

INFLUENCER MARKETING IN MILLENIAL ERA: A CASE STUDY OF SUHAY SALIM

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ABSTRACT

Millenials has inevitable attachment towards social media. What they see on social media has the ability to change their behavior and affect their decision-making process, thus the advertising industry adapting in order to reach them as target market. Social media utilization becomes an essential part of a marketing strategy on current millennial era, and one of it is to use social media influencer as its spear-head which later given the term influencer marketing. This paper aims to fathom influencer marketing through case study and analysis of Suhay Salim as Indonesian beauty influencer who actively posts on her YouTube channel and Instagram account. The result shows that Suhay Salim fulfilled several important characteristics namely credibility, attractiveness, confidence, authenticity, and interactivity which generates trust and loyalty of her audience. Hence, influencer marketing can count as successful if the brand managed to elect the right influencer to work with.

Keyword: influencer marketing, millennial era, Suhay Salim

BACKGROUND

Development of information technology has created social media era which highly affects human life. The number of social media users has sustained growth over the years with approximately two billion internet users currently using social networks. Not only for socializing purposes, social media utilization has expanded its realm into education, business, and more, especially for millenials. Remembering how high millenials' user rate and individual engagement towards social media, what they see on social media will be able to influence their behavior and decision-making process. With social media growing in influence and advertising agencies allocating more of their media budgets to social, the

advertising industry is in search of effective strategies to get the most return on investment when it comes to social (Woods, 2016). The decision came encouraged by the percentage fluctuation of all American adults and internet-using adults who use at least one social networking site, seen below in Chart 1.

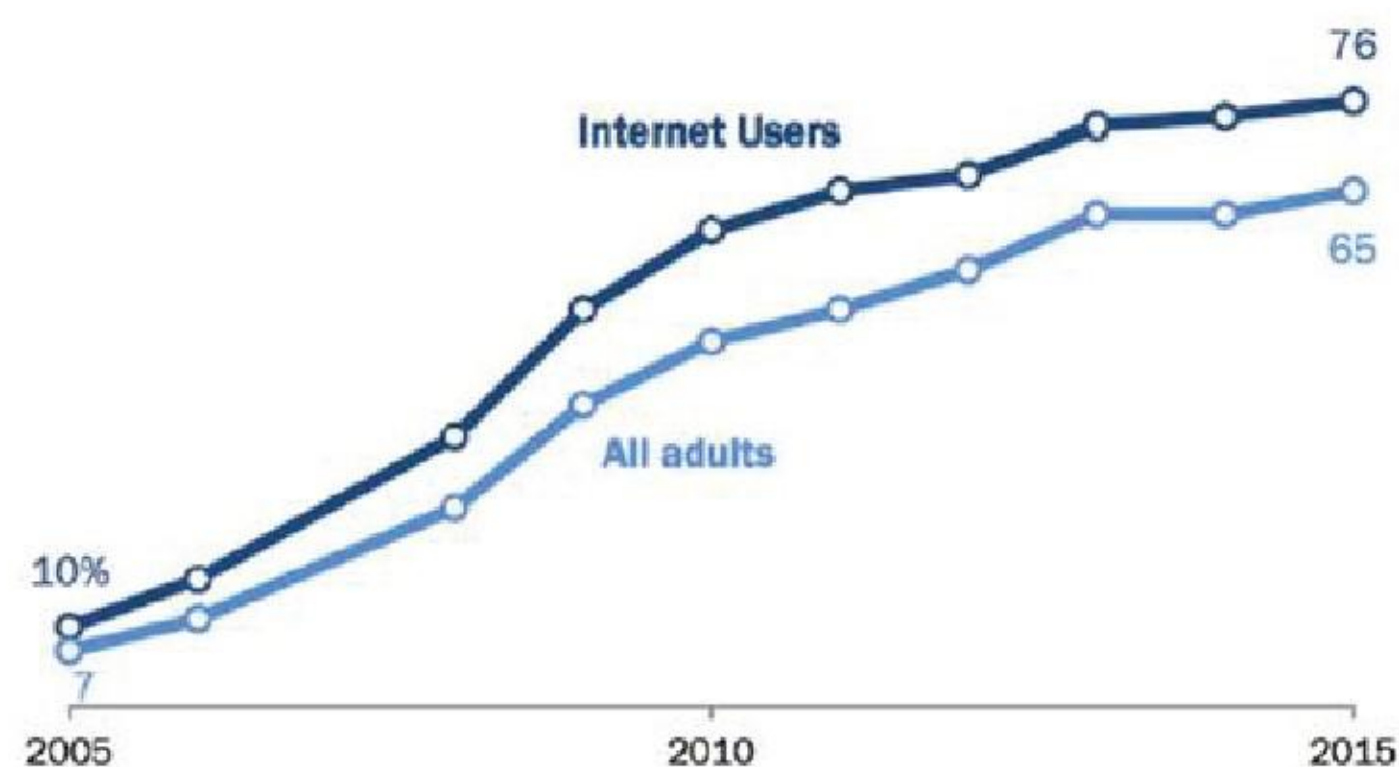


Chart 1: Fluctuation seen on social media use in a decade (Pew Research Center surveys, 2005-2006, 2008-2015. No Data available for 2007).

Social media utilization becomes an essential part of a marketing strategy on current millennial era, and one of it is to use social media influencer as its spearhead which later given the term influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is focusing on the third party who has the ability to influence someone's decision-making and purchase intention, chiefly through social media. Affiliation with social media influencer currently becoming a new strategy on marketing activities since it has some advantages which could not be attained by means of a traditional marketing strategy. A joint research study found that influencer marketing has the ability to trigger 11 times more return on investment than other forms of traditional advertising annually (Kirkpatrick, 2016). This return on investment is measured in terms of reach, engagement, and ultimately sales, where a positive association exists as identified in another joint research study. In this study, around 40% of respondents said they have purchased an item online after seeing it used by an influencer on Instagram, Twitter, Vine, or YouTube. Also, 20% of respondents said they shared something they saw from an influencer, while one-third of millennials said they follow an influencer on Twitter or Vine (Swant, 2016).

Influencer marketing has so much impact because there is no certain borderline between a deliberate and an inadvertent promotion. According to Nielsen, 92% of consumers believe recommendations from friends and family over all forms of advertising (Whitler, 2014). Influencer marketing relies on the trust upon closest person's testimony using social media influencer as intermediary or third party who are trusted by the target market just like trusting their own friend. On marketing and promotion context, influencers are running their promotional function with the Word of Mouth (Evelina and Handayani, 2018).

Beauty industry is one of the largest field we can think of when discussing utilization of cooperation between companies and influencers. One beauty influencer who always get a warm welcome is Indonesia's Suhay Salim. She started by blogging on 2012, subsequently set forth to her YouTube channel with a make-up tutorial video on 2015. Until now (March 2019), she still actively posts on her YouTube channel and Instagram account. Suhay Salim has her own speciality and distinctive traits which always helped her to obtain positive feedbacks nonetheless. This paper aims to fathom influencer marketing through case study and analysis of Suhay Salim through analyzing important characteristics to form a successful influencer marketing that are credibility, attractiveness, confidence, authenticity, and interactivity.

UNDERPINNING THEORY

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a new marketing strategy which relies on affiliation with an influencer, mainly through social media. Social media can be roughly referred to as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013). Hence, social media can be seen as online facilitator which reinforces both relationship between users and social engagement at once (Evelina and Handayani, 2018).

Millenials, also known as Generation Y, generation me or echo boomers, actually has no certain demography, yet experts classified them based on the beginning and end year. The classification of Generation Y are those who was born on 1980-1990 or early 2000 and forth. (Republika; 2016; Mengenal Generasi Millenial; <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/inovasi/16/12/26/ois64613-mengenal-generasi-millennial>; accessed on February 19th 2019).

Influencers are the ones who possesses greater potential than average to influence others based on communication frequency, personal persuasive, or the social networking scope and centrality (Nonprofit Business Advisor, 2015). The term "influencer" for millenials is indeed popular to specifically address social media influencers. Other commonly used words for them are selebgram, Key Opinion Leader (KOL), buzzer, YouTuber, vlogger, blogger, content creator, etc (SocioBuzz, 2018).

Influencer marketing on this millennial era is considered to be playing a significant role in advertising. Compared to celebrity endorsement promotion strategy, the use of social media influencers are regarded as more credible, trustworthy and knowledgeable due to their amiability in building rapport with consumers (Berger et al., 2016). Social media influencers play a highly significant role in driving product engagement and brand loyalty (Tapinfluence, 2017). That is because influencers usually got experience and knowledge on certain fields resulting to their specific audience segmentation.

Important Characteristics of an Influencer

According to Glucksman (2017), in terms of social media influencers, there are three characteristics that were determined to be important based on Bandura's previous research: confidence, interactivity, authenticity. When influencers possess these characteristics, they are likely to be successful in attaining brand partnership goals.

Confidence is when influencers trust their own-self and assures not only themselves but also their viewers of their abilities. When influencers express confidence in themselves, it also promotes confidence in the brand. This brand confidence leaves a lasting impression on followers and causes them to consider becoming a consumer of the product. An influencer's confidence could be seen through both verbal and physical gestures.

Interactivity is when the influencer works together with the viewer to solicit feedback. The two-way conversation between the influencer and the follower gives this advertisement a new dimension that did not exist before the use of social media influencers. This two-way conversation put influencers as equals with a friend who gives personal recommendations. That's how eWOM as the biggest strength of influencer marketing happened.

Authenticity is when the influencer is genuine and relatable with their followers. Woods (2016) wrote that authenticity can be seen if the influencer has built up the trust with their audience to where a paid product placement in a post seems authentic even though it is known they are receiving compensation.

According to Lim, Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017), credibility and attractiveness also capable of driving someone's purchase intention. Source credibility discussed trustworthiness and expertise. Metzger et al. (2003) noted that an endorser who is perceived as highly trustworthy and expertise would lead to consumers' indifference towards the advertising message, resulting in higher acceptance of the delivered message. Besides

credibility, physical attractiveness of social media influencers is perceived to have a high tendency in driving the acceptance rate of advertising. When an influencer matches how they want to look physically, it is likely that they would take interest in something worn or used by the influencer.

Suhay Salim

Suhaylah Salim, or better known shortened as Suhay Salim is a 1987 liner Indonesian beauty influencer. Despite being an Arabian descent, Suhay's nationality is Indonesian and she lives in Jakarta.



Photo 1: Suhay Salim (Instagram @suhaysalim)

Suhay started her activities of sharing her make-up hobbies in *www.suhay-salim.blogspot.com* on February 18th 2012. On February 8th 2015 she posted her first YouTube video titled *Blue Green Smokey Eye Make Up Tutorial*. Up until now (March 6th 2019), Suhay still constantly posts videos on her channel for 1-2 times a week and has gained 880.348 subscribers. Her accumulated video views by March 6th 2019 is 83.308.686. Her most viewed video was the one she uploaded back on January 2016, titled *Wardah One Brand Tutorial / First Impression*. The video has reached 5,7 million views. Her channel is mainly filled of tutorials and reviews of beauty products.

In one of Suhay's videos titled *Q&A (Question & Answer)*, Suhay shared the story of how she happened to fall for beauty stuffs. When she was 24, her hobby was photography. The younger Suhay who has yet to discover beauty stuffs came to realize the substantial difference between a photomodel with and without make-up. She subsequently dugged everything about beauty and make-up, which leads to her interminable love towards it.

There are several important characteristics an influencer has to grasp for the influencer marketing to be called successful: credibility, attractiveness, confidence, authenticity, and interactivity. Those are five characteristics used to build the discussion of this paper using qualitative research method with case study analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Following are discussions based on the datas obtained regarding Suhay Salim's performance as a beauty influencer. Case study was done by analyzing Suhay Salim's words and actions in her YouTube and Instagram posts along with the audience's feedbacks. The discussion is based on five important characteristics an influencer has to grasp for the influencer marketing to be called successful.

Credibility

Year 2019 is Suhay Salim's eighth year of involvement in beauty industry. Though, obviously not every single audience would know that fact at once, moreover for the first-timers. Suhay's digital traces namely her YouTube videos and Instagram posts shows as her portfolio. By March 6th 2019, Suhay Salim's YouTube channel has 240 videos dominated by tutorials and reviews, while her Instagram @suhaysalim has filled by 366 posts containing photos and videos dominated by her self-makeup.

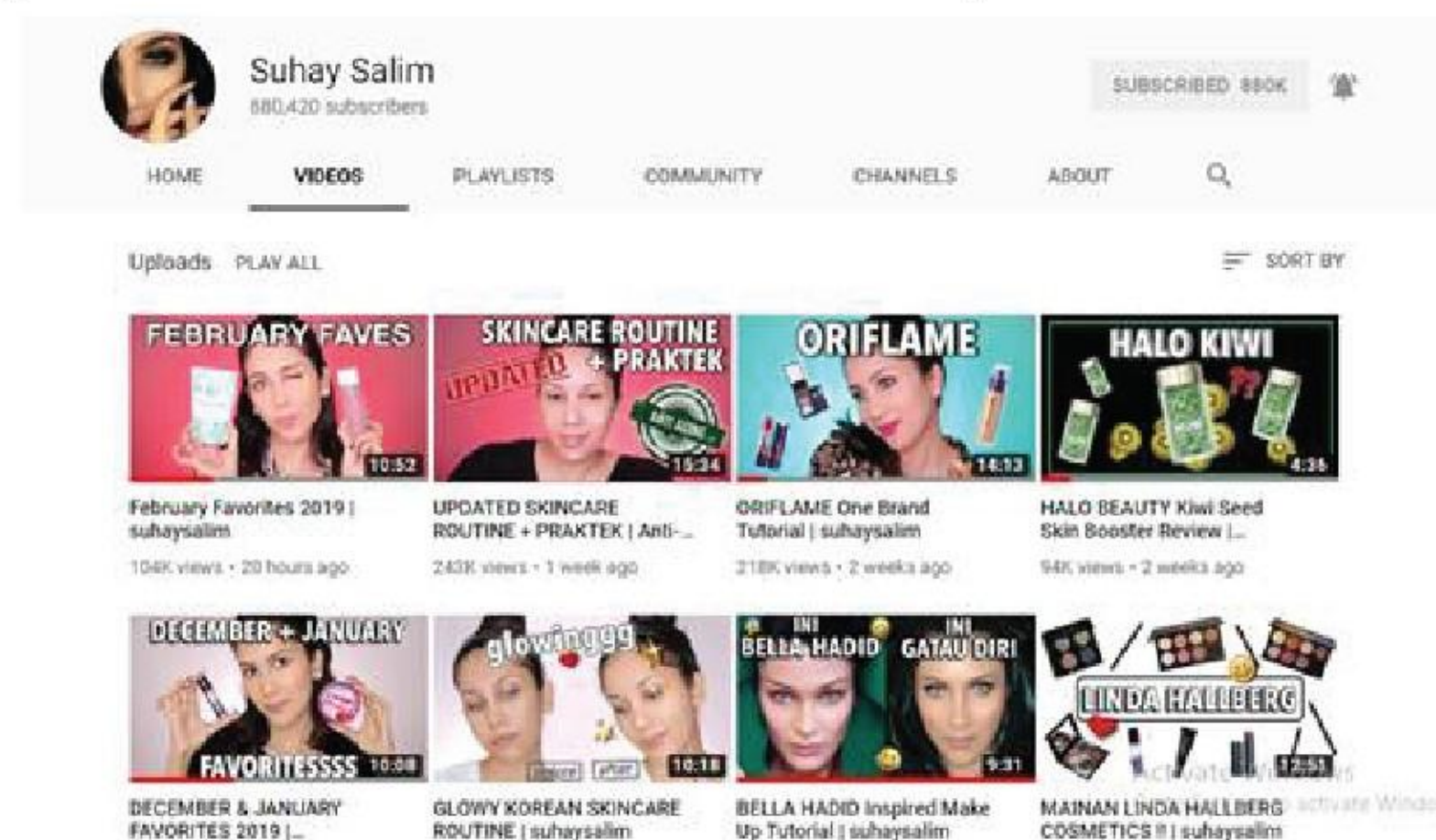


Figure 1: Suhay Salim's YouTube channel



Figure 2: Instagram @suhaysalim

The audience's trust towards her capability clearly shows on every comment section she has on YouTube and Instagram. YouTube users with username Radianteclipse and Dian Riski Anisa stated their admiration towards Suhay's ability to create smokey eye

make-up. Other users with username Anthina Wida Rahayu WR and Fajriyanti Nasir also admitted Suhay's ability to create cut crease eye make-up. Hence, capability is indeed one cause of audience's loyalty for her.



Figure 3: Comment in video "Q&A" (YouTube Suhay Salim)

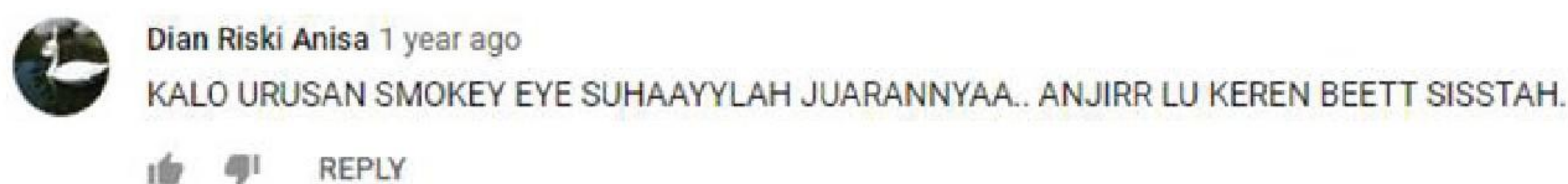


Figure 4: Comment in video "Nyobain Morphe 3502 Palette" (YouTube Suhay Salim)



Figure 5: Comment in video "Soft Cut Crease Iseng" (YouTube Suhay Salim)



Figure 6: Comment in video "Soft Cut Crease Iseng" (YouTube Suhay Salim)

Attractiveness

It is not rare for Suhay Salim to receive praises about her appearance. A lot of people left a comment on her posts saying how much they want her smooth pretty skin and beautiful face. In a *beautynesia.id* forum titled *Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?* (How come Suhay Salim always makes everyone wants to buy a make up she reviewed?), one of the user wrote that her face looks good and pretty, so every product she use would leave a good result. Then, a lot of women would want to buy the product she reviewed. Another user wrote similar thing: Suhay is so pretty

that it's normal for her audience to desire for the same product she uses. YouTube user named Julia Christina stated how seeing Suhay putting on make-up makes her happy by imagining she's the one getting pretty even though truthfully she cannot do make-up and too lazy to do it.



Figure 7: Comment in forum “Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?” (beautynesia.id)

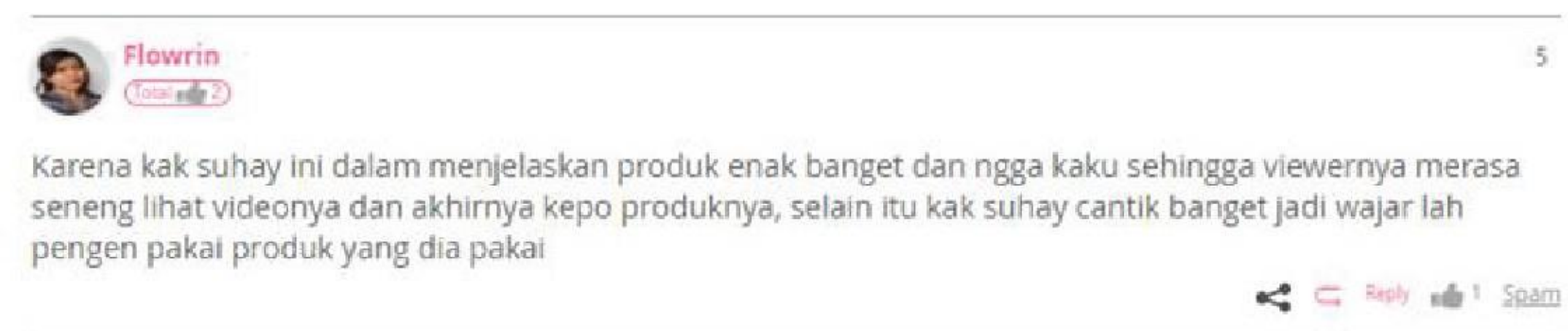


Figure 8: Comment in forum “Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?” (beautynesia.id)

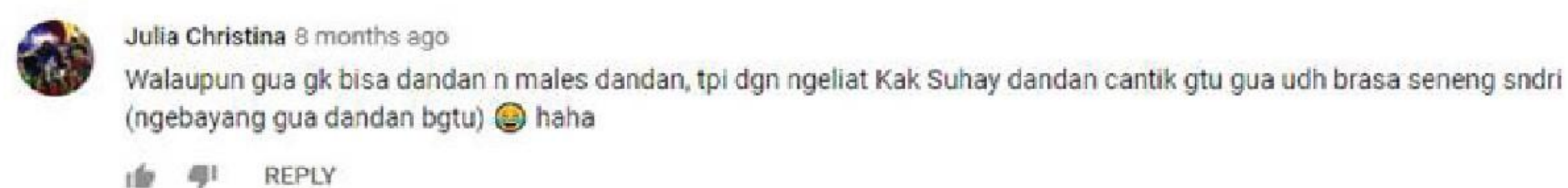


Figure 9: Comment in video “Soft Cut Crease Iseng” (YouTube Suhay Salim)



Figure 10: Suhay’s comment section filled of praises upon her beauty (Instagram @suhaysalim)

Besides physical attractiveness, Suhay also has a distinctive appeal which is her personality. She always uses the word “gua” as her first-person pronoun, which is usually not the most graceful way you would pick to address yourself. Her way of speaking is very

friendly, relaxed and light. She often makes spontaneous remarks which would bring laughter to her audience. In one of her videos titled *BAGUSAN MANA: Aloe Vera VS Snail Gel??* (Which one is better: Aloe Vera vs Snail Gel??) she expressed the bad aftermath she felt after using Snail Gel products which did not work well on her skin in a very comedical way: “*Yang ini, Allahuakbar. Gua mau sholat rasanya... ini kagak cocok sama sekali di kulit gua, buset, gua kagak tau ini keong dari kebon mana yang diambil* (This one, Allahuakbar. It makes me want to pray salah. It does not suit my skin at all, oh my God, I have no idea from whose yard did they took the snail.)”



Figure 11: Video “BAGUSAN MANA: Aloe vera VS Snail Gel??”
(YouTube Suhay Salim)

The random comedical remarks are not even the best part yet. In the middle of Suhay’s tutorial videos, she often sings or hums western songs and *dangdut* song. The audience favors this habit of hers a lot due to the give-it-my-all expression and tuneful crooked voice just like a professional *dangdut* singer. There’s more to it: being a beauty influencer does not held her from burping in front of the camera. Because of her relaxed behavior, many audiences were requesting a bloopers video which is a compilation of errors and accidents occurred during video shooting. Suhay consequently granted their requests by uploading a video titled *BLOOPERS Compilation* which later got a huge positive response.



Figure 12: Comment section of “BLOOPERS Compilation”
(YouTube Suhay Salim)

Confidence

An influencer's confidence could be seen through both verbal and physical gestures. Verbally, on her videos Suhay shows her confidence towards a product with certain words as “produk ini ‘*sakit jiwa*’ (this product is crazy)”, “it’s really really good”, “I highly highly recommend this”. Those words emphasizes her good impression of a product’s performance. In terms of body language, Suhay's confidence can be reflected in the way she often keeps her eyes on camera and through her hand gestures while giving a statement.



Figure 14: Suhay shows confidence through eye contact with the camera on video “HALO BEAUTY Kiwi Seed Skin Booster Review” (YouTube Suhay Salim)

When expressing her opinions whether it’s negative or positive, Suhay’s way of speaking is always straightforward and smooth: no wordy at all, nor doubtful. In a forum on *beautynesia.id* entitled *Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?* (How come Suhay Salim always makes everyone wants to buy a make up she reviewed?), some users wrote their opinions, saying that the way Suhay speaks makes them feel convinced and believing her words. Moreover, every review of Suhay was conducted based on her skin type which has the same problem as them, so they feel even more convinced. User called Tika Rawinda wrote that Suhay's way of speaking was nice, convincing, not rigid, and outspoken. Another user called Wike Dayani also stated the same thing: Suhay had her own way of public speaking to get people to try products that she reviewed indirectly, as it is, without any exaggeration. Thus, it is clear that Suhay's way of speaking reflects confidence and trust in the brand which triggers the audience's interest in the products she discussed.

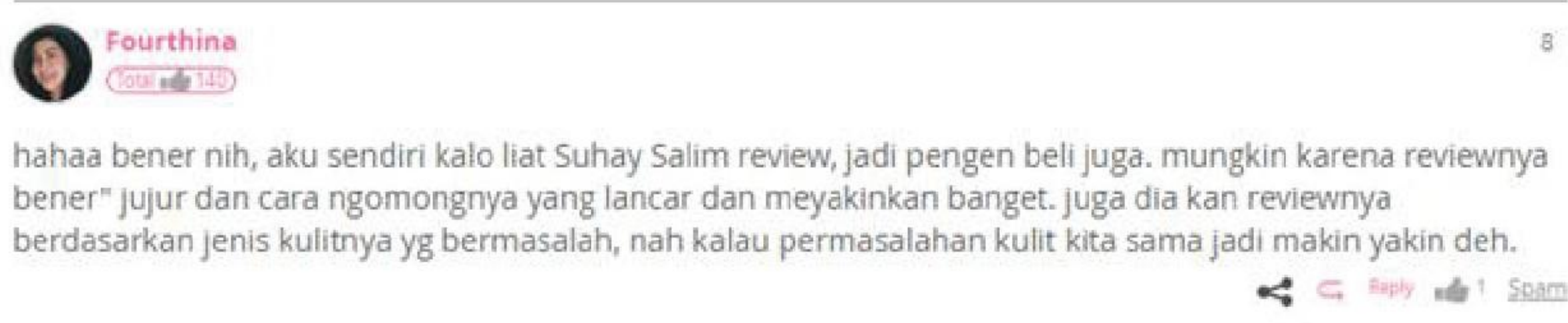


Figure 15: Comment in forum “Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?” (beautynesia.id)



Figure 16: Comment in forum “Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?” (beautynesia.id)



Figure 17: Comment in forum “Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?” (beautynesia.id)

Interactivity

Since there is no accurate access to the influencers audience data, most marketers assume that the more follower an influencer has the better (Zietek, 2016). In fact, engagement rate is actually more essential in choosing an influencer to work with. Not barely numbers of followers, but also the involvement and occurrence of two-way conversation between influencers and audiences.

Social media accommodates interactions and allows influencers to respond audience’s feedback. Audience’s enthusiasm can easily be found in Suhay’s uploads on YouTube and Instagram. Once in a while, she also replies to comments or just taped ‘like’ to some comments among the hundreds she receives in one upload.



Figure 18: Comment in video “BEST SKINCARE PRODUCTS 2018”
(YouTube Suhay Salim)

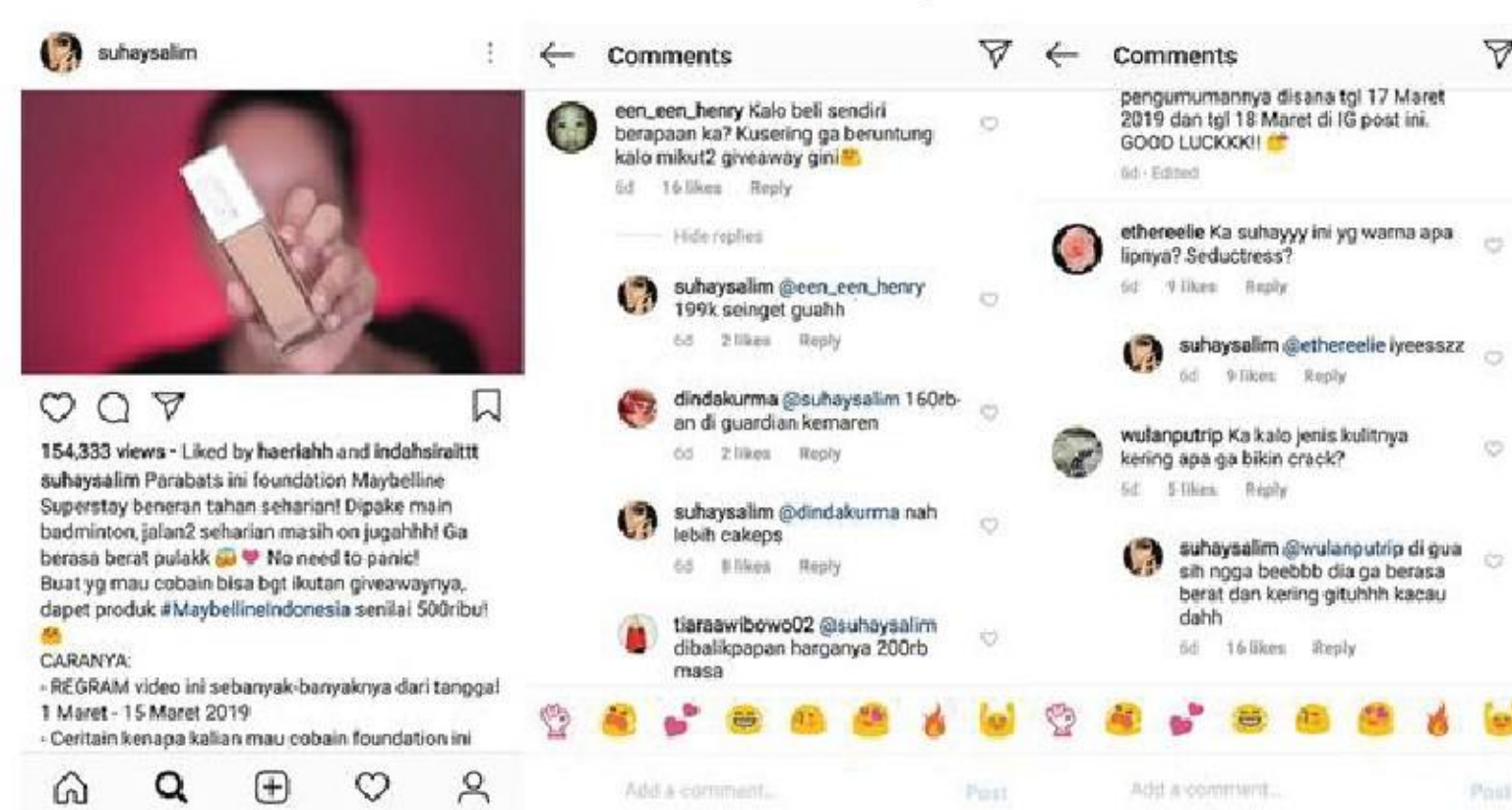


Figure 19: Interaction seen on Suhay’s comment section
(Instagram @suhaysalim)

On Suhay's YouTube video titled *Wardah One Brand Tutorial / First Impression*, she showed the steps to apply makeup by using only Wardah branded products. Between the steps, Suhay also gave her opinions about each product she used. At the end of the video, she announced Matte Lipstick, Lipstick Longlasting, and eyeshadow as her three most preferred products from Wardah. Afterwards, she said "Please let me know which Wardah products do you like, which probably I need to try. I'd love to try that". The sentence encourages the audience to leave comments, giving recommendations of their favorite Wardah products. In other words, the interactivity Suhay built was not only through her responses to comments, but also through her ways to create the desire to make the comment itself.



Figure 20: Video “Wardah One Brand Tutorial / First Impression”
(YouTube Suhay Salim)

Authenticity

Authenticity can be seen if the influencer has built up the trust with their audience to where a paid product placement in a post seems authentic even though it is known they are receiving compensation (Woods, 2016). Sometimes, influencers will not just discuss a product in persuasive language by listing product advantages. The application of a product into a real life also entices followers to view the product favorably, especially if it is used by someone they admire and trust (Woods, 2016).

Every time she talks about a product, especially skin care products, Suhay usually mentions how long she used the product before giving an opinion based on the good or bad effects she experienced. In her video *February Favorites 2019*, Suhay discussed Anti-aging Serum products from ElsheSkin brand. "This is good for getting rid of acne scars. I like to apply it dots by dots," Suhay said. Through that sentence, Suhay convinced the audience that she actually used the product. She also said, "If you know me, I am very obsessed with anti-aging stuffs, so yesterday I went back using their anti-aging serum. I tried again, after that it was like only a few drops left, so I used it all the way and repurchased. I'm super delighted". That kind of sentence will make the audience consider buying the same product. In addition, the distinguishing line between paid and non-paid reviews is vague for the audience because Suhay often presents herself as a consumer, one example is when she stated that she repurchased the product.



Figure 21: Suhay talking about ElsheSkin Anti-aging Serum in Video "February Favorites 2019" (YouTube Suhay Salim)

In order to be seen as a genuine reviewer, an influencer usually does not always rate products positively. In one of Suhay's videos entitled BAGUSAN MANA: Aloe vera VS Snail Gel?? (Which one is better: Aloe Vera VS Snail Gel??), she said that the Snail Soothing Gel product produced by The Saem brand did not suit her skin at all, causing her face to breakout. "It's just do not work on me. Terrible", is what she said in the video. Because of such reviews, audience would be even more keen believing that each of Suhay's

words is honest and is a pure opinion she got after actually used the product. They believe Suhay's opinion so much they often left comments using the term *racun* (poison). The term 'poison' is used when Suhay's review makes the audience immediately interested in buying the product she is talking about, as if they got exposed to a poison. In a forum on *beautynesia.id* entitled *Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?* (How come Suhay Salim always makes everyone wants to buy a make up she reviewed?), username *artyas_* wrote that Suhay always gives honest reviews of a product frankly and without further ado resulting in audience's trust. YouTube user *Cindy Panda* stated that she feels 'poisoned' while watching Suhay's video review and immediately checked the product's price on e-commerce. Hence, Suhay is known as one of the most influential influencers in conducting reviews because she will also say it briefly if a product does not work well or leaves a bad effect on her skin.

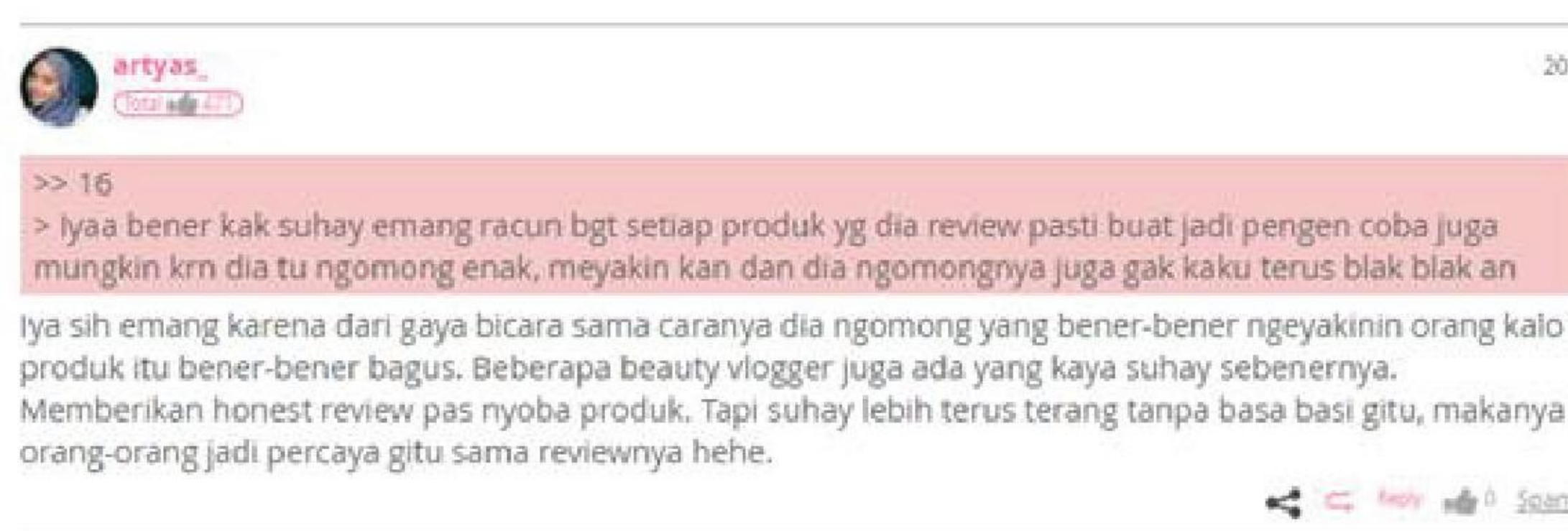


Figure 22: Comment in forum “Kenapa ya kalau Suhay Salim review make up gitu, pasti semua orang pengen beli?” (*beautynesia.id*)



Figure 23: Comment in video “DIVA Beauty Drink Review” (YouTube Suhay Salim)

CONCLUSION

The result of case study analysis shows that Suhay Salim as Indonesian beauty influencer who actively posts on her YouTube channel and Instagram account has fulfilled several important characteristics such as credibility, attractiveness, confidence, authenticity, and interactivity which generates trust and loyalty of her audience. Hence, influencer marketing can count as successful if the brand managed to elect the right influencer to work with, since it is possible that not every influencer would be capable to seize those important characteristics.

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