Making Sense of Beauty Vlogging

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This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of my advisor John Zimmerman, the fashion and beauty vloggers who were wiling to be interviewed and industry experts. I also recived support, assisatance and feedback from Brynn Flynn, Yian Ling Cheong, Justin Sykes, Tom Sykes, Susan Sykes, Kristina Sykes and Rebecca Genik.

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INTRODUCTION

Each month over 50 million people watch more than 1.6 billion minutes of consumer created fashion and beauty videos on YouTube (StyleHaul, 2014). Fashion and beauty videos are a specific type of video blogging, or vlogging. Since 2006, there have been over 14.6 billion views of these videos, with an average of 700 million views per month in 2013. More than 45,000 YouTube channels exist specializing in fashion and beauty videos. Consumers currently create ninety-seven percent of these videos (Beauty on YouTube, 2014).

Young women predominantly create these videos to show what they buy and how they wear different clothing and makeup as part of their daily routine. These videos provide information through personal review of products and through tutorials showing how to put outfits together or apply makeup. They also provide a window into the personal lives of the young women who make them.

Adolescent and young adult females are the primary viewers of fashion and beauty videos on YouTube. Watching these videos not only provides women with information about new products but also inspires new styles for daily looks. The personable and relaxed nature of these videos allow the viewer to feel a more intimate connection with the vlogger.

Young women are not the only players within this space. Retailers feel the impact on products featured in videos. A recent Google study showed that four out of every ten apparel videos viewed led to the viewer visiting the physical or online store as a direct response to seeing a video (The Role of Mobile, 2012). Marketing and advertising firms have begun to pay attention to these videos. Today, multichannel networks like StyleHaul reach out to independent fashion and beauty vloggers to form a network of similar channels to increase views while working with marketing and advertising clients.

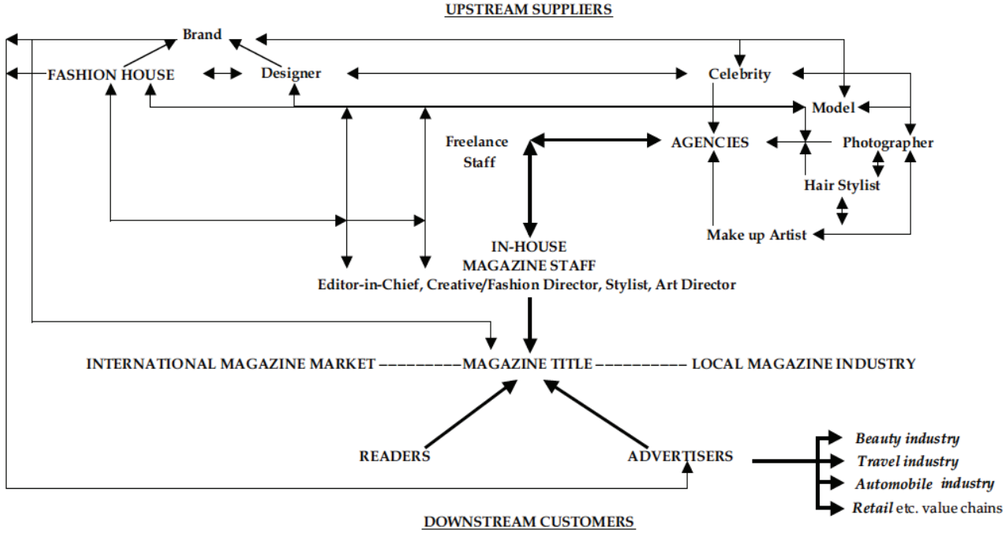
Despite the size of this online practice and the magnitude of stakeholders involved, little research exists investigating why people make and consume these videos or how this new content fits within the world of fashion media. To better understand the emerging practices in this space, I undertook a constructive design research project. I investigated the behaviors surrounding fashion and beauty videos to identify opportunities where interaction design might enhance the experience of the participants. Following a user-centered design approach, I analyzed "haul videos" posted to YouTube - videos where young women recount the items purchased on a recent shopping trip. I also interviewed fashion and beauty video vloggers, viewers, and industry experts. Through a process of mapping and diagramming, I synthesized the initial findings, identifying four opportunity areas for interaction designers to develop products, services, or systems that support YouTube vloggers, consumers, retailers, and other media channels involved.

I chose to focus on transforming the fashion and beauty video viewing experience. Within this space I ideated many possible futures and developed scenarios to validate user needs. After establishing needs for the viewers, I created wireframes to understand how these needs can be addressed through interaction design. The wireframes and prototypes led to a concept I call StyleQ, an interface that recognizes the underlying structure of fashion and beauty videos, and uses this to enhance a viewer's experience.

Through StyleQ, viewers can watch videos in a way that adapts to their needs. For example, if the viewer wants to relax, queued (or recommended) videos will autoplay much like a TV channel. However, if the viewer is more engaged with content, like when following a step-by-step tutorial, the video they are following is broken into steps, helping them operationalize what they are learning. The viewer can search for products and then can choose to either watch a stream of short clips featuring only the searched product pulled from longer videos, or they can watch full videos that mention the product they are trying to learn more about. StyleQ suggests products related to the searched item to cue the viewer on compiling a new look. The dynamic viewing structure of StyleQ increases the usability for the viewer as it accommodates their needs.

To enable this adaptability for the viewer, StyleQ prompts fashion and beauty vloggers to add time-specific information when uploading a new video. This information, tied to specific video segments, helps viewers find more applicable content. By enabling viewers to easily find this desired information, fashion and beauty vloggers increase the number of views on their videos. Segments within the video become more searchable allowing viewers to easily find what they want to watch and vloggers to cater to the diverse needs of their audience.

Fashion World Value Chain



Moeran, B. (2006)

BACKGROUND

Little research has been done specifically on fashion and beauty videos on YouTube. Therefore, to understand the state of the art, I looked at literature on fashion and identity, fashion media and vlogging.

Identity through Fashion:
Globally, the fashion industry is a $1.5 trillion industry (Amed, 2013). Every day a woman chooses her identity by the clothing she adorns herself with, the products she owns and the brands she acquires. This daily ritual makes clothing a tool to better understand the self and create, challenge or transform an identity. Previous research on identity shows that personal fashion can portray three images of self: the woman one wants to be, the woman one fears to be, and the woman one is most of the time (Guy & Banim, 2000). Negotiating these three potential images creates a dynamic relationship between women and their clothing. The more involved women are with this dynamic relationship, the better they can balance conflicting identities and become more satisfied with her own image (Guy & Banim, 2000).

Creating an identity through clothing is more than an internal process.. Social relationships and validation from friends and family members also

aids in the creation of self through clothing. In a needs validation study among 19-25 women regarding closets of the future and their wardrobe, clothing was revealed as a social currency, or a means to “form and strengthen social ties ... through the exchange of items, advice and validation” (Rode et al., 2012). Clothes can be chosen with the help of an immediate social network. Close social connections can recognize things that are “me” or “not me” (Rode et al., 2012). In general, women create identities more independently than men and value possessions that are representative of social relationships (Dittmar, 2004). In one theory of shopping, the practice of shopping is compared to the act of sacrifice, in that the goal is not the products, but rather a relationship with people who want the purchased products (Miller, 1998). The emergence of consumer created fashion and beauty videos allows vloggers to showcase their identity through their everyday fashion choices in a changing social space that reaches beyond physical relationships. While clothing is a primary focus with these videos, other material possessions contribute to the image of the fashion and beauty vlogger.

Brand Relationships:
Brand plays a critical role in the interplay of fashion and identity. People form strong relationships with brands as they use self-presentation of brand affiliations as a method of broadcasting to others an idea of who they might be. Brand relationships are the intangible perception that an individual carries about a brand. Previous research indicates that the bond formed between a brand and a consumer can fill different roles such as providing a sense of community, creating a view of the brand as something special worth upholding or an individual way to express self (Kleine & Baker, 2004).

Experience Attachment:
Lastly, while fashion and beauty products can have their own meaning, a product’s meaning can also come from the experience of how the product

was obtained. Fashion and beauty videos create a unique blend of both sharing a shopping experience, as well as creating a new experience by sharing a story about the shopping trip. Previous research on the shopping experience shows it is a repetitive event that people seek for its symbolic benefits (Kleine & Baker, 2004). Videos may be repetitively created to foster an internal bond that delivers symbolic benefits as well.

Fashion Media:
Mindfully curated collections of fashion and beauty products contribute to a person’s identity, and the discussion around such products has been present for centuries. In 1672, Le Mercure was the first publication to discuss fashion. By the nineteenth century, the fashion press had become more commercial and advertisements had become a dominant feature of fashion magazines (Rocamora, 2011). Similar to other forms of mass media, fashion magazines can be seen as both cultural products and commodities. Moeran states that,

> *“As cultural products...they provide how-to-recipes, illustrated stories, narratives and experiential and behavioural models - particularly in the realms of fashion and beauty - in which the reader’s ideal self is reflected and on which she can herself reflect and act. As commodities, magazines are products of the publishing and print industry and important sites for advertising and sale of commodities.”*

Driven by the fashion industry, fashion magazines explore a sociologically rich space that incorporates multiple audiences. The key players include celebrities, fashion buyers, international press and the general public each of whom is searching for what clothes to talk about, buy or show off. A diagram illustrating the complex flow the fashion world value chain is show on page twelve (Moeran, 2006).

Traditionally, monthly publications are carefully planned to align with the fashion industry's seasonal calendar. However, there have been indications that the two-season is transforming into a more dynamic and constant production schedule (Morean, 2006). While it is important for industry driven media to keep spring/summer and autumn/fall collections confined to the correct timeline culturally and economically, consumer driven media has filled a more continuous media role. Popular fashion blogs are frequently updated and read by followers. The Sartorialist, a photographic fashion blog is visited by 225,000 people a day, for comparison, British Vogue sells around 200,000 copies a month (Copping, 2009). With the rise of accessibility in blogs there has been a rise in quantity and popularity. (Stefanic, 2010).

Rocamora suggests that fashion blogs capitalize on their own brevity and fragmented nature. Each blog post is seen as a point in time that will soon be pushed aside to make room for the next post. The fast paced nature of blogs keeps up with the dizzying speed of trends while producing a complex network of content. As fashion and beauty video vloggers utilize more avenues of social media and add multiple modalities of their 'voice' to the realm of fashion, this space becomes more complex. These consumer generated videos add new challenges to the fashion media ecosystem because they are not confined to hypertextual links (like blogs) but also include visual, video and audible components.

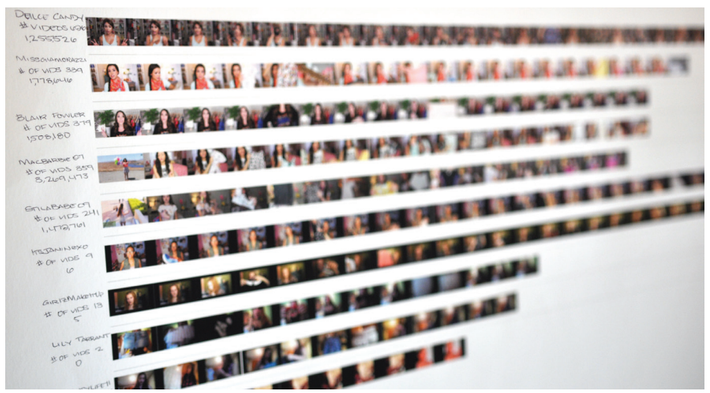
The changing space of fashion media has allowed for more interactive collaboration among consumers. Anybody who wants to contribute to the ongoing dialogue of fashion is now capable of being an active member. Consumers are able to find inspirational fashionistas to follow, develop their own personal style and learn about current trends. Platforms like Polyvore also allow active members to create virtual looks by pulling pieces from various online stories and combining them into an online

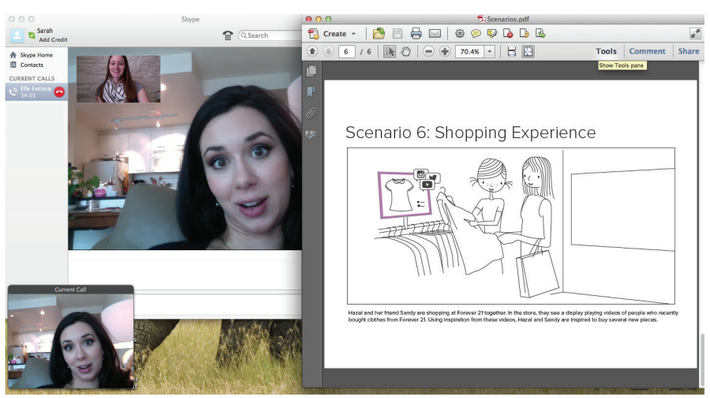
collage showcasing the outfit. Outfits can be shared with friends or followers, and they contribute to the organic conversation around fashion (Stefanic, 2010).

Vlogging:
While creating an image of self happens in many ways that can be illustrated in fashion and beauty videos, communicating the created image is another aspect to consider. In a study on teen identity in fashion blogs, it was revealed that a crucial part of the process of understanding one's identity was the communication with others within the space (Chittenden, 2010). By understanding more about the conversational style of YouTube videos we can explore this new form of communication.

The videos found on YouTube are unlike traditional television broadcasting. Some research refers to the new blend of broadcasting from ordinary people, media people and celebrities as a form of post-television, claiming that it can provide a new type of authenticity. Vlogging is known for its conversational tone and face-to-face style of speaking, but it is unclear if this is the driver behind authenticity. Because of the importance around identity, it is equally crucial to appear to deliver an authentic representation of self. Other factors such as presentation, interactivity and expertise have also been explored as elements that create this authenticity (Tolson, 2010).

Expertise is another critical aspect of vlogging. YouTube is seen as a place for learning, not just entertainment despite how informal videos are. To negotiate the paradox of informing while still being ordinary, vlogging allows the forms of speech to change between formal and informal all within the same broadcast. (Tolson, 2010)



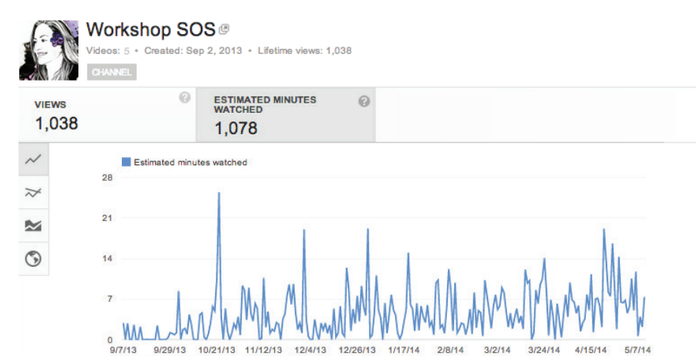


PROCESS

In order to identify opportunities for interaction design to transform fashion and beauty vlogs, I engaged in a research through design project (Zimmerman et al., 2007). I engaged in the following user-centered design activities.

Immersion:

I created five of my own fashion and beauty videos to gain insight on the felt-life experience of video vloggers. Over repeated attempts, I became more familiar with the challenges of planning, shooting and posting videos on YouTube and interacting with viewers. I posted the videos I created on YouTube to understand the analytics provided for vloggers as well as to follow the number of views, likes and comments on my own videos.



Video Analysis:

To better understand this trend, I conducted an analysis of fashion and beauty videos. I initially started with 'haul' videos that summarize a recent shopping trip. In looking at the related videos on YouTube, I quickly discovered that this is just one type of video within a much larger fashion and beauty space on YouTube. As part of this effort, I sampled many videos within the channels of individual vloggers, paying particular attention to how their approach changed and refined over time.

I observed that successful fashion and beauty vloggers post a variety of content that falls into three large categories: product reviews, tutorials and personality clips. The lines of these categories are not clearly distinguished and overlap within a single video. For example, an eye make-up tutorial video might mention a beloved mascara and review why it is great while also showing how to use it. A haul video that summarizes a shopping trip merges personality and first impression reviews.

In a review video, the fashion and beauty vlogger talks about her favorite and least favorite products and why she loves or hates a product after using it repeatedly. To keep current products relevant and up-to-date with seasonal trends, review videos are frequently tagged with the month or season like 'July favorites' of 'fall favorites.' While fashion and beauty vloggers rave about popular products, they also shame unsatisfying purchases. Unpopular products are often shown together in a video tagged 'products I regret buying' where the vlogger tells about numerous products she has collected over the past few months and is unhappy with. Although negative review videos highly criticize a product, the vlogger usually adds a disclaimer about how this product might work well from somebody else (her many followers), just not for herself.

Tutorial videos are dedicated to teaching the viewer how to create a new look. Most tutorials within the fashion and beauty space of YouTube refer to make-up techniques or hairstyles. In a tutorial video, the fashion and beauty vlogger introduces the look they are going to create, then demonstrates the process explaining each step along the way. As the vlogger transforms, she describes what she is doing, tells about the products she is using and suggests alterations to accommodate for differences between her many viewers. Interestingly, tutorials that cite a celebrity look, for example a specific Katy Perry make-up style, tend to receive more hits than non-celebrity tagged videos.

Personality videos offer a closer look at the fashion and beauty vlogger. Common personality video tags include ‘outfit of the day,’ bedroom tour,’ and ‘what’s in my bag.’ These videos show a glimpse of who the vlogger is and allows viewers to look into the lives of seemingly average people.

Regardless of the video type, quality plays a crucial role in the popularity of a video. In watching a video, I could soon recognize when a fashion and beauty vlogger was a novice or an expert based on the screen presence, background set and tools used to create the video. It is challenging to analyze videos over time since all videos are available on a channel and can be viewed at any point, meaning that older videos could have more views merely because they have been available longer. However, in looking at the full video history of an expert, one can easily watch video production improvements over time as she make more videos and grows her audience.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fozUq1Hhuko

Novice fashion and beauty vloggers tend to use the built in camera on their computer, a small point and shoot camera or even a smart phone to film. More experienced vloggers have a set-up where they can see what they are filming as they film. As vloggers become more invested in creating videos for their followers, a DSLR camera is usually their first investment to provide high definition videos. Another interesting distinction between expert and novice fashion and beauty vloggers is how they use YouTube features. Expert vloggers fully utilize the ability to link videos, add video tags, close with end cards and fill their video description boxes with contact and product information.

Many fashion and beauty vloggers emphasize the importance of using natural light to ensure an attractive set. Some vloggers even altered their filming schedule to accommodate for the best lighting in their bedroom; the preferred filming space. Highly viewed videos have a common visual composition. The vlogger typically sits on the floor, the bed, or at a vanity table and mounts the camera on a tripod showing the rest of the bedroom in the background. Fashion and beauty vloggers decorate their bedrooms with candles, accessories and jewelry or make-up displays.

Quality is a characteristic not only confined to the technical specifications of the videos but also the fashion and beauty vloggers screen presence and narrative. Expert fashion and beauty vloggers maintain eye contact with the camera, even while holding up products and pointing out details, much like a meteorologist motions an approaching weather pattern. The dialogue in fashion and beauty videos is conversational and covers the vlogger’s favorite details about the product, the price they paid (or the discount they got) and how they plan to wear the new product. Most videos are minimally edited, usually using cuts and fades to remove unwanted clips. Interestingly, interruptions to the videos are not always edited out. For example, it is not unusual for a vlogger to pick up a pet that walks into the room and coddle it for a few seconds.

More experienced fashion and beauty vloggers also have professional introductions and closings to their videos as well as a more refined dialogue. Many videos start with enthusiastic greetings, include appreciation for viewers; tell them when to like things or how to stay more connected (Tolson, 2010). Viewers are able to respond and provide comments that reiterate what the video shows, typically agreeing about how cute something is or how much they love something; however, these comments lack substance beyond empathy (Jefferies, 2011). While expert fashion and beauty vloggers might appear more dedicated to accumulating viewership, both novice and expert vloggers ask viewers to like their videos and subscribe to their channel.

While quality is a key aspect of creating highly viewed videos, it does not necessarily mean the products shown are expensive. Fashion and beauty videos most often cover low to mid range fashion and beauty shops. A study by Jefferies found there are ten brands that appear most commonly in fashion and beauty videos. These brands include American Eagle, Victoria's Secret, Lush, Ulta, Sephora, Hollister, Charlotte Russe, Wet Seal, with perpetual favorites being MAC and Forever21 (Jeffries, 2011). While I observed a large number of videos focused on these brands, I also noticed stores like CVS and Target commonly being mentioned and even thrift stores. While some fashion and beauty vloggers will make videos about trips to Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue, it is unlikely that less mainstream store like Camper shoes would be the subject of a video.

Fashion and beauty vlogger Interviews:
To develop an understanding of young womens' motivations for making and viewing fashion and beauty videos, I conducted interviews with three vloggers. Fortunately all of them were also viewers of fashion and beauty videos, so I probed them both on their viewing behaviors and on their vlogging behaviors. I recruited active fashion and beauty vloggers via email, using their contact information on YouTube. I conducted interviews

over Skype and I used directed storytelling to get the fashion and beauty vloggers to relive and share specific experiences. Interviews focused on the experience of creating and maintaining their YouTube channel, use of different social media outlets, vloggers' relationship with viewers and retailers, and their video viewing habits.

In general, fashion and beauty vloggers told how they produce about two videos per week. The most popular vloggers often have over one million followers on YouTube alone, and their videos can generate 250,000 views within a couple of weeks. Some expert fashion and beauty vloggers are so popular in our attempt to contact them it was evident they had a team of support staff answering emails and business inquiries. From the interviews, I observed that fashion and beauty vloggers frequently struggled with creating content. Vloggers often mentally prepared a filming schedule to ensure that there would be enough daylight to have a bright set. Another frustration for fashion and beauty vloggers is uploading content. If an error occurred while uploading a video, vloggers would just try re-uploading without knowing if changes needed to be made. In one instance, a video

had to be completely re-filmed and re-edited to upload successfully.

Despite the time commitment and effort needed to maintain an active channel, fashion and beauty vloggers are dedicated to providing information and entertainment to their viewers. Vloggers feel appreciated by their followers and often described the most rewarding part of the process as the hours immediately following a new post when they can see the views, likes and comments come in.

While speaking with fashion and beauty vloggers about their viewing habits it was evident that the range of dedication in viewing fashion and beauty videos on YouTube is drastic. Some girls watch a few short videos every few days, while other have more consistent and prolonged viewing sessions.

When discussing viewing fashion and beauty videos during the interviews one common complaint was the need to sit through a fifteen-minute video to hear about just one product. One interviewee told how she would micro-review every product on Instagram using hashtags to make the product easily searchable to mitigate this same frustration for her own viewers.

Another challenge viewers expressed was finding videos that were worth watching. Viewers use a variety of approaches to find new content but one common method that proved successful was to look at who their favorite fashion and beauty vloggers were following. Once they found a new fashion and beauty vlogger to follow, they would go through older videos and see if those videos were linked to any other fashion and beauty vloggers with similar styles. They noted that this organic process of finding inspirational fashion and beauty vloggers was very time consuming.

Both creating and watching fashion and beauty videos provide a sense of community for the girls involved. Viewers tend to watch people that they

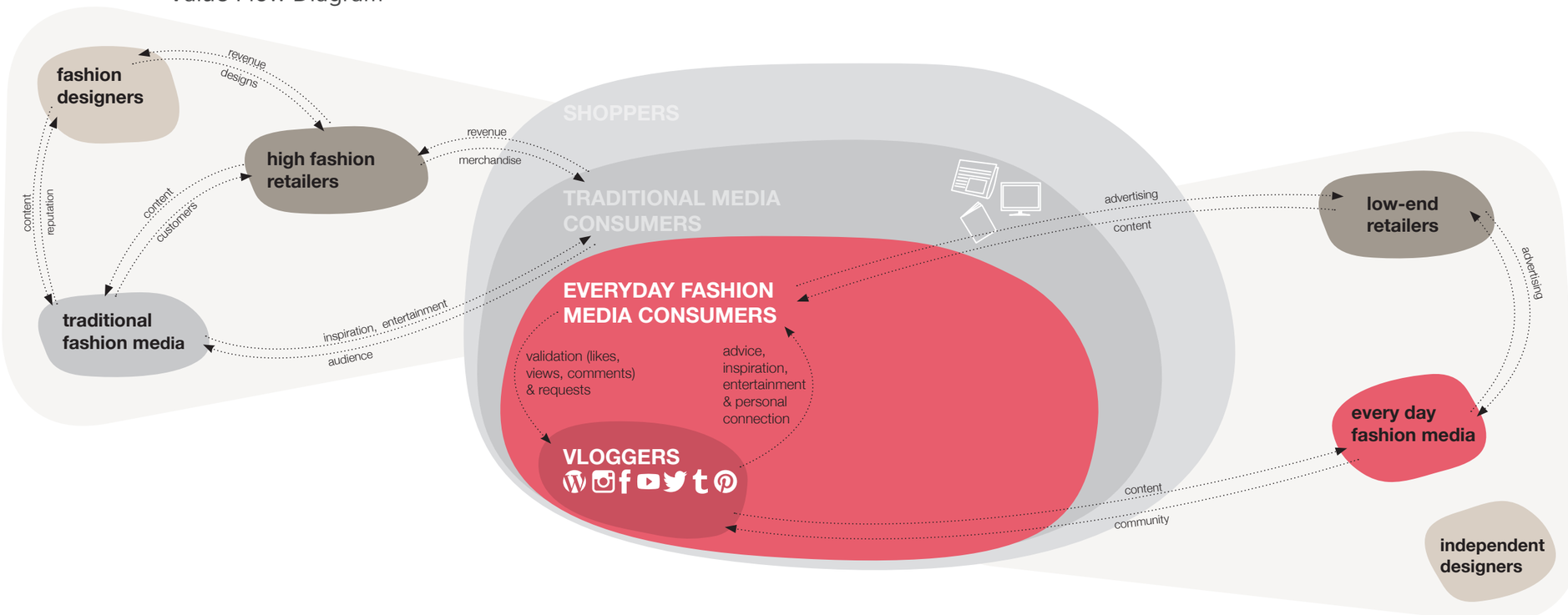
can relate to and aspire to be like, while vloggers try to identify a unique niche to fill, for example, West Coast business looks.

Subject Matter Expert Interviews:
To better understand the larger system within which fashion and beauty videos exist, I also interviewed subject matter experts. This included one interview with an interaction designer at YouTube, two interviews with marketing experts at a clothing manufacturer and three interviews with marketing experts for teens. Questions focused on experts' perception of this emerging trend, their previous work with YouTube fashion and beauty vloggers, and future goals regarding social media marketing.

In the discussion with the interaction designer at YouTube, I learned that there are several ways for fashion and beauty vloggers to generate a profit from their videos. YouTube's Partner Program is a way to monetize posted videos by allowing advertisements on the videos. Additionally, multichannel networks like StyleHaul reach out to independent fashion and beauty vloggers to form a network of similar channels to increase views while working with marketing and advertising clients. StyleHaul also reaches into other industries. For example, StyleHaul formed a partnership to connect rising musicians with fashion and beauty vloggers, providing the video vloggers with music for their videos and musicians a larger audience.

In talking to marketers in the fashion industry, I learned that retailers are aware that fashion and beauty videos directly influence sales; however, they do not know how to have influence within this space. It is challenging to work directly with fashion media vloggers without tarnishing their authenticity. Compared to national advertising campaigns, the viewership is much lower and it is difficult to match what is in stores with videos that might be months or years old. Another challenge is aligning the fast paced fashion and beauty industries with videos that last online for years.

Value Flow Diagram



Mapping and Diagramming:
To make sense of the data collected, I iteratively produced many maps and diagrams throughout the data collection process. These included affinity diagrams containing insights across our different important themes as well as a value-flow stakeholder map to help reveal the relationships between the underlying system and these consumer-generated videos.

Creating the value flow diagram proved very helpful. Value flows are a type of stakeholder map that show all the stakeholders and the value they exchange with each other. It is one way of seeing the system that underlies this emerging behavior. In making our diagram, we noticed that the fashion media, TV, and magazines mainly focus on more expensive clothing

lines and designers. The focus is almost entirely on couture clothing that is out of reach for most people. Interestingly, very little professional fashion content exists that focuses at the low-end and mid-end of the market, other than advertisements. This discovery made us wonder if the popularity of the haul videos had to do with the fact that they seem to fill a hole in the fashion media landscape. It appears that the fashion and beauty channels on YouTube have an audience because people want fashion news and guidelines on the clothes they actually can afford.

After synthesizing our initial findings I identified four opportunity areas for interaction designers to develop products, services, or systems that support YouTube fashion and beauty vloggers, viewers, retailers, and other media channels involved.

Fashion and beauty vloggers:
There is a great opportunity to develop new tools that can help a novice fashion and beauty vlogger to more easily become an expert. First, designers could make a sort of vlog production kit that provides tips and techniques to help novice vloggers improve the look of their videos. This could offer sample scripts, tips on lighting and set dressing, and advice on recording audio. In addition, tools could help scaffold novices, helping them engage in the activities that help the experts, such as demonstrating how much personal content to share in a haul, guiding the types of products to haul, and advising how to incorporate look books and tutorials to help round out a channel.

Viewers:
Interaction designers could also help both fashion and beauty vloggers and viewers by rethinking the way videos are currently consumed. A better interface would allow viewers to search by product across many fashion and beauty vloggers. For example, they could find all of the videos on a new lipstick. In a sense, videos would be segmented into a searchable piece based on each item. In addition, this interface could integrate the other content types vloggers are currently using including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. This would support viewers in giving them better control to pick and choose the products in which they had an interest. In addition, it would better support the vloggers by bringing the various content they make on a topic into a single interface.

Brands:
Another opportunity would be to develop a dialogue between fashion and beauty vloggers, viewers and retailers. Currently, fashion and beauty vloggers are already voicing their opinions about products, viewers are showing allegiance to vloggers, and retails are striving to increase sales. A system could be created that encourages the vlogger and viewer to influence corporate retail decisions. Rather than relying on top down marketing, a systematic conversation could encourage acknowledging and catering to bottom up popular opinions.

Shopping Experience:
Finally, there is an opportunity within the retail space to enhance the shopping experience online or in stores. Fashion and beauty videos create a way for viewers to research products before buying, and a mobile app or digital store displays could connect that learned information about a product to the point of purchase. The experience of watching video could be combined with the act of shopping to aid in decision-making and enable shoppers to gain insight as to which products are best for them. This could enable a more efficient type of shopping based on popular opinion and similar shoppers.

Moving forward, I chose to focus on transforming the viewing experience. To investigate which ideas might best engage viewers, I conducted a speed dating session using needs validation.

Speed Dating:
I developed a series of scenarios depicting a variety of possible futures. These scenarios encompassed concepts around viewing alone, viewing as a social activity, viewing passively and viewing while actively engaged with the content. The scenarios were presented to people over skype who currently watch fashion and beauty videos. The participants ranged from committed viewers who watch videos daily to less frequent viewers who watch videos sporadically throughout the month. As the scenarios were presented, participants were asked about their current viewing habits and reactions to the scenario.
While discussing viewing habits, it was evident that there is a range of engagement between the viewer and the video. Some viewing habits are lean back experiences where the viewer is looking for entertainment, while

other behaviors are more lean forward and involve actively engaging with the content on the screen.

YouTube beauty videos are often watched for entertainment. Viewers subscribe to their favorite channels to hear beauty musings and personal stories. Usually, viewers watch beauty videos alone but will discuss the channel with friends who also subscribe, similar to how fans gossip about the latest episode of their favorite TV show.

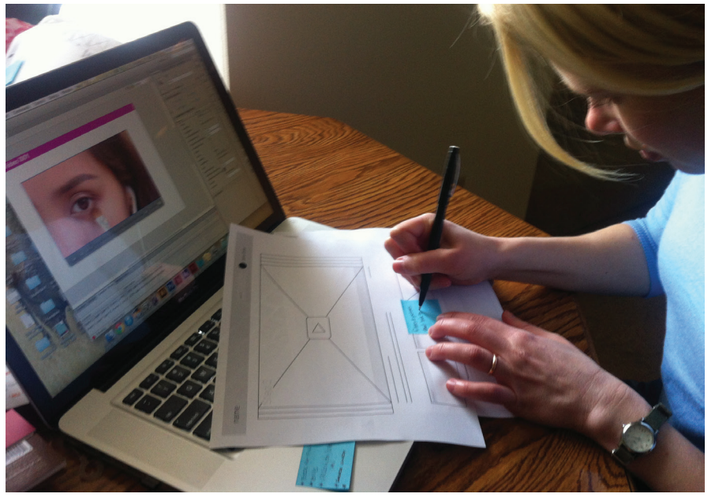
Viewers search for product information for two reasons. First, viewers seek to hear authentic reviews from consumers to learn more about a product before purchasing. Second, viewers look for information about where to buy products that often go out of stock.

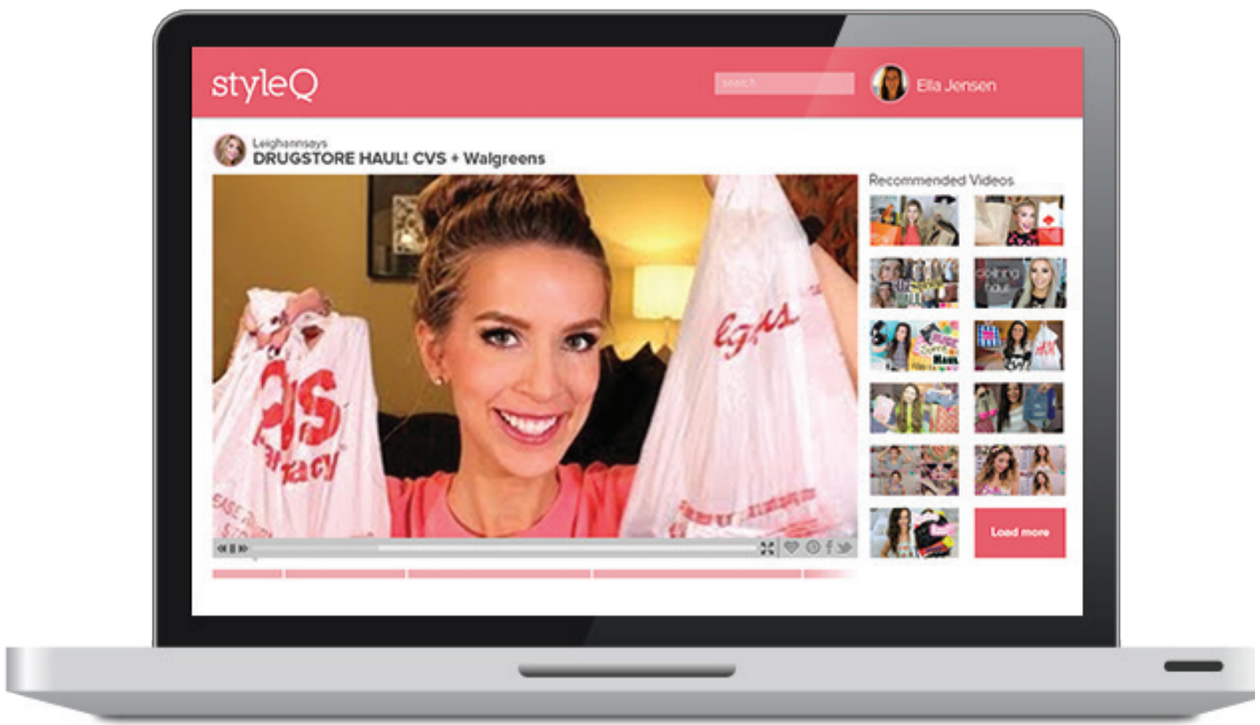
Video tutorials are a source for real-time beauty advice. Longer videos with step-by-step instructions are preferred and allow the viewer to follow along. There is a spike in tutorial views early in the morning as viewers get ready for their day or in the evening before going out.

Wireframing:
Wireframes were created to explore the information on each screen and the interaction touchpoints. Sketching the flow of wireframes allowed me to understand the various sections of the concept and how they could be used together as a comprehensive experience.

Video Exploration:
To understand how compiled videos could be presented in my concept I manipulated exciting fashion and beauty videos from YouTube. By clipping, rearranging and compiling segments of videos I began to understand how different categories of videos could be optimized for the viewer.

Usability Testing:
The wireframes and video explorations were shown to active YouTube viewers to gauge their understanding of the design. The respondents were given a simple task and asked to think aloud while walking though the task with the screens provided. Feedback provided information for refinement before implementing the final design.





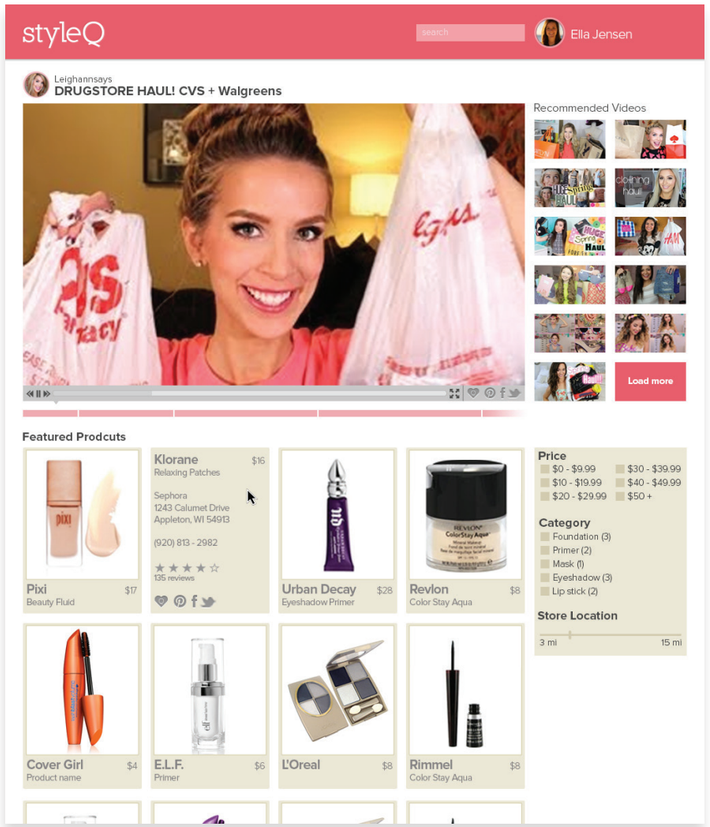
DESIGN

Design:

The constructive design process led to a concept I call StyleQ, an interface that leverages the underlying structure of fashion and beauty videos to enhance a viewer's experience. StyleQ pulls in videos from YouTube and offers an adaptive interface that caters to the various needs of the viewer and accommodates a range of interactions. StyleQ provides three main benefits:

1. Autoplay: Allows viewers to chain videos together into a personal channel that simply plays, much like traditional TV.
2. Retrieval by product: Viewers are able to search for product segments within a longer video and continuously play just the segments featuring the product they are looking for.
3. Segmented tutorials: Allows viewers to see a breakdown of each step in the tutorial and follow along at their own pace.

In addition, it provides a new interface for vloggers to help deliver these benefits to their viewers.



Autoplay:

The home page of StyleQ supports a lean back experience similar to television - optimized to entertain the viewer without requiring their constant interaction. When a viewer visits StyleQ's homepage, the system checks all of the subscribed channels and retrieves all of the videos that have been uploaded since the viewer's last visit, putting them into a playlist organized by time with the most recent videos at the top of the list. When the viewer presses play, the system plays the videos one at a time. When all the new videos have played, StyleQ automatically adds other currently popular or similar videos to the queue. The viewer is able to see visualization of the videos under the video player and mouse over to see

thumbnails of each clip. To add a video to the queue, the viewer can drag and drop a new video to any place in the queue.

The autoplay feature mimics a TV channel and allows the viewers to play content without taking the time to curate a playlist or settle for a preset playlist made by somebody else. At any time the viewer can skip, rewind, like, share, save or block a video. StyleQ also stores a history of recently viewed videos to help the viewer find old favorites.

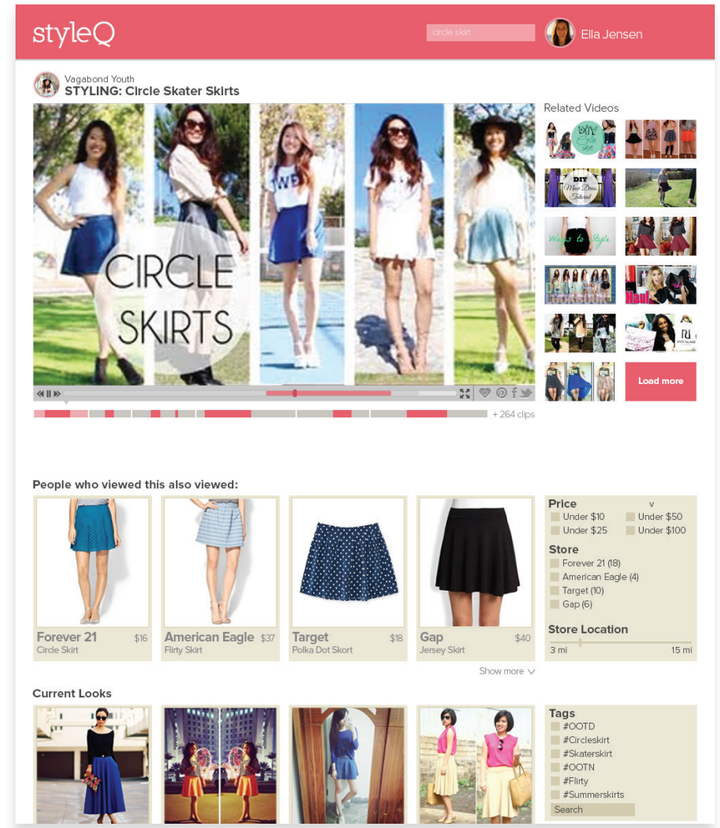
If the viewer wants to engage with the content within a video, the platform has a grid of the products below the main video bar, or similar products if the original link is outdated. Each product card shows a photo, price and place where the item can be purchased. My research showed that many viewers watched 'haul' videos specifically to find out where to buy products, especially products in high demand that sell out quickly. StyleQ provides both a link to an ecommerce site as well as local store information where the product is sold. While I considered showing local store inventory for each product, outside constraints made this impractical. Instead, the platform provides a phone number for the local store allowing the viewer to easily call to confirm an item is in stock before embarking on a shopping trip. The viewer can also share or pin products to better incorporate information from the video into other social media channels.

The layout of the home page accommodates viewers' needs by keeping

the main focus on the video. If the viewer cares to learn more about the video playing, scrolling down provides product information. On the other hand, if the viewer prefers to maximize their viewing experience, they can maximize the video window and allow videos to stream continuously. The viewer is also able to log in on multiple devices to allow for continuous viewing anytime and anywhere.

Search:
My research showed that fashion and beauty video viewers often had many needs to search to pieces of videos; however, currently search engines only return results that point to whole videos. For example when comparing multiple similar products, looking for styling ideas for a specific article of clothing or finding the best makeup shade for the viewers skintone.

Through StyleQ, viewers can view product reviews, purchasing options, suggestions for use and tutorials. The platform displays search results enabling the viewer to either watch a continuous stream of clips featuring just the item they searched for or watch full videos that contain segments about the search item. Under the video player, the viewer is able to see a visualization that shows how long each video is and how long the relevant clip is within that video. They can also toggle between clips and full videos to learn about the people using the products in addition to the products themselves. While videos play, suggestions come up based the viewer's search. The viewer can add these recommended videos to their queue to allow for an organic and uninterrupted viewing experience. This also allows viewers to compare products and learn about all similar items when considering a purchase. While video queues generated through a search area always changing and cannot be saved, viewers can share or pin individual clips or save them to their StyleQ favorites list to conveniently reference later. If a viewer searches for a brand instead of a product, videos segments showcasing currently popular products from that brand



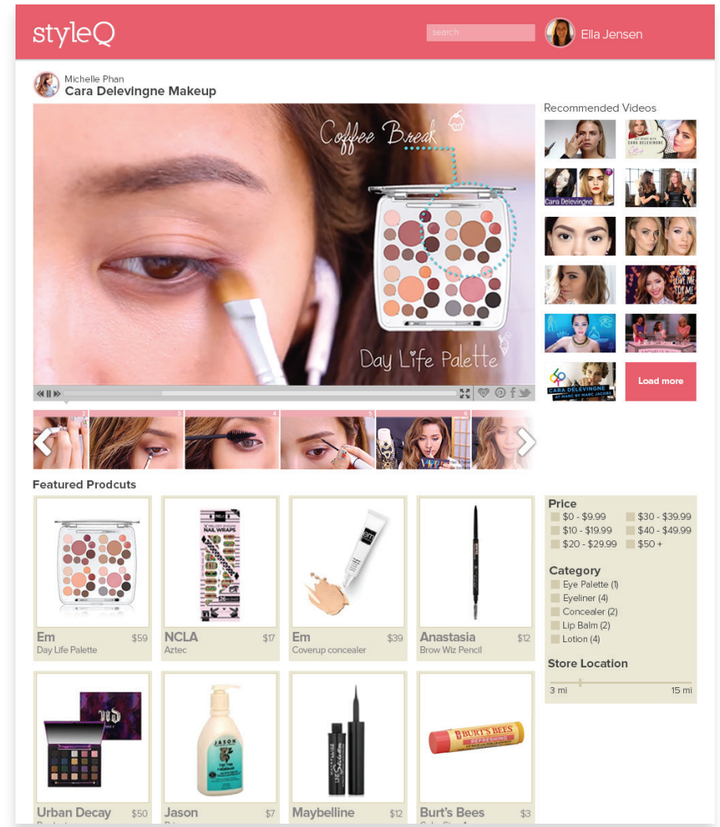
will be displayed. Similarly, viewers can search for a specific item from a brand, for example lipstick from Sephora and see a variety of videos showing lipsticks that are available at Sephora.

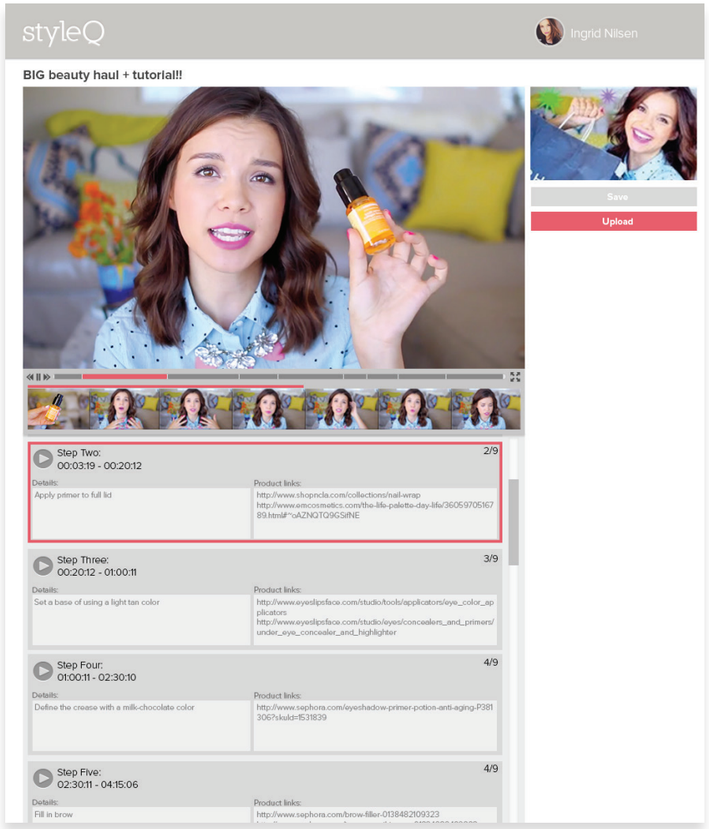
StyleQ shows product search results under the video bar and provides information about available products. It suggests similar products that other viewers have recently viewed to show what is currently available. This resolves the discrepancy between the brevity of product availability in the fashion and beauty industry in comparison to the months and years videos remain online. A filter provides viewers with the option to tailor the products they see based on their preferences.

Below a row of products, StyleQ also presents an Instagram feed of related search results to provide more suggestions about how the searched product can be used to both inspire and inform the viewer. Photographs with relevant tags are uploaded and the viewer can see a quick overview of current looks related to what they are searched for. The viewer has the capability of curating the photos they are presented with by choosing tags on the image filter. The images can be shared, pinned or favorited to reference later.

Tutorials:

My research showed that many people paused and replayed segments of tutorials in order to recreate the look being described. To aid with this task, StyleQ guides vloggers to break down tutorial videos into discrete steps so that viewers can better follow along with step-by-step instructions. By setting up a structure so that the vlogger can segment their video into different steps, StyleQ eliminates the need for the viewer to fuss with the scrub bar. Under the video player, the viewer sees a thumbnail of each step within a tutorial. This visual overview offers a quick synopsis of the complexity of the tutorial based on the number of steps and what each step entails. Each thumbnail is clickable and plays that section of the video. The viewer can replay a specific clip as many times as needed. This allows the viewer to follow along with the video while practicing the techniques on herself. Since viewers use many tutorials as a guide when getting ready in the morning or again before going out in the evening, this segmentation of steps allows the viewer to efficiently skip past irrelevant content and focus on the instructions they need. StyleQ also integrates information about the products used in the tutorial, listing them below the video bar.





Vlogger:

StyleQ can provide its viewers with interactions that adapt to their needs by prompting vloggers to add time specific information to their videos. When a video is pulled from YouTube, the video description from the vlogger is also carried over to StyleQ. A typical video description on YouTube includes a list of the products used and often times a link to purchase that product. With StyleQ, that information can now be tied to a specific segment in the video. When uploading a new video, the platform suggests segmentations based on audio cues. Fashion and beauty vloggers can easily edit suggested segments by changing the start and stop times, combining multiple segments or splitting up a segment that is too long. For tutorial videos that have specific step-by-step instructions, the vlogger can tag both the steps and the products used at each step. The automated segment suggestions keep additional work to a minimum and the reward is clear. Vloggers can see specific analytics about what StyleQ viewers are searching for and the segments of video they are watching most. These analytics give vloggers quantitative feedback, which vloggers can then use to make sure they are addressing the needs of their viewers.

StyleQ bridges the gap between vloggers and viewers. Viewers can choose how they want to view content and more easily find the information they want. At the same time vloggers have the opportunity to increase their audience by learning about viewers' desired content and their preferred ways of using it. They can then create content that caters specifically to their viewers' preferences.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I set out to explore the fashion and beauty space on YouTube. I found that this space is dominated by consumer generated content, in particular content created by teen and young adult female fashion and beauty vloggers. These vloggers and their numerous and dedicated viewers are changing the way fashion and beauty products are discovered, purchased and used. Because this phenomnenon is happening online it offers a rich opportunity for interaction designers to improve the space. Currentely, fashion and beauty vlogger are approriating existing tools to meet their needs, but have not been provided with specialized tools to maximize their reach in this space. There is also potential to make industry brands more active players in this space. StyleQ, by conceptualizing autoplay videos, individually tagged product clips and segmented tutorials, provides a vision of how an online video platform can be reconfigured to better empower vloggers, their viewers and the fashion and beauty industry.

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