Sheffield Hallam University. With a PhD in digital media and communication awarded by the University of Edinburgh, his research interests include aspects of digital media including social media, audience engagement, social hyperlinks, participatory cultures and network analysis. His research explores audience engagement with YouTube video blogs (vlogs), YouTube video interactions and general elements of online streaming apps. He is currently exploring including multi-modal, print and Web media productions, as well as in media evaluations and the professional landscape.

Notes
5. Zoella [at] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8h692vwwj1j8S2P-HJ8Q-A5.
8. Descriptions of Sugg’s video types are in the supplementary data set file ““Zoella” profiles and video types” in Appendix A.
9. Video samples are listed in the supplementary data set file ““Zoella video samples”” in Appendix A.
10. Analysis examples can be found in the tables of the supplementary data analysis file ““Dichotomous analysis”” in Appendix A.
11. See Appendix A.
12. Six video samples (published between 2060 and 2011), were set to private by Sugg in 2020. Therefore, due to ethical concerns we did not reveal the content of those videos in this paper.
15. Zoella indicated that the video was requested by viewers (19:18): “I got a lot of requests from you guys saying: ‘How do you do this, how do you do that?’ So, I thought today I would do like, a tutorial mini video, showing you how I do one of my many styles that I like to do.”
17. Zoella indicated that the video the content was requested by viewers (19:29): “The next hair style I want to do is also very highly requested.”

References


Blurring the lines: Market-driven and democracy-driven freedom of expression. Gothenburg: Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communications Research (Nordicom), University of Gothenburg, pp. 153-161.

Bishop, 2016, p. 88.


Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoella Sugg


Forbes listed her as one of the top influencers in the beauty category in 20172. Her main channel, Zoella, mainly features videos about beauty products and tutorials, and other content such as conversational videos. She also has her second channel called Zoella Beauty3, which was created in 2012 contains videos of her life activities. Apart from videos, she has also created her own brands including beauty brand Zoella Beauty4. She also has released novels, such as the series Girl Online5.

Video types from Zoella Sugg (Zoella)

Collection7: These videos have a similar format as Hauls, but do not necessarily show things that Sugg just bought. For instance, she shares products she likes in the video series called ‘Favourites’. Products are not only beauty related, but also often such as food and clothes.

Personal Item Showcase8: In these videos, Sugg shows the audience things that she usually keeps personally, especially in her bag. Some of these items are regular daily essentials, but not necessarily beauty products.

Beauty Experience9: Sugg introduces her everyday beauty habits in these videos, such as her daily skin care routine.

Beauty Product Reviews10: In these videos, Sugg shows new products and expresses her opinions about them.

DIY11: These videos show food preparation and sometimes handcraft, such as festive dessert making and decoration crafting.

Fashion and Style12: These videos show Sugg in different scenes wearing different types of clothing. These videos mostly feature cinematic editing and background music. In addition to fashion, she also showcases her lifestyle in a similar format, for instance, showing home decorations and festive parade.

Year Conclusion17: In these videos, Sugg summarises what happened during the previous year and discusses her plans for the new year.

Topical Chat16: These videos feature Sugg talking directly to the camera about personal topics and advice.

Your Conclusion15: In these videos, Sugg summarises what happened during the previous year and discusses her plans for the new year.

DIY11: These videos show food preparation and sometimes handcraft, such as festive dessert making and decoration crafting.

Collection7: These videos show Sugg in different scenes wearing different types of clothing. These videos mostly feature cinematic editing and background music. In addition to fashion, she also showcases her lifestyle in a similar format, for instance, showing home decorations and festive parade.

Forbes listed her as one of the top influencers in the beauty category in 20172. Her main channel, Zoella, mainly features videos about beauty products and tutorials, and other content such as conversational videos. She also has her second channel called Zoella Beauty3, which was created in 2012 contains videos of her life activities. Apart from videos, she has also created her own brands including beauty brand Zoella Beauty4. She also has released novels, such as the series Girl Online5.

Video types from Zoella Sugg (Zoella)

Details on Sugg’s video types:

How-To: These videos feature Sugg showing her audience beauty or fashion products that she bought and providing some details, like prices.

Collectives: Collectives videos have a similar format as Hauls, but do not necessarily show things that Sugg just bought. For instance, she shares products she likes in the video series called ‘Favourites’. Products are not only beauty related, but also often such as food and clothes.

Personal Item Showcase: In these videos, Sugg shows the audience things that she usually keeps personally, especially in her bag. Some of these items are regular daily essentials, but not necessarily beauty products.

Beauty Experience: Sugg introduces her everyday beauty habits in these videos, such as her daily skin care routine.

Beauty Product Reviews: In these videos, Sugg shows new products and expresses her opinions about them.

DIY: These videos show food preparation and sometimes handcraft, such as festive dessert making and decoration crafting.

Fashion and Style: These videos show Sugg in different scenes wearing different types of clothing. These videos mostly feature cinematic editing and background music. In addition to fashion, she also showcases her lifestyle in a similar format, for instance, showing home decorations and festive parade.

Year Conclusion: In these videos, Sugg summarises what happened during the previous year and discusses her plans for the new year.

Topical Chat: These videos feature Sugg talking directly to the camera about personal topics and advice.

Your Conclusion: In these videos, Sugg summarises what happened during the previous year and discusses her plans for the new year.

DIY: These videos show food preparation and sometimes handcraft, such as festive dessert making and decoration crafting.
Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

17. Zoella (13 December 2016), “Social Anxiety & Frank Cat” at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LcOOGHdA4g
2. Zoella (23 December 2016), “Spilling Makeup Funnies (i.e. Leek Year Worst)” at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsxq_d7l-RA

Appendix B: 76 video samples collected from Zoe Sugg’s main channel Zoella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video title</th>
<th>Video URL</th>
<th>Date of upload</th>
<th>Video category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collectors Hunt: Topshop, New Look, Soap &amp; Glory, Style.com, Orange Circle &amp; Vintage</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>3 February 2012</td>
<td>Fashion &amp; Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty How-to</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>3 February 2014</td>
<td>Beauty How-to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Experience</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>23 April 2016</td>
<td>Beauty Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Review</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>23 April 2016</td>
<td>Product Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>23 April 2016</td>
<td>DIY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion &amp; Style</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>23 April 2016</td>
<td>Fashion &amp; Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical Chat</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>23 April 2016</td>
<td>Topical Chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
<td>[URL]</td>
<td>23 April 2016</td>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Thematic analysis results and process examples

Table 3: Examples of deductive coding results from a Sugg Q&A video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of described and transcribed content assigned to main codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
<td>Sugg indicates at the beginning that the video was made based on viewers' requests (10:52).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg asks for video ideas (16:48): “I get a lot of requests from you guys saying: ‘how have you done this, how do you do that’? So, I thought today I would do like, a midweek mini video, showing you how I do one of my many styles that I like to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Examples of inductive coding results for “interaction”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of content assigned to “interaction”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
<td>Sugg indicates at the beginning that the video was made based on viewers' requests (10:52).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg asks for video ideas (16:48): “I get a lot of requests from you guys saying: ‘how have you done this, how do you do that’? So, I thought today I would do like, a midweek mini video, showing you how I do one of my many styles that I like to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Examples of inductive coding results for “rewards”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of content assigned to “rewards”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Examples of inductive coding results for “information offers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of content assigned to “information offers”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Examples of deductive coding results from a Sugg Q&A video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of described and transcribed content assigned to main codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
<td>Sugg indicates at the beginning that the video was made based on viewers' requests (10:52).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg asks for video ideas (16:48): “I get a lot of requests from you guys saying: ‘how have you done this, how do you do that’? So, I thought today I would do like, a midweek mini video, showing you how I do one of my many styles that I like to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Examples of inductive coding results for “interaction”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of content assigned to “interaction”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
<td>Sugg indicates at the beginning that the video was made based on viewers' requests (10:52).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg asks for video ideas (16:48): “I get a lot of requests from you guys saying: ‘how have you done this, how do you do that’? So, I thought today I would do like, a midweek mini video, showing you how I do one of my many styles that I like to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Examples of inductive coding results for “rewards”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of content assigned to “rewards”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Examples of inductive coding results for “information offers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Main codes</th>
<th>Examples of content assigned to “information offers”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information offers</td>
<td>Sugg provides information about her Twitter handle on screen for viewers to follow.</td>
<td>Sugg made this video to answer viewers' questions sent on Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Sugg asks viewers to like the video for more similar content (09:21): “So, give this video a massive thumbs up if you want me to do more of these sorts of videos.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exploring audience engagement in YouTube vlogs through consumer engagement theory: The case of U.K. beauty vlogger Zoe Sugg

Editorial history
Received 23 August 2021; revised 9 August 2022; accepted 12 March 2023.

This paper is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v28i4.11822