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## Analysis of Young Vietnamese Consumers' Makeup Application from Reference Group Perspective

**“The world’s biggest power is the youth and beauty of a woman”  
– Chanakya**

Despite the appraisal on inner beauty, the power of beautiful appearance is undeniable. The urge of being beautiful resulted in individuals', especially females' huge expenditure consuming of products (e.g. cosmetics) and methods (e.g. makeup) to modify and enhance their physical outlooks. It is reported that Global Color Cosmetics Market was valued at \$5,875 million in 2016, and would grow continuously with a forecast at \$9,555 million by 2023, registering a CAGR of 7.4% from 2017 to 2023 (Roy, 2017).

Regard to the potential of color cosmetics industry in Vietnam, recent report noted the positive sign of growth (In-Cosmetics, 2017). Vietnam population in 2016 is over 92.6 million. In which, female account for 50.7% (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2017). The proportion of 15 to 34-year-old female population is around 32% (PopulationPyramid.net, 2017). In recent years, besides saving money for future, consumers are also willing to spend more money to increase the quality of life (Nielsen, 2017). Vietnamese ladies, especially the young generation, are much more care about their look and have better knowledge about beauty products (Kantar, 2017). These factors are boosting the country's cosmetic industry expansion and growth. Revenue generated in color cosmetic is expected to reach US\$291 million in 2018 (Statista, 2017) and continuously grow at CAGR 9% (Euromonitor, 2017). Vietnamese consumers are strongly influenced by foreign brands. They prefer imported brands from Europe, Korean, and Japan (Euromonitor, 2017). Foreign brands dominate Vietnam cosmetic market, with 90% of sales in 2016 while local brands just accounted for 10% (Vietnam Essential Oil Association, 2017). There are a wide range of beauty products, cover low-, mid- to high-end segments, such as Maybelline, Ohui, MAC, L'Oréal, Lancôme etc., which are available on both offline channels, such as supermarkets, department stores and direct sales and online e-commerce (Q&Me, 2016).

Solomon (2017) suggested that the ideal of cultural values serve as a standard of beauty ideal. Since each culture may have its own set of values, beliefs and customs, individuals of different societies possibly hold different belief, standard and practice of beauty. Despite the influences of culture, it is obviously that individuals in the same society may be different by the way they decorate themselves, as well as the way they judge the others' beauty. By the nature of consumer behavior, one's purchase decision may be influenced by the reference group, which

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is classified into normative- and comparative reference group. Family, teachers and friends belong to the normative group, which strongly influences to consumer through direct interactions. Existing literature noted that familial influences to consumers would be strong in the context of extended family and cultures that stress on the family value (Childers & Rao, 1992). Yet, as internet is widely used, people – especially the young one, who are from 16 to under 35 years old, are more and more engaged in social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. (GlobalWebIndex, 2016). Due to the empowerment of these user-generated platforms, amateur beauty video bloggers, which is also called as beauty vloggers- are considered as an important force of comparative reference group, that may significantly influence to consumers' minds and product/ brand preference. Research on the effects of YouTube vloggers to consumer perceptions indicated that the review of these vloggers may results in positive perceptions and purchase intention of consumers toward luxury products, including cosmetics (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Research provided by Pixability, (2014) stated that "YouTube beauty vloggers are controlling the future of brands".

This study was conducted focusing on the facial beauty within the context of Vietnamese culture, examining the influences of individuals' family and friends – which represent to the traditional normative referents, and the beauty vloggers on YouTube –a new referent that young adults consult in the consumption of color cosmetics and the process of constructing and presenting of facial beauty.

According to Hofstede et al. (2010), Vietnam is a collectivism society that typically treasures the value of family, in which the coherence among members in a family is closely maintained. Thus, it is possible that individuals' belief of beauty may strongly affected by this source of influence. On the other hand, cosmetic is a type of luxury product used in public context. Previous studies reported the crucial role of peer's influences on consumers' brand and product choices (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992). In recent years, fostered by the internet penetration, social media becomes more and more popular in Vietnam society. Vietnamese consumers, especially the young generation, love to engage in social media networks. They leverage social media as a tool to update and exchange information and learning new knowledge, including the makeup styles, tips and information about cosmetic products (Q&Me, 2016, 2018). Paticularly, people who are from 16 to 29 are more likely to use YouTube as their source of information related to makeup (Q&Me, 2018). The enthusiasm of Vietnamese consumers to beauty vlogs can be recognized easily by the huge number of subscribers and views, not only to the world famous vloggers like Michelle Phan, but also to the Vietnamese beauty gurus (see in Table 2).

The country's cultural complexity as well as the diversified influences exert on Vietnamese consumers and the market potential trigger researcher's interest in conducting this study. Based on the platform of YouTube, and the examination the experience of color cosmetic use of

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young female aged from 16 to 29, who are highschool or graduated student, or office workers, this research seeks for better understanding on following issues:

1. What Vietnamese cultural values do reflect upon consumers' beliefs of facial beauty?
2. What do Vietnamese young consumers integrate or negotiate their own beauty meanings/values with those of influencers who are from traditional (i.e. family or friends) and the new reference groups (i.e. beauty vloggers on YouTube)?

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