The complex construction of K-beauty

A constructivist grounded-theory analysis of South Korean and U.S. beauty YouTube videos

Student Name: Kayra Isabella Koene
Student Number: 504331

Supervisor: dr. A.M.M. Hermans

MA Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master Thesis
June 27th 2019

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1. Introduction

Recently, a new movement by South Korean women, called 'Escape the corset' has made waves in international news and on social media (Haas, 2018; Bicker, 2018). South Korean women have been posting photos and videos themselves destroying their makeup and cutting their hair to rebel against the South Korean beauty standards these women claim to be oppressive. Gallup Korea, a South Korean social research company, distributed a survey to a sample of South Koreans meant to represent South Korean society and asked them "How do you feel about your current appearance?" Of the female participants 40% said they did not feel confident, against 35% of female participants that said they did feel confident (Perception of appearance, 2015). The other 25% of South Korean women said they could not answer this question. This same survey by Gallup Korea revealed that a third of young South Korean women had undergone some kind of cosmetic surgery. Women in South Korea seem to be held to unachievable beauty standards by the media, friends and family (The K-beauty nation, 2018; Haas, 2018; Rhyu, 2017). Considering the 'Escape the Corset'-movement and the results from the Gallup Korea survey, it seems as though perhaps South Korean beauty standards have a negative effect on South Korean women's perception of themselves. Part of the persistence of these beauty ideals is the fact that in South Korea beauty is booming business, and not just within South Korean borders. South Korean beauty products have accumulated significant popularity overseas in recent years.

Opposite to the seemingly oppressive and constrictive nature of beauty for South Korean women, K-beauty may function as an inspiration or even motivation for others. In May 2019, Refinery29, a digital media company directed towards young women, published a video "The Terrifying Danger of Wearing Makeup in North Korea'. In the video two young North Korean women are interviewed about the role K-beauty has played in their life. In North Korea, one's appearance is dictated by the government and individual expression is kept to a minimum. However, there is a thriving black market in North Korea for products that are not allowed, from DVDs, to music, to beauty products. The act of having, let alone wearing K-beauty products while in North Korea may be considered an act of rebellion against the North Korean government. For the women in the video, the imported South Korean beauty products motivated them to desert the restrictiveness of North Korea and move to South Korea, where they can actually wear the beauty products they own in public and be free to choose how they want to look. So, while South Korean beauty may be deemed oppressive by a portion of South Korean women, for some North Korean women it functions as a symbol of liberation. In contrast to the seemingly oppressive and constrictive nature of beauty standards for some South Korean women, K-beauty may function as an inspiration or even motivation for others. In May 2019, Refinery29, a digital media company, published a video on 'The Terrifying Danger of Wearing Makeup in North Korea'. In the video two young North Korean women are interviewed about South Korean beauty and they explain how K-beauty motivated them to come to South Korea, or, in other words, to escape North Korea. In North Korea, one's appearance

is dictated by the government and individual expression is kept to a minimum. For the women in the video, the imported South Korean beauty products gave them a taste of freedom and motivated them to desert the restrictiveness of North Korea and move to South Korea, where they can actually wear the beauty products they own in public. These North Korean women's stance towards K-beauty is very different from the negative stance of South Korean women joining the 'Escape the Corset'-movement. So, while South Korean beauty may be deemed oppressive by a portion of South Korean women, for some North Korean women it functions as a symbol of liberation. This show that South Korean beauty, and K-beauty, are extremely hot topics within society, even outside South Korea, with extremely differing perspectives on the subjects.

K-beauty is not a term that can be found in a dictionary, thus, those interested in what the term means have to refer to the web. A source that the average person looking into K-beauty can find on the internet is Wikipedia. Naturally, Wikipedia is not an acclaimed source, however it is what is used by 1.4 billion devices a day (Barnett, 2018). Thus, when the average person looks for a definition of K-beauty, Wikipedia is something they are likely to find. Wikipedia gives this definition: "K-Beauty is an umbrella term for skincare products that derive from South Korea. The fad gained popularity worldwide, particularly in the U.S., in 2016 and focuses on health, hydration and a preferred lack of pigment," (K-beauty, 2019). BBC News also describes K-beauty as a possible fad in a late 2018 article on their website (Russon, 2018). Foreign media seems to think of K-beauty as a trend that will pass, but even overseas K-beauty has been around for a while now. Since 2011 K-beauty products can be found in mainstream US stores (e.g. Sephora) (Meltzer, 2018). The word fad implies that K-beauty has a temporal sense. 'Fad' relates K-beauty to a craze even though K-beauty products have been a successful South Korean export product for years.

In academic research the term 'K-beauty' has been overlooked. South Korean popular media has been a much-researched topic within academic literature. Hallyu, or the Korean Wave (as its English translation), is a term that describes the popularity of South Korean popular media and culture as export products (Danico & Ocampo, 2014). Since the 1990s, South Korean tv shows, movies and music have gained popularity overseas, starting with countries like Taiwan, China and Japan, but have now also gained recognition across continents (Danico & Ocampo, 2014). While Hallyu is often more used to refer to popular media, this Korean wave was credited with far more export products such as electronics, food and clothing (Danico & Ocampo, 2014). Together with K-pop and K-drama, K-beauty too is part of Hallyu now that South Korean make-up and skincare products are popular export products.

In the South Korean beauty market, 'K-beauty' is a recurring term. The term K-beauty seems to be mostly used to describe make-up and skincare products from South Korean brands. K-beauty is also used as an overarching term for many trends and products. Examples are: BB creams (a moisturizer and foundation in one product), glass skin ("skin that looks clear, poreless, translucent, [and] luminous) and gradient lips ("to make your lips look just bitten") (Levitt, n.d.; Fasanella, 2017,

para. 2; Denton-Hurst, 2017, para. 1). In fact, K-beauty seems to be linked to a plethora of beauty phenomena.

The popularity of K-beauty is evident from the number of times it is mentioned on social media. On Instagram 2.3 million posts are tagged with #kbeauty, not to mention the all the other hashtags that include 'kbeauty' in them. On YouTube, a quick search for 'K-beauty' gives users a plethora of videos to choose from. Some people have found their YouTube niche in discussing K-beauty, and this is not limited to people of South Korean origin. There are non-South-Korean YouTubers that have gained a significant subscriber count by uploading videos discussing K-beauty (e.g. username Heyitsfeiii).

But despite all the coverage K-beauty gets on social media, it remains unclear what exactly K-beauty refers to (Rhyu, 2017). For instance, Ko, Chun & Lee (2011) did research on Korean beauty, but their definition of Korean beauty was the idea of the beauty of Korean (traditional) culture and how this beauty is expressed in different types of products (e.g. food and clothes). Meanwhile the way K-beauty is discussed in popular media (blogs, magazines, YouTube videos, etc.) is more specific to outward personal appearance. Popular media puts the focus on trendy make-up and extensive skin care routines (10 Step Routines, 2018; Lee, 2019). People may also link K-beauty to other South Korean beauty related topics such as beauty standards, ideals or cosmetic surgery. t seems to be quite hard to clearly explain what K-beauty exactly entails and whether K-beauty refers to the products, the trends, the South Korean beauty industry as a whole, or a 'type' of appearance (a 'look'). Furthermore, Hallyu has internationalized many Korean products. This means that the definition of K-beauty may be different across the globe. In order to find out what the term 'K-beauty' entails exactly, and whether the concept is the same around the globe, this research aims to answer the question: "How do Korean and American beauty video creators construct and explore the concept of K-beauty?" This question will be answered through constructivist grounded theory analysis of YouTube videos, made by American and South Korean beauty YouTubers, that discuss K-beauty.

The remainder of the thesis has been divided into 4 chapters. The second chapter will firstly examine the lack of academic literature on the topic of K-beauty and thus introduce the research gap in which this research is situated. Next, sub-chapter 2.2 will also dive deeper into topics that seem related to K-beauty, such as South Korean beauty and give an overview of previous research on South Korean beauty and will provide relevant historical context for discussing South Korean beauty. Afterwards, sub-chapter 2.3 will examine the current state of the South Korean cosmetics industry and how the South Korean cosmetics industry seems to be related to the concept of K-beauty and will provide some context for a likely target audience of the beauty YouTubers: K-beauty consumers. In sub-chapter 2.4 cultivation theory will be used as a framework to understand how the perception of K-beauty for viewers may be influenced by the videos in the sample. Lastly, sub-chapter 2.5 will provide context for the sample videos, based on previous academic research on the

topic of beauty YouTubers. The third chapter will outline the criteria for the sample, explain why constructivist grounded theory was chosen as the data analysis method and will include what implications there are for the research because of my -the researcher's- role in the research. Chapter four will discuss the results based on three major themes that were prevalent in the data: the place of K-beauty in the cosmetics industry as a whole, particular characteristics of K-beauty, and individual handling of K-beauty. Lastly, the conclusion will examine will look at these themes in relation to K-beauty, state the limitations of this research and give recommendations for future research based on the remaining gaps in academic literature in regards to K-beauty.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of K-Beauty

As mentioned in the introduction, in academic literature K-beauty is not an established concept yet. Although K-beauty has been referred to as a trend, "the K-beauty phenomenon is more than five years old, but shows no signs of losing its popularity" (Yeomans, 2018). Academic research on South Korean culture often focuses on Hallyu. Hallyu (English translation: the Korean Wave), refers to the surge in popularity of South Korean pop culture in non-Korean countries (Danico and Ocampo, 2014). Academics have covered Hallyu extensively in the last decade, however the literature remains contained to discussions about K-pop (Korean pop music) and K-drama (Korean TV drama series) (Siriyuvasak and Shin, 2007; Choi and Maliangkay, 2015; Madrid-Morales and Lovric, 2015). While K-beauty originated in South Korea and is popular overseas, academic literature, even academic literature that discusses Hallyu, almost never considers K-beauty. Therefore, the scientific relevance of this study is gaining more information on the under-researched concept of 'K-beauty' and working towards a possible definition for the term.

Unlike academic literature, K-beauty is discussed more often in business and entertainment literature (Yeomans, 2018; Lim, 2019). An article by Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN) discusses the hype around K-beauty products by highlighting the number of patents regarding personal care products South Korea has issued between 2010 and 2016, namely a total of 2722 patents (Signal in the noise, 2016). The article gives insight into the magnitude of the K-beauty industry. Moreover, the article seems to imply that K-beauty revolves around 'all-in-one' products: products that are a combination of (at least) two previously separate products (e.g. the BB creams that have been discussed in the introduction of this paper that were made up of moisturizer and foundation). While the article by C&EN emphasizes the impact of K-beauty, it does not give a clear definition for K-beauty. This lack of definition for K-beauty is a recurring problem in articles that discuss the subject, to the extent that there are even articles that explicitly discuss the lack of a definition for K-beauty (Yeomans, 2018; Wood, 2016; Carli, 2017). As the problem regarding the lack of definition for 'K-beauty' is found in academic, business and entertainment literature, the societal relevance is the similar to the scientific relevance; the societal relevance of this study is to accumulate more information on the concept of K-beauty and work towards a possible definition for the term. In order to find more information on K-beauty, this literature review will go more in-depth into K-beauty related subjects, such as South Korean beauty and the South Korean beauty industry.

2.2. History of South Korean beauty

Academic literature that tries to uncover what has influenced South Korean beauty ideals often looks at South Korean history and considers other countries, such as Japan and the United States, as influences, rather than that these beauty ideals stem from South Korean culture itself. Culture is one of the most important elements to set one country apart from another, and become

'unique' (Kim, 2009). Some academics, such as Ko, Chun and Lee (2011), claim that in comparison to Japan and China, South Korea currently does not seem to have a distinct cultural image that they are internationally known for. For instance, Park (2007) says that with the modernization and industrialization of South Korea came the adoption of 'Western' ideals and thinking. Academics, such as Park, often make it seem as though South Korea's culture has been heavily influenced by 'the West' (particularly the United States). Sometimes the influence of the United States on South Korea's culture is described in such a way it seems as though South Korean culture is primarily 'Western, and less South Korean.

Valérie Gelézeau, a researcher in the field of Korean Studies, wrote *The body, cosmetics and aesthetics in South Korea*, in which she explains the way South Koreans view their body and how this view came about (2015). The author calls the beauty standards of South Korea a 'hybrid', which implies that while there are non-Korean influences, there are still criteria that have originated from Korean culture itself. The characteristics of these beauty ideals will be discussed later in this chapter, but important to note is that Gelézeau (2015) emphasizes that South Korean beauty ideals did not originate from 'Western' media, as other academics have insinuated, but that perhaps these beauty ideals formed as to dissociate oneself from the Japanese.

Park (2007) and Gelézeau (2015) show that in academic literature Japan and the United States are mentioned as important influences on South Korean culture because of these countries' shared history with South Korea. However, when one looks at South Korea's history, there are not only arguments that support the idea that South Korea was heavily influenced by Japan and the U.S., but there are also arguments against this idea. Therefore, in the next few paragraphs I will critically examine some important events of South Korean history that are referred to in academic literature in regards to the influence of the Japanese and the United States' culture on South Korean culture.

Firstly, the history between Japan and Korea has been quite tumultuous, with critical events happening before the split of Korea into South and North Korea. In 1905 the Japan-Korea treaty was signed, which stated that Korea was under the protection of the Japan. This treaty was the start of Meji Japan's colonial rule over Korea from 1910 to 1945. The notion that Korea as a nation was lagging behind spread internationally as a narrative from the Japanese colonial ideology in the beginning of the 20th century (Gelézeau, 2015). The friction between Japan and South Korea continued long after the colonial rule, and can be used as an argument for why 'Western' ideals and thinking were adopted into South Korean culture rather than the Japanese counterparts.

However, a more recent event that is highlighted in academic literature on South Korea's culture involves the United States: the split of North and South Korea. Following the divide of the two Koreas after World War II in 1945, South Korea "existed as a dependent state under the protection of the United States" (Eder, 1996, p.5) The presence of the United States in South Korea may be used as an historical argument to show that South Korea was heavily influenced by the U.S.

However, while history may provide an argument as to why South Korea was heavily influenced by the United States, history can also provide an argument for why South Korea may have actively tried to minimize influence by the United States. An example can be found in regards to the aforementioned Japan-Korea treaty, which was presented as a 'protectorate', but in reality, the treaty was forcibly signed by the Korean government. Keeping this is mind, the protection provided by the United States during World War II may have been met with weariness by South Koreans as their previous 'protectors' were in fact colonizers. Historical arguments for both sides of the discussion on whether the United States influenced South Korean culture, can be found.

The previous paragraphs gave examples of how other countries are described as having significant influence on South Korean culture in general, but the next few paragraphs will talk more in-depth about beauty in South Korean history.

Industrialization and modernization have been attributed as crucial influences in shaping the current South Korean beauty ideal. During the Korean war, North Korea received support from the big communist nations: The Soviet Union and China. Soviet and Chinese competition for North Korea resulted in heavy industry and production, which was perceived as a threat by South Korea and their supporters, the United States. Because of the perceived threat South Korea was pushed towards industrialization and modernization, with the focus being on military performance (Eder, 1996). The modernization of South Korea came in waves and while this started in the 1950s, economically the country did not successfully 'modernize' until the late 1980s. According to Jung and Lee (2006) industrialization and modernization affected the South Korean beauty ideal. However, the authors do not specifically say which period of time they refer to, as they mention themselves that South Korea has shown multiple 'episodes' of modernization. According to the authors the changes brought about by modernization shifted the South Korean beauty ideal from a voluptuous body, that signified wealth and abundance, to the opposite of what it used to be, as women nowadays want to be very thin (Jung and Lee, 2006). It was previously mentioned that Park (2007) says modernization caused the adoption of Western ideas in South Korean culture. But in academic literature descriptions for both the 'Western beauty ideal' and the 'South Korean beauty ideal' can be found, of which the names already suggest that these are two different ideals. The Westernized ideal is often described similar to Anglo-Saxon beauty: "blond, young, slim, tall, virginal, and upper-class (Patton, 2006, in Kim and Chung, 2009, p.229). However, this ideal does not seem to correlate with the South Korean ideal as described by Seung Chul Rhee who says particular preferences were a "narrower lower face, large eyes, a small mouth and a fine, oval jaw line" (Rhee, 2009, cited by Elfving-Hwang, 2013). The beauty ideal for the body is described as having long, slender legs. It is apparent that the characteristics of the Westernized ideal, such as 'young' and 'upper-class', are desirable in most cultures and countries and are quite generic. The generality of Patton's (2006) Westernized ideal and the specificity of Rhee's (2009) South Korean ideal make it difficult to establish whether there is any significant overlap between these two ideals

Therefore, it seems that the influence of the U.S. and 'Western' media on the South Korean beauty ideal is not as great as it is sometimes presented. While some academics present modernization and U.S. influences in South Korean culture as a cause-and-effect relationship, the effect of the United States on the South Korean beauty ideal seems very limited.

Aside from the influence other countries may have had on South Korean beauty, other historical events may also provide insight into how South Korean beauty ideals have been established. One of these events is the rise of the middle class, which came about as a result of modernization. In South Korea, the rise of the middle class came about very quickly, starting in the late 1980s, and "the Korean economy set world records for expansion" (Eder, 1996, p.6) Uncertainty about the longevity of South Korea's economic success made it so that people were also unsure about their own new-found place in the middle class and tried to retain that lifestyle as much as possible (Gelézeau, 2015). Social climbing presented an opportunity to middle-class South Koreans to gain more stability in their social rank and thus middle-class South Koreans sought to emulate the practices of the upper-class.

One way to emulate the upper class was by indulging in the same luxuries. Important to note is that luxury did not find its way into Korean society only after the last wave of modernization. As in China and Japan, Korea used to have a bourgeoisie of its own (Bouissou et al., 2013). In fact, according to Gelézeau (2015), luxury in pre-modern Korea's was similar to that of other countries across the globe. However, pre-modern luxury was only available to few people, while modernization made luxury possible to attain for many people.

So how does cosmetic 'enhancement' relate to luxury? Diana Derval, a neuroendocrinology researcher, wrote a book on luxury consumer behavior called *Designing luxury brands: the science of pleasing customers' senses* (2018). The author explains that many demographical factors, such as age and gender can play a role in what type of luxury product someone is interested in, but cultural aspect are crucial context to people to understand status objects. A key concept in the book are 'ornaments', which is explained through a comparison with animals that have pretty colors or patterns to signal they are ready to mate or ready to fight. Derval claims that humans have the same use of ornaments, although we mostly use certain objects such as cars, jewelry and clothes to do so.

In this book the author explains that nowadays luxury is produced by "storytelling, knowledge, exclusive service, and dream-realizing" (Derval, 2018, p. vii). Make-up and cosmetic surgeries fall into the category of ornaments, even if the luxury of make-up and cosmetic surgeries cannot be immediately noticeable like a Louis Vuitton label on a bag. Derval (2018) emphasizes on men-to-men and women-to-women competition. Rather than trying to appeal to the other sex, people seem to focus on 'being better' than others of their gender: on status-seeking. It is not surprising that luxury would be a part of status, through showing off money and resources, or perhaps 'beauty'. 'Looking pretty' according to mainstream beauty standards may be considered decorating with

ornaments by Derval's (2018) explanation. Fixation with appearance can be explained through the concept of luxury, which became increasingly important during the rise of the middle class.

One particularly important topic Gelézeau discusses is the interference of the 'developer State' with South Koreans and their bodies. The 'developer State' refers to "the dictatorial form that was characteristic of Korean politics between 1961 and 1987" (Gelézeau, 2015, p. 7) The South Korean government under Park Chunghee set up two campaigns regarding the body, that were meant to "support economic development [..], but also develop and consolidate the image of a modern and progressive nation" (Gelézeau, 2015, p.7) One campaign promoted the use of birth control and the other one was an anti-parasite campaign. With more money, more means, disease and many children were not part of the ideal modernized South Korea. The practices of the South Korean government during these campaigns were invasive to people's bodies, to say the least. The State made their campaign extremely visible, with vans doubling as mobile birth control clinics and the recommendation of invasive surgeries, such as vasectomies. According to several authors, for South Koreans appearance symbolizes a successful nation (Leem Seo Yeon, 2014; Epstein and Joon, DiMoia, 2013).

In current academic research that discusses South Korean beauty and culture, the State is still considered an influence. In their research Ko, Chun and Lee (2011) considered South Korea as a brand and posed the question: "What are South Korea's cultural export products, and how can we best market those products?" The authors started their research from the concept of Korean beauty. The definition of Korean beauty the authors used encompassed "clothing, food, housing, Korean liquor, and Korean paper." Four of the elements Ko, Chun and Lee (2011) claim to be part of Korean Beauty, namely food, clothing, paper and housing, are also part of HanStyle. HanStyle started as a marketing project by the South Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism that was implemented in 2006 in order to create a Korean cultural brand (Um, 2013). The State still has a hand in constructing culture, as can be seen from the HanStyle campaign.

Besides the four aforementioned elements both HanStyle and Ko, Chun and Lee's Korean beauty promote, HanStyle also promotes South Korean language and music. Ko, Chun and Lee's Korean beauty also promotes Korean liquor. Ko, Chun and Lee (2011) make good arguments for why these export products can put South Korea on the cultural map. However, it seems as though the authors discuss how to market traditional Korean culture, rather than popular culture. The authors do not clearly make the distinction between traditional and popular culture in their article, while Um's (2013) discussion of HanStyle clearly states that HanStyle focused on the export of South Korean traditional culture. Appearance in terms of a person's physical attributes, does not get discussed in either article. Beauty standards, 'beauty enhancements' through skincare, make-up or cosmetic surgery are not explicit elements of either HanStyle or Ko, Chun and Lee's Korean Beauty. The term 'K-beauty' is also not mentioned in HanStyle or Ko, Chun and Lee's Korean Beauty, which shows

that K-beauty is under-researched, perhaps ignored or unknown, in both the academic and political sphere, even though in international entertainment media it is an often-discussed topic.

There exist few cross-cultural research articles on the topic of beauty standards that include South Korea, however many of the articles that do exist compare a South Korean sample with a sample from the United States. As mentioned before, there are academics that accredit modernization with shaping South Korean beauty ideals to become more 'Westernized' (Park, 2007) Isa and Kramer (2003) claim that in more recent years, globalization and digitalization may have 'Westernized' non-Western countries beauty ideals even more. In the U.S., a person who is perceived as beautiful is also perceived to be more successful. This assumption seems to be applicable to South Korean society too. In this global age, where the internet and popular media can travel across borders extremely fast, especially U.S.' media seems to have spread to other countries. Images from Hollywood (celebrities) and social media are widespread. Thus, finding similarities between American and South Korean media are not very surprising, say Isa and Kramer (2013).

2.3. South Korean Cosmetic Industry

The biggest company in the South Korean beauty industry is AmorePacific, with a 2018 turnover of 334.8 billion Korean won (approximately 260.4 billion euros) (AmorePacific- Korean beauty company, 2017; AmorePacific Earnings, 2019). A case study by Lee and Kang (2016) explains AmorePacific's success through their constant innovation in peripheral components. Components that are essential to a product's functionality are called core-components and components that are not essential are called peripheral components (Tushman and Rosenkopf, 1992; Tushman and Murmann, 1998). Instead of focusing on core-components, such as a product's formula, AmorePacific adapted already existing products in order to give them a new way of use, for instance by a different type of applicator for an already existing product. The peripheral invention that AmorePacific is most well-known for is their compact foundation. Instead of bottled foundation, that can be applied with the fingers or with a foundation brush, AmorePacific introduced a compact that held a foundation-soaked sponge, together with a pad applicator that could be pressed into the sponge to grab the foundation. This new way of application was more convenient for South Korean women, since it could be applied throughout the day in an easy way, but the compact also allowed light application, which resulted in the natural look that South Korean women desired (Lee and Kang, 2016; Chang, 2017). Rather than overhauling the entire product, AmorePacific continuously innovated the peripheral components that allowed the products to fit with the consumers' lifestyles. According to Lee and Kang (2016), this continuously innovating and improving their products is what gave AmorePacific, among other South Korean brands (e.g. LG Household & Healthcare and its balm sunblock), a great competitive advantage in the beauty industry. In this way South Korean cosmetic brands have set themselves apart from non-Korean brands.

2.3.1. 'Natural' Korean cosmetics

Another characteristic of many South Korean cosmetic brands is their alignment with being 'natural'. For instance, though there are still chemicals in AmorePacific's products, the brand promotes its products as natural through the use of botanicals. According to Chang (2017) the appeal of AmorePacific as a brand comes from their "use of rare Asian botanicals in its products, cutting edge-technology and a global beauty philosophy that emphasizes a nurturing approach to optimal skin health," (p.8). AmorePacific highlights the sources of their products as botanical and thus puts their products opposed products that are not (partially) plant-based. The Nielson Company found that "As with organic food and household supplies, more consumers are becoming interested in natural beauty products," (2018, p.3) The 'natural' beauty industry is becoming increasingly important for consumers and has outperformed conventional beauty for several years now. AmorePacific branding their products as 'natural' is a marketing move to fit in with the growing demand from consumers for natural products. However, what 'natural' exactly meant is different for every consumer, says Nielsen Company (2018). In their report, the Nielsen Company explained than rather what was in the product, in 2018 'natural' products had become more about what ingredients were not in the product. Such as a hype around paraben-free products.

The importance of a 'natural' brand is not just carried out by South Korean brands in the ingredient lists of their products, but also in the style of make-up that they advertise. In a research report by Parsons and Su (2017), the natural makeup look was mentioned as a trend among South Korean women. Important to note is that natural makeup is a style of make-up, also referred to as the 'no makeup makeup look', and does not mean that people who engage in this style wear no make-up at all. In fact, Makeup.com writer Tembe Denton-Hurst said: "Contrary to its name, the no-makeup makeup look actually requires a decent amount of makeup and steps" (2018, paragraph 1). An article on Newsmax from almost 10 years ago describes natural makeup in regards to the colors used, earthy tones, and in regards to its ingredient composition, e.g. mineral and organic makeup (2010). However, recent popular media articles discuss natural makeup in regards to the desired visible outcome (Jowett, 2019; Huszar, 2018; Denton-Hurst, 2018). Words that are often used to describe the natural makeup look are: minimal, flawless, glow and warm. The natural makeup look is not about looking natural, but looking like the ideal version of a natural woman; the goal is to achieve even-toned skin without bumps, no under-eye bags, a warm complexion and well-defined features with makeup, without looking like you have makeup on.

I would like to note that these articles are from U.S. websites, and natural makeup in South Korea is not exactly the same as it is in the United States. The perfect example to illustrate this difference between countries are eyebags. While U.S. popular media emphasizes eyebags are things that need to be covered, in South Korea oriented media, eyebags are meant to be enhanced. Aegyosal [애교살]. While Aegyosal technically does not refer to the bags you get under your eyes from lack of sleep, but to the lower eyelid, this Aegyosal is not a sought-after feature in U.S. mainstream

media. Popular media often does not even make a distinction between aegyosal and under-eye bags (De Lacey, 2013). However, in South Korea definition of one's aegyosal with makeup became very popular. So popular that some people even turned to cosmetic procedures (fillers or surgery) to get the aegyosal look they desired (De Lacey, 2013; "Aegyo-sal", 2013). The definition of the natural makeup look depends on cultural context, and more specifically on the beauty ideals of a certain culture.
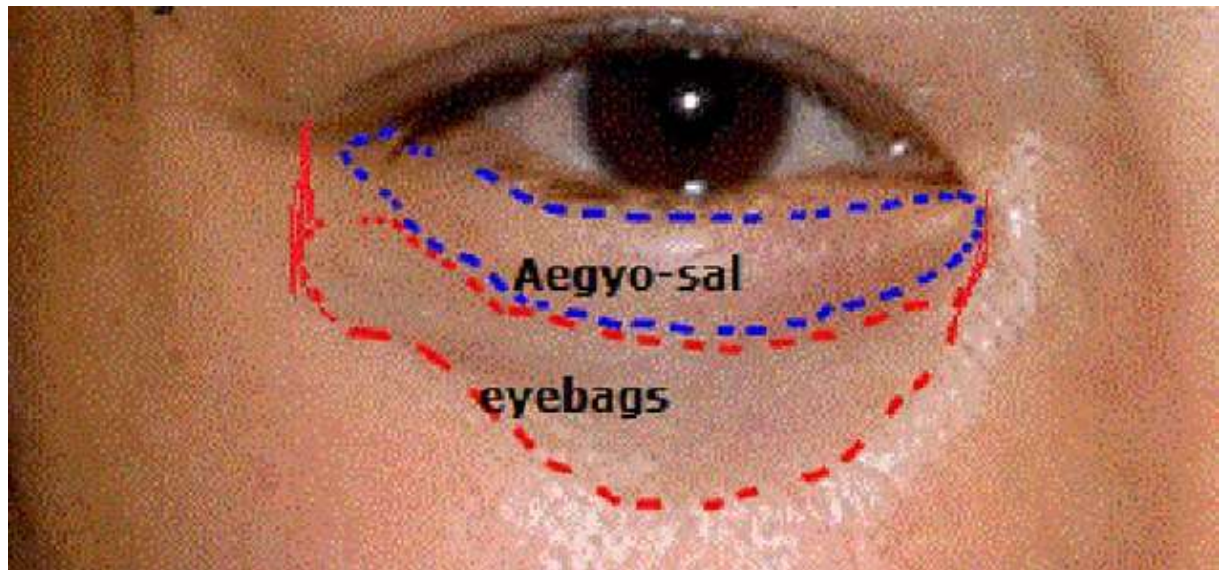

Figure 1. Where is your Aegyosal, from myfatpocket.com.

The aforementioned foundation cushion by AmorePacific, which is called the Air Cushion (by the brand IOPE), is meant to "to make the face flawless and look moisturized and glowy" (Chang, 2017, 19). Looking natural is currently a very popular make-up trend, which is different from a few years back when heavy contouring and face shaping was a trend in the U.S (Villett, 2016). Many South Korean cosmetic brands play into this popular natural makeup trend by producing cosmetics that fit into this trend.

Being 'natural' is further emphasized by AmorePacific as the company promotes an environmentally-conscious message through their website. The company "seeks peaceful coexistence between nature, human beings and businesses" and "is committed to the elimination of unnecessary animal testing for cosmetics" (AmorePacific, n.d.). However, AmorePacific's commitment to the environmental cause is limited; when required by law, they will test their products on animals. The company tries to (look like they) account for consumers' social and environmental wishes.

South Korean brands appeal to customers by marketing their brand as 'natural'. The brands do so extensively, to the point where this becomes a core element of their brand.

2.3.2. Cosmetics consumers in South Korea

Research has shown that South Korean women are more critical of their bodies compared to American women (Jung and Lee, 2006). The dissatisfaction of South Korean women with their appearance and the willingness to change their appearance to adhere to certain beauty ideals may also be explanations for why the beauty business is booming in South Korea. In order to achieve a Caucasian look, many South Korean women undergo cosmetic surgery (Kim and Chung, 2009; Rainwater-McClure, Reed and Kramer, 2003). Alteration, and perhaps improvement, of personal appearance seems to be of high importance for South Korean women.

A two-week longitudinal study by Parsons and Su (2017) researched the consumer behavior of eight South Korean women. When these women went out looking for cosmetic products they focused on price, which often led to looking for discounts and duty-free products. These women often did research on cosmetics online, but did not have a significant preference for buying products online rather than offline. In terms of what kind of products South Koreans cosmetic consumers are attracted to, it seems to be more about what is in style at that time. So, how does this differ from U.S. consumers of K-beauty?

2.3.3. Popularity of South Korean brands in the U.S.

In her research, Chang (2017) determined that the K-beauty product target audience in the U.S. was comprised of female millennials, aged from 18 to 34. That the target consumers in the U.S. were mostly made up of millennials was corroborated by Euromonitor Research (2018). Moreover, Euromonitor Research said that consumers were often fans of South Korean pop culture, such as K-dramas and K-pop, and that these consumers were often influenced to buy products that their favorite South Korean actor or singer used. South Korean brands that were explicitly marketed as 'natural' also had a huge advantage in the U.S. cosmetic industry. Rakuten Intelligence, an e-commerce research firm, found that in the U.S. people who consider themselves white made up the biggest percentage of K-beauty consumers, at 61% (Zucker, 2018). This number is quite similar to the percentage of white consumers in the U.S. cosmetic market (70%). The number that stood out was the amount of people of Asian ethnicity; Asian people made up 16% of the K-beauty consumers, while they only made up about 8% in the entire U.S cosmetic market. According to Rakuten Intelligence's data, those who purchase K-beauty products have a habit in doing so and spend about 60% of their budget for cosmetic on K-beauty products (Zucker, 2018).

Sephora was the first U.S. offline store to sell K-beauty products. Nowadays K-beauty products can now be found in a multitude of U.S. stores, from high-end (Nordstrom), to low-end (Target) stores, and several online stores (SoKo Glam) (K-boom, 2017; Chang, 2017). In 2017, South Korea exported cosmetic products to the U.S. for a total value of $422.3 million (Workman, 2018). South Korea ranked as the fifth largest export country of cosmetic products to the U.S., coming in after China, France, Canada and Italy. However, South Korea showed the largest amount of growth as they went up 389.4% in value growth from 2014 (Workman, 2018).

According to Priya Venkatesh, the hair and skincare divisional merchandise manager at Sephora, South Korean brands set themselves apart from Western brands through their "clear messaging, sensorial product design and marketing, creation of millennial-friendly skincare, and engagement of consumers on skincare education" (K-boom, 2017, p. 6). In the U.S., beauty giant AmorePacific accounted for 35% of sales in the K-beauty market (K-boom, 2017).

South Korean brands do not always immediately fit in with the U.S. culture. An example is the range of shades most South Korean brands have for their face-base makeup (e.g. foundation and concealer). In South Korea, brands often carry shades #21 and #23 (as can be seen in *Figure 1*). These shades are roughly the same darkness, but with different undertones (yellow and red). South Korean brands often lack products for darker skin tones. Asian women only make up 5.8% of the U.S. female population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). African American and Hispanic women, who most likely cannot find their shade among #21 and #23, make up 31.7% of the U.S. female population. The cosmetic industry for women of color amounts to roughly $7.5 billion a year (Bryant, 2016). Not including more shades may leave women with darker skin tones feeling left out, and this may negatively impact their opinion of South Korean brands, and perhaps K-beauty.

Figure 2. Shade range for Missha Signature Essence Cushion Intensive Cover Cushion foundation, from https://www.misshaus.com/

2.4. Cultivation Theory

Since my research handles audiovisual data, a framework based on cultivation theory can help explain the effects of audiovisual media on its viewers. First, as a way to illustrate the relationship between media and its consumers, we look at research by Kim and Chung's (2009), who aimed to figure out whether beauty ideals have actually diffused in this global age, or whether the perception of ideal beauty is still culture-specific. The authors write that during their experiment they provided participants with photos of models and the participants had to rate the models' attractiveness. It turned out that the models that received the lowest score were the ones who were not represented in the entertainment industry of the respective countries (South Korea and the U.S.). Thus, the results showed that what the media presents as attractive, and what was perceived by people as being attractive was the same. These results may suggest that there is a possible correlation between the kind and amount of media people consume and what they find attractive. If media consumption has this kind of effect on consumers, then perhaps consumption of K-beauty YouTube videos may have an effect on how viewers shape the idea of K-beauty.

The research by Kim and Chung (2009) is based off visual, rather than audio-visual media. Therefore, the framework of media consumptions effects on consumers will be expanded with cultivation theory. Cultivation theory can be used to explain how frequently consuming audio-visual media may influence people's perception towards a certain subject. Cultivation theory was first introduced by George Gerbner. The theory stems from research Gerbner and colleagues did on media violence. Among those who were deemed 'heavy viewers' there was a wide range of attitudes, but among those who were deemed 'light viewers' the attitudes were far more similar. What was seen on the television was 'violence', but what it sparked in society was 'a sense of fear and protection' (Gerbner et al., 1978, p. 184). The research focused on the messages that were shown on television and what the effects of those message were on the audience's thoughts, rather than on their behavior (Gerbner, et al., 1978). The conclusion was that exposure to many of the same message on a subject would result in a more extreme stance on the subject.

The theory was criticized on several points by other academics. The first criticism was that the differences in attitudes could also be explained by the audience's demographics, rather than heavy vs. light viewing of the content (Ruddock, 2011). Secondly, Morgan and Shanahan (1996) found that the effects of cultivation theory by Gerbner et al. (1978) were far less significant as claimed, as their results could only explain '9 per cent of the variations in belief and ideology observed among the respondent' (Ruddock, 2011, p. 108). Thirdly, Gerbner et al. made no clear distinctions between heavy, medium and light viewers, which greatly diminishes the reliability of the theory. Lastly, cultivation theory by Gerbner dismissed the notion of selective exposure by assuming there was only source people had access to in order to get information. In case of Gerbner, et al's (1978) research this meant that TV was the sample's only source of information.

Since cultivation theory was based on a specific research, the criticism on Gerbner et al's (1978) research directly affects the reputation of cultivation theory. However, other academics have continued using cultivation theory as a framework for their research, although the explanations for the differences in attitudes among heavy and light viewers have been adapted a bit. In academic literature cultivation theory now encompasses the idea that "we remember general patterns of information gained from television but not the precise sources of this information" (Shapiro and Lang, 1991; Mares, 1996; in Ruddock, 2011, p.111). Now cultivation theory in its simplest form means that high exposure to certain messages influences its audience, and since "popular culture provides a constant stream of information about the world around us that is easier to recall than information from other sources (Ruddock, 2011, p.112).

The results from Kim and Chung (2009) tie in with cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 1994): "the more media a person is exposed to, the more he/she will interpret the message [of the media] to be valid" (Kim and Chung, 2009, p. 232). Research by Hesse-Biber, Leavy, Quinn and Zoino (2006) connects this media exposure and message cultivation to feelings of dissatisfaction for women about their appearance and bodies. Kim and Chung (2009) suggest that there may be a difference in message about the same concept between different media: TV content may have a different message about beauty ideals than magazine content (Pompper and Koenig, 2004). This means that whatever message is broadcasted through YouTube videos has the ability to influence the viewers attitude or perspective on the subject of that message. Cultivation theory explains that media does not just broadcast, but also transmits messages: output and input. Thus, in my research I may find definitions for K-beauty, which are likely to be the same definitions some viewers have for K-beauty.

2.5. K-Beauty on YouTube

For the sake of consistency, we will refer to those who make beauty related videos on YouTube as beauty YouTubers throughout this paper. YouTube is a platform defined by Web 2.0. The platform's interactive element is one of the main features that sets it apart from traditional media, such as TV and film. On YouTube, people upload videos to their personal channel and viewers are able like those videos, or subscribe to YouTube channels in order to immediately get updated when a new video gets posted, and also to show their support for the YouTuber. With the rise of Web 2.0 and social media, a new type of celebrity has emerged: the influencer. Through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, anyone can become famous in the sense that people can "develop and maintain an audience" (Marwick and Boyd, 2011, p.140). These online celebrities, or influencers, present themselves as a brand on social media through marketing strategies and creating a coherent brand identity (Senft, 2013; Marwick, 2015). Academic research has covered many different YouTubers and aspects of YouTube, but there has not been much research on beauty gurus (Garciá-Rapp, 2017). Garciá-Rapp (2017) defines a beauty guru as someone who makes videos "on cosmetics, makeup, and hairstyling, demonstrating and teaching practical matters through regular video posts in the form of video tutorials as step-by-step How-to

guides" (p. 229). Although Garciá-Rapp (2017) refers to this lot of YouTubers as beauty gurus, in this paper we will refer to them as beauty YouTubers, because the word 'guru' may have certain connotations for people, whereas 'YouTuber' is a relatively neutral term. An article by García-Rapp (2017) aims to fill that gap in the literature by looking at the strengths of beauty guru Bubzbeauty and choses to do inductive qualitative data analysis, which seems an appropriate method, since there is little prior research on the beauty community on YouTube. Garciá-Rapp's (2017) article was affirmation that an inductive method works very well for YouTube content and that video content by beauty YouTubers is indeed rich enough to gather sufficient data from.

In the media industry audiences are very important. In television, audience size is the most important factor. In commercial television audience size determines value for advertisers. In public television audience size determines value for funding (Ruddock, 2001). Besides the size, the demographics of the audience and when the audience watches their shows is important to the TV industry (Ang, 1991). On YouTube, audiences are often measured in views, shown by a counter below the video. In the TV industry the amount of people that watch a show is measured by a small sample of people who watch, and then generalized to the entire audience. Thus, the ratings for a show may not be very accurate. Although somewhat similar, on YouTube views are not the only measure. Another measure is important for advertisers who wish to advertise on YouTube: a channel's subscriber count. In order to get a YouTube channel monetized, a channel needs to have at least a 1000 subscribers and 40000 minutes of view time in the last month. Thus, YouTube determines a channel's worth not only by views, but also by its potential to gather views and returning viewers. Although still not 100% accurate, subscriber count and the amount of views a video has could give a more accurate indication of how many people have actually seen the video.

Research by Chang (2017, p.40) found that "a few leading K-Beauty bloggers based in the U.S. not only play a key role in promoting Korean cosmetic products, but are also perceived as credible experts,". The YouTubers I have selected as part of my research sample have gathered a significant following on the social media platform (as shown by their subscriber count and video views), and may enjoy the same perception of being 'credible experts' on the subject matter. Thus, these YouTubers may actually be the main source of information on K-beauty and the definition of the concept for many of their viewers.

3. Research Design

In order to answer the research question of "How do Korean and American beauty video creators construct and explore the concept of K-beauty?" a qualitative method will be used. Through constructivist grounded theory the sample's language will be dissected to see how these YouTubers discuss and thereby help construct the concept of 'K-beauty'.

3.1 Data Collection Method

The analysis of the data will be done through constructivist grounded theory analysis, and will compare two different sets of data: set 1 will be the analysis of videos made by South Korean beauty YouTubers and set 2 will be the analysis of videos made by American beauty YouTubers.

YouTube is a platform on which people can discuss their very specific, and eccentric interests. On the other hand, on YouTube anyone can stumble upon any sort of content, because of certain features such as the recommended videos on the homepage, the search option and its filters, and the trending page. Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz (2016) make the distinction between 'Standard YouTubers' (those who interact on the platform with people they know personally) and 'Special YouTubers' (those who interact with people they 'meet' on the platform). Most people are 'Special YouTubers' and interact with people they do not know from their personal life, but like, comment and subscribe to YouTubers they have never met offline (Ding, et al. 2011). While YouTubers may think of a specific target audience, that is not to say their actual audience actually consists of those people. Therefore, the content on YouTube may be specific enough to cater to a certain demographic (K-beauty fans), but also to K-beauty newbies and those who have never even heard the term K-beauty.

There were some criteria that the videos and the YouTube channels had to adhere to in order to be included in the sample. Firstly, at least one video by the YouTuber needed to be able to be found through the search term 'K-beauty' in the YouTube search bar. All YouTubers chosen had at least one video that explicitly mentioned 'K-beauty' in the title. During the process of deciding on the sample it turned out that while non-Korean video creators make great use of the term K-beauty in their video titles, descriptions and channel descriptions, Korean YouTubers did not seem to use K-beauty or the Korean version (K뷰티) that often in their video titles or descriptions. While it was evident from many channels pages that the creators were South Korean, and some specific trends (e.g. glass skin) that have been linked to K-beauty were in their video titles, there were no explicit mentions of K-beauty.

Secondly, the videos had to be uploaded after 2016 to insure a recent sample. There were a few videos that came up in YouTube search that explicitly had 'K-beauty' in the title, however, these videos were all over 5 years old. Since K-beauty has only gone international since around 2011, videos from 5 years ago have less chance of discussing K-beauty as a stable, or developed concept

(Meltzer, 2018). The oldest video in the sample is from March 2017, whereas the newest video is from November 2018.

Lastly, the Korean videos had to have English subtitles, as this indicates the videos have international influence. In order to do the grounded theory analysis, the English subtitles will be extracted from the videos using an online tool that automatically rips the subtitles from the YouTube videos (e.g. LilSubs.com). YouTube automatically generates subtitles for their videos. Thus, for the English videos the auto-generated subtitles will be ripped from the videos and for the Korean videos the English subtitles that were added to the video post-edit will be ripped. The sentences from the YouTube video often were not whole sentences, or had many clauses and thus could not automatically be assigned as separate units. Therefor the units were constructed based on sentences, but some units were cut based on the intonation used in the video. Pauses and cuts from one shot to another shot were used as signals for separate units. There was very little slang in the videos already, but the slang also did not need to be taken into consideration for the coding process since it did not matter for the content of the units whether someone said 'leggo' or 'let's go'. Notes were added at the end of units based on the YouTuber's intonation, as this could clarify the attitude the YouTuber had when speaking. For instance, in a video by Heyitsfeiii (17 makeup hacks), she said "that brightened up my eyes like that", like that could mean "in this way", but from her intonation it became clear she meant "quickly". In instances like this, notes were added to the transcriptions.

The ripped subtitles were not always good grammatically, but also content-wise. Auto-generated subtitles make use of software that automatically creates written subtitles from audio. However, if the audio is not 100% mutable, the subtitles may not be completely accurate. In other instances, a fan of the YouTuber had created the subtitles for a video and the subtitles still were not completely accurate. The transcriptions will be checked and improved manually, since the technology is not 100% accurate. For one of the videos from Lamuqe the subtitles were added to the video in editing, and not post-edit as YouTube subtitles, therefor one of the Korean transcriptions will be completely manually copied from the video's visuals.

In the end, the sample was based on videos from 4 different YouTubers: KennieJD (American), Heyitsfeiii (American), Lamuqe (Korean) and Daisy (Korean). The YouTubers in the sample are all female. In terms of age, KennieJD is 24, Heyitsfeiii is 25, Lamuqe is 35 and Daisy is 29, so the Korean sample features beauty YouTubers that are roughly 7,5 years older than the beauty YouTubers in the American sample. However, what may be more important to mention is that the South Korean YouTubers were both of South Korean ethnicity, while American YouTuber Heyitsfeiii is of Hmong descent and American YouTuber KennieJD is African American. Cultural context and ethnicity may be important to understand some of the statements made in the videos.

For both the American and South Korean data set there was a big video creator (over 1 million subscribers) and a smaller video creator (under 500.000 subscribers). This was due to

availability of K-beauty content, but also Burges and Green (2009) say that the influence of YouTubers can be measured through video views and the YouTuber's subscriber amount, thus the American and South Korean YouTubers needed to have roughly the same subscriber count. Between the views from the American and South Korean videos there was only a .1% difference, so the videos have been watched almost equally. Thus, following Burges and Green's (2009) claims about YouTuber's influence, the American and South Korean samples have nearly the same amount of influence on their audiences. The best way to determine whether samples are equal is to look into YouTuber's audience data, however this information is private, and thus not available to me. Therefor views and subscriber count are the most accurate method available to me as a researcher to determine equality of the samples.

The American sample included two videos from KennieJD and two from Heyitsfeiii, which accumulates to 58 minutes and 36 seconds of video footage. The South Korean sample included two videos from Lamuqe and three videos from Daisy, as Daisy's videos tended to be a little shorter. These videos accumulated to 60 minutes and 14 seconds. Thus, the total amount of data analyzed was 1 hour, 58 minutes and 50 seconds long. Most videos were published in 2018, but three are from 2017, with the oldest one being from March 2017. See Table 1.0 for more specifics on the sample videos.

Because of the previously mentioned criteria for the videos, the videos were all related to K-beauty; however, the formats of the videos differ widely; two were makeover videos, one was a discussion about K-beauty in regards to darker skin tones, and the remaining videos were reviews of either K-beauty products, brands or hacks. Thus, the aspects of K-beauty that may arise from the video will differ widely and may not be as prevalent in all videos because of the formats.

Moreover, since these beauty YouTubers have significant amounts of followers, they most likely receive ad revenue from their videos. This means that there is financial gain in discussing K-beauty and this may influence what the beauty YouTubers will say in their videos. Financial gain may also come into play when videos are sponsored, or feature brand deals. None of the videos explicitly state that it was sponsored, however sponsorships are not always explicitly mentioned by YouTubers, and thus some videos may still be sponsored. Since K-beauty is part of these YouTubers job, it may influence the way they discuss K-beauty.

3.2 Data Analysis Method

Constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz (2000) differs from traditional grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in its constructivist, rather than positivist approach. Rather than the positivist idea that there are unquestionable truths that need to be discovered, constructivism sees individuals that are constructed by interaction with the outside world and since no one has exactly the same experiences, there can exist many different 'truths'. In Charmaz's (2000, p.510) own words: "[assuming] the relativism of multiple social realities, [recognizing] the mutual creation of

knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and [aiming] toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings". By choosing constructivist grounded theory, rather than trying to find the social norm to which people comply, I am looking for in-depth information on how beauty YouTubers construct the concept of K-beauty. I acknowledge that I am looking at complex people's constructions of K-beauty and not at the underlying truth of what K-beauty means. Although for this research I position myself as a concealed complete observer, I should acknowledge that not only the YouTubers are constructors of these interpretations, but that I, as a researcher, mold these interpretations of K-beauty.

There are however, some factors that make this data more 'reliable'. Since YouTube content is static and linked to a certain time of uploading, I as the researcher cannot influence this factor. The data does reflect a certain time period.

Transcriptions of the videos will be coded through initial, axial and selective coding. Once both the South Korean beauty YouTuber sample and the American beauty YouTuber sample have been coded, these data sets will be compared to one another. In the end, the datasets should reflect a certain view(s)/construction(s) of the concept of K-beauty and possibly explain what the key elements of the concept are. In turn these elements can be compared between datasets to see whether there is a cultural difference between South Koreans and Americans when it comes to the interpretation of the concept of K-beauty. Coding will be done entirely based on textual data. While this textual data is stripped from audio-visual material (YouTube videos), the visuals of these videos do not hold much information on the concept of K-beauty. The videos from both samples have presenters, the beauty YouTuber, that tell a story. While the videos may show some South Korean products, this is all further discussed audibly, thus stripping the textual data from the audio will suffice to answer my research question.

Constructivist grounded theory provides both flexibility in what can be done with the data, as well as gives some structure in terms of what steps to follow for the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Since there is so little previous literature on K-beauty, the inductive nature of constructive grounded theory makes it the perfect method of analysis of this research's data. Since K-beauty is under-researched, there is almost no academic literature to corroborate my final results. The steps (initial, axial and selective coding) of constructivist grounded theory may provide more reliability over other methods that lack a similar structure. Naturally, the conditions for this research can never be exactly repeated, but the coding steps may give clearer insight into the process of how I went from the raw data to the final results.

3.3 Researcher reflexivity

Not only does the method shape the research, the researcher also shapes the research. Therefore, I must specify that I am neither American nor Korean, but have been in both the US and in South Korea and even lived Seoul for a couple of months during my studies. I have studied both

English and Korean, so it may be the case that I will tend to code based on what I know and have experienced from both cultures. This may actually be beneficial to the analysis since I have more cultural context and may be able to better understand the cultural context than someone who has not been in these countries or studied these cultures.

4. Results

The data from the South Korean and the American data sets have been analyzed collectively in order to provide insight into what constitutes 'K-beauty'. However, the two data sets have also been compared in regards to the open and axial codes in order to analyze differences in the South Korean and American K-beauty communities and their attitudes towards K-beauty. After all the coding phases there were nine selective codes and 64 axial codes. From the data three aspects of K-beauty, as discussed by the beauty YouTubers became apparent: the place of K-beauty in the cosmetics industry as a whole, particular characteristics of K-beauty, and individual handling of K-beauty. These relationships will be discussed in this order in this chapter.

4.1. K-beauty and Beauty

This first section will explain how beauty YouTubers discuss K-beauty as a part of the general cosmetics industry. A large part of the data of the videos referred to cosmetic brands and products. Hair and skincare products as well as make-up products were mentioned and reviewed in the videos. In most of the videos, these K-beauty products were the main subject. However, some videos revolved more around popular trends, such as water masks[1] and the no-makeup-makeup-look, which will be explained later in this chapter. These trends often involved South Korean products, as supposed to non-Korean products. Products are reviewed, but not just the workings of the product on the skin or hair are important. From the data, much of the attention in the videos went towards: 1) showing how a product was used (correctly), 2) descriptions of the brand and 3) how a particular product works in combination with other products. For instance, in one of her videos Heyitsfeiii says: "Now, with the matte finish sunblock you want to take a little bit of that and apply that all over your face," as she shows the viewer how to correctly apply the sunblock. The beauty YouTubers often describe what type of product they use, but also how the consistency of the product looks, feels, and smells. From the data it would seem that for these beauty YouTubers, K-beauty is made up of South Korean products, and considering how in-depth these YouTubers go into the specifications of the products and how to properly use them, the products are very important.

While the K-beauty products are an important topic of discussion for the beauty YouTubers, the brands and stores that carry the products seem less important. Almost all of the videos, there were only mentions of brands in reference to specific products that were either being used on camera, or being referred to as alternative options to what was being used on camera. In the data there was no real information on most of the brands that were mentioned. Moreover, brand names often only came up in combination with a product, for instance "one [blusher that] is really inexpensive this is Tony Moly's crystal blusher in bold glamour" or "the last product is NATUREREPUBLIC new color

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[1] Water mask refers to a skincare method in which toner, mist or oil-soaked cotton pads are placed on the face for circa 10 minutes in order to hydrate the skin.

tints". Therefore, because of the lack of discussion of brands and stores, it seems that for beauty YouTubers, brands and stores are far less important than specific products.

However, there was one video by American beauty YouTuber Heyitsfeiii in which the characteristics of a brand, rather than in reference to a specific product, were mentioned. In the video the beauty YouTuber does actually describe a South Korean brand and a South Korean store. She discusses the South Korean brand Bring Green and points out specific characteristics of the brand, rather than specific products, by saying: "[Bring Green] aim[s] for natural ingredients on your face as skin care," and "this brand Bring Green is so, so big on natural extracts". In that same video she also wants to "let you [her viewers] know that Olive Young is similar to a Sephora here in the U.S.", and by saying this she uses the example of Sephora to illustrate to her American audience what to expect from the South Korean store Olive Young. The reason why these brands may be discussed more in-depth in the video by Heyitsfeiii is because she may have been sponsored. While the description of the video on YouTube explicitly says that the video was not sponsored, she did provide an affiliate link in the description for the Olive Young website, which means that if people purchase from Olive Young through Heyitsfeiii's link she will get a commission. Moreover, in the video it was mentioned that Heyitsfeiii and Olive Young had a previous partnership. Because of the affiliate link and the previous partnership with Olive Young it may be that Heyitsfeiii spoke (positively) about Bring Green and Olive Young because of financial gain. Since most videos did not talk about brands, but rather about specific products, and the video by Heyitsfeiii that featured a brand with which the YouTuber has worked directly, it seems that results from (semi-)sponsored videos and non-sponsored videos may differ.

For some products, how the formulas of the products combine together on the skin was mentioned. An example of this can be seen in one of the videos by KennieJD in which she talks about how Western primers make her foundation looks worse. A single product does not seem to be used on its own but always in combination with other types of makeup products. It seems that when doing makeup, it needs to be a 'full face of makeup' with products for specific areas: base products (foundation and concealer), eye products (eyeshadow, eyeliner), lip products (lip liner, lipstick), but also contour and highlighter for specific areas. However, how products work together is not only important for makeup products, but also skincare products. In one of her videos South Korean beauty YouTuber Daisy talks about the use of K-beauty water masks and says: "you can apply a thin layer of ampoule or cream before water mask". From the data it seems that the use of multiple makeup products at the same time is 'normal' or 'expected' of the viewer. This is especially noticeable against another big theme in the data, namely the notion of 'natural' in K-beauty, which will be discussed later in this chapter. When it comes to skincare, the use of multiple skincare products is presented more as optional and that the more effort you put into your skincare, the better your skin will feel or look. From the discussions in the YouTube videos, the use of many makeup products seems to be more conventional than the use of skincare products, even though skincare has the extra

benefit that it is good for your skin, aside from making you look 'better' as makeup is also supposed to do. An explanation for this can be found in chapter 2.3.1, as it was mentioned that the aim of the natural look was "to make the face flawless and look moisturized and glowy" (Chang, 2017, 19); while skincare may provide tools to achieve a blemish-free, even-toned skin, with makeup any self-perceived problems with the face can be instantly fixed. Because of this, it would seem that a flawless appearance is more important than the actual health of the skin. Although combining products was discussed in both the South Korean and the American sample, and made discussed not only South Korean, but also Western products, these findings still discuss K-beauty as a part of the global cosmetics industry. The use of multiple makeup products at the same time may tie into the discussion about the 'Escape the Corset'-movement in chapter 1, which says that South Korean women feel pressured to wear makeup "by the media, friends and family (The K-beauty nation, 2018; Haas, 2018; Rhyu, 2017). The use of makeup to appear flawless may be more so a result of the pressure people feel from their surroundings to wear makeup, than it is a personal preference to wear a certain amount of makeup. The pressure felt by South Koreans women to wear makeup may not be completely different from how American women feel; the previously stated Westernized ideal also includes "young" (Patton, 2006, in Kim and Chung, 2009, p.229), and as a result makeup may be used to achieve a look that is perceived as "young". However, the specific pressure South Korean women feel to wear makeup may be explained chapter 2.2, which states that there is academic literature that claims that for South Koreans appearance is very important since it symbolizes a successful nation (Leem Seo Yeon, 2014; Epstein and Joon, DiMoia, 2013). The pressure that South Korean women feel about 'keeping up' their appearance is embedded in their culture and not working on one's appearance could be interpreted as letting down the nation. Therefore, in regards to K-beauty, the way the beauty YouTubers discuss the amount of skincare and makeup products they use, it seems that K-beauty, being part of the cosmetics industry, is used as a tool to emulate beauty ideals and that for South Koreans this is considered less of an option and more of an expectation considering appearance symbolizes a successful nation.

4.1.1. Purposes of K-beauty

The data did not just reflect what products are part of K-beauty, but also what the purpose of K-beauty is. Two of the nine selective codes were categorized as 'purpose of K-beauty'. In the data, it came up that K-beauty is meant to beautify: the premise is that after applying makeup one would be more beautiful than before. This could be seen in the data by 'compliments' and 'showing off', which showed a change in behavior and discourse after makeup was applied. In some of the videos the beauty YouTubers (and their guests) gave and received compliments and discussed showing off their newly acquired beauty achieved with K-beauty products and/or styles of makeup that considered K-beauty looks (which was mentioned explicitly in the data on one occasion). One example of 'showing off' comes from a video by Lamuqe in which her guest that she just gave a makeover says that now that she is going to "show off to my friends." Another example of 'showing off' was found in a video by American beauty YouTuber Heyitsfeiii when she says: "Although you

know if you [do your makeup] like this girl, you slay," in which she refers to her own makeup look as an example that others can recreate and will make them look very good. Another code was 'becoming more beautiful'. This phrase was explicitly used in a video by Lamuqe in which she says: "Be more beautiful tomorrow than today!" as an ending to her video. It would seem the message Lamuqe wants to convey to her viewers is that her makeovers, which rely heavily on K-beauty product and makeup styles can help people become 'more beautiful'. The key point here is that, in the data, makeup is discussed as a tool to make people look good and feel better about themselves, which is not a specific characteristic of K-beauty, but more so a characteristic of makeup in general.

The discussion in the data about using K-beauty products and makeup looks to become 'more beautiful' seems to be related to other themes in the data, namely insecurities and problem areas. In the videos, people's problem areas are described as physical features that they themselves perceive as unattractive. In the videos, the beauty YouTubers made a distinction between becoming more beautiful, which was not necessarily related to being explicitly unattractive before, and 'covering problems', which was specifically about certain features that were considered unattractive. Naturally, within context the perception of having problem areas is not merely a personal opinion, but is embedded in a complex social construction. For instance, what people find attractive and unattractive may be influenced by the media; looking back at chapter 2.4, research by Kim and Chung's (2009) was explained which stated there was a significant relation between media exposure and the perception of attractiveness; the media representation of attractive people and what participants of the study considered attractive people was the same. Media exposure is just one example of an influence that helps construct the idea of 'problem areas'. In the data of this research, the beauty YouTubers were sometimes quite subtle in their phrasing when saying how a certain feature could be categorized as a problem area. For instance, in a video by Heyitsfeiii she says: "Imagine you are out with a friend or two or you're just on the go and you're hair's a little bit shiny," in which the video subject was all about K-beauty hacks, which are meant to improve something, in this case the shininess of your hair, which is posed as if it is a problem. While problem areas were discussed in both samples, the theme was especially prevalent in the South Korean sample. The videos by Lamuqe, that specifically dealt with makeovers, may account for the high presence of problem areas; although a makeover does not necessarily need to have the purpose of making someone look more beautiful (e.g. Halloween makeup, using a different color palette), the title of Lamuqe's makeover series is *Lamuqe Plastic Surgery*, which implies that makeup is used to emulate plastic surgery and alter the appearance of certain facial features' construction. The Korean sample mostly reflects on some of the relatively easy-to-fix issues appearance-wise (rather than health-wise) the beauty YouTubers have, such as redness of the skin, or shiny hair. These relatively minor issues can also be found the American sample as in one of her videos KennieJD discusses her own problem areas and refers to her pores, and her uneven skin texture. Where a big difference can be seen between the American and South Korean sample in regard to the topic of problem areas is when it comes to 'permanent' facial features. I have named these problems areas 'permanent' facial features,

since these type of problem areas have to do with the bone structure of the face, which - if someone wants to intentionally change the natural state of those features - can only be altered through cosmetic surgery. These permanent facial features are different from other relatively easy-to-fix issues. For instance, the amount of redness of the skin can differ day-to-day and shiny hair can easily be fixed by washing one's hair and does not require cosmetic surgery to change the actual skin or hair itself. However, solving the problem area of "a wide face"[2], which was mentioned in one of the videos by Lamuqe, can only be changed by undergoing cosmetic surgery. Makeup can alter the appearance of permanent facial features but does not change anything about the feature itself. Whereas something like shampoo actually changes the state of hair, or certain cream may actually get rid of the redness. These permanent facial feature problem areas only occur in Lamuqe's videos. Examples of these problem areas arise when one of the guests in Lamuqe's videos says she has "small, stuffy eyes" and "I take after my dad's rounded nose". When we look at the previous examples, we can see that "wide face" and "small, stuffy eyes" are permanent facial features which do not conform to the South Korean beauty ideal of having a "narrower lower face" and "large eyes" (Rhee, 2009, cited by Elfving-Hwang, 2013). Because problem areas involving permanent facial features only arose in the South Korean sample, and not the American sample, it may indicate this difference in samples is due to cultural influences. As mentioned earlier, in order to change not only the appearance but the actual natural state of these features, cosmetic surgery is needed. In the Introduction of this thesis, a survey by Gallup Korea was mentioned which stated that over a third of young female South Koreans had undergone cosmetic surgery (Perception of appearance, 2015). Moreover, South Korea is the country with the highest rate of cosmetic surgeries in the world per capita (Jacobs, 2018). One of the reasons for the popularity of cosmetic surgery could be that the South Korean beauty ideals are so important in South Korean society that at least a third of young South Korean women are willing to go under the knife to get closer to this ideal. That South Korean beauty ideals seem to have a big influence on at least a portion South Korean women is can be seen earlier in chapter 1 in regards to the 'Escape the Corset'-movement, in which South Korean women said that the South Korean beauty ideals were oppressive and these women needed to break free from that oppression by destroying their makeup (see Chapter 1.) The data of this research and the literature on South Korean beauty ideals in chapter 1 and 2 support the idea that for South Korean women covering their problem areas in order to adhere to South Korean beauty ideals is considered normative and that these beauty ideals are embedded in K-beauty as well.

A similar theme to problem areas that arose from the data was the discussion of insecurities. These insecurities were only found in the Korean sample in Lamuqe's videos. An explanation for the occurrence of insecurities only in Lamuqe's videos could be, again, as with the problem areas appearing only in Lamuqe's videos, that because these were videos in which a guest receives a

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[2] A wide face most often refers to the width of the face being close to the length of the face. However, the quote was used specifically to refer to her jaw having roughly the same width as her forehead.

makeover the aim may be to make the guest look 'better', and perhaps make them feel better about their insecurities. The insecurities are often a reaction to a compliment, for instance where this happened was when Lamuqe said: "your eyes remind me of comic books, so doll-like" to her guest, to which her guest responds with "No?" From the visuals of the video the guest looked a bit shocked and uncomfortable about the (perhaps sudden) comment on her appearance. Instead of taking the compliment, Lamuqe's guest asks: "don't I look a bit blank-minded?"[3] which is a quite a self-deprecating comment. This example in particular can be used to illustrate that for the guests, they think that their appearance may influence other people's assumptions about personal traits, such as whether they are "blank-minded" or not. This is in line with platonic philosophy, which assumes that a person who is perceived to have a good physique will be a good person in terms of their personality; one's appearance is directly linked to their character (Featherstone 2010: 195; Moeran 2010: 495). Another example that illustrates platonic philosophy happened in a video by Lamuqe in which a guest came in that said other people called her makeup "too fierce". The guest used to do her makeup how she wanted, but when she heard other people thought about her makeup look she wanted to try a different look on Lamuqe's YouTube makeover show. According to the guest, based on what she had heard from others, in order to look appropriate for a professional setting, she could not look "too fierce". In this case, the problem was constructed by the people in the guest's environment. The guest is not "too fierce", but is perceived as such by people in her direct surroundings based on her makeup look. People do not just use K-beauty to make themselves more beautiful, but can also be help them to look more professional, glamorous, or approachable to other people. The way the beauty YouTubers discussed the relationship between appearance and personality, K-beauty products and styles seems similar to, for instance, American beauty products and styles, as they can be used to exude a certain image to other people. Furthermore, if the style of makeup you wear is linked to other people's perception of you and wearing makeup is the norm in South Korea, then not wearing makeup may be considered 'abnormal' and therefor a bare-faced person may be perceived as 'abnormal' not only appearance-wise, but perhaps also personality-wise. K-beauty is used as a tool to hide these insecurities, but also meant to help people exude a certain image. However, from the data there does not seem to be one specific type of look that K-beauty aims to portray, such as professional or glamorous. It may be that there are several looks that are considered K-beauty, or that there is one look which just has not been explained properly in the American or South Korean sample.

However, makeup was not only discussed as a tool for exuding a certain image, it also seemed to directly affect confidence. Considering the results from a survey by Gallup Korea that was mentioned in chapter 1, which stated that 40% of South Korean female participants did not feel confident about their appearance it may not be as surprising that these insecurities were found in the

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[3] Blank-minded is a translation by Lamuqe for the word 맹하다, however a better translation may be 'dense' or ' stupid'.

South Korean sample (Perception of appearance, 2015). However, what stood out from the data was the difference in behavior and discourse between the guests when they were not wearing any makeup and when they were wearing a full face of makeup. The insecurities as discussed in the videos often revolved around the guest's perception of themselves without makeup. In both videos, participants of the makeover had just washed their face and thus washed off their makeup. Moreover, in one of the videos, right after the guest removes her makeup she says: "I'm so embarrassed with my face". In the other video the guest says: "This is a bit embarrassing," which is a reaction to a comment by Lamuqe about the guest's bare face, which is "your bare face looks a lot less fierce,". Lamuqe's comments seemed to make her guests a bit uncomfortable and insecure. However, one of Lamuqe's guest said: "I felt amazing because you kept telling me I'm pretty all through the makeup", which contradicts the previous observations that the guests seemed insecure. In the beginning of both videos by Lamuqe, when the guests were not wearing any makeup, compliments made by Lamuqe towards her guest were responded to with insecurity, usually downplaying or discrediting the compliment. However, after the makeover compliments were not responded to with insecurities. In fact, some compliments were affirmed, for instance when Lamuqe said: "I applied a long-lasted mascara so it's like a real doll like eyelashes, isn't?"[4], to which the guest responds with "yes". It seems that the use of makeup not only upped the confidence Lamuqe's guests had in their appearance, but that makeup is also the basis of Lamuqe's guests' confidence, as stripping away makeup resulted in insecurities.

Since insecurities were only present in the South Korean sample and not the American sample, this may indicate that South Korean women are possibly more insecure than women from the United States. The reason for this difference between the South Korean and the American sample may be the normative South Korean beauty ideals and high peer pressure, where people are extremely concerned with how they are perceived by others and people seem to comment often on each other's appearance (The K-beauty nation, 2018; Haas, 2018; Rhyu, 2017). When comparing the South Korean beauty ideal as described by Rhee (2009) and the Westernized ideal by Patton (2006) the beauty ideal as described by Rhee goes into much more detail regarding ideals for the face, whereas the ideal by Patton is based on more general characteristics. "Blond, young, slim, tall, virginal, and upper-class" are not features someone can achieve by using makeup, thus it may be that the Westernized ideal is not specific enough to provide 'guidelines' for how American women should do their makeup (Patton 2006 in Kim and Chung, 2009, p.229). If for South Korean women their insecurities were based off a beauty ideal that specifically outlined what facial features are attractive, then the quite general Westernized ideal may not influence American women to have as specific insecurities about their facial feature as South Korean seem to have. Moreover, the Westernized ideal is based on Anglo-Saxon beauty, and both the YouTubers in the American sample are not white: they are Asian and black. The United States hosts several different cultural

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[4] Doll-like eyes are considered a compliment in South Korea.

communities; thus, in this multicultural setting the Westernized ideal is challenged, and that there are more beauty ideals present aside from the Westernized ideal. These YouTubers, who are both not of Anglo-Saxon descent, may not perceive this Anglo-Saxon beauty ideal as directed towards them. Thus, because the normative beauty ideal in the United States stems from a culture of which both American YouTubers may not consider themselves a part of, they may not feel as insecure about not looking like that Anglo-Saxon ideal. As mentioned earlier in chapter 4.2.2, South Korea is considered a homogenous country, therefore there is only one culture visible, which has a certain beauty ideal (The World Factbook, n.d). As Americans have more visual representations of different ethnicities and cultures in their direct surroundings, it may be that they are exposed to multiple beauty ideals, and that in comparison to South Korea, it decreases the strength and social pressure of adhering to one beauty ideal. However, it should be noted that the sample sizes are small, and may not properly indicate whether there is the lack of insecurities on a cultural level or to what extent other ethnicities and cultures influence the American beauty YouTubers referred to in this research.

Moreover, the social pressure of the South Korean beauty ideal and the social pressure that comes with it may not be limited to ethnically South Korean women, but more so to women living in South Korea. In one of Lamuqe's videos the guest tells Lamuqe that she "didn't make up when I was in Vietnam!"; she only started to use make-up after moving to South Korea. The guest then proceeds to tell Lamuqe that after coming to South Korea she started wearing more makeup and became more interested in makeup and K-beauty. But as can be seen from the examples of insecurities in the data, the Vietnamese guest becomes embarrassed and insecure in the video when she has no makeup on, while she herself says that before South Korea she did not wear much makeup to begin with. One of the reasons the guest gives for not wearing makeup is she had to wear a mask when she rode her motorbike and her makeup would fade when wearing the mask. However, she says that the mask is "one of the reasons" for why she did not wear makeup, meaning there are more reasons. What is evident is that after coming to South Korea, the guest has changed her makeup habits, which could also indicate a change of attitude towards makeup. This may also be an effect of normative South Korean beauty ideals that make not only women of South Korean ethnicity, but women who are part of South Korean society in general, feel pressured use (K-beauty) products to make themselves look 'better', where better is perceived to be more similar to the South Korean beauty ideal.

4.1.2. Appeal of K-beauty

The appeal of K-beauty consists of three big elements: novelty, variety and specialty. The first aspect, novelty, comes from a seemingly continuous flow of new products, as indicated in the videos. The high number of new products that are released is emphasized by YouTubers in both the American and Korean sample; for example, South Korean beauty YouTuber Daisy said: "A lot of new products are being released this month" and American YouTuber Heyitsfeiii talked about the South Korean store Olive Young and that "they have a lot of new trendy unique products". The only

word used to describe these products collectively is that they are new, and in the data the fact that these products are just entering the K-beauty market is mentioned explicitly, and seems to be a good enough reason to be excited, even before the beauty YouTubers have tried the product.

K-beauty is also perceived as novel by beauty YouTubers in the sense that there are a lot of products that are not like any other products on the market. In one of her videos, for example, Heyitsfeiii talks about "the vitamin silky sun stick", which is a sunblock product in the form of a stick. She discusses this product in contrast to other sunblock products she knows, including American products. Thus, from her comments it would seem that this vitamin silky sun stick is unlike other sunblock products and thus has that novelty element to it. Moreover, it is a novel product to Heyitsfeiii because these products are not commonly found in the United States, while this product may be easier to find in South Korea. According to American beauty YouTuber KennieJD what K-beauty is really known for complexion cushions. These complexion cushion, sometimes called 'BB cushion' or 'foundation cushions' have been discussed in Chapter 2.3 and their appeal was that was the completely new application process of foundation (Lee and Kang, 2016). Complex cushions were first invented by a South Korean brand, and now this invention has become a staple K-beauty product, according to American YouTuber KennieJD. Other ways in which products are distinguished from one another is through applicators, packaging, and smell, as these are factors that are analyzed by the beauty YouTubers when they are determining whether a K-beauty product is good or bad. The novelty aspect of K-beauty products is realized in every aspect of the product, not just the formula.

The second aspect of K-beauty as discussed by the beauty YouTubers, variety, can be seen in the data as the beauty YouTubers mention a wide variety of types of makeup, skincare and hair products. But not only cosmetic products are referred to under the umbrella term K-beauty. In the samples so called K-beauty 'hacks' and 'looks' or 'styles' can be found. Hacks refer to specific techniques that are used to provide a better alternative of using cosmetic products. 'Looks' refer to the finished result of doing makeup. While everyone can do their makeup and call the finished result a makeup look, there are some 'standardized' or commonly used terms for certain makeup looks, such as a glamorous look or a natural look, which I will go into detail on later in this chapter.

Hacks are not exclusive to K-beauty, but can be found in Western beauty too, for instance L'Oréal Paris published the video "5 Halloween Makeup Hacks and Ideas" in which they show hacks using L'Oréal Paris products (2015). What was specifically K-beauty about the hacks and looks found in the sample, and set them apart from for instance the L'Oréal Paris hacks, was not explicitly explained and, after viewing the videos from the sample again, not visually explained either. There is a strong possibility that the K-beauty hacks are considered K-beauty because South Korean beauty products are used in the hacks.

Previously mentioned makeup looks, such as "sophisticated" and "glamorous" seem to have certain key characteristics -as indicated by specific names given to the makeup looks- that are not explained by the beauty YouTubers. Glamorous style and Korean style makeup only came up in the South Korean sample, while the natural style came up in both the American and South Korean sample. Thus, different YouTubers have an understanding of, in this case, the natural look, yet do not explain its characteristics, however it seems implied that viewers would still understand what the term "natural makeup" refers to. The Korean style makeup came up in a video by Lamuqe in which Lamuqe asks her guest: "Do you like any Korean make up style?" From Lamuqe's question it seems Korean style makeup has several sub-styles. What the key characteristics of the Korean style makeup are, however, does not become clear from the data. Key words used to describe the glamorous style are that 'it looks strong' and 'glitter'. The glamorous style was also posed as the opposite of 'tidy makeup', but there was no clear description given of the key elements of a 'tidy' look. It may be that these makeup looks are not at all commonly known, and viewers may have different interpretations of what looks glamorous or tidy. However, this would seem unlikely, because then an explanation of what makes a certain makeup look glamorous or tidy should be provided in order for the viewer to understand why a look is perceived in a certain way. The fact that these terms are used in the discussion, but not explained, could be because these are standardized terms within the beauty community, and the beauty YouTubers assume their audience to already have this knowledge. This could also indicate that there is such a thing as 'basic knowledge of K-beauty' that viewers are expected to have and that this basic knowledge includes the different sub-looks of K-beauty.

Both the American and South Korean beauty YouTubers discussed a 'natural' look. The word 'natural' came up 18 times in the American sample, in all videos, and 15 times in the South Korean sample, in three out of five videos. Of those 32 mentions of the word 'natural', only six times was it in reference to natural ingredients in K-beauty products. The other 26 times the word natural was used was in regards to the natural look, or appearing natural. It seems quite contradictory to call a look natural when it involves putting on makeup that cover one's face to in order to achieve that look (Denton-Hurst, 2018). In the data, the natural look was linked to concepts such as: 'wearable', 'blendable', and 'subtle'. A specific example of an aspect of the natural look is the term MLBB that came up in the South Korean sample. MLBB stands for My Lips But Better, and it refers to 'nude lipsticks', which come in brown, pink and red tones that are supposed to be "basically the same shade as your lips but adds just a bit more depth and intensity to your pout." and the purpose of it is that "you can swipe it on and look "done" (Michael, 2017). The natural look seems to be used in order to look as flawless as possible, without having others notice you are wearing makeup. A quote by American beauty YouTuber Heyitsfeiii that support the idea that natural makeup should not be noticeable is "if you want [lower eyelashes] to look natural without it sparking too much attention pinch your lashes with your wrist just resting on your boobs". The specifics of how this natural look is achieved is not that important, but what is important is that the way heyistfeiii presents this to her audience; the lack of noticeability of makeup on the lashes is the desired outcome. While problem

areas and insecurities were solely discussed in the South Korean sample, the natural look is discussed in both the samples. While the natural look was discussed in both samples, chapter 2.3.1 discusses there are possible cultural influences when it comes to the natural look. The example used in chapter 2.3.1 was aeygyosal, which is considered attractive in South Korea, but perceived as unattractive in the U.S., because they resemble eyebags ((De Lacey, 2013; "Aegyo-sal", 2013). This may be because the natural look, as defined in Chapter 2.3.1, aims to be flawless and what constructs the idea of a flaw is cultural. Therefore, culture could possibly influence makeup looks. Then what sets K-beauty apart from other types of beauty would be that K-beauty is influenced by South Korean culture. While the natural makeup look has been discussed in the data in relation to K-beauty products, the data did not show these clear cultural differences in discussion about the natural look. Further research could look into the relationship between culture and what constitutes as (visual) characteristics of K-beauty, instead of other types of beauty (e.g. American).

Aside from the natural look, there was also discussion about natural products. Natural products referred products made with natural ingredients. Just like the natural look, natural products are currently a trend and has become increasingly important for consumers not just of K-beauty, but cosmetics in general (Nielsen Company, 2018). Natural products generally refer to products with natural ingredients which means that ingredients are directly extracted from nature into the product and not chemically engineered or altered (Nielsen Company, 2018). Notable was that in one of the videos by Heyitsfeiii, the beauty YouTuber said that : "Lot of the ingredients are freshly from nature right into these mask, which, you know, fulfils the idea of fresh lively characteristics in our skincare and that's super important, especially with the world today that we live in, everything is chemicals, chemicals, chemicals. So sometimes it's nice to have nice face masks with natural extracts from actual like aloe and lemon and kale and et cetera, right?", and thus relates natural products to being fresh, lively, important and opposite chemicals. The use of the word "lively" is quite striking, as it almost seems as though natural products would have an emotional effect on the consumer. However, "lively" could also refer to a health-related effect. Health benefits of skincare were discussed in Chapter 2.3.1 as South Korean cosmetic company AmorePacific was said to use natural products to achieve "optimal skin health" for consumers (2017, p.8.). Thus, there is literature on possible added physical health benefits from using natural products. However, the interpretation of Heyitsfeiii's words that links added mental benefits to using natural products is not affirmed by academic literature. Nonetheless, the data reflects that the beauty YouTubers perceive natural products as far healthier than those containing artificial ingredients.

In the K-beauty industry, certain brands market themselves as natural, by highlighting that they use natural extracts or ingredients, but some take it a step further and the brand name, logo, and all the packaging reflects the natural or green image. An example of this is Bring Green, a brand that American beauty YouTuber Heyitsfeii mentions in one of her videos. According to the YouTuber, Bring Green is considered 'green' because of its use of natural extracts, but of course also the name

helps solidify this image. In turn, the beauty YouTuber may project the natural image of Bring Green onto Olive Young, the store where Bring Green is sold. Natural products are perceived as being 'better' than artificial products by the YouTubers and they express that to their viewers. However, in the data, the arguments the YouTubers mention for using natural products over products with artificial ingredients are quite weak, for instance an argument by Heyitsfeiii in favor of natural products was that "it's nice to have nice face masks with natural extracts", but "it's nice" is hardly a convincing argument. Another example was from a video by South Korean YouTuber Daisy in which she first states that "water mask is one of the most easiest and natural skincare method," where she specifically mentions that it is a natural method and since the entire video revolves around her recommending water masks, it would seem she has a positive attitude towards natural methods, but does not elaborate on what function 'natural' has. Moreover, in the YouTube videos arguments in favor of natural products were never backed up with any scientific sources. In chapter 2.3.1, the appeal of natural products was explained as hype around what ingredients are not in a product, more so than what ingredients are in a product, such as parabens. In the data there were mixed findings: in one of her videos, Heyitsfeiii says "face masks with natural extracts from actual like aloe and lemon and kale and et cetera" and thus emphasizes what ingredients are in the products, however, in a different video, Daisy explains that "It [an essence][5] even left out PEG and parabens that I am sensitive to.", which means that for these YouTubers, both with is in the natural product and what is left out is important. However, the relationship between the natural ingredients and the supposed benefits of using natural over artificial products was not explained anywhere in the videos. Certain K-beauty brands and products are labelled by the YouTubers as natural, and this 'natural'-label seems to be perceived as a benefit. Natural products in terms of the three aspects mentioned earlier (novelty, variety and specialty) seems to be hard to put into a category, since it is not discussed within the context of novelty, variety or specialty, although that is not to say natural products do not fall within one of these categories. In order to determine the relationship between K-beauty and natural products further research is needed.

The last aspect of K-beauty that is discussed by the YouTubers is that K-beauty is 'specialty'. Both samples discuss Korean expertise when it comes to beauty, whether that is specifically K-beauty or beauty in general is unclear. In a video by South Korean beauty YouTuber Daisy she mentions "I didn't invent this [a K-beauty hack], I also learned from experts" meaning that there are experts on the topic of K-beauty. What sort of people may be considered K-beauty experts is touched upon in a video by American beauty YouTuber Heyitsfeiii makeup artists were credited with the creation of certain trends and techniques that are part of K-beauty, for instance she said: "a famous Korean makeup artist was the one who created this technique [to apply foundation]" . Moreover, as both Daisy and Heyitsfeiii have explicitly mentioned in their video, the YouTubers

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[5] An essence is a liquid skincare product that may be used for "brightening, dark spots, wrinkles, etc.", but also hydrating the skin. (Wisschover, C. 2017)

learn directly from the makeup artists, whether that be in real life, or through a YouTube video made by these makeup artists. These makeup artists seem to have a direct influence on the K-beauty community, by explaining how products are meant to be used. However, from the data it cannot be known whether these makeup artists create specific trends and looks that adhere to characteristics of K-beauty, or whether the trend and looks become related to K-beauty because these makeup artists are South Korean.

From the data, not only professional makeup artists seem to be considered K-beauty experts, but YouTubers discuss their own K-beauty expertise. In their videos the beauty YouTubers explain hacks and their steps, exactly like makeup artists seem to do. Moreover, YouTubers give specific recommendations for products and also discourage people from buying other products. In doing so, these beauty YouTubers present themselves as experts on these products. Although it should be noted that there are beauty YouTubers who may have been sponsored by cosmetic brands to review products, or receive some other form of payment to talk about a brand, and this may skew the honesty of these YouTubers reviews. They did not become experts through formal study, or work experience in the cosmetics industry, but based on their personal experience with the K-beauty brands and products. While products can of course be spoken about on their own, it seems that within K-beauty some guidelines and guidance may be offered in the shape of makeup artists and beauty YouTubers that share their tips and tricks. Thus, another aspect of K-beauty seems to be that there are 'standard components', such as K-beauty hacks and looks, and that skills and experience may make someone an expert on the subject of K-beauty.

4.2. K-beauty and South Korea

The American beauty YouTubers sometimes referred to Korean cosmetics brands as a group and compared Korean and non-Korean brands. For instance, in a video by American beauty YouTuber KennieJD where she tells her viewers about her favorite K-beauty products, she mentions a primer and says: "this is not my favorite prime, but for a Korean brand this is my favorite primer", which shows that K-beauty is situated in the global cosmetics industry, but also places K-beauty opposite to non-Korean brands. Another example is the previously mentioned comparison between Olive Young and Sephora, which is based on company size as Heyitsfeiii mentions: "They carry about 12,000 products and they have like 1000 offline stores in Korea." The point of comparison is not that important, but what is important is that American beauty YouTubers use non-Korean brands as a measure with which South Korean brands are compared. The distinction between these brands is merely the geographical location, as understood from the YouTubers' discussion of the brands. For the American beauty YouTubers, K-beauty brands seem to be understood in terms of geographical location a.k.a South Korean brands are K-beauty.

The notion that K-beauty is heavily tied to South Korea is not just evident in the American sample. One cultural element that was illustrated by the Vietnamese guest in Lamuqe's video was

that the guest said that she did not wear much makeup before coming to South Korea, and only started wearing more makeup after coming to live in South Korea. From what she said, it seems as though her move from Vietnam to South Korea was the reason for this change in her makeup use. Although her makeup habits are not discussed in-depth any further, it begs the question of whether social and cultural pressures influenced Lamuqe's guest to start wearing more makeup. For a foreigner, it may be that makeup is a way to fit in with South Korean society, and K-beauty products, but more so K-beauty makeup looks may be the 'best' way to adapt to South Korean society.

A factor that was said to influence people K-beauty consumer behavior in Chapter 2.3.3 was popular South Korean media, such as K-pop and K-drama (Euromonitor Research, 2018). However, in the data, K-pop stars are mentioned only once in a video by the American YouTuber Heyitsfeiii, where she says a certain makeup hack is popular among K-pop stars. This is the only mention relating to K-pop or K-drama in the whole sample. The quote by Heyitsfeiii illustrated the popularity of the hack, but besides that the beauty YouTuber did not discuss K-pop any further. Thus, for the YouTubers, popular South Korean musicians and actors did not seem to be an influence on their K-beauty purchasing behavior.

The previous possible cultural elements of K-beauty were not spoken about in-depth, considering these discussions came up in videos such as makeovers and product reviews, of which culture was not the main topic. However, in the sample there was one video by American beauty YouTuber KennieJD called *There is no place for dark skin in beauty??? (RANT)* which talks about a specific social issue that she relates to K-beauty. KennieJD said the video idea originated from a discussion in the comments section on YouTube under one of her videos, where people got into a heated discussion about the shade ranges for skin colored products in South Korea. The next subchapters will discuss the issues raised in this video; however, it should be noted that this is one video by one person and although KennieJD mentions other people's experiences, it is solely based on the testimony of one person. Nonetheless, the video raises interesting questions and examines the relationship of K-beauty and (multi-)culture.

4.2.1. Fair Skin

The discussion about fair skin and K-beauty with KennieJD saying: "I don't know who been lying to y'all and telling y'all that every Korean is white as paint but Koreans have some melanin all right?" as she claims that there is a misconception among people, most likely referring to her viewers, about South Koreans and that they are all fair-skinned. In chapter 2.3.3. it was stated that South Korean cosmetic brands often only carry two shades of foundation. In her video, KennieJD expressed her dissatisfaction with the South Korean foundation shade ranges and said, like in chapter 2.3.3, that brands often carry only two shades. Interestingly, KennieJD said that there are South Koreans who "actually like that [lighter than their skin tone foundation] makes them look fairer," and followed that by saying: "the problem is people overextend that and make it seem like every Korean thinks exactly the same and they all want the same stuff." The problem according to KennieJD is that

'people' assume that all South Koreans want to use light foundation, and perhaps be lighter, however according to the YouTuber there are also plenty of South Koreans with a more tanned complexion who wish to have a foundation that matches their skin tone. And since most South Korean brands only sell two shades, for these South Koreans it is extremely difficult to find a suitable foundation.

In the social sciences, the desire for light, or fair, skin has been extensively researched. One theory may possibly explain the desire for fair skin is the 'Bleaching Syndrome', which "is the conscious and systematic process of self-denigration and aspiring to assimilation on the basis of alien ideals, resulting from colonial domination" (Hall, 2013). South Korea has a history with colonial domination by the Japanese, as can be seen in Chapter 2.2. Although Japanese may not be (significantly) lighter-skinned than Koreans, Hall (2013) states that the ranking system Japanese used to discriminate against darker-skinned people "the same system is applied to Japanese citizens who may be among Japan's minority group", and in terms of status Korea was considered a minority during the Japanese colonization. Central to the Bleaching Syndrome is the "bleached ideal", which becomes accessible to people of color by having lighter skin. This ideal has been internalized by people of color in post-colonial states, and symbolizes a power imbalance where people of color are presented as inferior to those who are lighter skinned (Hall, 2013). In Asia, South Korea is an example of a country that has clearly been affected by the Bleaching Syndrome (Garrett, 1999). Hall (2013) claims that among Asian countries, Japan has shown the most signs of Bleaching Syndrome, as they created myths to maintain the superiority of light-skinned people and spread that idea to others. Considering Japan colonialized Korea, these Japanese myths may have likely been present in Korea as well. Although the desire for fair skin is not exclusive to South Korea, it is a part of Korea's post-colonial culture. This desire for light skin may have been internalized in South Korea to the extent where South Korean brand only sell foundation shades in the desired shades, represented by #21 and #23 (see Figure 2 in Chapter 2.3.3).

While fair skin might present a South Korean beauty ideal, KennieJD also says that "the people" seem to be a misinformed on what South Korean people look like. According to the data, like the claim that Koreans prefer to be fairer, there seems to be the idea, especially among non-Koreans, that Koreans are fair-skinned themselves. That Koreans are fair-skinned is then used as an argument by other people, according to KennieJD, for K-beauty brands carry only about two to three shades, that supposedly match South Korean skin tones. The claims made by 'people' according to YouTuber KennieJD seem to be a case of circular reasoning: argument number one states that because South Koreans are light only two shades of foundation are needed, while argument number two states that because there are only two shades of foundation it must be that those are the representative of South Koreans' skin colors. These arguments are contested by KennieJD on several accounts: 1) Koreans are not all fair-skinned, 2) Korean may also have personal preference for a tan, 3) K-beauty is not only for Korean consumers. These arguments, which will be examined more in-depth in the rest of this chapter, are part of the discussion on the relationship between K-beauty and

culture and KennieJD dives deep into social issues (such as colorism), cultural differences between South Korea and non-Korean countries, but also touches on the business side of K-beauty in terms of corporate social responsibility.

According to KennieJD, mainly non-Korean people have the idea that Koreans all have roughly the same skin color. This may be due to the visibility of fair South Koreans in popular media, such as K-pop and K-drama, but may also be directly influenced by the K-beauty shade ranges. People who see there are only two shades of foundation, may assume that the people then only have two shades as well. However, in her video KennieJD gives her own testimony as to there being more tanned South Koreans, and also tells a story of a South Korean woman who expressed the same annoyance with the lack of inclusivity for South Korean shades, as this woman could not find the right shade of foundation for her skin tone and had to go to non-Korean brands to find a match for her skin color. These testimonies would then prove that South Korean shade ranges do not cater to all South Koreans, but only to a portion of the people. Possible explanations are that the earlier mentioned Bleaching Syndrome constitutes the inferiority of people of color and many South Korean brands do not wish to partake in producing foundation shades outside of the desired light shades. The fact that the two most carried shades are #21 and #23 indicates that there is still the assumption that most South Koreans would want these particular shades. It seems the internalized struggle of South Koreans regarding light versus dark skin tones has had its effects on the K-beauty industry.

4.2.2. Exclusively for South Koreans?

The reason why KennieJD made the video in the first place was because she received criticism from viewers under one of her earlier videos and on this subject she said: "I got you know a little bit of criticism […] where people were saying: "Why do you even care, it's Korean makeup, It's called Korean, it's for Koreans."" However, KennieJD contest that K-beauty is an enterprise solely by and for South Koreans, and K-beauty is actually an international phenomenon. However, she mentions there seems to be the notion that K-beauty is tailored to South Koreans, rather than non-Koreans being a prime target group among K-beauty consumers. KennieJD illustrates that K-beauty is not in America by pure happenstance by saying: "I can guarantee you, K-beauty brands aren't just happening to pop up at Sephora" as Sephora is a big, mainstream American company and products are sold across the United States.

As a result of the expansion of K-beauty overseas, to for instance the United States, South Korean brands now have a consumer base that much more diverse than foundation shade #21 and #23. As said in Chapter 2.3.3, Hispanic and African American women make up 31.7% of the female population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Some brands do carry more foundation shades, up to a #37, as can be seen below in Figure 3. However, most K-beauty brands that enter the American market only carry foundation shades #21 and #23, which means that these brands ignore about 31.7% of the U.S. population, while still trying to appeal to the American consumer base, of

which African American and Hispanic women are a part, in mainstream stores such as Sephora and Walmart (K-boom, 2017; Chang, 2017). The assumption by KennieJD is that by exporting to a certain country, and selling in stores that have customers of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, K-beauty would want to sell products to people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, according to KennieJD there are discrepancies by South Korean brands between who they try to appeal to and what products they sell them, and this may result in a negative attitude towards K-beauty by women of Hispanic and African American backgrounds.

However, in the video by KennieJD she mentioned that there was the idea among 'people' that because K-beauty is from South Korea, it is for South Koreans only. KennieJD mentions that her viewers have argued that "[K-beauty]'s called Korean, [so] it's for Koreans". From this quote it seems that the term K-beauty is used as an argument for why K-beauty is for Koreans. The K in K-beauty is more confusing than it is logical. While K-beauty is not a term that is coined or attributed to anyone in particular, the term is similar in form to 'K-pop' and 'K-drama', two popular South Korean media products, in which the K stands for Korea. Because of this, naturally then some people link the K in K-beauty with Korea, and while there is no official confirmation of what the K in K-beauty stands for, saying the K stands for Korea is a logical conclusion. However, one could also argue that if K-beauty refers to Korean beauty, why people do not just use that term. The argument that K-beauty is for Koreans because the word Korean is featured in the term, is weak. There is no indication of whether the Korean in K-beauty is in reference to the origin of K-beauty products or to the target audience of K-beauty products, or even something completely different.

The point that was raised in KennieJD's video about K-beauty only being for Koreans is contested by the rest of the data. In one of her videos Lamuqe says "We're so global, right?" to her guest, and acknowledges the global reach she has with her YouTube channel. In the South Korean sample, the data showed that Koreans are aware of K-beauty being an internationally known concept, as well as there being consumers of K-beauty outside of South Korea. However, the international aspect of K-beauty is emphasized more in the American sample. In one of her videos, American beauty YouTuber Heyitsfeiii mentions going to New York for K-con, which is a convention concerned with South Korean culture: music, drama, food, but most importantly, K-beauty. This means that this beauty YouTuber travelled across the country specifically for a K-beauty related event, indicating that K-beauty it has gathered significant popularity in various places across the United States. However, the most interesting data comes from American beauty YouTuber KennieJD, whose videos explicitly claim that K-beauty is an international phenomenon.
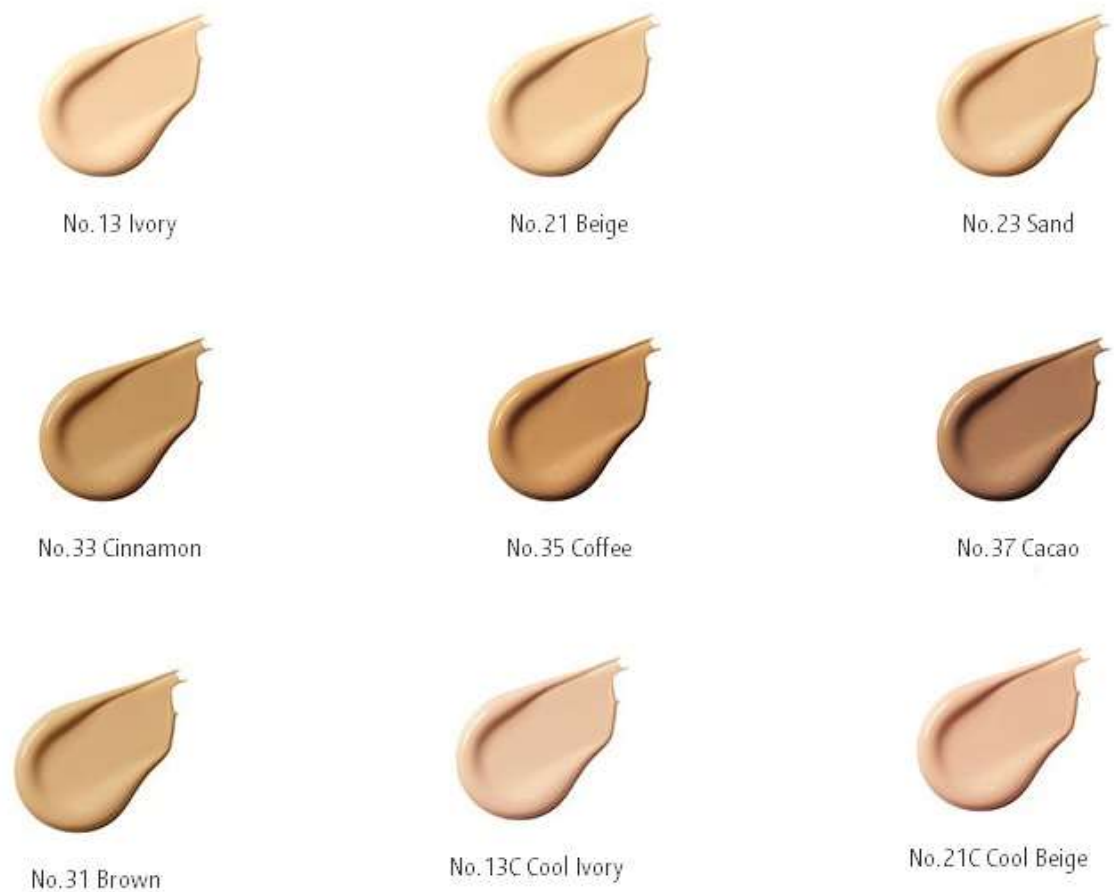
Figure 3. Laneige BB Cushion Pore Control Swatches, from laneige.com

The last way K-beauty is discussed within an international context is in terms of K-beauty communities. K-beauty communities are discussed on both an online and offline basis. The online K-beauty community is linked to YouTubers' individual communities. K-beauty seems to have a fan culture, as illustrated by the significant number of subscribers the YouTubers in the sample have gathered and by fan culture events, such as the earlier mentioned K-con. Moreover, some of the YouTubers have a special nickname for their subscribers, or fans; for instance, American YouTuber Heyitsfeiii refers to her viewers as Lindas, which is in reference to one of her videos *Listen Linda*, which is reference to a viral video of a little boy saying "listen, Linda," repeatedly to his mother. This nickname is based on an inside joke between Heyitsfeiii and her viewers and signifies a more personal relationship between Heyitsfeiii and her viewers. However, there is not much information on the K-beauty communities or fan culture in academic literature presently. Since fan culture studies are extremely diverse, making any claims about the nature of K-beauty fan culture is outside the aim of this thesis and would require further study (Busse and Hellekson, 2006; Lamerichs, 2018).

4.3 The Individual K-beauty Experience

The third major theme that was apparent in the data, was the individual handling of K-beauty. There are influences that determine the experience individuals have with K-beauty, although

this individual experience is based on the earlier examined themes: K-beauty in the cosmetics industry as a whole, particular characteristics of K-beauty. One factor that influences an individual's experience with K-beauty is skin type. Dermatologist Zoe Diana Draelos wrote *Cosmetic dermatology: Products and procedures* (2016), in which she discusses skincare products and consumer behavior. Draelos makes the distinction between skin type and skin problems. There are three skin types: oily, dry, and normal. However, certain areas of the face may exhibit different types of skin, which then can be referred to as combination skin. Skin problems refer to problems such as "acne, excessive flakiness, and dryness." (Draelos, 2016, p.108). In the data, all skin types were mentioned. Regardless of the skin type of the beauty YouTuber, recommendations for skincare and makeup products could be given for differing skin types. For instance, beauty YouTuber KennieJD said: "if you have oily lids you might want to try and see how this works for you," while previously mentioning that she herself does not have oily eyelids. Skin type and skin problems are taken into consideration by the beauty YouTubers, even when a certain problem is not applicable to them. In this way the YouTubers acknowledge differences among their viewers, and this goes to show how important skin type and skin problems are for people's individual experience with K-beauty.

However, the question of why individuals would need skincare and makeup products that work with their skin type still remains. Different types of skincare products have different goals (Draelos, 2016). For instance, cleansers have four common goals: to clean, exfoliate, remove bacteria and cause minimal damage to the skin (p. 104). Meanwhile, "consumers expect a facial moisturizer to reduce dryness, improve dull appearance, smooth and soften the skin, and increase suppleness" (Draelos, 2016, p.133). Furthermore, Draelos explains that this skin ideal is also aesthetic; skin should not just be, or feel healthy, but should also look healthy. Draelos emphasizes that products should fit one's skin type, because different skin types react differently to products. So, while skin type is not specific to K-beauty cosmetics, but a factor considered in the entire cosmetics industry, it is a factor that plays into how individuals may experience K-beauty. In the data, skin types were mentioned in seven out of the nine videos and thus seems an important influence on one's K-beauty experience.

While K-beauty may have certain characteristics, for instance what makes a makeup look fall under the term K-beauty, for individuals their individual expression still plays a role when it comes to their relationship with K-beauty; in the data, many statements made by the YouTubers fall under the category of 'personal preferences', which refers to remarks by beauty YouTubers about a product, hack or look, which seems more emotional than logical. Personal preferences do not explain whether a certain product, or hack, works better than another, but whether the YouTuber 'likes' it. Liking a product can refer to a multitude of things: packaging, consistency, coverage and smell, but also to a certain aesthetic. For instance, American YouTuber KennieJD said: "like I like [the eyeliner] to look really really glossy and really like wet" and followed up this statement by saying "so that's cool with me", which makes it clear that this is her personal opinion, and that others may

not agree with her previous statement. In a video by South Korean beauty YouTuber Lamuqe, one of her makeover guests says: "I like make-up with great eyes!" which is a very generic statement, but presented as a personal preference. Preferences are sometimes explicitly mentioned, such as in a video by South Korean beauty YouTuber Daisy who says whether her viewers like any of the products she recommended in her video "may depend on one's preference, so please keep that in mind". These personal preferences are merely based on a YouTuber's opinion, and do not state whether a product adheres to a certain ideal, or whether using the product results in a generally desirable outcome. Thus, even after these YouTubers have reviewed certain K-beauty products, personal preference is a deciding factor for individuals whether they like or dislike a product, and these personal preferences are recognized and considered by the all the YouTubers in the sample, although not present in all the videos. Several academics have examined consumers' emotional response to advertising (Kim, 2000; Mogaji, 2016). However, there did not seem to be any research on consumer attitudes towards products and differences in an emotional versus a more logical response, let alone in regards to K-beauty products; this may be examined in future research, as to figure out what influences people to respond emotionally to a K-beauty product, rather than logically.

The findings about K-beauty, as discussed by the South Korean and American beauty YouTubers in the samples, are tied to three major themes: the place of K-beauty in the cosmetics industry as a whole, particular characteristics of K-beauty, and individual handling of K-beauty.

5. Conclusion

This thesis started by stating there was no definition for K-beauty in academic literature. While there were business and entertainment articles that discussed K-beauty, these articles also failed to give a clear definition of what K-beauty is. In order to answer the research question: "How do Korean and American beauty video creators construct and explore the concept of K-beauty?" a constructivist grounded theory analysis of YouTube video data from South Korean and American beauty YouTubers was conducted. The coding process was data-driven, which may lead to unexpected results, however the coding scheme immediately showed a clear structure. The selective codes were easily put into a chronological story based off three themes (the place of K-beauty in the cosmetics industry as a whole, particular characteristics of K-beauty, and individual handling of K-beauty) for this thesis that arose from the data. The three themes had a natural flow, that seemed to affirm that the design of this research was excellent for answering the research question. The results showed that K-beauty has different levels at which it exists: the cosmetics industry, the aesthetic and the individual. K-beauty is considered a sub-category of the global cosmetics industry, with brands and products that are linked to South Korea. The products are considered Korean even if production of these products is not located in South Korea (e.g. products from AmorePacific (Choi, 2018)). The selection of the videos in the samples showed to be very fruitful. Much new, more in-depth information about K-beauty arose from the data. Because there was a broad variety of subjects amongst the videos, so that K-beauty could be examined from multiple perspectives. This resulted in not only a generic understanding of K-beauty, but also an understanding of K-beauty on different levels. In terms of in-depth results, this variety approach seems to be better than if, for instance, the samples consisted only of videos that discuss a certain K-beauty features (e.g. only videos about BB cushions).

The first theme, K-beauty's place in the cosmetics industry, seems to consist of tangible cosmetics products, certain trends and techniques are also core components of K-beauty. According to the data, what sets K-beauty apart from, for instance, American cosmetics, is the novelty and specialty of the products and the variety in products. Nowadays, K-beauty is becoming more and more accessible as many K-beauty brands expand their business overseas. However, not all K-beauty brands cater to their new customers. In the K-beauty community as imagined by the beauty YouTuber data, the topic of inclusivity came up and was examined in-depth. The fact that the topic of inclusivity was discussed shows that K-beauty is a changing concept; it was said by one of the American beauty YouTubers, KennieJD, that K-beauty needs to adapt in order to stay relevant. Now that K-beauty has an extremely diverse, global consumer base, it may become more difficult for brands to continue their practices as before, as the South Korean brands now also need to take the needs and wants of other cultures into account. From the data it seems that international K-beauty consumers will ask, or perhaps demand, more inclusivity from K-beauty brands.

While the data indicates that the YouTubers are aware of certain K-beauty characteristics, such as what constitutes the natural look, what these characteristics are is never clearly described in the data. What does come forward in the data is that the YouTubers and their viewers still have personal preferences when it comes to how they want to do their makeup. While trends may be popular, people have the ability to opt in or out of trends or use only particular things from one trend to combine it with another. Because of these personal preferences the makeup looks that come out of K-beauty and are associated with K-beauty can vary from person to person. Since there was so little concrete information on the K-beauty aesthetic, this could indicate that the individual is more important than the general K-beauty aesthetic. The lack of clarification or discussion on the K-beauty aesthetic in any of the videos could indicate that even for the YouTubers themselves it might be difficult to pin-point exactly what looks K-beauty, and not some other form of beauty.

The purpose of K-beauty for individuals, as analyzed from the beauty YouTubers' comments, is to beautify people and help cover up their problems concerning their appearance, but K-beauty can also be used as a tool to achieve a certain image people may want to exude to others. For these individuals, K-beauty products seem to be intertwined with K-beauty trends, and are not necessarily about the products that enable people to experiment so much with makeup, but more to give specific tools that align with current K-beauty trends.

The perspective of the individual was often presented in the data, and was mostly discussed in regards to a person's biology, which seemed to heavily influence how an individual experienced K-beauty. Many products cater to specific biological characteristics, such as skin type, skin problems and skin color. However, one of these characteristics, namely skin color, is extremely important, since it is rooted in deep-rooted cultural and social contexts, for both South Koreans and Americans. While the data showed that among YouTubers and their viewers there was criticism on K-beauty in terms of inclusivity, from the literature review more criticism was expected in the data. The 'Escape the Corset'-movement was not discussed in any of the videos and the subject of wearing no makeup seemed to be a given, rather than a discussion-point. The social pressure many South Korean women feel according to the 'Escape the Corset'-movement was non-existent in the data.

This may be due to the subjects of the videos and it may be a sensitive topic for some. However, other sensitive social issues were discussed, such as colorism. The lack of discussion about the 'Escape the Corset'-movement may be explained by the American beauty YouTubers not experiencing the social pressure that South Korean women feel, or at least not to that extent. Another reason may be that because the South Korean beauty YouTubers make a living off (K-)beauty, through advertising money or brand deals, have an invested interest in K-beauty, whereas South Korean women who do not make a profit off cosmetics do not have an invested interest. In fact, for beauty YouTubers and South Korean women that do not make a profit off K-beauty their financial relationships with K-beauty are quite the opposite since South Korean women that are not beauty YouTubers have to spend money on cosmetic products without getting any returns. Therefore,

research which features South Korean women who do not make a profit off K-beauty may have different results and may mention the 'Escape the Corset'-movement.

5.1. Limitations

One of the limitations of this research was that there were big differences between the two samples in terms of video type; some videos were makeup tutorials, some were makeovers and there was also one video commentating on the K-beauty industry. This means that when a YouTuber from a certain sample talked about a social issue (e.g. the inclusivity of darker people), but it did not come up in the other sample, it could perhaps seem as though only one nationality cared about that social issue. While that could be a possible explanation, far more research with a bigger sample and a different method would need to account for those claims.

Another limitation of the research may be the sample sizes. Every video had a multitude of new axial codes, and some selective codes were exclusive to one video. Although there was some overlap in the videos about what K-beauty is, every video also had a lot of new information. This leads me to believe that saturation as to what K-beauty exactly entails, has not been reached within this specific research, although much has been uncovered within this research.

 A limitation of the sample may also be that the visuals of the video were not part of the data that was analyzed. While the visuals were sometimes used to figure out nuances about what was said in the video, there was no process that involved finding patterns in the visuals of the videos, even though there may have been patterns.

There may have also been patterns in the South Korean sample that could not be fully explored because of the translation of the videos. While the videos featured translations that were provided by the South Korean YouTubers themselves, it may be that there are some differences between the South Korean texts and the English translations.

5.2. Recommendations for future research

In order to have an all-round concept definition of K-beauty, more research needs to be done. This research is a starting point, and can be used as a basis for similar research using datasets from online and offline areas, such as different social media platforms, or for instance, a K-beauty brand's in-store survey. A clear definition of K-beauty will help clarify discussions on the subject in academic literature.

There were some social issues, such as colorism, that came up in the data in combination with K-beauty. K-beauty's role in social issues and vice-versa is relevant in society (e.g. 'Escape the Corset'-movement), and can be explored further in academic research. Further research would be needed to effectively examine the relationship between K-beauty and colorism, whether solely in South Korea or the United States, or even cross-culturally.

This research may also have financial value. The appeal of K-beauty and its purposes as discussed by the beauty YouTubers are outlined in this paper, and this information can be used as a starting point for further market research. Three appeals of K-beauty (novelty, specialty and variety) have been identified in this research and what specific elements from K-beauty products and brands translated well to the YouTubers. Future research could examine the K-beauty consumer behavior and use these three appeals a basis for understanding purchasing motivations. For instance, in the data it was found that K-beauty brands and products were considered specialty was due to professional makeup artists and non-professional makeup artists (such as the YouTubers themselves) using, reviewing and recommending certain products. From the results of this research it seems that K-beauty brands would do well to use more makeup artists that do makeup tutorials as brand ambassadors. Another example is that in the data novelty did not just correlate to new formulas for products, but that packaging, smell and applicators may also be a reason to like, love or buy a K-beauty product. Products that are different from other on the market in terms of packaging, smell and applicators may do better with K-beauty consumers. Moreover, not only the appeal of the products, but also some expectations customers have of K-beauty brands and products are stated in this research as well. A clear example is that customers with darker skin want base products (e.g. concealer and foundation) that match their skin tone. Another example is that for some of the YouTubers seemed to correlate natural products with healthy products, even to the extent of natural products having mental health benefits. From a marketing perspective, South Korean brands would do well to incorporate 'health'-discourse into branding their natural products. However, all these consumer behavior motivations are based on a sample of four beauty YouTubers, and more research needs to be done before any claims regarding consumer behavior may be considered significant.

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