

# **Vietnamese Generation Z's attitude towards YouTube influencer marketing**

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<p>Social media marketing in general YouTube influencer marketing in particular has become a rising trend in this digital age as more and more people are using YouTube, which makes this platform a useful tool for companies to reach out to more audiences. Therefore, companies from different industries have been carrying out YouTube influencer marketing campaigns in order to reach their target markets and deliver their values to consumers. As a result, it is crucial to study consumer's attitude and perspective towards this marketing practice.</p> <p>The goal of this thesis is to understand consumer point of view and help companies and brands which aim or will aim at Vietnamese Generation Z market to build sufficient marketing plans via YouTube vlogs. The aim of this research is to understand Vietnamese Generation Z's perspective and attitude towards YouTube influencer marketing as well as examine their ability to recognize partnerships between content creators and companies.</p> <p>The research was carried out using quantitative research methodology in the form of an online survey. The sample consisted of Vietnamese people who were born from 1995 to 2010.</p> <p>The results show that Vietnamese Generation Z is a suitable target market for companies that implement YouTube vlog marketing. For Vietnamese Generation Z, advertisements from influencers in their videos are a useful source of information on products and services. Vietnamese Generation Z has the ability to recognize advertisements in YouTube vlog well. However, the fact that a lot of influencers are not disclosing partnerships, remains a problem as it causes confusion for viewers as well as reduce the trustworthiness of the brands and the influencers themselves. It is essential for companies and content creators to take action to re-gain trust from consumers and keep YouTube vlog as a trustworthy source to find information on.</p>		
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# 1 Introduction

In the current digital age and the rise of popularity of social media, brands and companies are taking advantage of these platforms to approach consumers. It is assessed that approximately 3.8 billion people use social media and on average they spend around 2 hours and twenty-four minutes per day on social media (Broad Band Search 2020). Because of this, social media marketing in general, and influencer marketing in particular, are important marketing trends that can be used nowadays between different industries. YouTube – a video streaming service – has risen and become one of the most essential platforms for companies to promote their products and services through influencers, who are also known as content creators.

Although much research has been carried out (Woods 2016; Johan et al 2018; Viertola 2018) on social media marketing, in-depth information about YouTube influencer marketing is still missing. As most of the existing data are gathered from market research companies (Global Web Index), more research is needed on customer insights, for example perception of trust, the impact of YouTube vlog marketing on people and other aspects of consumer behaviour. This is extremely important, because understanding consumer characteristics will help companies to maximize the efficiency of marketing campaigns.

According to Choudhury, Vietnam is one of the five “most dedicated markets of YouTube in the world” based on how long users watching video on the site (2019). A research from Phan (2019) shows that there are approximately 50 million Vietnamese people who use social media, and YouTube is the second-most used app just after Facebook. Besides, this thesis is aimed at Vietnamese Generation Z because by 2025, this generation will make up 25 percent of the country’s work-force and can be seen as 15 million potential customers (Minh 2018).

The objective of this research is to discover Vietnamese Generation Z’s perspective and attitude towards YouTube influencer marketing as well as examine consumers’ knowledge about influencer partnerships. The goal of this thesis is to understand

consumer point of view and help companies and brands which aim or will aim at Vietnamese Generation Z market to build sufficient marketing plans via YouTube vlogs.

The research was carried out using quantitative methodology in the form of an online survey, which was designed to discover Vietnamese Generation Z vlog watching habits, the role of YouTube vlogs in helping them to purchase products, the ability to recognize advertisements in YouTube vlogs, and their opinions and attitudes towards YouTube influencer marketing.

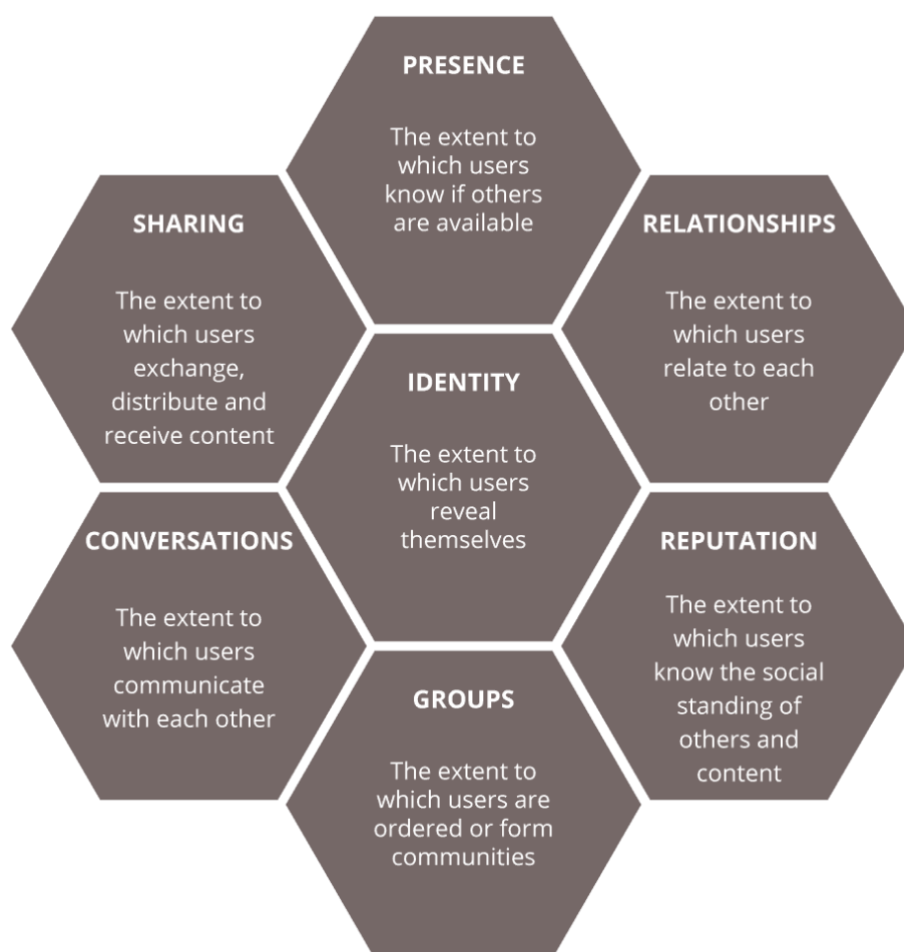
The structure of the thesis is as follows. First, the literature review about previous researches and the context of the thesis will be presented. Next, the research methodology and research results will be presented. That will follow with discussion on the importance of results. Finally, the thesis is concluded.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Social media marketing

According to Hudson, “social media refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real-time” (2020). Over the past few years, social media has become an extremely important tool to establish and strengthen relationships between customers and businesses as nowadays, people can easily release, share, and exchange personal contents in the forms of blogs, chat tools, videos, and other modes. Ahmad’s report (2019) shows that Facebook is the dominant application in social media marketing, following by YouTube with Facebook Messenger at the third place.

Kietzmann and colleagues (2011) introduced the honeycomb of social media functionality which helps businesses to illustrate the social media ecology, understand the insights of consumers in order to develop engagements. The framework includes seven social media building blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputations, and groups.



*Figure 1. Social media honey comb by Kietzmann et al. (2011)*

The Identity block represents “the extend to which users reveal themselves” (Kietzmann et al 2011). Personal information on social media, for example: name, age, gender, location, hobby, interest, perspective, and similar, are crucial for businesses in order to build strategic marketing plans. From contents that people share on Facebook to videos audiences hit like button on YouTube, these activities show users’ personality traits that help companies decide if they are high-potential targets.

The Presence block represents “the extent to which users can know if other users are accessible” and it illustrates people’s connection between virtual world and real world (Kietzmann et al 2011). For instance, not only showing if users are online or offline,

Facebook is now providing the estimate time each Facebook fan page answers people's messages. Furthermore, these connections also associate with users' presence in physical world through feature like location tagging and so on.

The Relationship block represents how social media users are connected and how they are interacting with each other. Users on these platforms can be associated on different levels: being friends or following each other, a group of friends who use group chat messaging frequently, event functionalities, fans, and other similar ways (Target Internet.)

The Reputation block demonstrates the way users identify their own reputation and reputation of others through a variety of mechanisms: followers, blue ticks, likes, subscribers, and others (Target Internet). These factors are considered as metrics for companies to evaluate the reputation of its community's social media engagement (Kietzmann et al 2011).

The Groups block demonstrates "the extend to which users can form communities and sub-communities" (Kietzmann et al 2011). While a certain percentage of activities on social media happen on private channels, user-generated grouping feature is also used widely in order for people to share the same interests or needs. Businesses can use this feature to increase their market share and opportunities if they can place themselves in a successful group (Target Internet.)

The Conversation block demonstrates "the extend to which users communicate with other users in social media setting" (Kietzmann et al 2011). Conversations can be defined as likes, shares, comments, messages and marketers can use these factors to track and modify their conversations between the brands and users (Target Internet). However, based on RadiumOne's report (2016), only 9 percent of consumers actually share company's contents on Facebook and only 7 percent share it publicly on other social media. 84 percent of the sharing activities take place in "dark social", the term that refers to Whatsapp messages, Instagram or Twitter direct messages, or basically all the communications on private social media messaging.

The Sharing block refers to “the extend to which users exchange, distribute and receive contents” (Kietzmann et al 2011). These contents can be videos, images, texts, links, location and various other kinds of information. It is important for companies to acknowledge about what their users have in common as sharing a content item can be seen as something which would emphasize a person’s identity. If the companies can engage and improve their contents based on observing consumer sharing behavior, social media users might be more active on sharing brands’ contents as they see matching values between the brands and their identities.

The honey comb of social media is very important for companies which want to carry out social media marketing as each block represents an aspect that need to be take into consideration while building this strategy. Social media marketing is not only publishing contents on different social media platforms but also about listening and engaging with audiences, building the brands’ images, analyzing users’ activities, understand users’ values and interests as well as the way they communicate with each other. All these factors are also important in YouTube marketing as this is a part of social media marketing.

#### 2.1.1 YouTube and YouTube Marketing

YouTube is a video sharing platform where users can watch, like, share, comment and upload their own videos. Millions of users around the world have created accounts on the site and it allows people to upload, watch, comment on videos free of cost.

YouTube is used by people from all ages and nowadays, it is very popular among teenagers. According to Siddiqui (2019b) and Madiha (2020), nearly 2 billion registered users would visit YouTube every month and in 2019, this platform dominated among five major streaming apps and consumed around 70 percent of people’s time.

In the last few years, YouTube has become an extremely important social media platform in digital marketing as according to Stelzner (2020), 60 percent of marketers in the research claimed that they plan to increase their YouTube marketing in the future. Users are able to create their own contents such as online journalism or



contents based on daily basis like product reviews, make-up tutorials, cooking tutorials or experiences while studying, working or living aboard. Well-known and successful content creators can become social influencers – that can be compared with celebrities (Westenberg 2016, 6).

As the popularity of YouTube has been rising remarkably, companies and organizations have discovered different ways to do marketing via this service. For example, some of the most common types are bumper advertisements, TrueView discovery advertisements and TrueView in-stream advertisements (YouTube Help). The bumper advertisements will last for 6 seconds at the beginning of the video, the TrueView adverts work the same way but last longer and the TrueView discovery adverts appear when you search for video in the search bar (ibid.). Besides from these basic forms, many companies also decide to choose to cooperate with content creators. The number of views for a video can reach millions, which shows that the advertisement is able to reach quite huge customer segments.

## 2.2 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing can be defined as “a type of marketing that focused on using key leaders to drive a brand’s message to a larger market” (Byrne, Kearney & MacEvill 2017, 1). Furthermore, according to Brown and Hayes (2008, 50), influencer marketing is defined as “A third-party who significantly shapes the customer’s purchasing decision, but may ever be accountable for it”.

According to Woods’s research (2016), “social media influencers was born out of the lack of an opportunity to advertise on social platforms”. It is also stated that influencers are created by the necessity for brand to have presences on social media platform at the time brands could not pay to have their contents featured on social media in the form of sponsored posts (ibid.). Influencer marketing can be seen from everywhere and under a variety of formats: a picture posted by a famous singer in which MAC Cosmetics is mentioned or a status on Facebook posted by a friend about their experience at McDonald.

As customers nowadays can decide themselves which influencer to follow and who they allow to influence them, it can be said that consumers trust their influencers and their opinions (Hsu, Chuan-Chuan Lin & Chiang 2013). As influencers are seen to be more credible and trustworthy compared to a paid advertisement, more and more brands are seeking for an efficiency influencer marketing strategy to spread their products and brand awareness.

When the companies decide their ideal influencer model and how they will influence their (future) customers, there are various ways to find them. One of the most basic ways is to do research about the industry, the products or services to find out the most viewed blogs at the time. A very effective way to do this is to follow the hashtags on Instagram, Twitter or any other kind of social medias. For example, we can search for the hashtag #maccosmetics on Instagram and they will give us 17 million pictures where the captions include that hashtag (see Figure 2).

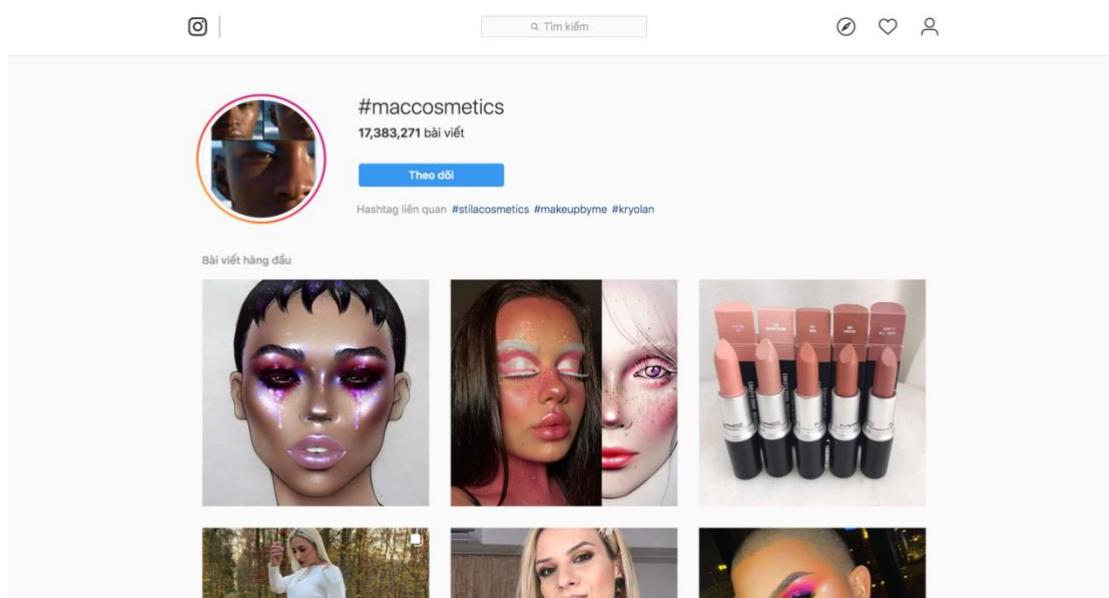


Figure 2. Result after searching for #maccosmetics on Instagram. Screenshot by the Author.

After that companies can check out influencers' posts to see who are they engaging with and check if they match the set requirements. The second way – which is the most common method – is working with agencies. There are many influencer agencies nowadays and they will help companies to select the most suitable representative for the brand images, the products or targeted customers. For instance, in Vietnam, MeTub is a famous digital entertainment company and YouTube multi-channel network (METUB). According to metub.net, MeTub is responsible for “building the leading network on support, promotion and distribution, video production for individuals, companies who are working in online content businesses” (ibid.).

## 2.3 Influencers – who are they?

Influencers are people who have influence on audiences present on various social media platforms, for instance YouTube, Facebook, etc. (Ehrhardt 2018). Influencers can be celebrities, brand ambassadors or nowadays also “internet famous personalities”, who have thousands to millions of followers/subscribers on the Internet (for example: vloggers, bloggers, fashionistas, and others) (Nguyen 2018.)

### 2.3.1 Spectrum of Influencers

The Pyramid of Influence presents the overview of influencer relationships (Starngage). In Figure 3, we can see that influencers are divided into different categories and levels. According to Starngage website, celebrities and thought leaders – influencers with a high reach and lower relevance – are at the top of the pyramid while influencers with lower reach and higher relevance are at the bottom. Moreover, influencers can be identified among the following three types:

- Mega-influencers: Actors, artists, social media stars and similar, who have over 1 million followers and drive 2 percent to 5 percent engagement per post (Starngage).

- Macro-influencers: Professional creators with strong passion for a particular subjects (bloggers and YouTubers) who have large base of 100,000 to 999,000 followers (ibid.).
- Micro-influencers: People with strong relationships with audience (everyday consumers) who have 1,000 to 100,000 followers and drive 25 percent to 50 percent engagement per post. These people have the highest relevance level to audiences and they influence consumers by their personal experiences with the brand and their engagement with viewers (ibid.).



Figure 3. The Pyramid of Influence. Source: <https://starnqage.com/influencer-marketing-vietnam/>

Besides these three categories, there are also Brand Advocates, who are typically known as consumers who are passionate and willing to share but have little influence.

According to SpourtSocial, “a brand advocate is someone who elevates your brand through word of mouth marketing” and “leaves positive reviews about your product”

The Pyramid of Influence is very important for companies that want to co-operate with influencers as different target segments require different levels of influence. It depends if companies want to reach a large amount of audiences or if companies want to engage with audiences on a deeper level and understand customers’ insight.

### 2.3.2 YouTube Influencers

Influencers on YouTube, also known as YouTubers or vloggers, are role models for their viewers. They collaborate with companies and become brand advocates in the social media marketing strategy of the companies by showing their products on videos (Viertola 2018, 14). In this way, influencers help companies to gain awareness for their brand, their new products and/or their promotions from the loyal subscribers of the YouTubers.

In order to create a positive and dynamic brand image, while using YouTube influencer marketing, interactive video content like invite followers and subscribers to join the video and experience the products themselves is essential. For example, Fabo Nguyen – a fashionista and a vlogger – created a video content to advertise a new clothing brand and at the same time, he invited one of his subscribers to join in the video and shop in the store together with him (see Figure 5).

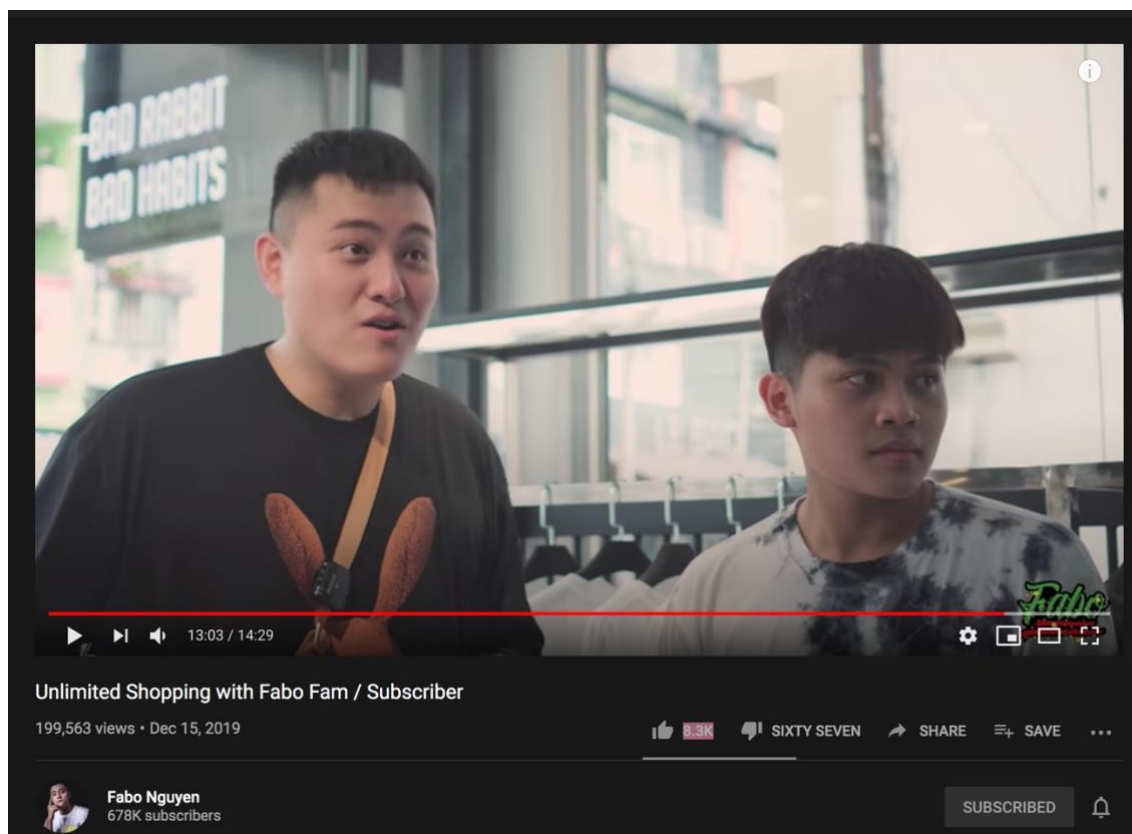


Figure 4. Example of interactive video content. Screenshot by the Author. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQsLPyOj898>


Furthermore, many vloggers also ask their subscribers to share thoughts and feedbacks in the comment section. This is a chance for vloggers to build personal connection between them and viewers and these conversations can also reflect the represented brands. By sharing their opinions in the comment section, subscribers are not only connected with the vloggers, but also to other subscribers, which is a part of electronic word of mouth marketing strategy.

## 2.4 Disclosing partnership between brands and influencers

Based on the Federal Trade Commission's Endorsement Guidelines, "advertisers need to have reasonable programs in place to train and monitor members of their network" (Woods 2016, 19). According to one interviewee from the interview by Woods, they always make sure to refer to "our partner" (ibid, 19) in the advertisement as a disclosure. In addition, it is important to disclose the partnership through hashtags

that “say ads, sponsored, on in partnership with” (ibid, 19) as both company and the influencer might be fined up to \$250,000 by Federal Trade Commission and lose trust and credibility among the customers (Rodriguez 2015).

Nevertheless, according to Alavarez, the lines between content and ads are getting blurry and this has been raising a problem of advertising without proper disclosure (2020). According to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), it is more difficult for viewers to distinguish advertorial vlogs as user-generated content or independent editorial (2020). For instance, a vlogger might mention the phrase “affiliate links may be present below” in their video, but not all viewers actually understand what is an “affiliate link” and only a small number of YouTubers actually give a proper explanation. In addition, another situation could be when the products/services are given to vlogger as gifts or the vlogger actually paid for the products/services themselves, but receive a share of profit if their subscribers also purchase them. In this way, content creators are more likely to fail to inform their subscribers about the partnership (Matsakis 2018.)



| Giveaway | Mua 1 Thùng Mỹ Phẩm 1000 Đồng Siêu To Khổng Lồ Ở Watsons | Con Thỏ

88,198 lượt xem • 16 thg 9, 2019

3,4 N 40 CHIA SÉ LƯU ...

**CON THỎ** 280 N người đăng ký

ĐÃ ĐĂNG KÝ

Hi cả nhà , video hôm nay thỏ sẽ unboxing 1 thùng mỹ phẩm thỏ mua được rất nhiều sản phẩm giá rẻ chỉ 1000 đồng ở watsons và sẽ giveaway lại cho các bạn những phần quà này nữa nhé hi vọng mọi người sẽ thích

+ Link mua sản phẩm: [http://bit.ly/w\\_1000d](http://bit.ly/w_1000d)  
+ Nhập Code "CONTHO" Để được giảm giá 10% khi mua hàng nha

Figure 5. Example of disclosing partnership by YouTuber "Con Tho". Screenshot by Author. Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_UKCqtRva4&t=51s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_UKCqtRva4&t=51s)

Figure 5 is an example of disclosing partnership as this beauty vlogger revealed the partnership of her channel and company Watsons by putting the direct link to buy the products and a promotion code – which is her name (CONTHO) – in the description box of the video. This is also an example of disclosing partnership through affiliate links.

## 2.5 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

According to Kenton (2019), word-of-mouth is free advertising, triggered by customer experiences. It is proved that 20 to 50 percent of all purchasing decisions are affected by word-of-mouth advertising as the primary factor and works the best when consumers make purchase decision for the first time, especially for valuable products and services (Bughin et al 2010, 2). Furthermore, the digital revolution has brought word of mouth marketing to another level which is now being called eWOM. With the advance of technology, it is much easier for customers to spread their thoughts and information about the encountered brands, product or services. Nowadays, product reviews are posted online through different social media platforms, either to praise or punish the brands.

However, electronic word-of-mouth marketing “may come as the result of a promotion, encouragement or other influence by a company, otherwise known as seeding” (Kenton 2019). Schaefer claims that influencer marketing and word-of-mouth marketing are not exactly the same (2018). As influencers are paid to promote the product, they need to disclose advertisements as mentioned above. On the other hand, word-of-mouth marketing can be considered as ad-free, authentic and trustworthy (ibid.). Furthermore, using influencer marketing means that the company is “borrowing” the audiences from someone who has a stable number of followers and relatable values with the companies (ibid.). In WOMM, “super sharers” – the way Schaefer names people who spread stories but have “a greater than average reach or impact through word-of-mouth in a relevant market place” – will joyfully spread stories without demanding revenue. According to Schaefer, at least 10 percent of



influencers are “super sharers” and share the stories without any incentives. In order to maintain their positions in the industry, influencers have to manage their access to the market and the products and they would willingly share the information because it is new, up-to-date or trending, and not because they are paid.



Figure 6. Food Vlogger Ninh TiTo eating only pink food for 24 hours. Screenshot by Author. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZdMUfGWwq4>

In Vietnam, the trend of eating same color food in 24 hours has been very popular and a lot of YouTubers have been participating and releasing videos that help audiences to get to know more about the products. Figure 6 above presents a YouTube vlog belongs to this trend, in which YouTuber Ninh TiTo ate only pink food for 24 hours.

## 2.6 Generation Z (Gen Z) – who are they?

According to Francis and Hoefel (2018), all people who were born from 1995 to 2010 belong to the Generation Z. These people are true digital natives from youth and have

been exposed to the internet, social networks, and mobile systems. People who belong to Generation Z have been described as rather optimistic and driven by their personal ambitions (Jörg 2017).

Generation Z often purchases with the intention to feel happy and spending money is a huge factor contributing to their happiness. They care about the brand image and gladly use brands to craft their identities. According to Jörg (2017), “people from Generation Z grew up with diverse family structures, a more varied mix of ethnic groups and blurred gender roles”. They are very comfortable with complex sexualities as well as gender identities and tend to have connections and friendships with people from different races. As Generation Z’ characteristic is connected to their social responsibility, they value the brands which have similar values and beliefs as them and would not spend money on those that do not (Autumnfair 2019.)

Francis and Hoefel claim that Gen Z’s behaviors are influenced by the way Gen Z view consumption and relationship with brands (2018). According to Beckman, 63 percent of Generation Z respondents would like to see a real person rather than celebrities in advertisements, therefore working with influencers on YouTube or Instagram in an authentic way is considered the key to reach out to this market (2017). In addition, before they go shopping, Generation Z would look up for inspiration, feedbacks, advantages and disadvantages of the products through social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and others. Even when they go shopping in-store, they would get real-time feedback from their friends and families via Messenger, WhatsApp or any other texting applications. According to Jenkins, prior generations had limited amount of information for their research on products or services and most searches were based on the salespersons at physical stores who were trained to sell the products (2018).

Generation Z is both practical and skeptical, since they grew up at a time when “alternative facts” have become a newsworthy phrase and as mentioned above, their familiarity with technology means that they are not easily fooled (Cheung et al 2017). Another trait of Gen Z is that “one size does not fit all” – which means that although Gen Z is one connected community with similar habits, each person interacts with

brands on their own terms. Therefore, in order to gain successful relationship with Gen Z, brands need to value different opinions from their customers.

### 2.6.1 Vietnamese Generation Z

Vietnamese Generation Z was raised when Vietnam was going through a phase of rapid economic change and was exposed to Western and international cultural influence that carries the concepts of freedom, individuality and right to indulge. As mentioned above, this generation was growing up in digital atmosphere that has influenced Vietnamese Gen Z' decision-making process (Mah 2019.)

Vietnamese Gen Z spends a significant amount of time on various social media platforms, for instance YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and they also follow influencers across these platforms. Apart from that, Vietnamese Gen Z also follows various topics and shows high interest in various influencer contents (Vero 2019). Vero's research has found out that close to 20 percent of Vietnamese Gen Z follow more than 4 influencers on regular basis and they prioritize the quality of the content over the popularity of influencers (2019).

Although family and friend is the most trustworthy source for advice for Vietnamese Generation Z, Vero's research also shows that this generation trusts influencers nearly as much. Besides, 56 percent of Vietnamese Gen Z say that they are more likely to trust the brands after seeing influencers promote their products and 57 percent claims that they like when influencers advertise for brands. Moreover, Vietnamese Gen Z is the biggest purchaser of influencer products, although the majority of them earn only around €260 per month (ibid).

Even though Vietnamese Generation Z has rather low income, they still have high power in making purchasing decisions and affecting the decisions of others. According to Nielsen's research, 70 percent of Vietnamese Gen Z can "influence the purchase decisions made by their parents" on various product categories like furniture, food and beverages, outdoor entertainment or even electronic devices (Minh 2018). From their childhood they can observe, choose and demand for the products or services, because families have more money to spend in the present dual-income households (ibid).

Besides, Vietnamese Generation Z is also skeptical, as they expect influencers to prove that the products are actually being used by them and to provide comprehensive information on the products (Vero's research). Vietnamese Gen Z also believes that there should be a connection between the product values and influencers' lifestyle or characteristics (ibid).

## 2.7 The influence of YouTubers on Generation Z

### 2.7.1 The influence of YouTubers on Generation Z's purchasing decisions

According to the study by Woods, YouTube marketing has an influence on young target audiences to the extent that it can impact on their general opinions and attitudes towards the product or brand (2016). Smith and colleagues conducted a survey on 4594 US adults in 2018 and the study results show that more than a half (54 percent) of the respondents agreed that YouTube videos are important in helping them make purchasing decisions. According to Westenberg (2016), YouTubers actually affect purchasing decisions of teenagers as they think YouTubers are honest about the products they promote and often want to purchase things that YouTubers have. Although young audiences know that influencers receive compensation for their endorsement, YouTubers nevertheless remain trusted and authentic source for their followers (Woods 2016, 19). By creating contents, interacting with their followers constantly and putting the application of the products into real life situations, influencers build their own credibility and trust that celebrities can not (Woods 2016 14). Based on previous researches, it can be assumed that YouTube videos do have influence on young audiences when they think that the contents are trustworthy.

In addition, advertising in the form of commercial cooperation does not bother teenagers as long as influencers can merge the advertising part into the rest of the video and the brand's value fits the YouTuber's style (Viertola 2018, 24). This type of advertising does not interrupt viewer's experience if the influencer does not mention about the products too many times and/or try to praise it too much. Therefore, the way influencers combine the advertising with other contents must be as natural as

possible or else it could bring negative reactions and impressions towards both the influencers and the brand.

### 2.7.2 The influence of YouTubers on other aspects of Generation Z

Besides from purchasing decisions, YouTubers can also influence other than buying behaviors (Westenberg 2016, 21). According to the interviews with Dutch YouTubers and Dutch teenagers by Westenberg, teenagers claim that watching videos of English-speaking YouTubers helps them improve their English skills. Furthermore, clothing, humor, behavior of teenagers can be influenced, and YouTubers even can have positive influence on teenagers' mood and well-being (ibid, 19).

Viertola states in the article that YouTube videos can be considered as education source, since young people also tend to watch Ted Talks and tutorial videos (2018, 23). Moreover, YouTubers have great impact on young people in relation to societal topics, such as feminism, equality or green branding and green products (ibid, 23). Therefore, as audiences nowadays are well aware of societal issues and environmental problems and are looking for brands with good reputation and image, companies need to take this into consideration when choosing and cooperating with influencers. For instance, YouTubers in Vietnam nowadays care about environmental problems and are trying to spread their concerns about this issue to their audiences. An example for this could be when vloggers require their drink to be put in their own tumblers instead of one-time-use plastic cups while going to a coffee shop or when they use their own bags while shopping and refuse to take more plastic bags.

## 3 Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Method

This chapter outlines the methodology and research methods implemented in this thesis. The thesis is based on a quantitative study that aimed to understand how Vietnamese Generation Z consumers are affected by YouTube influencer marketing.

The data for this thesis was collected using a survey. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions that were divided into five thematic sections. Beside from socio-demographic background information, the respondents were asked about YouTube vlog watching behavior (how often and what kind of vlogs), information on products and services searching behavior (digital or traditional sources), influencer marketing recognition (how consumers recognize that influencers are advertising products) and opinion on influencer marketing (see the full questionnaire in Appendix 1).

Before starting the survey, the respondents were provided information about its aims and were guaranteed full anonymity and voluntary participation. Their consent to participate was acquired before answering the questions. The questionnaire was designed and run during April 2020 using the Google Survey platform. It targeted Vietnamese people who were born from 1995 to 2010 and spend the majority of their life living in Vietnam. In the course of one month the survey was completed by 169 respondents, 159 of which fit the criteria set for this thesis. The link to the survey was posted on social media (Facebook groups of Vietnamese people) and was also shared through personal connections using the snowball technique. The link to the survey was sent to Vietnamese acquaintances who were asked to forward it to others.

### 3.2 Research Questions

The goal of this thesis is to understand consumer point of view and help companies and brands which aim or will aim at Vietnamese Generation Z market to build sufficient marketing plans via YouTube vlogs. To achieve this goal, it was divided into four main research questions: What YouTube vlog watching behavior is characteristic for Vietnamese Generation Z? How important are YouTube vlogs as a source of information on products and services? How well advertising on YouTube vlogs is recognized by Vietnamese g=Generation Z? What is Vietnamese Generation Z's opinion on influencer marketing in YouTube vlogs?

Based on the literature review and previous studies in the field, nine hypotheses were raised to help to answer these research questions:

H1: Vietnamese Generation Z watches YouTube vlogs one to two hours per day.

H2: Vietnamese Generation Z prefers vlogs from macro-influencers over other groups of YouTube influencers.

H3: Vietnamese Generation Z prefers YouTube vlogs from foreign vloggers more than the Vietnamese ones.

H4: Lifestyle vlog is the most popular type of YouTube vlogs among Vietnamese Generation Z .

H5: For Vietnamese generation Z YouTube vlogs are not a primary information source while making a purchasing decision.

H6: Vietnamese Generation Z can recognize advertisements in YouTube vlogs well.

H7: Vietnamese Generation Z purchases products/services that appear in YouTube vlogs.

H8: Product placement on YouTube vlog increases brand's trustworthiness among Vietnamese Generation Z.

H9: Vietnamese Generation Z who thinks that advertisements in YouTube vlogs are useful purchase products of services advertised by influencers.

### 3.3 Data analysis

The data from Google Survey platform were saved and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. There were 169 respondents in total who answered the survey, but some of them did not fulfil the necessary criteria for this thesis (for example, were too young or too old, did not watch YouTube vlogs, and similar). After using the filter questions (year of birth, nationality, current location and YouTube vlogs watching habit), 159 respondents were selected, who fulfilled all the requirements set for this thesis. The survey was analyzed based on the responses from these respondents.

Apart from the percentage evaluation of answers to each question, the average scores were counted when the questions had statements that had to be rated on a scale . The

results were also evaluated based on gender, while the answers of various questions were cross-analyzed and compared to each other.

## 4 The Results

### 4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

As a first step of the analysis, socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were investigated to evaluate the sample and context of the survey.

The average year of birth of the respondents is 1999, which means that they were about 20 to 21 years old at the time of the survey (see Figure 7). The survey only managed to reach the older part of Generation Z, therefore, the results are based on the older people and could not be generalized to all Generation Z. This is one of the limitation and the results should always be evaluated having this in mind.

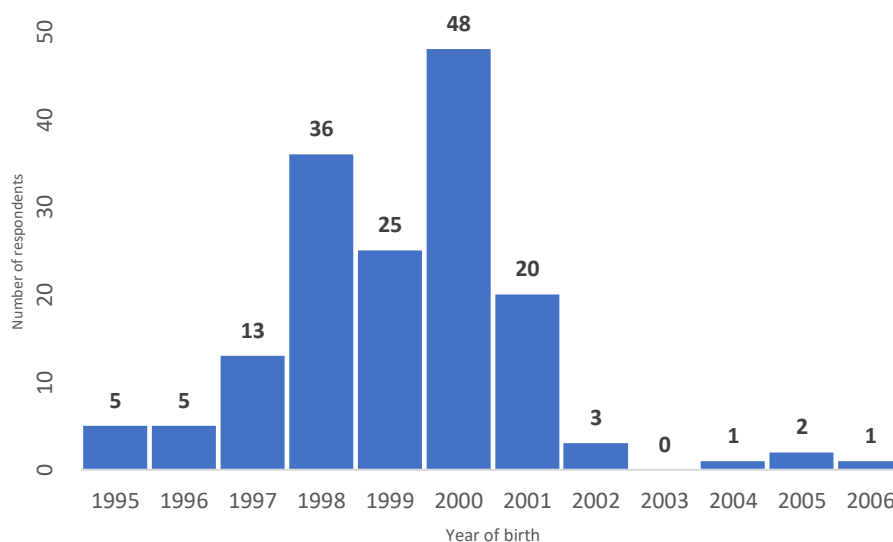


Figure 7. Respondent's birth of year.



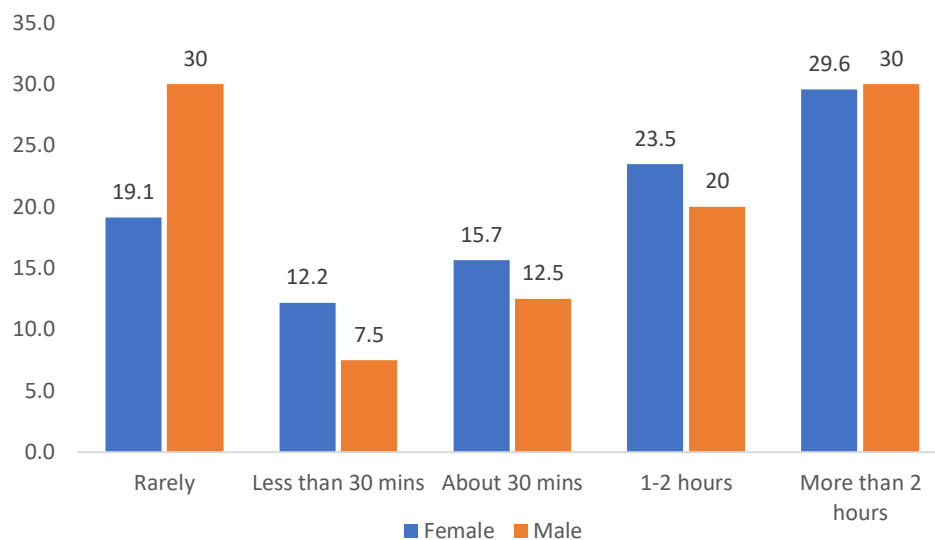
Based on the initial aim of this thesis to reach Vietnamese Generation Z, the nationality of all selected respondents is Vietnamese. Majority of them have lived in Vietnam all their life, and only a small number of respondents were living, working or studying abroad at the time of the survey, although they grew up in Vietnam.

The majority of the respondents were female (74 percent), while males constituted only approximately a fourth of the sample. Since the survey was shared on social media and through social networks of friends, it is possible that females were more active in sharing the link and more interested in the topic in general as compared to the males. Since the average age of female and male respondents is very similar, this thesis mainly represents the voice of the young (18-22 years old) Vietnamese women. This should be taken into consideration every time when evaluating the results of the survey.

#### 4.2 Vietnamese Generation Z's YouTube vlog watching behavior

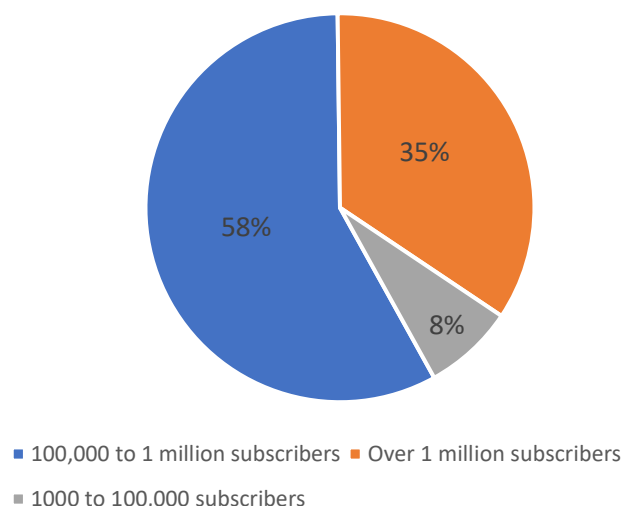
Before analyzing opinions on influencer marketing, it is important to find out generation Z's YouTube vlog watching habits. Based on the previous research, it was assumed that Vietnamese Generation Z watches YouTube vlogs one to two hours per day (Hypothesis 1). For this reason, respondents were asked how often they watch YouTube vlogs.

As seen in Figure 8, approximately one third of the respondents watch YouTube vlogs more than two hours per day. Only 22 percent of them watch vlogs from one to two hours per day. The share of those who watch YouTube vlogs about half an hour per day and less than half an hour per day is quite low and similar, but about one fifth of the respondents watch YouTube vlogs rarely. Based on these results, it can be stated that hypothesis 1 is not true. Vietnamese Generation Z seems to watch YouTube vlogs more often than it was initially assumed. The results are very similar among gender groups, although a larger share of males (30 percent) watch YouTube vlogs rarely, as compared to females (19.1 percent).



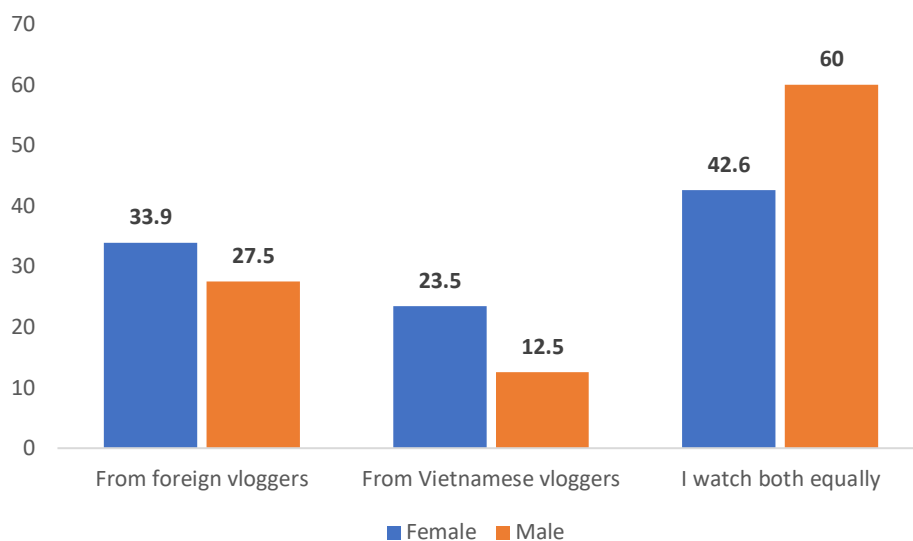
*Figure 8. The frequency of viewing YouTube vlogs among respondents*

As it was demonstrated in the Literature Review influencers can be divided into different groups that are based on the number of followers they have. From this, hypothesis 2 that Vietnamese Generation Z prefers vlogs from macro-influencers over other groups of YouTube influencers was raised. Figure 9 presents the survey results and shows that a majority of the respondents (58 percent) most often watch YouTube vloggers who have 100,000 to 1 million subscribers (macro-influencers). More than a third follow and watch celebrities (vloggers who have over 1 million subscribers) and the least popular are the micro-influencers (vloggers who have 1,000 to 100,000 subscribers). Macro-influencers are most popular among both females and males, although males (40 percent) tend to watch celebrities more often on YouTube than females (33.9 percent). Based on these results, the hypothesis 2 is confirmed.



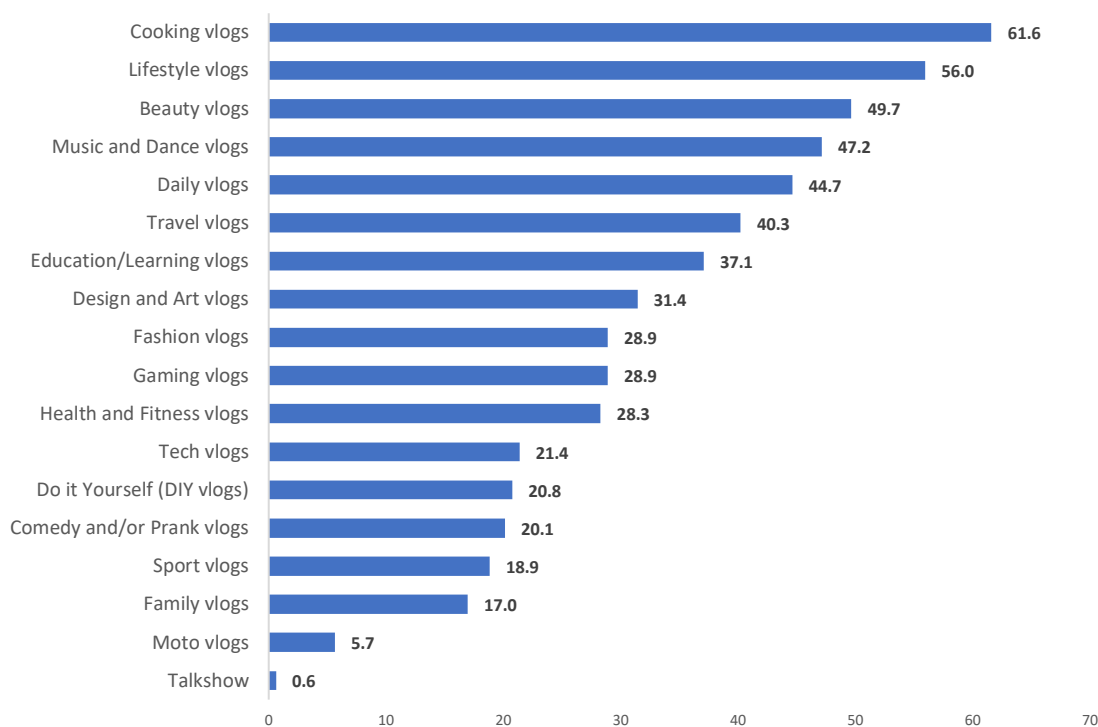
*Figure 9. YouTube influencer types by frequency of viewing*

YouTube vlogs can also be different based on their locality or nationality of the vlogger. In this thesis, it was assumed that Vietnamese Generation Z prefers YouTube vlogs from foreign vloggers more than the Vietnamese ones (Hypothesis 3). Figure 10 displays the types of YouTube vlogs that respondents watch more often and it is evident that they prefer both foreign and Vietnamese vlogs equally. Foreign vlogs are more popular than Vietnamese vlogs among the respondents, but hypothesis 3 cannot be confirmed as nearly a half of the respondents watch both types of vlogs equally. It is important to note that females tend to watch Vietnamese vloggers more often compared to males, while larger share of males watch both Vietnamese and foreign vloggers equally. Nevertheless, there was no clear preference for the foreign vlogs among both of the genders in the study.



*Figure 10. YouTube vlog frequency of viewing by gender*

As YouTube is one of the biggest and dominating social media platforms that allow users to upload video contents free of cost, there are different varieties of YouTube vlogs by their content. The hypothesis 4 was raised to evaluate Vietnamese Generation Z's preference for the type of YouTube vlog. It was assumed that the respondents will prefer lifestyle YouTube vlogs in the study. Figure 11 represents the types of vlogs on YouTube and their popularity among the respondents. Cooking vlogs was the most chosen category at over 60 percent. Lifestyle vlogs were the second most commonly chosen category, followed by beauty vlogs at the third place. Although about half of the respondents, both male (45 percent) and female (61 percent), are watching lifestyle vlogs, the hypothesis 4 cannot be accepted.



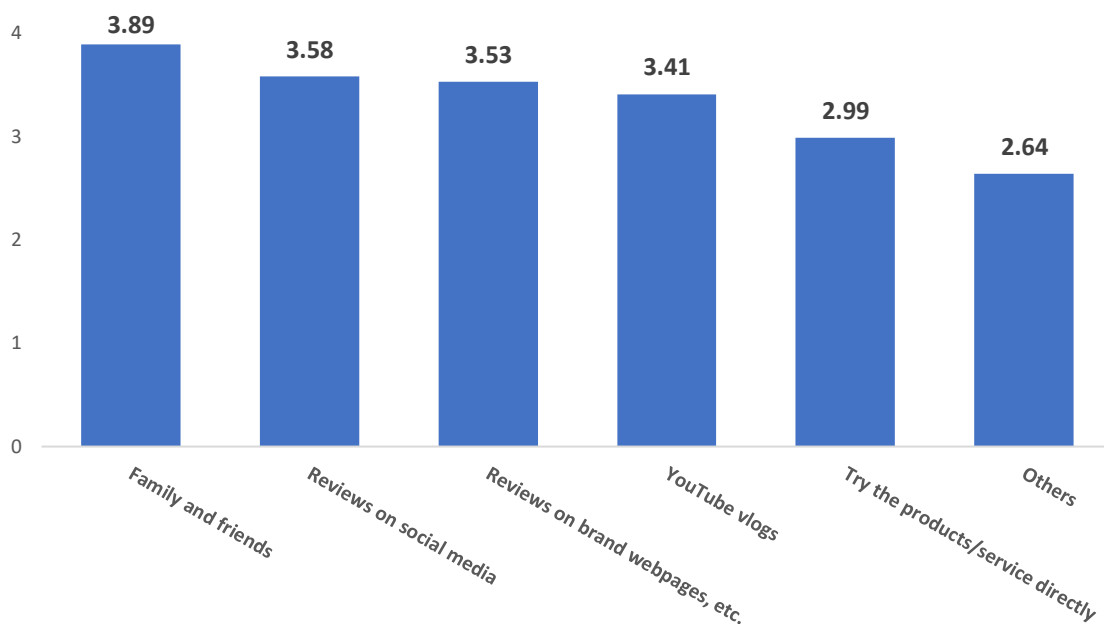
*Figure 11. YouTube vlog types by content and their frequency of watching*

This result that cooking vlogs are the most watched type of vlog could be affected by the fact that majority of the respondents were female. 71.4 percent of women who answered the survey watch cooking vlogs regularly as compared to only 32.5 percent of men. Beside gender factor, age can also be the reason why cooking vlogs are most often watched among the people in the survey. The survey managed to reach only the older age group of Generation Z who is starting their own independent life and probably need new skills such as cooking. In general, the survey shows that female and male have different preferences for vlog types. While females watch beauty and lifestyle vlogs more, male respondents watch other types of vlogs, for example gaming vlogs that were watched by 67.5 percent of the males and only 16 percent of the females. Nevertheless, despite the gender differences in preferred YouTube vlog types, lifestyle vlogs are not the most popular type of vlogs among the respondents.

### 4.3 Vietnamese Generation Z's information on products and services searching behavior

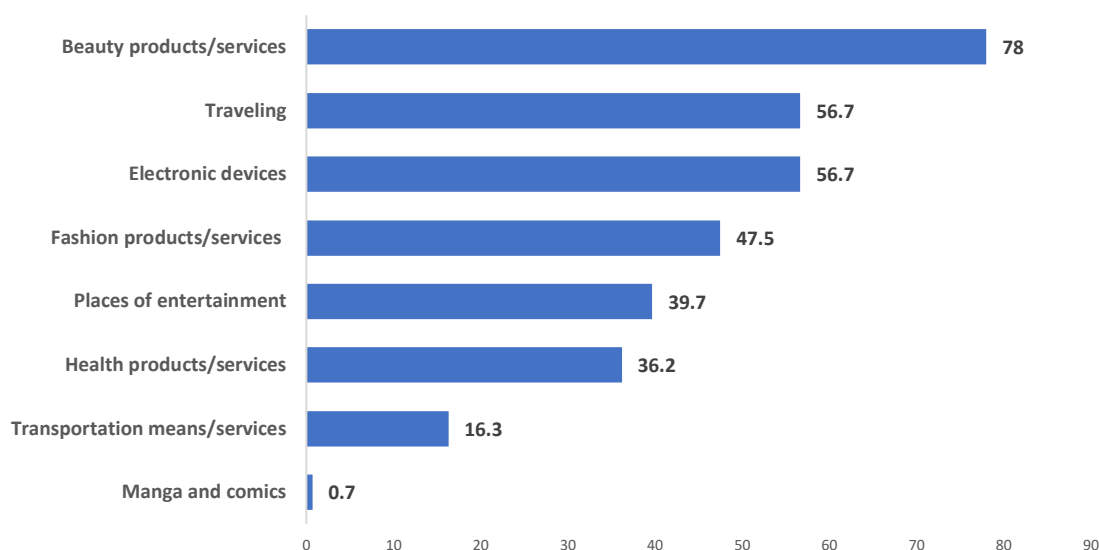
Before making a purchase decision people usually do research and search for the information on the best products or services on the market. Therefore, it was important to find out how important YouTube vlogs are as an information source. For this reason, the respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of possible information sources in their research on products and services. They were asked to evaluate each source on the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 meant "I never use the source" and 5 indicated "I always use the source". After that, the average score was counted for each source. If the average is over 3, it indicates that the source is important for the respondents and if the mean is lower than 3, the source is not very important.

Previous research shows that social media is important information source for the Generation Z while making purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, they also tend to have very strong friendship and family connections. Therefore, it is not expected that YouTube vlogs will be a primary information source for the respondents while making a purchasing decision (hypothesis 4). According to the survey results (see Figure 12), asking family and friends about the products or services is the most important source of information for the survey participants. The reason for this could be that their trust in family and friends is higher compared to other information sources. YouTube vlogs are only the fourth source by importance for the respondents. Nevertheless, customer reviews on social media, customer reviews on the Internet (brand webpages, online shops) and YouTube vlogs were evaluated very similarly and are all related to the digital sources of information that are typical for the Generation Z. Based on this, hypothesis 4 is accepted, since the primary source of information for the respondents that helps them make purchasing decision is family and friends.



*Figure 12. Sources of information used by the respondents to research on products and services before purchasing*

Despite not being the primary, YouTube was still considered as important information source by the survey participants. 88.7 percent of respondents confirmed that they used YouTube vlogs to find information on a product or service before a purchase. Based on the survey results (see Figure 13), information on beauty products or services was most looked for on YouTube vlogs, following with traveling information and electronic devices. These results can also be helpful for companies that intend to use influencer marketing strategy as it shows clear information preferences on products or services that Vietnamese Generation Z expects to find on YouTube vlogs.



*Figure 13. Types of product or services that respondents were researching using YouTube vlogs*

The reason why beauty products or services were most looked for on YouTube vlogs is related to gender. Majority of females (93.2 percent of all females) in the study used YouTube vlogs as a source of information on beauty products or services, compared to only one third of male respondents (34.3 percent out of all males). On the other hand, male respondents were looking more often for information on different type of products or services, for example electronic devices (80 percent of all males and 48.5 percent from all females). YouTube as information source is clearly related to the preferred types of vlogs by the respondents. Since females watch beauty vlogs more often, it is only natural that they would look for the information on beauty products in these vlogs. However, it is important to note that this connection is not direct. Products that the respondents were researching on YouTube vlogs are not related to the most popular types of vlogs they watch, that is, neither cooking, lifestyle or music, for example.



#### 4.4 Influencer marketing recognition

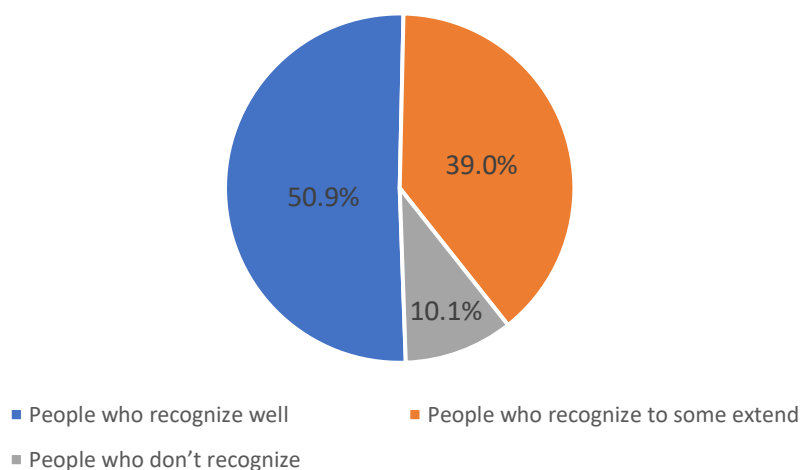
As it was demonstrated in the Literature Review, the problem in disclosing partnership has made the line between the video content and advertisements getting blurry. Since vloggers might confuse their subscribers whether they are having partnership with a brand and if their contents are advertisements, consumers can have difficulties recognizing promotion on YouTube vlogs. Therefore, it was decided to test how well Vietnamese Generation Z can recognize advertising on YouTube vlogs. Hypothesis 6 presumes that Vietnamese Generation Z can recognize advertisements in YouTube vlogs well.

First, participants were asked if they knew that companies often use vloggers to advertise their products or services. 56 percent of the respondents assured that they knew and have researched a lot about it, while 42.1 percent said that they have only heard about it, but have not thought a lot about this issue. Only a very small number of respondents (1.9 percent) have not heard or thought about the issue at all. This demonstrates that majority of respondents have at least some knowledge on advertising in YouTube vlogs.

To test how well they recognize advertising on vlogs, the respondents were asked to evaluate the statements on advertising. The statements represented a range from very obvious advertising (when the vlogger reveals partner's name directly; actively advertises the product or service in the video; includes the hashtags of the brand, product or service in the video) to hidden form of advertisements (when there are links to the product or service; when the name or brand of the product is mentioned in the video; when the product or service is mentioned in the comment section). The question also included the statements that described a situation which looked like an advertisement, but was not (the product or service just appears on the video; the vlogger uses the product or service as part of their video content without actively advertising it; if you can see the brand name of the product or service in the video). Respondents were asked to evaluate if the statement represents advertising, not advertising or if they could not decide if it is a form of advertising. There were 9 statements in total and among them, 3 statements were describing obvious signs that

the vlogger is advertising the products or services, 3 statements were showing hidden form of advertisement and 3 statements indicated situations which might look like advertising but is not necessarily the case. The recognition scores were counted for each respondent based on their answers to the statements on the obvious and hidden advertisements. Based on the scores, the respondents were divided into three groups: people who recognize advertisements well (with 5-6 correct answers out of 6), people who recognize advertisements to some extent (3-4 correct answers out of 6) and people who don't recognize advertisements (under 3 correct answers out of 6).

According to the survey results (see Figure 14), more than a half of the respondents recognize advertisements in YouTube vlogs well. Almost two-fifths of Vietnamese people who answered the survey can recognize advertisements to some extent and only a small number of respondents could not recognize the situations correctly. Based on this, hypothesis 6 can be accepted.



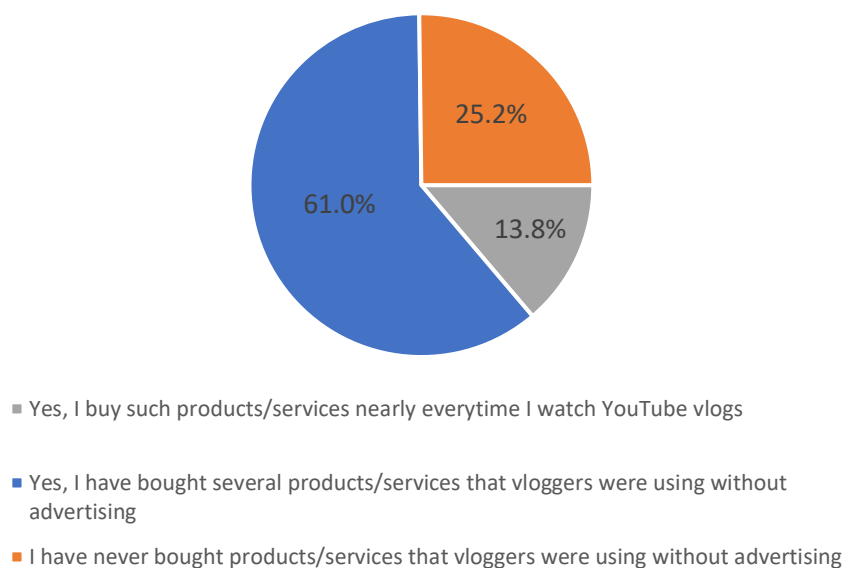
*Figure 14. Levels of advertisement recognition among respondents*

It is important to note that out of all respondents who stated that they knew and researched a lot about the use of YouTube vloggers to advertise products, only about

half (55.1 percent) could recognize advertising situations well. About one third (37.1 percent) of them evaluated the situations correctly to some extent and 7.8 percent could not recognize the advertisements. It shows that advertising situations are confusing for the people even if they know about them and have done research on the issue beforehand.

Pervious research display conflicting results whether YouTube vlogs have an influence on viewers' purchasing behavior. Based on this, the question about Vietnamese Generation Z's purchasing behavior in the situations when they think that the products or services were used in the video, but not advertised, was developed. From this, hypothesis 7 that Vietnamese Generation Z would purchase the products or services that appear in YouTube vlogs was raised. In order to test the hypothesis, respondents were asked about their purchasing behavior when they see that the products or services were used in the video but not actively advertised.

Based on the survey results (see Figure 15), majority of the respondents claimed that they bought products or services that were used but not advertised several times when they watched YouTube vlogs. A quarter have never bought any products or services that vloggers were using and even less people purchased products or services nearly every time they watched YouTube vlogs According to these results, hypothesis 7 is accepted.



*Figure 15. Purchasing decisions when vloggers were using but not advertising the products or services*

The reason why nearly two thirds of the respondents purchased products or services several times when they watched YouTube vlogs might be that when people see the contents as non-advertising, the credibility of that product or service increase. YouTube vloggers gain credibility and trust from their audiences by creating contents and interact with them regularly. When the audiences already trust the vlogger and they see the products or services that are being used by them without any praising or hyping effect, they would trust the quality of that product or service more and that would increase the likelihood of purchasing. However, even if viewers see the contents as not -advertising, it does not mean that there are no hidden advertisements included. As mentioned above, nowadays it is more and more difficult to distinguish non-advertisement contents from advertisements. Besides, the fact that people tend to purchase products or services when they see the content as non-advertising could be the reason why the problem about disclosing the partnership is increasing in the first place.

Among the respondents who purchased products or services several times when they saw them on vlogs without advertising, only about a half (53.6 percent) could

recognize advertisements well (35.1 percent could recognize to some extent and 11.3 percent could not recognize at all). The recognition ability is even worse among the respondents who purchased products or services nearly every time they saw them in videos without advertising as only 27.3 percent of them could recognize advertisements well (63.6 percent could recognize to some extent and 9.1 percent did not recognize at all). This shows that many people buy products or services thinking that they were only being used but not advertised, although they probably could not really recognize if the video contents were actually containing advertisements.

Furthermore, Generation Z respondents are confident that they can recognize partnerships between vloggers and companies. In the survey the respondents were asked to rate the statement "I know when vloggers are having partnership with the brands and when they are getting paid to advertise the products" on the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 represented "I strongly disagree with the statement" and 5 meant "I strongly agree with the statement". This means that the closer the score is to 5, the higher is the "confidence level" of the person that they can recognize the advertising situations while watching YouTube videos. The average evaluation score of the statement is 3.83 which shows rather high level of confidence among the respondents.

The confidence rate is slightly higher among the people who could recognize advertisements well as compared to the ones who could not recognize the advertising situations. Nevertheless, even people who could not recognize the advertising situations at all were very confident about their recognition abilities and had an average score of 3.56. Moreover, previous research on the issue also raises confidence level, since the respondents who claimed that they knew and researched a lot about the partnerships between companies and vloggers (3.96 on average) had higher confidence rates compared to the respondents who have heard but have not thought about the partnerships before (3.66 on average).

#### 4.5 Vietnamese Generation Z's opinions on YouTube influencer marketing

As influencer marketing in general and YouTube influencer marketing in particular are built on trust and credibility, it is important to examine the opinions of Vietnamese Generation Z on trust related to YouTube vlog marketing. For this reason, the respondents were asked to rate the statements on YouTube marketing in the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 represented "I strongly disagree with the statement" and 5 meant "I strongly agree with the statement". The statements included opinions on the level of trust, consumers' attitude, the trustworthiness between YouTube vlogs and other traditional marketing means, trustworthiness between influencers' levels, purchasing decisions, and purchasing experiences.

First, hypothesis 8 that product placement on YouTube vlog increases brand's trustworthiness among Vietnamese Generation Z was raised. For this, two statements were used in the analysis – one indicating more positive attitude "I start thinking more positively about the brands after I see their products in YouTube vlogs" and one indicating increase in trust "I start trusting the brands more after I see their products in YouTube vlogs". Since in both statements the large part of respondents chose the middle option in the scale (3 out of 5), the average score for both statements was around 3 and was not used in the analysis. Instead, percentage evaluation of the answers was applied.

According to the survey results, although the majority of respondents (47.2 percent) were unsure how to evaluate the statement and chose the neutral option (answered 3 out of 5), many claimed that they start to think more positively about the brands after they see their products in YouTube vlogs (37.7 percent agreed with the statement and 8.8 percent strongly agreed with the statement). In a similar way, people also start trusting the brands more after they see their products in YouTube vlogs (37.7 percent agreed with the statement and 39 percent strongly agreed with the statement). On the other hand, respondents were more likely to strongly disagree with the trust statement compared to the positive attitude one (13.8 percent and 3.8 percent respectively strongly disagreed with the statement). Based on this, hypothesis 8 can be

accepted, although one third of people did not express their opinions by choosing the neutral option.

Apart from the positive attitude and trust, the survey also asked respondents to evaluate the trustworthiness of YouTube vlogs compared to more traditional sources of advertisement (“YouTube vlogs are more trustworthy than advertisement on TV, newspaper or brand’s website”). Respondents were more likely to agree (27.7 percent agreed and 11.3 percent strongly agreed) that YouTube vlogs are more trustworthy compared to other sources of advertisement than to disagree (17 percent disagreed and 6.3 percent strongly disagreed) with the statement. However, a large number of respondents (37.7 percent) chose the middle evaluation of 3 in the scale, which could indicate indecisiveness on the trustworthiness of YouTube vlogs among the respondents.

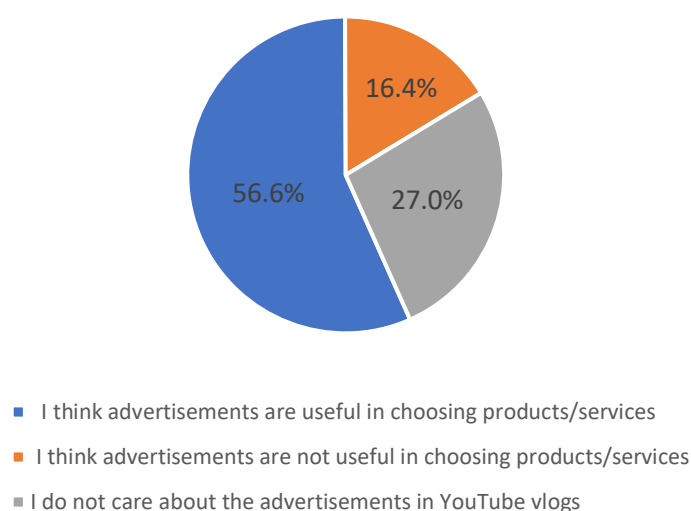
Respondents were also asked to evaluate the trustworthiness of different types of vloggers. They more likely agree that less known vloggers are more trustworthy compared to celebrities. However, the difference between agreeing and disagreeing opinions is not very large (approximately 15 percent). Besides, majority of people who answered the survey chose the neutral option. This result indicates that although the trustworthiness of micro vloggers is higher compared to celebrities, the difference in trustworthiness is not particularly large.

Beside trustworthiness, the survey also aimed to examine the usefulness of YouTube advertisements. As it was shown in Literature Review, previous research found out that advertisements in YouTube vlogs do not bother viewers if content creators do not exaggerate or praise the products or services too much and affect the video contents in this way. It was also previously proved that many people see YouTube vlogs as useful and important in helping them make purchasing decisions. In order to test this on Vietnamese generation Z, hypothesis 9 was raised. It assumes that Vietnamese generation Z who thinks that advertisements in YouTube vlogs are useful purchase products of services advertised by influencers.

More than a half of the respondents find advertisements in YouTube vlogs useful while choosing products or services, only small share do not find them helpful and nearly

one third do not care about advertisements in vlogs (see Figure 16). These results show that YouTube advertisements are useful when making purchasing decisions among the Vietnamese Generation Z. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the respondents actually buy the products that are advertised by the influencers. To test this, the question on advertisement usefulness was examined in connection with the evaluation of the statement “I purchase the product/service even if I know that vlogger is paid to advertise them”.

Respondents who think that advertisements in YouTube vlogs are useful tend to agree (32.2 percent) or strongly agree (7.78 percent) that they purchase products or services advertised by the influencers. People who consider advertisements useful are more likely to purchase the products or services advertised by influencers compared to the ones who do not care about advertisements or do not find them helpful (average score of 3.22, 2.70 and 2.88 respectively). This shows that usefulness of the advertisements leads to actual purchasing behaviour of the Generation Z. Based on this result, hypothesis 9 is confirmed.



*Figure 16. The usefulness of advertisements on YouTube vlogs*



The usefulness of advertisements is also connected to non-objection to their existence in YouTube vlogs. People who find advertisements in YouTube vlogs useful do not mind seeing them in YouTube vlogs ( 38.9 percent agreed and 16.7 percent strongly agreed with the statement “I do not mind advertisements of products/services by the vloggers in their YouTube videos”). Even among the respondents who claimed that they do not find the advertisements in YouTube vlogs useful, 23.1 percent agreed and 11.5 percent strongly agreed that they do not mind seeing them in YouTube vlogs. Even though majority of the respondents did neither agree nor disagree with the statement (chose 3 out of 5 in the scale), the rest did not object to the existence of advertisements in YouTube videos, even if they do not find them useful themselves.

Survey participants were also asked to rate the statement “I was never disappointed by the products/services that I bought based on the advertisements in YouTube vlogs”. This statement, when analyzed together with the question on advertisement usefulness, intended to test if disappointment in purchases is connected to the evaluation of the advertisements on YouTube. While the average evaluation of this statement is very similar among all three groups of people who find YouTube advertisements useful, not useful or do not mind about them (2.81, 2.88 and 2.93 respectively), respondents who find advertisements useful were more likely to strongly disagree with the statement (13.3 percent compared to 7.0 percent among the ones who do not care and 7.7 among those who do not find advertisements useful) and less likely to strongly agree compared to the other two groups (3.3 percent compared to 7 percent among the ones who do not care and 7.7 among those who do not find advertisements useful). ). This shows that even though some respondents have experienced disappointment purchasing products or services based on YouTube vlogs before, they still find these advertisements useful. On the other hand, it is possible that people who had unpleasant experiences purchasing products or services based on YouTube influencer, do not find these ads useful anymore.

Trustworthiness and usefulness of YouTube as a source of advertising are not straightforwardly connected to each other. All three groups of respondents who find

YouTube advertisements useful, not useful or do not mind about them evaluate the trustworthiness of YouTube vlogs similarly (average score of 3.24, 3.15 and 3.16 respectively on the statement that YouTube vlog is more trustworthy than traditional advertisement). This result is rather surprising, because it could be assumed that people who find YouTube vlogs useful would trust YouTube vlogs as a source of advertising more than other traditional advertisements. On the other hand, as previous results show, YouTube is not the main source of information while making a purchasing decision. Therefore, the fact that its trustworthiness is rated similarly among three groups who evaluate the usefulness of advertisements on YouTube differently confirms that YouTube is an additional, but not the most trustworthy, source of information while deciding on possible purchases.

## 5 Discussion

This thesis analyzed Vietnamese Generation Z's opinion on YouTube influencer marketing. One of the most important finding is Vietnamese Generation Z is a good target market for YouTube influencer marketing strategy because they are very active on social media and after seeing brands' products/services on YouTube vlogs, they tend to trust and have positive attitudes for the brands. However, there are still some problems that companies should take into consideration.

The study revealed that Vietnamese Generation Z spends a lot of time on YouTube vlogs. This makes them an important target segment for the companies that use or intend to use YouTube influencers in their marketing strategies. The reason why Vietnamese Generation Z spends a considerable amount of time watching vlogs might be YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms and in general, as mentioned in Literature Review chapter, Generation Z uses YouTube as a tool to for education and entertainment.

Watching YouTube vlogs gives a viewer a chance to observe another person's life and daily activities. This could be another reason why Vietnamese Generation Z spends a lot of time on YouTube. People might be interested in watching vlogs because it gives them a closer look to the influencers' life and also inspires them to make changes in

their lifestyles, which can explain why lifestyle vlog is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most watched type of vlogs. As mentioned in Literature Review chapter, Vero's research states that Vietnamese Generation Z believes there should be connections between the product values and influencers' characteristics. Based on this, companies are advised choose influencers who match up with the existing or sought for lifestyle of their target markets.

Vietnamese Generation Z prefers macro-influencers over celebrities or micro-influencers. It is related to their belief that lesser known influencers are more trustworthy than celebrities. These influencers have a stable fan base and are famous, but still relatable for their audiences since they manage to maintain similarities between themselves and their audiences (for instance they live in the same city, work or study in the same field, or have similar family background). Besides, macro-influencers have closer connection to their viewers through comments, mini games, and fan meetings that is not typical for celebrities. All these factors help viewers and content creators build a solid relationship which increase trust and positive feelings. Therefore, brands should take this into consideration when choosing the influencer level for their products/services based on the relevant between the products' values and the influencers' characteristics. Furthermore, to make the marketing strategy more efficiency, there is a need to increase interaction between vloggers and their subscribers, for instance having mini games or fan meetings.

Vietnamese Generation Z does not have a clear preference for Vietnamese or foreign YouTubers. Although they usually watch both of them equally, foreign vlogs are slightly more popular than Vietnamese vlogs. Although this thesis did not examine the reasons behind the preferences, it could be assumed that foreign vlogs are more entertaining, more professional. Foreign vlogs are also more popular among males, who have interests in more international topics – sports, gaming, cars, while females are more interested in Vietnamese vlogs, since they more often watch beauty, cooking, fashion vlogs that are more cultural and location based. Moreover, besides from entertainment factor, watching vlogs from foreigners could also help people to improve their foreign language skills as was shown in previous research from Westenburg (2016). It can be assumed that young Vietnamese people are also

practicing their foreign language skills through while watching videos in YouTube. However, the research did not ask neither what language foreign vlogs people watch nor inquired about their language skills. Based on this, brands are advised to target not only Vietnamese vloggers but also foreign vloggers to advertise their products/services.

Cooking vlogs were the most popular type of YouTube vlog followed by the survey participants. Although the popularity can be partly explained by gender factor (mostly watched by females), the interest in learning new skill can explain why this type of vlogs (and also DIY vlogs, for example) are popular among Vietnamese Generation Z. The average age of respondents who answered the survey was around 20 to 21 years old and it is the group of people who are preparing to start or have just started their own life, for example moved out to their own households, started studying abroad or living away from their families. These situations might make them more pressured in learning new skills and, consequently, in watching cooking vlogs as these videos usually provide short, clear and entertaining instructions on a new set of skills, whether it is cooking or making anything else themselves.

Besides from entertaining purpose, YouTube vlogs can also be considered as a good source for consumers to find information on the products or services. The reason for this could be nowadays there are more and more brands are using YouTube influencer marketing as a tool to reach out to consumers (as mentioned in Literature Review chapter) and this turns YouTube into a good platform for users to discover new brands as well as tracking products' reviews. However, according to the respondents, their most used source is from family and friends who used the products/services before. This can be explained as they tend to trust the closet people around them more as family members and friends are trustworthy and it is also the fastest way to get information. Even though the targeted respondents are at their young age and they are not completely independent (financially and other aspects), it is proved that they actually have really high power in making purchase decisions and influence the others. Although YouTube vlog is standing at the 4<sup>th</sup> place, the survey results show YouTube vlog is still one of the most common sources. As influencer trend is growing at rapid speed, this marketing strategy is becoming very important especially in beauty,

travelling and electronic device industry. Naturally, influencers build their reputation based on trust and authenticity which also an important factor in influencer marketing. However, as mentioned in Literature Review chapter, disclosing partnership between influencers and companies is a rising issue that cause confusion and trust issue for consumers. Companies should take this in consideration and focus more on developing YouTube influencer marketing as well as fixing trust problem if they want to target Vietnamese Generation Z.

Overall, Vietnamese Generation Z can recognize advertisements in YouTube vlogs to some extent. High number of people who cannot recognize advertising correctly indicates that advertising situations in YouTube vlogs are obscure and difficult to assess. Vietnamese Generation Z, nevertheless, is very confident that they can recognize advertisements, especially if they have read and researched about this before. The results are very similar to the previous research (Westenberg 2016) that demonstrated how Dutch teenagers do not feel the need for content creators to put hashtag #sponsored while posting videos, since they were confident that they are able to recognize promotions in YouTube vlogs even without them. Moreover, the fact that there were people who did not recognize even the obvious signs of advertising in the described situations indicates that Generation Z does not pay attention to advertising or they do not understand what the partnership or advertising on YouTube actually means.

Researched population tends to buy products or services from YouTube videos if they are not advertised, although in many cases they are not able to recognize advertisements well. This raises a question about partnerships and their disclosure once again. Moreover, the trust issue is also important, since even when viewers think that there is no advertisements in vlogs, it does not mean that the partnership does not exist. It may be discussed what would be the most proper and obvious way to indicate the partnership without it being obstructive or vague in the video. Hidden forms of advertisements or even concealing of partnerships is very common nowadays (Westenberg 2016). One reason for this can be if the partnership is not clear and vloggers do not feel the need to disclose it (for example, when products were sent to influencers as gifts or when the influencers paid for the products themselves and only

receive small profit when subscribers purchase products through the affiliate links). Another reason why vloggers try to avoid revealing their partnership could be if they are worried about the drop in views if people see that the video contains advertisements. In order to solve this issue, there is a need for companies and influencers to be self-conscious and make the influencing process transparent in order to build trust from audiences.

As Vietnamese Generation Z tends to have positive attitude and trust the brands more after seeing their products in YouTube vlogs, this could be an essential marketing possibility for new brands and companies in different industries. In addition, YouTube can reach larger markets and more dedicated audiences as was shown by Westenberg's research (2016) and can be seen as a trustworthy source of information as was established by the survey in this thesis. As influencers are trusted by their subscribers, having influencers as intermediaries would help companies to gain more trust from their consumers as well. Traditional marketing means are usually seen as pure advertisements that show only the positive side of the products and could be considered as not authentic. Advertising on YouTube can provide this authenticity by placing products or services in real life situations and used by relatable and genuine people who are similar to the viewers. Vietnamese Generation Z also tend to agree that less known influencers are more trustworthy than celebrities, even though the difference is not very high. Therefore, it depends on the company to decide which level of influencers they prefer for their target markets.

Advertisements in YouTube vlogs are considered not only trustworthy, but also useful. This shows that YouTube influencer marketing is already working well for this specific market, however, there are still some existing problems. It was found out that that people who find advertisements useful will purchase products even when the influencers reveal their partnership. However, even if advertisements are found to be useful, people still experience disappointment while purchasing products or services based on influencers' videos. People who find advertisements not useful also are less likely to purchase the products based on the advertisements and have more disappointing purchasing experiences compared to the other groups. Overall, it can be assumed that people stop finding YouTube vlog marketing useful and are less likely to

be influenced by this marketing strategy in their purchasing behaviour, if they are losing trust through disappointing experiences. If the influencers and/or companies continue to fail solving this problem, it is likely that they would lose a large share of their costumers and interest of the target market. In order to keep this marketing strategy trustworthy and authentic in consumers' eyes, proper solutions should be implemented. One of them, for example, could be when influencers and companies listen to the needs of their subscribers and consumers through the comment section or emails and take real and timely actions to solve problems or respond to feedbacks.

Overall, Vietnamese Generation Z is an important target market for companies that implement YouTube influencer marketing. In order to carry out the marketing campaigns in the most effective way, companies need to take into consideration the types of vlogs Vietnamese Generation Z watches the most (cooking vlogs and lifestyle vlogs), the level of influencers they follow (macro-influencer and celebrities) and the mindset of young people, who enjoy entertaining, creative and fast contents.

## 6 Conclusion

The thesis examined Vietnamese Generation Z's point of view towards YouTube influencer marketing. It was found out that YouTube influencer marketing is an important strategy for the future markets. However, it also confirmed that trust questions are important in YouTube influencer marketing and can become a problem if not addressed properly. Although YouTube vlogs are considered as an important source of information before purchasing process, the fact that many influencers nowadays do not disclose their partnerships is making this marketing channel less trustworthy. Moreover, not disclosing partnership causes people to confuse advertising and non-advertising contents, consequently, it is harder for the consumers to recognize advertisements in the YouTube videos.

The influencer trend is continuing to grow, which makes influencer marketing strategy very important. This can be especially applied for the new brands and companies, as people tend to evaluate brands more positively and trust them more after seeing the products or services in YouTube vlogs. Besides, Vietnamese Generation Z sees YouTube

influencer marketing as more trustworthy than more traditional marketing means. Most searched for industries by the Vietnamese Generation Z are beauty, traveling and electronic device industries. Therefore, these industries could benefit most from this marketing strategy in the future and build the trust for their brands.

It is essential for companies and influencers to put more effort in solving consumer complaints and to retain and regain trust from the Vietnamese Generation Z. Part of the Vietnamese Generation Z were disappointed while purchasing products or services based on influencers' advertisements and they do not find advertisements on YouTube vlogs as a useful source of information in their purchasing decisions. In order to keep YouTube vlogs as a trustworthy and authentic source of information, brands and content creators need to take more direct action to clarify the partnership agreements, to respond to the feedbacks or solve problems based on the viewer comments, value different opinions, and have designate solutions for each potential consumer.



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## Appendix 1

### **YouTube vlogs and products/services**

You are being invited to participate in a research study on YouTube vlogs. This study is part of my Bachelor's Thesis in Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. The purpose of this research is to find out the opinions on YouTube vlogs and purchasing products and services. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. It will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Your participation will be kept anonymous. It is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. There are no foreseeable risks from participating in this study. If you have questions about this research or any research-related problem, you may contact me at [han.le@student.jamk.fi](mailto:han.le@student.jamk.fi)

I have read the preceding information describing this study and freely consent to participate in this study. My decision to participate or to decline participating in this study is completely voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. By pressing "Next", I agree to participate in this study.

Thank you for your answers!

## 1. 1. What is your birth year \*

Mark only one oval.

- Before 1995      *Skip to section 12 (Thank you!)*
- 1995
- 1996
- 1997
- 1998
- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- After 2010      *Skip to section 12 (Thank you!)*

### Background information

## 2. I am \*

Mark only one oval.

- Vietnamese
- Not Vietnamese      *Skip to section 12 (Thank you!)*

### Background information

## 3. 2. Where do you live? \*

Mark only one oval.

- I live in Vietnam and lived here all my life
- I lived in Vietnam majority of my life, but now I am living abroad because of my studies/work
- I lived and continue living out of Vietnam majority of my life

## 4. 3. What is your gender? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

## YouTube vlogs

## 5. 4. How often do you watch YouTube vlogs? \*

Mark only one oval.

- More than 2 hours per day
- 1-2 hours per day
- About half an hour per day
- Less than half an hour per day
- I rarely watch vlogs
- I never watch vlogs      *Skip to section 12 (Thank you!)*

## YouTube vlogs



6. 5. What kind of YouTube vlogs do you watch? (choose all types of vlogs you usually watch) \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- Daily vlogs
- Lifestyle vlogs
- Family vlogs
- Gaming vlogs
- Beauty vlogs
- Cooking vlogs
- Travel vlogs
- Sports vlogs
- Educational/Learning vlogs
- Tech vlogs
- Comedy and/or Prank vlogs
- Motovlogs
- Fashion vlogs
- Do It Yourself (DIY) vlogs
- Health and Fitness vlogs
- Music and Dance vlogs
- Design and Art vlogs

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

7. 6. How popular are the vlogger(s) you watch the most? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Over 1 million subscribers
- 100,000 to 1 million subscribers
- 1000 to 100,000 subscribers
- Less than 1000 subscribers      *Skip to section 12 (Thank you!)*

8. 7. Which YouTube vlogs do you watch more often? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- From Vietnamese vloggers
- From foreign vloggers
- I watch both equally

### Information on products/services

8. If you are thinking of buying a product/service, where do you look for more information about it? (evaluate each source in the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is "I never use the source" and 5 is "I always use the source")

9. YouTube vlogs \*

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always use

10. Customer reviews on other social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) \*

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always use

11. Customer reviews on the Internet (brand webpages, online shops, beauty webpages, etc) \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always use

12. Family and friends who used the products/services \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always use

13. I try the products/service directly (getting samples/trials from physical stores or asking information from salesperson) \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always use

14. Others \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always use

YouTube and information

15. 9. Did you ever use YouTube vlog to find information on a product/service before buying them? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No     *Skip to question 17*

### YouTube and search for information

16. 10. What were the products/services? (choose all that you used) \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- Beauty products/services (make-up, skin and hair care products, spa centers, etc.)
- Health products/services (gyms, healthy lifestyle products, supplements, medical treatments, etc.)
- Fashion products/services (clothes, shoes, accessories, home decoration, designing services, etc.)
- Electronic devices (small home/personal devices, gaming devices, phones, computers, etc.)
- Transportation means/services (cars, bikes, scooters, rental services, airlines and other means of travel)
- Places of entertainment, restaurants and accomodation (bars, clubs, cinema, amusement parks, cafeterias, hotels, airbnb, etc.)
- Travelling (destination places, tourist attractions, activities, festivals, etc.)
- Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

### Vlogs and advertising

17. 11. Do you know that companies often use vloggers to advertise their products/services? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, I know and I read/researched a lot about it
- Yes, I have heard about it but I have not thought a lot about it
- I have never heard/thought about it      *Skip to question 21*

## 18. 12. How do you know if the YouTube vlogger advertises the product/service? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Advertising	Not advertising	I cannot decide if it is advertising or not
If the product/service appears on the video, it is an advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she reveals partners/sponsors directly (through hashtags like #ads or #sponsored, provides the discount codes, says it in the video, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she actively advertises the product/service in the video (talks about it a lot, gives tutorials, shows the process of using it, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she puts the hashtags of the brand/product/service in the video description	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she includes links to the product/service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she uses the product/service as part of their video content without actively talking about them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she mentions the name/brand of the product/service in the video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If he/she mentions the product/service in the comment section	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you can see the brand name of the product/service in the video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. 13. Did you ever buy a product/service that the vlogger was actively advertising in the video you watched? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, I buy such products/services nearly everytime I watch YouTube vlogs
- Yes, I have bought several products/services that vloggers were advertising
- I have never bought products/services that vloggers were advertising

20. 14. Did you ever buy a product/service that the vlogger was using in the video, but was not advertising it? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, I buy such products/services nearly everytime I watch YouTube vlogs
- Yes, I have bought several products/services that vloggers were using without advertising
- I have never bought products/services that vloggers were using without advertising

### Opinion on vlogs

15. Please evaluate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below (evaluate each statement in the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "I strongly disagree with the statement" and 5 is "I strongly agree with the statement")

21. Usually I start thinking more positively about the brands after I see their products in YouTube vlogs \*

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

22. Usually I start trusting the brands more after I see their products in YouTube vlogs \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

23. YouTube vlogs are more trustworthy than advertisement on TV, newspaper or brand's website \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

24. I know when vloggers are having partnership with the brands and when they are getting paid to advertise the products \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

25. I purchase the product/service even if I know that vlogger is paid to advertise them \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree



26. I do not mind advertisements of products/services by the vloggers in their YouTube videos \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

27. I trust less known vloggers more than celebrities (celebrities are considered as famous singers, actors, models, etc) \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

28. I was never disappointed by the products/services that I bought based on the advertisements in YouTube vlogs \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

29. 16. What do you think of advertisements of products/services in YouTube vlog? \*

Mark only one oval.

- I think advertisements are useful in choosing products/services
- I think advertisements are not useful in choosing products/services
- I do not care about the advertisements in YouTube vlogs

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