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Successful Personal Branding on Social Media

Creating and building a personal brand via content on YouTube

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the phenomenon of personal branding on social media and, in particular, it examines how successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via content. The thesis provides valuable input to the existing literature on personal branding, which is predominantly found in self-help books and articles by self-proclaimed gurus within personal branding. Using the method of qualitative content analysis, a total of 72 videos from four different successful YouTubers have been collected and analysed. The analysis of the empirical material revealed that there are three main patterns across the content of the successful YouTubers. That is: Loyal to Personal Brand Profile, Promotion of Multiple Social Media Accounts, and Addressing the Audience and Encouraging Co-creation. Subsequently, these patterns can be understood as the key success factors of personal branding on social media via content. Based on these findings, this thesis proposes a new conceptual framework for personal branding on social media. The framework explains that personal branding on social media via content is a complex and on-going process, in which all elements of the framework should be implemented simultaneously in order to build a strong and holistic personal brand. By illustrating how established branding theories can be extended to include humans, this thesis not only serves as a contribution to the theoretical field of personal branding, but also to the field of branding as a whole.

Keywords: Personal Branding, Social Media, YouTube, Brands

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1 Introduction

The following chapter provides a glimpse into the topic of this thesis and its purpose. It also highlights several concerns related to the existing literature on personal branding and challenges some of its assumptions. Moreover, the chapter suggests how an investigation of personal branding on social media can serve as a contribution both theoretically and practically. Finally, the outline of the thesis is presented.

1.1 Background

The globalized world we live in today has created pressures, such as fiercer competition in most aspects of our daily lives, which require people to ‘stand out’ from the crowd (Brooks & Anumudu, 2016; Arruda, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005). Hence, the idea of differentiating oneself is becoming a more common notion. As a response to these pressures, personal branding has taken hold among professionals. Most of the personal branding literature suggests that branding yourself is the key to personal and professional success (Rampersad, 2008; Gehl, 2011; Khedher 2013; Gandini, 2016; Harris & Rae, 2011; Schwabel, 2011; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). Moreover, the argument that “if you don’t brand yourself, others will” (Kaputa, 2003, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 590) seems to have led to the increased interest in personal branding that we have seen for the past two decades.

The term personal branding was coined by Peters (1997), who claims that everybody has his/her own brand. Thus, every person has the power and possibility to be the marketer for himself or herself. The premise of personal branding is therefore that branding theories, which traditionally have been employed to products and services, can be extended to include humans. This is not a new idea, since Kotler and Levy (1969) already discussed in 1969 how marketing efforts could be applied not only to products, but also to services, persons and ideas. Today, the notion of humans being a brand is recognized among researchers because humans “1) can be strategically managed and 2) have additional associations and features of a brand” (Khedher, 2015, p. 19).

Among most advocates of personal branding, the practice has been regarded as a means to achieve professional advancement or sustain popularity (Peters, 1997; Arruda, 2013; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005). Therefore, personal branding has traditionally been the domain of celebrities, politicians or professionals who strive to succeed in their careers (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). However, with the introduction of Web 2.0 and the concurrent rise of social media, personal branding has evolved into a phenomenon not only exclusive to professionals and celebrities.

Today, individuals interact on social media through personalized digital profiles where they present themselves via the content that they publish and share. By publishing personalized content on social media, individuals are able to present themselves in a favourable manner to a broad range of audiences that can be reached immediately. Thus, social media has made personal branding both more relevant and far-reaching than ever before.

Personal branding on YouTube

As explained above, social media has enabled personal branding to take a new form, in which people brand themselves through the content that they share on their personalized ‘profiles’. One platform in which personal branding is arguably especially evident is YouTube - the currently leading video sharing website (Head, 2006). According to Statista (2016, n.p.), “[m]ore than 400 hours of videos [are] uploaded to YouTube every minute” and interestingly, some of the most popular YouTube channels are not maintained by corporate brands or celebrities but by ‘ordinary people’ online.

YouTube is arguably a popular platform for personal branding as videos are a suitable form of presenting oneself. Firstly, videos can include both verbal (i.e., spoken and written words) and nonverbal communication such as the use of symbols, sound adjustments, costumes, items, etc. Hence, the tools available for self-presentation in videos are plentiful. Secondly, YouTube allows its users, also known as YouTubers, to promote their personal brand via their channels, which include the YouTuber’s name, avatar and videos. All these features make YouTube a relevant platform to complete the ‘picture’ of self-presentation (Pace, 2008), that is: personal branding.

Additionally, YouTube is heading to be something more than a forum for sharing videos. Today, YouTube is the runner up for most used search engine after Google (Rosner, 2015). Thus, successful personal branding on YouTube can turn an individual into a strong influencer. This happens in the moment when YouTubers' content becomes popular and YouTubers are able to gain large amount of subscribers willing to listen and watch the message they convey. For this reason, YouTubers, who are engaged in personal branding, should not be underestimated.

Furthermore, as explained in an article in the Guardian, "this new generation of superstar YouTubers are not just gawky kids sitting in their bedrooms with a webcam. That might be how it started but many have managed to turn it into a lucrative business" (Lewis, 2013, n.p.). For instance, Felix Arvid Ulf Kjelberg, Swedish video game commentator known as PewDiePie, is currently dominating YouTube with more than 43 million total subscribers and over 11 billion total views (Social Blade, 2016). According to the latest data from Social Blade (2016), the estimated yearly earnings of PewDiePie are between \$708.4 thousand and \$11.3 million. Thus, being successful with personal branding on YouTube may not only enable individuals to exercise an influential power via the content they share, it is also a potentially lucrative business. For these reasons, the social group of YouTubers is arguably an interesting one to study.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Since the beginning of the 90's, personal branding has primarily been the domain of self-help consultants, experts and practitioners (Shepherd, 2005; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005; Chen, 2013). While much research has been done on the phenomenon of branding on social media (Barware & Meehan, 2010; Holt, 2016; Gensler *et al.* 2013; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), it is only recently that branding from a personal perspective has sparked an interest among academics. There are, however, several concerns related to the existing literature on personal branding, which need to be addressed.

Firstly, despite academics' growing interest in the phenomenon, the majority of the literature on personal branding is still found in self-help books and articles by self-proclaimed gurus within personal branding. The problem with this literature is that "intuitive and informal

approaches often predominate, and professional advice is often hype-ridden and rooted in uncorroborated case-study experience” (Shepherd, 2005, p. 592). For this reason, we argue that in order to have a better understanding of the phenomenon, the advocates’ literature on personal branding needs to be complemented with academic literature that is rooted in a formal and deeper investigation of personal branding on social media.

Most advocates of personal branding argue that the branding of humans is similar to the branding of products and services, in which an individual should identify and then promote his or her distinctive traits and strengths to a target audience (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). Yet, while advocates’ literature on personal branding mirrors established theories within marketing and branding (Shepherd, 2005), much of the academic literature on personal branding has mainly been focused on exploring personal branding by reviewing and applying existing theories from a sociocultural perspective and the sociological concept of the self (Nolan, 2015). For example, Khedher (2015) uses sociocultural theories to conceptualize the process of personal branding. He argues that personal branding is a three stage process which consists of: i) defining the *personal brand identity* by drawing on Bourdieu's (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) theories of social and cultural capital; ii) *personal brand positioning*, which he relates to Goffman’s (1959, cited in Khedher, 2015) theories on the presentation of the self; and iii) *personal brand image*, which is related to Schön’s (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) theory of reflexivity. However, there have been some attempts to theorize personal branding from a marketing perspective (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Chen, 2013), in which Shepherd (2005) is seemingly the first. Nevertheless, Shepherd does not appear to come to a conclusion in his article. Rather, he highlights several of the challenges of extending the established theories of marketing products and services to include humans. Furthermore, Shepherd (2005, p. 602) concludes his article by asking “can the discipline of marketing reclaim self marketing and personal branding from the enthusiasts? [...] Is it beyond the wit or ambition of mainstream marketing to put its own seal of approval on these potentially crucial ideas [i.e. personal branding and self marketing]?” We believe it is possible;; however, it requires that the phenomenon of personal branding is formally investigated from a marketing perspective. By exploring personal branding on social media from a marketing perspective, this thesis will serve as an answer to the questions raised by Shepherd (2005), in which we attempt to put marketing’s ‘seal of approval’ on personal branding.

Another concern with the existing literature on personal branding is the strong emphasis on exploring the motivations for engaging in personal branding and, in particular, the focus on personal branding as a means to achieve professional advancement (Gandini, 2016; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005; Nolan, 2015). In general, there seems to be an underlying *in-house assumption*, i.e. an “assumption that exist within a specific school of thought” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), that personal branding is the domain of professionals who strive to achieve successful careers. For this reason, much of the literature that discusses how personal branding can be practiced successfully on social media has done so from the perspective of professionals. However, as we have highlighted previously, the rise of social media has made it possible for virtually anyone with internet access to brand themselves. Thus, personal branding is no longer a practice exclusive for celebrities and professionals (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). As a consequence, we argue that the engagement in personal branding on social media is not necessarily solely based on the motives of professional advancement. For example, Labrecque, Markos & Milne (2011) state that for most people, the creation of social networking profiles is based on social motives such as staying in touch with friends and family. Furthermore, while researching individuals’ motives for creating and utilizing personal homepages, which in this context is transferrable to YouTubers’ personal channels, Papacharissi (2002, p. 360) discovered that “the most frequently encountered reasons for hosting a personal homepage were entertainment and information”. On the other hand, ‘professional advancement’ and ‘passing of time’ were shown to be the least frequent motives (Papacharissi, 2002). Furthermore, in their article on self-presentation on personal web-pages, Schau and Gilly (2003, p. 391) state that “[t]here are likely to be as many motivations as there are people who create personal Web sites”. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that people may be engaging in personal branding on social media for other motives than professional advancement.

It is, however, important to note that this thesis does *not* seek to investigate the motivations behind personal branding on social media. Yet, it is deemed important to highlight the fact that due to its strong focus on motivations of career advancements, the existing literature is arguably both somewhat narrow-minded and limited in regards to its approach to conceptualizing personal branding on social media. We argue that, when exploring how personal branding can be practiced successfully on social media, it would be a mistake to consider the practice only as a means to achieve professional advancement. As Khedher (2015, p. 20) highlights, due to the rise of social media, “individuals not formally trained in

the discipline of marketing may often participate in the act of marketing without being aware that they are doing so". For example, Bethany Mota (9,9 million subscribers) started uploading videos of herself talking about fashion and beauty when she was 16 years old. PewDiePie (43 million subscribers) is uploading videos of himself while he plays video games, while Jenna Marbles (15 million subscribers) has had great success with her ironic and sarcastic videos about how it is to be a young millennial woman (Jacobs, 2014). Arguably, neither of these YouTube stars started uploading videos of themselves for the purpose of professional advancement. Furthermore, neither of these individuals is unique when it comes to the topics they have chosen to talk about. There are thousands of other individuals talking about the same topics. Yet, these three individuals have managed to 'stand out from the crowd', which is the main purpose of personal branding (Arruda, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005; Saltzman, 2015). Their videos have led them to fame and to hold a recognized personal brand. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that what these individuals are practicing on YouTube is indeed personal branding. Moreover, neither of these YouTube stars are formally trained in the discipline of marketing and branding, yet each of them have more subscribers on YouTube than Coca-Cola, Nike and Starbucks combined. Thus, we argue that, rather than viewing personal branding on social media as a concept limited for professionals seeking to succeed in their careers, the phenomenon should be considered as an activity that can be practiced by anyone that has access to internet and for a variety of motivations. It is only with this mind-set that we can begin to explore and understand how 'ordinary people', such as the YouTubers, can be successful with personal branding on social media.

Two studies that have applied this mind-set while attempting to conceptualize the process of personal branding on social media is the research done by Chen (2013) and Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011). These two studies are valuable because they serve as a counterweight to the previous literature that mostly focuses on personal branding as a means to achieve professional advancement. However, as their main focus were to conceptualize the process of personal branding from the perspective of the personally branded, these studies are once again much reliant on uncovering the motivations of the individuals engaged in personal branding. Moreover, Chen (2013, p. 333) states that the aim of his research on personal branding on YouTube is to uncover "the process that amateur individuals use, explicitly or implicitly, to brand themselves". While the investigation of 'amateurs' provides good input to why and how amateurs engage in personal branding online, it does not give any pointers to how successful personal branding is carried out. On the other hand, Labrecque, Markos &

Milne (2011, p. 48) conclude their research by stating that: “[P]eople both explicitly and implicitly brand themselves using content they place online.” Yet, they do not provide any inputs to what this content should contain in order to succeed with personal branding. Thus, the academic literature is still lacking knowledge on how personal branding can be carried out successfully on social media and, in particular, in terms of content. For that reason, a research that aims at uncovering the key success factors of personal branding on social media by investigating the content of successfully branded individuals would arguably be both highly relevant and beneficial.

Moreover, according to Arruda (2009), a key to personal branding is communication. The argument of Arruda (2009) is much aligned with traditional branding theories, which commonly acknowledge that in order to create awareness of a brand there must exist some form of brand communication. Marketing or brand communication is usually considered to be the means by which a brand is placed and developed in the minds of consumers. That is, “by communicating the key strengths and differences of a brand, by explaining how a brand brings value to a customer and by reinforcing and providing consistency in the messages transmitted, a level of integration can be brought to a brand, or rather the way it is perceived by the target market” (Fill, 2005, p. 412). Ellwood (2000, p. 11) explains the role of brand communication by comparing it to a flag that is “waving to consumers, creating awareness of the product and differentiating it from other competitors”. Moreover, as explained by King (1984), “[b]rands succeed because they offer consumers added values that are communicated through advertising” (cited in de Chernatony, 1998, p. 123). Thus, it seems that a premise of branding is that, in order for a brand to succeed, whether it refers to a product, corporation or human, there must be some form of brand communication. For that reason, we ask: If the premise of successful branding is the communication of the brand, can we really theorize and understand the phenomenon of personal branding on social media without considering the content that individuals post? Needless to say, we consider the answer to this question to be: no, we cannot. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore the phenomenon of personal branding among successful YouTubers in order to uncover how they create and build their personal brand via the content that they publish and, thereby, increase the knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon.

1.3 Research Purpose and Question

On the basis of the background and problem formulation that were discussed above, the purpose of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of personal branding on social media. In particular, we aim to investigate and further conceptualize the key success factors needed in order for ‘ordinary persons’ to be successful with personal branding on social media. In this respect, a study of successful YouTubers is arguably especially interesting.

What makes successful YouTubers interesting to study in the context of personal branding is that, in order to become successful and create a name of themselves, we believe they must be doing something ‘right’ in terms of the content they share. For YouTubers to stand out and be interesting to such a large audience, these individuals have arguably managed to master the tactics of personal branding, even though they are not necessarily knowledgeable with the theories of branding and marketing. Moreover, being successful with personal branding on YouTube has been proven to lead to financial gains, as successful YouTubers are rewarded through a wider earning system. This earning system includes shared revenue from ads, sponsorship (product placement in their videos), views per videos, and number of subscribers (Kachroo-Levine, 2015). The logic is simple: the more followers you have, the more money you earn. In other words, YouTube is currently providing individuals with a new way of making millions of dollars on social media if they manage to attract a large follower base and brand themselves effectively. For this reason, the research question guiding this thesis is:

How do successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content?

By asking this question, the objective is to see whether there is a pattern in terms of elements in the content published by successful YouTubers. In turn, this may provide a better understanding of how successful personal branding can be carried out on social media via content sharing.

According to Oxford dictionaries (2016a), a YouTuber is a person that produces and appears in videos on YouTube and who frequently uses this social media site for video sharing. Additionally, the term ‘successful’ refers to YouTubers who have a follower base (subscribers) of minimum one million. This is due to the rise of Web 2.0 and nature of

YouTube, which allows any person to become famous and recognized also by chance of luck through uploading a video that goes viral. This could undermine the idea that there is a way to create a successful personal brand. Nevertheless, there might be other factors that lead to success on YouTube such as the quality of content, type of personality and topic, or frequency of video sharing. Thus, it is essential to investigate YouTube channels of those who have been active on YouTube for a longer period and succeeded in creating a personal brand by gradually and steadily increasing the number of subscribers.

Figure 1.1 outlines the three objectives that the researchers aim to fulfil with this thesis.

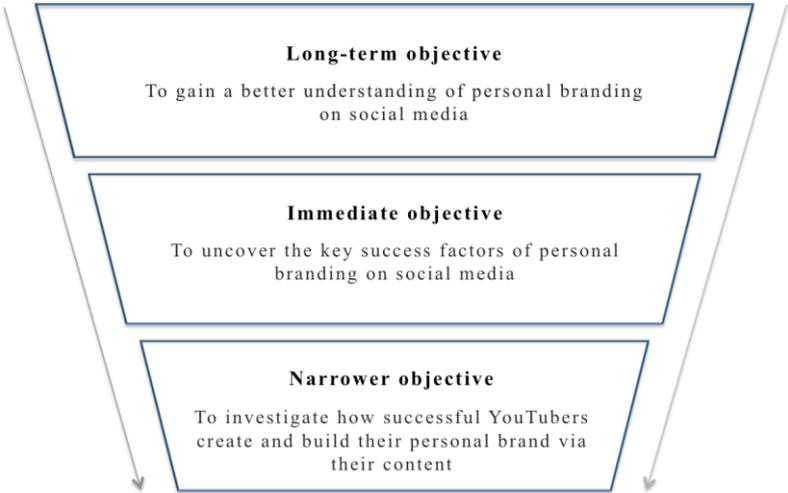


Figure 1.1 Research Objectives

1.4 Contribution of the Thesis

The contribution of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, this thesis seeks to provide a theoretical contribution in terms of filling gaps within the existing literature on personal branding on social media. Secondly, this thesis intends to provide a practical contribution in terms of key success factors of personal branding on social media via content. These contributions are further addressed and explained in the following two sections.

1.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to the literature on personal branding and, in particular, the phenomenon of personal branding on social media. A research on this topic is highly relevant given the time we live in, in which personal branding on social media is becoming increasingly popular. However, as previously discussed, most of the existing academic literature related to personal branding on social media has mainly focused on uncovering the motivations of individuals who are engaging in this practise, while the content of these individuals seems to have been neglected from the scope of most researches. Thus, an in-depth investigation of the content posted by personally branded individuals is arguably long overdue. By investigating such content, this thesis aims at providing valid insights that will contribute to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, by exploring the content of successful YouTubers in particular, this thesis intends to contribute with a conceptualization of key success factors of personal branding on social media. This conceptualization will also serve as the practical contribution of this thesis (see Section 1.4.2).

1.4.2 Practical Contribution

The practical contributions of this thesis can be divided into two tracks. Firstly, this thesis aims at providing practitioners of personal branding with a set of key success factors that can serve as guidance when engaging in personal branding on social media. Given the fact that personal branding on social media is becoming increasingly popular worldwide, a contribution of that kind is arguably highly relevant.

Moreover, this thesis aim at providing marketing managers a better understanding of personally branded individuals who are currently dominating social media. It was noted earlier in this chapter that these individuals should not be underestimated, as many of them have more followers on social media than some of the biggest corporate brands combined. Thus, marketers need to understand how influential these individuals are and, subsequently, utilize the influence these individuals hold by collaborating with them. For example, there is currently a new trend within the marketing and branding industry, in which newly established consultancy companies, such as theAudience (2016), are specializing in pairing companies with successful social media stars for marketing purposes. In that regard, this thesis can serve as a contribution to marketers, as it may enable them to discover personally branded

individuals who are headed for success, and reach out to these personally branded individuals at an earlier stage in the process. In other words, marketers that become aware of this new phenomenon may have an advantage over competitors who are still considering YouTubers and other social media personalities as nothing more than ‘gawky kids with a camera’.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The outline of this thesis is divided into five parts (see Figure 1.2). Chapter 1 has introduced the phenomenon of personal branding on social media and has argued for its relevance based on the problem formulation. Moreover, the purpose and the research question of the thesis has been presented and explained. In Chapter 2, theories related to the phenomenon will be presented and reviewed, which will also support the analysis of the empirical findings in Chapter 5. Chapter 3 will provide methodological insights through which we will argue for the research design and its respective parts, such as the research philosophy, strategy, method, ethical considerations, limitations, and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 will present our empirical findings, which will follow up with a discussion in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, we also propose a conceptual framework that involves the key success factors of personal branding on social media. Finally, we will summarize all the essential findings in the conclusion, where we will answer to our research question. Additionally, we will emphasize several ethical implications as well as managerial recommendation and, as a final note, we will suggest possible directions for future research on the phenomenon of personal branding on social media.



Figure 1.2 Outline of the Thesis

2 Literature Review

To begin the investigation of the phenomenon of personal branding on social media, we first present key theoretical constructs related to the phenomenon. In the following chapter, we then provide our understanding of how branding theories can be extended to include humans and we present existing theories related to personal branding. Moreover, this chapter explains how social media has had an imperative impact on the development of personal branding. Finally, the term 'personally branded content' is presented and explained.

2.1 Extending the Concept of Brands to Humans

It has been argued that the concept of brands can be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman times when symbols and signs were used by tradesmen as a means to communicate what products they had on offer (de Chernatony, 1998; de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012). Others have proposed that the concept of branding stems from the earliest forms of organized farming, in which Norse farmers would burn a mark into the skin of cattle in order to differentiate amongst, and claim ownership over, the animals (Roper & Fill, 2012; de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003). What we can decipher from these arguments is that the concept of branding is based on two main ideas: i) brands are used to communicate a message through association for a target audience; and ii) brands function as a differentiating factor.

Today, brands are commonly explained as being “a manufacturer’s way of adding value and giving its products or service an individuality that sets it apart from the rest [i.e. the products and services of competitors]” (Roper & Fill, 2012, p. 108). Moreover, the notion that brands add value to products and services that goes beyond their functional attributes seems to be widely acknowledged among marketing researchers and professionals today. However, whether these branding theories can be extended to include humans is still a topic of discussion among academics (Shepherd, 2005). Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing majority of researchers that acknowledge that humans can indeed be a brand (Khedher, 2015; Chen, 2013; Gandini, 2016; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Parmentier, Fischer & Reuber, 2013; Harris & Rae, 2011; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). For instance, when discussing celebrity brands, Roper and Fill (2012, p. 190) explain: “the image of the sports

star no longer belongs to the their club but to the individual sportsperson. This is in recognition of the fact that the individual has now also become a brand.”

The idea that a person can be marketed, and therefore also be a brand, was first formally presented by Kotler and Levy in 1969. In their article, Kotler and Levy (1969, p. 10) discuss how the concept of marketing can be transferred from its traditional business context of selling products to the “marketing of services, persons and ideas”. They write: “Personal marketing is an endemic human activity, from the employee trying to impress his boss to the statesman trying to win the support of the public [...] Thus, the ‘product’ can take many forms, and this is the first crucial point in the case for broadening the concept of marketing” (1969, p. 12). In other words, Kotler and Levy argue that the same marketing concepts used to promote and sell products can in fact be extended to include humans. The notion that a person can be a ‘product’, and therefore a brand, has later been both criticized and promoted. For instance, Shepherd (2005) argues that there are many challenges related to extending traditional branding theories to include humans. He explains that advocates of personal branding tend to emphasise the idea of “Work with what you’ve got! ... And make it special” (Peters, 1999, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 593), which he sees as conflicting with one of the fundamental marketing principles that suggests that companies should respond to the market’s demand (i.e. deliver what the market asks for). Moreover, Shepherd (2005) points to challenges such as brand conflict, the issue of multiple brands, false promises and the marketing of an illusion. However, despite taking a critical approach, Shepherd (2005) does not discard the possibility of extending the principles of branding to humans. Instead, he points out that a multidisciplinary approach, which combines sociocultural theories with marketing theories, might be appropriate when investigating the concept of personal branding.

Khedher (2015, p. 19) on the other hand, states that “researchers recognize that brands can also be human because they 1) can be strategically managed and 2) have additional associations and features of a brand”. For example, according to Biel (1997, cited in Fill, 2005), a brand is composed of three features: *brand skills*, *brand personality* and *brand relationships*. Brand skills refer to the functional abilities that the brand possesses and delivers. In the context of personal branding, brand skills can be interpreted as the particular set of skills or knowledge that the individual inhibits. Brand personality refers to the “personality of the brand and its fundamental traits concerning lifestyle and perceived values, such as being bland, adventurous, exciting, boring or caring” (Biel, 1997, cited in Fill, 2005,

p. 394). This definition makes it arguably easy to see how the feature of brand personality can also be applied to personal brands, as the idea of brand personality is built on the fact that brands can have human characteristics, also known as *brand personification* (Cohen, 2014). Lastly, Biel (1997, cited in Fill, 2005) uses the term brand relationship to explain the importance of brands interacting with consumers. This implies that there must exist a two-way relationship between the brand and the consumers. In regards of personal branding, the feature of brand relationships is arguably even more applicable, since human beings interact with each other on a daily basis. Two-way communication is a fundamental part of how we interact.

What these examples illustrate is that humans can also have features of a brand, as suggested by Khedher (2015). Hence, our assumption and understanding, which serve as a basis of this thesis, is that humans can indeed be a brand.

2.2 Personal Branding

The assumption that humans can be a brand was early adopted among marketing practitioners that have used branding theories to conceptualize the phenomenon of personal branding. Personal branding became popular in the 90's when the topic started emerging in the self-help books industry (Shepherd, 2005). The term was coined and popularized by Peters (1997) who claims that everybody has a personal brand: "...the brand called You", which includes a 'sign of distinction' (1999, cited in Shepherd, 2005). Thus, the premise of personal branding is that every person has the power and possibility to be the marketer for himself or herself. Since then, the idea of a person being a brand has become an increasingly popular notion and for the most part it is considered to be the domain of professionals in the job market (Shepherd, 2005). Hence many consultants have recognized the opportunity to make a business out of advising professionals on how to brand themselves (Arruda, 2009; Peters, 1997; Rampersad, 2008; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005). Many of these self-help gurus have approached personal branding from a marketing perspective, in which they have applied traditional marketing techniques to people.

There is currently a wide number of advocates' literature and theories related to *personal branding*, *self branding*, *person marketing*, *personal marketing* and *self-marketing* (Shepherd,

2005), which all refer to the marketing efforts of individuals to promote themselves in a crowded marketplace. Nonetheless, for the sake of clarity, in this thesis we are consistent in our use of the term *personal branding*. Moreover, in order to establish a working definition for the purpose of this thesis, we draw on the definitions offered by Labrecque, Markos and Milne, (2011), Rampersad (2008) and Khedher (2015), and refer to personal branding as:

The effort made by individuals to create awareness and visibility of their persona among a target audience, which enables them to stand out from the crowd and gain personal or professional success.

Although it is explained in various terminologies, personal branding seems to be commonly acknowledged by advocates as a three-stage process. This process has been summarized by Arruda (2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 590) as “extract, express and exude”, which involves: i) exploring the unique value or key differentiation the person has; ii) developing a strategy to communicate the unique value; and iii) implementing a strategy for making the personal brand visible to the outside world (Arruda, 2005; Roffler, 2002, cited in Shepherd, 2005). This means communicating one's uniqueness to a target audience. This theory is also supported by Chen (2013) when he concludes his research of personal branding among, what he refers to as, ‘amateur performers’ on YouTube. According to Chen (2013), the Taiwanese amateur performers branded themselves in accordance with Arruda’s (2009) ‘extract, express and exude’ theory.

While personal branding advocates have conceptualized the process of personal branding from a marketing perspective, many academics, such as Khedher (2015), have followed Shepherd’s (2005) suggestion and applied a multidisciplinary approach when conceptualizing the personal branding process. Similarly to Arruda (2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005), Khedher (2015) states that personal branding is a three-stage process; however, he applies both branding as well as sociocultural theories to his conceptualization. That is, Khedher (2015) suggests that personal branding consists of: i) defining the *personal brand identity* by drawing on Bourdieu's (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) theories of social and cultural capital; ii) *personal brand positioning*, which he relates to Goffman’s (1959, cited in Khedher, 2015) theories on the presentation of the self; and iii) *personal brand image*, which is related to Schön’s (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) theory of reflexivity.

Khedher (2015) adopts Bourdieu's (1983) theory as the input of the personal branding process, because the success of strong personal brand depends on how much an individual invests of his/her *social* and *cultural capital*. While social capital is related to networks or groups and can be converted into economic capital, cultural capital is related to the knowledge and education (Corrigan, 1997). This means that the better and higher education, the higher the cultural capital. In terms of personal branding, Khedher (2015) suggests that the more both capitals are invested, the higher is the probability of 'standing-out' from the crowd.

Furthermore, Khedher (2015) also refers to Goffman's (1959) sociocultural theory of presenting self in everyday life as a method of personal branding process, where the *Impression Management* is in place. This means that the personally branded individuals seek to impress the audience and, therefore, act accordingly. This is aligned with Goffman's theory (1959, cited in Corrigan, 1997) of *front* and *back region*, which is explained by referring to a theatrical performance where actors play their assigned roles on a stage. However, the key idea of Goffman's theory is that once the actors leave the stage, they will go back to acting natural and being their 'true self'. This is because in the back region, i.e. 'off-stage', they are no longer observed by their audience. Nevertheless, in the front region, i.e. 'on-stage', they have to act in a manner that will attract the audience.

Lastly, the outcome of the personal branding process is connected to Schön's theory (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) of reflexivity, which explains that reflection can improve professional development. However, it is important to reflect upon present as well as past professional practices, because an individual can learn from the past behaviour (Khedher, 2015). Therefore, Schön distinguishes between *reflection-in-action*, which is connected to the immediate reflection during the process, i.e. testing or experimenting, and *reflection-on-action*, which is related to reflecting upon what was done in the past. According to Khedher (2015, p. 23), adopting both types of Schön's reflections is essential in order to "improve practices and assure personal development" within the last step of the personal branding process. However, Khedher (2015) notes that reflection is also the first step of personal branding because it is a repetitive process.

In summary, personal branding can, according to the existing theories, be considered as a process. Moreover, what both theories of Arruda (2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005) and Khedher (2015) have in common is that they are constructed from the perspective that

personal branding is motivated by career advancement and, for that reason, they both imply that personal branding is a planned process (Khedher, 2015) in which individuals should strategically manage their personal brand.

2.2.1 Elements of Personal Branding

Although the terminology and context varies from researcher to researcher, it can be summarized and understood that brands are constructed through three main pillars: *brand identity*, *brand positioning*, and *brand image* (Roper & Fill, 2012; de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). Brand identity refers to what the brand stands for and what it delivers, commonly explained as the brand's *promise, values, and personality* (Roper & Fill, 2012). Brand positioning refers to the value and the uniqueness of the brand in respect to its competitors (Keller, 2008), while brand image is commonly explained as the perceptions and associations of the brand in the minds of the consumers. The brand image is often linked to reputation, since it is what the consumers think and say about the brand.

Similar to the established branding theories, there are certain elements that should be present when engaging in personal branding. For example, many advocates of personal branding have highlighted the importance of describing and emphasizing one's strengths, values, goals and personality (Rampersad, 2008; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005). Moreover, Rampersad (2008, p. 35) proposes that an individual should formulate a clear *brand promise* and a *personal brand story*, which will serve as the essence of what a person says about his or her brand in order to "produce a positive emotional reaction". In other words, similar to traditional branding practises, personal branding also entails the act of defining and communicating the brand identity. Additionally, advocates of personal branding are almost unanimous when they talk about the importance of communicating one's uniqueness (Peters, 1997; Rampersad, 2008; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005). This coincides with the traditional branding practise of brand positioning, as the goal is to show what differentiates the individual from the competitors, and thereby positioning oneself in the marketplace. Lastly, a personal brand is also created based on the public perception of the personality and abilities of the branded individual (Rampersad, 2008; Gandini, 2016; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd 2005). For this reason, personal branding involves not only a personal brand

identity and brand positioning but also the person's reputation, i.e. his or her personal brand image (Holloway, 2013, cited in Gander, 2014).

Furthermore, according to Arruda (2009) there are three key qualities of a strong brand, whether it is personal or corporate: *clarity*, *consistency* and *constancy*. In the context of personal branding, he explains that clarity is important because “it is critical to be clear and authentic about who you are, and what you are not. You must understand your unique promise of value, and how this promise enables you to influence people who can help you achieve your goals” (2009, p. 409). Consistency refers to the importance of being persistent in the communication of the brand. That is, in order to create a recognizable personal brand, the individuals must ensure that their brand is consistent in what it communicates. Constancy refers to the importance of always being visible for the target audience. Arruda (2009, p. 410) illustrates this point by referring to perhaps one of the most successfully personal branded persons to this date: “One of the most successful, visible, and constant personal brands, both commercially and personally, is Oprah Winfrey. With her weekly television show, book club, magazine, numerous media appearances, and casual appearances in grocery stores and restaurants, Oprah is consistently visible and has maintained an incredibly strong brand over a very long career.”

Additionally, most advocates agree that authenticity is also an essential aspect of personal branding, in which personally branded individuals should strive to communicate their brand in an authentic manner (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011, Rampersad, 2008; Arruda, 2009; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd 2005). In summary, it can be suggested that incorporating all elements of personal branding and communicating them to the audience means that an individual manages his or her personal brand strategically (Rampersad, 2008).

2.3 Personal Branding on Social Media

The technological advancement of the last decade has enabled the growth of the internet into the Web 2.0 era where social media sites have developed (Chen, 2013). Social media has enabled people to engage and interact in a virtual world. Thus, the very core of how people communicate online has shifted (Muñiz Jr. & Schau, 2011; Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2010). It means that internet users are able to communicate with each other through sophisticated

social media platforms that have turned the World Wide Web into a playground for consumers rather than a tool for marketers (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009; Fournier & Avery, 2011). Today, individuals on social media can communicate freely and immediately without boundaries as well as they can create relationships (Berthon *et al.*, 2012). Thus, the internet bears a clear social aspect, as individuals can interact with each other. Moreover, this development has disrupted how people share information and has given rise to a whole new degree of consumer-to-consumer information (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010). That is, with social media, consumers can effectively and efficiently share information with one another to a greater degree and with a greater reach than ever before.

Moreover, social media has enabled individuals to create personal ‘profiles’ on various sites, through which they can construct and present themselves to broad audiences (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Shih, 2009; Holt, 2016). According to Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011), this can then be understood as a way for individuals to build a personal brand identity. Indeed, they suggest that “[i]n an online context, personal brand identity relies on self-presentation as identities are created in computer-mediated environments using social networking profiles, blogs and personal Web pages.” In other words, it can be argued that social media has made personal branding both more relevant and more efficient. For instance, politicians, celebrities, professionals on LinkedIn and even teenagers on YouTube are taking efforts to stand out by tailoring their social media accounts so that their voices are heard among various audiences. Thus, it is clear that the social online environment with Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube supports the concurrent growing phenomenon of personal branding (Khedher, 2015; Chen, 2013).

Due to the previous discussion of the three main pillars of branding that are also present in personal branding, i.e. brand identity, brand positioning and brand image, we can support the argument that the social online environment normalize the personal branding phenomenon by addressing Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) framework of social media functionality outlined in Figure 2.1. Since the functionality of social media is composed of seven elements: presence, sharing, conversations, groups, reputation, relationships, and identity, it clearly illuminates how branding is fitting on social media. Firstly, by placing ‘identity’ to the centre of the framework of social media functionality, Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) strengthen the idea mentioned earlier that social media allows individuals to reveal their personal brand identity. Secondly, some of the functions of social media are interdependent and thus, as a whole, they

can reflect into brand positioning. For example, conversations on social media can lead to building new relationships and the latter can further cumulate into community. Therefore, based on how they communicate their uniqueness, individuals can influence where they belong. Lastly, the framework also includes ‘reputation’, which is the element that defines the brand image.

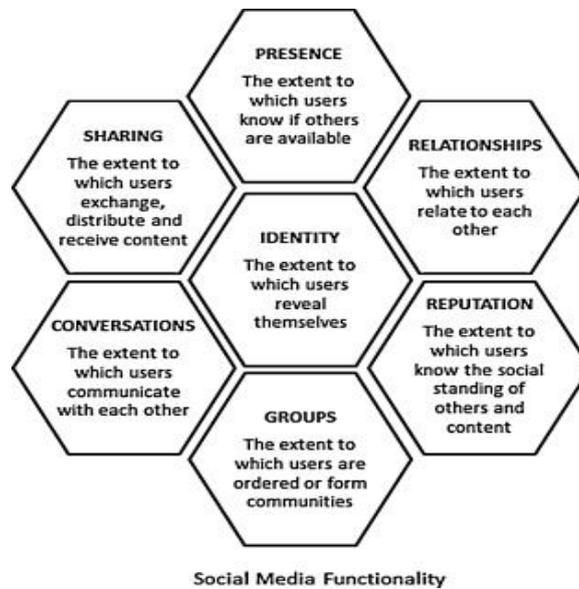


Figure 2.1 The Honeycomb of Social Media (Kietzman et al., 2011)

Altogether, social media can be seen as the ‘primary mechanism’ (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011, p. 48) that enables the wide spreading of the personal branding phenomenon. Hence, Peters’s (1997) argument that everybody has his or her own brand that can be managed becomes even stronger.

2.3.1 Personally Branded Content

As it has been highlighted above, social media has made it easier for individuals to engage in personal branding as they can present themselves to a wide audience through their personalized profiles. However, it is important to note that merely having a profile on social media does not result in a recognized personal brand. A profile page must be filled with something, that is: online content. Online content refers to “[i]nformation made available by a website or other electronic medium” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016b, n.p.). Thus, in the context of social media, content is understood as anything that provides information. Examples of the

forms that social media content can take is then: written texts, pictures, icons, logos, videos and audio files.

From a marketing perspective, online content is often referred to as *branded content* or *content marketing* (Ashley & Tuten 2015). Today, content plays an important role when building and promoting a brand on social media, as it is through the content that marketers communicate with the consumers in order to spread their brand stories (Gensler *et al.* 2013). According to the Content Marketing Institute (2016, n.p.), content marketing is “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action”. Over the past few years, much research has been conducted on branded content and what the key success factors of such content are. For example, research has shown that the branded content that tends to create positive engagement among consumers, i.e. responses either in the form of ‘likes’, ‘comments’, ‘sharing’ or increased sales, are informative (Ashley & Tuten 2015), vivid and interactive (de Vries, Gensler & Leeftang, 2012). Moreover, from their study on factors influencing popularity of branded content in Facebook fan pages, Sabate *et al.* (2014) found that the richness of the content, i.e. the inclusion of images and videos, has a positive effect on consumer engagement in terms of likes. The results from their study also showed that, although both videos and images have a positive impact, images were more effective than videos (Sabate *et al.*, 2014). On the other hand, researchers have suggested that content that evokes high-arousal emotions (both positive and negative) is more frequently shared (Berger & Milkman, 2012). What becomes clear from all of these findings is that there is still no consensus among researchers on what constitutes effective branded content in terms of consumer engagement. Yet, many researchers seem to agree that entertainment has a positive effect on consumer engagement online (Ashely & Tuten, 2015; Gensler *et al.*, 2013; Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González & Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015; Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011).

Moreover, online content is often categorized as either firm-generated content (FGC) or user-generated content (UGC) (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). While FGC refers to “the messages posted by firms on their official social media pages” (Kumar *et al.*, 2016, p. 9), UGC is defined as the “material on a website that is voluntarily contributed by members of the public who use the site” (Oxford dictionaries, 2016c, n.p.). For the past years, the role of UGC, in which users contribute to the creation of brand stories, has become increasingly noted by researchers

(Gensler *et al.* 2013). A common notion today is that “a brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is” (Cook, n.d., cited in Sayler, 2012, n.p.). For this reason, many researchers have suggested that companies should produce content that stimulates and encourages a positive co-creation of the brand story (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; de Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012; Gensler *et al.*, 2013).

In the context of personal branding, the online content that individuals publish can be categorized as UGC, because it is content that the individuals voluntarily contribute with. However, what is interesting about personal branding is that, although it could be categorized as UGC, the content of the branded individuals also shares similarities with FGC, in the sense that the aim of posting content is to build and promote the brand. This is also supported by the argument of Schau and Gilly (2003), who state that one of the main reasons that individuals generate and share content is to express their personal identity. Thus, for the sake of clarity, we propose a new term and will refer to the content posted by the personally branded as *personally branded content*. Thus, in the context of this thesis, personally branded content refers to the information published by individuals that enables them to build, communicate and promote their personal brand.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have introduced arguments for how the concept of branding can be extended to include humans. This is based on the idea that humans, like brands, can be strategically managed and, more important, they have additional associations and features of a brand, such as skills, personality and relationships. We have proposed our own definition of personal branding, which we understand as the effort made by individuals to create awareness and visibility of their persona among a target audience, which enables them to stand out from the crowd and gain personal or professional success. Moreover, different perspectives on how the personal branding process is constructed have been discussed. While advocates argue that the process is based on the steps “extract, express and exude” (Arruda, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 590), academics have suggested that the process could be explained through the use of a multidisciplinary approach. Khedher (2015) suggests the three-step process of: i) defining the brand identity based on Bourdieu's (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) theory of social and cultural capital; ii) brand positioning based on Goffman's (1959, cited in

Khedher, 2015) theory of presentation of the self; and iii) brand image based on Schön's (1983, cited in Khedher, 2015) theory of reflexivity.

The chapter has also presented theories concerning important elements of personal branding. While drawing on traditional branding theories, it can be argued that important elements of personal branding is the brand identity, the brand positioning and the brand image. It has also been suggested that important elements of brand communication are: clarity, consistency and constancy. Lastly, the important role of social media in respect to the widespread of personal branding has been highlighted, and the term personally branded content has been introduced.

In summary, the theoretical framework of this thesis can be understood as illustrated in Figure 2.2. It should, however, be noted that this theoretical framework only serves as a summary of our understanding of the theories and how they fit together and how they fit to the phenomenon of personal branding on social media. It does not guide the thesis. At the bottom, there are the three pillars of branding: personal brand identity, personal brand positioning and personal brand image. The brand identity is understood as consisting of the person's skills, personality, values and promise to the audience. The brand positioning is understood as what is distinct about the person or what differentiates him or her from everyone else. The brand image relates to brand relationship and how the individuals manage their image among their target audience. Furthermore, in order to create awareness of the brand among the target audience, brand communication must be in place. This is illustrated as the middle of the house, i.e. where the activity is. Following the logic of Arruda (2009), it is then understood that the brand communication must be clear, consistent and constant. Lastly, in the context of social media, information about the brand is delivered in the form of personally branded content. In order for the personally branded content to be successful in creating engagement, it is suggested that the content should be vivid and interactive, entertaining, rich in pictures or videos, informative, or it should evoke high-arousal emotions. The content is then understood as the roof, as it is the final touch needed to complete the house. Hence, we understand the theories presented in this chapter as separate parts that, when put together, create a complete picture of personal branding on social media.

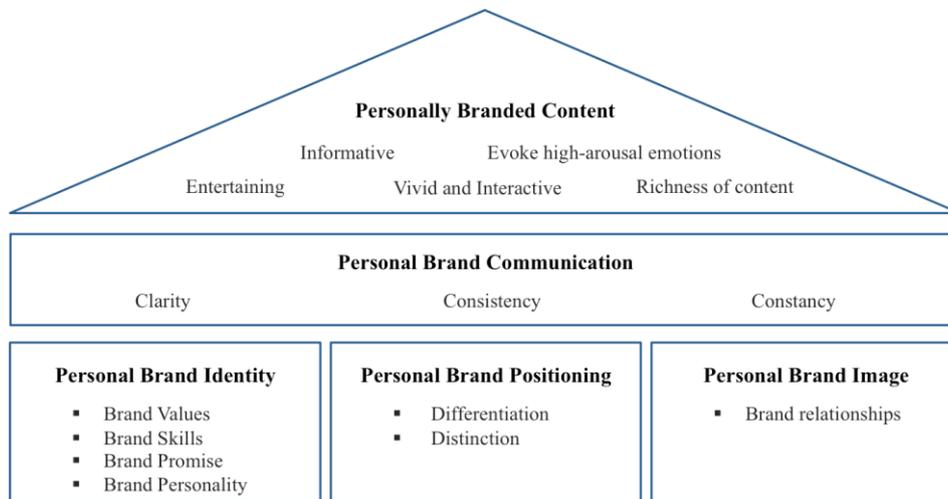


Figure 2.2 Theoretical Framework

3 Methodology

In this chapter, we present and argue for the methodological choices of this thesis. Firstly, the research philosophy, which includes the epistemological and ontological standpoint of the researchers, is presented. This is followed by a discussion of the research strategy and approach. Moreover, the choice of method for both data collection and data analysis is presented and reasoned for. Lastly, the chapter addresses the ethical considerations of the selected method, limitations, as well as the trustworthiness of the research.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Due to the objectives of this thesis and its research question, which aims to uncover new insights of personal branding on social media, it is essential to discuss the research from its philosophical perspective. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 107), research philosophy is an “over-arching term [which] relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge”. Furthermore, it enables to reflect upon the research process from both epistemological and ontological viewpoints, which stimulate the research to produce a valid knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The philosophical commitments linked to our research strategy can significantly impact what we understand and also what is investigated (Johnson & Clark, 2006; cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Firstly, we discuss what is regarded as acceptable knowledge around the phenomenon of personal branding on social media and whether we can study social actors involved in personal branding on social media according to the same principles (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This research deals with social actions on social media sites. Individuals on social media are considered as social actors because they have to communicate and engage in virtual relationships on social media. Thus, as underlined by the research question, we seek to understand these social actors and the elements composing their communication on social media. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 19), this leads to the epistemological considerations of *interpretivism*, which “requires [us] to grasp the subjective meaning of

social action”. In other words, with this research, we try to explain and understand personal branding on social media by interpreting the activities of social actors.

When considering the ontological position of this research through which we can describe our view on personal branding on social media, we present the social reality of this phenomenon via branding theories. We hold a subjective stance because this phenomenon is interpreted based on our own perceptions of individuals’ actions on social media (Bryman & Bell, 2007). By investigating the phenomenon based on branding theories, we argue that individuals acting on social media can be considered as brands. However, the premise is that individuals construct their brands through their actions on social media. That is, the personally branded individuals are branded because the audience accepts and acknowledges their brands as a reality. Thus, the assumption is that personally branded individuals can only be defined as such if they are recognized and acknowledged by a wider audience on social media. In that sense, the research of the phenomenon of personal branding on social media falls into *constructionism* as one of the ontological perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.2 Research Strategy

Following the perspective of interpretivism and constructionism, we address the overall research process, including the research approach and the research strategy that provides a solid ground for the research method.

3.2.1 Exploratory Research with Inductive Approach

The research of this thesis was guided by the research question: “*How do successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content?*”. In order to answer this question, we first review the literature on personal branding in both offline and online settings. Secondly, we collect relevant data in order to explore new insights of personal branding on social media. By adopting these steps, this thesis can be categorized as an *exploratory* study, which offers an open and curious approach to the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Moreover, the theories that are outlined in the second chapter of this thesis (see Figure 2.2) are considered to be the basis for the understanding of the phenomenon; however, they do not serve as a building block of this research. In line with our research objectives and exploratory purpose, we seek to uncover elements of personal branding that can be considered as key success factors and, based on these insights, we attempt to build a new conceptual framework. Accordingly, we adopt an *inductive approach* (Bryman & Bell, 2007). A clear choice of the research approach is particularly important as we are interested in understanding what composes the successful personal branding on social media via content (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008, cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.2.2 Qualitative Strategy

A qualitative strategy is considered to be an appropriate choice for this research, because it serves the intention of understanding the phenomenon in depth and subsequently developing a relevant conceptual framework through data collection and analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2007). As it has been previously discussed, the literature and research on the phenomenon of personal branding on social media is scarce, particularly when it comes to the study of personally branded content. For this reason, a qualitative strategy is deemed appropriate, as it typically allows flexibility in terms of data collection and analysis, through which a theory can emerge (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Moreover, a qualitative strategy is concerned with the words and it requires thick descriptions (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Such thick descriptions are particularly relevant when observing how individuals on social media build their brand via content, since the information offered in the content can be both explicit and implicit.

3.3 Research Method

A key of this research is that the content of successful YouTubers is investigated and analysed. In order to do this, the selected method of this research is a qualitative content analysis, also known as ethnographic content analysis (ECA) (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This method has been chosen for several reasons, which are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the most apparent reason for selecting this method is that a qualitative content analysis enables a proper investigation of the YouTubers' content. In order to fulfil the research

question and objectives of the thesis, it is deemed necessary that the empirical material includes information on what the YouTubers' content contains, both in terms of what they are talking about and how the message is conveyed. However, since no studies have been conducted on this topic previously, it is also necessary that the chosen method allows the researchers to explore the content and look for patterns that emerge along the way, which is aligned with our exploratory and inductive research approach. In this respect, the method of qualitative content analysis is considered to be appropriate, as it allows the researchers to adopt a more flexible approach to the collection and investigation of the empirical material. According to Altheide (1996, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 569), "the aim [of ECA] is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid. Categories and variables initially guide the study, but others are allowed and expected to emerge during the study, including an orientation to *constant discovery* and *constant comparison* of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances." In other words, the use of qualitative content analysis allows the researchers to move more freely between the stages of data collection, analysis, interpretation and conceptualization (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Moreover, as one of the objectives of this study is to uncover the key success factors of personal branding on social media via content, it is also necessary to look for patterns among the successful YouTubers, which can ultimately provide valuable discoveries. However, because it is considered unlikely that the YouTubers explicitly say 'this is how I create my brand' or 'this is what makes me stand out from the crowd', the method of qualitative content analysis is deemed to fit, as it enables us not only to consider the explicit information of the YouTubers' content, but also to interpret the latent messages that are being conveyed. That is, qualitative content analysis allows the researchers to search for underlying themes in a systematic, yet flexible and analytic manner.

Lastly, the method of content analysis is chosen, because it is often considered as an appropriate method to use when investigating "social groups that are difficult to gain access to" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 313). Successful YouTubers have in many cases become celebrities in their own right and are not the easiest to gain access to. Moreover, as the researchers are interested in achieving a truthful picture of how successful YouTubers build their brand via their content, the method of content analysis seems appropriate. This is due to the fact that this method is considered to be a non-reactive method (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

This means that by applying a non-reactive method, it is assumed less likely that the subjects of the study - the YouTubers - act differently because they know that they are being studied.

3.3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

As seen from Figure 3.1, which illustrates the research process of this thesis, the researchers have taken an iterative approach to the collection, analysis and conceptualization of the empirical material. This means that there was a “repetitive interplay between the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 581). First, we identified a set of questions, such as ‘What messages do they convey?’; ‘Do they talk about themselves, and if yes, how?’; ‘What are their surroundings and appearances?’; and ‘What are their gestures?’, which helped us to know what to look for in the videos. Then, we ran a pilot study (see Section 3.3.3), in which we uncovered a set of themes that seemed to be common among the sampled YouTubers. These themes were then used to create a coding manual and to collect the empirical material. The empirical material for this research was collected via the videos of four sampled YouTubers. The videos (i.e. the content) were viewed, transcribed and categorized in a coding manual with the help of the identified themes from the pilot study.

While the empirical material was collected, we simultaneously analysed it by comparing it to the identified themes, thus following the orientation of *constant discovery* and *constant comparison* (Altheide, 1996, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015). This continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Afterwards, the empirical material was re-analysed by reading through each of the transcribed videos. We then summarized and recorded aspects that were recurring in the personally branded content of the selected YouTubers. Based on these summaries, we compared the findings from each YouTuber in order to identify patterns among them.

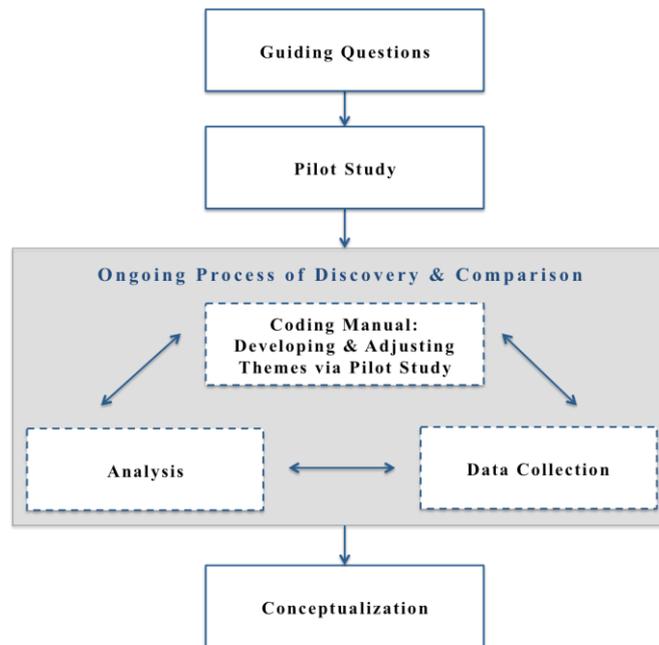


Figure 3.1 Research Process

3.3.2 Site and Sample

In order to uncover how successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content, it is necessary to collect the empirical material from the site where successful YouTubers publish their content. It is important to note that, although the vast majority of successful YouTubers have gradually become present on multiple social media sites and post content in various forms, the scope of this research does not include an investigation of content on various social media sites. Rather, the research is focused on the YouTubers' primary channel of content sharing. Thus, the site of this research is the social media site YouTube.

YouTube is currently the largest video-sharing platform in the world (Head, 2006), thus the amount of content and actors available to be investigated is immense. It is a chaotic place where more than 400 hours of video are being uploaded every minute (Statista, 2016). In other words, knowing what to look for is essential when conducting a research on this site.

For this reason, we employed what Bryman and Bell (2015) term as *generic purposive sampling* when selecting the units to be studied and analysed. As the idea of the generic purposive sampling approach is that “the research question should give an indication of what units need to be sampled” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 433), it became apparent that the first

criterion for the sampled units was indicated by the term ‘successful’. That is, in order to study how successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand, it was essential that the sampled units are considered to be successful (for a recapitulation of our definition of a successful YouTuber, see Chapter 1). Moreover, since the research question itself adopts the assumption that successful YouTubers are in fact personally branded, it was necessary that the sampled units provided substantial proof of this assumption. However, these overarching criteria established by the research question turned out to be insufficient when trying to narrow down the possible units to be studied. Thus, it was decided to apply another set of criteria *a priori* for the selection of samples. All together, the fixed list of criteria was as follows:

Criteria set by the research question:

- The selected YouTuber must be successful, which in this context means that the YouTuber must have a minimum of 1 million subscribers; and
- the selected YouTuber should have a recognized personal brand among a wider audience.

Additional criteria:

- The YouTuber must have been active on YouTube for a minimum of three years. This criterion was set because, if the empirical material included information from both recent and ‘older’ content, it was considered feasible to find out whether or not the YouTuber is consistent in the way he or she builds his/her personal brand;
- the YouTubers should be diverse in their concepts. Meaning, there should be diversity among the selected samples in terms of the kind of videos they post and the target groups they are aiming at. This criterion was set to ensure that we can uncover patterns among personally branded YouTubers despite the diverse concepts they have branded themselves under;
- the YouTubers must be speaking English in the videos. A criterion established for practical reasons, such as lowering the risk of misunderstandings and misinterpretations;
- the selection of YouTubers should include both male and female YouTubers in order to further ensure diversity in the samples.

Based on our generic purposive sampling approach and the set criteria, the sampled YouTubers for this research are: Jenna Marbles, Bethany Mota, Tyler Oakley and Casey Neistat. The choice of studying four YouTubers was based on the conception that three or less YouTubers would make it challenging to argue for the legitimacy of the uncovered patterns. In the following paragraphs, each of the sampled YouTubers are briefly presented.

1. Jenna Marbles

According to her own website, Jenna Marbles is a “comedian and YouTube entertainer” (Marbles, 2016b). She started uploading videos on YouTube in 2010 and since then has attracted more than 15 million subscribers to her channel. In 2013, the New York Times published a feature about her, calling her “a reigning queen of YouTube” and describing her fame accordingly: “While few people older than 30 probably know who Jenna Marbles is, her popularity is unquestioned among teenage girls who live on the internet. She has more Facebook fans than Jennifer Lawrence, more Twitter followers than Fox News and more Instagram friends than Oprah” (O’Leary, 2013). Jenna Marbles has later appeared in an interview on Larry King Now, on MTV together with Kylie Jenner and in various newspaper articles. Today, she also hosts a radio show on SiriusXM Hits 1. Thus, it is arguably safe to say that Jenna Marbles have managed to create and build a personal brand.

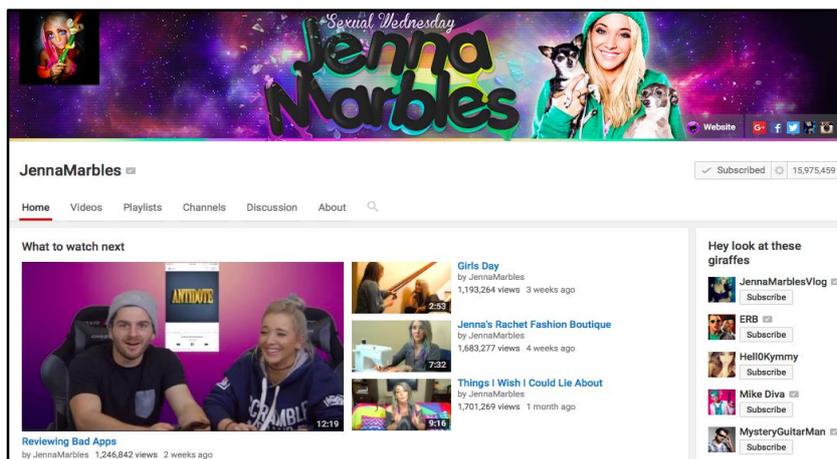


Figure 3.2 Jenna Marbles 's YouTube Channel (Marbles, 2016a)

2. Bethany Mota

Bethany Mota is a young woman who started uploading videos to YouTube in 2009 at the age of 16. The concept of her videos is much based on topics related to beauty, fashion and D.I.Y projects (Mota, 2016). She is presently listed as one of the most influential YouTubers in the world with nearly 10 million subscribers (Casparis, 2014). A Google search of her name produces around 1.5 million leads. Her success as a YouTuber landed her a place in ABC's popular television show *Dancing With the Stars* and a contract with clothing brand Aéropostale, which has created Bethany Mota's own fashion line (Newberg, 2016). Hence, Bethany Mota is another good example of a personally branded YouTuber.

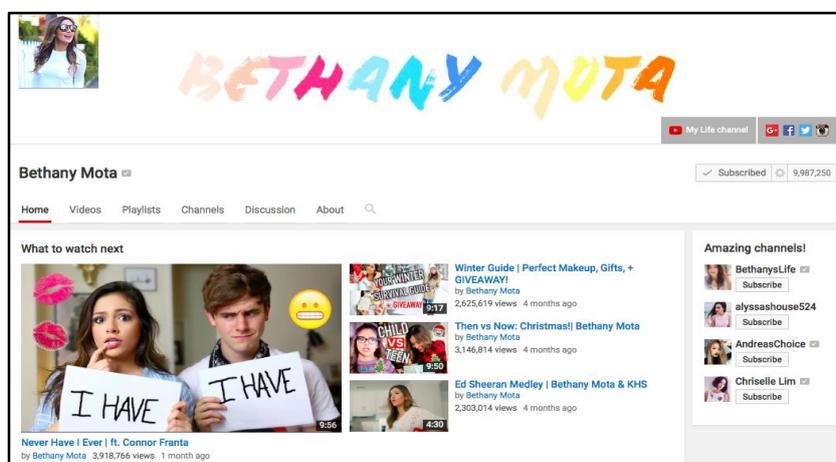


Figure 3.3 Bethany Mota's YouTube Channel (Mota, 2016)

3. Tyler Oakley

Tyler Oakley is a 26 years old man who has been listed as one of the most influential YouTubers of today alongside Bethany Mota and PewDiePie (Time, 2015). The concept of his video content is based on his sexual orientation and he is an LGBTQ activist. According to an article in Time (D'Addario, 2015, n.p.), "[t]he 26-year-old got started making YouTube videos in college; he now has more than 7 million subscribers to a channel where he continues to build his personal brand simply by being himself, with titles like "Pancake Art FAIL" and "MY EPIC FOOD FIGHT". In each of them, he's exuberantly goofy and eager to share his slightly raunchy sense of humour and déclassé taste in junk food with fans." Since his fame on YouTube took off, Tyler Oakley has been a guest at *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and at *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. He has also had an audience with President Barack

Obama, interviewed Michelle Obama, and been a reporter at the Grammy Awards' red carpet. The latest of his achievements is the releasing of his book *Binge*, which is a collection of autobiographic essays and the releasing of the documentary *Snervous* starring himself.

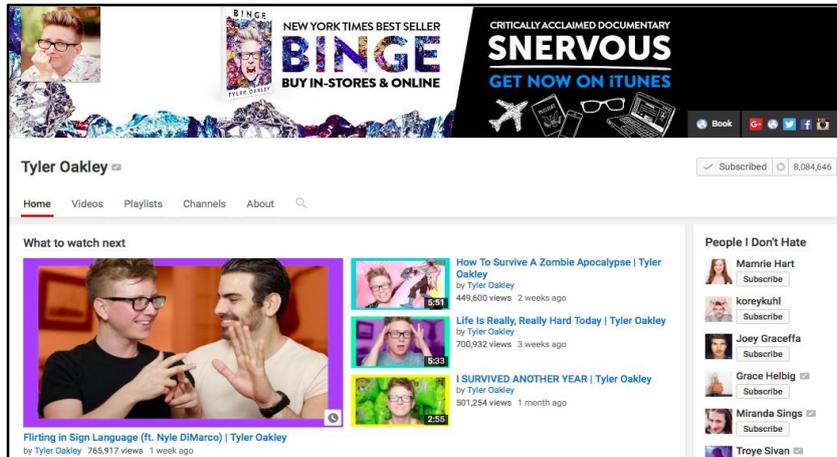


Figure 3.4 Tyler Oakley's YouTube Channel (Oakley, 2016)

4. Casey Neistat

Casey Neistat is the one YouTuber of our research whose success is recent. Although being active on YouTube since 2010, his rise to fame has been slow until it finally took off in 2015. This led him to being awarded the title YouTuber of the Year at the Shorty Awards (Shorty Awards, n.d.a). The Shorty Awards is the official award institution for "honoring the best on social media" (n.d., n.p.b). The concept of Casey Neistat's videos is based on showing the audience his hectic life as a husband, father, adventurer, traveller and filmmaker. He has collaborated with Nike in the creation of a promotional video called 'Make It Count' (Neistat, 2012). Moreover, Casey Neistat's number of subscribers is growing rapidly. This is well illustrated by the following example: while we collected his number of subscribers (2,746,501 million) on the 18th of April 2016, the number had increased with nearly 50,000 subscribers only five days later (Neistat, 2016). In other words, out of the four sampled YouTubers of this research, Casey Neistat is the one with the fastest growing subscriber rate by far.

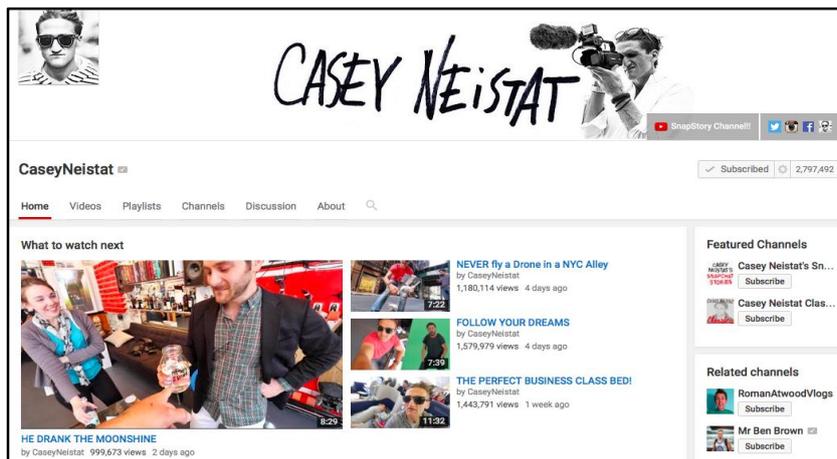


Figure 3.5 Casey Neistat's YouTube Channel (Neistat, 2016)

For more detailed information on the selected YouTubers, see Appendix 1.

Method of selecting the videos:

All videos were selected from the video archive of each YouTuber, see Appendix 2. We used two methods for selecting the videos to be analysed. The first method was applied to Jenna Marbles and Casey Neistat's channels, and involved choosing every 15th video from the first video posted and counting upwards. This method was applied to ensure a bias-free selection of videos. However, another method had to be developed and applied to the channels of Bethany Mota and Tyler Oakley in order to ensure that the data collected included videos that were both old and recent. We selected videos from the video archive of their channels according to how many years ago the videos were posted. Within each year we selected the first and last video. Moreover, in the case of Bethany Mota we selected every fifth video from the most recent year in order to have the same amount of videos of all four YouTubers. 15 videos from each YouTuber were analysed. Reaching this point, the researchers discussed the empirical material and decided to collect one more video from each YouTuber to ensure that theoretical saturation had been reached. The 16th video was then the last video (per 28 April 2016) posted by each of the YouTubers. During the data collection, empirical material was gathered from 64 videos. Including the eight videos from the pilot study, the total number of analysed videos amounted to 72.

3.3.3 Pilot Study

In order to uncover some initial themes that would help us in the data collection, we first ran a pilot study. The pilot was conducted in one day, in which both researchers watched the same two videos of each of the sampled YouTubers, resulting in a total of eight videos to be viewed and analysed. The videos were selected by applying a ‘counting method’ in order to ensure a bias-free selection. This was done by opening the video archive of each of the selected YouTubers and counting 10 and 20 videos downwards from the most recent ones per 26 April 2016. That is, video number eleven (11) and number twenty-two (22) in the list of each of the YouTubers were picked for the pilot study. An overview of the selected videos can be found in Appendix 3. Both researchers viewed the videos separately, transcribing and making thick descriptions of what they saw in the videos. Then, the researchers met and discussed the results. It was discovered that both researchers had noticed the same potential patterns, which was then formulated into themes and put into a coding manual. The coding manual was then used to guide the further collection of empirical material. The themes and coding manual is presented in the next section of this chapter.

3.3.4 Coding Manual

For the analysis of the empirical material, we used a coding manual. The coding manual provides information about selected themes that were observed during the data collection phase. Firstly, we identified a set of initial themes during the pilot study and the themes were continuously adjusted until the end of the data collection. The themes can be considered as a set of written rules allowing to record the data in a consistent manner (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Thus, the coding manual can be referred to as the *content analysis dictionary* (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The same form of the coding manual was used for each video. Four examples (for each of the YouTuber) of filled in coding manuals are enclosed in Appendix 4.

The final version of the coding manual includes the identified themes and is illustrated and explained in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Themes Included in the Coding Manual

Theme	Explanation
Showing emotions	What emotions are shown in the video? What emotions are evoked with the viewer?
Showing personality	What personality traits does the YouTuber show? How does he/she show it? What is he/she saying about himself/herself?
Uncovering	Does the YouTuber reveal things about himself/herself that we would otherwise not know? Does the YouTuber reveal flaws or vulnerability?
Expressing/Sharing personal stories	Does the YouTuber tell personal stories and share personal experiences?
Expression of values and opinions	Does the YouTuber communicate his or her values and opinions? What are his/her values and opinions?
Setting the scene/Introduction to the content of the video	Does the YouTuber introduce the topic of the video? Is the topic of the video clear?
Recognizable personal ‘trademarks’	What are the elements that appear in almost every video, for example products or things YouTuber uses, wears or says. What is it that makes the YouTuber recognizable?
Use/promotion of products/brands	Does the YouTuber promote brands? How?
Use of positive laden words	Excessive use of words such as ‘fantastic’ ‘amazing’ ‘great’ ‘magnificent’ ‘wonderful’ ‘love’ ‘awesome’, and so on?
Use of music	Does the YouTuber use music as a tool in his/her video?
Exemplifying recognizable situation for target audience	Is it likely that the situations described and exemplified in the video are recognizable among the target audience? What are the situations?
Encouragement of ‘co-creation’	Does the YouTuber encourage the viewers to co-create? If yes, how?
Use of multiple channels and promotion of these	Is the YouTuber present on multiple social media sites? Does he/she promote these? How?
Addressing the audience	Does the YouTuber talk in the video to his/her audience in the same way as if the audience were next to them? Does he/she refer to the audience directly?

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Our research is concerned with the observation and further analysis of content on the internet and thus it calls for the respective discussion of *netiquette*, which is the term for the etiquette related to the internet research (Bryman & Bell 2007; Mann & Stewart, 2000). The boundaries between what is ethical or unethical on the internet are blurred because the

internet is a free space where everything is available to everyone. Thus, electronic communication on the internet is almost without any legislation framework (Mann & Stewart, 2000). However, when it comes to extracting information from virtual sites or communities, ethical expectations provided by the owner of the venue should be considered.

Videos of our four selected YouTubers are shared on YouTube, which falls under Google's privacy policies. Nevertheless, even though YouTubers use YouTube in order to share publicly their videos, they own, according to Google (Google, 2016), copyright of the work. For this reason, although we do not plan to distribute their videos, we checked whether Bethany Mota, Casey Neistat, Jenna Marbles and Tyler Oakley specify privacy rules on their channels. Neither of the YouTubers specify any privacy rules on their channels.

The research is conducted via observation of digital video content, which is voluntary provided for the public. Therefore, according to Hewson *et al.* (2003, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2007), we are not obliged to protect confidentiality or anonymity of the selected YouTubers or gain their consent to observe and analyse their video content. Moreover, we commit ourselves to not reproduce their work in this thesis nor on the internet. Thus, the researchers consider the study of the YouTubers content as being in compliance with netiquette.

3.5 Limitations

The first limitation relates to the overall concern of all qualitative methods, namely subjectiveness. Qualitative research has been criticised for being too subjective as it ultimately is the researcher's own worldview and understandings of the phenomenon that forms the conclusion (Bryman & Bell, 2015). That is, the act of drawing valuable information from the empirical material heavily relies on the interpretations made by the researcher. However, the subjectiveness of qualitative methods can also be considered to be strength as it allows the researcher to uncover meanings from what is being observed, and thus "contribute to the evolution of new theories" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008, p.72). In the context of this research, the subjectiveness can therefore be considered to be strength as it allows the researchers to extract meanings from the content that the YouTubers share, and subsequently gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, although the subjectiveness can be considered as strength, it is still a risk that the interpretations of the

researchers are biased, which could be considered as a limitation. Therefore, in order to counteract this issue, the researchers of this thesis employed two tactics. Firstly, both researchers watched the videos and analysed the empirical material individually. The interpretations were later discussed between the two researchers and validated against the empirical material before a conclusion was drawn. Secondly, the researchers of this thesis kept a high level of reflexivity while conducting the research, challenging both their own and each other's assumptions.

A second limitation of this research design is related to the sampled YouTubers and the issue of 'fairness'. Fairness relates to the degree of which all actors within the phenomenon are represented in the study. Although the researchers have put much effort into ensuring a set of samples that is diverse both in terms of 'concepts', age, sexual orientation and gender, all the sampled YouTubers are Americans residing in the US. Thus, it can be argued that the empirical findings are based on a very specific social group in terms of culture, which in turn could result in a somewhat distorted understanding of the phenomenon. However, it should be noted that personal branding on YouTube is a rather new phenomenon, which is especially popular within the United States (Shepherd, 2005). Even though we are currently seeing a growth of this phenomenon worldwide, the majority of the YouTubers that have been successful in personal branding so far are Americans. Thus, this is also reflected in the selection of samples for this research. Moreover, the issue of language barriers and cultural understanding made it challenging for the researchers to sample successful YouTubers from other cultures without running the risk of misinterpretations.

The third potential limitation of this research design is also connected to the selected samples. The researchers of this thesis have chosen to limit the number of YouTubers to be studied to four. As it was explained previously in this chapter, the researchers have decided to study four YouTubers because it is deemed that three or less YouTubers would make it challenging to argue for the legitimacy of the uncovered patterns. However, if we consider that the number of active YouTubers are significantly higher than four persons, it could also be argued that the number of samples of this research is too low in order to be representative. Nevertheless, the selected YouTubers are the 'leading stars' within personal branding on YouTube, thus it is the researchers' conviction that the empirical material collected from these four YouTubers will anyway provide valid and important insights to the phenomenon.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Research

Content Analysis, whether it is qualitative or quantitative is often associated with the study of documents. However, as this thesis is an example of, the term ‘document’ should be understood in a looser fashion than the common notion of the word (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Yet, in order to ensure the first step of trustworthiness of this research we have adopted the criteria for assessing the quality of documents as suggested by Scott (1990, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Scott (1990, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015), the four criteria are *Authenticity*, *Credibility*, *Representativeness* and *Meaning*.

Authenticity

This criterion relates to the question of whether the document is “genuine and of unquestionable origin” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 555). In the context of YouTubers, it is considered that the authenticity of the videos is ensured as the videos were exclusively selected directly from the channels of the YouTubers. This means that the videos must have been published by the YouTubers themselves, thus assuring both the genuinity and the unquestionable origin of the video.

Credibility

Credibility relates to the question whether the document is “free from error and distortion” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 555). Since the videos are made, edited and published by the YouTubers themselves, it seems reasonable to assume that the videos do not contain errors concerning their personal brand. Yet, since the researcher have not encountered the individuals in real life, it is challenging to say whether the content in the videos are free from error and distortion. However, what the YouTubers publish of content is ultimately the way they choose to communicate and potentially create their brand, which is the focus of this thesis, whether or not that brand is built on a distorted identity. Therefore, the credibility of the evidence itself is considered to be sufficient.

Representativeness

“Is the evidence typical of its kind, and if not, is the extent of its untypicality known?” (Bryman & Bell, 2015) is the question that guides the criterion of representativeness. In the context of the selected YouTubers and their content, the videos were in all cases typical of its kind. That is, all of the videos selected were videos that can be considered to be typical of the

genre of YouTubers' video. Moreover, the evidence drawn from the videos to support arguments of underlying themes were also typical of each of the YouTubers as they were recurring in multiple videos.

Meaning

This criterion is connected to the comprehensibility of the document. In respect to the videos of the YouTubers, the content is for the most part both clear and comprehensible. However, in some cases, contextual understanding is necessary. As the YouTubers may refer to activities or incidents that they have discussed in previous videos, it can compromise the comprehensibility of the document. Furthermore, since these YouTubers sometimes use what can best be termed as 'teenage terminology' the comprehensibility of the document partially depends on the viewer's familiarity with this terminology.

Additionally, on a more general level, it is customary to measure the quality of a research against a set of criteria, in which *validity* and *reliability* are the most common to be used (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, many researchers have argued that since these criteria were developed in the context of quantitative research, the meaning of the terms do not fulfil their purpose in the context of qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus, we argue that the criteria of validity and reliability would serve their purpose better if they are adapted to qualitative research. For this reason, we assess our research according to the criteria suggested by LeCompte and Goetz (1982, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015) who propose the terms *external reliability*, *internal reliability*, *internal validity* and *external validity* as a way to 'measure' the quality and trustworthiness of a qualitative research.

External reliability relates to "the degree to which a study can be replicated" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 400). In this thesis, the researchers have made great efforts in order to ensure that each step of the research process is described in such a manner that a replication can be conducted. This includes a clear description of the sampled YouTubers, a clear overview of the videos studied with a direct hyperlink to each video, and a coding manual describing the identified themes. Moreover, since the videos are published online and presumably not significantly edited once they have been published, the content of the videos studied in this research will stay the same. Thus, while Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 400) argue that the concept of replication is difficult in qualitative research as "it is impossible to 'freeze' a social setting", the use of videos for studying the social actions make it easier to overcome this

challenge. Hence, the external reliability of this research is considered to be satisfactory. However, if the YouTubers decide to remove the videos from their channel, replication can be challenging, but this factor is beyond the control of the researchers.

Internal reliability relates to the degree the researchers agree about what they observe. (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Naturally, since qualitative content analysis is a very subjective method of research, it cannot be taken for granted that what one researcher interprets is the same as another. However, in respect to the research of this thesis, the researchers' interpretations were very much aligned. Furthermore, in order to reduce the risk of biases, the content of the videos were first viewed, transcribed and interpreted by the researchers separately, then discussed in team. Not only did this help to reduce the risk of biases, but it also allowed for both researchers' interpretations to be considered and discussed.

Internal validity is considered to be the degree to which “there is a good match between researchers' observations and the theoretical ideas they develop” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 400). The researchers viewed and analysed a total of 72 videos from four different YouTubers. Although this number is fairly low in terms of numbers of videos available on the site, it is deemed that the number of videos and the way they were studied and analysed, were sufficient to ensure a satisfactory level of congruence between the observations made and the conceptual framework developed within this thesis.

The last criterion, *external validity*, relates to the generalizability of the findings. One of the main critiques of qualitative studies is the problem of generalization (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since this research includes examples from only four YouTubers, it cannot be claimed that the findings applies to all YouTubers, and certainly not to all individuals on social media. However, according to Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 414), the aim of qualitative studies are to “generalize to theory rather than to populations”. In that sense, our research provides valid input to the theories of personal branding as we propose a set of key success factors that is potentially crucial when creating and building a personal brand via content on social media.

4 Empirical Findings

In this chapter we present the empirical findings from the qualitative content analysis of 72 YouTube videos (a list of videos is available in Appendix 5). During the collection and analysis of the empirical material, we were able to identify a total of 14 themes. While all themes were visible in the YouTubers' content, certain themes were more frequent and visible than others, thus, allowing the researchers to identify common patterns within the content of the YouTubers. Hence, the following sections highlight the particular themes that clearly represent patterns among all four YouTubers. Additionally, the chapter briefly discusses a last theme that was categorized as noteworthy, although it does not represent a clear pattern among the YouTubers.

4.1 Identified Patterns

The empirical material revealed several themes that were frequently occurring in the content of all four YouTubers. These themes include: *Showing Personality; Expressing Values and Opinions; Recognizable 'Trademarks'; Promotion of Multiple Social Media Accounts; Addressing the Audience; and Encouraging Co-creation*. Moreover, by analysing the data and comparing the results from each of the YouTubers, we discovered another interesting pattern. That is, while the first three themes, i.e. *Personality, Values and Opinions*, and *'Trademarks'*, were originally analysed and considered as single-standing themes, we observed that these three themes could be grouped together under one larger theme: *Loyal to Brand Profile*. This is also the case of the two last themes *Addressing the Audience* and *Encouraging Co-creation*. We noticed that these two themes go hand-in-hand, thus, they are explained together rather than separately. Hence, the three key findings that are exemplified in the following sections are: *Loyal to Personal Brand Profile, Promotion of Multiple Social Media Accounts, and Addressing the Audience and Encouraging Co-creation*. Finally, the theme *Use and Promotion of Brands* is briefly addressed, as it is considered to be a noteworthy theme, even if it does not represent a clear pattern among all the YouTubers.

4.1.1 Loyal to Personal Brand Profile

While analysing and comparing the YouTubers' content, we noticed that all the YouTubers have distinct brand profiles. What we mean by this is that each of the YouTubers have certain features that they employ in their content, which altogether constitute what their videos are about. The Table 4.1 below illustrates our findings related to the profiles of the four YouTubers.

Table 4.1 Features of the Four YouTubers' Brand Profiles

	Jenna Marbles	Bethany Mota	Tyler Oakley	Casey Neistat
Personality	Unconventional, fun-loving and provocative	Proper and innocent with a passion for fashion and beauty	Open, personal, and anti-discrimination activist	Adventurous and active. Loves New York City
Typical Topics	Things to do while being drunk Things to do instead of.... Opinions and thoughts on men and women	Fashion, beauty, design and cooking tips	Intimate/detailed personal stories	Daily life activities
Tone of Voice	Exaggerated, sarcastic, self-ironic	Positive and joyful	Brazen and immodest attitude	Laid-back and humble
Environment	Various rooms in her home	Adapted to the topic of the video, although most of the time her bedroom.	His bedroom	On the move or in his office
'Trademarks'	Dogs	Music clips	Personal stories	Skateboard and sunglasses

Although all of the YouTubers' profiles varies in terms of topics and how they talk about the topics, we did noticed a common pattern among the YouTubers nonetheless: they are all very loyal to their profiles. From the empirical material we could clearly see that the YouTubers rarely stray away from the category of topics they talk about, the environment where they film the video, or the tone of voice used when talking about the topic. For example, Jenna Marbles is consistent in being sarcastic and unconventional when sharing her opinions about men and women. Bethany Mota is consistent in being positive and 'proper' while providing tips related to fashion and beauty. Tyler Oakley on the other hand is consistent in being open and

somewhat brazen while sharing detailed personal stories related to being openly gay, and Casey Neistat is consistent in being adventurous and sporty while showing his love for New York city. In other words, they all produce content that is aligned with their ‘brand profile’, and they stick to it without exceptions. We analysed videos that were up to eight years old, and although the YouTubers have matured with age, the personality, values and opinions that are communicated via the content remained the same from the oldest to the most recent videos. Moreover, we also noticed that by being consistent in the way they create content as well as being consistent with the content itself, all the YouTubers have been able to create certain ‘trademarks’ for themselves. That is, features that they are recognized for. What we can draw from this is that by being consistent with their brand profile, the YouTubers are also able to clearly showcase their brand personality, values and ‘trademarks’, and thus give the viewers a clear idea of who they are, what they stand for, and perhaps more importantly, give the viewers a good understanding of what to expect from the content of the YouTubers.

For example, by discussing topics such as *‘Better names for Body Parts’* (Video no. 12, 2014), *‘Other ways to use your degree’* (Video no. 10, 2013), and *‘Things to do instead of cleaning your room’* (Video no. 2, 2011), **Jenna Marbles** shows the viewers her self-ironic and sarcastic personality. She also shows her personality of being an unorganized and fun-loving person who does not care about what is considered ‘proper behaviour’ such as when she makes a balloon animal tutorial (Video no. 14, 2014) and decorates a Christmas tree (Video no. 8, 2012) while being visibly drunk. She frequently states that she enjoys drinking alcohol: *“We’re excited and we’re gonna get our drink on”* (Video no. 1, 2010) and *“What makes the holidays always merrier? Fucking alcohol!”* (Video no. 8, 2012), and her videos regularly show Jenna drinking or being drunk (Video no. 1; 8; 10; 11; 14; and pilot video 2). Moreover, all these videos have been posted years apart, i.e. 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2014, which shows that she remains consistent over years in regards to the content she shares. She is unconventional, she uses swear words extensively, and she delivers her opinions and advices wrapped in a thick layer of sarcasm, irony and humour, which is illustrated with the following examples:

- Video no. 15 (2015): *Kylie Jenner lip tutorial*

The video is meant as a mock of the many makeup tutorial videos that are found on social media. Jenna pretends to be a girl who gives a tutorial in ‘how to have lips like Kylie Jenner’. However, the tutorial is sarcastic and ironic. For example, she states

that in order to prepare the lips she likes to rub cat sand and chilli seeds on them, then cinnamon, and finally acid. The voice-over says in an exaggerated sweet voice: *“Don't mind it if it hurts your lips a little, no pain, no gain you know.”*

- Video no. 13 (2014): *How to parent your dog*

The video is an ironic video where Jenna provides her ‘best tips’ on how to discipline dogs. Jenna lists ‘rules’ that are commonly considered to be ‘good dog parenting’, such as housebreaking and teaching them the fundamental commands of ‘stay’, ‘sit’ and ‘come here’. However, as she mentions each of these rules, there is a corresponding video clip showing how Jenna does the exact opposite of what she says, thereby illustrating that she is in fact not good at dog parenting. She summarizes the video by ironically stating: *“So as you can see, I am pretty much like an expert, which is why I have the most well-behaved dogs in the world.”*

Tyler Oakley shows his personality of being a very open and outgoing person. He does this by being consistent in sharing detailed personal stories such as when he talks about starting a new semester at school (Video no. 5, 2008), when he tried to flirt with a dentist (Video no. 6, 2010), and the time he had a gun pointed at him (Video no. 9, 2011). The detailed personal stories are often told in a humorous way. These stories then become what Tyler is known for delivering to the audience via his content. He also shows his personality of being a person who believes in equality and who is against discrimination, such as when he encourages his viewers to stand up against hate speech (Video no. 2, 2008), when he talks about ‘how to be a manly man’ and states that: *“It's not your actions or your abilities or your appearances that makes you a man, it is identifying as a man.”* (Video no. 10, 2012) or when he shows his viewers that he is learning sign language from his friend and says: *“We were hanging out, and we were talking about how important accessibility is, and ya'll know that I caption my videos. I think it's really important for everyone to be able to enjoy content.”* (Video no. 14, 2016) Moreover, through his quick-witted comments, he also shows himself as a person with a somewhat brash personality and immodest attitude. This is well illustrated when Tyler answers the question from one of the subscribers who asks if he is Jesus, and Tyler sarcastically answers: *“Do I look like a person who would only have 12 followers? Eh, no!”* (Video no. 13, 2014), or when he states that he has no problem talking to a beautiful blonde, because he happens to do so every time he looks in the mirror (Video no. 10, 2012). The videos we analysed from Tyler Oakley’s channel spans over eight years, yet there is not much

difference what regards the topics, format, or tone of voice when comparing the most recent videos to the oldest. Repeatedly, loyalty to brand profile and consistency seems to be a key pattern.

With topics such as *'Back To School: 5 Quick Hairstyle Ideas! ♥ NO HEAT'* (Video no. 13, 2014), *'Throw a DIY Party! Quick Treats, Party favors + Outfits!'* (Video no. 14, 2014), *'How to make Feather Earrings!'* (Video no. 4, 2011) and *'Spring Outfit Ideas: Floral Print!'* (Video no. 8, 2013), it becomes clear that **Bethany Mota** is loyal to her profile. She is able to show her personality by sharing her opinions about products and she always provide her viewers with advices related to beauty and fashion. Thus, she is consistent in what she delivers to the viewers. Bethany is also very consistent in how she presents herself and she comes across as an innocent, feminine and proper young girl. For example, she explains that she enjoys watching cartoons (Video no. 11, 2014) and that she likes nude colours for spring because *"it is more girly"* (Video no. 6, 2012). She also says that she is obsessed with hair bows (Video no. 9, 2013) and she is consistent in being positive even when there could be reasons not to be, such as when she has to clean and re-organize her room: *"To be honest, I don't consider spring-cleaning and reorganizing to be the most exciting things in the world. But today I will make it more exciting. [...] After I reorganized I feel so refreshed and stress free."* (Video no. 15, 2015)

Via the content of **Casey Neistat's** videos, it becomes apparent that this is a person who is fond of New York City and that he enjoys sharing this love with his viewers. Casey regularly shows footages of the busy city (Video no. 5, 2013; 7, 2015; 10, 2015; 11, 2015; 12, 2015; 16, 2016) and he often makes statements such as: *"I love this city"* (Video no. 1, 2011 & 5, 2013). In his videos, Casey is always on the move, showing that he leads a very active lifestyle. He shows that he enjoys running (Video no. 5, 2013; 10, 2015; 16, 2016) and that he is a hard-working person with many projects. The main idea of Casey's videos is sharing his hectic life as a father, husband, filmmaker and adventurer. He is consistent to this brand profile as each of his videos have the same format, in which he takes the viewers with him everywhere he goes during a day. He includes his wife Candice and his children frequently in the videos, and shares personal stories, which he uses to provide his viewers with advices. In one of his videos, he shares the story of what he considers to be both his biggest achievement and biggest failure. He states that his mistake was to become stuck in the comfort zone, and that: *"The lesson learned is: with each success must come a bigger and more ambitious goal"*

(Video no. 9, 2015). Moreover, because Casey is a hobby-filmmaker, he also shares his personal tips and advices related to film equipment with his viewers. For example, he says: *“People always ask me how I get that footage, and it’s not that complicated. I stick my iPhone to the fence, I run and then go back for the phone”* (Video no. 7, 2015). He also provides his opinions on cameras: *“Piece of crap. Don’t buy Canon cameras because they will fail you when you need them.”* (Video no. 12, 2015)

Moreover, because all the YouTubers are so consistent and loyal to their profile, we also noticed that all of them have been able to develop recognizable ‘trademarks’ for themselves. That is, there are certain features that always appear in their content. These features differ among the YouTubers, in which some are features related to appearances while others are features related to the content itself. Nevertheless, they all have something that they are consistent in using or applying in their content that makes both them and their videos recognizable to the viewers.

For example, **Casey Neistat** is always wearing his black, scratched sunglasses that he takes off occasionally. He is recognized thanks to his sunglasses by his fans even on the street, which can be seen in one of his videos. The video starts by showing the street with people but the person in the video is video-calling over the phone and saying: *“Hello, I just met Casey Neistat and I recognized him by his sunglasses to be honest.”* (Video no. 7, 2015)

Usually, Casey Neistat rides his skateboard when going around the city, and for those viewers who have seen a couple of his videos, it will quickly become clear that Casey and his skateboards goes hand-in-hand. This is underlined by the fact that, in one of the packages sent from a company or fan, he received a skateboard with his name, see Figure 4.1 below. The scene goes as follows: He is sitting in his office, unpackaging boxes that he has received. Suddenly, he tears apart one of the boxes and shows the letter with the message for him. Then, he takes out the skateboard with his name, which he likes and says: *“This is awesome!”* (Video no. 14, 2015).



Figure 4.1 Casey Neistat in His Office while Unpackaging Presents (Neistat, 2015)

Jenna Marbles is consistent in having her dogs in the video, which has become her ‘trademark’, along with her sarcastic tone of voice. It seems as if Jenna Marbles considers her dogs to be part of her personal brand. This is apparent especially when she is consistent in saying ‘we’ and ‘our’, referring to herself and her dogs as a unit, rather than saying ‘I’ or ‘my’, such as in the following scenes:

- Video no. 3 (2011): *Cooking with Sarah Palin*
Jenna is holding Marbles (the dog) in her hand. Saying: “*We had so much fun going rouge today didn’t we?*”
- Video no. 6 (2012): *Interrupting Adele*
She is hugging the dog and says in a lighter tone of voice: “*Make sure you subscribe to our channel, we put out videos every Wednesday, and sometimes we hug each other*” (while hugging the dog).
- Video no. 10 (2013): *Other ways to use your degree*
Jenna says: “*OK Kermit [the dog], say: make sure to subscribe to our channel, we put up new videos every Wednesday and Thursday*”. New clip: Kermit the dog is ‘hiding’ under her sweater: “*Ok now you're getting an F for participation.*”

However, the recognizable ‘trademarks’ are not only items or living creatures (like Jenna’s dogs), it can also be a certain feature that appears in each video such as style of editing the videos, place where the video is recorded or the way of communication.

For example, Jenna Marbles always starts her videos by adding a sound that is similar to squeezing a pet toy. This sound accompanies the introduction of each of her videos where she appears in a picture as a somewhat rough woman dressed in American football gear. Moreover, she is consistent in posting new videos every Wednesday, which she calls ‘*Sexual Wednesdays*’, see Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2 Introduction of Jenna Marbles (Marbles, 2016c)

Bethany Mota can be recognized for her style of presenting her advices. That is, before presenting each of her fashion tip, she makes a short scene where she appears in the specific outfit that she wants to present and she adds a text with the name of the outfit. This way of presentation is similar to a music video as she always chooses some of the popular songs at the time to accompany the presentation, see Figure 4.3 below. This is a distinctive element of her personal brand that she includes while providing advices to her audience. Apart of this, she always wears make-up and the entire environment seems to be very ‘girly’.



Figure 4.3 Bethany Mota Presenting Her Hairstyle Tip (Mota, 2014a)

Lastly, **Tyler Oakley's** 'trademark' is somewhat harder to pinpoint than the three other YouTubers, because it could be argued that rather than being a 'trademark', it is just the way he is. That is, Tyler Oakley speaks significantly faster than the three other YouTubers, thus he is easily recognized by the way he speaks. He is also the only one who shares so detailed and intimate personal stories. Although the stories he shares are part of his brand profile, they can also be regarded as his recognizable 'trademark'.

What we can draw from these examples is that although all the YouTubers have very different personalities, what they do have in common is that they are all skilled at making their personality visible for the viewer via their brand profile and personally branded content. Moreover, by being consistent and loyal to the brand profile the YouTubers are able to build associations to themselves in the sense that the viewers know what to expect from them. In that regards, it could be suggested that the YouTubers' loyalty to the profile is also their way of delivering on the brand promise. The brand promise can then be understood as the promise of being themselves whether this to be sarcastic and unconventional, proper and sweet, open and brazen, or active and adventurous, while sharing their life experiences, opinions and advices.

4.1.2 Promotion of Multiple Social Media Accounts

One of the most visible patterns is linked to the promotion of social media accounts of all four YouTubers. All of them promote their multiple social media accounts in the end of each video either by saying it explicitly or by adding a textual form that encourages viewers to subscribe their YouTube, Twitter or Instagram channel. Examples of how the YouTubers promote their social media accounts via their content is shown below.

Bethany Mota's promotion of her Twitter account looks like in the following Figure 4.4.

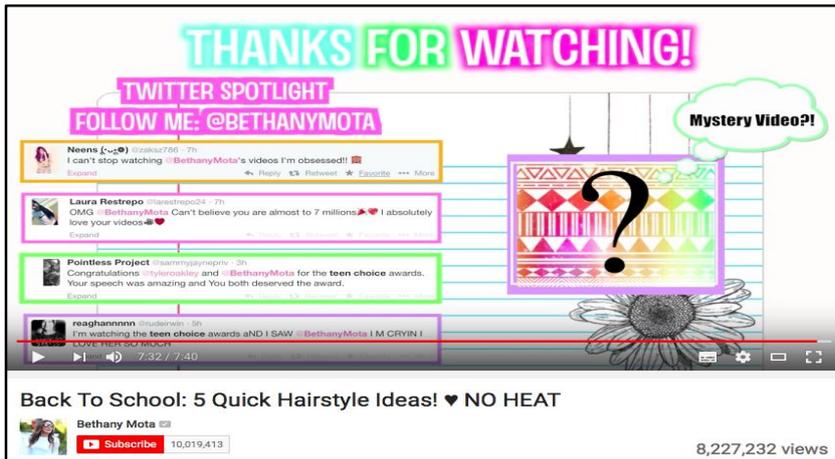


Figure 4.4 Promotion of Bethany Mota's Twitter Account (Mota, 2014a)

Another example is shown in Figure 4.5 where **Casey Neistat** promotes his YouTube channel and Instagram account.

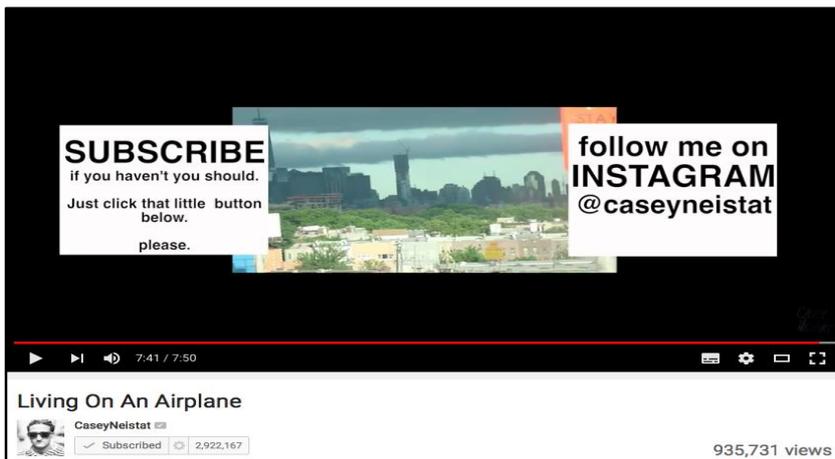


Figure 4.5 Promotion of Casey Neistat's YouTube and Instagram Accounts (Neistat, 2015)

Tyler Oakley and **Jenna Marbles** follow the same trend, however, in a different style as it can be seen in the Figure 4.6 and 4.7.



Figure 4.6 Promotion of Tyler Oakley's Social Media Accounts (Oakley, 2013)

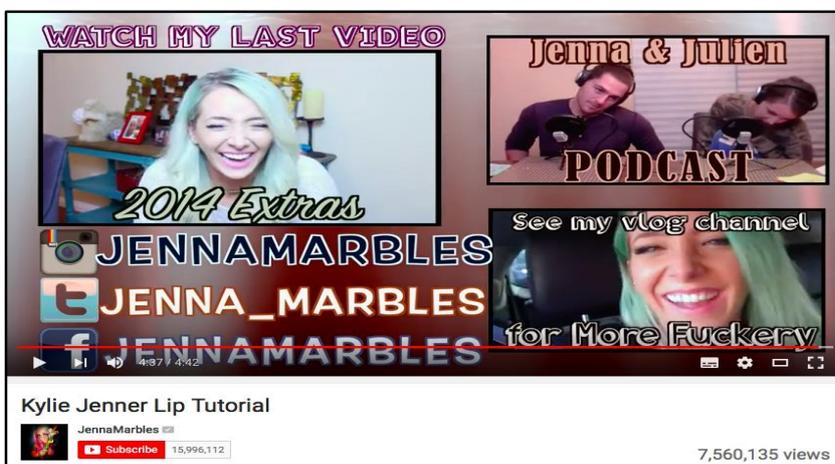


Figure 4.7 Promotion of Jenna Marbles' Social Media Accounts (Marbles, 2015)

Jenna Marbles also promotes her YouTube channel explicitly in all her videos by saying: *“Make sure to subscribe to my channel, I put up new videos every Wednesday.”*

Moreover, three of the YouTubers - Bethany Mota, Casey Neistat and Tyler Oakley also do so-called ‘giveaways’, which means giving away presents to their viewers. Such giveaways serve as an incentive for the viewers to subscribe to the YouTuber. Especially because, in many occasions, the viewers have to subscribe to the YouTuber’s channel or mention the YouTubers’ video on social media in order to enter the competition. Thus, the giveaways does not only serve as a tool for attracting more subscribers, but it also enables them to use their social media accounts for self-promotion. For instance, Bethany Mota gives away an iMac monitor to one of her followers and she explains how it is possible to receive it: *“The only*

thing that you have to do is to subscribe to my channel and follow me on Twitter, send the tweet with the link to the video and hashtag #newbethvideo.” (Video no. 15, 2014)

Lastly, all four YouTubers indirectly promote their social media accounts as communication channels where their viewers can propose topics for their upcoming videos, ask questions and share responses to videos in form of a picture or simple text. This can be illustrated by the video no. 10 (2015) of Casey Neistat, in which he shows his Twitter account and tells his audience to send their questions there. The video clip shows Casey Neistat walking through the city with a small table and computer, on which he has written: *“ASK ME ANYTHING”*. He enters his office and says: *“Let’s do a little experiment and watch how quick I get questions after a tweet.”* [Showing his phone and his Twitter account while posting the tweet]. *“OK. Ready. Tweet.”* [Text on the screen: 2 min later]. *“More.”* [Refreshing his Twitter feed]. *“This is why I miss so many people’s questions. Every refresh is like 15 more questions.”* Since YouTubers use their multiple social media accounts for the communication with the audience, it means that this promotion is connected to the encouragement of co-creation, which is the pattern explained in the following section.

4.1.3 Addressing the Audience and Encouraging Co-creation

The last pattern that the data analysis revealed is that all YouTubers are frequently involving and addressing their audience in several manners. Firstly, all YouTubers always give the impression of communicating directly with their audience by looking into and talking to the camera while regularly saying ‘you’ and ‘you guys’. This is illustrated with the following examples:

- Jenna Marbles (Video no. 4, 2011): *Sluts on Halloween*
“So what I want to say to all the girls out there is that I challenge you! I dare you! I double fucking dog dare you to go out on Halloween, see a girl who looks fucking cute and just go up to her and be like: You know what, you look hot. I appreciate the fact that you probably went on a diet and you probably exercised your tiny little butt off to fit into that. Congratulations!”
- Casey Neistat (Video no. 14, 2015): *Living On An Airplane*
“Take it easy with the amount of stuff you guys send me. Thank you, but take it easy!”

- Tyler Oakley (Video no. 7, 2010): *My missing eyepatch*
“Today is the day we're going to address this issue. So we're opening up my email. I have their e-mail address. If they don't reply, I'm gonna give their address to all you guys. [Points to the camera] You're gonna have my back on this one and let them know that I need my eyepatch [and] if these fucks don't reply with an eyepatch a-fucking-s.a.p I'm letting you all know, and we're gonna get them.”
- Bethany Mota (Mota, video no. 11, 2014): *Spring/Summer Clothing Haul!*
“I hope you guys enjoyed it. If you like it give it a thumbs up. Let me know which clothing item is your favourite and if you don't like any it is also cool. Anyways guys, I love you so much. Thanks a lot for watching.”

Also, Bethany Mota and Tyler Oakley always greet their audience in the beginning of the video by saying “Hey guys” or “Hey everyone”. Casey Neistat and Jenna Marbles are subtler as they only occasionally make a direct greeting in the beginning of the videos. However, they always start the videos by looking and talking to the camera, which can be understood as addressing the audience.

Secondly, all four YouTubers create videos that are made for the purpose of interacting with their viewers. For example, Casey Neistat did a ‘Q&A day’ in video no. 10 (2015), where he answers questions sent to him from his followers on Twitter. Tyler Oakley does the same in video no. 13 (2014), and Bethany Mota answers her viewers’ questions in video no. 12 (2014). Of all 16 videos selected and analysed from Jenna Marbles’ channel, no one included a ‘Question and Answer’ session, however, this is not because she does not have them. The researchers scanned the videos in her channel in order to verify the pattern identified from the other three YouTubers and discovered that similar to the other YouTubers, Jenna Marbles has at least five videos in her channel dedicated to answering questions from her viewers. Additionally, while answering the questions, the YouTubers are also concerned with acknowledging the individuals who are posing the questions and addressing them personally. For example, Casey Neistat and Tyler Oakley are frequently mentioning the name of the person who asks the question:

- Casey Neistat (Video no. 9, 2015): *My Biggest Failure*
“John wants to know who would you love more than anything to get a compliment from. You know John, I have a rule. And that is to ignore praise and embrace criticism. So I’m really not ... I never tried to seek compliments, it is generally dead end.”
- Tyler Oakley (Video no. 13, 2014): *Who is my OTP?*
“Jocelin would like to know: do you plan on having kids? And Jocelin, no matter how hard I try, I cannot get pregnant. Us gays just keep trying and nothing is working. So if you figure it out, yes, I would love to have kids, but until then, I guess I will just keep trying”

Furthermore, all the YouTubers address and involve their audience in other ways as well, such as showing the presents they have received from their fans (Casey Neistat, Video no. 14, 2015; Tyler Oakley, Video no. 10, 2012; Jenna Marbles, Video no. 14, 2014), or asking the viewers to share their opinions and tips with them. For example, Casey Neistat asks his viewers to give feedback on the quality of the video: *“How does the picture quality look? It’s a new camera, I just picked it up today.”* (Video no. 12, 2015). Both Tyler and Bethany Mota say that they enjoy reading books, and that they would love to receive book tips from their viewers (Bethany Mota, Video no. 16, 2016; Tyler Oakley, Video no. 11, 2013). Additionally, all the YouTubers tell their viewers when and where they can meet them in person, thus inviting their viewers to have even closer interactions with them. For example, Jenna Marbles explains that she will be in Melbourne, Australia on March 8th 2014, for a YouTube convention and says: *“For those of you that are in the Melbourne area, I will be there, and I will be looking for you so that I can hug the shit out of you.”* (Video no. 12, 2014). Tyler Oakley promotes his book tour and says that people should not be sad if the VIP tickets are sold out because they may still get a chance to meet him: *“I always bring tons of people backstage after the show, and I bring people up on stage during the show, so anybody that comes, no matter what seat they are in, they will have a chance to meet me”* (Video no. 14, 2014). In video no. 15 (2015), Casey Neistat explains the viewers that he has organized a ‘meet up’ with fans so they can meet him personally, while Bethany Mota promotes her meet-up in the end of video no. 11 (2014), as seen in Figure 4.8.



Figure 4.8 Promotion of Meet-up (Mota, 2014b)

Another interesting theme that the analysis of the empirical data revealed is that all the YouTubers involve their audience by encouraging co-creation. For example, the YouTubers frequently ask the audience to leave a comment with wishes of topics for their next videos or they explicitly mentions in the video that the topic they are talking about has been requested from the audience. This is illustrated by the following examples:

- Bethany Mota (Video no. 15, 2015): *Desk Makeover: DIY Organization + My Essentials!*

“Hope you guys enjoyed that fun little organizational desk makeover, if you guys want me to do another one of these but focused on a different part of my bedroom whether be closet, bookcase ... a different area of your room you want me to focus on? Also thank you to everyone who requested this video. I always read you guys’ tweets and comments, especially when you request a video because I love knowing what you want to see.” [In the video appears the text and screenshots with some of the people’s comments] *“If there is some video you want to see in the future, just let me know and I will do it.”*
- Jenna Marbles (Video no. 4, 2011): *Sluts on Halloween*

“This week like every week, I asked on my Facebook and Twitter what do people want to see from me this week, and for the last two weeks people have been like ‘talk about sluts on Halloween’, and at first I didn't really want to make this video because you, my friend, are talking to a slut on Halloween. But because people kept bombarding my

social media platforms about doing a video on sluts on Halloween, I'm gonna do a video on sluts on Halloween."

Moreover, the YouTubers frequently ask their viewers to comment or create a video response related to the topics the YouTubers' talk about and share it with them. Such as when Jenna Marbles says: *"If you guys want to make a video response or leave a comment on things that you like to do instead of cleaning your room or instead of your grown-up responsibilities, please leave them in the comments or make me a video response. I'd love to post them on my blog"* (Video no. 2, 2011) or when Tyler Oakley says: *"So this week on Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook I asked you guys, if you could add a ridiculous rule to how to be a man to this list, what would it be? And these are some of my favourite responses. [A collage of different comments from Facebook and Tumblr shows on the screen] According to you guys I am just so manly, I'm just the manliest of all men. [...] And if you recall from last week, I showed you my brand new tattoo, and I asked you guys: If you could have any type of tattoo, what would it be? Here are some of my favourite answers."* [Shows a collage of comments from viewers on the screen]. (Video no. 10, 2012) (See Figure 4.9)

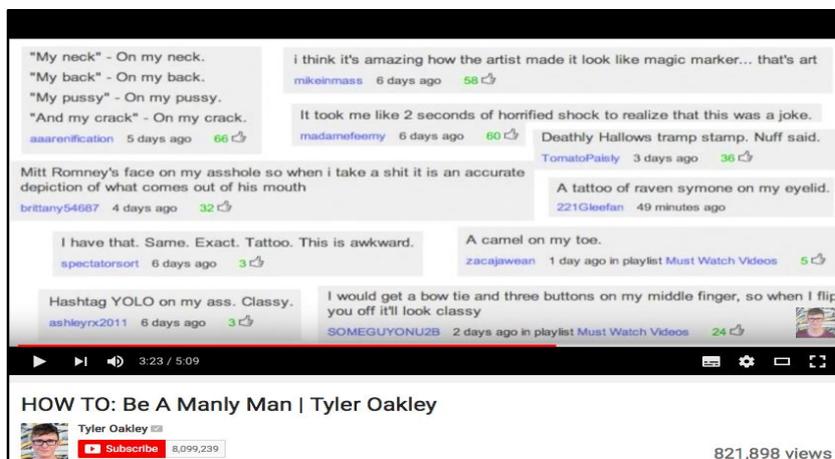


Figure 4.9 Responses to Tyler Oakley's Tattoo Question (Oakley, 2012)

In summary, the empirical findings that have been presented above clearly illustrate that the YouTubers are conscious about engaging their viewers as they actively encourage co-creation, request feedback from their viewers and address them directly by talking to the camera while saying 'you' and 'you guys'. Moreover, the examples also show that the

viewers are active in providing responses, thus, enabling interactions to occur between them and the YouTubers.

4.1.4 Use and Promotion of Brands

As a last note to the empirical findings, we present the theme *Use and Promotion of Brands*. Although this theme was not as frequent or clear as the other identified patterns discussed above, it was considered to be an interesting finding nonetheless. The empirical material revealed that three out of the four YouTubers tend to use and promote other product or service brands in their videos. Thus, it might play a role within personal branding on social media.

Use and Promotion of Brands is the theme that can go partially hand in hand with the ‘giveaways’ type of videos, which were explained earlier within *Promotion of Multiple Social Media Accounts*. By giving away the products it also means that YouTubers promote a brand or company. This is clear on several occasions like the one of **Casey Neistat** during his ‘Question and Answer’ session: [Casey reading the question from a fan] “*More giveaways coming soon? Aaaa, I don’t know, as soon as another fancy electronics company sends me a whole bunch of fancy equipment to give away, there will be another giveaway.*” (Video no. 16, 2016).

Tyler Oakley promotes in one of his videos a website with audiobooks as his viewers requested him to talk more about books. He also explains that he would not do this promotion if he could not receive any benefits for his followers, thus it is promotion covered as a giveaway.

- Video no. 11 (2013): *Tin can challenge (Ft. Hanna Hart)*
“*Ya’ll mentioned that you wanted me to talk about books more, and I mentioned audible.com [The logo pops up] and you guys were like: talk more about books, but I don’t know where to tack it on, so I think I’m just gonna put it right here. [...] And if you want a free book on audible.com, just sign up through audible.com/tyleroakley and you get a free book. Because, I was like, I’m not gonna talk about it if I can’t give you guys free books, so I got the hook up for ya’ll!*”

However, YouTubers promote products and companies not only by doing giveaways, but also by mentioning or showing them in their videos, which can be done intentionally or unintentionally. The most apparent promotion is done by **Bethany Mota** when she talks about any fashion piece or product (in each of her videos) because she uncovers the fact where she bought it, which brand it is and how she feels about it. Specifically, she refers to various brands in the video no. 6 (2012) *'Spring/Summer Clothing Haul!'* or video no. 11 (2014) *'Clothing Haul!: Tilly's, Forever 21, Target & Tobi!'*. Bethany Mota is always positive about the brands and companies she shows and she never gives a negative feedback on them.

- Video no. 11 (2014): *Spring/Summer Clothing Haul!*
"First store. Forever 21. I really wanted to find an oversized denim jacket [...] I just really love how they look. So I just found this one in Forever 21. [...] Then I've got two different pyjamas pieces from Forever 21 because I looove their pyjamas. They are super inexpensive and they are also really really cute."

Furthermore, **Casey Neistat** also mentions in some of his videos companies such as Mercedes (Video no. 3, 2013), Canon (Video no. 12, 2015), Nantucket Nectars (Video no. 9, 2015), Starbucks (Video no. 14, 2015) or American Airlines (Video no. 8, 2015). However, he does not refer to all brands positively. In regards to Canon, he complains about the camera by calling it *"a piece of crap"* and suddenly, he smashes it apart with an axe. He continues by saying: *"Don't buy Canon cameras because they will fail when you need them"* (Video no. 12, 2015).

Lastly, **Tyler Oakley** does not only promote other companies but also his own merchandise products. This can be seen in his video no. 14, where he encourages people to send him pictures of themselves with one of his merchandise products. The selected person will become his 'person of the week' who will appear (as a picture) in his next video.

- Video no. 14 (2014): *The Youtube burn book*
"And if you want to be my person of the week, you can click right there [Points to the lower right corner where there is a picture of a girl, and the picture title says "my person of the week"] and get anything from my store, a shirt, a sweater or a poster. Send me a picture of you being cute with it and I might put you right there [Points to the "my person of the week" area]. It's that simple."

From above examples, it is illustrated that some of the YouTubers tend to show and comment on various branded products or services. However, since this theme was not seen among all the YouTubers, and as it was not a consistent pattern among the YouTubers, (i.e. it only happened occasionally in their videos), this theme is considered to be important, yet, not a clear pattern related to how YouTubers create and build their personal brand.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, we discuss the empirical findings that were presented in Chapter 4 and consider them in terms of the theories presented in Chapter 2. Through the discussion of the empirical findings, we seek to fulfil the overall objective of gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of personal branding on social media. Furthermore, we present our conceptual framework for how successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content, thus providing an answer to the research question of this thesis.

5.1 Establish Personal Brand

One of the main patterns that were identified during the analysis of the collected empirical material is the YouTubers' loyalty to their personal brand profile. This was explained by showing how the YouTubers are consistent in respect to the type of topics they talk about, how they talk about the topics, what personality traits they show to the viewers via the content, and the opinions and values they communicate. Based on this, it can be suggested that there are certain features that constitute a personal brand profile (see Figure 5.1).

Firstly, the personal brand profile should clearly showcase the personality of the individual, such as when the brand profile of Bethany Mota allows her to present herself as a proper and innocent girl. Secondly, the brand profile should consist of what can be considered as 'typical' topics. For example, Tyler Oakley's typical topic is 'himself', as in fact he shares detailed and intimate personal stories with his viewers. Thirdly, a specific tone of voice seems to be an important feature of the personal brand profile, such as Jenna Marbles' sarcastic and self-ironic way of presenting her topics. Moreover, the environment in which the personally branded record his/her videos is an important feature of the brand profile. For example, Casey Neistat always records his videos while he is on the move, which resonates with his personality of being an active and adventurous person. Lastly, the use of artefacts in the videos seems to be a relevant feature of the personal brand profile, such as Jenna Marbles' inclusion of her dogs and Casey Neistat's sunglasses and skateboard. As it was shown in Chapter 4, when used consistently, such artefacts can then become recognizable 'trademarks' of the personally branded individuals.

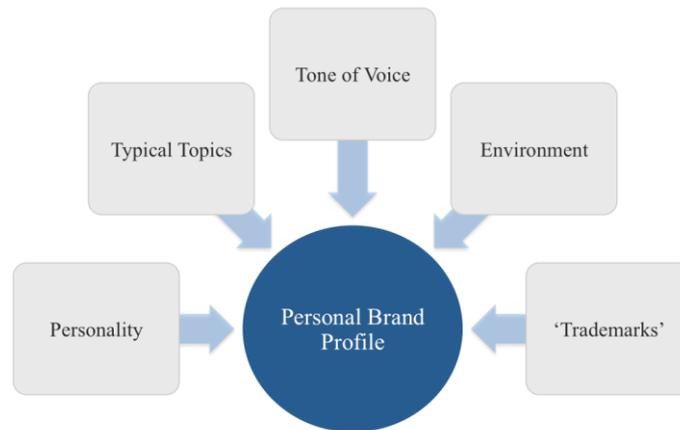


Figure 5.1 Features of Personal Brand Profile

As it was explained in Chapter 2, most advocates of personal branding claim that the process of building a personal brand starts with what Arruda (2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 590) calls the *extract* step, which he relates to the act of identifying “your unique promise of value”. While applying a more common branding term, the ‘unique promise of value’ can also be understood as the act of identifying the personal brand identity. In the context of the successful YouTubers, the creation of a brand profile can then be interpreted as the YouTubers’ way of establishing their personal brand identity. That is, the brand profile is understood as the ‘idea’ behind the content. It is what guides what the YouTubers deliver and how they deliver it. This corresponds to what Ellwood (2000, p. 135) calls ‘brand themes’ and which he explains as the “conceptual driver that all of the elements of the brand message can be connected with”.

For example, Jenna Marbles’ sarcastic tone of voice, unconventional personality and opinions can be interpreted as her unique promise of value, whereas Bethany Mota’s unique promise of value is her innocence and positive attitude while providing tips related to fashion and beauty. It should, however, be noted that since the researchers did not conduct any interviews with the YouTubers, it is challenging to evaluate whether the YouTubers’ creation of a brand profile is a planned and strategic decision, which Arruda’s (2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005) extract theory suggests it should be, or if the creation of a brand profile is merely the result of the YouTubers ‘being themselves’. Yet, from the researchers’ viewpoint, there seems to be a conscious decision behind the content that the YouTubers publish. Moreover, whether it is

planned or not, the pattern in itself is clear: all the successful YouTubers have a brand profile around which their content revolves and to which they all are remarkably loyal.

Furthermore, in Chapter 2 it is highlighted that branding theories are often based on the idea that in order to build a strong brand it is necessary to have a clear brand identity, which should be communicated to a target audience. It is also explained that brand identity is commonly considered to be comprised of the brand's skills, values, personality and promise (Roper & Fill, 2012; Rampersad, 2008; Arruda, 2009; Montoya, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005). Lastly, it is stated that according to Labrecque, Markos & Milne (2011) the effort of building a personal brand identity on social media, relies much on the act of self-presentation. If we then consider the empirical findings from the research, it becomes even more apparent that the YouTubers' loyalty to the brand profile can be understood as their way of establishing and presenting their personal brand identity:

By being loyal to their brand profiles, the YouTubers are able to clearly communicate and present their personalities, values, opinions and 'trademarks' via the content they share. Also, being loyal to the brand profile enables the YouTubers to be consistent in how they present themselves. This is an important point to note since consistency has been suggested to be one of the key qualities of strong personal brands (Arruda, 2009). Consistency is important because it allows the YouTubers to become recognizable and familiar to the audience. From our experience with the YouTubers' content, we observed that because the YouTubers' are consistent in the content they share and how they present themselves, we could easily provide a description of who the YouTubers are, what they stand for and what we can expect each of them to deliver - in other words, their personal brand identities.

Moreover, we noticed that because the YouTubers are skilled at being consistent, we were left with the impression that they are authentic when presenting their brand identities. This was also supported by the fact that the YouTubers occasionally disclosed unfavourable personality traits, such as when Jenna Marbles states that she is the "best procrastinator of all time", which curiously led us to have a more favourable impression of them. The logic behind our reaction was that the YouTubers' disclosure made them seem more 'real' and 'normal'. The YouTubers' authenticity is supported by Severin (2016, n.p.) when he writes "'Bedroom content' has a clear USP over what traditional companies call 'professional/high quality' content: authenticity. While traditional celebrities are connecting with audiences through their

‘made up/scripted’ personas, YouTubers have the upper hand in convincing audiences that they are in fact watching the *real* them. No make up. No scripts. Just an authentic informal chat with millions of subscribers.”

As it is noted in Chapter 2, authenticity has also been suggested to be an important element of personal branding since it has been found to enhance “message receptivity and relationship quality” (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011, p. 48). However, as Chen (2013) discovered in his research, most YouTube performers are very conscious about what they publish. Therefore, the reader of this thesis should be advised that the likelihood that the YouTubers are carefully selecting and editing the content they publish is high, and consequently the authenticity of the brand identity they present could be challenged. On the other hand, it could be argued that the question of whether or not the YouTubers are truly authentic is of lesser importance. What matters is the impressions that the viewers are left with from the content. In particular, the impression the researchers of this thesis were left with was: ‘what you see, is what you get’.

In summary, it can therefore be suggested that the successful YouTubers manage to establish a personal brand by having a clear profile behind the content they publish, which subsequently enables them to publish content that is consistent. In other words, loyalty to the brand profile is of importance when building a personal brand identity on social media. This is also well illustrated by the fact that the successful YouTubers’ content was consistent even when we compared videos that had been published years apart. Moreover, this is important not only because it allows the YouTubers to clearly present their brand identities to the viewers, but also because consistency serves as an advantage in terms of perceived authenticity.

5.2 Enforce Personal Brand

In the previous section, it is suggested that having a clear profile and being loyal to it is an important part of establishing a personal brand on social media. However, while analysing the empirical material, we asked ourselves – is this enough to establish a successful personal brand? This question was important to ask because, albeit publishing content that is aligned with the brand profile is important, the effort will be futile if no one sees it. As Khedher

(2015, p. 20) suggests: “personal branding requires a distinctive persona recognized by wide audience”. In other words, the YouTubers could be posting content all day long, but if it is not visible to the audience, it is unlikely that the content would serve much purpose. For this reason, another pattern that we noticed during the analysis of the data becomes equally important as being loyal to the brand profile, namely *promotion of multiple social media accounts*.

In Chapter 4, we presented our findings related to how the successful YouTubers are all actively promoting their other social media account via their content. What we can draw from this identified theme is two-fold. Firstly, the fact that all of the YouTubers are promoting multiple social media sites via the content they post implies that, when building a personal brand on social media, being active on just one site is not enough. Secondly, the finding suggests that self-promotion, i.e. promoting one’s own social media accounts, is important when building a personal brand on social media. Altogether, these two factors can be summarized and understood as the importance of visibility. That is, by being present and active on multiple social media sites it is likely that the successful YouTubers are able to increase both their reach and their visibility. For example, in one of her videos Jenna Marbles says: “If you guys have any other names for different body parts that you like, you should tweet them at me” (Video no. 12, 2014). So, let’s say that ‘Jane Doe’, who has 200 followers on Twitter, watches Jenna’s’ video and decides to follow up on the request by tweeting a response to Jenna. When Jane does this, she contributes to increasing Jenna’s visibility, because Jane’s tweet will show up in the feed of her 200 Twitter followers. Out of these 200 followers, let us, for example, say that five persons become curious and decide to go on Jenna Marbles’ YouTube channel and check out the *‘Better names for body parts’* video. Now, five persons is not an impressive number; however, if we consider that for every ten persons that respond to Jenna with a tweet the potential number of new subscribers is 50 persons, the effect becomes clearer. Considering that Jenna Marbles currently has more than 15 million subscribers on YouTube, it is easy to grasp why promotion of one’s own social media accounts could have a positive effect in terms of increased visibility and reach.

Moreover, by being present on multiple social media platforms and encouraging the viewers to follow all their channels, the successful YouTubers are able to be visible to their audience in another way as well. If the viewers follow the YouTubers on all their social media accounts, it is likely that the viewers will be subjected to the YouTubers’ content and

communication frequently, as it will show in their social media feeds. In other words, the YouTubers then manage to stay visible and ‘top of mind’ among their viewers. According to Arruda (2009, p. 410) this is another important part of building a personal brand, as “strong brands are constant – always visible to members of the target group – regardless of the setting”.

Thus, while the successful YouTubers establish their personal brand by being loyal to their brand profile, it seems that, by encouraging the viewers to subscribe to their channel and follow them on multiple social media sites, they are also actively enforcing their personal brand. That is, via their content the YouTubers are making an effort to ensure that their brand is constantly visible to the outside world, which in turn enables them to increase their reach and grow their audience.

5.3 Maintain Personal Brand

One of the most significant and repetitive pattern that was discovered is that the YouTubers are interacting with their audience, which allows them to develop relationships between their personal brand and the audience. As it is explained above, YouTubers build such relationships not only via content on YouTube but also by their constant presence and activity on various social media sites such as Twitter or Instagram.

Even though the scope of this thesis does not include an observation of YouTubers’ activity on the aforementioned social media, we could see that they involve their audience by interactions through ‘Question & Answers’ sessions, where YouTubers answer questions from their viewers, organizing so-called ‘Meet ups’ and asking the audience to provide their own opinion or advice, or asking what the audience would like to see in the upcoming videos. All these activities contribute to building the brand relationship, which is arguably one of the most important part of personal branding on social media. Moreover, this supports Biel’s theory (1997, cited in Fill, 2005) that the brand is composed of three features, one of them being brand relationships. Biel (1997, cited in Fill, 2005) emphasizes the importance of brands’ interactions with consumers as it helps build strong relationships. This also corresponds to our findings among the successful YouTubers on how they interact with their audience. For example, by addressing or involving the audience, it is likely that the

Youtubers master to create more personal and authentic ties between them and their audience. This can lead to the audience's impression of knowing the YouTuber very well and, even more, feeling a part of the YouTuber's personal brand, although the relationship is only virtual.

Moreover, when YouTubers involve or encourage their audience to co-create, they show that they care about their audience (i.e. they respond to their demand). In that sense, the successful YouTubers oppose Shepherd's (2005) argument of personal branding being an inside-out branding approach. This means that, according to Shepherd (2005, p. 593), personal branding holds an "unavoidable conflict" as it does not fit with established marketing principles of 'responding to the market's demand', but rather it encourages individuals to "[w]ork with what you've got!" (Peters, 1999, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 593). Yet, from our findings, it seems that the YouTubers have found a way around this issue by involving their audience and encouraging co-creation. In that way, they manage to have a brand-oriented approach, in which they stick to their established personal brand, while also adopting a market-oriented approach of responding to the demand of the market (i.e. the audience).

Nevertheless, the YouTubers are in all occasions the decision-makers and the ones who ultimately decide what will be included in their video in order to align it with their personal brand. Therefore, through involving their audience in any way, they are not only able to build relationships but also to maintain their personal brand. This can be partially linked to the *brand image* (Roper & Fill, 2012; de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011), which is the branding concept that covers the brand relationship and image management. We can to some extent explain that YouTubers manage their image by responding to their audience in their videos, for instance, Casey Neistat answers questions posted by his followers on Twitter; however, we are not able to provide a comprehensive explanation within image management of the respective YouTubers, since we did not observe their activity beyond the video content they publish on YouTube.

In conclusion, the researchers' understanding of this finding is that successful YouTubers maintain their personal brand by interactions with their audience, which allows them to build strong brand relationships. Furthermore, by encouraging co-creation, YouTubers are able to respond to the demands of their audience and subsequently remaining relevant, yet loyal to their brand profile.

5.4 Personal Branding on Social Media

In the previous section, we have discussed our empirical findings in terms of related theories. In turn, this has enabled us to enhance our understanding of personal branding on social media and furthermore to reveal how successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content.

We support the fact that branding can be extended to humans (Khedher, 2015; Chen, 2013; Gandini, 2016; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Parmentier, Fischer & Reuber, 2013; Harris & Rae, 2011; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005) and thus we acknowledge personal branding on social media. This is because we can notice from our findings that personally branded YouTubers share the same elements with conventional branding of a product or a company. Similarly, they establish the brand, communicate the brand and develop relationship between the brand and the target audience.

We further suggest that a social media presence in itself generates online personalities; however, this is not the same as being personally branded. In order to be personally branded, certain key success factors need to be employed, as the successful YouTubers do, because it enables to be acknowledged and recognized by a wider audience. Therefore, personal branding is understood as a process where the individuals mature into being a brand. As their audience (in terms of subscribers rate) grow, the stronger the brand becomes. However, to assure said growth, it is necessary to produce personally branded content that is clear, consistent and constant, as suggested by Arruda (2009).

Based on all our findings and the above discussion, we propose a framework for personal branding on social media, which is a way to explain how successful personal brands on social media are created and built. The framework is presented in Figure 5.2.

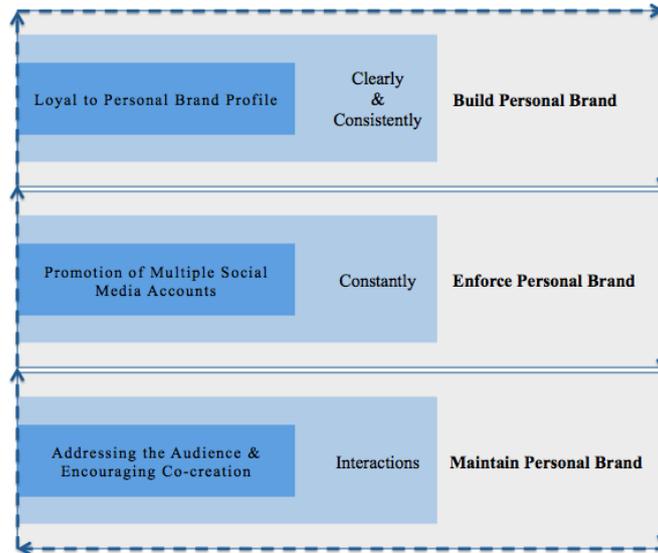


Figure 5.2 Personal Branding on Social Media

The framework represents all the important elements of how to create and build a personal brand on social media via content. The inner blue boxes represent the patterns that were addressed in Chapter 4 and which can be understood as the key success factors. The outer blue boxes represent the communication features that accompany the identified key success factors. Lastly, the grey boxes that surround the key success factors and communication features represent the resulted actions. Altogether, these elements are what form a successful and strong personal brand on social media, which is explained in the following paragraphs.

In order to establish a personal brand on social media, it is essential to have a clear brand profile that captures the personal brand identity and to stay loyal to it. This should be done by publishing content that is aligned with the brand profile and which allows the brand to be communicated clearly and consistently to the audience. Consequently, this will enable the personally branded individuals to clearly show their personality and what they stand for, and to become recognizable to their audience.

The personal brand should be enforced constantly by promotion of multiple social media accounts. The use of multiple social media sites is important because it increases the individuals' visibility among the audience.

The personal brand should be maintained by interacting with the audience. This means that the personally branded should address the audience, as well as encourage co-creation. This is also important because it will allow the personally branded to remain relevant to the audience, thus maintaining the personal brand.

It is essential to note that although it may resemble a process in which each activity is done step-by step, this framework should be understood as a complex on-going process without a 'finish line'. This is why the three outer boxes are surrounded by continuous arrows, as all the elements of the framework should be employed simultaneously. In turn, this will result in the creation of a holistic, strong and successful personal brand.

In summary, successful personal brands are created and built via content by mastering all three main activities, i.e. *Establish Personal Brand*, *Enforce Personal Brand*, and *Maintain Personal Brand*. Doing this clearly, consistently and constantly creates the impression of being personal and thus authentic. This goes along with the concepts of Arruda (2009), Montoya (2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005), Labrecque, Markos & Milne (2011), and Rampersad (2008), even though the authenticity could be challenged by the fact that a personal brand is managed on social media and thus what is truly authentic can be hidden behind the social media account (Shepherd, 2005). Nevertheless, the point is that successful personal brands are communicated in an authentic manner, which is an essential aspect of personal branding, as suggested by all mentioned advocates. Yet, there is a catch that personally branded individuals should consider in respect to authenticity. Although our framework is based on personal branding on social media, it should be followed also in the 'off-line' context. For example, all successful YouTubers of this study promoted so-called 'meet-ups', where their fans can meet them in real life. In other cases, the successful personally branded are likely to encounter fans in other settings, such as in the street or in the grocery store. In these cases, it is equally important that the personally branded stays loyal to his/her own brand profile. This is also supported by Montoya and Arruda (2005; 2005; cited in Shepherd, 2005) who claim that personally branded individuals should live their brands, which means that as a personally branded individual "you need to align your brand environment - that is, everything that surrounds you - with your personal brand" (Arruda, 2005, cited in Shepherd, 2005, p. 599). Moreover, this goes against the theory of Khedher (2015), who suggests that the method of personal branding is corresponding to Goffman's (1959, cited in Khedher, 2015) 'front and back regions'. As it is evident from above, we argue

that in order to be successful the personally branded individuals should never leave front regions where they seek to make favourable impressions. In extreme situations, it could also mean that being successful with personal branding on social media can strengthen individuals' personalities because from now on they have to live according to their personal brand so as not to disappoint their audience.

The last point that should be addressed is that this thesis has proposed key success factors of personal branding on social media from a perspective in which we consider the motivations for engaging in personal branding not to be limited to professional advancement. However, since most advocates and researchers of personal branding consider this practise to be mainly the domain of professionals seeking career advancements, it should also be illustrated how our framework can be applied in such a situation.

On social media, the currently most used site for professionals is LinkedIn (Milanovic, 2015). When engaging in personal branding on LinkedIn, it is arguably equally relevant to have a clear brand profile and be loyal to it. That is, in order to showcase their brand, individuals should publish content that is aligned with their career goals. Secondly, being active on multiple social media sites, particularly on Twitter, is imaginably also important in this context as it can enhance one's visibility in a competitive job market. Lastly, addressing the audience and encouraging co-creation is a key part of having a profile on LinkedIn, in which the site is constructed so that people can receive recommendations and acknowledgements from their peers. In other words, whether the objective is career advancement or personal success, our framework for personal branding on social media serves as a valuable guideline when it comes to personal branding on social media via content.

6 Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the major findings of this thesis and provides the answer to our research question. This allows us to discuss several ethical implications as well as to provide managerial recommendation. In the last note, we propose potential areas of future research within personal branding on social media.

This thesis has investigated the phenomenon of personal branding on social media via content. Through the method of content analysis of 72 videos of four different YouTubers, the researchers were able to identify several patterns relevant to the research question:

How do successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content?

In order to answer this question, a conceptual framework has been developed based on the empirical findings of our research. The framework suggests that successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via content by employing three key success factors. That is, in order to create and build a successful personal brand it is necessary to have a clear brand profile and stay loyal to it. The analysis of the empirical material of this thesis revealed that all the YouTubers are skilled at being consistent in their content, and as a result they come across as more authentic. Moreover, their loyalty to the brand profile also allows them to clearly showcase their personalities, values and opinions - i.e. their brand identity. That way, the YouTubers are able to establish their personal brand.

Secondly, the framework proposes that it is imperative to make the personal brand constantly visible to the audience. The successful YouTubers of this study do this by being present on multiple social media sites and actively promoting these via their content. Therefore, when engaging in personal branding on social media it is necessary to have a presence and being active on multiple social media sites, in addition to the one that is selected as the main channel. For instance, in the context of the YouTubers, YouTube is their main channel for communicating their brand, yet, they all actively use Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to increase their visibility and thus to enforce their personal brand among their audience. This is important because the wider audience they have, the more recognized and popular they will be.

Lastly, in order to create and build a successful personal brand on social media, it is also necessary to interact with the audience. The successful YouTubers do this by addressing the viewers and

encouraging co-creation of content. This enables the YouTubers to build relationships and thus to create strong ties between them and their loyal audience.

Overall, we understand that personal branding on social media is a complex on-going process in which an individual should include all three key success factors simultaneously. That is, when implemented altogether, these factors are what allow individuals to build a strong and holistic personal brand on social media. Furthermore, since the key success factors are examined and supported by existing branding theories, this thesis also serves as an answer to Shepherd's (2005) question of whether or not marketing can put its own seal of approval on the potentially crucial ideas of personal branding. Based on the conclusions outlined above, it is argued that the field of marketing, and branding in particular, can be extended to include the phenomenon of branding of humans. In that sense, it can be argued that this thesis does not only serve as a contribution to theories on personal branding, but also as a contribution to the field of branding as a whole.

6.1 Ethical Implications

After having analysed the phenomenon of personal branding on social media, we are able to draw several ethical implications. As this phenomenon is rather new and unexplored, there is an open space for the discovery of various insights that might have either positive or negative societal effects.

Looking at the phenomenon from a 'top-down' perspective, we also have to consider various consequences of social media being a rapidly growing internet trend (Morrison, 2014). Social media enable individuals to create customized profiles that are filled with personal content. However, since the content is placed freely on the internet without any control, it is important that the viewers - 'consumers' of the content - are constantly prudent towards it. This is also the case with successful YouTubers who are able to attract wider audience through their personally branded content. Such YouTubers create authentic and personal experiences for their viewers by sharing immediate emotions or opinions, personal stories, and addressing their audience directly, which might let the audience feel that they know the YouTubers very well, almost as their real-life friends. However, the millions of people who are watching the YouTubers' videos should be aware of the fact that what is behind the camera stays hidden. Because the YouTubers are able to portray themselves as authentic, it also leads to have an influential power, which the audience should be aware of. Severin (2016, n.p.) supports this

by saying: “YouTubers talk to their camera as if they were talking to an individual person. Instead of broadcasting to their audiences, they are talking with them. This leads to an increased degree of trust, and therefore power to influence.” Therefore, the responsibility is two-folded. YouTubers should be self-aware in regards to content they produce, and the audience should be attentive by having on the top of their mind that the relationship with the YouTubers is virtual and nothing can be taken for granted. Yet, this might be challenging as the audience of YouTubers can vary across generations starting with teenagers, who are still innocent kids. Especially, when YouTubers promote various brands and products, there is a high probability that their younger audience is unable to recognize their marketing intentions. For example, Bethany Mota with her personal brand profile can be considered as a role model for young girls. She always shows what she wears, how she does her make-up and she does not forget to mention where the products are bought. Her comments on products and items can be perceived as more authentic than reading a fashion magazine and thus Bethany Mota’s content stimulates the audience to consumption. On the other hand, Jenna Marbles does not promote any products in her video-content but she curses in almost every video. Her influential power might therefore be of a different kind, but still present. Therefore, YouTubers’ strength to influence their audience is incessant as well as pervasive. In this sense, they are not only successful YouTubers mastering their personal brands, but also socially empowered individuals. Consequently, they, as well as other successfully branded personalities, should acknowledge and take responsibility for the influential power they hold.

Lastly, at the very beginning of this thesis it was explained that the globalized world we live in has created pressures that suggest that in order to succeed, people need to ensure that they ‘stand out’ from the crowd. By providing a set of key success factors of personal branding on social media, this thesis serves as a confirmation and enforcement of these pressures as it implicitly supports the idea that individuals should work to brand themselves. Moreover, suggesting a set of key success factors arguably pose both positive and negative ethical implications. That is, the guidance can aid in relieving some of the pressures and difficulties, as individuals now have a ‘recipe’ to follow. However, the recipe in itself may enhance the pressures, because it can raise the expectations to personal branding and to the personally branded individuals.

6.2 Managerial Recommendation

As explained above, the influential power of YouTubers is evident and therefore we deem it important to address it also in a business context. In this section, we refer back to our fourth pattern, which was introduced in Section 4.1.1, i.e. Use and Promotion of Brands. We noticed that YouTubers intentionally or unintentionally include branded products or services in their content. This inclusion of brands can be both positive and negative for the brand owners such as in the situation when Casey Neistat expresses his dissatisfaction with Canon. He made a negative comment towards Canon's product in a video, which has been watched by more than 1 million people on YouTube. Therefore, Canon as a company should certainly be aware of the potential impact such a comment may have on its business. However, it is important to note that not all YouTubers refer to brands that explicitly. Sometimes the YouTubers would show brands that they use, yet not comment on them. Although this may not be perceived as a direct recommendation, it could potentially still influence the viewers in the sense that they become aware of the brand, either consciously or subconsciously.

Even though this theme of using and promoting brands did not turn out to be a clear pattern among the successful YouTubers, it was still considered to be a noteworthy finding in respect to the potential implication it holds for companies. This is also confirmed by Berthon *et al.* (2012), who explain that social media shifted value production and power away from the firm to the consumer. In this sense, successful YouTubers, who have millions of subscribers, are arguably more influential in shaping a brand image than the companies who actually own the brand. Therefore, our managerial recommendation is that marketing managers need to stay aware of what is being said about the brand by successful YouTubers and other branded personalities on social media with a wide audience. Marketing professionals should acknowledge that such an audience can also be considered as a strong community, following and supporting the YouTuber when needed. It is possible that a successful YouTuber is able to turn not only an individual, but an entire community either in favour or against a company, which can significantly impact its reputation and consequently its sales.

On the other hand, companies could utilize the influential power of YouTubers as a new way of advertising. This could be done by including successful YouTubers in both offline and online marketing campaigns. The latter should be understood as an attempt to 'push' the product or service into the content of the successful YouTubers. If companies succeed with

this tactic, they might be able to control the brand communication to some extent, although the YouTuber is the content creator and, ultimately, the decision maker. However, companies that choose to employ this tactic should also be aware of the pitfalls. If an influencer, such as a successful YouTuber, promotes a brand and it is perceived as pure advertisement rather than a genuine recommendation, the authenticity and reputation of both the influencer and the promoted brand may be at risk.

In summary, the managerial recommendation of this thesis is that marketing professionals should under no circumstances underestimate YouTubers as someone sitting in their bedroom, playing with a camera. YouTubers and other personally branded individuals on social media who have millions of followers should be acknowledged for the influential power they hold. Hence, we recommend that companies employ a procedure in which they regularly scan the social media sphere for influencers such as the successful YouTubers. Not only will that allow companies to detect potential threats to their business, but also enable them to identify opportunities in terms of influencers that can be advantageous to collaborate with.

6.3 Future Research

This thesis has investigated how successful YouTubers create and build their personal brand via their content. This has also contributed to gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of personal branding on social media as a whole. Moreover, this thesis has revealed potential areas within personal branding on social media that would be beneficial to explore further.

As outlined in Chapter 3, this thesis is based on the investigation of content posted on the social media site YouTube. Although the results of our research are arguably transferrable and equally relevant when it comes to personal branding on other social media sites, it could be fruitful to conduct a study that considers the content published by personally branded individuals on other social media sites. This is due to the fact that the present research revealed that the YouTubers utilize several social media sites in order to brand themselves. Investigating the content posted on multiple social media sites by the personally branded individuals could possibly provide an even deeper and more cohesive understanding of the

phenomenon, as it would allow researchers to compare how individuals adapt their personally branded content to various social media sites.

Furthermore, the scope of this thesis was narrowed to the investigation of content posted by the YouTubers, and only them. However, since the research revealed that the YouTubers are very active in involving their viewers by encouraging co-creation, it could be argued that a research that includes the investigation of the audience's comments is beneficial. This type of addition to the present thesis could potentially provide valuable insights to how the audience perceives and responds to the content of personally branded individuals and, consequently, enhance the understanding of how personally branded individuals build their brand through co-creation. Moreover, a study that considers the perceptions of the audience would also allow researchers to explore why some personally branded individuals are more appealing than others, even when the brand profile is similar. Since the present research has not considered the perceptions of the viewers, it is likely that our proposed framework can be strengthened if it also includes insights from the perspective of the audience.

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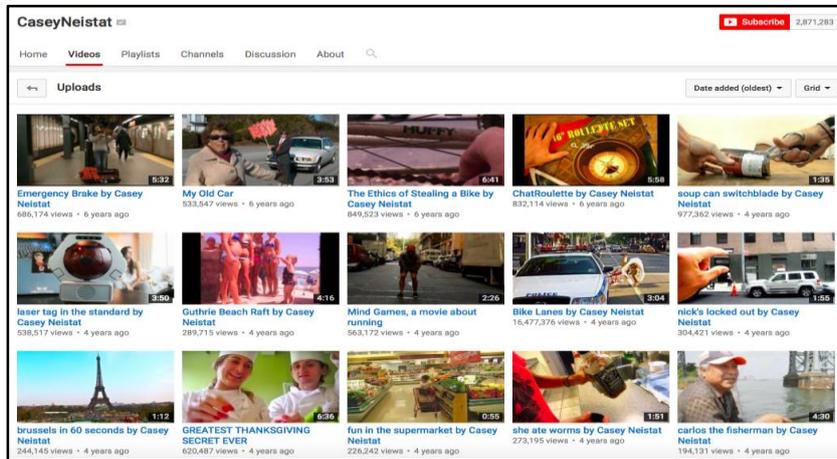
Appendix 1

The table provides a short introduction to the selected YouTubers based on the data from YouTube's statistics Social Blade per 18 April 2016.

	Jenna Marbles	Bethany Mota	Tyler Oakley	Casey Neistat
Subscriber Rank by Social Blade	19th	59th	89th	504th
No. of Subscribers	15,967,953	9,983,592	8,078,352	2,746,501 2,794,399 (23 April 2016)
No. of views	1,984,113,749	840,963,733	569,484,260	610,399,868
No. of Videos	294	432	412	513
Joined YouTube	2010	2009	2007	2010
Country of Origin	USA	USA	USA	USA
Channel Type	Comedy	Howto	Entertainment	People
Topic	Ironic videos about being a Millennial woman.	Style, travel, comedy, beauty, and cooking.	Biographical accounts related to being an openly gay young man.	Everyday life as a husband, father, traveller, adventurer and filmmaker.
Commercial Deals	Hired as stand-up comedian and speaker for various events. Hired as a radio hostess, and has her own line of dog toys.	Own clothing brand and has figured on the television show Dancing with the Stars.	Figured on The Ellen DeGeneres Show and The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. Stars in a documentary about his life, and has released an autobiography of short essays.	Hired by Nike to make commercial video for the brand.

Appendix 2

Example of the video archive of Casey Neistat's YouTube channel per 2016.



Appendix 3

The table provides information about the videos that were selected for the pilot study.

	Video	Published	No. of Views	Likes	Dislikes
Bethany Mota	Cute and Comfy Outfits for School! + DIY's	14.9.2015	3,359,899	134,230	2,998
	Spring Guide! Beach Essentials, Sweatproof makeup + more!	8.4.2015	4,973,850	217,649	3,843
Jenna Marbles	Thoughts From A Bathtub	11.2.2016	2,664,990	136,288	1,809
	Oops I'm In Tokyo	25.11.2015	1,021,244	41,995	357
Casey Neistat	BAD IDEA	11.4.2016 (a)	1,214,292	46,641	621
	i never get this ANGRY	1.4.2016 (b)	1,470,928	58,451	1,040
Taler Oakley	MY FAVORITE THINGS (+ GIVEAWAY!) Tyler Oakley	29.9.2015	791,282	59,556	366
	DEAR BASIC BITCHES	26.1.2016	1 004 813	94 665	776

Appendix 4

No. 2	CODING MANUAL
YouTuber	Jenna Marbles
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvHwh9O9Tsg
Video Headline	Things to do instead of cleaning your room
Number of Views	12,304,850
Publishing Date	23.5.2011
Date of Analysing	26.4.2016
Themes	Description
	<p>Appearance: White top, torso and face visible. Make-up on. No introduction, just starts saying: "Ok, so for anyone that's never been to my house before, uhm my living is like a hot mess, HOT mess" (Emphasizes Hot mess by repeating it, raising eyebrows and rolling eyes) "And I'm also like the best procrastinator of all time, right now I think I have like maybe the dirtiest room on planet earth" Camera shows the room, which is full of clothes and other stuff everywhere. Camera goes back to her, shouting "aaaah" and laying on the bed. Communicating: I don't like this mess. Video clipped back to the same situation as the intro. "I really don't feel like cleaning it, I don't. I don't feel like cleaning it, I don't feel like doing my laundry, I don't feel like doing any of that, so here's the list of things that I'd rather do than cleaning my room". 1. Shows a clip of her with her dog Kermit, on her head, while she says "Kermit hat", 2) clip of her with her dog Marbles on her head "Marbles hat", 3. Holding two stuffed animals (lions) voiceover saying "double lions", 4) Making a smoothie = "Beer smoothie", 5. Jenna with a banana peel on her face, "banana face", 6. Jenna scratching her chin = grow a beard (says "no" in reference to still no beard there). 7. Jenna holds up both hands that have popcorns stuck to them = popcorn hands, 8. Jenna is applying peanut butter on her face = Peanut butter face, 9. Add jelly to her face = Peanut butter and Jelly face, 10. Peanut butter and Jelly in her face, with toilet paper roll on her head and toilet paper in her face = peanut butter and jelly toilet paper hat face, 11. Chili face (has added chili to her face), 12. Has chili in her face still, holds up a pack of pasta, "Noodles punch chili face", 13. Puts Kermit the dog in an (cold) oven = "bake a Kermit", 14. Puts Marbles the dog in an (cold) over = "bake a marbles" 15. Close up of face, spitting out a green mash = Make baby food 16. Eating chocolate = eat chocolate 17. Holds a piece of chocolate on a piece of aluminum foil with a lighter underneath (resembling the process of inhaling narcotics) = smoke chocolate 18. Head over toilet = throw up from smoking chocolate, 19. Fake crying in front of camera = cry about your life. 20. Dog licking peanut butter from her face = peanut butter-dog face, 21. Snort chocolate (has brown cocoa powder under her nose, pretends to be sniffing chocolate) 22. Throw-up from snorting chocolate. 23. Wearing a turtle backpack and a eye band while spinning on the floor= turtle-backpack-spin, 24. Fake crying and fake gaging = cry about your life and throw-up. "So yeah, that's what I did today instead of cleaning my room...it was a productive day". New clip: Holding the dog. If you guys like this video, make sure to subscribe to my channel. A yellow box pops up saying "subscribe to my channel here". Also promoted her Vlog channel - points the right, a new box pops up saying "vlog channel".</p>

	"And an other random video channel that you can subscribe to as well for more videos. A blue box pops up saying "other channel". " And if you guys want to make a video response or leaving a comment on things that you like to do instead of cleaning your room or instead of your grown-up responsibilities, [laughs] please leave them in the comments or make me a video response. I love to post them on my blog" At the end- holds dog in front of camera and makes a high pitch voice to indicate that it is "the dog speaking", saying "we make new videos every Wednesday"
Showing emotions	Camera goes back to her, shouting "aaaah" and laying on the bed. Communicating: I don't like this mess. Shows annoyance with having a messy room, but explains
Showing personality	Ok, so for anyone that's never been to my house before, uhm my living is like a hot mess, HOT mess". (Emphasizes Hot mess by repeating it, raising eyebrows and rolling eyes) "And I'm also like the best procrastinator of all time, right now I think I have like maybe the dirtiest room on planet earth" Camera shows the room, which is full of clothes and other stuff everywhere. Video then shows several "useless" things that she would rather do than clean her room, giving an impression that she is a young woman who is not wanting to take the responsibilities of grown-up life. She wants to have fun and does not want to worry about chores. Underlined when she says: "I really don't feel like cleaning it, I don't. I don't feel like cleaning it, I don't feel like doing my laundry, I don't feel like doing any of that" She also show her ironic personality when she says: "So yeah, that's what I did today instead of cleaning my room...it was a productive day"
Uncovering	The video reveals that Jenna is a messy person, who would go far in order to avoid having to clean.
Expressing/Sharing personal stories	Ok, so for anyone that's never been to my house before, uhm my living is like a hot mess, HOT mess".
Expression of values and opinions	The message that comes across from this video is that Jenna is a person who values fun much more than responsibilities. From the video and all the things she lists that she would rather do than cleaning signals that she would basically do anything else than cleaning her room, such as smearing chili on her face or "sniffing" chocolate.
Setting the scene/Introduction to the content of the video	Ok, so for anyone that's never been to my house before, uhm my living is like a hot mess, HOT mess" (Emphasizes hot mess by repeating it, raising eyebrows and rolling eyes) "And I am also like the best procrastinator of all time, right now I think I have like maybe the dirtiest room on planet earth"
Recognizable personal 'trademarks'	The two dogs, Marbles and Kermit feature in the video frequently.
Use/promotion of products/brands	No
Use of positive laden words	No
Use of music	No
Exemplifying recognizable situation for target audience	Not wanting to clean your room is likely a familiar situation among most of her target audience, and the feeling that you would do nearly anything else to avoid it. The fact that she illustrates all these things that she would rather do instead of cleaning creates a humorous aura of the video and its content.
Encouragement of 'co-creation'	And if you guys want to make a video response or leaving a comment on things that you like to do instead of cleaning your room or instead of your grown-up responsibilities, [laughs] please leave them in the comments or make me a video response. I love to post

	them on my blog"
Use of multiple channels and promotion of these	If you guys like this video, make sure to subscribe to my channel." A yellow box pops up saying: "subscribe to my channel here". Also promoted her vlog channel - points the right, a new box pops up saying "vlog channel". "And an other random video channel that you can subscribe to as well for more videos" A blue box pops up saying "other channel". " At the end- holds dog in front of camera and makes a high pitch voice to indicate that it is "the dog speaking", saying "we make new videos every Wednesday"
Addressing the audience	"If you guys like this video" "if you guys want to make a video response"

No. 8	CODING MANUAL
YouTuber	Casey Neistat
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vjhkq_4WQWU
Video Headline	Penny Boarding the streets of NYC
Number of Views	594,885
Publishing Date	14.4.2015
Date of Analysing	27.4.2016
Themes	Description
<p>He is rather talking in the video himself, always turning camera on him, most of the times, no voice in the background.</p>	<p>Filming a store. "This is one of the most curious stores in Lower Manhattan. You can get a haircut, shoes, woman does not speak English and she can give you whatever massage you want. I was there once and they offered me all kinds of strange services". Then the introduction: CN Vlog_020. City view, music, time-lapse of the city, skateboarders, street, Casey in the video, very close face with sun glasses, he talks immediately about his son's birthday, he will be 17 so it is the same age when Casey had him. "That is crazy, at least theoretically, I could be a grandfather right now." Then showing how he cuddles with his baby girl, glasses on the top of the head, jacket, showing his daughter "it is my daughter, she is not 17" - textual format. Saying her bye. Going to his office. Sharing emotions: 3 days in the office this week, which is stressful. Music. Office. Colleagues. "Smells like burning in here". Unpackaging. Expressing that he received some invitation to some party but the letter was heavy and it cost 2 something dollars - that is crazy! Unpackaging post: American Airlines showing – “these are the best”. “Some best service”. Showing it. Coffee making. “Suck machine” but he ordered better one. No glasses in the office. Taking skate and saying that his wife and daughter are somewhere in the park so instead of taking a smoking break he sometimes go (saying he is not a smoker and instead of this bad habit he goes to his family) to see his wife and kid. Skating via NYC streets. Greeting people. Meeting his wife and kid. Then back in the office. Showing some work. Without glasses. Showing his office and surveillance monitor. Lot of monitors in the office. Showing them. He is explaining without glasses why he has these, "I am not a crazy person", but his office has no windows and when he has the TV monitors he knows what is going on. And it helps him to focus. Meeting some guys asking them about drone. "I love the drone. These things are like puppets but tremendous responsibility. I was in the office. Pure work day, I could not film all the time with family because I had to be present." But he is talking about his vlogging without glasses. He is just vlogging what he is up to no matter how interesting or not interesting he determines to be. City view time-lapse. Late night leaving office. Showing he is leaving again late. He goes to dinner meeting. No glasses. Going via streets. Meeting. Dinner. Commenting: "Good dinner". “It’s late but I am finally heading home, long day.” Screen subscribe, Instagram, THANK YOU FOR WATCHING.</p>
Showing emotions	<p>That it is crazy imagination if his son would have kid as he had him in the age he just turned to be. Then about the stressful days being only 3 days in the office. Crazy that the letter was so heavy and just because of that format it cost so much. They spent money on it. Good feeling about the airlines. bad coffee machine, happy with daughter, long day, "I love drone."</p>
Showing personality	<p>Non smoker, family value, hard working, father, skateboarder</p>

Uncovering	Several times without sunglasses, with daughter, in the office, while walking to a dinner. Talking about his family, showing co-workers
Expressing/Sharing personal stories	Sharing a story about the shop and then about his son's birthday. About the job. Guiding through the day, personal life. So he expresses it constantly in the video.
Expression of values and opinions	Family guy, hard working, he implicitly shows that he does not smoke but he rather spent time with family instead of going for smoke break
Setting the scene/Introduction to the content of the video	Random shop that has nothing to do with following video content, only living in NYC, then introduction, white text, number of the vlog, city, his name, time laps, music, city view, appears in the video and sharing his story and feelings, then guiding throughout the day
Recognizable personal 'trademarks'	Sunglasses, jacket, skate, office, family, introduction and end
Use/promotion of products/brands	Drone of the 'guys', unpackaging invitation, coffee machine, AMERICAN AIRLINES! Talking about great services: "They are the best"
Use of positive laden words	"Best services, they are the best" – American Airlines, "I love drone"
Use of music	Using music throughout the video
Exemplifying recognizable situation for target audience	Going to work, family time
Encouragement of 'co-creation'	Any
Use of multiple channels and promotion of these	Subscribe to YouTube, Instagram
Addressing the audience	"THANK YOU FOR WATCHING"

No. 13	CODING MANUAL
YouTuber	Tyler Oakley
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1l_clzguR7g
Video Headline	Who is my OTP?
Number of Views	1,589,248
Publishing Date	28.4.2014
Date of Analysing	28.4.2016
Themes	Description
	<p>Tyler is in his room, in front of the camera. He has dyed his hair blonder, and he has new glasses. He is wearing a sweater with the "Trevor project" logo on it. (The Trevor project is an American organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24) "Hi everyone, my name is Tyler Oakley, and (starts clapping and singing the words) it is time for another Q & A." A print screen of a twitter comment pops up, where a woman asks if Tyler Oakley is Jesus. Tyler replies: Do I look like someone who would only have 12 followers? Eh, no!" Question from Jocelin: Do you plan on having kids? Tyler replies: Jocelin, no matter how hard I try, I cannot get pregnant. Us gays just keep trying and nothing is working. So if you figure it out, yes, I would love to have kids, but until then, I guess I will just keep trying." Kerry: Would you ever adopt a Dorrito and raise it as your own? Tyler: "Well, considering that procreation is not a viable solution for all the children that I would like to have, yes, adoption is one hundred percent probably what I'm gonna do, but I would probably not adopt a Dorrito, because for some reason in our society it is frowned upon eating your children. So that's just not gonna happen. Vivia: Have you ever been caught picking a booger in public? Tyler: No I don't think I have, but today I'm gonna tell you a story about the day I was walking with Corey and I picked my nose behind his back and I was punished for it by getting a bloody nose. Everyone knows I have sharp boogers, so I get a bloody nose if I pick it, and I get a bloody nose if I don't. Damned if I do, Damned if I don't. That's the struggle. Maggie: Any items from Naturebox that you are raving about? Tyler: Maggie, girl, let me tell you. Ya'll know I talk about naturebox every month now. Basically all you gotta do is go to naturebox.com/tyler and you can pick out a whole bunch of healthy food. It's all like healthy snacks but they taste good. No trans-fat or any of that stuff. You pick out any size of box that you want and they send you that box full of goodies. And it's the best thing ever because you don't have to go to a store. It just shows up at your door every month, it's the best. And ya'll know i don't talk about something without giving you a hook up, so they let me give you a 50% off your first box, so just use naturebox.com/tyler, that is the hook-up. You are welcome in advance. The link is below. Pam: What is the first word that comes to mind when you think of a cucumber? Tyler: Uuhmm..Cold? Em: How long until you reveal the project you are working on? Tyler: Patience! All good things come to those who wait, and it is really really really fucking good. I want to tell you right now, but I can't. (Seems frustrated for this). It's good. Trust me, it's worth waiting for. Jeffrey: What is it like to have Corey back in your life on a daily basis? Tyler: It is actually the best thing in the world, and I just love having him in my town now. If you don't know, Corey is my bestie. He lives here now, and I adore him, and he is part of the secret project." Kat: will you pee on me? Tyler: Kat would like to know if I would pee on her. What in the actual heck Kat? Kristen: Who is your OTP? Tyler: For those of you who don't know, an OTP is a One True Pairing. It is two persons that you would just love to see</p>

	<p>together, and my OTP right now is this person right here: *shows a picture of a twitter post from a person who writes "can't believe America is 2013 years old"* *Tyler then shows a comment to the first picture, where a person writes "no, that's how old the world is you idiot"* Tyler says: What a pairing. Marina: How does one pass physics? Tyler: I would have to ask you the same thing, because lord knows, mama did not pass physics. I have no fucking clue. Nisa: What is Whitney Huston's favorite type of coordination? Tyler: And I would probably have to say: (sings) And I will always love you. Riley: How was your day today? Tyler: Riley, thank you for asking. My day was fabulous. I did so many cool things for you guys that I can't tell you about, but I want to tell you about, but they are amazing so just stay tuned. But yeah, it was really good, and thank you for asking. It really actually warms my heart when people asks, because you know what, you realize I'm a human, and not an entity that you can ask to have pee on them, (laughs) unless that's what you're into. The screen zooms out, Tyler encourages the viewers to like the video and subscribe. He promotes other videos in his channel, and he also has a new feature of "person of the week". Hope you have a fabulous life, and I will see you guys next time. Music plays in the background. Video ends with Tyler snapping his finger, singing the same song as in the beginning: time for Q&A.</p>
Showing emotions	<p>"Hi everyone, my name is Tyler Oakley, and (starts clapping and singing the words) it is time for another Q & A. Seems excited and happy. = My day was fabulous. I did so many cool things for you guys that I can't tell you about, but I want to tell you about, but they are amazing so just stay tuned. But yeah, it was really good, and thank you for asking. It really actually warms my heart when people asks, because you know what, you realize I'm a human, and not an entity that you can ask to have pee on them (Laughs), unless that's what you're into.</p>
Showing personality	<p>Jeffrey: What is it like to have Corey back in your life on a daily basis? Tyler: It is actually the best thing in the world, and I just love having him in my town now. If you don't know, Corey is my bestie. He lives here now, and I adore him, and he is part of the secret project." "Well, considering that procreation is not a viable solution for all the children that I would like to have, yes, adoption is one hundred percent probably what I'm gonna do, but I would probably not adopt a Dorrito, because for some reason in our society it is frowned upon eating your children. So that's just not gonna happen. He answers some of the questions with attitude and humour. Marina: How does one pass physics? Tyler: "I would have to ask you the same thing because lord knows, mama did not pass physics. I have no fucking clue."</p>
Uncovering	
Expressing/Sharing personal stories	<p>But today I'm gonna tell you a story about the day I was walking with Corey and I picked my nose behind his back and I was punished for it by getting a bloody nose. Everyone knows I have sharp boogers, so I get a bloody nose if I pick it, and I get a bloody nose if I don't. Damned if I do, Damned if I don't. That's the struggle.</p>
Expression of values and opinions	<p>It really actually warms my heart when people asks, because you know what, you realize I'm a human, and not an entity that you can ask to have pee on them, (laughs) unless that's what you're into. He is wearing a sweater with the "Trevor project" logo on it. (The Trevor project is an American organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24)</p>
Setting the scene/Introduction to the content of the video	<p>"Hi everyone, my name is Tyler Oakley, and (starts clapping and singing the words) it is time for another Q & A."</p>
Recognizable personal 'trademarks'	<p>Talks very fast, is very open when he answers questions, this is a trademark in the sense is always explains his personal stories in detail. He has a sassy attitude. " A print screen of a twitter comment pops up, where a woman asks if Tyler Oakley is Jesus. Tyler replies: Do I look like someone who would only have 12 followers? Eh, no</p>

Use/promotion of products/brands	Maggie, girl, let me tell you. Ya'll know I talk about Naturebox every month now. Basically all you gotta do is go to naturebox.com/tyler and you can pick out a whole bunch of healthy food. It's all like healthy snacks but they taste good. No trans-fat or any of that stuff. You pick out any size of box that you want and they send you that box full of goodies. And it's the best thing ever because you don't have to go to a store. It just shows up at your door every month, it's the best. And ya'll know I don't talk about something without giving you a hook up, so they let me give you a 50% off your first box, so just use naturebox.com/tyler, that is the hook-up. You are welcome in advance. The link is below.
Use of positive laden words	Fabulous, it's the best, love, amazing
Use of music	In the end.
Exemplifying recognizable situation for target audience	
Encouragement of 'co-creation'	"It is time for another Q&A" Screenshots of Twitter comments of questions – implicitly encouraging viewers to send him questions.
Use of multiple channels and promotion of these	Tyler encourages the viewers to like the video and subscribe. He promotes other videos in his channel, and he also has a new feature of "person of the week".
Addressing the audience	"Hey Everyone" "Patience! All good things come to those who wait, and it is really really really fucking good. I want to tell you right now, but I can't. (Seems frustrated for this). It's good. Trust me, it's worth waiting for." "Riley, thank you for asking. My day was fabulous. I did so many cool things for you guys that I can't tell you about, but I want to tell you about, but they are amazing so just stay tuned. But yeah, it was really good, and thank you for asking."

No. 16	CODING MANUAL
YouTuber	Bethany Mota
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8vRWeQcSWI
Video Headline	5 REAL WAYS TO BE HEALTHY! Bethany Mota
Number of Views	1,481,633
Publishing Date	28.4.2016
Date of Analysing	29.4.2016
Themes	Description
<p>Advising more on health and ‘smart’ things: important to be happy, mentally, it is not only about physical appearance.</p>	<p>Music clip with famous song. About waking up, healthy things, food, in the bed, exercising, Nike shoes. Name of the video. Snapchat in the beginning. “Hey guys, it is Beth here”, about the hair, appreciation. “If you guys struggle about being healthy.” She will show 5 realistic ways to be little bit healthier. She uses it on a daily basis. More towards mental health. “Because for me, it is inside out. I had a lot of fun doing this video, thumbs up if you like it. I challenge you guys to send me videos and photos how you are being healthy. We can learn from each other and we can be happy with each other. I like to hear from you guys and looking to pictures that you send me. I hope you enjoy the video. I love you.” First tip, process, voice over, explains what she likes, running late every day. Another music clip with famous song, another tip, “If you are on Snapchat you know about my obsession. Total Instagram-worthy, you can switch ingredients. Really good recipes, I encourage you to try because I am so energized.” Professional video. Journal and writing about what she is feeling and it helps her, reading books, write your favourite book in the comment section below because I search for new books. Music clip with exercising, getting outdoors, opinion, that it is good, she likes to be in touch with nature, she feels a lot better, touch with body because it is important. “Sneaky tip, one of my favourite tips, adding to water”. Chlorophyll drops. Waking up in a bad mood but when using she wakes up into a better mood. “Start your day right”. Favourite music, thinking about great things in her life, mental thing, makes her day started in much better way. Health is number one priority above school and parents. I care about how my body looks like. But, it is a lot of pressure and when you are too focused on physical appearance rather than health, she had this experience. She finds hard to hit on her own body and comparing it to other people. She feels little mushy but that’s how she feels. “I hope you enjoyed it and that I inspired you. I love you guys so much, thank you for watching, muck, I will see you soon. Promise. Bye.”</p>
Showing emotions	Happy, positive, tips for being healthier, that’s how she feels.
Showing personality	Health number one, talking about the appearance, she wants to stay fit physically and psychically. What she eats and drinks. How she works on feeling better. “Because for me”. “I care how my body looks like.” That’s how she feels.
Uncovering	In the bed, bedroom,

Expressing/Sharing personal stories	Opinion about health and beauty, all video is about sharing her opinion.
Expression of values and opinions	Same as above - about health
Setting the scene/Introduction to the content of the video	Music clip with famous song. About waking up, healthy things, food, in the bed, exercising, Nike shoes. Name of the video. Snapchat in the beginning. "Hey guys, it is Beth here", about the hair, appreciation. "If you guys struggle about being healthy". She will show 5 realistic ways to be little bit healthier.
Recognizable personal 'trademarks'	Beauty, girly, make up, advice
Use/promotion of products/brands	Nike and some other products in the video
Use of positive laden words	Love, great, famous
Use of music	Music along the video, famous songs
Exemplifying recognizable situation for target audience	Waking up, trying to be healthy.
Encouragement of 'co-creation'	"I challenge you guys to send me videos and photos how you are being healthy. We can learn from each other and we can be happy with each other. I like to hear from you guys and looking to pictures that you send me."
Use of multiple channels and promotion of these	Snapchat, Instagram
Addressing the audience	"I hope you enjoy the video. I love you. I encourage you to try because I am so energized. I hope you enjoyed it and that I inspired you. I love you guys so much, thank you for watching, muck, I will see you soon. Promise."

Appendix 5

List of analysed videos of Casey Neistat

YouTuber: Casey Neistat Date of Analysis: April 2016		
No.	Video Headline	Video URL
1	carlos the fisherman by Casey Neistat	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmTB8poXbD0
2	13yr old learns to drive stick by Casey Neistat	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc1Y-3R6Ig0
3	The Mercedes CLA Project Part 1 of 4	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPcxzeZPhvM
4	happy independence day!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzpHbB0ATNU
5	NYC Marathon vs YouTube Music Awards	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCR7PTGNkT8
6	Peace in Ferguson	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBjOoVbCYIA
7	Selfies With Strangers	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWlcAXtI_ZA
8	Penny Boarding the streets of NYC	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vjhkq_4WQWU
9	My Biggest Failure	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaGKf6266PY
10	Special Visitor	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw-8NZ1_ItE
11	Skate Ramp in my Building!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITNNXTdDU6g
12	Quitter	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dK9SSu3uZ2Q
13	Hover Board Delivery Man	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3zv_y_BgaE
14	Living On An Airplane	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wr1h0Bo9II
15	Mobbed At Vidcon	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0c0Zqgq8gRY
16	She Said It Was Awkward	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDb9GtAZAlo

List of analysed videos of Bethany Mota

YouTuber: Bethany Mota Date of Analysis: April 2016		
No.	Video Headline	Video URL
1	First Video :) Mac and Sephora Haul.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0wCoXVkjGA
2	Taylor Swift Hair Tutorial	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDcdXvetRmU
3	Nail Polish Collection/Storage!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHG03E3itew
4	How to make Feather Earrings!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXGjFeHQjjc
5	Color Block your nails! - Neon Tiger Inspired	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2mAKBZ7Prc
6	Clothing Haul!: Tilly's, Forever 21, Target & Tobi!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73oN7ho5qk4
7	Casual & Cute Outfit of the day in LA! Feat. Roxy!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw- mldLGFQ
8	Spring Outfit Ideas: Floral Print!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo6nA5vH9IM
9	April Favorites 2013!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZeCXmKX0JY
10	Easter Makeup, Outfit Ideas, + DIY Treat!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqC-zrS5mAE
11	Spring/Summer Clothing Haul!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUQEpH6MfA8
12	Fears, TV Shows, Boyfriend? TMI TAG!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoakbXJmcto
13	Back To School: 5 Quick Hairstyle Ideas! ♥ NO HEAT	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXyWD7HnyTs
14	Throw a DIY Party! Quick Treats, Party favors + Outfits!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udHjzcAUVu0
15	Desk Makeover: DIY Organization + My Essentials!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wleDrnLgOdI
16	5 REAL WAYS TO BE HEALTHY! Bethany Mota	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8vRWeQcSWI

List of analysed videos of Jenna Marbles

YouTuber: Jenna Marbles Date of Analysis: April 2016		
No.	Video Headline	Video URL
1	What I did this weekend	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVKIR0p1e2w
2	Things to do instead of cleaning your room	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvHwh9O9Tsg
3	Cooking with Sarah Palin	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWjX1Uj4KV8
4	Sluts on Halloween	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPPsf-Mi8FY
5	What Boys do in the bathroom in the morning	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJOVntAve4M
6	Interrupting Adele	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtuqJZqEli8
7	Nice guys do not finish last	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VXXXX9iVPI
8	Drunk Christmas Tree decorating	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6CFgK8nYLA
9	What are this?	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4sXjJJcWQ
10	Other ways to use your degree	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VS7GcO6AsqE
11	Photobooth Tag	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQq4-3crqGA
12	Better names for body parts	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sfRFhhYIOs
13	How to parent your dog	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eN4Vj0QVhZg
14	Jenna's drunk Art School: Balloon art	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1lclpx914
15	Kylie Jenner lip tutorial	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0mri_BC4xQ
16	Childhood stories	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiN9tTVhH9M

List of analysed videos of Tyler Oakley

YouTuber: Tyler Oakley Date of Analysis: April 016		
No.	Video Headline	Video URL
1	Raindrops	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIdT_tIPomw
2	Speak out against hate speech	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTdCa6vbvTk
3	Vlogging: Behind the scenes	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKDo-eU8mhg
4	Tina is SO tropical	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTURUvBqO5I
5	New semester	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AECgHzwOcd0
6	How to: Make the first move	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEu5nR6evV8
7	My missing eye patch	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-5EeTKOG_c
8	Could it get worse?	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzpKBrRW3p0
9	Shotgun at white castle	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvoDB5FbsiE
10	How to: Be a manly man	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6K26g6FTUM
11	Tin can challenge (Ft. Hannah Hart)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7PJZ864QTo
12	Tyler Oakley takes Disneyland	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guudUW7hmvY
13	Who is my OTP?	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1l_clzguR7g
14	The Youtube burn book	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1YNsCRB6Sc
15	Getting tipsy with mama	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5Xsvhz5o3Q
16	Flirting in sign language (ft. Nyle DiMarco)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7y7I4A3usg