Between Professionalism and Amateurship: Makeup Discourse on YouTube

Giorgia Riboni

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Abstract

Over the last few years, brands have become increasingly aware of the marketing potential of social media and have been exploiting them as a component of their marketing effort. A strategy adopted in various industries is to co-opt social media celebrities and either employ or pay them to promote products, often without explicitly declaring it. This is common in the makeup industry, where a number of social media users are so popular that they have become (corporate) 'makeup gurus'. Their alleged amateur status is key to their success: by appearing economically disinterested they seem more trustworthy than corporations, thus being able to attract a wide follower base. On the other hand, makeup gurus have to depict themselves as valuable experts in order to appear credible both to the companies that supposedly hire them and to their fans. This study sets out to investigate the linguistic representation of makeup gurus' identity in texts collected from their YouTube channels in order to analyse the way in which their 'persona' (or 'edited self') discursively stems from an ongoing negotiation between professionalism and amateurship. A critical discourse analytical approach is adopted as it arguably represents the most suitable tool to investigate social and, as in this case, professional (or amateurish) identities.

Keywords: amateur vs. professional, vlog, makeup gurus, makeup tutorials, YouTube.

1. Research background

The advent of social media has brought into existence new professional figures that have no offline equivalent such as, for instance, 'beauty gurus'. The latter are digital influencers, i.e. online personalities who have built

a big follower base around their knowledge of cosmetic products and are therefore able to orient their audience's purchasing behaviour. On YouTube, the second largest social networking site after Facebook (*YouTube* 2015), being a "guru" can either mean having a "guru account" mainly devoted to educating the audience on a specific topic (even though the option of registering newly created channels under this category was removed in 2015) or having a wide viewership and being publicly acknowledged as someone with the necessary erudition and notoriety be considered as a sort of authority in one's field. In order to appear acknowledgeable, beauty gurus typically adopt the specific language of cosmetics to the Internet electronic environment, thus giving birth to new genres, such as the video makeup tutorial.

Makeup tutorials are video guides or demonstrations of how to apply makeup and what techniques to utilize. They normally combine the how-to genre with the vlog, i.e. a "video blog" or a video "diary page" in which users typically narrate their daily-life, as well as personal and spontaneous moments (García-Rapp 2016). Makeup tutorials are very popular and are characterized by the convergence of electronic word of mouth, personal narrative, and audience engagement.

This study investigates makeup tutorials on YouTube, one of the preferred social media platforms among those used by the beauty community. This website affords to freely and easily upload footage, watch others people's content, comment on it and connect through channel subscription; due to its emphasis on the visual component, YouTube can well serve the purpose of showing products and their application and this may explain why it has been adopted by so many cosmetic gurus.

Numerous YouTubers aspire to become gurus, as this status not only guarantees recognition and fame within the community, but it can also lead to revenue: as a matter of fact YouTube's advertising sharing scheme allows users to monetize the number of views of their videos (Burgess and Green 2009a, 56; Wasko and Erickson 2009; Moir 2014). Additionally, gurus having a wide follower base can also attract the attention of, and be recruited by corporations wanting to promote their brand through digital influencers. Their role as opinion leaders within the online beauty community makes them particularly suited to influence the purchasing preferences of vast audiences of acolytes (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013; Uzunoğlu and Misci Kip 2014); consequently, they are often paid to incorporate and endorse products in their videos (Wu 2016). Endorsement and sponsorship practices via YouTube are extremely common in the beauty industry[1]

[1] In 2014, beauty was the fourth-leading industry with the largest reach of influencers in the United States (as regards online marketing; cf. Statista 2016).

and they typically take the form of "1) direct sponsorship where the content creator partners with the sponsor to create videos, 2) affiliated links where the content creator gets a commission resulting from purchases attributable to the content creator, and 3) free product sampling where products are sent to content creators for free to be featured in a video" (Wu 2016, 1).

Beauty gurus find themselves in a very problematic situation: they want to sign as many endorsements deals as possible in order to make the most profit, but they have to be careful not to feature too many advertisements in their videos lest they should lose credibility and popularity (thus jeopardising their guru status which is what got them endorsement contracts). In order to be able to juggle their financial interest and their viewers' trust (Wu 2016, 15-16), they have to carefully craft their own persona (an "edited self"; Marwick 2013, 194-197) which is both business-friendly and carefully monitored (*ibid.*, 195). Research has shown that reaching and maintaining the guru status (in the cosmetic domain or elsewhere) is not simply obtained through effective self-expression, but represents the product of self-branding and attention-seeking online strategies involving "an intense process of engaging in conversations and building relationships" (Spyer 2013) as well as "creating a persona, sharing personal information about oneself [...] and strategically revealing information to increase or maintain [one's] audience" (Marwick 2013, 117). Burgess and Green highlight the entrepreneurial character of YouTubers' practices aimed at "building a meaningful presence and an engaged audience in a participatory media space" (2009b, 105). Despite the fact that creating beauty videos may have become their main source of income thanks to their collaborations with cosmetic brands, gurus wish to appear as genuine and amateurish as possible, while still displaying their competence and knowledge about products. YouTube amateur discourse (either real or forged) provides an anchor for consumers (Beverland and Farrelly 2009) as they normally do not regard the platform as a source of advertisement and therefore watch gurus' videos without guarding suspicions, finding the latter more relatable and "authentic", differently from those posted on companies' channels (Wu 2016, 3). Whereas drawing a sharp distinction between amateur and professional content might not be possible and maybe not even desirable (Burgess and Green 2009a, 57), studies have stressed the fact that the former dominates the YouTube beauty and cosmetics domain (cf. Pixability[2] Report *Beauty on YouTube*

[2] Pixability is a software company that works with major brands to increase their YouTube impact on target audiences (http://www.pixability.com). In 2014 and 2015 it

2015), thus indirectly confirming the influence and power of gurus as well as users' preference for their videos over those directly uploaded by brands.

2. Aim, Material and Method

Against this backdrop, this article sets out to examine YouTube gurus' communicative strategies aimed at representing themselves as competent and passionate in order to appear credible in the eyes of their viewers in spite of allegedly being sponsored by cosmetic brands. To do so, it will be verified whether it is the professional or the amateurish dimension that prevails in the videos and what language strategies are utilized in the creation of the "guru persona".

Whereas an ever-growing body of research has been devoted to the study of YouTube communicative practices, especially from sociological and digital humanist perspective (cf. e.g. Burgess 2011, 2012 and 2015; Burgess and Green 2008, 2009a and 2009b), not much has been written on the phenomenon of beauty gurus (García-Rapp 2016), especially from a linguistic perspective. This analysis, instead, mainly investigates the verbal component of videos, drawing on the assumption that it represents an instance of language for special purposes (cf., among others, Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Gotti 2003; Garzone 2006; Garzone, Heaney, and Riboni 2016). The study of gurus' self-representation as experts or amateurs is organized in three stages and departs from the examination of the macrostructures of the videos (i.e. the generic and the discursive level; cf. § 3) to subsequently narrow its scope to their smaller elements (i.e. the textual and syntactic levels as well as the lexical level; cf. § 4 and § 5 respectively) [3].

In order to explore these different levels a hybrid methodological toolkit is needed. This research mainly relies on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model for the examination of communicative events (1992); however, each dimension of the model (dealt with in a separate paragraph of this article) draws upon a more restricted, specific approach. Fairclough's model starts from the assumption that the textual, rhetoric-discursive and social dimensions are simultaneously activated in any lan-

analyzed the YouTube beauty ecosystem and the online behavior of brands and beauty creators and issued reports on the data collected.

[3] A video is a semiotically rich item but, while the importance other semiotic resources and of their interaction cannot be underestimated, the main focus of this analysis is the language utilized in beauty videos.

guage realisation and therefore arguably represents a suitable framework for this multi-level investigation of makeup videos. Research on professional metadiscourse (cf. Ilie 2003) can offer a good understanding of the strategies utilized by YouTubers to strike a balance between their professional and their amateurish persona, whereas studies focusing on genre such as Swales's (1990) and Bhatia's (1993), can provide valuable insights into the communicative purposes and rhetorical organization of gurus' monologues (cf. § 3). Werlich's (1976), Hatim's (1984) and Hatim and Mason's (1990) classifications are useful to analyse their textual and syntactic features (cf. § 4). Finally, beauty vloggers' lexical choices can be analysed in terms of their degree of specialization following the categorizations of Calsamiglia and van Dijk (2004) as well as Garzone (2006).

An *ad hoc* corpus consisting of fifteen tutorials has been built for this analysis [4]. The videos selected were posted on three of the most subscribed YouTube How to & Style channels (also ranking within the top 300 most subscribed channels of the whole YouTube platform) and are therefore arguably a representative sample of the genre [5]. Makeup tutorials realized by Michelle Phan (USA), Tanya Burr (England), and Lauren Curtis (Australia) and uploaded on YouTube over the course of seven months (October 2014 - April 2015) have been collected and examined [6].

3. Generic and discursive features of makeup tutorials

Gurus' tutorials enjoying a vast viewership are perhaps the most representative ones and the most likely to affect the genre, which may mean that even those created by relatively unknown amateurs can possibly bear traces of professional discourse (as they are inspired by the most famous ones). These videos display discursive features of both professionalism

[4] Cf. Appendix for detailed information on the corpus.

[5] Data collected in May 2015.

[6] Michelle Phan is an American thirty-year old who, thanks to the huge popularity of her videos (which have been watched more than a billion times), has been able to launch her own makeup line and to publish a non-fiction beauty guide and autobiography. She has more than 8.5 million subscribers and in 2013 Lancôme made her their official video makeup artist. Tanya Burr is an English makeup guru specialized in "celebrity looks". She has 3.5 million subscribers. She is also thirty and launched her own makeup line in 2014 and published a non-fiction beauty guide and autobiography in 2015. Lauren Curtis is an Australian twenty-four-year old who has almost 3.5 million subscribers (data collected in April 2016).

and amateurship as makeup gurus tend to portray themselves as "ordinary experts" (Tolson 2010, 283-285). Professional metadiscourse, "often used deliberately to highlight the speakers' professional and/or public image so as to instill confidence in the audience" (Ilie 2003, 81), is rather present in tutorials. In actual fact, gurus build their economic value and are able to attract advertisers mainly through the know-how they express in their videos (García-Rapp 2016)[7]. In this regard, Media and Communication scholar Andrew Tolson notes that the latter represent "performances which are akin to lectures, as extended monologues" (2010, 282) although delivered as "conversational talk". In order to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable, makeup celebrities provide their audience with very detailed instructions and information about brands' products and their application and uses. Such specific knowledge reveals a level of expertise that sets gurus apart from other makeup lovers and makes them authoritative in their community (cf. examples [1] and [2]).

(1) Instead of using your hands or a brush, cushion compact has a very specific application. (*sic* MP)

(2) BB or cream from Korea is very different than BB and CC cream from the West. The coverage is light to medium and the finish is dewy. (MP)

Showing insight about the main trends of the beauty industry is another discursive feature which allows them to display their competence and which is arguably a successful move to appeal to both makeup brands and viewers.

As regards the rhetorical level, recourse to figures of speech, which are typically used in a manner reminiscent of political discourse (Tolson 2010, 283), seems to indicate that gurus' monologues are very carefully drafted: for example, lists of three (example [3]), binomials (example [4]) and parallelisms (example [5]) are rather common in makeup tutorials.

(3) *It doesn't* smudge, *it doesn't* make a mess and it's very very pigmented. (LC)

(4) [...] even though it's all covered it's still not perfectly *clean and crisp*. (LC)

(5) I like *different* concealers for *different* jobs. (TB) (my emphasis)

The presence of an effective rhetorical construction is also revealed by discourse markers, which "signpost logical developments in a way similar to the conventional lecture" (Tolson 2010, 283):

[7] Gunnarsson (2009) highlights the "expert character" of professional discourse.

(6) Hey guys, I'm so excited about what I'm about to film today *for two reasons*: *one* because this is my all-time favourite makeup for autumn and winter time *and two* because I get to use my new products for Tanya Burr Cosmetics which I've just been waiting for so long to be able to tell you guys about and today for you guys is launch day. (TB)

(7) *Next* I'm going to use my (brand name) ultra black liquid liner. (TB)

(8) *And to finish off* just set the cream pencil with an iridescent white eye shadow. (MP) (my emphasis)

However, in spite of being "reminiscent of traditional speech genres associated with expertise" (Tolson 2010, 283) and sharing some important similarities with them, most videos are structured as virtual conversations with a friend. Swales's and Bhatia's works provide the theoretical foundation for the investigation of genres' rhetorical organization, which they divide into "moves" and "steps". Even though makeup tutorials are relatively new, they typically stick to a rather standard inner structure: they start with the Greeting of the viewer, normally followed by a short Introduction leading to the Makeup Application part. This part represents the core element of the video, as well as its main obligatory move, and precedes the Leave-Taking section [8]. As the analysis of their rhetorical organization indicates, tutorials are configured as (computer-mediated) face-to-face interactions, containing an initial segment in which gurus welcome their audience, a central segment which deals with the subject matter of the conversation (makeup application in this case) and a final closing. It is therefore possible to assume that YouTubers' choice of structuring their videos as a friendly chat rather than as a series of instructions reveals their intention to appear more as fellow amateurs than as professional experts with respect to their viewers.

Other markers of amateurship include, for example, the prevalence of the personal subjective dimension over the public dimension. Makeup gurus do not seem to construct themselves discursively as representative of their professional category, but rather highlight their own individual, "idiosyncratic" tastes and preferred application techniques:

(9) This is a *personal last step* because *I'm obsessed* with highlighters. (MP)

(10) I do use quite a few different brushes in this tutorial, just because *it makes it easier for me* [...]. (LC) (my emphasis)

[8] A complete codification of the makeup tutorial as a genre is provided in Riboni (forthcoming).

Stressing their own peculiarities allows these YouTubers to portray themselves as alternative to "mainstream" professional makeup artists and emphasize their "ordinary person" status.

Feigning similarity and self-deprecation are two other discursive practices that enable gurus to misrecognize the fact that they are not normal consumers (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013, 151; cf. also Reichert 2014, 108-109). Makeup celebrities feign similarity with their audience by "referring to mundane and ordinary aspects of their lives that downplay the glamour" that comes with being famous (Reichert 2014, 108-109):

(11) This video is going up on Thursday the 23rd October which is the day *I'm launching my lashes!!!* Which is insane and [...] just so so exciting. I actually wanted to do this announcement once I had all the beautiful makeup on, I don't really know why I'm doing it now. *I have a huge spot on my chin.* (TB) (my emphasis)

In example (11) Tanya Burr announces the launch of her false lashes collection, an achievement that she was able to realize thanks to her fame and success as a YouTube makeup artist. However, after publicizing her new product and expressing joy for her professional accomplishment, the guru immediately tones down her superstar status by alluding to the presence of a spot on her chin, a very common problem whose mention is meant to highlight similarity and create a feeling of proximity with her followers.

Self-deprecation is a related discursive practice which is also used to make makeup celebrities appear less detached and professional, thus denying the existence of boundaries that would separate them from their audience (Reichert 2014, 108-109). Self-criticism strategies mainly include the reference to makeup application difficulties and to video tutorial-video making flaws. As regards the former, it can be observed from examples (12) and (13) that the makeup guru represents herself as sharing the same problems experienced by her viewer, not as a professional having a full command of makeup applying techniques:

(12) *I'm terrible at* applying eyeliner on camera. (LC)

(13) [...] blend a really small amount – *this is probably too much* – under my eyes [...]. (TB) (my emphasis)

Underscoring these shortcomings is meant to generate solidarity with the audience as makeup celebrities want to appear as amateurs, just like their followers, and not as trained specialists. Moreover, they are typically very transparent about the process of video production as well as about its imperfections:

(14) *I always find it really hard* to end a video [...] like What do I do? (TB)

(15) Oh this isn't the one (lipgloss) I wanted to use. *I picked up the wrong one* [...]. (TB)

(16) It does help to softly pull the skin around your eye [...] but obviously I've got my hands full (laughter) so I'm not gonna be able to do it today! (LC) (my emphasis)

Makeup tutorials are therefore discursively constructed "not so much as finished pieces of work but rather as improvised drafts" (Reichert 2014, 108). In actual fact defects in video-making are explained rather than glossed over and this is not just to indicate that the production is amateurish, but to make a virtue of this (Tolson 2010, 281). This strategy probably indicates gurus' will to appear different from brands, since the latter normally upload polished, professional content. By depicting their videos as unprofessional – in spite of the fact that they are usually high quality – they want to look more authentic and genuine and demonstrate that they are just like their viewers.

To sum up, the payoff of feigned similarity and self-deprecation stems from makeup celebrities' desire to be perceived as similar to their followers, only luckier (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013, 152). This may induce followers to identify with the gurus (García-Rapp 2016) and feel that they can trade place with them at any time (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013, 152). These communicative practices also allow famous YouTubers to be perceived as credible and reliable, even though supposedly paid by brands in order to promote their products.

4. The text types of the "ordinary expert"

After dealing with the generic and discursive levels of the analysis, I now turn to the examination of the textual and syntactic features of makeup tutorials [9].

A first comment that can be made is that the different text types videos belong to mainly depend on the sort of voice setup gurus opt for, whether it is a voiceover taped after the shooting of the video and edited into it later or the real time recording of the makeup artist's words as she is addressing the camera. Most tutorials collected for this research feature a real time recording whereas voiceovers are the least favourite option. This

[9] This section only examines the makeup application part of the videos (cf. § 3) and is loosely based on Riboni (forthcoming).

is probably due to the fact that the latter have a more professional air, while footage without any added sound arguably looks more "spontaneous" and "amateurish" and therefore more "authentic" [10].

Gurus may nonetheless resort to voiceovers when they are filming in very noisy locations or when engaged in a very difficult makeup application (which would probably make talking problematic). The text type most videos with voiceovers correspond to also indicates a high degrees of professionalism [11]: as a matter of fact, they are instructional (cf. Werlich 1976; Hatim 1984; Hatim and Mason 1990) and provide guidelines on how to use different makeup items in order to recreate the desired look. Most voiceovers contain imperatives (which represent the prevailing mode; cf. example [17]), often combined with expressions containing a modal (example [18]):

(17) As always, *start* with a clean face. *Depuff* and awaken your eyes using under eye patches or chamomile tea bags. *Leave them on* for a few minutes and *remove. Say bye bye* to your puffiness. (MP)

(18) Now you *can take* a pastel blue colour. (MP) (my emphasis)

The choice of the instructional text type suggests the existence of an expert-layman relationship between the gurus and the audience. However, the former arguably wish to appear as "ordinary experts" and therefore privilege a peer-to-peer kind of communication. As a consequence, the expository text type and not the instructional text type is the preferred option in makeup tutorials (Hatim and Mason 1990). As a matter of fact in most of the videos analysed makeup application is constructed as a process consisting of numerous constitutive steps rather than as a list of instructions. Moreover, the focus is not so much on the viewer and what he/she should do but on the guru herself and what she does to create the look. This can be observed in the fact that imperatives – which are also present in real time recordings in a quick tip format – are significantly less common. The dominant mode-personal pronoun combination in the tutorials is, quite predictably, the indicative mode and the first person singular. Makeup celebrities habitually explain what they are doing, what products and what application techniques they are using employing the "going to" form:

(19) I am *going to* apply it over the light, silvery-yellowy shade that I've just applied. (LC)

[10] This does not mean that videos without voiceover are not heavily edited afterwards.

[11] Michelle Phan, who is, rather significantly, the most successful and popular of the three makeup gurus examined in this study, shows a preference for more professional-looking and instructional videos.

(20) I *am just going to* blend this into the shadow. (TB) (my emphasis)

Besides the "going to" form, other structures with equivalent meaning can be identified in the corpus, e.g. the present continuous ("I am just drawing") and the contracted form of a semi-modal ("wanna").

(21) This *I am just drawing* along my lash line. (TB)

(22) I *wanna go* from here all the way to the inner corner (of my eye). (LC) (my emphasis)

The indicative mode represents the preferred choice in videos recorded live as it focuses on the unfolding of the makeup application process in the same way as the makeup guru experiences it. This way she is able to present it as an example and a possible suggestion rather than as a lecture, with the result that the amateurish component dominates over the professional one. As already suggested most tutorials appear as virtual moments of intimacy between friends, in which the most knowledgeable one shares what she does and provides makeup tips (using the indicative mode) rather than giving instructions using imperative forms (as a professional would).

The analysis of the textual and syntactic levels thus additionally confirms the hypothesis that the makeup guru persona is the product of intense self-branding which carefully blends professional and amateurish elements and in which the latter dimension strategically prevails.

5. The makeup lexicon of video tutorials

The analysis of the last level, the lexical level, further suggests the coexistence of both the professional and the amateurish domains. One of the most immediately recognizable lexical features of tutorials is the massive presence of highly specialized lexicon which gurus mainly adopt with reference to makeup products (e.g. falsies, primer, highlighter ...), makeup application (e.g. contouring, blending ...) and tools (e.g. lash curler, mascara wand ...). The use of specialized lexicon identifies gurus as members of the professional makeup artist community of practice (cf. Wenger 1998). Their desire to appear as experts in the field is also observable in the widespread utilization of specific terminology relating to face parts, which, in some cases (such as, e.g., "T-zone area" or "Cupid's bow"), may not even be transparent and known to the audience. As indicated by examples (23-26), specialized lexicon in makeup tutorial is hardly ever explained:

(23) Now I'm not a big fan of *contouring* these days which is quite strange 'cause I used to absolutely love it. (LC)

(24) So pretty much is doing what I normally do when I create a bit of *a cat eye*. (LC)

(25) Add a touch along the *brow bone* for a three-dimensional illusion. (MP)

(26) And, if you want a fuller *lash line*, *tightline* your *upper water line*. (MP) (my emphasis)

This choice may possibly depend on two factors. First, tutorials are video recordings, which means that viewers can work out the meaning of certain terms or expressions by simply watching what the guru is doing and what face parts are involved in the application process. Anyway, the strategy of almost never clarifying the specific terminology may also have to do with the fact that, in spite of the instructional nature of tutorials, they do not entirely represent an instance of expert-to-layman communication. Instead, gurus seem to rhetorically construct their target audience as composed of peer makeup enthusiasts. This means that if, on the one hand, this kind of makeup video can be compared to a lecture aimed at educating the audience, on the other hand it is arguably also possible to liken it to conference presentations, where the speaker is addressing an audience of peers.

The register characterizing makeup tutorials is, however, very different from that of academic conferences: as a matter of fact gurus make an abundant use of colloquialisms in their monologues. It is to be noted that most colloquial expressions are utilized with reference to the makeup domain, i.e. the same domain where a highly specialized lexicon is adopted, too:

(27) So, just apply *this baby* all over your face. (MP)

(28) [F]or this look *I'm gonna rock* a matt red lip. (MP)

(29) Grab the lash from *the thingy* – very professional! (laughter). (TB) (my emphasis)

Example (29) is rather interesting as it contains both a colloquialism and a comment of Tanya Burr. She appears to be very self-aware of her lexical choices and of the ways in which the latter can contribute to the maintenance of her "guru persona": she declares that she should speak as a professional, but she does not seem too concerned to come across as an amateur.

The presence of colloquial expressions therefore highlights once more gurus' self-representation as "ordinary experts", who can incorporate both highly specific terminology as well as informal language in their mono-

logues. The latter can be very effective in conferring an intimate quality to the videos, which, as already pointed out, are analogous to virtual encounters among friends.

The lexical choices made by makeup celebrities therefore allow them to construct their audience as composed of enthusiast, expert peers who have a good knowledge of the specific lexicon as well as of virtual friends with whom they can have casual conversations which may include colloquialisms.

6. Concluding remarks

The different levels of analysis carried out in this study all seem to indicate the presence of an ongoing negotiation between professionalism and amateurship in makeup gurus' self-representation. It is this combination of identities which mainly characterizes the "makeup guru persona" and arguably contributes to its success and popularity. YouTube scholar Patricia Lange has introduced the notion of "videos of affinity" (2009) to designate hybrid content which cuts across the professional and amateurish categories and highlights that "many so-called amateur video creators can use characteristics found in videos affinity to gain support and viewership for work that they will happily commercialize" (Lange 2009, 83). The professional dimension is what possibly attracts viewers and corporations alike: gurus do have to showcase their knowledge and skills in order to be worth watching as well as credible. However, it is the amateurish element which probably prevails in the videos: in their relationship with their followers, gurus appear as the (virtual) friend who shares his/her techniques and tricks rather than instruct.

Makeup celebrities' message is all the more convincing because they discursively construct an "us amateurs" (in spite of being almost always professional) which they juxtapose to "them/cosmetic brands". Since "instead of simply accepting packaged brand messages, (viewers) tend to place more trust in the opinions of those who appear to be similar to themselves" (Uzunoğlu and Misci Kip 2014, 598), gurus deliberately emphasize their non-professional side to show that they are just like the members of their audience. This can be done by means of discursive practices such as feigning similarity and self-deprecation, but also by describing the makeup application process as a series of steps taken by the YouTuber rather than as a list of instructions that the audience has to follow.

Most of the success and popularity of makeup celebrities therefore depends on their ability to attract and manage attention, retaining their

viewership and winning its trust. This difficult task can be accomplished through language, by carefully creating a brandable, successful and yet non-intimidating version of themselves. The investigation of the makeup lexicon of tutorials reveals a strategic combination of specific cosmetic terminology and colloquialisms which allows gurus to represent themselves as "ordinary experts" who, unlike corporations, appear genuine and authentic as well as credible.

Research has shown that popular YouTubers are extremely skilled at generating affiliation with their viewers, to the point that, even when they openly disclose their involvement with cosmetic brands, followers do not interpret such involvement as a violation of trust but rather as a sign of prestige and a ratification of their leadership (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013, 153). In other words, even though makeup gurus have business connections to the corporate world and no obligations towards their acolytes, their rhetoric strategically highlights affinity towards the latter (while downplaying the importance of the association with the former). The result is that celebrities are perceived as similar to their viewers, only luckier. Consequently, followers identify with these famous YouTubers and feel that they may be able to trade places with them, which is one of the most crucial dynamics lying at the basis of gurus' popularity.

To conclude, this investigation into the language of tutorials has shed light onto the complicated balancing and blending of the professional and amateurish identity of the "ordinary makeup expert". Social media communication is a fairly recent and a very rapidly evolving phenomenon, and has brought about new professional figures as well as new interdiscursive formations (like demonstrated by this analysis). As challenging as they can be, these interdiscursive formations can be said to represent an interesting object of study. Hopefully, more future studies will be carried out which explore the complexities and the contradictions of user-generated content and the ways in which various discourses and most notably advertising discourse are increasingly colonizing it.

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Appendix: List of makeup tutorials

Michelle Phan

1. Butterfly Kisses
   17th April 2015 (5:58)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfvPDTbnplQ&list=
   PLDm3KH9jNzQmFrVXOjaHlL-572mQe7zOv
2. Glowing Skin Look ✧ Ethereal Aura
   20th March 2015 (6:35)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3CmBjdoHNc&index=3&list=
   PLDm3KH9jNzQmFrVXOjaHlL-572mQe7zOv
3. Lunar New Year Beauty
   19th February 2015 (8:33)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDciknUOA7w&index=5&list=
   PLDm3KH9jNzQmFrVXOjaHlL-572mQe7zOv
4. 5 Lipstick Looks & a Valentine's Day DIY!
   13th February 2015 (3:37)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_VIWu5Tbz0&list=
   PLDm3KH9jNzQmFrVXOjaHlL-572mQe7zOv&index=6
5. Glam X ／(^ x ^)／
   13th December 2014 (5:34)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn2YzWqnS7M&list=
   PLDm3KH9jNzQmFrVXOjaHlL-572mQe7zOv&index=7

Tanya Burr

1. Emma Stone Flawless Skin Makeup Tutorial! ad | Tanya Burr
   19th April 2015 (13:58)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPlOSoT_BEQ&list=
   PLt_BERL98BiftO9uquOF7wJ97d-AzsOWf
2. My Smoky Night out Makeup Tutorial! | Tanya Burr
   22nd March 2015 (11:58)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRk2PrTZchE&index=2&list=
   PLt_BERL98BiftO9uquOF7wJ97d-AzsOWf
3. Golden Goddess Makeup Tutorial! | Tanya Burr
   22nd February 2015 (13:39)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6BMkt65rkE&list=
   PLt_BERL98BiftO9uquOF7wJ97d-AzsOWf&index=3
4. Selena Gomez Everyday Makeup Tutorial! | Tanya Burr
   25th January 2015 (11:59)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhr3cvSVK40&list=
   PLt_BERL98BiftO9uquOF7wJ97d-AzsOWf&index=5

5. My Autumn Makeup Tutorial! | Tanya Burr
   23rd October 2014 (13:29)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcz6XUdD_bQ&list=
   PLt_BERL98BiftO9uquOF7wJ97d-AzsOWf&index=5

Lauren Curtis

1. Inverted Smoked-out Eyeliner & Ombre Vampy Lips! | Lauren Curtis
   19th February 2015 (11:48)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQn1CkXOLTI&list=
   PLa4Mpt4BD3Pb_Dh6iENxdUZQakFqX2O0D
2. How to Apply EYELINER + Graphic Liner! (ONE BRAND)
   15th February 2015 (11:25)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T68caIDzOlo&list=
   PLa4Mpt4BD3Pb_Dh6iENxdUZQakFqX2O0D&index=2
3. Valentine's Day Makeup Tutorial – Soft & Pretty!
   9th February 2015 (7:49)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLc6nOYxDWw&index=3&list=
   PLa4Mpt4BD3Pb_Dh6iENxdUZQakFqX2O0D
4. Makeup 'Makeover' on My MUM!
   28th January 2015 (14:11)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ27fFddwGE&list=
   PLa4Mpt4BD3Pb_Dh6iENxdUZQakFqX2O0D&index=4
5. Removing Makeup in Front of BOYS! Tips & Advice!
   13th January 2015 (15:04)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IkBQsMzjJs&index=6&list=
   PLa4Mpt4BD3Pb_Dh6iENxdUZQakFqX2O0D