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'My Friend Bubz': Building intimacy on YouTube's beauty community

Florencia García-Rapp

Introduction

The relevance of establishing feelings of connection and intimacy with an audience for cinema, television and online celebrities has been extensively researched. It has been argued that, for television personalities, familiarity and regularity foster authenticity and renew viewers' interest (e.g. Dyer, 1998; Holmes, 2004; Marshall, 2014). This is similar for Internet celebrities, for whom it is particularly important to remain 'ordinary' in order to foster a sense of 'realness' and authenticity (e.g. Tolson, 2010).

For online celebrities, there is a strong expectancy of authenticity, due to social media's implicit values of immediacy and spontaneity, as well as the inherent image of grassroots, amateur and DIY culture (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Burgess and Green, 2009) that the platform of YouTube started with and seeks to maintain. Successful online celebrity practice implies building intimacy through disclosure and connection-seeking. This legitimises celebrity practitioners' positions and reputations as renowned personalities (García-Rapp, 2016a, 2016b; Marwick and boyd, 2011; Smith 2014). As Cohen argues, self-disclosure is 'the engine that drives new relationships' (2001, p. 46; also Baym, 2010) and 'disclosing intimacy acts as a marker that defines authentic friendship' (p. 47).

To date, practices at play within YouTube's beauty community are still under-researched. The platform's beauty ecosystem is not only highly active and dynamic, but it also represents a large market that is steadily growing. The number of views for these videos grew by 50 per cent between January 2014 and April 2015 (Pixability, 2015). Moreover, the 1.7 billion beauty-related videos that populate YouTube have generated a total of 45.3 billion historical views and more than 123 million subscriptions (Pixability, 2015).

To understand the dynamics of YouTube's beauty community, it can be particularly fruitful to explore not only the celebrification processes of beauty gurus as *regular-users-turned-celebrities*, but, more specifically, to explore how they forge closeness and intimacy with their audiences. When compared to the '15 minutes of fame' of other popular content such as viral videos, the *sustained* popularity of

these beauty channels (often over several years), in such a competitive and dynamic environment, is a relevant aspect to consider. To locate this 'new public intimacy' (Marshall, 2014, p. xii), one must explore affective and discursive practices, as well as the particular 'bonds of intimacy afforded by interaction' (Usher, 2015, p. 313). In this vein, it is relevant to look at how self-disclosure through uploaded content further sustains the celebrity position of popular beauty gurus. Here, I explain how the renowned guru Bubz addresses her viewers through her channel, Bubzbeauty.

This chapter contributes to the scholarly dialogue focused on current digital culture practices at the intersection of digital fandom and celebrity culture (Kanai, 2015; Marwick and boyd, 2011; Smith, 2014; Usher, 2015). I examine the way in which content fosters different modes of address and promotes various types of connection with viewers. In addition, I describe how viewers consume Bubz's different types of content, and often reciprocate by engaging in self-disclosing narratives through comments. Like Lange, I see intimate YouTube videos or videos disclosing intimate and personal moments as 'videos of affinity' (2009, p. 73) that strengthen feelings of closeness and connection between viewers and content creators.

I do not aim at discovering whether Bubz's performance of intimacy is 'sincere' or part of her self-brand; rather, my focus is on the affordances of her content for sustaining and legitimising her position, and what viewers *do* with this – how they consume and respond to her videos. I leave aside the often simplistic considerations of 'true' versus 'false' for two reasons. First, any evaluation of truth claims would not influence the phenomenon of her popularity. In other words, independent of any moral dualism, Bubz owns a very successful channel, and I present the way she seems to connect with her followers. As Abidin writes, in reference to Singaporean lifestyle bloggers: 'the intimacies negotiated are felt by followers as opposed to whether or not these intimacies are actually "authentic" or "genuine"' (2015, p. 6). What is more, in many cases, viewers are aware of Bubz's restraints in self-presentation as a popular personality, and they know that producing videos and engaging with her audience is her occupation. My perspective is close to that established by Lange, who acknowledges that intimate videos may well have 'varying degrees of sincerity' (2009, p. 83). However, rather than using this as a major point of discovery or interpretation, I focus on the affordances of content and users' responses to it.

Second, and most importantly, Bubz's interactions likely blend her acknowledgement of community-based rules, attention building strategies and genuine, 'sincere' self-expression. This is probably also true for the interactions of most online and mass media celebrities, who are also social (and human) beings. What is more, many of Bubz's 'everyday performances' that focus on 'impression management' are practices that we all engage in, as shown by the works of Goffman (1959) and

Garfinkel (1967) on the relevance of dramaturgical action as social action in everyday human interaction and the notion of behaviour as ruled-governed, respectively.

Methods

This paper draws on a broader ethnographic examination of YouTube, specifically its beauty community, between 2013 and 2015. The data collection and analysis are based on 22 months of immersed fieldwork, which involved systematic online observation and interpretation of 313 videos and more than 10,000 comments. For this paper, I considered a purposeful sample of 20 videos, which were transcribed and interpreted in light of their qualities of building and strengthening feelings of connection and intimacy with viewers. Correspondingly, I analysed 3,000 user comments by manually coding them according to descriptive, verbatim and emotional codes (Saldaña, 2009) in order to assess the extent to which viewers reciprocated, responding to Bubz with their own self-disclosing narratives.

In crafting an ethnography, we look to achieve a 'theoretical description of the cultural patterns that cross-cut different domains of social activity' (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz, 2014, p. 2), considering the meaning people give to their experiences and actions. My research follows ethnographic fieldwork techniques (Boellstorf, 2008; Kozinets, 2010; Wolcott, 1995, 2010) and aims at immersive observation, description and interpretation to uncover meanings that lead to practices and dynamics (Baym, 2010; Strangelove, 2010). In this vein, the project is structured as a data-driven, explorative study following an inductive rationale. I use qualitative data analysis to perform a contextual, open-ended examination (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013). I not only consider the inherent intimacy of the content, as determined by the personal and private nature of the topics and Bubz's disclosure practices, but also take into account Bubz's audience´s responses in the form of textual comments.

From content-oriented to motivational videos: A scale of intimacy

The focus of my study is a very popular British Chinese girl, Bubz, who has been uploading video tutorials on beauty and lifestyle to YouTube since 2008. She is known as a beauty guru: a person who creates video tutorials demonstrating looks and offering advice on makeup, hairstyling techniques and cosmetics. Makeup tutorials are widespread on YouTube and constitute an essential part of its beauty community (García-Rapp, 2016a; see also Spyer, 2011). Since 2010, Bubz has been one of the most viewed and subscribed YouTubers in the world. She is the sixth most viewed beauty guru in terms of historical views, which total more than 350 million (Pixability, 2015). Additionally, she has almost 3 million subscribers. Worldwide, only 30 other how-to channels – mainly beauty channels – have achieved such a high number of followers (Socialblade, 2016). The longevity of her channel and her

influential role, together with viewers' sustained interest in her content, is rendered even more relevant considering the highly dynamic, competitive and ever-changing environment of YouTube.

Bubz's more than 300 videos can be grouped into four categories, which I term 'content-oriented', 'market-oriented', 'relational' and 'motivational' (García-Rapp, 2016b). Content-oriented uploads are tutorials in which she demonstrates makeup and hairstyling techniques. Market-oriented videos are essentially product reviews of one or a set of products. Relational uploads are 'vlogs' (video blogs) that display her daily activities and depict her everyday interactions at home in Hong Kong, sometimes involving her husband and dogs. These videos also feature self-reflections on life and her role on YouTube, viewing it as both a platform and a community. Her content is often highly emotional and intimate, since she also discloses her own life experiences. Through her motivational videos, she offers advice and thoughts on relationships and career and personal development. In these self-help guides, she usually sits in her living room and talks to the camera in a frontal perspective, addressing her audience directly.

I argue that her videos can be arranged on a scale of increasing intimacy, with her subjective views and opinions progressing to personal, emotional narratives. I locate her videos on what I term a 'scale of intimacy', and propose this case study analysis because it can aid in the understanding of the creation of affective bonds online (Baym, 2010; Lange, 2007, 2009, 2014). Bubz's content ranges in intimacy, and her viewers' responses imply reciprocal feelings of connection and engagement, in line with the intimacy of her content. In other words, intimacy develops in a bifold sense: parting from the video content and finding its counterpart in the viewers' comments.

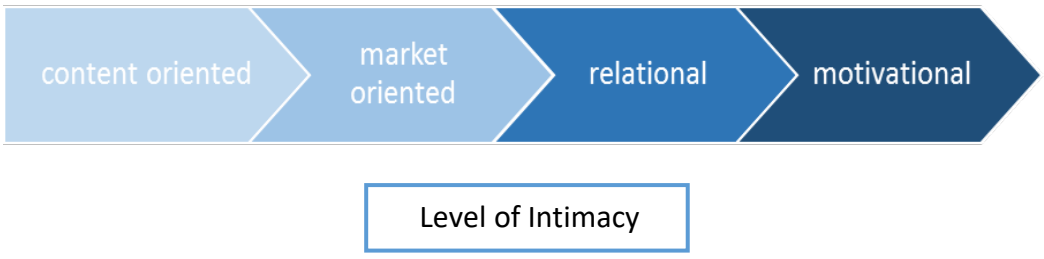

Figure 1: Scale of intimacy

Bubz's content-oriented video tutorials can be positioned at the beginning of the scale, due to their focus on rather objective and straightforward steps to achieving a certain makeup or hairstyling look. These videos are simply structured, with an introduction and ending showcasing Bubz posing with the finished look and a voice-over throughout, explaining the steps she demonstrates. A greater sense of connection develops with her product reviews (market-oriented videos), which involve more subjective opinions and her personal experiences with the cosmetics. In these videos, as well as in her

vlogs, Bubz addresses her audience directly, looking into the camera. Online intimacy continues to build through her personal vlogs (relational uploads), through which she shares her daily life and discloses life stories, dreams and even problems. Intimacy reaches its highest point in what I describe as motivational videos, in which she talks and advises her viewers with an implicit sense of trust and closeness, much as a friend would do. In this analysis, her content-oriented video tutorials and her motivational videos are on opposing sides of the scale, denoting the full range of intimacy and personal engagement.

Bubz's relational and motivational videos show the most explicit sense of intimacy, as evidenced by her personal disclosure and the feedback left in the comments. Her relational vlogs highlight subjective and personal topics, such as life stories, opinions and aspirations. Some of the titles of her vlogs are: 'A day in my life', 'Q&A with Bubz', 'Journey to Japan' and 'Meet my best friend'. In one of her vlogs, Bubz shares the experience of being bullied during high school in Northern Ireland because of her Chinese ethnicity. In some of the videos she cries and in others she laughs, and − according to the analysed comments − her viewers share these emotions and physical reactions with her.

This dynamic shows the extension of viewer engagement beyond beauty topics, which is a general thematic interest of the community. As Lange writes about YouTube vlogs: they 'give viewers the feeling of being connected not to a video, but to a person' (2009, p. 83). I suggest that, in this case, Bubz's viewers' feelings of closeness towards her are a prerequisite for their interest in watching and listening to her highly personal and subjective views on various life topics. Here, her know-how, centred on beauty and embodied by her tutorials, is relegated to the background by the increased relevance of her supportive and guiding role in broader life areas, including work and relationships. Bubz's vlogs motivate her viewers – through affective and communicative disclosure (Cohen, 2001) – to identify and engage with her and her content by commenting, sharing and discussing. As Abidin and Thompson argue, regarding fashion bloggers, the 'portrayal of their online persona is crafted through the narrative accounts of their everyday life' (2012, p. 472). These 'videos of affinity' (Lange, 2009, p. 73) can be seen as attempts at establishing closeness and a sense of familiarity (also Marshall, 2010).

Bubz can thus be seen as contributing to viewers' 'feeling of sharing a particular moment, large or small, or certain state of affairs in the creator's life' (Lange, 2009, p. 74). For instance, during the video 'Draw my life', she narrates the story of her life pre-YouTube. Some fragments are emotional – for example the fragment when she talks about her grandfather passing away:

> When I was 12 years old, my grandad was suddenly submitted into the hospital, he had gotten really sick and it really broke my heart because when I went to visit him, he couldn't even recognise who I was from all the medication. And he was only in the hospital for 2 weeks before he passed away. So, I didn't even get to say goodbye to my grandad and I miss him so much. I would go to his bedroom and crawl underneath his cover and just cry because I missed him so much and I would even get helium balloons and write messages on it and release it from his bedroom window. And I hoped that he would receive my message and just know how much I love and miss him.

To this 'private revelation for public consumption' (Marshall, 2014, p. xiii), viewers respond through comments that relate to her story and identify with her. This can be seen, for example, in the following comments:

> A tear went down my face about the grandpa part :/
>
> It is really sad about your granddad. but the balloon thing is kinda adorable
>
> Bubz on the hope you read this, you honestly made me cry. Because I can relate to you so much with your grandpa. It's so hard at the moment. Thanks for everything. Sam xx
>
> Omg the granddad part mad me cry T_T you inspire me! ^_^

During motivational videos – such as, for example, the video 'Finding happiness' – Bubz motivates her viewers to 'dream' and to 'try':

> If you try, it doesn't always mean you will win, but the only way that you could really lose is by not trying and I am willing to try. So if you have a dream, don't let it go! Hold it close to your heart and run with it! It's your dream and no one can really take it away from you. I believe that when you truly want something, you can actually achieve it. Whatever a mind can conceive, it can achieve but you have to make it happen and you have to believe.

In these videos, the topics do not pertain strictly to makeup or hairstyling; rather, they are oriented around themes such as friendship, career and relationships. Titles include 'Thinking about your future' and 'How to escape the friend zone'.

Additionally, and although they are located at opposing sides of the intimacy scale, the motivational videos are as pedagogical as her step-by-step tutorials (García-Rapp, 2017a). The educational videos make more literal the traditional value incarnated by celebrities as 'pedagogical tools' (Marshall, 2010, p. 42) in their audience's lives. While the tutorials aim more literally at teaching makeup and hairstyling techniques, the vlogs focus on promoting self-help and positive messages as motivation for self-improvement − fitting today's 'therapeutical' society (Furedi, 2004, cited by Aslama and Pantti, 2006, p. 167). In her motivational videos, Bubz teaches and guides, much as she does in her tutorials, but rather than conveying a structured, step-by-step process, she advises her viewers through friendly,

personal talk. She acts as a trusted friend and a guide/guru in the broader sense of the word, superseding her position as a 'mere' beauty expert. For example, during the video 'No pain, no gain', she says:

> Now a lot of people are miserable, and they complain about being unhappy, and they want to be happy. But then you would hear them just talking bad stuff about other people; they are always judging others and that's, like, no wonder you are miserable! And just, like, with weight loss, I think people should instead of focusing on 'Oh I can't do this and can't do that', I think what people should really focus on is just 'I'm going to lead a healthy lifestyle, I'm going to eat healthier, I'm going to be better for my body'. And, you know, when you do all of that, eventually your weight loss just follows behind.

Bubz's relational and motivational uploads create loyal subscribers, while her more content-oriented uploads receive more views (García-Rapp, 2016b). According to her channel metrics, the proposed scale of intimacy matches the like, comment and share figures achieved by her content. Additionally, her relational and motivational videos generate the most subscriptions, implying not only interest but the intention of sustained engagement from viewers. This is why I argue that this type of video constitutes a major tool in building intimacy and creating a sense of connection with viewers. Viewers' comments advance from short, positive pieces of feedback such as 'great video, keep on doing this' that are posted in response to her tutorials, to self-disclosing life experiences in response to her vlog stories (García-Rapp, 2016b). Furthermore, viewers thank her for helping them introduce changes into their lives and for contributing to them thinking differently about life and problems. We see, through the comments, how viewers express their appreciation to Bubz and underline their closeness:

> You are one of the biggest sweet hearts ever. You really make me feel better about things to come and I feel like even though you have no idea who I am, that we are close. Thank you so much. (:

Many viewers consider Bubz a positive influence in their lives – a 'role model' – and express admiration towards her. In line with the notion that 'celebrity taught generations how to engage and use consumer culture to "make" oneself' (Marshall, 2010, p. 36), Bubz's role in the lives of her fans is coupled with a sense of identification that fosters 'identity work' (also Marwick, 2013). This will be further explained in the following section:

> Maybe you will or will not read this, but you are our IDOL. I have watched all videos…
>
> Good Job Bubz! You are amazing! I watch ur videos everyday and you inspire me in EVERY video. U a seriously our favorite youtuber in the ENTIRE universe! I wish I was u. Ur our role model.

> I have lots of photos hanging in my room and one of them is a picture of you. :) When someone asks me 'who is that?' I tell them 'she is my role model' :3 Love you bubz!! never stop making videos!

The proposed scale of intimacy should not be seen as a linear development, since viewers may choose to focus on one or other type of video and not engage with the others. However, in line with the scale, the content grows in subjectivity, emotionality and, as a result, intimacy. I argue that this development pre-defines certain viewers' affinity, growing from contextual (i.e. beauty-related) to a focus on Bubz as a person. While market-oriented and content-oriented tutorials focus on beauty, the other two categories of videos focus on Bubz and her advice (García-Rapp, 2016b); this is why her role as a trusted friend and advisor is rendered more relevant through these videos. As Lange argues about vlogs: 'they typically interest delineated groups of people who wish to participate and remain connected social in some way' (2009, p. 73).

Thanks to Bubz I am 'a better version' of myself

In the previous section I explained how, when arranged on the scale, the development of topics in Bubz's videos progresses from content-based videos to guru-centred uploads that are increasingly subjective and personal. Through advice (e.g. motivational) videos, Bubz motivates her viewers to change aspects of their lives and improve themselves. These videos serve as self-development guidelines for 'being happier' and 'growing as a person'. As Lange writes, based on her ethnographic examination of online vlogging practices in 2007: '[bloggers] use intimacy to create reactions in viewers that encourage reconsideration of the blogger's own and viewers' ideas' (p. 1).

It is worth noting that I understand media, and particularly audience research, from the perspective of people actively using media to satisfy specific needs (Katz and Blumler, 1974; Rosengren, 1985; Ruggiero, 2000). This is why I leave aside perspectives focusing on 'audience manipulation', wherein the agency and understanding of viewers is not recognised or is overly simplified, automatically assuming symbolic inequalities and positioning the audience as 'disempowered fans […] as a flattened mass or sameness of consumers' (Hills, 2006, p. 116). Instead, I draw from the research of scholars who acknowledge viewers' active and differing roles in processes of (new) media reception and consumption (e.g. Burgess and Green, 2009; Lange, 2009, 2014; Meyers, 2009; Smith, 2014; Strangelove, 2010). It is fruitful to consider how viewers use the content that this beauty guru makes available.

In line with this, we can see (through comments) how viewers follow Bubz's advice and actively adapt and 'update' their identities with the aim of being 'transformed to "better" versions of themselves' (Marwick, 2013, p. 356). In particular, Bubz's motivational videos play an important role

in guiding and ‘inspiring’ her viewers to act (García-Rapp, 2016b). The following comments help illustrate these points:

> i luv ya bubz! ur life may not be perfect but u definitely have made my life a step closer o here i want it to be
>
> This is amazing! Thanks Bubz for being such as inspiration and pushing us to leave our comfort zone and do new things...
>
> Bubz, you are amazing. Your videos are an inspiration to me and many others to go and live life beautifully.

People receive, through media and consumer goods ─ including celebrities and renowned personalities ─ ‘exemplary models’ (Marshall, 2014, p. 187) or, in the words of Thompson, ‘mediated symbolic materials’ (1995, p. 207) to choose from to actively construct an identity. According to the analysed comments, Bubz’s videos aid viewers in building and transforming their ‘narrative[s] of self-identity’ (Thompson, 1995, p. 210). Marwick notes how identities are constructed ‘through a bricolage of consumer goods, media, fashion, and styles’ (2013a, p. 358), facilitated by media and technology. This is reflected in ‘the necessity of lining one’s own identities into some sort of pattern, from Twitter to Facebook, from YouTube and Flickr to Myspace, from blogs to Digg’ (Marshall, 2010, p. 42).

Drawing on the work of sociologists such as Giddens (1991) and Thompson (1995), parallels can be traced between viewers’ comments and the notion of active engagement with one’s identity as an ongoing ‘project’ (see also Cohen, 2001; Hills, 2002). Viewers let themselves be guided by Bubz and imitate not only her makeup and hairstyle, but also her general attitude towards life. As a viewer puts it in the following comment, Bubz seems to offer ‘much more than just makeup’, since ‘it isn't just for looks’:

> You always seem so happy and bubbly (even if you really aren’t) and you have encouraged me to do the same and build my own life how I want it. Your beauty channel isn’t just for looks, it’s for personality too. Thank you for doing what you’re doing. Never stop.

In her motivational videos, Bubz advises her viewers to be thankful for what they are given, but without forgetting their own achievements. She reminds her fans that the key to happiness rests in themselves and their way of seeing life. She moves her audience to appreciate the little things in life and to be patient and understanding with others, but also with themselves.

> You have great beauty videos also great advice videos! PLEASE uploads many more. You’ve made me more of a happy person! Happiness is so contagious!!

> I just want to say, watching your videos brightens my day and makes me smile. You are so beautiful inside and out!

To conclude this section, I would like to build on Redmond's observation of two types of intimacy (2014). I argue that Bubz's viewers experience a *private* intimacy between the guru and themselves when watching her videos, but enact a '*public* intimacy' (2014, p. 111, italics mine) when commenting, praising and thanking her for her disclosure, her trust and the role she plays in their lives. Viewers feel her joy, sadness, highs and lows; they share her stories, hopes and thoughts and reciprocate by sharing the same. Redmond's parallel between public and private intimacy is similar to Thompson's conceptualisation of 'lived experience' (unmediated) and 'mediated experience' (1995, p. 230). People draw components from both sources to creatively and reflexively integrate into their 'evolving life-project[s]' (p. 230). From the feelings of connection and identification arise not abstract, but very concrete uses and benefits for viewers.

Conclusions: Public, private and productive intimacy at play

With this study, I sought to contribute to the understanding of current digital culture practices through an examination of the dynamics of the YouTube beauty community. Drawing from findings of my ethnographic examination of the platform, I analysed and interpreted the data corpus of videos and comments in light of what I term a 'scale of intimacy'. Aided by the content typology of four categories (García-Rapp, 2016b), I emphasised the relevance of Bubz's connection-seeking uploads for community building. Findings suggest that Bubz's development of closeness and intimacy with her audience can be seen as a progression that begins with tutorials (content-oriented videos), which usually catch the attention of random viewers through title keywords. Product reviews, in which Bubz addresses her audience in a more direct way and offers her opinion on products (market-oriented videos), are slightly more intimate. Intimacy then advances to her personal vlogs (relational videos), which generate stronger connections and maintain audience attention by showcasing her private life and activities. The highest degree of intimacy is found in Bubz's motivational uploads.

Considering the high number of shares, subscriptions and comments received by these two latter categories of videos, it is relevant to note how 'people may find a video personally meaningful in ways that merit attention despite its seeming lack of normatively valued "content"' (Lange, 2009, p. 70). I argued that Bubz's relational and motivational videos foreground her efforts to achieve a close connection with her audience, not least in order to sustain her popularity as a renowned beauty guru (also García-Rapp, 2016b). Moreover, I suggested that the ties with viewers must be strong enough, a priori, for them to be interested in her experiences and highly subjective opinions about life and self-growth. In other words, viewing and commenting imply an interest in the person behind the channel – the guru, herself. Bubz turns from a stranger to a skilled guru who teaches useful beauty techniques,

to a friend who shares her daily life and stories. At the same time, viewers turn from random viewers to loyal subscribers and fans (2016b).

All things considered, I believe it can be fruitful to not always see performers through 'the lenses of commodification', but to also recognise them as 'social and creative beings' (Baym, 2012, p. 294) who are not always 'selling us intimacy' (e.g. Littler, 2004, p. 4) or persuading us, but (and maybe even simultaneously) experiencing connections themselves and receiving personal rewards from the affective intimacies that are established. Rewards can be in the form of emotional support and feedback (Baym, 2012; Abidin, 2015), as Bubz herself discusses. Thanks to this approach, we can see how 'intimacy is not just something fans project onto artists, it can be something artists experience when they interact with their audiences' (2012, p. 312). Therefore, I locate viewers 'somewhere between unequal "fans" and equal "friends"' (p. 289), since celebrity/fan forms of connection are not only platform-based or community dependent, but often negotiated and experienced on an individual basis.

In conclusion, it is relevant to revisit Redmond's distinction between public, private (2014, p. 111) and 'productive intimacy' (2006, p. 35). In the case of Bubz and her viewers, three main practices are at play. As explained above, a *private* intimacy is represented by an individual viewer's experience of watching and eventually feeling connected to the content creator. Further, *public* intimacy is visible through viewers' engagement with the guru. Bubz's content fosters identification and promotes viewer engagement in the form of viewing, liking, subscribing, sharing links of her videos and leaving written comments on her channel. Lastly, a *productive* intimacy emerges from the feelings of closeness and identification, fuelling self-reflexivity and often even self-development. Besides being useful in pragmatic terms (by, e.g., helping viewers achieve a particular hairstyle), Bubz's relational and motivational videos are helpful as tools for motivating personal change and positive habits.

I argued that Bubz provides viewers with information-rich tutorials; personal, humorous and entertaining vlogs; and motivational self-help videos (García-Rapp, 2016b) that her audience enjoy, discuss, criticise, reflect on in relation to their own lives and emulate, modify and find inspiration in. This is up to them. Moreover, viewers' reception practices are not meaningful because they are 'active' and 'productive' in this way, or because the videos are supposed to be empowering. Rather, the practices are meaningful because they reflect what viewers choose to do with their time at that moment. Some viewers claim that Bubz's content is helpful and useful in both practical and deep, personal ways. But I argue that other viewers may (also) 'just consume' the content as a 'mere' pastime to forget daily issues and overcome stress. This should not necessarily be understood as disempowering, nor should it reflect the often cynical academic view of the 'bad' side of fandom: 'the fan as consumer', as Hills aptly argues (2002, p. 30).

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