

# Building Digital Communities through Content: How Filipino Beauty and Life Coaches Engage Audiences on Youtube

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**ABSTRACT:** Social media has transformed influencer marketing, with YouTube as a key platform where Filipino influencers use storytelling and engagement to build confidence and community. Grounded in Social Comparison Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory, this study examines the communication styles and content themes employed by Filipino beauty and life coaches to engage audiences.

A qualitative content analysis of 44 video clips from three selected influencers was conducted using a structured coding framework and the DiVoMiner platform. Findings reveal that self-care, travel, product reviews, and beauty tutorials are the dominant content themes, reflecting a balance between aspirational and practical content. Additionally, engagement strategies such as responding to comments, hosting live Q&A sessions, and integrating audience feedback strengthen parasocial relationships and enhance audience trust. These findings highlight the role of Filipino beauty and life coaches as both aspirational figures and relatable mentors who shape online self-perception and beauty standards.

This study highlights the importance of authenticity and audience engagement for influencer marketing. It offers content strategies for influencers to balance aspiration and relatability while fostering trust. Future research should examine the psychological impact of beauty influencers, audience demographics, and cross-platform engagement to deepen understanding of digital influence.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise of social media has transformed the way individuals connect, communicate, and consume information, significantly shaping consumer behavior and self-perception (Statista, 2023). Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become essential to daily life, particularly among younger audiences, fostering relationships and facilitating knowledge-sharing. Among these platforms, YouTube stands out as a leading space for beauty influencers and life coaches who share content on self-care, personal development, and wellness. These digital personalities shape beauty standards and self-confidence by employing interactive engagement strategies such as storytelling, product recommendations, and direct audience interaction through comments and live sessions (Fardouly et al., 2015).

Influencers play a critical role in identity formation and self-perception, as individuals increasingly seek online figures for guidance and inspiration. According to Social Comparison Theory, people evaluate themselves based on the content they consume, influencing their confidence and self-image (Marwick & Boyd,

2011). Digital interactions have become a primary source of validation and self-worth, as suggested by Leary and Baumeister's (2000) sociometer theory. Beauty and life coaches often present curated representations of ideal lifestyles, which may motivate audiences while also impacting their self-esteem and purchasing decisions (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). Studies indicate that teenagers trust influencers more than traditional celebrities, underscoring the shift in authority from mainstream media to digital creators (Statista, 2023).

Filipino beauty and life coaches hold a distinct position in this digital landscape, blending cultural values with personal narratives to foster a sense of belonging within their online communities. Research suggests that authenticity and relatability are key factors in maintaining audience engagement, with users placing higher trust in influencers who share personal experiences and communicate directly with their followers. YouTube, as a highly interactive platform, enables these influencers to build parasocial relationships with their audiences, strengthening credibility and emotional connection (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms for personal development and lifestyle guidance, it is crucial to examine how these influencers shape self-perception and confidence through their communication styles and content themes. This study contributes to the growing discourse on digital influence by analyzing the role of Filipino beauty and life coaches in fostering authenticity and engagement on YouTube. The findings offer insights into the intersection of influencer culture, self-image, and community-building, with implications for marketers, content creators, and scholars studying the evolving landscape of social media influence.

The absence of substantial research explicitly focusing on Filipino beauty and life coaches presents an academic gap in understanding the impacts of digital beauty culture within this specific context. Despite the pervasive influence of beauty influencers globally, there is a notable lack of analysis on how Filipino creators engage their audience regarding self-perception and confidence. Most existing literature has highlighted Western influencers, thus neglecting regional cultural dynamics. This gap is critical, given the unique cultural frameworks that affect how content themes such as beauty standards, self-care, and mental wellness resonate within the Filipino population.

Moreover, previous studies have shown that social media significantly influences self-esteem and body image among users; however, the nuances in the Filipino context have not been sufficiently explored. Research indicates that visual representations of beauty ideals on social media platforms often propagate unrealistic standards that can lead to body dissatisfaction and anxiety, particularly through upward comparison phenomena (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). Filipino audiences interacting with beauty content may experience distinct cultural dynamics compared to their Western counterparts. The Filipino cultural backdrop often emphasizes collectivism and social harmony, potentially intensifying the impact of social media portrayals on individual self-esteem. For instance, family-oriented and community-centered values in the Philippines may make audiences more vulnerable to perceived expectations from online content, further influencing their identity development and self-worth.

In conclusion, the exploration of beauty influencers—specifically Filipino life coaches—alongside the cultural implications of their content, is essential in understanding how they affect audience self-perception and confidence. Importantly, integrating discussions of body positivity, beauty standards, and self-care within the unique Filipino context may reveal deeper insights into the socio-cultural landscapes influencing these dynamics.

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To identify and analyze the dominant content themes explored by Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube.

2. To examine the impact of audience interactions with Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube on self-esteem, highlighting both positive and negative influences.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to enhance the understanding of the role Filipino beauty and life coaches play in shaping self-perception and confidence among their audiences, thereby informing strategies for more authentic and impactful digital engagement.

### **The Role of Beauty Influencers in Consumer Behavior**

**Influencers as Drivers of Consumer Decisions.** Beauty influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior in the cosmetics and skincare industries. Unlike traditional celebrities, they are perceived as more relatable and trustworthy due to their personal experiences and honest reviews. Consumers often rely on influencer recommendations before purchasing beauty products, believing influencers provide authentic insights into product effectiveness. The rise of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has amplified influencer marketing, as user engagement through likes, comments, and shares strengthens influencer credibility. Beauty influencers also create tutorials, product hauls, and in-depth reviews that guide consumer decisions, solidifying their influence in the beauty industry (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Ilieva et al., 2024).

Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) is particularly relevant in understanding how beauty influences consumer choices. This theory explains that individuals assess their own appearance, skills, and experiences by comparing them to others, which is common in the context of Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube. When viewers consume content featuring skincare routines, makeup techniques, or self-improvement advice, they often evaluate their beauty practices in relation to the influencers' portrayals (Sheldon, 2010).

In the beauty industry, exposure to influencers who portray flawless skin and curated lifestyles often motivates consumers to adopt similar products and self-care routines to achieve comparable results. While some viewers feel inspired, others may experience self-doubt if they feel they do not measure up. These negative effects can be mitigated when influencers share their personal struggles, as this helps them relate to their audience and foster a more inclusive community (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2019).

Influencers' ability to engage audiences through personal narratives strengthens their relatability and authenticity, making them particularly influential in a collectivist society like the Philippines. Beauty and life coaches become not only beauty advisors but also aspirational figures, reinforcing shared beauty standards and self-care practices within their communities (User-Generated content by the beauty influencer and its impact on E-WOM and purchase intentions, 2024). This dynamic is evident as Filipino consumers often seek peer validation, with influencers serving as role models who shape beauty norms and self-esteem within their social circles.

**The Rise of Micro-Influencers and Authenticity in Marketing.** The growing popularity of micro-influencers has reshaped beauty brand marketing. While prominent influencers have broad reach, smaller influencers cultivate more engaged audiences and foster stronger connections with their followers (Marwick, 2015). Consumers perceive micro-influencers as more authentic and less commercialized than high-profile influencers (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2010). Transparency is key to trust, as audiences favor influencers who disclose brand partnerships and provide honest reviews. Maintaining authenticity while engaging in brand collaborations ensures sustained audience trust and continued influence on consumer purchasing behavior.

### **Content Strategies and Engagement Techniques of Beauty and Life Coaches**

**Personal Storytelling and Interactive Engagement.** Beauty and life coaches on YouTube use various strategies to build their brand and sustain audience engagement. Personal storytelling, where influencers share their experiences and transformations, fosters emotional connections with followers (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2019). Additionally, tutorials, product reviews, and self-care tips enhance credibility while subtly promoting endorsed products (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2014).

Interactive engagement techniques, such as responding to comments, hosting Q&A sessions, and conducting live streams, strengthen community ties and foster audience loyalty (Marwick, 2014). Research indicates that parasocial relationships—where audiences form emotional bonds with influencers—significantly impact viewer retention and engagement (Horton & Wohl, 1956). These relationships are reinforced when influencers adopt conversational tones and directly engage with their followers (De Mooij, 2004).

Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) explains how audiences develop one-sided emotional bonds with influencers, perceiving them as close friends despite never having met in real life. However, studies warn that excessive exposure to idealized beauty content can negatively impact self-esteem, particularly among young viewers who are still shaping their self-identity, highlighting the dual influence of social comparison in digital spaces, where content can inspire self-improvement but also create pressure to conform to beauty ideals (Schouten et al., 2019).

Filipino beauty and life coaches enhance parasocial bonds through direct audience engagement, personalized responses, and interactive content such as live Q&A sessions. Research suggests that stronger parasocial relationships lead to higher trust and increased engagement, which explains why followers often adopt the beauty routines and self-improvement practices recommended by these influencers (Baldus et al., 2014).

**Trend-Based Content and Brand Collaborations.** Beauty and life coaches leverage trending beauty techniques, viral challenges, and self-improvement topics to remain relevant and attract new audiences (Marwick, 2015). Collaborations with brands and fellow influencers further expand reach and credibility (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2019). However, maintaining authenticity is crucial, as audiences prefer genuine content rather than excessively promotional (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Studies show that transparent disclosure of brand partnerships enhances consumer trust, with influencers who practice openness maintaining higher engagement (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). Beauty and life coaches sustain their online presence by balancing authenticity with strategic content planning while fostering meaningful audience relationships.

**Cultural Influences on Online Interactions.** The collectivist nature of Filipino culture influences digital interactions, where shared experiences and group validation take precedence over individual achievements. Beauty and life coaches engage audiences by fostering discussions, offering advice, and creating content that resonates with community values. The concept of *kapwa*, or shared identity, is pivotal in shaping online engagement, reinforcing interpersonal relationships in digital spaces. As social media evolves, Filipino online communities continue to shape digital identity, foster social connections, and influence consumer behavior (Habito, Morgan, & Vaughan, 2021).

## II. Research Framework

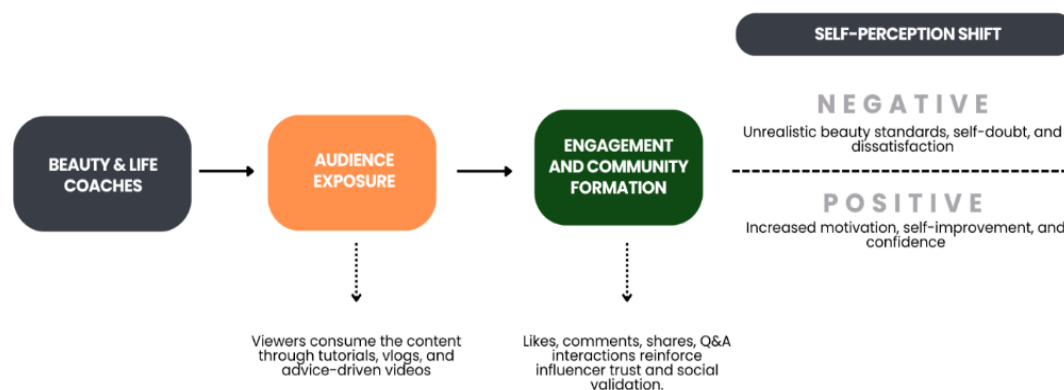


Figure 1  
 Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), which posits that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their appearance, behaviors, and achievements to those of others. In the context of Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube, this theory provides a lens for understanding how viewers form self-perceptions through exposure to influencer content.

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 presents a linear process illustrating how social comparison unfolds in digital spaces:

1. **Beauty & Life Coaches.** Influencers serve as the initial source of content. They share curated tutorials, vlogs, and motivational videos focused on beauty, self-care, and lifestyle improvement. Their polished presentation and aspirational messaging provide a benchmark for viewers' self-evaluation.
2. **Audience Exposure.** Viewers consume this content regularly, becoming exposed to idealized portrayals of beauty and personal success. This exposure is the foundation for social comparison, where individuals begin to assess their own routines and appearance in relation to what they see online.
3. **Engagement and Community Formation.** Beyond passive consumption, audiences actively participate through likes, comments, shares, and Q&A sessions. These interactions foster a sense of community and enhance the credibility of influencers. They also reinforce social validation—viewers feel connected to both the influencer and the broader community of followers.
4. **Self-Perception Shift.** The outcome of this process is a shift in self-perception, which can be either **positive** or **negative**:
  - **Negative outcomes** may include dissatisfaction, self-doubt, and pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards (Fardouly et al., 2015).
  - **Positive outcomes** may include increased motivation, confidence, and self-improvement (Suls & Wheeler, 2000).

These effects are shaped by the relatability and engagement strategies used by influencers. For example, some beauty and life coaches openly share their imperfections and personal struggles, which helps counterbalance the effects of idealized comparisons and fosters inclusivity (Chae, 2018). In the Filipino context, these interactions are embedded in collectivist values, where online communities act as extensions of real-life peer groups (Soriano, 2020).

Ultimately, the research framework captures how exposure to influencer content leads to social comparison, which, through community engagement, results in either empowering or detrimental shifts in how individuals perceive themselves.

### III. Methodology

#### Population, Sample, and Sampling

The population for this study consists of Filipino beauty and life coaches who actively produce video content on YouTube and are known for their influence in beauty, self-care, and motivational communication. To conduct a focused and in-depth qualitative analysis, a purposive sampling technique was employed. This sampling method was chosen to ensure that selected influencers meet specific criteria aligned with the research objectives—namely, high engagement, strong audience following, and consistent production of beauty and self-improvement content.

**Sample Selection.** Three influential Filipino content creators were selected based on the following criteria:

- Active content creation during the 2024 calendar year;
- High audience reach and engagement, as measured by view counts and follower/subscriber numbers;
- Content focus on beauty, self-care, confidence-building, and inspirational messaging;
- Demonstrated audience interaction through comments, live sessions, and community engagement.

From each influencer, the top twenty most popular videos published between January and December 2024 were reviewed. Popularity was determined by view count, ensuring that the selected videos represent the most visible and influential content of each creator. This resulted in a total sample of 44 videos for in-depth analysis, selected based on feasibility, diversity of content, and analytical richness.

**Influencer Profiles.** The three selected influencers represent a diverse yet complementary cross-section of the Filipino beauty and life coaching community on YouTube. Each was chosen for their unique approach to combining aesthetic content with motivation, wellness, and audience engagement as in details in Table 1

Table 1

*Influencer Profiles according to the Platform Activity, Audience Reach, Content Focus and Notable Traits*

Influencer	Platform Activity	Audience Reach	Content Focus	Notable Traits
Jen Barangan	220 YouTube videos; 357,000 Google results; 139,000 video results	Over 3.5 million followers across platforms	Fashion, dance, beauty, self-care, and mental health	Blends entertainment with emotional empowerment; promotes relatable self-improvement narratives for young women.
Hannah Pangilinan	130 YouTube videos; 118,000 Google results; 2,600 video results	500,000+ YouTube subscribers	Travel, lifestyle, beauty, documentary-style storytelling	Integrates personal journeys with beauty and wellness, encouraging self-discovery, emotional balance, and holistic well-being through everyday practices.

Influencer	Platform Activity	Audience Reach	Content Focus	Notable Traits
<b>Julienne Ipapo</b>	99 YouTube videos; 10,700 Google results; 2,660 video results	680,000+ followers and 17 million TikTok likes	Motivational speaking, beauty, wellness, life advice	Entrepreneur and virtual life coach; offers practical guidance and motivational content that promotes confidence and self-care.

These influencers, selected for their relevance, reach, and thematic focus, collectively represent the evolving communication landscape of Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube. Their content provides rich data for examining how digital creators shape self-perception, confidence, and community through interactive, aesthetic, and motivational media.

#### IV. Instrument and Variable Measurement

To guide the analysis, a structured **coding framework** was developed as the primary research instrument. The framework was designed to capture two main dimensions:

**Thematic Categories.** These represent the primary content types and narratives used in influencer videos, categorized as:

- **Tutorials / How-To** – Step-by-step guides for makeup and skincare techniques.
- **Product Reviews** – Evaluations of beauty products, including ingredients and user experience.
- **Get Ready with Me (GRWM)** – Narrated routines showcasing makeup, outfit choices, and daily preparation.
- **Routines** – Daily or seasonal skincare and beauty regimens.
- **Favorites** – Personal product endorsements.
- **Challenges/Tags** – Trend-based, participatory content.
- **Personal Videos / Vlogs** – Lifestyle content reflecting the influencer’s personal experiences and values.

**Engagement Strategies.** This component captures how influencers interact with and engage their audience:

- Responding to comments
- Engaging in live or chat discussions
- Hosting Q&A sessions
- Using polls and surveys
- Giving shoutouts or mentions
- Sending personalized messages
- Other interactive techniques

These variables were coded using **DiVo Miner**, a social listening and content analysis platform, to ensure consistency and validity.

#### Data Collection

The selected 44 YouTube videos were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Transcripts were uploaded into DiVoMiner to facilitate systematic coding and thematic classification. The focus



was on how influencers convey messages, engage their audiences, and foster a sense of community through narrative and interactivity.

The use of purposive sampling ensures that the selected content is relevant to the research focus on communication strategies, self-perception, and digital community-building. The diversity of video types and influencer communication styles provided a robust basis for comparison across different content formats.

## **V. Data Analysis and Reporting**

A qualitative coding approach was used to analyze the video transcripts. The data were categorized into themes and interaction patterns using the pre-established coding framework. DiVoMiner enabled efficient content categorization and pattern recognition, helping identify recurring themes related to self-perception, authenticity, and community engagement.

To ensure analytical rigor, an intercoder reliability test was conducted. At least two independent coders analyzed all videos using the same coding scheme. Cohen's kappa was calculated to assess the agreement level between coders, yielding a reliability score of 0.85, which indicates strong agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussions.

Findings were interpreted through the lens of Social Comparison Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory, with particular attention to how content exposure and audience engagement contribute to shifts in self-perception—either positively (increased confidence and motivation) or negatively (self-doubt and beauty dissatisfaction).

## **VI. Results**

This section presents the findings based on the two primary objectives of the study: (1) to identify and analyze the dominant content themes explored by Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube, and (2) to examine how audience interaction with influencer content impacts self-esteem, highlighting both positive and negative effects. The analysis is based on 44 videos from three selected influencers, chosen for their popularity, relevance, and communication styles. The analysis identifies self-care, travel, product reviews, and tutorials as the dominant content themes. These reflect a balance of wellness, beauty, and lifestyle, enhancing the influencers' relatability. Audience interactions—like comments, likes, and live Q&As—foster community and belonging, offering insights into how beauty and life coaches shape self-confidence and digital identity in Filipino online spaces.

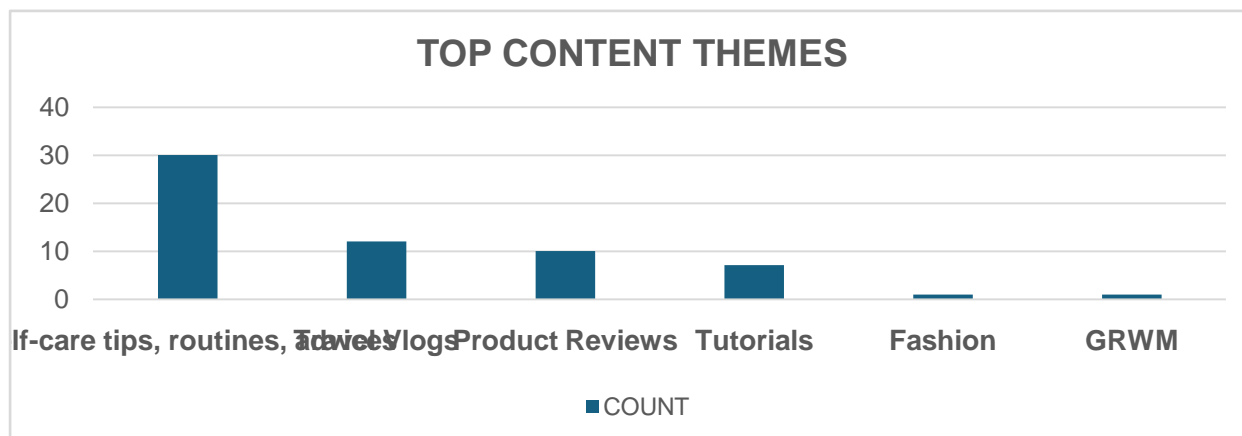
### **Dominant Content Themes Among Filipino Beauty and Life Coaches: Wellness, Identity, and Inspiration**

The qualitative content analysis revealed four dominant content themes across the sampled videos.



Figure 2

*Research Question # 1: What are the dominant content themes (e.g., self-care, body positivity, beauty standards, mental wellness) explored by Filipino beauty and life coaches?*



**Self-Care and Wellness (49.20%).** This was the most prominent theme in the dataset. Influencers frequently discussed topics such as skincare routines, morning/night self-care rituals, mindfulness, and emotional well-being. These videos promote self-empowerment and inner confidence through consistent care routines.

Illustrative Quotes:

- *"Taking care of your skin is more than just beauty—it's about feeling good and confident in your own skin."* – Influencer A
- *"Guys, remember, self-care isn't selfish! When you take care of yourself, you can take care of others better."* – Influencer B

In response audience comments highlight the emotional impact of this content:

- *"This video really reminded me to slow down and take care of myself. Thank you for this!"*
- *"I followed your skincare routine, and my skin has never felt better. Super helpful!"*

**Travel (19.70%).** Travel was often integrated with self-care and lifestyle content. Influencers documented trips while highlighting beauty routines on the go, relaxation, and cultural exploration. These videos created aspirational narratives that resonated with viewers.

Illustrative Quotes:

- *"Skincare is still a must, even when you're traveling! Here's how I keep my skin fresh on long flights."* – Influencer C
- *"This place is so relaxing—perfect for a self-care getaway!"* – Influencer A

Audience comments show how travel content resonates with viewers:

*"Ate, ang sayapanoorin ng travel vlogs mo. Parang kasamamo kami sa trip!"*

- *"Dream destination ko 'to! Thank you sa tips, ate. Manifesting namakapuntarinako soon!"*

**Product Reviews and Beauty Tutorials (16%).** These videos provided honest product evaluations, skincare reviews, and beauty tips. The transparency and level of detail influenced viewer trust and informed purchasing decisions.

Illustrative Quotes:

- *"Okay, real talk lang, guys. Worth it batalaga 'tong viral na sunscreen? Let's find out!"* – Influencer B
- *"Alamniyonamanako, hindi biased samga reviews! Honest thoughts lang—kung fail, sasabihin ko."* – Influencer A

Audience comments emphasize trust and decision-making:

- *"Thank you sa honest review! Ang damikasi sponsored content ngayon, kaya butinalangandyan ka."*
- *"Bibilinasanaako, perobutinalangnapanood ko 'to. Hindi palasiyamaganda for oily skin!"*

**Tutorials (11%).** Step-by-step beauty tutorials, such as makeup application and hairstyling techniques, are another prevalent content type. These tutorials cater to audiences seeking educational and skill-based content, offering clear and practical guidance for different occasions or skill levels, thereby enhancing engagement by encouraging viewers to actively follow and apply the demonstrated techniques, which contributes to both skill-building and self-expression.

Illustrative Quotes:

- *"Kung beginner ka sa eyeliner, etona ang pinaka-madaling hack para sayo! Promise, di ka mahihirapan."* – Influencer C
- *"Girls, etona ang go-to makeup look natin pang everyday. Fresh lang, walanghalong effort!"* – Influencer B

Audience comments reflect learning experiences:

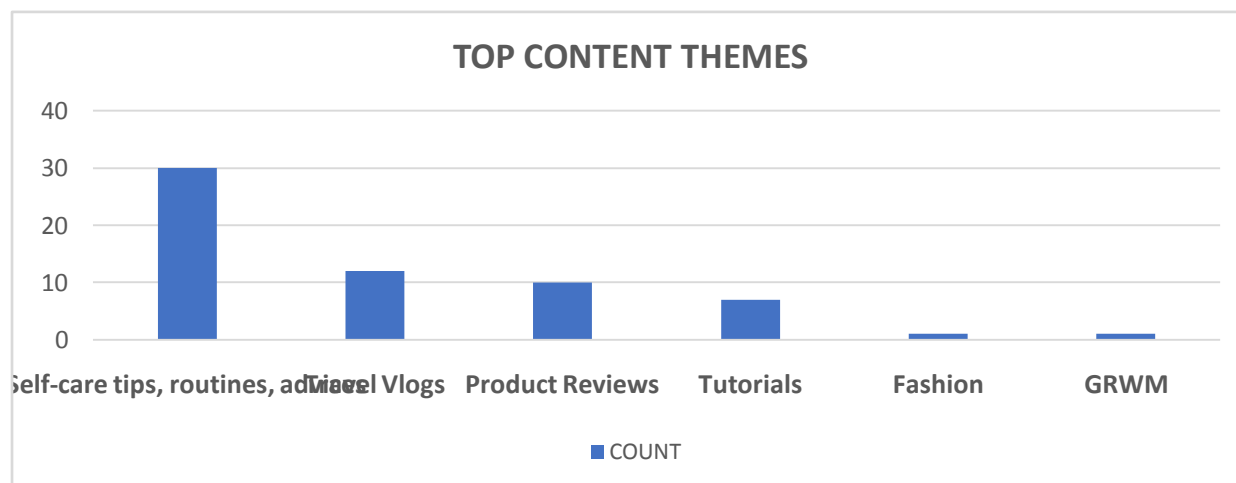
- *"Finally! Natutonarinakong mag-eyeliner, ate! Salamat sa tip mo, life-changing!"*
- *"Super helpful! Ang dalimoipaliwanag, kaya madali ko rinnasundan. More tutorials please!"*

### **Audience Interaction and Its Impact on Self-Esteem: Positive Connections and Potential Pressures**

The findings reveal several forms of audience interaction that shape the emotional connection between influencers and their followers, reinforcing community and influencing self-perception.

Figure 3

*Objective 2: To examine the impact of audience interactions with Filipino beauty and life coaches on self-esteem, highlighting both positive and negative influences*



**Engaging in Chats (40%).** Influencers often host real-time or pre-recorded video chats, fostering direct communication with their audience. This two-way interaction enhances intimacy, emotional investment, and trust.

**Audience Impact:**

- Viewers feel heard and valued, which boosts self-confidence and emotional connection.
- Positive reinforcement and personalized responses reduce the perceived distance between influencer and audience.

**Responding to Comments (33%).** Influencers frequently reply to audience remarks, offer advice, or share humor. These actions humanize the content creators and create a supportive atmosphere.

**Audience Impact:**

- Strengthens feelings of belonging and recognition.
- Encourages continued engagement and openness in expressing personal thoughts or struggles.

**Featuring Audience Members in Videos (10%).** This includes fan-submitted content, answering questions, and guest features. It increases relatability and encourages deeper participation.

**Audience Impact:**

- Enhances self-worth by acknowledging individual contributions.
- Provides aspirational motivation as audiences see their voices represented.

**Using Polls and Surveys (10%).** Influencers use interactive polls to invite audience feedback on content, beauty trends, and lifestyle topics.

**Audience Impact:**

- Creates a sense of shared ownership over content direction.
- Empowers viewers to feel involved in the digital community.

In sum, findings revealed that the Social Comparison Theory is reflected in the way audience members evaluate their own routines and appearance relative to the influencers, resulting in both motivation and self-doubt. Likewise, Parasocial Interaction is evident in how viewers form emotional bonds with influences, strengthened through direct interactions and content personalization. While positive influences on self-esteem are widespread—particularly in comments expressing gratitude, motivation, or learning—some negative effects, such as feelings of inadequacy or unrealistic standards, were implied in feedback expressing envy or comparison.

## **VII. Discussion**

This study explored the communicative strategies of Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube and how these influence audience self-perception and engagement. The two key objectives were to: (1) identify and analyze the dominant content themes explored by these influencers; and (2) examine how audience interact with influencer content impacts self-esteem, highlighting both positive and negative effects. The findings offer significant insights into how influencers act as both cultural intermediaries and emotional anchors within the digital beauty landscape.

### **Dominant Content Themes: Merging Wellness, Lifestyle, and Authority**

The analysis revealed that **self-care and wellness** emerged as the most dominant content theme, followed by **travel, product reviews, and tutorials**. This aligns with the growing literature on the role of influencers as **drivers of consumer behavior**, particularly in the beauty and wellness sectors. Studies have emphasized that influencers are viewed as relatable and credible sources due to their transparency, peer-like positioning, and authenticity in content delivery (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

In this study, Filipino influencers provided wellness content that went beyond skincare—encompassing emotional well-being, mindfulness, and motivational messaging. These practices reflect a growing convergence between **beauty and identity**, wherein influencers promote inner confidence and self-worth alongside aesthetic enhancement. Their frequent use of personal storytelling confirms (De Mooji, 2004) observation that self-disclosure builds emotional resonance and increases perceived trustworthiness.

Tutorials and product reviews were also integral to influencer content, fulfilling the audience's need for educational, skill-based, and consumer-oriented media. These findings support Baldus, Voorhes, and Calantone's (2014) view of influencers as digital opinion leaders, whose content informs purchasing behavior and reinforces product credibility through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

### **Audience Interaction and the Construction of Digital Self-Concept**

Audience engagement in this study—especially through live chats, comment responses, and polls—demonstrated how parasocial relationships foster loyalty and influence viewer self-esteem. Consistent with

Horton and Wohl's (1956) Parasocial Interaction Theory, Filipino viewers often form one-sided emotional attachments to influencers, interpreting their responses and advice as personally meaningful.

This parasocial bond is further strengthened by influencers' efforts to respond to comments, personalize shoutouts, and conduct interactive sessions. However, this study also reflects the dual influence of social comparison, as outlined by Festinger (1954). While many followers expressed appreciation and gratitude—indicating improved self-confidence—some comments subtly suggested feelings of envy, self-doubt, or aspiration toward unattainable ideals. This mirrors findings Fardouly et al. (2015), who noted that exposure to idealized beauty content may inspire self-improvement but also reinforce pressure to conform to narrow beauty standards.

In the Filipino context, these effects are compounded by cultural dimensions of collectivism and the concept of *kapwa*, or shared identity. Influencers act not only as lifestyle mentors but as community figures who reinforce collective beauty norms and emotional resilience. Habito, Morgan, and Vaughan (2021) note that Filipino digital interactions often revolve around relational harmony, shared experiences, and mutual validation—traits that beauty and life coaches appear to foster through inclusive, conversational, and emotionally supportive content.

### **Authenticity, Micro-Influencers, and Brand Trust**

Another key discussion point emerging from the study is the strategic balance between authenticity and marketing. The selected influencers, though popular, reflect the traits of micro-influencers, who are seen as more authentic and community-oriented (Ilieva et al., 2024). Their open product reviews, candid storytelling, and visible engagement with followers exemplify the transparency audiences now demand.

Maintaining authenticity amid branded content is crucial to sustaining audience trust. As (Gani et al., 2022) and more recent studies suggest, influencers who disclose brand collaborations and preserve their independent voice are more likely to retain loyal followers and influence purchasing behavior. In this study, audience responses frequently praised honesty and non-sponsored opinions, reinforcing the expectation that influencers prioritize community over commerce.

### **Implications for Digital Culture and Communication**

This study underscores the pivotal role of Filipino beauty and life coaches as mediators of digital identity and shapers of consumer behavior. Operating within a hybrid communicative space, they function as educators, motivators, and cultural mirrors—extending their influence beyond beauty norms into emotional wellness, aspirational living, and shared community values.

The research contributes to Southeast Asian digital media scholarship by situating influencer culture within Filipino collectivist values. It reveals how global beauty trends are locally reinterpreted through relational dynamics, cultural scripts, and digital rituals that emphasize connection and validation.

Grounded in Social Comparison Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory, the findings provide a robust framework for understanding the psychological and relational mechanisms underpinning influencer engagement. Audiences not only evaluate themselves in relation to influencers—experiencing both motivation and insecurity—but also develop emotional bonds that deepen trust and receptivity. These interactions play a key role in shaping self-perception, confidence, and digital identity within online communities.

Practically, the study highlights the need for influencers, marketers, and media educators to recognize their responsibility in supporting audience well-being. Promoting authenticity, diversity in beauty standards, and inclusive engagement can help mitigate comparison-driven insecurities while sustaining the positive social potential of influencer culture.

## **VIII. Conclusion.**

Filipino beauty and life coaches on YouTube serve as more than content creators—they act as role models and digital mentors, shaping perceptions of beauty, wellness, and self-worth. By combining lifestyle content with authentic storytelling and interactive engagement, they foster both parasocial bonds and social comparison.

While their content empowers many viewers, it can also contribute to self-esteem challenges, particularly when idealized images dominate. These findings affirm the relevance of Social Comparison Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory, especially within collectivist cultural settings.

The study calls for ethical content practices, stronger media literacy, and future research that includes audience perspectives to better understand the long-term emotional impact of influencer engagement.

### **Limitations and Future Research.**

This study is limited by its focus on three influencers and the exclusive use of YouTube as the platform of analysis. While purposive sampling allowed for in-depth thematic exploration, broader samples across diverse demographics and multiple social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram) may offer a more comprehensive understanding of influencer impact. Additionally, the exclusive reliance on content analysis restricts the study to observable interactions, without capturing the internal experiences of audiences.

Future research should incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups to better understand the emotional and psychological responses of viewers. Investigating cross-platform behaviors may also reveal differences in content strategies and audience engagement across various digital ecosystems.

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