

24 STRINGS BASS SOLO

Following the footsteps of successful YouTube-musicians in creating and building personal brands on YouTube

**Jyväskylä University
School of Business and Economics**

**Master's Thesis
2023**

**Author: Päivi Kujanen
Subject: Marketing
Supervisor: Juha Munnukka**



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

ABSTRACT

Author Päivi Kujanen	
Title 24 strings bass solo. Following the footsteps of successful YouTube-musicians in creating and building personal brands on YouTube	
Subject Marketing	Type of work Master's Thesis
Date 31.5.2023	Number of pages 78+9
Abstract <p>The music business has undergone a radical change in the past decade, mainly due to the digital revolution. This “extreme metamorphosis in the past century” has changed the way music is heard, produced, distributed, and reviewed. The radical changes in the music business have opened new possibilities for many independent artists and labels, making them less dependent on the traditional record labels and free to distribute their music directly through the Internet and social media platforms. Still, to be able to succeed in the changed landscape the artists now need to be able to brand themselves without the support of the major record label leading to the need for personal branding skills. Branding oneself especially on social media has been a trend growing in a fast pace not just in the scene of music but overall. One of the leading platforms of personal branding, YouTube, has grown to become the biggest online video platform worldwide, and helping musicians create very successful careers in music.</p> <p>This study focuses on finding answers how the successful YouTube-musicians are branding themselves and have been able to create themselves such large audiences. While there are studies focusing on successful personal branding on social media, there seems to be a research gap of how musicians are successfully branding themselves on social media and especially on YouTube. Four YouTubers were chosen for this research as study objects and the empirical part of this study was conducted as a qualitative content analysis (QCA), directed content analysis as the approach to the QCA. A coding manual was created, mainly based on Khedher's (2015) study on personal branding process.</p> <p>The main findings of this study reveal that the personal branding process for the YouTubers selected was partially aligned with the previous theory. The most important discovery was that all the four YouTubers seemed to follow a similar pattern unique to them in their most viewed videos. They seemed to have created “a format” and by following it, they were creating videos that were gaining views. The results were interesting but because of the rather limited sampling size the results cannot be generalized but can probably act just mere guidelines to further studies and practices.</p>	
Key words marketing, personal branding, personal branding process, YouTube, YouTube musicians	
Place of storage Jyväskylä University Library	

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä Päivi Kujanen	
Työn nimi 24 strings bass solo. Following the footsteps of successful YouTube-musicians in creating and building personal brands on YouTube	
Oppiaine Markkinointi	Työn laji Maisterin tutkielma
Päivämäärä 31.5.2023	Sivumäärä 78+9
<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Liiketoiminta musiikin ympärillä, suurelta osin digitaalisen vallankumouksen myötä, on viimeisten vuosikymmenten aikana kokenut radikaalin muutoksen. Tämä "vuosisadan suurin muutos" on mullistanut musiikin kuuntelun, tuottamisen, jakelun ja sen arvioimisen. Muutokset ovat avanneet uusia mahdollisuuksia monille itsenäisille artisteille ja levy-yhtiöille tehden ne vähemmän riippuvaisiksi perinteisistä levy-yhtiöistä, sekä vapaampia jakelemaan musiikkiaan suoraan itse suoratoistopalveluiden ja sosiaalisen median kautta. Kääntöpuolena artistien on täytynyt oppia brändäämään itseään ilman suurten levy-yhtiöiden tukea. Itsensä brändääminen erityisesti sosiaalisessa mediassa on kasvava trendi niin musiikkialalla kuin laajemminkin. YouTube on yksi henkilöbrändäyksen johtavista alustoista, joka maailman suurimmaksi videoalustaksi kasvaneena on auttanut muusikkoja luomaan menestyksekkäitä uria musiikin parissa.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään, kuinka menestyneet YouTube-muusikot luovat, perustavat ja ylläpitävät henkilökohtaisia brändejään. Tutkimuksen pyrittiin selvittämään, miten toiset YouTube-muusikot ovat onnistuneet luomaan itselleen suuria yleisöjä. Tutkimus on tarpeen sen vuoksi, että aiempi sosiaalisen median tutkimus henkilöbrändäyksestä on keskittynyt brändäykseen sosiaalisessa mediassa yleensä, eikä niinkään kartoittamaan asiaa artistien näkökulmasta. Tähän tutkimukseen, joka toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena sisällön analyysinä ja jonka tulokulmaksi valittiin ohjattu sisällön analyysi, valittiin neljä menestynttä YouTube-muusikkoa / yhtyettä. Koodauskäsikirja luotiin pääosin Khedherin (2015) tutkimuksen pohjalta.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen päälöydökset osoittavat, että valittujen neljän tubettajan henkilökohtainen brändäysprosessi noudattelee jokseenkin aikaisemmassa teoriassa havaittuja askeleita. Tutkimuksen kenties tärkein löydös oli se, että kaikkien neljän toimijan suosituimmat videot tuntuivat noudattavan samanlaista muotoa, joka oli kunkin videoille ominaista. Toimijat olivat luoneet "muodon", jota seuraamalla ja toistamalla he saattoivat luoda videoita, jotka keräsivät suuria katselukertoja. Tutkimustulokset olivat kiinnostavia, mutta tutkimusjoukon pienuuden vuoksi tulokset eivät ole yleistettäviä, joskin ne voisivat toimia seuraavien tutkimusten ja käytänteiden ohjaajina.</p>	
Asiasanat Markkinointi, henkilöbrändäys, YouTube, muusikko	
Säilytyspaikka <u>Jyväskylän Yliopiston kirjasto</u>	

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

“The Internet is so big, so powerful and pointless that for some people it is a complete substitute for life.” (Andrew Brown, 1938-1994)

The music business today looks very different from what it used to be. The digital revolution of the music industry has changed how the music is distributed and reshaped the value-added network (Tschmuck, 2016). The change can be called as the “extreme metamorphosis in the past century” meaning how all the aspects of the industry differ from what it used to be in terms of how the music is heard, produced, distributed, and reviewed (Mishra & Mudita, 2022, p.509).

The rising internet boom in the mid-90s has made a way for many independent artists and labels (Mishra & Mudita, 2022, p. 509). Thanks to the radical changes in the industry, the artists have now become less dependent on the traditional record labels, distributing their music directly through the Internet and through social media platforms (Tschmuck, 2016, p.13-14), such as YouTube, building their fan bases and getting in touch with the fans. This change has opened new possibilities for the independent artists, but as Kartik and Mishra (2022, p. 510) put it, without the support of the major record labels the process of branding their image and music must be done by the independent artists themselves. And according to Kee, Wahig and Ling (2022, 66) who describe the performing artist’s life as unpredictable and hard due to the fierce competition, short-lived bookings and constant hustle for next job, personal branding is essential for individual performing artists to secure income. Personal branding has thus become “crucial for today’s young artists” (Kucharska & Mikolaczjak, 2018, p. 251), but the question remains “how?”. Despite the radical challenges music business is facing today, the rise of social media has provided new possibilities for independent artists to promote themselves and find success outside of the traditional ways of “making it”. How is personal branding done successfully in today’s market to advance the career of an artist? How have some performing artists been able to create themselves successful personal brands especially on the realm of the social media when others seem to struggle?

If the music business has been in a turmoil in these few decades of time so has the rest of the world, as the pressures of succeeding in the work life seem to have grown and competition gotten tougher. In the era of temporary employment systems and more project-based work structure personal branding has become a way to attain career success (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova, 2018). The ability to “stand out” from the crowd and brand oneself to succeed seems more important than ever in this globalized world where we are facing competition in most aspects of our lives (Brooks & Anumudu, 2016; Kucharska & Mikolaczjak, 2018, p. 249). The importance of successfully branding oneself seems just to grow

as Tarnovskaya (2017) notes how also the personal branding literature suggests the key to one's personal and professional success to lie in branding oneself. Furthermore, what the key point of personal branding seems to claim is that "if you don't brand yourself, others will" (Shepherd 2005).

Personal branding has traditionally been the cup of tea for celebrities of different fields of profession, politics, and business leaders (Shepherd 2005) but the era of Web 2.0 and the rise of social media have broadened the concept of personal branding and increased the interest towards it in the past few decades (Tarnovskaya, 2017). Developing a personal brand for oneself especially on social media has become a rapidly growing trend (Chen, 2013, p.332) as anyone with access to the internet could become a celebrity by branding themselves. Of all social media platforms Statista (2023) highlights YouTube and its growth "into the biggest online video platform worldwide" with around 500 hours of video being uploaded to YouTube every minute and over a 2,56 billion users watching them on YouTube in 2022. YouTube has grown to be the leading platforms of personal branding (Tarnovskaya, 2017), due to its astonishing popularity beating Facebook and Twitter combined (Arruda, 2021). What is more, the most popular YouTube channels are now being maintained by "ordinary people", not company brands or even celebrities (Tarnovskaya, 2017).

The rise of the social media era has created a whole new cluster of YouTube and social media stars. With the help of YouTube musicians across the globe have been able to create successful careers in music. Just think about the YouTube-violinist and dancer Lindsey Stirling (13,6 million followers on YouTube) who first started her YouTuber career back in 2007 (Carson, 2015) and has been ranked as YouTube's top-earning musician in 2015 (Forbes) and to date having done several world tours with several albums released collaborations with Amy Lee of Evanescence, John Legend, and Avril Lavigne (Collar, no date). Then think about "The internet's biggest low-end sensation" (Bass Player, 2021), the Italian bass-player Davie504 (12,7 million followers on YouTube) who is Italy's most successful YouTube musician and hosts the second most followed YouTube channel in Italy (Statista, 2023), with collaborations such as PewDiePie (Ramsay, 2019), Charles Berthoud and TwoSetViolin. The Korean bedroom singer J.Fla (17,6 million followers) seems also been battling in a class of her own, with her cover versions of hit songs sung from her bedroom, and according to Tae-Hee (2018) being the first Korean YouTuber to reach over 10 million followers. Also, the career of the Canadian indie pop-band Walk off the Earth (5,54 million followers) has gotten a little extra boost thanks to YouTube. As their frontwoman, Sarah Blackwood has stated, the band "has been a major beneficiary of new, digital forms of distribution" with their cover videos of hit songs reaching over 140 million views on YouTube (Manes, 2012).

Where the people are there are the marketers as well, and social media with its massive amounts of daily users is attracting a growing number of businesses into the game. As Lo and Peng (2021, p. 320) notice, social media is an important tool for nearly every major company today and the managers are start-

ing to notice the social media marketing potential in cooperation with the Internet celebrities. It is through social media and the collaboration with the Internet celebrities the companies can promote their products and interact with fans and potential customers. Creating a successful personal brand can thus bring also economic benefits to the Internet celebrities. (Lo & Peng, 2021, p. 320-321) and YouTube is a channel that makes it possible to earn satisfying and attractive money for the YouTube celebrities (Grzesiak, 2017, p.337).

The interesting question is what can be learned from these individuals or groups who have been able to create successful personal brands and their “winning formula”. This research is about finding answers of the branded content these YouTube musicians create and succeed with it online. This thesis will try to find answers how some independent musicians have been able to create a massive following on social media platforms by branding themselves through the content they create online.

1.2 Research objectives and problem-formulation

Personal branding and self-marketing have been gaining popularity since the late 1990’s thanks to the large number of self-improvement books, consultancy services and websites (Shepherd 2005; Chen, 2013; Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney 2005). Although, self-marketing in the academic contest has been seen more in a way of landing a job as a graduate or planning a career, whereas self-marketing in the recruitment industry is part of the advice given by the employment agencies (Shepherd, 2005). It is only in the recent years that the topic of personal branding and self-marketing been gaining more and more attention in the academic marketing literature. The academic interest towards personal branding has increased significantly in the last 10 years, giving the phenomenon a widespread but still rather fragmented academic presence (Scheidt, Gelhard & Henseler, 2020).

While there are several studies focusing on successful personal branding on social media (Tarnovskaya, 2017; Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011; Lo & Peng, 2021; Grzesiak, 2017; Holland, 2016; Wincci & Mohamad, 2015) the research around branding within the music industries is limited (Dumbreck & McPherson, 2016; Macy, Rollston, Allen & Hutchison, 2016; Lieb, 2013). Furthermore, there is only a small number of academic research around marketing and digitization within the music industries (Salo, Lankinen & Mäntymäki, 2013, p. 24) not to even name artists’ personal branding in the online environment. Despite the studies of Salo and Lankinen (2013) focusing on artist marketing on social media from a music industries’ point of view, or Kartik and Mishra’s (2022) case study about personal branding strategies for 5 Indian Independent Artists, or Gruzd and Hodson (2021) bringing the attention to performance capital of YouTube musicians, there is a research gap about how YouTube musicians can build their personal brands successfully. This study aims to fill this gap by answering the

question how the YouTube musicians can successfully build and manage their brands.

There are three studies that have especially guided this process of conceptualizing personal branding on social media, ones by Kartik and Mishra (2022), Lo and Peng (2021) and Tarnovskaya (2017). These studies give very valuable insights on personal branding on social media, Lo and Peng (2021) providing strategies for successful personal branding strategies on social media, Tarnovskaya (2017) diving into how successful YouTubers create their personal brands online, and Kartik and Mishra (2022) how independent music artists are applying personal branding strategies to their careers. Still, while the studies of Lo and Peng (2021) and Tarnovskaya (2017) are providing useful insights about personal branding on social media in general, these studies don't talk about music artists' personal branding. On the other hand, the study of Kartik and Mishra's (2022) does focus on music artists' social media branding, but it is a very limited case study investigating music artists with maximum 5000 followers. To be considered "successful" on YouTube would mean 1 million subscribers (Molenaar, 2022; Tarnovskaya, 2017) meaning that a study investigating music artists with less than 5000 followers doesn't meet the criteria of 'successful'. For this reason, it can be concluded that research that aims to discover the key factors that make a music artist's personal branding successful on social media would undoubtedly be beneficial and relevant. To conclude, the purpose of this study is to discover how personal brands are created and built among successful YouTube musicians and by doing this, increase the knowledge.

The study objective and the research questions for this thesis considering the discussion above are formed as follows (Figure 1).

Study objective

To generate better understanding of how YouTube-musicians create and build their personal brands in the online environment.

Research Questions

How do the successful YouTube-musicians create their personal brand identities?
How do the successful YouTube-musicians position their personal brands?
How do the successful YouTube-musicians maintain their personal brands?

Also, creating a successful personal brand on YouTube has proven to lead to financial gains through YouTube's wide-ranged earning system, the YouTube Partner Program, including shared ad revenue, merchandise sale, monthly payments, fans' message highlights and subscription fees. To be eligible to the program a YouTuber need to have a certain active follower base with a simple earning logic is also simple: the more followers and views YouTubers get the more they earn. (Molenaar, 2022.) YouTube provides a way for individuals to make a

good income should they be able brand themselves effectively to attract large follower bases.

Based on the problem formulation and on the background that was discussed about, the goal is to investigate and conceptualize what are the needed key success factors for the musicians to gain success with personal branding online. The especially interesting point of view when studying the successful YouTube musicians is that to create themselves such a large audience, they must be doing something “right” in marketing and branding wise. The YouTube musicians, having created a following of millions of subscribers, must, no doubt, master the tactics of personal branding even if they might not have the theoretical knowledge of marketing and branding. Furthermore, what have these successful YouTube musicians done differently to stand out in the crowd, that is, why other brands are more popular than the other although the brand profiles might be similar?

1.3 Research Structure

The research is divided into 5 chapters. We first begun by introducing the subject of personal branding on social media followed by the problem formulation and the research question. The existing theoretical knowledge is then discussed in the following chapter 2. In chapter 3 the research structure is discussed with the chosen methodology and the introduction of the objects of this study. Then, in chapter 4 the results are presented and in chapter 5 both the theoretical and managerial conclusions are drawn from the results. Chapter 5 also provides the limitations of the study with further research recommendations. The research structure provided in Figure 1 illustrates the structure of this thesis in greater detail.



1.4 Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Juha Munnukka from the University of Jyväskylä, whom I was very fortunate to have as my supervisor. His guidance and advice throughout this process has been most encouraging and invaluable. Juha has been a great support for the successful completion of this thesis, always willing to help, helping me to see the essential, and brightening the day with his sense of humour. Also, I'm also very grateful for these three years of university studies, first one year at JYU Open University and the next two years at the University of Jyväskylä. Studying again and finishing my second master's degree in my 30's has been very invigorating.

These three years of studying, working, and having a family life would have not been able without the constant support from my husband, children, my family, and my parents. There are two persons I'd especially would like to thank, without whom the studies and the writing of this thesis would have not been possible: my sister-in-law and my mother. Thank you both for your endless kindness, support, and help. My studies would have not been possible without you, thank you for believing in me and most of all, giving your valuable time to help me for taking care of our two daughters so that I was able to study. Four words to summarise my thoughts: on se teidänkin gradu!

THANK YOU
Päivi

AI language models have not been utilized in the making of this thesis.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Brands: From companies to individuals

What are brands? What is branding? The origin of the word brand roots to the old Norse word, “brandr”, to burn, referring to the earlier days how people would stamp their ownership on livestock (Gronlund 2013, p. 2). According to the good old Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries (2022a) brand is a product, a service or something else that is being made or offered by a particular company under a particular name.

Brands today are comprised of an identification, of a name and/or a kind of a logo or symbol although the value and strength of a certain brand comes only after the evaluation what the name or the symbol means to the people (Gronlund 2013, p. 2). Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney (2005, p.311, 313) define branding as attempts to “make direct, clear, and persistent bonds between symbols and products or services”. Branding – giving a particular name and image to the produced goods and services – aims at making people attracted to and wanting to buy the certain brand (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2022b).

Traditionally, branding has been seen as a communication strategy associated with consumer products, but the scope has now been broadened to retail brands, product brands, corporate brands, and personal brands (Lair et al., 2005, p. 311, 313). The marketing and branding principles first utilized to market and brand products and corporations, are now being applied to people in personal branding (Shepherd 2005). Thomson (2006) defines personal brands as well-known personas who are being the subjects of the efforts of marketing communications. Close, Moulard and Monroe (2010) add to this definition that personal brands may also refer to emerging personas that are the subjects of “marketing, interpersonal, or inter-organizational communications”. Today, the research recognizes persons, alongside with businesses, products, organizations, and services, as brands, as the personal brands can 1) be managed strategically and 2) have additional associations and features or a brand (Close, Moulard & Monroe, 2010).

Persons can be brands, but the question that rises is what would be the benefits of personal brands compared to other subjects of branding? One reason that stands out are the stronger bonds with the customers as customers seem to form stronger attachments to personal brands than to other kind of brands. Thomson (2006) in his study strives to find answers to the consumers’ strong attachments to personal brands that are any well-known personas that are being subjects to marketing communications efforts. He points out that for organizations to enjoy the superior customer relationships they need to make consumer feel autonomous and related. Brands create meanings, they have personality, attitude and most importantly, influence, as people are relating, identifying, and

defining themselves by brands (Gronlund 2013, p. 3). Be successful in creating feelings of autonomy in consumers, according to Thomson (2005), can be achieved when personal brands make consumers feel appreciated, empowered, and understood. Also, to create feelings of relatedness are, according to the study, possible to produce when the personal brands are promoting acceptance, openness and belonging. The benefits in creating attachments as he sums it are achieving stronger marketing relationships in a more effective and economical way.

The benefits of personal branding seem to be unarguable. Achieving stronger attachments between the customers and the brands more effectively and economically – in other words getting better results when saving money – seem very desirable in a marketer point of view. Although, to be able to create successful personal brands one would need to know how to create and manage the brands. In the following, the phenomenon of personal branding is explored to achieve a deeper understanding what is personal branding, what is the process of personal branding and how this process translates into the social media field. Personal branding in the field of music business is also discussed.

2.2 Personal branding

“Personal brand is a set of characteristics of an individual (attributes, values, beliefs, etc.) rendered into the differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience.” (Gorbatov, Khapova & Lysova, 2018)

As Gorbatov et al. (2018) above mention, personal branding is all about creating yourself the competitive advantage in the market. Personal branding can help one to stand out in the crowd and to benefit from it. The origins of the business self-help genre of management communication trace back to the 1930’s and Dale Carnegie’s (1936/1982) *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005, p. 308) whereas the idea of marketing people stems from Kotler and Levy’s article (1969). They argue that persons could be marketed like products and personal marketing could be seen as an endemic human activity. They also state how no attempts are made “to examine whether the principles of ‘good’ marketing in traditional product areas are transferable to the marketing of services, persons, and ideas”.

Although the idea of self-marketing seemed first apply to celebrities, politicians, and business leaders (Kucharska & Mikolajczak, 2018, p. 251), it has now seemingly spread out to the world so that “‘nobodies’ of the past are now the new ‘somebodies’ demanding the attention” (Booth & Matic, 2011, p. 184). Having a strong personal brand has helped some of the world’s best entrepreneurs like Elon Musk (founder of Tesla and SpaceX corporations), Bethenny Frankel (American businesswoman, entrepreneur, television personality, and author)

Tyra Banks (American model, television personality, producer, writer, and actress) to build strong, successful and innovative companies and also market themselves (Morgan, 2021). Would you disagree that one cornerstone of the success of the Apple Inc. has been the strong brand of its late and yet controversial founder Steve Jobs?

The concept of individual branding was first brought to light by Al Ries and Jack Trout (1980) by introducing positioning strategies to advance one's career (cited in Khedher, 2015, p. 20). Later, Tom Peters (1997) popularized and virtually invented the term of personal branding in his *Fast Company* article "The Brand called You" (Khedher, 2015, p. 20; Shephard 2005). Lair et al. (2005, p. 311) note, that in the late 1990s the environments of both corporate communication and employment world were becoming increasingly complex and chaotic in their nature. The researchers go on to say, that as a communicative response the emergence of personal branding showed a way to its practitioners to stand out not just as communicators but also as prospective employees. Personal branding and self-marketing have since been gaining popularity from the late 1990's thanks to the large number of self-improvement books, consultancy services and websites (Shepherd 2005).

To be able to brand yourself in the today business environment is becoming more and more vital (Kucharska & Mikolaczjak, 2018, p. 249) as possessing a strong presence and a message can even be a competitive advantage (Morgan 2021). Peters (1997) summarizes the importance of personal branding by introducing each one of us as the CEOs of our own companies representing ourselves. He continues to say: "To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketers for the brand called You" (Peters, 1997). Everybody has their personal brands, and the brand is all about what you stand for, how you are perceived by others and what are your strengths and weaknesses (Morgan 2021). The key point of personal branding is that unless you manage your own brand, you let others manage your brand for you (Shepherd, 2005).

2.3 Personal branding process

"Personal branding is a strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based in a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery" (Gorbatov et al. 2018).

Personal branding can be seen as a process that establishes, maintains, and develops an individual's human brand, human brand translating into an intangible asset that is linked to a person and generates "economic and social value through its visibility as a result of a personal branding process" (Scheidt, Gelhard & Henseler, 2020). The planned process of self-marketing is the heart of personal branding

(Kucharska & Mikolajczak, 2018, p. 251) and personal branding can be seen as varied activities individuals undertake to make themselves known in the marketplace (Shepher, 2005, p. 590). When an image of a person can be formed in seconds of meeting them, personal branding tries to take control over this process and thus meets the need of building one's reputation (Kucharska & Mikolajczak, 2018, pp. 250-251).

As Gorbatov et al. (2018) state, the personal branding process includes three steps: 1) creating, 2) positioning, and 3) maintaining the positive impression of a person. Therefore, they agree with Khedher (2015, p.19-22), who says personal branding is a three-stage process (Figure 2). He bases his view on the work by Bordieu (1983, 1984; cited in Khedher, 2015, p. 20), Goffman (1959; cited in Khedher, 2015, p. 20) and Schön (1983, 1987; cited in Khedher, 2015, p. 20) where people are making efforts to promote themselves in the market: (1) developing a personal brand identity, (2) positioning the brand and (3) monitoring the brand image.



Figure 2 Personal branding process (Khedher, 2015, p. 21)

Morgan (2021) gives three guidelines to follow when building a personal brand: consistency, frequency, and visibility. Arruda (2010) conceptualizes the personal branding process into a three-step process: “extract, express and exude” where: i) extract implies for unearthing the brand; ii) express translates into communicating the unique value of the brand; and iii) exude stands for managing the brand environment and making the brand visible to the outside world (Figure 3).

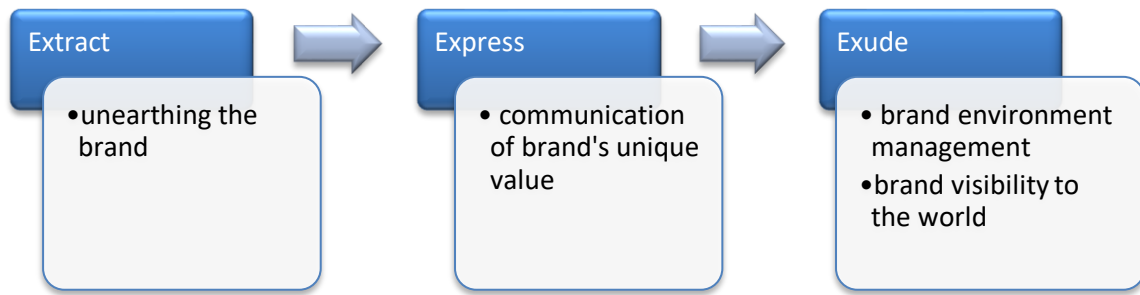


Figure 3 Personal branding process by Arruda (Arruda 2010)

Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2011, p. 39) also divide personal branding into three steps. The steps are (1) defining brand identity, (2) actively communicating brand identity via brand positioning and (3) finally through brand image estimating how the brand is perceived by the marketplace.

Building a personal brand should begin at either defining the area of expertise or what you would like to be known for and being consistent about it (Morgan, 2021), thus investing in cultural and social capital within the established organizational field (Khedher, 2015, p.19-22). The next step would include positioning one's brand by managing the impressions via verbal strategies and artefactual, non-verbal behaviours (Khedher, 2015, p. 19-22), talking about it frequently across multiple channels and most importantly, being visible (Morgan, 2021). Thirdly, as an outcome of the personal branding process, one would need to take control of their personal brand and image by monitoring the image how the brand owner wants to be experienced, perceived, and appreciated by others. On this reflective stage of the process the researcher emphasizes both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The first, reflection-in-action stands for interaction between the practitioner and the environment where the practitioner monitor how they are being responded to when presenting themselves to the environment. The latter, reflection-on-action refers to reflexivity on action by carefully and critically evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. (Khedher, 2015, p. 19-24.)

As Tarnovskaya (2017, p. 30) notes, the common feature in both personal branding definitions (Arruda, 2010; Khedher, 2015) is that they agree personal branding being motivated by career advancement, thus leading to the conclusion that personal branding is a planned process where individuals "strategically manage their personal brand". Concerning personal brand identity, the researcher also brings forth the importance of highlighting one's strengths, values, goals, and personality and formulating a personal brand story and a clear brand promise. In terms of brand positioning, she stresses communicating one's uniqueness. Finally, concerning brand image, she states that the relationship with the audience stemming from the public perception of the branded person's personality and abilities is the base of creating a personal brand (Figure 4).

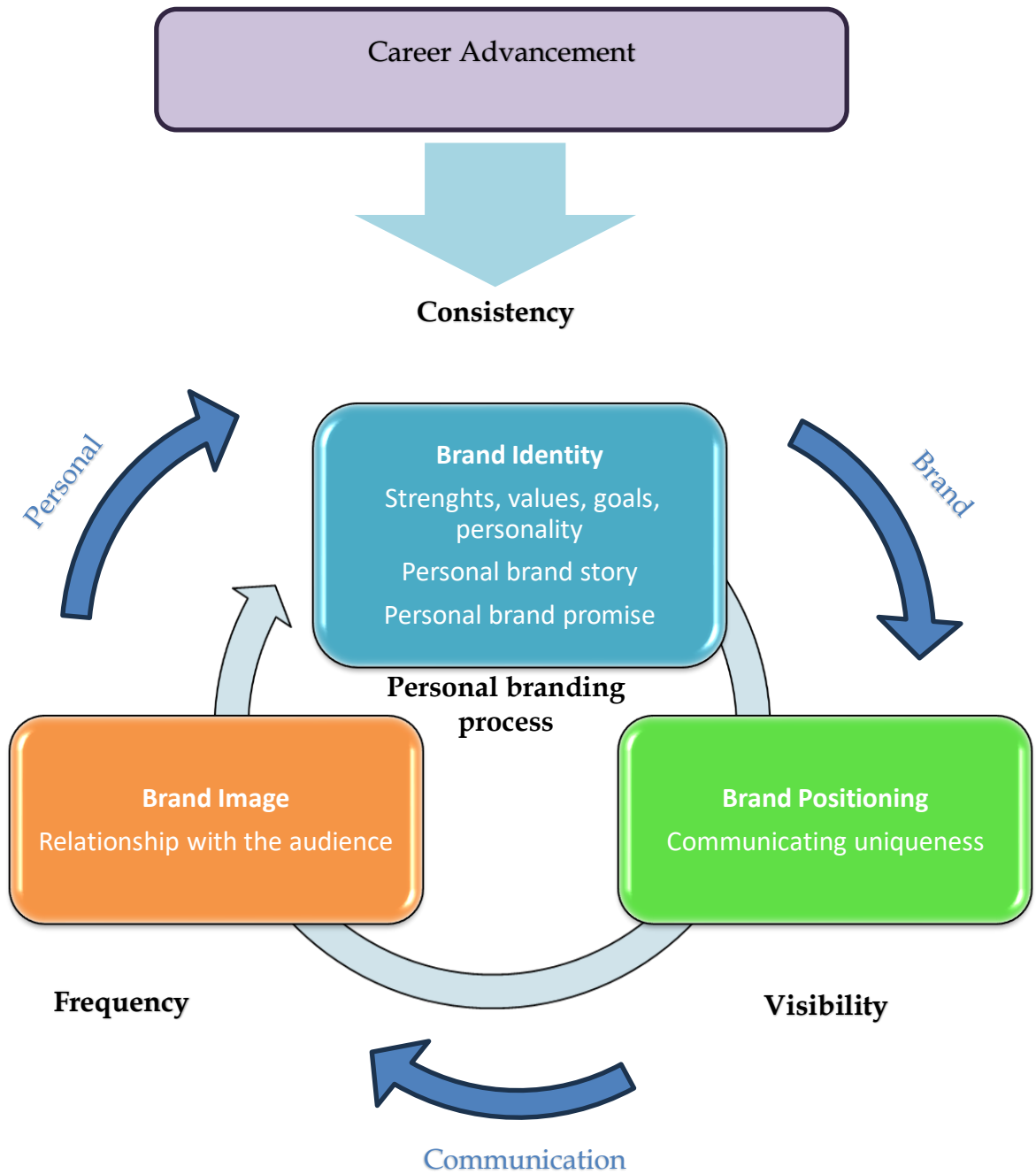


Figure 4 Personal Branding Process by Tarnovskaya (2017), combining the work of Arruda (2010) and Khedher (2015)

2.4 Music industries and personal branding

The music industries as part of the creative industries or creative economy (BCCEU, 2010, p. 12) and of the cultural industry (Kartik & Mishra, 2022, p. 513) consist of a range of industries centered around music (Williamson & Cloonan, 2007, p. 320). These industries – the new economy – are generating a growing number of the major countries' GDP contribution (Kartik & Mishra, 2022, p. 513). Williamson and Cloonan (2007, pp. 306, 310, 316) refer to the music industries as activities revolving around creating, managing, and selling music in physical, digital or a performance form or around intellectual property rights, noting that the definitions of the music industries consist of several different sectors in the music field – branding and promotional activities being present in at least some of them. While the music business has undergone some radical changes in the last decades (Kartik & Mishra, 2022, p. 513; Tschmuck, 2016, p.13-14) this change can oftentimes be referred only as the digitization of the music industries. Meier (2017, p. 5) notices how the digital era makeover goes even deeper than just covering the technological change as the music industries have seen the growth of the promotional industries, including advertising, branding, marketing, and public relations. She refers to marketing in the music business as a “central consideration” where positioning recording artists as brands “is consistent with wider changes inside neoliberal capitalism”.

The discussion about recording artists often refers to the artists of the major record labels and the shift in the music business in the last years has affected the way the record labels do business today. Although Williamson and Cloonan (2007, p. 305) criticize how the term music industry is often understood as a synonym to the major labels, Kartik, and Mishra (2022) list the “Big Three” – Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and the Warner Music Group – as the heart of the music industry (Kartik & Mishra, 2022, p. 513). In this case let's call the Big Three as the heart of the recording and publishing industry within the music industries. Meier (2017, p. 4-5) states, how the growing possibilities in branding opportunities have led the record labels to “artist as brand” concepts, where the artist personae are viewed as a private property that can be mass marketed in multiple medias and where the revenues to both the record label and the artist come from licensing, touring, endorsement branding and merchandise income. She also notices how the meaning of CD's and digital music publications has now changed from being the primary products to being brand pieces instead, because of the market of shrinking record sales. Lieb (2013, p. 49), supports Meier's (2017) view on branding and promotional activities being the core in a record label's work and says that recording artists' commercial values are tied to the ‘possible extensions of their respective star “brands”’.

How has the change in the music business then affected independent artists (music artists not signed to any major record labels) in the game dominated by the Big Three? Kartik and Mishra (2022, p. 513) explain how previously, with-

out the support of the major record label, it was difficult for the independent artists to attain fame but now the situation has changed thanks to the Internet era. As the music business has undergone some radical changes thanks to digitization the artists have now become less dependent on the traditional record labels and can instead distribute their own music through the Internet or social media channels (Tschmuck, 2016, p.13-14).

The challenge remains for the independent artists to be able to brand themselves without the support of the major labels (Kartik & Mishra, 2022, p. 513). As Kucharska and Mikolajczak (2018, pp. 249-251) note, especially the young artists of today might often find it difficult to accept that artists can be brands too, as branding is oftentimes associated with marketing, aggressive sales practices and being “pushy”. They point out that seeing oneself as a brand enhances the artist’s personal performance positively. Thus, the researchers underline the ability of branding oneself as a necessity for the young artists of today. Kee, Wahig and Ling (2022, p. 66) support the necessity for an artist to brand oneself, pointing out that branding can be the key element in landing jobs in an environment of constant and fierce competition, short-lived bookings, and continuous search for the next jobs that make the artists’ lives both unpredictable and hard. Nonetheless and despite the challenge of branding oneself, according to Kartik and Mishra (2022, pp. 510, 513) many independent artists have managed to create successful content and careers without the help of major labels especially by being proactive on social media by advertising, sharing content with content creators or with the help of word-of-mouth. They go on to say that social media presence and social media activity is also essential for independent artists, for if they fail to do so, the public easily moves on to other pages with similar content.

In summary, it could be argued that branding is at the very core of an artist’s professional life for both the independent artists and artists signed for the record labels. Promotion is also at the center of the music business, as due to the recent changes within the industries, the ability of branding oneself successfully has a direct impact on the revenue. The commercial value of an artist is directly bound with how successful their brands are. This can also be applied to the independent artists, as their commercial value is also the greater the better their brands are. One of the most important platforms of branding oneself is the social media. We will next discuss how branding and social media can be combined and what are the best practices the research has identified when building successful personal brands on social media and especially on YouTube.

2.5 Social media and personal branding

We are living in the middle of a new communication landscape: social media (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). The social media is part of

our everyday lives, and it has turned into a platform that combines the matters of business, politics, dating, socializing and daily communication. The internet users of today are spending more time with social media sites compared to any other types of sites (Wincci & Mohamad, 2015, p. 237) and social media is being used to stay connected with family and friends, to fill spare time, to look for inspiration, to read news stories and to access news (Statista, 2022a). In 2022 the average time spent on social media daily by the internet users worldwide was 147 minutes a day, increased by 2 minutes compared to the year 2021 (Statista, 2022b).

The emergence of social network sites of Web 2.0 has accelerated personal branding and made it an important marketing tool for the everyday people (Shepherd, 2005). Furthermore, branding oneself on social media has quickly become a trend growing in a fast pace (Chen, 2019) as people are turning to different social network profile pages, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter for self-branding (Labreque, Markos & Milne, 2011, p. 48; Khedher, 2015). Personal branding in the digital age of web 2.0 has grown increasingly important, even to the extent that it has become nearly impossible keeping individuals from creating their personal brands, whether they want it or not (Khedher, 2015). Personal branding is now happening both straightforwardly and indirectly by the content people are placing online to brand themselves (Labreque et al., 2011, p. 48). Thanks to the rise of social media, the people can both brand themselves and engage with enormous numbers of users in a relatively easy, remarkably cheap and effective way (Lo & Peng, 2021).

The new era of social media has generated a growing number of social media influencers and for them the social media comes with benefits, that Wincci and Mohamad (2015, p. 237) list being reputation building, career opportunities and monetary income. Lo and Peng (2021) agree with Wincci and Mohamad (2015) and say that creating successful personal brands can bring economic benefits to the Internet celebrities (Lo & Peng, 2021, p. 320-321) as the method of marketing – companies integrating social media influencers into their marketing plans – has become a new standard in the marketing and advertising industry of today (Gannon & Prothero, 2018; Lo & Peng 2021). As Thomson (2006) notices, the consumers form strong attachments to human brands and the human brands consumers are attached to might be exceptionally effective. This knowledge together with the Internet celebrities to endorse brands can, as Lo and Peng (2021) put it, benefit both parties. It is through social media and the collaboration with the Internet celebrities the companies can promote their products and interact with fans and potential customers (Lo & Peng, 2021, p. 320-321).

The marketing within the field of music business has also been reaching to the new media where the brand partnerships work two-ways: promoting the music and by music promoting the products, services, and brands. Recording artists are positioned as brands by the record labels and the sponsorship opportunities bring revenue for both the artist and the label. (Meier, 2017, p. 4.) One might ask what has happened to the independent artists in this changed environment, but thankfully, they have also benefitted from the rise of social media.

Kartik and Mishra (2022, p. 517) notice, how thanks to the social media and different streaming services, the music artists can now monetize their work and no longer be dependent on major record labels to succeed. Meier (2017, p. 9) also adds how the independent artists benefit from their brand collaborations. She states, that while the independent artists usually cannot reach the mainstream promotional channels, including the commercial radio and MTV, the advertisements have grown to be the 'new radio' or the new medium when it comes to promoting music releases. One could then conclude that the independent artists have possibly benefitted most from the rapid rise of social media as the change has now opened possibilities for the artists that were out of their reach before.

2.5.1 The elements of successful personal branding on social media

Labreque, Markos, and Milne (2011, p. 39) suggested over a decade ago that the self-branding tactics in the age of Web 2.0 should consist of creating and maintaining social and networking profiles, personal blogs, and Web sites, and utilizing the techniques of search engine optimization to encourage accessing to one's information. What about now? As discussed before, the three pillars of branding, Brand Identity, Brand Positioning and Brand Image, are also the elements in personal branding. By looking at Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre's (2011) framework (Figure 5) of social media functionality can be stated that the personal branding phenomenon is normalized in the field of social online environments. The Kietzmann et al. (2011) framework, originally intended for managers to work out the social media ecology, with seven social media building blocks - identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups - places identity at the centre of the framework of social media functionality and illustrates how branding is present in social media.

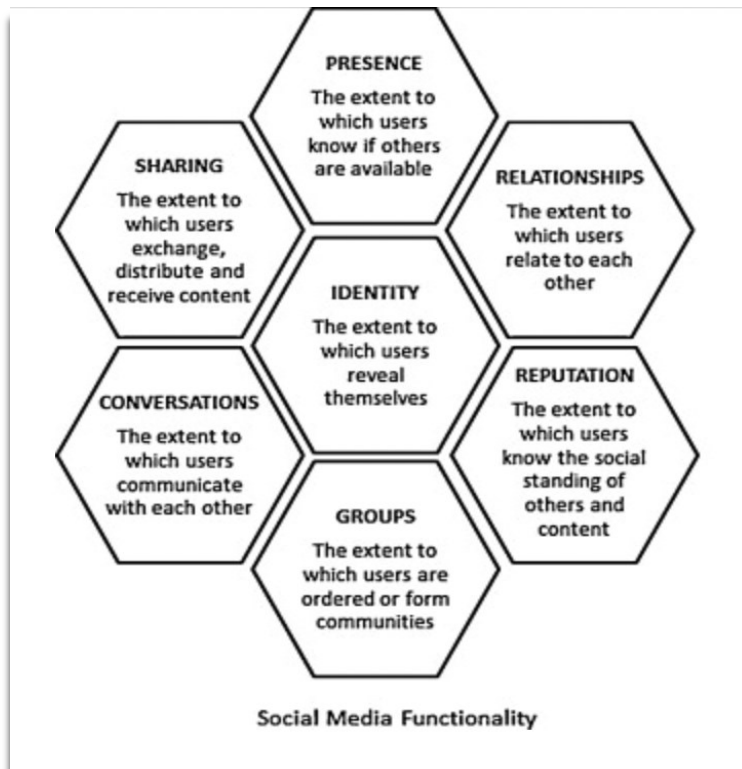


Figure 5 The honeycomb of social media (Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 243)

By recognizing identity as the core to many social platforms, Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 244) place identity as the centre of their framework of “Social Media Functionality”. Their work supports the view that was discussed earlier in Chapter 2.2.1, stating that identity is the core of personal branding, and that identity is at the core of social media functionality as well. Thus, the branding process would seem to be tied to the brand identity of, in this case, an artist. All other six building blocks – presence, relationships, reputation, groups, conversations and sharing – can be viewed as ways to position the brand and managing the image of a brand, still tied to identity.

To do this in action, Budzinski and Gaenssle (2018, p. 79) condense social media audience building into two elements: *audience attraction* and *audience maintenance*. They say that it is essential, in terms of audience attraction, to keep on generating content, collecting followers and being persistent even without massive amounts of followers and attention in the beginning. With audience maintenance they refer to the content providers both consistently entertaining their fan bases and also staying in contact with their consumers. Tarnovskaya (2017, p. 30) also underlines the importance of content when building and promoting a brand on social media. She notes that the content should be of relevance to the target audience, be both consistent and valuable and include a call for action in a way or another and ends that entertainment has been found to have a positive effect on consumer engagement online. Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins and Wiertz (2013) seem to confirm the importance of entertainment as a motive for consumers to contribute and create content.

In creating content and publishing it Budzinski and Gaenssle (2018, 82) find that social media content provider should both actively seek audience attention and be able to offer new content at an adequate pace or risk losing their followers' attention in favor to other contents. Still, the researchers emphasize that the publishing frequency shouldn't be too high as posting too often might also lead to negative results. Overall, the two suggest that personal and upload behaviour to be the key feature of audience attraction and audience maintenance.

2.5.2 YouTube as a channel of personal branding

YouTube, the second largest search engine and the second most-used social network (GMI Blogger, 2023), was founded by Char Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim, and launched in 2005, providing a simple and integrated platform where users, without high-level technical knowledge, could upload, publish, and view streaming videos (Burgess, Green, Jenkins & Hartley, 2009, p. 9). YouTube, the number one video-sharing platform, available in 80 different languages and the local versions of it in over 100 countries (GMI Blogger, 2023), has since its development offered job opportunities for content creators in both new and mainstream media (Holland, 2016).

YouTube has grown to become one of the most effective tools to create and shape personal brands and it's also become one of the most important pillars of contemporary culture and metaculture. Furthermore, YouTube is an effective marketing tool in terms of branding and engaging the users, enabling possibilities to earn satisfying and attractive money (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 333, 337). To consider YouTube as a personal branding platform for professionals, Arruda (2021) lists six reasons: (1) YouTube is popular - more visits than Facebook and Twitter combined in May 2021, (2) a video format is the richest form of communication, set apart of being present, (3) YouTube is differentiating as still many professionals haven't started doing videos, giving a competitive advance to those who do, (4) videos are visible with the likelihood of 50 times more to appear on page one on Google results compared to text-based content, (5) YouTube videos are easy to share on other social media platforms and (6) YouTube is innovative. YouTube has come to show that a video on the web is short, mostly humorous, and easily accessible (Holland, 2016).

The recent studies (Lo & Peng, 2022; Holland, 2016; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Grzesiak, 2017) focus on how to create successful personal brands on YouTube. Still, to be able to build a successful personal brand on YouTube is not about just one or two factors alone but there are other factors that can determine the success of Internet celebrities' personal brands (Lo & Peng, 2022). The single most stressed highlight on achieving success as a YouTube celebrity is the importance of user participation and the interactive relationships with fans (Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022).

The Internet celebrity's involvement spending time with fans is also a feature the firms look for when hunting down good collaborative partners (Lo & Peng, 2022). To create successful YouTube brands the YouTubers would need to stay in regular contact with the YouTube channel viewers by following the commenting and actively responding to reported needs, questions, or criticism (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338). The YouTubers, with an ongoing interaction between them and their viewers, seem to be very conscious about engaging their viewers (Tarnovskaya, 2017, p. 31) as the interactive relationship with the fans seem to be the cornerstone of success of the personal brands of the Internet celebrities' (Lo & Peng, 2022). This engaging includes addressing the audience, encouraging the viewers into co-creation and requesting feedback and can be done by multiple ways: (1) by giving the impression of direct communication by looking and talking straight into the camera and saying, (2) by asking questions from the audience, (3) involving the audience in other ways, like showing presents received from the fans, asking the audience for tips and opinions or topics wishes, (4) telling the audience when and where they can meet the YouTube celebrity in person (Tarnovskaya, 2017, p. 31-33) for increased channel recognition (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338).

Another important pattern determining successful YouTube celebrities is the precise determination of the target group and then creating and consistently utilizing unique personality that is both easy to remember and distinguishes itself from other authors with similar YouTube channels. The elements supporting this unique personality creation would include using characteristic clothing, recognizable language of communication and behaviour typical for the author and the type of communication (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338). Tarnovskaya (2017, p. 31) also notes that staying loyal to their established personal brand profiles would mean not straying away from the topics discussed about, the tones of voices used when talking about the topics and the environments filming the videos. Holland (2016) adds that the shooting locations of the influential YouTubers often includes filming and vlogging from their bedrooms or living rooms.

The importance of sincere and authentic connection building between the Internet celebrities and their fans must also be emphasized (Lo & Peng, 2022). The concept of authentic branding is growing in importance and being seen as inauthentic might result in failed segmentation, with the different brand identities clashing and creating a mixed message (Labreque et al., 2011, p. 48).

The third factor In creating successful YouTube brands is using multiple social networking sites to promoting videos on them and asking viewers to subscribe or follow the YouTube celebrities on different platforms (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338; Tarnovskaya, 2017, p. 31-32). It seems that most successful YouTubers use a multi-channel strategy, operating simultaneously on several social networking sites (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 33, 339-340).

Factors to determine the success of a YouTuber would also be the uploading schedules – posting at least once a week (Holland, 2016). One should be consistent and regular with the undertaken activities, for example posting once a week on Friday at 20.00. (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 339). The importance of cooperation

in order to grow audiences is also a factor to consider: joining forces with the fellow YouTubers for joint content to reach the followers of the person invited to cooperate and cooperating with the brands for brand advertisements, product placement or products reviews to increase channel revenues and reach new audiences. Also, media publications alongside with book publications when publishing content from the channel in a form of a book might increase the prestige of the channel and strengthen the quality of the personal brand in the eyes of the viewers. (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338-339)

2.6 Theoretical framework of the study

The literature review (Chapters 2.1-2.4) aimed to enlighten first the process of personal branding and explain how the process of personal branding is applied in the context of social media. It was noteworthy how the 3-stage process of personal branding (Kheder, 2015) is present in social media but how all the three stages usually are happening at the same time (Tarnovskaya, 2017). The framework of personal branding was presented in 2.2.1 that included brand identity, brand positioning and brand image to the process. Brand identity included the strengths, values, goals, and personality of the individual; the brand positioning was standing for communicating the individual's uniqueness to the public; and brand image included building and maintaining the relationship with the audience. To this framework was now added the personal branding means that are used by the YouTube celebrities and supported by the recent research of Tarnovskaya, 2017; Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski and Gaenssle, 2018; Holland, 2016; Lo and Peng, 2022; and Labrecque et al., 2011. This framework is presented in Figure 6 to clarify the personal branding process happening online in the social media environments, especially on YouTube.

Morgan (2021), as quoted earlier, explains brand identity to be the "area of expertise or what you would like to be known for" and that brand identity is being strengthened by being consistent in the effort. When building brand identities, the YouTubers utilize their unique personalities and aim to create one to be easy to remember for their target audience and to differentiate themselves from the vast number of other YouTubers (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018, 82). They also define their target audiences to provide content for and focus just on their audiences (Tarnovskaya, 2017, p. 31).

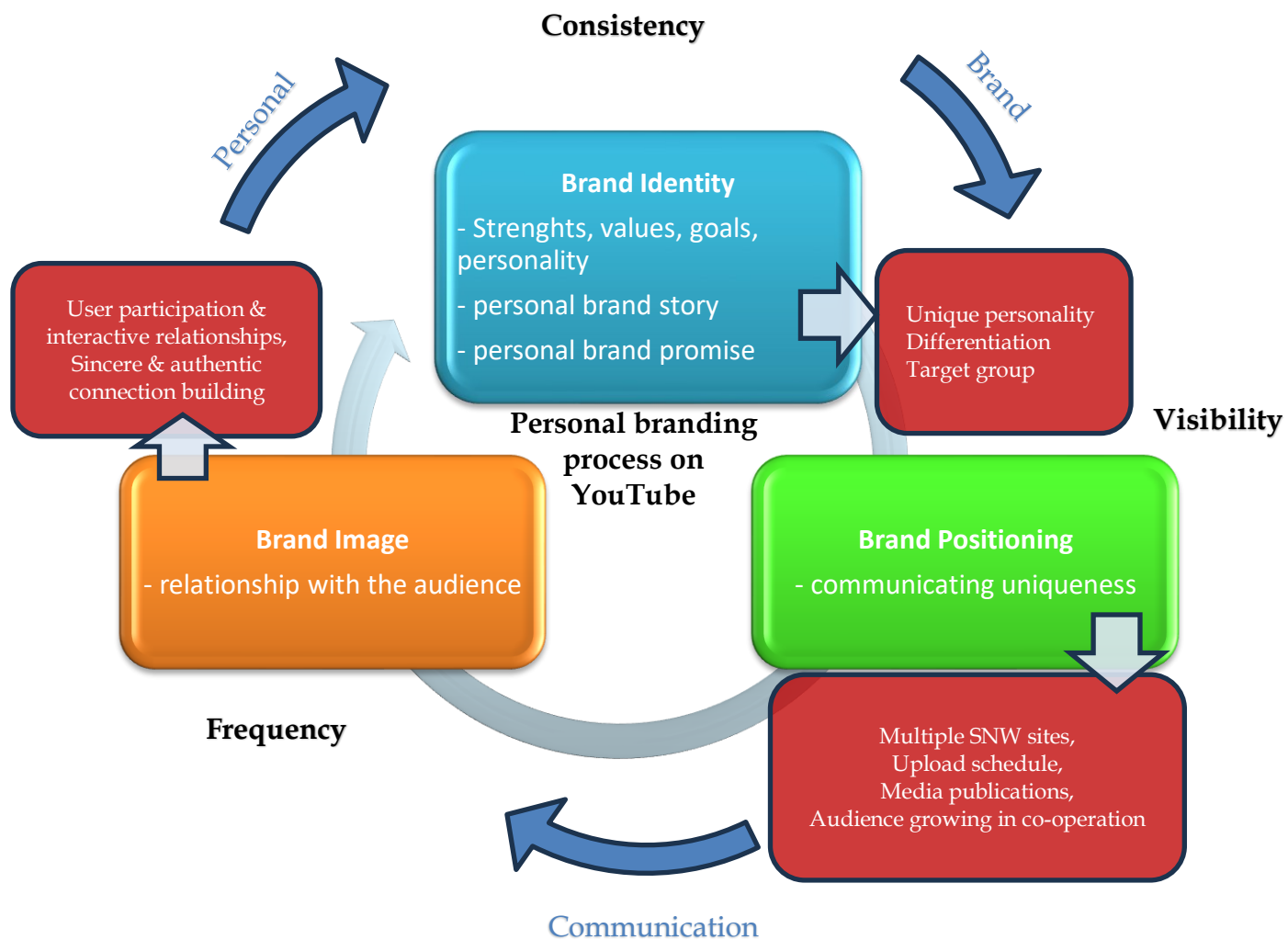


Figure 6 Personal branding in social media and YouTube (Based on Arruda 2010; Khedher 2015; Tarnovskaya 2017; Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018; Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; and Labrecque et al., 2011).

Brand positioning as Khedher (2015, p. 19-22) sees it and is cited above, can be done “via verbal strategies and artefactual, non-verbal behaviours”. Morgan (2021) adds that one should also utilize multiple channels to talk about it frequently and underlines the importance of being visible. When positioning their brands, the YouTubers exploit multiple social network sites to promote their channels for their audiences (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338; Tarnovskaya, 2017, p. 31-32). Also, their upload schedule on YouTube is rather determined, not too seldom or often but optimized, e.g., once a week, so that they stay in the front of the minds of their audiences (Holland, 2016; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018, 82; Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338). To further help the YouTubers position themselves they grow their audiences in cooperation with other YouTubers, brands and/or products and make media publications such as books (Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338-339).

Khedher (2015, p. 19-22), cited above, when talking about Brand Image, lists monitoring the performance of a brand – how one wants “to be experienced, perceived, and appreciated by others” – as the way to create and manage it. When coming to creating their brand images the YouTubers aim to participate their fans and stay in interactive relationship with them (Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; Tarnovskaya, 2017, p. 31-33; Grzesiak, 2017, p. 338). Sincerity and authenticity seem also important Brand Image elements for the YouTubers. Failing to be perceived as sincere and authentic in their connection building might result in severe failures in terms of clashing different brand identities and mixed message creation (Lo & Peng, 2022; Labrecque et al., 2011, p. 48).

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter first discusses the methodological choices of this theses in the light of qualitative method used in this study. This chapter secondly provides the methods concerning data collection and practical implementations. Finally, the processes of data analysis are discussed.

3.1 Research approach and strategy

Methodology, referring to organizing principles, guides the research process (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) and is related to the general approach to research problem (Metsämuuronen, 2005, p. 198). Methodologies are associated with us coming to know of the world and can be used in research when trying to understand this world better (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The suitable method should also fit the research question, theory, hypothesis, and methodology (Metsämuuronen, 2005, p. 80).

In this study the aim is to uncover new insights about YouTube musicians' personal branding on social media. Because of the nature of this study, studying the social world phenomenon of personal branding in social media, the epistemological considerations first need to be discussed. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 15-16, 18) bring forth the central epistemological issue of social world being studied "according to the same principles, procedure, and ethos as the natural sciences" and conclude that the study of social world calls for a differing logic of research procedure reflecting the distinctiveness of humans - interpretivism. To understand the social world, the researchers need to "grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 19). Thus, to explain and understand the phenomenon of personal branding on social media in this study, the activities of social actors must be interpreted.

As Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) note, a qualitative approach to research, is especially relevant when the prior research on the subject is modest which implies that qualitative research strives to be exploratory and flexible in nature. For this reason, this study will view the interesting phenomenon of YouTube musicians in the music field through the lenses of qualitative study.

Qualitative study seeks to understand the phenomenon in depth "through the eyes of the people" that are being studied (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 402). Also, a qualitative approach is especially useful when the desire is to study natural situations that cannot be organized as tests (Metsämuuronen, 2011, p. 220). Qualitative research also strives to understand the social world through examining the interpretations of the world of the participants, stressing that behaviour and values should be understood in the context (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 386, 404).

The feature of qualitative research is its inductive view on the relationship between theory and research as qualitative research emphasizes the theory generating out of the research. Furthermore, qualitative study tends to be concerned more with words than numbers and thus requiring thick descriptions (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 402, 403).

3.2 Research Method

In this chapter the chosen research method, a qualitative content analysis, is discussed and further the directed content analysis is explained. This chapter also discusses the benefits of the chosen method, as the choice of the chosen research method is made for several reasons and talks about why this chose method is a suitable method for this specific study.

3.2.1 Qualitative content analysis

Schreier (2012, p. 2) refers to qualitative content analysis (QCA) as a method to consider when the researcher needs to engage interpretation to some extents to arrive at the meanings of the data, especially with meanings that are less obvious. Bryman and Bell (2007, 289) note that QCA is objective and systematic where anyone might apply the same rules and “(hopefully) come up with the same results”. The benefits of QCA, as Schreier (2012, p. 3, 5) recons them, are that the method is systematic, flexible and reduces data and the material can also verbal or visual. She also states the goal of QCA as a systematic way describing the meaning of the material when one needs to summarize and describe the key aspects of the material.

The aim of this research is to investigate and analyse the content of successful YouTube musicians and the first reason to utilize QCA as a research method is that the method allows to investigate the YouTube musicians’ content thoroughly. This study utilizes the directed content analysis as the approach to the qualitative content analysis of which Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1281) write about that is a suitable approach when the prior research or existing theory about a phenomenon is incomplete or would otherwise be beneficial to further research. They argue that validating or conceptually extending a theoretical framework of theory is the goal of the directed content analysis. The researchers point out that the key is that the prior research finding or theory act as the guidance for coding in this approach. Thus, the prior research (discussed in Chapter 2) functions as a guidance for the initial codes in this research.

Secondly, qualitative content analysis seeks to find hidden and underlying themes in the materials that are being analysed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 560). In this study the aim is to discover the key success factors of successful musicians on via the content they create on social media, it is important to seek for patterns among the successful YouTube musicians. Via qualitative content analysis the

researcher can search for underlying themes in a systematic and analytic way while still retaining the flexibility.

Thirdly, via the chosen research method it is possible to have generated information about social groups that would otherwise be difficult to gain access to (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 305). As the successful YouTube musicians are often also self-made celebrities and thus are not the easiest to gain access to, the chosen research method provides a way to develop information about how the YouTubers are building their brands via content they create.

Finally, as the aim of the study is to get a truthful picture of how the successful YouTube musicians have built their brands via created content it is essential that the method used considers this as well. Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 305) describe content analysis to be both a transparent research method, enabling follow-up studies while being an objective method of analysis, and an unobtrusive or non-reactive method, meaning the method doesn't include participants and allows the researcher to carry out the research without the subjects being aware that they are the focus of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 281, 305). By conducting the research in such a way, the subjects of study, in this case the YouTubers, won't be affected by the presence of a researcher and won't act in a different way.

3.2.2 Data-driven coding frame

Coding is at the heart of the QCA (Schreier, 2012, p. 58) and in directed content analysis the previous research or theory acts as a guidance for the initial codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). Also, coding forces the researcher to select certain key aspects of the material and focus on them (Schreier, 2012, p. 59). In directed content analysis the key concepts or variables are identified to initial coding categories by using existing theory or prior research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). A coding frame can be built using the concept-driven strategy that draws on previous knowledge. When using the concept-driven strategy the coding frame is structurally complete as the strategy is based i.e. on theory and on prior research. (Schreier, 2012, p. 94.)

In this study the coding frame is built based on previous research and theory. The coding frame functions as a mean to structure the material, consisting of main categories that specify integral aspects and of subcategories that specify integral meanings for the main categories (Schreier, 2012, p. 61). The coding frame for this study utilizes mostly Khedher's (2015) research on personal branding process and is completed by the research about the personal branding process on social media networks, and especially on YouTube. The coding frame is presented below (Table 1), the supplementing research being also listed to the coding frame.

The requirements for coding frames are most importantly reliability, referring to results of the analysis remaining firm over time, and validity, as the

coding frame is valid when it captures what it is deemed to capture. Other requirements for a coding frame are: unidimensionality, meaning that just one aspect of the material should be captured by each dimension in the coding frame; mutual exclusiveness, meaning that each segment of the material can only be assigned to one subcategory; exhaustiveness, referring to all the relevant in collected material captured by one of the subcategories of the coding frame; and saturation that each subcategory is to be used at least once, referring to the coding frequency for each category and subcategory equalling 1 or higher. (Schreier, 2012, p. 71-72, 75-77.)

Table 1 A coding frame based on Khedher's (2015) personal branding process:

Theories	Themes/ Categories/ Codes	Subthemes/ Subcategories/ Subcodes	Meanings/Operational Definitions
Khedher, 2017	Brand Identity		
Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018		Unique personality and differentiation	How do the YouTubers differentiate from the others and show their unique personality?
Tarnovskaya, 2017		Target group	Who do the YouTubers aim to reach with the content they create?
Khedher, 2017	Brand Positioning		
Grzesiak, 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017		Multiple social networking sites	Do the YouTubers promote their work on their social network?
Holland, 2016; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018; Grzesiak, 2017		Upload schedule	How often do the YouTubers post? The posting time should not be too often nor too seldom, but e.g., once a week
Grzesiak, 2017		Media publications	Are there some media publications, such as books?
Grzesiak, 2017		Audience growing in co-operation	Do the YouTubers grow their channels by teaming up with other YouTubers?
Khedher, 2017	Brand Image		

Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Grzesiak, 2017		User participation and interactive relationship with fans	How do the YouTubers activate their audience into their video-making and do the YouTubers have an interactive relationship with their fans?
Lo & Peng, 2022; Labrecque et al., 2011		Sincere and authentic connection building	Do the YouTubers seem authentic and sincere and are they perceived as sincere by their audiences?

3.3 Data collection and analysis

3.3.1 Research process

The research process in this study follows the steps of directed content analysis. Directed content analysis is a more structured process compared to the conventional approach where the key concepts of variables stem from the existing theory or prior research (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, p. 1281). The key concepts of personal branding were first identified from the prior research and were discussed earlier. Then, following the guidance of Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1281) who note, that the operational definitions for each category should be created by using the theory, the definitions were generated for each category.

After identifying the key concepts into initial coding categories and determining the operational definitions for the categories the coding process was ready to begin. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1281-1282) note that coding can begin immediately with codes that are predetermined and rise from the theory. This research directly found some predetermined codes from the data and used the predetermined codes to begin coding straight away. It was also noted that there were data that wouldn't fit into the predetermined codes. In such cases Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1282) recommend, that the data should be identified and later analysed to see if the data forms a category of their own or can be fitted as a subcategory of an existing code. In this way this study was able to make findings that both supported the theory but also some findings that were bringing forth new information. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1282) point out that usually the findings from a directed content analysis provide both supportive and non-supportive evidence for the theory, as the new identified categories might provide either an opposite view to the phenomenon or extend, breed, or enrich the theory.

3.3.2 Site and sample

The aim of this research is to uncover how successful YouTube musicians´ create and build their personal brands via content created. Thus, it is essential to collect the empirical material on site, in this case on YouTube, where the successful YouTube musicians publish their content. It is also noteworthy that although the successful YouTube musicians might have other successful social media platforms as well this study will concentrate on investigating only the content published on YouTube.

YouTube has grown to be the biggest online video platform worldwide (Statista, 2023) and the most popular social media platform after Facebook (Bernhardt, 2022). There also were around 500 hours of video uploaded on YouTube every minute in April 2022 (Statista, 2023), signifying the importance of knowing what to search for to conduct research successfully on YouTube.

Due to the nature of this research purposive sampling is utilized in sampling the research participants. Bryman and Bell (2011, 442) describe purposive sampling as a non-probability form of sampling where the researcher won't seek the sample research on a random basis but chooses the participants in a strategic way. The aim is to have participants relevant to the posed research question and oftentimes sampling is chosen for the sake of variety, so that the sample members differ from each other in key characteristics wise. When utilizing purposive sampling it must be noted that the researcher cannot generalize the results to a population. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, 442.) In the light of purposive sampling the participants were chosen especially under two key criteria. In order to study how successful YouTube-musicians create and build their personal brands on YouTube (1) the participants needed to be YouTube musicians, that is to say musicians to whom YouTube has been in a major role or the key factor to launch their careers, and (2) the chosen musicians needed to be successful in a way ´success´ on YouTube is portrayed (see Chapter 1.2). Also, as there were a remarkable number of participants to consider with this set of criteria another set of criteria was created to complete the two key criteria.

The two key criteria set by the research question:

- The selected participants need to be YouTube musicians, in other words musicians to whom YouTube has been in a major role or the key factor to launch their careers.
- The selected YouTube musician need to be successful, that is the chose YouTube musician must have a minimum 1 million subscribers.

Additional criteria

- The selected YouTube musicians must have been active on YouTube for a minimum of three years. This is to find out whether the YouTube musicians have been consistent in building their personal brands or not as comparing both recent and older content of the empirical material will give a fuller picture of the YouTube musicians' ways of building a brand.
- The concepts of the chosen YouTube musicians need to be diverse (instrumentation) and the kind of videos they post. This criterion was created find out whether there were certain patterns all the YouTube musicians are having in common despite the diverse content they are sharing.
- The prioritized language for the YouTubers analyzed must be English. Although many videos the musicians produce for YouTube do not contain spoken content the written content e.g., in the description box must be in English. The need for this criterion springs from practical reasons, mainly lowering the risks of misunderstandings and misinterpretations.
- The criterion of being an indie musician. The chosen YouTube musicians need to be independent musicians, thus without record deals from major labels (see Chapter 2.3) as the major record labels often want to have a say how the artist brands need to be built and what content published. Also, with major record labels the artist might be able to utilize the label's resources in terms of e.g., marketing and branding resources.

Based on the purposive sampling approach and the criteria set above, the chosen participants for this research are these four YouTube musicians / groups: a Korean "bedroom singer" J Fla Music (17,6 million followers), an American violinist and a dancer Lindsey Stirling (13,6 million followers), an Italian bass player Davie504 (12,9 million followers), and a Canadian indie pop-band Walk off the Earth (5,48 million followers). The four YouTuber musicians / groups are introduced as follows. A summary of all the selected YouTubers is also provided after the introductions of the chosen subjects of studies (Table 2).

J Fla Music

J.Fl.a, a YouTube sensation, originally Kim Jung-hwa rose to stardom after starting to make cover versions of popular songs such as Ed Sheeran's Shape of You and Luis Fonsi's Despacito. Her channel has been the first South Korean YouTube channel to reach 10 million followers. (Tae-hee, 2018.) Born in 1987 in Seoul, South Korea, Jung-hwa started her YouTube channel back in 2011 working with her original music on the side (McGregor, 2023). Jung-hwa released her debut EP, "Stupid Story" in 2013 (Tae-hee, 2018). She released more EPs in the following four years, leading to the release of her first full-length album in 2017. In 2022 Jung-hwa founded her own record company, Goodsen Entertainment, that is

publishing her debut album of original songs in the near future. (McGregor, 2023.) Her YouTube channel has gained nearly 3,8 billion views to date (@JFlaMusic, 2023).

Lindsey Stirling

Lindsey Stirling started her career in music at the age of 6, playing the violin. Her appearance on “America’s Got Talent” in 2010, to showcase her ability to dance while playing the violin, was her first attempt to break through but she was voted off of the show (Sculley, 2022). Shortly after the show, with the help of Devin Graham, an American filmmaker, she set up her own YouTube channel (Artemis, 2015) and to date her subscribers are over 13,6 million. She has released six albums, including two holiday albums (Sculley, 2022) with featuring guest artists such as Dan + Shay and Christina Perry, earning her numerous awards and rankings on Billboard charts (Bringin’ it Backwards, 2021). Her YouTube collaborations include groups and artists such as Pentatonix and John Legend. She has co-written a New York Times best-selling book with her sister, she’s a runner-up on Season 25 of “Dancing with the Stars” and is currently helping families through her nonprofit charity program (Bringin’ it Backwards, 2021).

Davie504

“The internet’s biggest low-end sensation” (Bass Player, 2021), the Italian bass-player Davie504, originally Davide Biale (Newman, 2021) with 12,9 million followers on YouTube, is Italy’s most successful YouTube musician and hosts the second most followed YouTube channel in Italy (Statista, 2023). Biale was drawn into music at high school and founded his YouTube channel back in 2011. His unconventional approach combining comedy and music in his videos and his constant interaction with his fans has led him to become a YouTube sensation (Newman, 2021). During the years of being active on YouTube he has collaborated with other YouTubers such as PewDiePie (Ramsay, 2019), Steve Terreberrry, Jared Dines (Newman, 2021), Charles Berthoud and TwoSetViolin. He has his own signature Davie 504 bass guitar with Chowny Bass, a bass guitar maker and manufacturer and his other achievements include being listed as number two hottest bassists in the world today by MusicRadar (Newman, 2021).

Walk Off the Earth

Walk off the Earth is a Canadian multi-platinum indie pop band known for their “innovative covers and catchy originals” (Sydenham Current, 2023). The band has gained success by covering hit songs often in unusual ways and by using unusual instruments and by releasing their original songs (Gokhman, 2021). The

band first achieved global success after releasing a cover version of Gotye’s “Somebody That I Used to Know” in 2012, reaching over 175 million views in a couple of months (Miller, 2023). Their YouTube covers have since won then Streamy awards (Sydenham Current, 2023), and their original songs have gained them two Juno award nominations, top 10 listing on Apple Music’s top pop playlist (Guarneri, 2020) and other high-profile accolades such as multi-platinum certifications and placing on US Pop Album Chart (Sydenham Current, 2023).

Table 2 A Summary of the selected YouTubers

YouTuber	J. Fla	Lindsey Stirling	Davie504	Walk Off the Earth
No. of Subscribers	17,6 million	13,6 million	12,9 million	5,66 million
No. of views	3 792 507 239	3 752 169 966	2 663 121 057	1 544 654 361
No. of Videos	323	199	835	405
Joined YouTube	2011	2007	2011	2008
Country of origin	South Korea	USA	Italy	Canada
Channel content	Cover songs, originals,	Originals, cover songs, Tour videos	Humorous bass videos	Cover songs, multi-instrumental videos, original songs

With four YouTube channels now chosen the method of selecting the videos from each channel was to decide. The method of selecting videos was eventually set to choose one video per year from each YouTuber, starting from the most recent video at the time of analysis (the beginning of May) and going back in the archive for eight years, always choosing the video that was dated closest to the beginning of May.

There were exceptions to choosing the videos at times, mainly due the posting schedule of the YouTubers. Lindsey Stirling has not been posting any YouTube videos since December 2022. This led to choose her latest video, published in December 2022, to be included in the analysis. Despite the lack of content in her channel it was not considered that her channel should be dropped out from the chosen YouTube channels as YouTubers can be on breaks from YouTube occasionally. Davie405 was seemingly on a break from YouTube in 2022, releasing close to no content between June and October that year. Also, JFlaMusic had not been releasing content actively in the beginning of the year 2023, but at the time of field study she had just released a music video that was included in the analysis. Walk off the Earth was also publishing a bit less actively in 2023. Overall,

the publishing activity of the chosen channels was alternating from publishing content very actively into publishing only very little content in the examined timespan of eight years. It was thus considered that all the four selected channels would nonetheless be eligible to include in the study as all there were alterations in each of their channels in terms of publishing activity.

Altogether eight videos per YouTube channel were analysed, totalling of 32 videos. An overview of the selected videos from each YouTuber is presented below (Figures 8 to 11).

Total of eight videos that were selected and analysed from Davie504's archives are as follows (Table 3).

Table 3 An overview of Davie504's selected videos

YouTuber: Davie504	Pub-lished	Number of views	Video dura-tion	Short description
1. 可愛くてごめん [ベース]	30.4.2023	386 192	2:50	Anime song played on a bass with a bit of humor
2. You've NEVER SEEN This Instrument Before	1.5.2022	2 034 539	8:00	Introducing different and odd instruments with humor
3. bass solo that got my stepsister stuck	7.5.2021	834 364	0:33	A bass solo with humor
4. Very FRIENDLY Bass video feel free to watch in NOW, no pressure ☺	9.5.2020	1 336 100	2:40	A mafia style music video, playing the Godfather-theme on bass
5. This Bass video will make you question your sanity	3.5.2019	2 126 947	1:48	Playing the bass with different and weird sounds
6. 30 MUSIC MEMES in 2 MINUTES	20.5.2018	22 444 690	2:32	Playing 30 music memes
7. Fidget Spinner on BASS GUITAR	10.5.2017	7 245 382	1:22	Playing the bass with fidget spinner
8. DISTORTED UKULELE SOLO	1.5.2016	1 306 036	1:05	Playing the ukulele with a distortion pedal

Total of eight videos that were selected and analysed from J. Fla's archives are as follows (Table 4).

Table 4 An overview of J Fla's selected videos

YouTuber: J. Fla	Pub- lished	Number of views	Video dura- tion	Short description
1. J Fla - To Me	19.5.2023	73 334	2:45	Original song music video with lyrics and shot by her
2. J Fla - Bedroom Singer (Official Music Video)	7.10.2022	3 594 504	3:23	Original song music video with special effects - a "big budget" video
3. Justin Bieber - Off my Face (cover by J. Fla)	7.5.2021	2 895 274	2:45	Cover song, sung from her bedroom
4. Dua Lipa - Don't Start Now (cover by J. Fla)	15.5.2020	3 802 864	2:10	Cover song, sung from her bedroom
5. Ariana Grande - 7 rings (cover by J. Fla)	3.5.2019	8 764 815	2:12	Cover song, sung from her bedroom
6. Imagine Dragons - Believer (cover by J. Fla)	11.5.2018	59 111 642	2:35	Cover song, sung from her bedroom
7. Luis Fonsi - Despacito (cover by J. Fla)	12.5.2017	211 830 095	2:42	Cover song, sung from her bedroom
8. Meghan Trainor - No (cover by J.Fla)	17.5.2016	1 439 379	2:43	Cover song, sung from her bedroom

Total of eight videos that were selected and analysed from Lindsey Stirling's archives are as follows (Table 5).

Table 5 An overview of Lindsey Stirling's selected videos

YouTuber: Lindsey Stirling	Pub- lished	Number of views	Duration	Short description
1. Lindsey Stirling - Magic ft. David Archuleta (Tour Performance)	21.12.2022	436 777	3:22	A tour video from her Christmas show featuring herself and David Archuleta
2. Lindsey Stirling - Lose You Now feat. Mako (Acoustic)	22.4.2021	1 655 075	3:15	Original song music video, acoustic version, featuring herself, a string quartet and artist Mako
3. Lindsey Stirling - Sleepwalking (Behind the Scenes)	28.4.2020	205 577	3:22	Behind the scenes -video from her original song music video
4. Lindsey Stirling - EndGame of Thrones - War of Music (Official Video)	17.5.2019	3 750 170	3:37	A lower budget cover video, featuring her playing the song at a rooftop in a city
5. Lindsey Stirling + Alexander Jean - Stampede TRAILER	11.6.2018	361 011	0:24	A trailer from her upcoming original song music video, professional feeling
6. Lindsey Stirling - Lost Girls (Official Music Video)	11.5.2017	30 293 080	4:49	A "big budget" original song music video telling the story of finding freedom

7. Lindsey Stirling - The Arena (Official Music Video)	28.6.2016	93 090 292	4:06	A "big budget" original song music video telling the story of courage
8. Pure Imagination - Lindsey Stirling & Josh Groban with the Muppets	7.5.2015	3 497 454	5:31	A humorous video featuring herself, Josh Groban, and the Muppets

Total of eight videos that were selected and analysed from Walk Off the Earth's archives are as follows (Table 6).

Table 6 An overview of Walk Off the Earth's selected videos

YouTuber: Walk Off the Earth	Published	Number of views	Duration	Short description
1. whatever - Walk off the Earth	5.5.2023	604 760	2:00	Original song lyric video
2. Walk off the Earth - Turn! Turn! Turn! (Official Cover of the Byrds)	13.5.2022	652 982	3:06	A cover song, one-take video at a beach featuring three people singing and playing
3. Best "Eye of the Tiger" Cover Ever?!	14.5.2021	3 524 884	3:23	A cover song, one-take video from a porch, featuring six people singing and playing
4. Stuck with U - Walk off the Earth (Ariana Grande & Justin Bieber Cover)	22.5.2020	892 694	3:44	A cover song, one-take video under a table, featuring two people singing and playing
5. We covered Taylor Swift at Red Rocks!	18.5.2019	1 634 131	3:24	A cover song, one-take video shot outside, featuring two people singing and playing
6. Maroon 5 Cover on rare instrument!	10.7.2018	22 439 734	4:06	A cover song, one-take video, featuring five people around one guitar-like instrument playing it and singing
7. I'm the One - DJ Khaled, Justin Bieber, Quavo, Chance (Walk off the Earth COVER)	16.6.2017	2 547 720	3:45	A cover song, one-take video shot in a living room, featuring two people singing and playing
8. Walk off the Earth - I'll be waiting (Official video)	3.5.2016	2 847 171	4:30	Original music video, travel video

The videos were coded straight after watching them, using the coding frame presented earlier (Chapter 3.2.1.). The codes in the coding frame were predetermined and rising from the theory as Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1281-1282) suggest and were quoted earlier. When data that could not be coded was come across the data was identified and later analysed to a category of their own or as a subcategory of a code already existing.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter the empirical findings of the study are discussed. The results are presented in the light of the coding frame (see Chapter 3.2.1). The coding frame based on Khedher's (2015) work on personal branding process introduced personal branding as a three-stage process. As discussed in Chapter 2.5., Khedher's (2015) personal branding process divides personal branding into three stages: 1) Brand Identity, 2) Brand Positioning, and 3) Brand Image. As discussed before, Khedher (2015) points out that Brand Identity includes the strengths, values, goals and personality of a person, the personal brand story, and the personal brand promise; Brand Positioning is about communicating one's uniqueness to the world and Brand Image is about building the relationship with an audience.

Based on the previous research (Tarnovskaya 2017; Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018; Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; and Labrecque et al., 2011) on how YouTubers build their brands it was concluded that Brand Identity is formed by utilizing unique personality and differentiation as well as a specifically determined target group. Positioning their brands and communicating their uniqueness, the YouTubers utilize multiple social network sites, use a determined upload schedule, make use of media publications, and grow their audiences in cooperation. Coming to Brand Identity the YouTubers build their relationships with their audiences by user participation and interactive relationships as well as building connection with them in a sincere and authentic way. Personal brand communication is also done in a consistent, frequent, and visible way.

4.1 Brand Identity

Based on the previous research (Tarnovskaya 2017; Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018) on how YouTubers build their brands it was concluded that Brand Identity is formed by utilizing unique personality and differentiation as well as a specifically determined target group. Grzesiak (2017) and Budzinski and Gaenssle (2018) argued that one of the most important factors in succeeding as a YouTuber was the ability to differentiate one's brand from the vast number of other YouTubers and show one's unique personality.

4.1.1 Unique personality and differentiation

This research can confirm the claim of unique personality and differentiation to be accurate. Looking at the YouTubers Davie504, J.Fla, Walk off the Earth and Lindsey Stirling can be found that each of them are showing their unique skills

in their videos. These unique skills seem to be essential in forming the YouTubers' unique personalities and differentiating them from other YouTubers.

Davie504 is combining humor and impressive bass playing skills in his videos with an editing style signature to him. His videos seem often follow a similar formula. Most of the time he is sitting on his chair in his room and playing the bass, adding humor and sarcasm to his videos. The humor could include him changing into an anime character (video no 1, 2023), him transforming into a celebrity (video no 3, 2021), "threatening" his followers in mafia style (video no 4, 2020), introducing new instruments to his followers with a lot of sarcasm (Figure 7, video no 2, 2022), playing in an unorthodox way (video no 5, 2019; 7, 2017; & 8, 2016) and combining music memes into his playing (video no 6, 2018).



Figure 7 Davie504 introducing new instruments "that aren't the bass" (Video no 2, 2022).

J.Fla approaches her fans in a very different style compared to *Davie504*. She rarely talks in her videos and her most watched videos have a certain similarity between them. She is making cover versions of hit songs by singing sideways to the camera, in front of a microphone, in her room and her hair up in a ponytail, and with usually one take (Video no 3, 2021; 4, 2020; 5, 2019; 6, 2018; & 7, 2017). She thanks her viewers at the end for watching and gives thanks to God. Because of these "trademarks" one is able recognize her videos straight away (Figure 8). The sound quality in the videos is good. She has also composed her own music and published videos of her singing her own songs (video no 1, 2023; & 2, 2022). Her own songs give a viewer the feeling that she is sharing a bit more about herself to the public and this gives her public image more depth. Her original songs analyzed for this study are dealing with matters such as being kind to yourself and being courageous. In her original song *To Me* (video no 1, 2023) she is singing

words of encouragements while walking in a rural city at nighttime. In her original song *Bedroom Singer* (video no 2, 2022) she seems to share her own story of overcoming her fears and finding courage. Her original songs and her appearance in her cover songs have made her identifiable for the public where she as a person seems a bit shy but yet has overcome her fears.



Figure 8 J.Fla singing on Video no 6 (2018).

Walk off the Earth, the Canadian indie band, is also rather consistent in how they communicate their unique personality and differentiate themselves from the other content providers. Their videos are often very down-to-earth and usually shot in one-take. The videos portray them in relaxed outfits and showcase their astonishing musical skills of singing and playing. They often cover hit songs with unusual instruments (Figure 9) or with unusual music styles (video 3, 2021). Apart from cover songs they are composing their own music, of which they have lyric videos of (video no 1, 2023) and music videos of (video no 8, 2016) of. They rarely speak in their videos, but when they do, that happens at the end of their older videos (video no 4, 2020 & 5, 2019) when they thank their viewers for watching, encourage them to subscribe, stream their music or get tickets to their tours. In most cases they write their thanks in the description box of comments-section below the videos, or at the end of the videos.



Figure 9 Walk off the Earth covering a hit song with their usual style, a one-take video (Video no 6, 2018).

Lindsey Stirling differs from the three other YouTubers. Her videos seem to be very professionally made: the editing style and the quality of the video make her videos look like mini movies (Figure 10). She appears in her videos playing her violin and dancing at the same time. Also, as the videos are made in such care, they also make her look very professional. Most of her videos analyzed to this study consisted of her original music: the videos containing her original music included video no 1 (2022), her original music videos include videos no 2 (2021), 6 (2017) and 7 (2016), trailers containing her original music included video no 5 (2016), and a behind-the-scenes videos containing her original music included video no 3 (2020). Only two videos out of totally eight videos were cover songs (videos no 4, 2019 & 8, 2015). *Lindsey Stirling* seems to have profiled herself in performing her original music as her recent videos are more about her original music than cover songs.

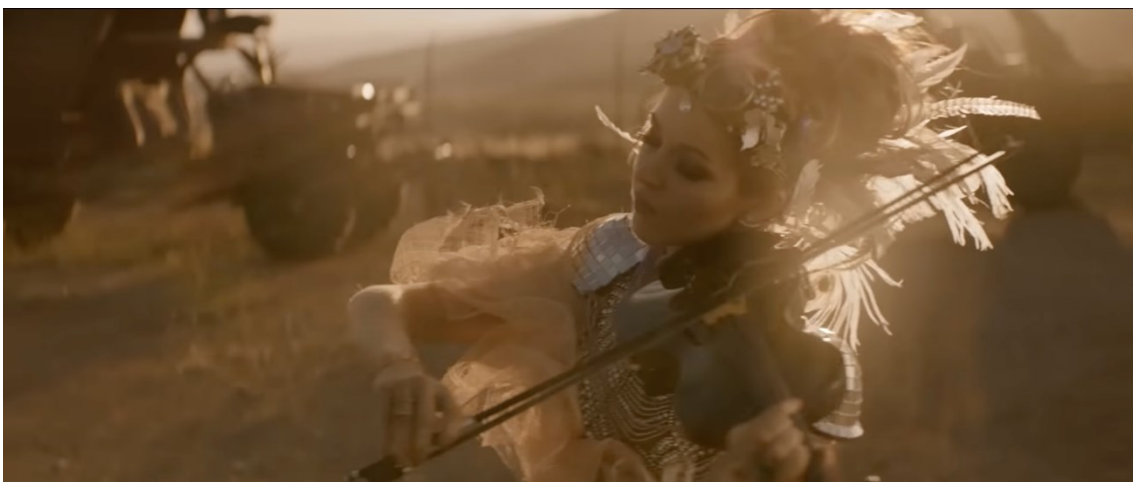


Figure 10 Lindsey Stirling in her music video Arena (Video no 7, 2016).

4.1.2 Summarizing the Brand Identity creation

Personal branding process in the case of YouTubers thus begun with forming a Brand Identity by utilizing one's unique personality to differentiate oneself from competitors (Tarnovskaya 2017; Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018) Tarnovskaya (2017) also emphasized the importance of finding the target group and "niche" to talk to and sticking to it to be successful as a YouTuber.

Comparing the YouTubers in this study was discovered, that all four of them seemed to be differentiating themselves from competitors both by their unique, musical skills as well as their personalities. Davie504 seemed to differentiate himself from the other content creators with his sharp and sarcastic humor as well as his bass playing skills. J. Fla seemed to differentiate herself with her singing skills but also with her videos following the same pattern of shooting them and rarely differing from it. Walk Off the Earth seemed to differentiate themselves with their musical skills but also with their videos following a similar pattern as well where they were covering a song in a simple, one-take video. Lindsey Stirling was also differentiating herself by her violin playing and dancing skills. Her popular videos seemed also follow the similar pattern of the professionally made music videos.

As a summary, by observing and analyzing all four YouTubers they all have rather consistent formula in creating their videos. It seems that all the YouTubers' most watched videos are following the same patterns - sitting in front of the camera and playing the bass, singing sideways, one-take video with unique musical skills, and professionally made music videos. The formula of creating similar videos that are gaining views might refer to Tarnovskaya's (2017) study about finding one's target groups and creating content just for the target group. In the case of the four YouTubers, it would seem that they have found their target groups and by creating similar videos they are sticking to their target groups and creating content for them.

4.2 Brand Positioning

Khedher (2017) defines Brand Positioning as the second step in the personal branding process. In the context of YouTubers, positioning one's brand would mean promoting one's work on multiple social networking sites (Grzesiak, 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017), a specific upload schedule (Holland, 2016; Budzinski & Gaenssle 2020; Grzesiak, 2017), media publications (Grzesiak, 2017) and growing one's audience in cooperation (Grzesiak, 2017).

4.2.1 Promoting the work

All the four YouTubers are promoting their social networking sites, although promotion of the sites doesn't usually happen in the videos but in their description boxes below the videos.

Davie504 doesn't mention his social media channels in his videos at all, only mentioning them at the description box (Figure 11). He has placed links in the description box leading to his Reddit-page, Patreon site, Merchandise site, his Twitter, Instagram and Facebook sites, and his Signature Bass site, but he doesn't actively ask viewers to follow him in those channels. He also advertises his new album with Spotify and iTunes links.

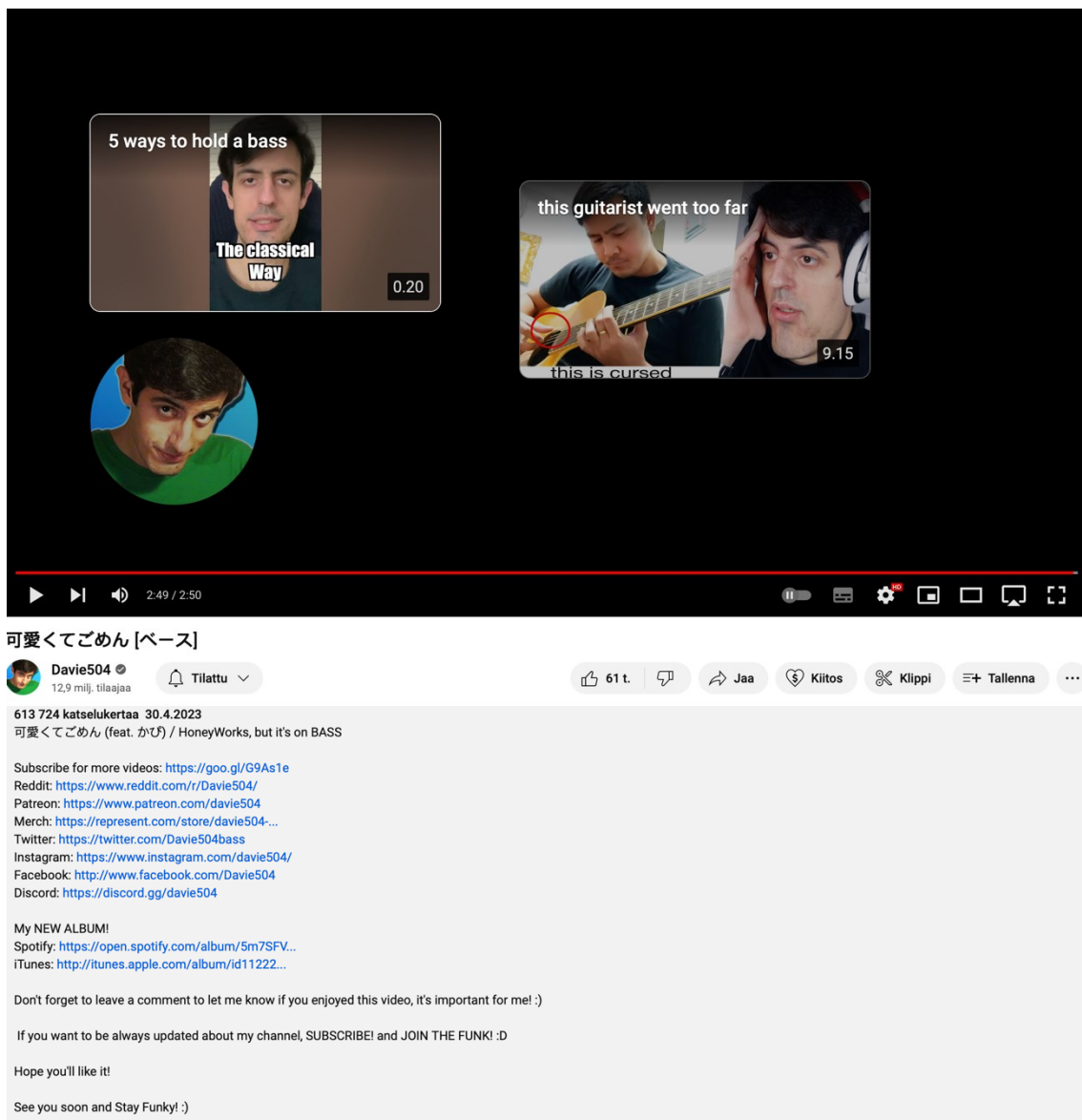


Figure 11 The end scene of Davie504's Anime-inspired video (Video no 1, 2023).

J.Fla is also listing all her social network sites (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) in her YouTube description box, oftentimes alongside with the hashtags “loveyouguys “and “gardeners” and but doesn’t actively encourage the viewers to follow her on social media. She does list the streaming services that have her music online. Figure 12 displays the end scene of her original music video from 2022 (video no 2), but the end scene of the video doesn’t provide any links to her social media or streaming services. She has placed the information of her social network sites in the description box alongside with the streaming information.

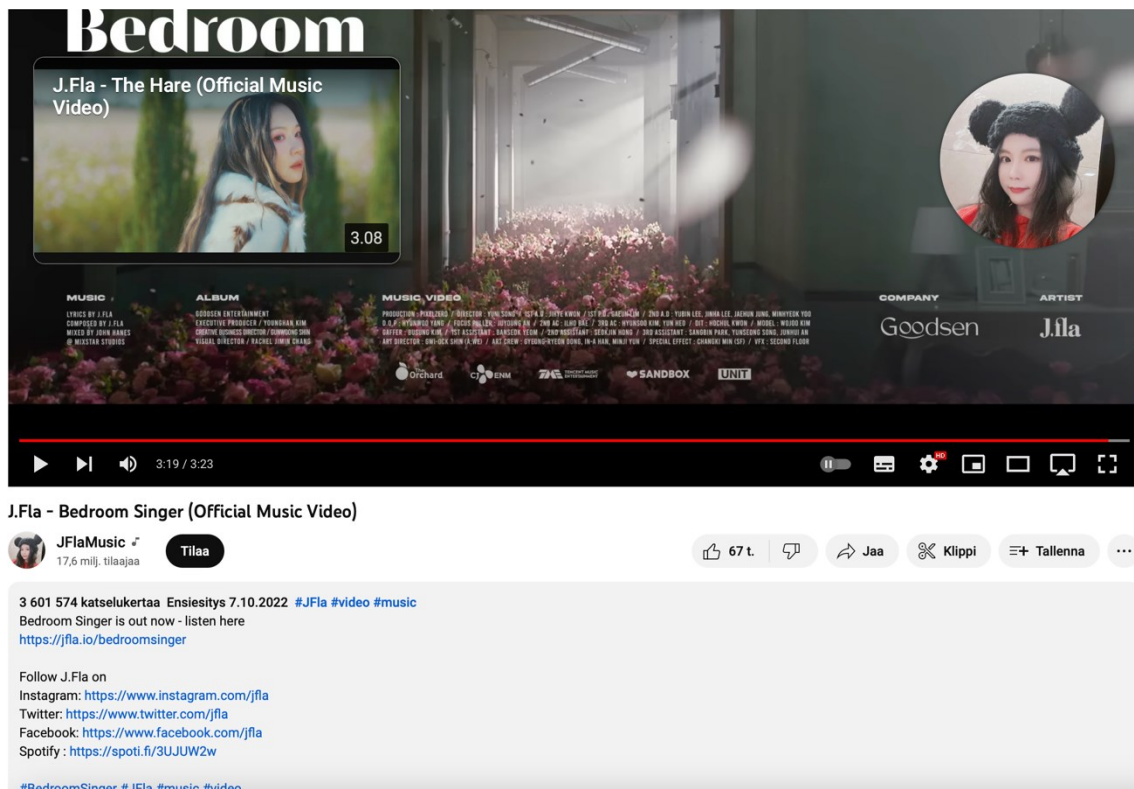


Figure 12 The end scene from J.Fla’s original music video “Bedroom Singer”. (Video no 1, 2023.)

Walk off the Earth don’t seem to actively ask viewers to follow them on social network sites in their videos but instead ask viewers to stream their music and add their songs to their playlists. They recommend their social network sites (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat) and their official website only in their description box asking viewers to follow them (Figure 13).

In their oldest video analyzed for this study the band asks their viewers to follow them on the social media at the end of the video (video no 8), but it seems that having their music streamed and added to viewer’s playlists is more important to them than following on social media. In all the videos analyzed for this study the band asks their viewers to stream their music and add the song on viewers’ playlists in the streaming services at the end of the video, in the description box and in the comments-section below the video.



Best "Eye of the Tiger" Cover Ever?!

Walk off the Earth 5,53 milj. tilaajaa
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Jaa
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3 545 955 katselukertaa 14.5.2021

Our brand new single is out now! 🎵 Stream it here: <https://withkoji.com/@walkofftheearth>
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 Stream/download our new album here: <https://orcd.co/meetyouhere>
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 Watch and listen to our Greatest Hits! <http://bit.ly/WOTEGreatesthits>
 WOTE merch available here: <https://walkofftheearth.myshopify.com/>
 Support WOTE on Patreon: <http://www.patreon.com/walkofftheearth>

Walk off the Earth cover "Survivor's" timeless classic "Eye of the Tiger" on their porch.

Band from left to right:
 Joel Cassady - Drums
 Sarah Blackwood - Ukulele
 Adam Mullett (@DelMar Music) - Bass
 Tokyo Speirs - Penny Whistle
 Danny Lopez (@Harm & Ease) - Guitar
 Gianni Luminati- Keys

DOP - Tommy Bowden
 PA - Carly Saundercook
 Audio - Tokyo Speirs
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See you soon!

Figure 13 Walk off the Earth encouraging their viewers to stream their music on different streaming sites. (Video no 3, 2021.)

Lindsey Stirling also focuses in recommending her YouTube channel and her album streaming links to her viewers in her videos. She does list her social media channels in the description box, though, and asks the viewers to follow her there. She, too, is more concentrated in asking her fans to stream and buy her music, of which she places recommendation links at the end of her videos (Figure 14).

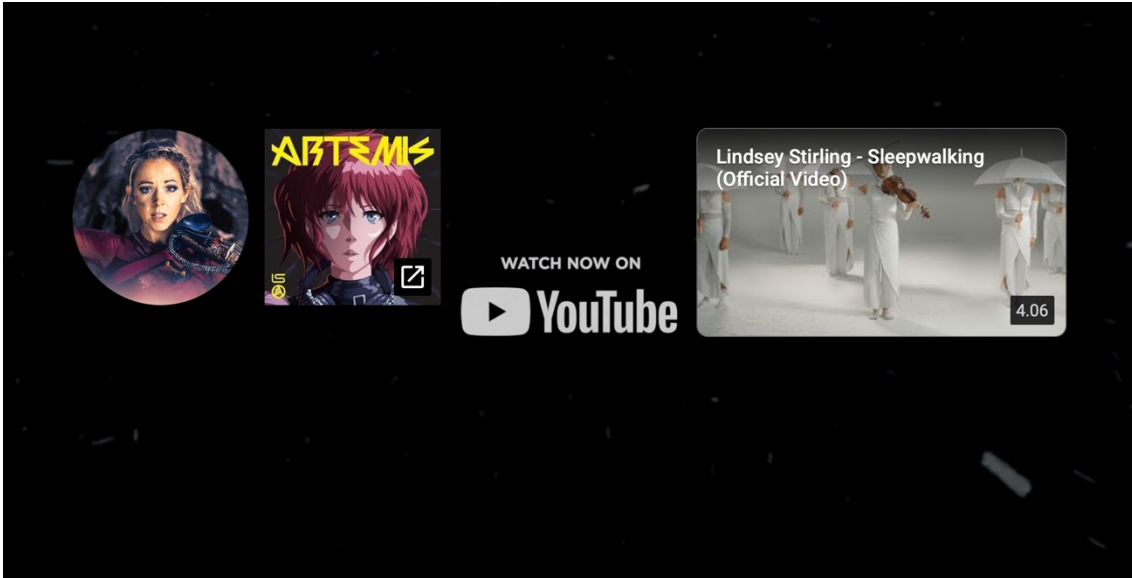


Figure 14 The end scene “Lindsey Stirling – Sleepwalking (Behind the Scenes) (Video no 3, 2020).

4.2.2 The video uploading schedule

The upload schedule for each YouTuber varied quite much; some posted videos on a regular schedule, and some were clearly posting more randomly. The upload schedule for each YouTuber varied from up to 13 videos per month to one video per month or no videos at all. Although the posting habits were altering, the interesting point that came up in this study was the feature all the four YouTubers had in common: they were all, at some point of their YouTuber careers, posting videos on a regular basis (at least once a month). The Table 7 below shows the posting activity for the four selected YouTubers per year. As the table shows, all of them have had times when they have been creating lots of content.

Table 7 Number of videos each one of the YouTubers have posted in the last 8 years.

YouTuber	Videos in 2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Davie504	15	19	63	183	94	74	71	49
J.Fla	3	8	9	28	34	47	52	52
Walk off the Earth	5	13	11	25	33	20	32	26
Lindsey Stirling	0	9	9	23	11	14	19	10

The upload schedule for *Davie504* is the most intense as he has been posting up to 13 videos per month in 2020. Otherwise, the upload schedule for him has been varying from no videos at all to one video per week. His most intense years of uploading videos have been in 2020, uploaded altogether 183 videos, and in 2019 uploading altogether 94 videos.

For *J.Fla* the upload schedule has been up to one video per week to less than one video per month. Her most intense upload schedules have been during the years of 2018 (total of 47 videos that year), 2017 (total of 52 videos that year) and 2016 (total of 52 videos that year). During the years of 2019-2023 her upload schedule has been less intense.

Walk off the Earth has had the average video uploading schedule of posting one to two videos per month. Their top years of most uploaded videos on YouTube have been 2017 (32 videos uploaded) and in 2019 (33 videos uploaded).

The upload schedule for *Lindsey Stirling* varies perhaps the most in the group of the four YouTubers as research subjects. Her upload schedule has been up to two videos per month but also including months without no uploads. Her peak years in uploading videos have been in 2020 (23 videos uploaded) and in 2017 (19 videos uploaded). Her videos, on the other hand, are usually big production videos that collect up to millions of views, whereas compared to the other three YouTubers the views in their videos vary from couple of hundred of thousand views into millions of views.

4.2.3 Media publications supporting the brand

All four YouTubers chosen for this study also had been publishing something during their years of being active. Media publications for the four YouTubers most often included album and single releases. All of them had their music on the streaming services and all of them had released albums and singles. *Walk off the Earth* and *Lindsey Stirling* had published their original music with most success, but *J.Fla* had also published her original music especially in the years of 2022 and 2023, and backed up her original music releases by publishing professionally made music videos.

Davie504 had released albums in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and singles in 2014 and 2020. All his releases were his original songs. *J.Fla* had released albums in 2017, 2018 (3 albums) and 2023 containing cover versions of hit songs. She had released numerous cover singles from 2013 to 2023, and she had released her original music as singles in 2013, 2016 and 2023. *Walk off the Earth* had released several albums during the years of 2007 to 2022. Albums containing their original music had been released in 2007, 2019, 2021 and 2022. They had also released singles from 2010 to 2023 including both cover and original songs. *Lindsey Stirling* had released albums in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2022 including mostly her original music and Christmas songs. She had released singles from 2011 to 2022 including both original music and cover songs. *Stirling's* media publications also included her autobiography "The only Pirate at a Party" (Williams, 2016), comic books based on her albums released and her music books (*LindseyStirling.com*).

An interesting observation that came forth was that underlining the streaming services on their YouTube channels seemed to be more important to all the four YouTubers than emphasizing their social network sites. They all had

music in the streaming services, and they actively asked their viewers to stream their songs and, in the case of Walk off the Earth, to add their songs to the viewers' playlists. All four YouTubers asked their viewers to stream their songs in their description boxes, and in the case of Walk off the Earth, they also asked their viewers to add their songs to their playlists at the end of their videos.

4.2.4 Audience growing in cooperation

Three out of four YouTubers in this study were also growing their audiences in cooperation. The only exception not to act alike was J. Fla. She didn't cooperate with fellow YouTubers or other artists to grow her channel.

Davie504 had been growing audiences with other YouTubers such as TwoSetViolin, Charles Berthoud, PewDiePie, and Seth Everman, and with celebrities such as the American rap-artist Snoop Dogg. *Walk off the Earth* had been growing audiences with other musicians such as the American rap-artists Snoop Dogg, the American singer-songwriters Phillip Phillips and Lisa Loeb, and the Canadian singer-songwriter Scott Helman, and YouTubers such as Gabriela Bee. *Lindsey Stirling* had also been growing her audiences in cooperation with other musicians such as the American singers Amy Lee, David Archuleta, and Josh Groban, with classical musicians such as the Chinese pianist Lang Lang, with DJs such as R3hab, and the American puppet characters the Muppets. As noted above, *J.Fla* had not been growing her audience in cooperation with fellow YouTubers or other artists during her years of being active on YouTube.

4.2.5 Summarizing the positioning of the brand

As a summary, positioning one's brand on YouTube as the second step of personal branding process according to the previous research would mean promoting the work on multiple social networking sites (Grzesiak, 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017), having a specific uploading schedule (Holland, 2016; Budzinski & Gaenssle; Grzesiak, 2017), making publications outside of social media (Grzesiak, 2017), and growing the audience in cooperation with others (Grzesiak, 2017). Comparing the findings of this study can be noted that the findings are partially aligned with the previous research.

All four YouTubers are promoting their work on multiple social media networking sites, but they rarely promote their other social media sites on their videos. This gives the impression that the four YouTubers don't actively seek to increase their following on their other social media sites. All of them on the other hand promote their music on streaming platforms. Having their fans to stream their music would seem to be more important to these four YouTubers than having the fans follow them on their social media accounts.

The previous research underlines the importance of a specific uploading schedule (Holland, 2016) and uploading content regularly to stay on the

top of the minds of one's audience (Budzinski & Gaenssle 2020). This study partially agrees with the previous study. All the YouTubers, at least at some point of their YouTuber careers, had been creating lots of content to their channels. Comparing the four YouTubers now it seems that *Davie504* is the most consistent in uploading content on YouTube. He has been posting up to 13 videos per month, although he, too, has been having breaks from uploading videos, especially in the year of 2022. *J.Fla* and *Walk off the Earth* have also been quite active in posting regularly, although they haven't been posting that often in the recent years. *Lindsey Stirling* on the other hand hasn't still been posting any videos in this current year of 2023 and her posting activity compared to the three other YouTubers seems to be most infrequently. Still, in her previous of being active on YouTube years she too was posting videos regularly, her posting activity being at least one video per month.

All the four YouTubers have some media publications made during the years, most often these publications have been single or album releases. All YouTubers have released at least three albums and several singles. Lindsey Stirling has also released her autobiography as well as comic books that are based on her albums, and music books.

The importance of growing one's channel in cooperation with others is supported by the actions of three YouTubers out of four. J. Fla is the only one in the group of four YouTubers, who has not been growing her audiences in cooperation with others. The other three YouTubers on the other hand have been growing their audiences in cooperation, Walk Off the Earth and Lindsey Stirling being the most active in co-acts. The cooperation acts for the Davie504, Lindsey Stirling and Walk Off the Earth include other YouTubers but also widely known artists, such as John Legend and Snoop Dogg.

As a summary can be noted that the findings of this study in the light of previous research are partially aligned but there are also divergences, especially when it comes to the uploading schedule and multiple social media networking site promotion.

4.3 Brand Image

As discussed before, Khedher (2017) suggests that as the third stage of the personal branding process, one should be monitoring one's image being experienced, perceived, and appreciated by others. Previous research has noted that user participation and interactive relationship with the fans (Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Grzesiak, 2017), and sincere and authentic connection building (Lo & Peng, 2022; Labrecque et al., 2011) are essential steps for YouTubers to build and maintain their Brand Images.

4.3.1 User participation and interactive relationships

Examining the practices how the four YouTubers utilized user participation and interactive relationships in their work as YouTubers, was noted that their practices seemed to vary. Davie504 seemed to be the most active and consistent in how he utilized user participation and maintained the interactive relationships with his fans. Lindsey Stirling seemed to be most distant towards her audience, not engaging her audience into participating, nor having very interactive relationships with her fans on YouTube.

Davie504 frequently asks his viewers to like and comment his videos and subscribe to his YouTube channel, usually with sarcastic jokes like “slap like now or your stepsister will get stuck too” (Video no 3, 2021). He would also threaten his viewers in the mafia style, like in Video no 4 (2020) while playing the theme from the Godfather, pressuring the viewer to watch until the end by pointing a gun at them, suggesting a viewer to press the Like-button by showing a knife and saying “right choice”, and suggesting that one should click the subscribe-button by saying “only if you want, of course” and showing his gun and a pizza slicer. He also asks the viewers to leave “a nice comment” while threatening them with an egg whisk (Figure 15).



Figure 15 Davie504 gently suggesting the viewer should subscribe to his channel (Video 4, 2020).

At the end of the Video no 1 (2023) Davie504 silently requests his followers to subscribe to his channel by raising his right hand to do his trademark, “slap”, that his viewers could understand as him asking them to subscribe to his channel (Figure 16). Davie504 subscribe button appears on the left corner of the video, he does the “slap” and the video ends. He is also asking ideas to his videos from his

viewers and carries their ideas out. He has the habit of commenting his own videos in the comments-section. These comments would include questions, such as “what are you doing step bass ?!” (Video no 3, 2021). Usually, his own comments in the comments-section gather a large amount of attention, e.g., his comment in Video no 3 (2021) gathered 162 replies and 8 100 likes.



Figure 16 Davie504 at the end of the Video no 1 (2023) silently asking viewers to subscribe.

J.Fla falls somewhere in the middle when evaluating the user participation and interactive relationships between the YouTuber and their audience. She has the habit of thanking her viewers for watching her videos with a note saying, “Thank you for watching <3 Give thanks to God”. This happens at the end of nearly every video analyzed. In the two videos containing her original music (video no 1, 2023 & 2, 2022), she also explains herself and the song with a written explanation of the video in the comments-section. Figure 17 shows how she shares her personal growth story with her fans – a story that is linked to her original song (Video no 1, 2023). She hasn’t been writing any explanations to her other videos analyzed but she has added two hashtags #loveyouguys and #gardeners to all her videos analyzed.

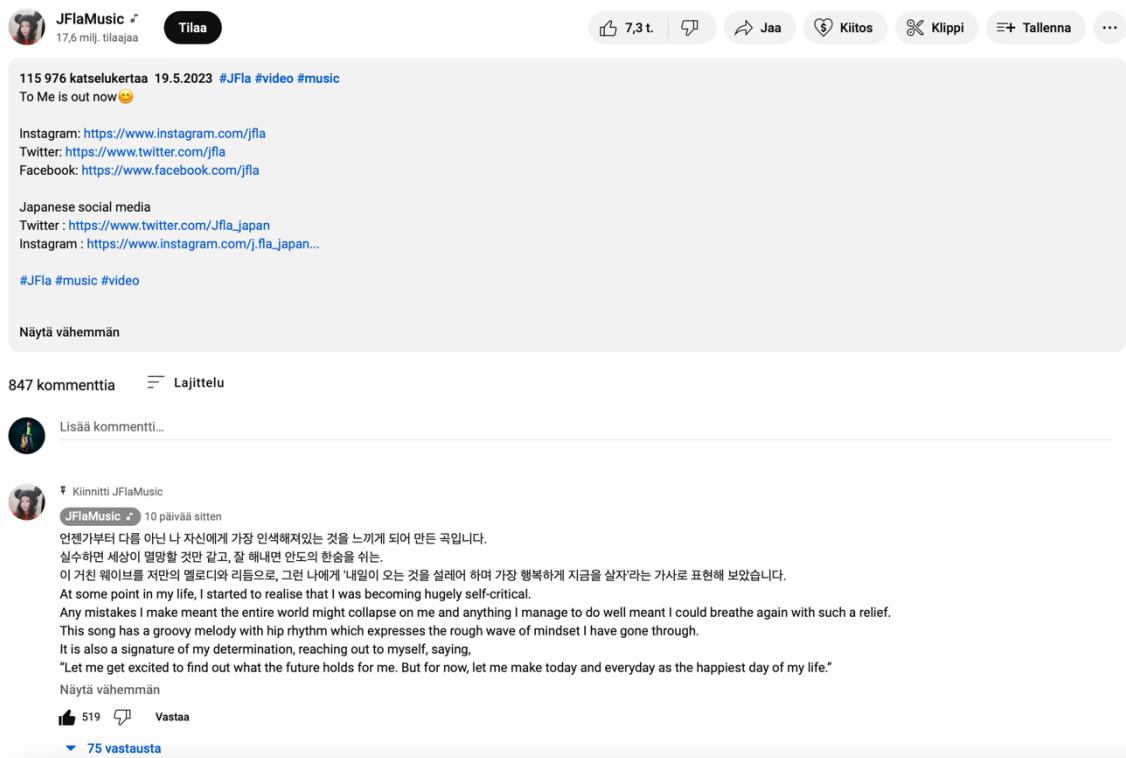


Figure 17 J.Fla shares her growth story that is linked to her original song (Video no 1, 2023)

Walk Off the Earth is quite consistent about thanking their fans for their support. The members write about the band in the description box and thank their fans for their support that has keeping the band making music. They ask the viewers to support them by becoming Patrons and encourage their viewers to join their journey. Their consistent message that they write in the most of their video description boxes analyzed in this study is about thanking their fans for the support. The following quote can be found from nearly all their videos analyzed for this study:

- “To our devoted WOTELings, your support over the years has blown our minds. We hope to be able to see you live one day soon. If you enjoyed this video then please help us out by sharing it on your socials, hitting the LIKE button and adding it to your favourites. Your support and word of mouth is the number one force keeping us making music and we can't thank you enough. (Videos no 1, 2023; 2, 2022; 4, 2020; 5, 2019; 6, 2018; 7, 2017; & 8, 2016.)

The band also has the habit of commenting their own videos in the comments section. These comments most often include thank you-notes for their fans (videos no 2, 2022; 5, 2019; & 6, 2018), promoting their tours (videos no 2, 2022; & 5, 2019), what songs to learn next (videos no 4, 2020; & 6, 2018), requesting their fans to add their songs into their playlists on streaming services (video no 6, 2018), and

even a comment they replied to from a hit song's composer (video no 3, 2021). Figure 18 shows an example how the band is engaging with their fans.

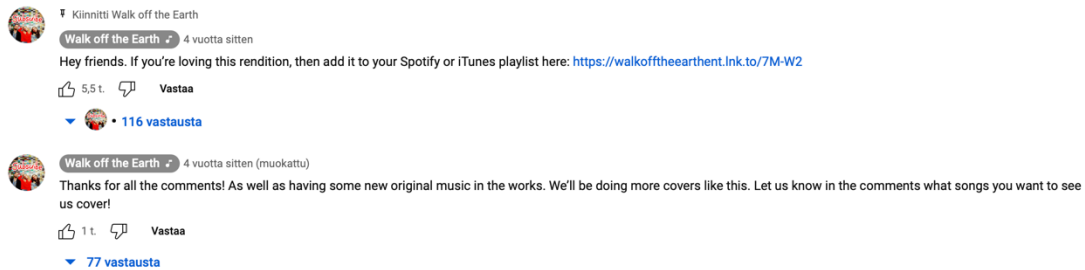


Figure 18 The band engaging with their fans (Vvideo no 6, 2018).

The user participation and interactive relationship with audience was most absent in the case of *Lindsey Stirling*. She doesn't seem to involve user participation in her videos nor try to have interactive relationship with her audiences, at least not in her YouTube videos. She usually doesn't address her audience in her videos nor thank them for watching her videos. Her message in the description box usually includes a request to follow her on social media, buy tickets for her tour and sign up for her newsletter. From all the videos analyzed for this study Video no 3 (2020) "Lindsey Stirling – Sleepwalking (Behind the Scenes)" is the only video where she was talking directly to the camera and to her audience, sharing her beliefs about life and encouraging her viewers (Figure 19).



Figure 19 Lindsey Stirling in Video no 3 (2020).

4.3.2 Sincere and authentic connection building

When scrutinizing the sincere and authentic connection building for YouTubers to build and maintain their Brand Images can be noted that all four YouTubers have different means to be perceived sincere and authentic.

The style of videos and how he is presenting himself in his videos make *Davie504* look and feel very authentic. In most of his videos analyzed to this study he is sitting on a chair of a sofa in a room and playing live (versus having recorded the music beforehand and playing the songs playback). His editing style is do-it-yourself style, that gives the impression that he is a guy playing directly to his viewers from his bedroom, with non-professional editing skills. Overall, the feeling *Davie504* is creating about himself is very down to earth.

J.Fla also has videos following the similar format to *Davie504*, as she as well is recording her videos seemingly from her bedroom. Although her editing style differs from *Davie504*'s, her videos being mostly one-take videos, she also gives the feeling authenticity and sincerity to the viewer. She seems to be herself in her videos even though she rarely speaks in them. In her original song videos (Video no 1, 2023; video no 2, 2022) she is also sharing her experiences and difficulties that she has been struggling with, creating a feeling that she wants to communicate with her fans and that she is a real and authentic person facing issues in life. Almost all *J. Fla*'s videos analyzed for this study are following the same formula: singing cover songs sideways to the camera. Although her videos in general are following the same pattern, the similarities of her most viewed videos might also be the reason for the popularity of her videos.

When evaluating the sincerity and authenticity of *Walk Off the Earth*, the overall impression of them is that they are being authentic and sincere. In every video analyzed they thank their fans for their support ("your support over the years has blown our minds"), ask the viewers to join their journey ("Walk off the Earth is a band. A band that is obsessed with making killer music in all its forms. Join us on our journey!") and list their fans being the reason they keep posting their videos ("Your support and word of mouth is the number one force keeping us making music and we can't thank you enough."). Their videos are mostly one-take videos, giving the impression that the band is playing directly to the viewers and thus increasing the feeling of sincerity and authenticity.

When it comes to *Lindsey Stirling* it seems that there isn't that much connection building in her videos. Her skills, playing the violin and dancing at the same time, are undisputable and her videos are very professionally made. Nonetheless, her videos seem to lack the connection building with the audience especially compared to the other YouTubers analyzed in this study, who seem to be putting effort into connect with their fans.

4.3.3 Summarizing the Brand Image

In the third stage of personal branding process, monitoring one's Brand Image, the previous research, as seen from the YouTubers' point of view, emphasizes the importance of interactive relationship with one's fans (Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Grzesiak, 2017), as well as the importance of being perceived as sincere and authentic in the connection building (Lo & Peng, 2022; Labrecque et al., 2011). When looking at all four YouTubers and their videos analysed in this study again can be found that the findings are partially aligned with the previous research, but they also differ from the previous findings.

In general, user participation varies when comparing all the four YouTubers in this study. Davie504 seems to be the most active in participating his fans and he manages to do this in most humorous ways. He asks his viewers to like, subscribe and comment his videos several times in a video, encourages to like, subscribe, and comment his videos in the description box and sometimes even writes comments in the comments-section. J. Fla and Walk Off the Earth participate their audiences more in their description boxes and comments-sections. J. Fla usually thanks her audience at the end of her videos and has shared some of her personal experiences in her comments-section. Walk Off the Earth also comment their own videos, thank their viewers, and ask their viewers to like, comment and subscribe their videos and stream their songs. Lindsey Stirling doesn't address her audience nor seem to try have an interactive relationship with her fans. She feels the most distant compared to the three other YouTubers in this study, as she rarely talks to her audience or tries to engage them.

When the previous research also considers sincere and authentic connection building important fact, this study finds that all the four YouTubers are establishing their sincerity and authenticity in different ways. The Italian bass player, Davie504, in his home-made videos feels very sincere and authentic, when playing his bass in his room or on a sofa. J. Fla has the similar feeling with her cover versions sung from her bedroom following the same formula. With her giving thanks to both her viewers and to God and how she opens with her past experiences, she feels very authentic and sincere. The same could be said from Walk Off the Earth, as their videos follow the similar formula of one-take videos bringing them close to the viewer. They also write in almost every video how their fans are the reason they make music and how their support means a lot to them. In a way Lindsey Stirling is also authentic as she most of the time plays her own music, giving the feeling of sharing something out of her heart. At the same time her videos lack the connection with her audience and because of the lack of connection her authenticity and sincere connection building aren't on the same level compared to the other three YouTubers.

All in all, it seems that the findings of this study support the previous theory as when looking at the numbers of views in the YouTubers' videos can be found that Lindsey Stirling is the only one who's videos aren't getting that many views any longer. On the other hand, whenever posting a professionally made

music video her videos still gain millions of views. Nonetheless, the findings of this study at least partially confirm the findings of the previous research.

4.4 Other observations

Other interesting aspects that were revealed in this study was the visual look of the videos, the cover thumbnails in the videos, the editing styles of the videos and the overall feeling of professional look of the videos. Google Support (N. D) stresses the importance of thumbnails in YouTube videos as in 90 % of the best-performing videos have custom thumbnails. Although this doesn't directly translate that with custom thumbnails one would have a best-performing video in their hands it might hint that best-performing YouTubers might also utilize custom thumbnails more often than the others.

4.4.1 Observations about visuality and the thumbnails

The visual look and editing style of *Davie504* is, as noted earlier, rather do-it-yourself. His editing style in his newer videos (Videos no 1 to 6) is hectic and because of the hectic editing style the videos are also entertaining to watch. He does have custom thumbnails in most of his videos, although Video no 8 (2016) might be an exception as it doesn't have any custom thumbnail in the video.

The visual look and editing style of *J.Fla* is also quite do-it-yourself, leastways in her cover videos (e.g. Videos no 3-7). Also, most of her video thumbnails seem not to be custom thumbnails but could rather be screenshots from the videos as they most often feature her standing before the microphone in her bedroom.

Walk off the Earth follows a quite similar path with J.Fla when it comes to the editing style of their videos. Their cover videos are most often filmed as one-take videos. In their more recent videos (Videos no 1, 2, 3 & 4) they seem to utilize custom thumbnails whereas in their older videos (Videos no 5, 6, 7 & 8) they seem to have custom thumbnails on their videos.

The editing style in the videos of *Lindsey Stirling* is, as noted before, very professional. The professional video and editing style also make her look professional. It seems that she has utilized the custom thumbnails in all her videos that were analyzed for this study. Her custom thumbnails are most often professionally taken photographs without any text on them.

4.4.2 The formula

Comparing the four YouTubers and looking at their history in the video making one more observation was made about the formula of their videos. *Lindsey Stirling* seems to be in a category of her own, as her videos are the only ones made very professionally and her posting schedule is only once a month or less. She is also the only YouTuber that seems a little distant to the audience when compared with the other three.

When analyzing the videos of the three other YouTubers, *Davie504*, *J.Fla* and *Walk off the Earth*, the study came into a conclusion that all the three's most popular videos seemingly follow a similar format. With *Davie504* his format is to sit on a sofa or in his chair and play his bass while having his videos edited in a style trademarked for him. Videos made in this format are also the ones gaining most of views. *J.Fla's* most popular videos also have a format to follow: her format has her singing a popular song sideways, in her bedroom, to a microphone and presumably live, with a thank you note and giving thanks to God at the end. In the case of *Walk off the Earth* their format seems to feature them playing a hit song with one take and good audio quality. There would also be something small happening throughout the video, like in Video no 6 (2018), where the band is playing the song gathered around one strange-looking instrument and the viewer really has to focus to catch everything that is going on in the video. The format would also include the band thanking their audience either in the video or the description box. *Walk Off the Earth* does have other kind of videos as well that don't follow the format but those videos are gaining less views.

4.5 Summary of the analysis

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the aim being to find answers how independent YouTube musicians can create and build their personal brands in the online environment, this study hints that to succeed in online environments one needs to follow the three-stage personal branding process. The most interesting observation made in this study when analysing the videos the four YouTubers generated, was that in their most successful videos all four YouTubers seemed to follow a similar pattern, their unique successful format.

In the case of *Davie504*, his most viewed videos had him sitting on his chair and playing the bass live. For *J.Fla* her most successful videos had her singing cover songs sideways to the camera with her light voice. As for *Walk off the Earth*, their most successful videos featured them as a group, covering hit songs, oftentimes with odd instruments. For *Lindsey Stirling* her format was highly professionally produced music videos featuring her playing the violin and dancing, oftentimes the videos communicating a story of courage or overcoming one's fears.

All the four YouTubers produced other kinds of videos as well, differing from their “formats”, but in those cases the videos rarely gained that many views compared to the videos that were made according to their unique format. This finding against the light of the study of Budzinski and Gaenssle’s (2020) who notice that consumers are oftentimes risk-averse and when their consumption cost being time itself the consumers often seem to “prefer known qualities over unknown ones”, could hint that the YouTube users prefer to watch content from YouTubers they know but probably also in the format they know it is worth their time. Thus, based on the findings of this study could be stated that to be successful on YouTube one should first find the unique format suitable for one’s Image, then be consistent in producing the content fitted in the format to make the content familiar to the viewers and worth their time. Thus, following the format would eventually bring success.

Now, looking at the format itself, this study found out that the most viewed videos from Davie504, J.Fla and Walk off the Earth have similar features in their videos. Their “winning formula” have them in front of the camera, playing and singing live without a professional editing touch in their videos, creating a feeling that all the three YouTubers are very present in the moment and connecting with their audience. With the format, Davie504 has in the recent years been able to gain up to 21 million views (Coffin Dance but it’s on BASS, 2020), while his most viewed video dates to 2017 (24 STRINGS BASS SOLO), peaking up to 36 million views. J.Fla has her most viewed video dated back to 2017 with 338 million views (Ed Sheeran – Shape of You [cover by J.Fla]) and her recent videos doing still quite well, with views up to 59 million (TONES AND I – Dance Monkey [cover by J.Fla], 2020). The most viewed video from Walk off the Earth date back to 2012 with 193 million views (5 people 1 Guitar!) and their recent videos peaking as high as up to 16 million views (Lil Naz S Cover With Weird Instruments!, 2019). Scrutinizing Lindsey Stirling’s videos can be noted that her videos, following the format of highly professional music videos, has during the years been shrinking in views. Her recent, professionally shot music videos, fall long short from her peak years, mostly before 2019, when her videos gained from 21 million (Lindsey Stirling – Artemis [Official Music Video], 2019) up to 376 million views (Lindsey Stirling - Roundtable Rival [Official Music video], 2014). Since her peak years she hasn’t been able to reach that high-peaking videos, her average views in her videos varying from couple of hundred thousand to as high as 12 million (Lindsey Stirling – Til the Light Goes Out [Official Music Video], 2020).

The summary of the study is provided in Table 8. The summary shows how the three-staged Personal Branding process is shaping when adapting to the four musicians building their brands. The summary shows how showing one’s unique musical skills and unique personality that can be shown for example via written messages and editing style, and creating and following a formula when filming videos seem to be the key elements in creating Brand Identity.

Looking at Brand Positioning can be noted that instead of promoting multiple social networking sites the four YouTubers are promoting their music on

different streaming sites. Also, the uploading schedule varies quite much when comparing the four YouTubers in question, but that all of them have been very active in creating content at least at some point of their careers. The media publications most often include albums and singles but can include music books, biographies, and even comic books. Audience growing in cooperation was a strategy for three out of four YouTubers in this study and growing one's audience included cooperation with other YouTubers as well as well-known artists.

Monitoring the Brand Image with user participation and interactive relationships was happening via written messages to the audience, addressing the audience and asking them to like, comment and subscribe, thanking the audience and asking the audience for new ideas for videos, song suggestions or what new songs to learn. Sincere and authentic connection building was created via singing and playing the music live (versus playback), thanking the viewers, sharing personal stories, and commenting own videos.

Table 8 Summary of the study

Theories	Themes/ Categories/ Codes	Subthemes/ Subcategories/ Subcodes	Findings of the study and interpretations
Khedher, 2017	Brand Identity		
Grzesiak, 2017; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018		Unique personality and differentiation	Showing unique musical skills and personalities to differentiate (e.g. written messages and editing styles ways to convey unique personality)
Tarnovskaya, 2017		Target group	Following a similar pattern / consistent formula when creating videos to appeal to target group
Khedher, 2017	Brand Positioning		
Grzesiak, 2017; Tarnovskaya, 2017		Multiple social networking sites	The importance of promoting their music on streaming sites; other social media sites not seemingly that important
Holland, 2016; Budzinski & Gaenssle, 2018; Grzesiak, 2017		Upload schedule	Upload schedule varied but noteworthy that active and regular content creating at least at some point of the YouTube career
Grzesiak, 2017		Media publications	Albums, singles, sometimes music books, comic books and biographies

Grzesiak, 2017		Audience growing in cooperation	Three out of four YouTubers in this study to utilize audience growing in cooperation with fellow YouTubers and well-known artists.
Khedher, 2017	Brand Image		
Holland, 2016; Lo & Peng, 2022; Tarnovskaya, 2017; Grzesiak, 2017		User participation and interactive relationship with fans	Encouraging to like, subscribe and comment and stream music; thanking the audience for the support; asking for ideas to new videos, instruments, or song suggestions.
Lo & Peng, 2022; Labrecque et al., 2011		Sincere and authentic connection building	The authentic and sincere feeling from 1) playing and singing live, 2) thanking the viewers, 3) sharing personal stories, 4) writing comments

5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the theoretical conclusions of this study. The research questions are first presented, followed by the discoveries of the study. The “Format”, the probably most notorious finding of this study, is also being discussed. Afterwards this chapter analyses the trustworthiness of this research, concluding with the limitations of this study and further research objects.

5.1 Theoretical conclusions

In this master’s thesis the focus was to discover how YouTube-musicians are successfully creating and building their personal brands on YouTube. The topic was interesting as there are only a limited number of research on the matter and majority of the study covering social media concentrates often on social media celebrities in general, not specifically on musicians. Because of the lack of research, a study focusing especially on how independent musicians on YouTube create, establish, and maintain their brands could potentially bring new information and create new ways of branding to the independent musicians.

This study first dived into the existing literature of personal branding process and the personal branding process applied in the context on social media. After the literature review, the empirical research was conducted as a qualitative content analysis. Total of four YouTubers were chosen to the study, criterion for their selection was presented in Chapter 3. 8 videos per YouTuber was analysed, integrating to total 32 videos coded and analysed. The example of each YouTuber’s coded and analysed video is included in the Appendixes.

The findings of the study were partially in line with the previous research and found some new perspectives to how personal branding is conducted in the case of YouTuber-musicians. This research aimed to answer to three research questions:

- 1) How do the successful YouTube-musicians create their personal brand identities?
- 2) How do the successful YouTube-musicians position their personal brands?
- 3) How do the successful YouTube-musicians maintain their personal brands?

With the first research question “*How do the successful YouTube-musicians create their personal brand identities*” it was found that the YouTubers utilized their unique personalities and musical skills to differentiate from the other YouTubers

in the eyes of their target group. The ways the YouTubers were showing their unique personalities included their written messages both in their description boxes and the comments-sections below the videos. These messages were most often thanking you-notes for the fans, expressing their gratitude that their fans keep on supporting them, but they also included jokes and personal stories and experiences in life. The written messages also made the YouTuber feel more authentic and sincere and created a feeling that the YouTuber wanted to be in connection with the fans.

Another way to show personalities in the videos included the editing style, as via editing style the YouTuber was also able to show for example their professionalism or humor. When creating videos to their target groups an observation was made as all four YouTubers seemed to have created and following a certain formula of creating videos.

To create videos for a certain group seemed to involve a certain formula of videos, where the YouTuber in question would create new videos alike to their previous videos. Budzinski and Gaenssle's (2020) note, that a feature common to consumers is their tendency to avoid risks. The risk on social media, as the researchers point out, is losing one's time. When creating certain formula videos – although the videos being new – the formula would give a proof of a quality and could thus be lowering the risk of the consumer. This might at least in part explain why the “formula” videos are gaining more views than other videos from the same YouTubers that differ from the formula.

Answering the second research question “*How do the successful YouTube-musicians establish their personal brands*” it was found that the YouTubers did communicate their uniqueness but slightly in a different way that the previous research had emphasized. Grzesiak (2017) and Tarnovskaya (2017) emphasized both the importance of multiple social networking site promotion, but what was found in this study was that while all four YouTubers promoted their social networking sites, the promotion happened in the description boxes of their videos, not directly within their videos. What seemed to be more important for all four YouTubers was to promote their music on different streaming services. Walk off the Earth was the one to promote their music the most in their videos, the others promoted their music in the streaming services most often in the description boxes of the videos.

Also, the upload schedule for the YouTubers varied quite a lot. In the study of Grzesiak (2017, p. 337) he recommended that a content creator should not produce too much nor too little content, but provide content e.g., once a week. Budzinski and Gaenssle's (2020) noted about the same thing but also warned that a content creator shouldn't be creating too much content e.g., per day, as content published too often might have an opposite effect on the audience. This study discovered that creating too much content wasn't oftentimes the case for the four YouTubers analysed to this study as all of them were having some breaks in creating content to their channels. What was discovered, on the other hand, was that although some of the YouTubers were posting seldomly in the recent years, they all had been posting very actively on YouTube at some points of their careers.

This could indicate that they had indeed grown their audiences in their most active years and now they probably were not feeling pressured to publish as often to keep their channels growing.

Concerning media publications, the publications for the studied YouTubers most often included album and single releases. All of them had albums and singles released and their music on the streaming services. This is also probably the reason all the YouTubers preferred to underline streaming services over social network sites in their videos. Additionally, three YouTubers out of four had been growing their audiences in cooperation either with other YouTubers or known artists. The only YouTuber who hadn't been growing her audience in cooperation was J.Fla.

As for the third and final question of this study, *"How do the successful YouTube-musicians maintain their personal brands"* it was found that all the YouTubers were utilizing user participation and interactive relationships to some extent in their work as YouTubers, but their practices seemed to vary. The most active and consistent YouTuber in user participation and interactive relationships was Davie504. He was constantly asking his viewers to subscribe, like and comment his videos. He was also able to do this in the most entertaining way, and as a result, this might also be one of the reasons his channel is constantly growing. Out of the four YouTubers, Lindsey Stirling seemed to be most distant towards her audience, as she was not engaging her audience to participate nor trying to build interactive relationships with her audience. As for the sincere and authentic connection building all four YouTubers had different means to be perceived sincere and authentic, but three out of four were taking the advantage of their live videos versus pre-recorded songs performed playback. The live video dimension made the three YouTubers feel more authentic and sincere.

Some other findings were emerged from the study, but the most probably important finding, that was discussed briefly above as well, was that all four YouTubers seemed to follow a similar pattern, their unique format, in their most viewed videos. Davie504's most viewed videos would have him sitting on his chair and playing the bass live with his hectic editing style. J.Fla would be singing cover songs sideways to the camera with her light voice in her most successful videos. Walk off the Earth would have in a video them as a group, covering hit songs, presumably with odd instruments. Lindsey Stirling would have her playing the violin and dancing, telling a story through her video and often communicating a story of courage or overcoming one's fears, all of this in a format of a very professionally produced mini movie.

The idea of a "successful video format", as discussed before, finds some support from Budzinski and Gaenssle's (2020) study that notices that consumers tend to avoid risks. On social media, the consumption cost for consumer is their time, and not wanting to waste it, the researchers note that consumers often prefer to choose what is known to be good instead of going for something they are not familiar with or not sure of. This finding in the context of YouTube musicians creating content for their viewers could hint that users would prefer to watch content from YouTubers they already know but also in a format that they are

familiar with, not to waste their time. Thus, it might be effective in creating content in the same format the consumers or YouTube users are already familiar with. In this way the known format would also be a guarantee of quality.

5.2 Practical implications

As noted in the previous chapter, this study found some new perspectives on how the musicians in this study were building their personal brands. In this chapter some practical implications springing from this study are being discussed and some recommendations made where the musicians should be beneficial to focus on and what actions to make when building their personal brands on YouTube. Despite the sampling of this study is quite small, the findings still can give leastways guidelines and act as a guidance for musicians aiming to build the personal brands. This study found that the YouTubers were indeed following the three-staged personal branding process that Khedher (2015) and Arruda (2010) write about to mention a few.

Brand Identity that consists of one's unique personality and differentiation and the focused target group would in the case of YouTubers mean showing one's musical skills and personality and to appeal to one's target group by creating a similar pattern when creating videos. Showing personality could be done by writing messages to fans and thanking them, sharing personal growth stories, and even telling jokes.

Brand Positioning would mean promoting especially one's music on different streaming services. Multiple social networking site promotion is also desirable but having one's audience listen to one's music seemed to be the most important factor to the four YouTubers in this study. The upload schedule should, according to this study, be consistent, leastways when growing one's audience. All the four YouTubers had been actively posting videos at some point of their careers and it was presumed that when they did so, their audience was also growing. The media publications for the chosen four YouTubers most of the time included albums and singles, but also music books, comic books and biographies. It would be recommendable that the musicians should make publications at least including singles and even albums to position their brands. Three out of four YouTubers in this study were also growing their audiences in cooperation and thus this would be recommendable to musicians aiming at growing their audiences.

When monitoring the Brand Image this study noted the user participation and interactive relationship with fans were more often presented in the videos of the YouTubers than weren't. Although the user activation wasn't that much in all the cases, in most cases the YouTubers were at least asking their viewers to like, comment and subscribe to their videos and stream their music, thanking

them for their support, and sometimes even asking for new ideas, song or instrument recommendations for future videos. When building personal brands and monitoring one's Brand Image, according to this study one should be careful to at least make the viewers feel appreciated for their time and strive to interact with the fans. Discussing sincere and authentic connection building this study found that being perceived sincere and authentic was probably an important success factor to the YouTubers analyzed in this study. Three out of four YouTubers generated videos that were rather simple (one shot videos) or non-professional looking (do-it-yourself -style). The editing style of their videos made them feel authentic and the personal stories they shared, messages they wrote and thanking their fans made them also feel sincere. As a guideline based on this study could be said that one should at least consider creating videos that bring the musician close to their audience, be it one-take videos, do-it-yourself-style of professional looking videos.

As a summary, when creating personal brands one should consider the three-staged personal branding process including creating the Brand Identity, Positioning the Brands and later monitoring the Brand Image. When creating YouTube videos, one should aim at creating the "winning formula", the format, that would bring the musician close to their audience, showcase their unique musical skills and personality, and connect with the fans, and when done successfully, creating more videos that follow the same format and publishing them on a regular basis: consistently, frequently and in a visible way.

5.3 Trustworthiness of study results

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) state that the challenge of a qualitative research is to assure the reader of the research's scientific nature – the quality and trustworthiness. Also, they remind that a qualitative study's evaluation should be done throughout the research process, not just at the end of the study. They go on to say that a researcher should choose the evaluation criteria that fit and aligned with the methodology, aims and assumptions and present the classic criteria of a good-quality research: reliability, validity, and framework.

Reliability, the evaluation criteria often used in quantitative research, tells the scope that the same results can be gained using the measure, procedure, or instrument on repeated trials (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This study was conducted as a qualitative content analysis, where altogether 32 videos were analysed based on a coding frame. Qualitative content analysis (QCA) was chosen as the method for several reasons. QCA is objective and systematic way of conducting research where anyone might apply the same rules and "come up with

the same results” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, 289), QCA is systematic, flexible and reduces data and the material can also verbal or visual and it describes the meaning of the material (Schreier, 2012, p. 3, 5), and QCA can find hidden and underlying themes in the materials being analysed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 560).

Within qualitative content analysis directed content analysis was chosen as the approach to the qualitative content analysis. In directed content analysis the previous research or theory acts as a guidance for the initial codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277), while coding is at the heart of the QCA (Schreier, 2012, p. 58). To analyse the material collected a coding frame was created based to the previous study and recent research on social media personal branding. The coding frame was based on previous study as this provided the researcher a way to proceed on the study in a more reliable way. This method also provided a way for other researcher to repeat the study and get similar results. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1281) explain how the research process of directed content analysis begins by identifying the key concepts of variables stemming from the existing theory or prior research into initial coding categories, the next being to determine operational definitions for each category and then creating categories for codes that don't fit into existing codes. This was done in this research. This research also found codes that didn't fit into existing ones. As Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1281) point out, usually the findings from a directed content analysis provide both supportive and non-supportive evidence for the theory.

The study can be confirmed as valid when the finding can accurately represent the phenomenon and are backed by evidence (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Some interesting findings were discovered in this study. The findings were backed by evidence but of course, with the group of study objectives being so limited the findings in this study cannot be generalized to concern a larger group of e.g., YouTube musicians.

5.4 Limitations of the study and further research

This study was conducted as a qualitative content analysis, and it included altogether four YouTubers as research subjects. While the research topic was interesting to study, the results of this study cannot be applied to concern a wider group of YouTubers as the sampling was rather small. This research can function as guidelines for independent musicians in their personal branding path and as a catalyst to further research.

For further research it would be interesting to study the highest peaked videos from different YouTube musicians' channels to find if there would be any similarities that could be found in their videos. The findings from this study hinted about a format unique to each YouTuber and following the format for more successful videos and because of these findings it might be possible to find similarities also in other successful videos. Also, another interesting point of view would be to study whether the success of a YouTuber could be predicted by how the YouTuber is implementing the steps of the branding process. One more possible further research point would be to study if publishing schedule of a YouTuber musician have something to do with a video going viral. It seemed that in their peak years of publishing videos the YouTubers in this study also had the most viewed videos.

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APPENDIX 1

Coding manual, Davie504, video 1 (2023)

No 1	Coding Manual
YouTuber	Davie504
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofW-KNsBXx28
Video Headline	可愛くてごめん [ベース]
Number of views	386 192
Publishing Date	30.4.2023
Date of Analysing	5.5.2023
Video duration	2:50

Themes	Description
	<p>Wears: Navy blue jacket and a pink shirt, a watch. Pink bass on his lap, sitting in his room and on a computer chair. No introduction and looks down on the bass but when the music starts looks straight into the camera. The camera angle changes in 1-5seconds from the full picture into filming his fingers on the bass neck. At 0:15 he introduces his TikTok-portray (a TikTok-filter) that turns into a Japanese manga figure. In 0:43 purple light sparks, maybe a refer to Japanese manga. 0:54 Davie's eyes turn to Manga eyes for 1 second. Purple light sparks continue to go on. 1:06 the purple light sparks end, the camera angles change faster. 1:20 another Manga-filter is being used and Davie turns into another Manga-character. 1:45 a change in the color settings of the video, the video footage is a bit cooler colored. 2:00 the purple light sparks returns and colors go back to what they were. Rapid changes of camera angles. 2:35 the song ends, Davie looks a bit puzzled and looks first straight</p>

	<p>into the camera and then lowers his gaze. 2:39 Davie raises his right hand to do his trademark, “slap” his viewers to subscribe but doesn’t say anything. He turns in his chair a little, Davie504 icon appears on the left corner of the video, he does the “slap” and the video ends to the slap when it first turns into pitch black. At the very end there are 2 video recommendations from Davie504 and his Manga eyes return for a second and the video ends. He asks people to leave a comment and to subscribe also on the description box.</p>
Unique personality and differentiation	<p>In this video Davie504 doesn’t say anything but the personality is shown in the way he edits the video. He turns into a Manga-character two times, his eyes turn into Manga eyes also two times, he adds purple light tracs into the video and changes the video filters to create different athmosphere</p>
Targer group	<p>The video is probably aimed for Manga-lovers as the title is in Japanese, but the explanation is in the description box: HoneyWorks, but it's on BASS. The video would most likely appeal to musicians who are into Japanese culture and manga.</p>
Multiple social networking sites	<p>Encourages to subscribe to his YouTube channel and lists his other social media accounts in the description box with links leading to right places.</p>
Upload schedule in 2023	<p>4-6 videos per month</p>
Media publications	<p>None</p>
Audience growing in cooperation	<p>Not in this video. The beginning of the year 2023 included cooperation with TwoSetViolin (videos and a concert), an imaginary cooperation with John Cena (American actor, show wrestler),</p>

	and he shows and comments the videos of other musicians on YouTube and if they are not bass players he is shocked.
User participation & interactive relationship with fans	He doesn't talk in this video at all but asks his viewers to leave a comment and subscribe in the description box. He also does the "slap" at the end of the video without saying anything but the viewers who have watched him before know that it acts like a reminder to subscribe to his channel. He has pinned a his own comment on the comment-section.
Sincere and authentic connection building	He seems very genuine, and his editing style is unique. Also, he is sitting in his very plainly decorated room which might want to say that he is a down-to-earth type of a person and does his videos in his modest room.
Cover art	Pink themed cover where Davie504 is turned into a Manga character holding bass in his arms. The text is in Japanese and there are also flowers in different shades of pink in the background.

APPENDIX 2

Coding manual, J.Fla, video 1 (2023)

No 1	Coding Manual
YouTuber	JFla Music
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS6HeUBNWVw
Video Headline	J FLA - TO ME
Number of views	73 334
Publishing Date	19.5.2023
Date of Analysing	21.5.2023
Video duration	2:45

Themes	Description
	It is her original song and a lyrics video titled: "To Me". She sings words of encouragements at the background of the video while walking in a rural city at nighttime. She doesn't sing in the camera but just walks about and hides her face into a big scarf. The video ends when the music stops. She has written "Thanks for watching; Give thanks to God" at the end of the video. There aren't any channel subscription recommendations nor her other video recommendations at the end.
Unique personality and differentiation	In the video J Fla doesn't sing nor say anything but just walks through a quiet rural city while filming herself. The video has a very down-to-earth feeling and shows her face at times when not covered in a scarf.
Target group	The target group are her followers, followers being music lovers all across the world.
Multiple social networking sites	She lists her social media channels (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) in her YouTube description box alongside with her Japanese social media links, with hashtags #loveyouguys and #gardeners.

Upload schedule in 2023	3 videos in 2023 so far, less than a video per month.
Media publications	Her new single To Me.
Audience growing in cooperation	Not in this video. None in the year of 2023.
User participation & interactive relationship with fans	She writes “thank you for watching” at the end of the video to thank her fans. She also has written an explanation of the song below in the discussion-part and thus is interacting with her fans.
Sincere and authentic connection building	Looking at the video, the message of the video and what she writes in her message in the discussion-section it feels that she is very sincere and authentic with the way she communicates herself to the world.
Cover art	The cover art is a photo of her walking outside, a scarf on her head. The cover art is possibly a screen shot from the video and doesn’t look very professional nor give the feeling she would have put a lot of effort into the cover art.
Editing style	The editing style is very simple. The video is shot in a one take, the only things happening in it are the lyrics that are both in Korean and English.

APPENDIX 3

Coding manual, Walk off the Earth, video 1 (2023)

No 1	Coding Manual
YouTuber	Walk Off The Earth
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NB233UYTDo
Video Headline	WHATEVER - WALK OFF THE EARTH
Number of views	604 760
Publishing Date	5.5.2023
Date of Analysing	14.5.2023
Video duration	2:00

Themes	Description
	This is their original lyric video. It is done in cartoon-like way and with nice, bright colors that reflect the energy of the song. The video ends with a video recommendation from their channel, subscribe-button, and a streaming link to the song.
Unique personality and differentiation	The song sounds like Walk off the Earth and the lyric video matches the song.
Target group	The target group musicians around the world, pop music lovers, indie music lovers.
Multiple social networking sites	They list their social media channels (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat and official website) on the YouTube description box.
Upload schedule in 2023	5 videos in 2023 so far, on an average 1 video per month.
Media publications	Their two singles: My stupid heart, whatever
Audience growing in cooperation	Not in this video. LAUV, Luminati Sons in the year of 2023.
User participation & interactive relationship with fans	They write about the band in the description box and thank their fans for their support that keeps them making music for them. They ask the viewers

	<p>to support them by becoming a Patron. They also encourage watchers to join their journey.</p> <p>“To our devoted WOTElings, your support over the years has blown our minds. We hope to be able to see you live one day soon. If you enjoyed this video then please help us out by sharing it on your socials, hitting the LIKE button and adding it to your favourites. Your support and word of mouth is the number one force keeping us making music and we can't thank you enough.</p> <p>“</p>
<p>Sincere and authentic connection building</p>	<p>Looking at the video, the message of the video and what they write in the description box it feels that they are sincere and authentic with the way they communicate themselves to the world. They have also written a comment in the comment-section thanking the fans for their messages. They ask for their fans' support by asking them to stream the song and adding the song to their playlists.</p>
<p>Cover art</p>	<p>The cover art could be taken as a screen shot from the video, as it reads: “Walk off the Earth; whatever (a smiley)”</p>
<p>Editing style</p>	<p>This is a lyric video, and the editing style reflects the song. The video looks very much like the band but also very nice, colorful, and professional.</p>

APPENDIX 4

Coding manual, Lindsey Stirling, video 1 (2022)

No 1	Coding Manual
YouTuber	Lindsey Stirling
Video URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwtheNpAssQ
Video Headline	LINDSEY STIRLING - MAGIC FT. DAVID ARCHULETA (TOUR PERFORMANCE)
Number of views	436 777
Publishing Date	21.12.2022
Date of Analysing	16.5.2023
Video duration	3:22

Themes	Description
	This is her most recent video on her YouTube Channel. It is a music video made from her Christmas Live Show. It shows Stirling playing the violin mostly in slow motion, the clips of her performing are probably taken throughout the show. David sings the song and is showing in the video. The video provides a great way to return to the tour feelings to everyone who attended the shows. At the end of the video: recommendation of her video and subscription button. In description box: tour dates, tickets and VIP upgrades to her tour, charity donation link, her signature violin waitlist, social media links (FB, IG, Twitter, Tik-Tok, website), sheet music link, sign-up for her newsletter.
Unique personality and differentiation	In the video Lindsey doesn't say anything but just play. It shows her skills to play and dance at the same time and how professional she looks all the time on stage.
Targer group	The target group might be people into music, probably violinists and music lovers in general.

Multiple social networking sites	She lists her all social media channels in her YouTube description box and encourages to follow her on social media.
Upload schedule in 2023	None in 2023, in 2022 altogether 9 videos.
Media publications	None.
Audience growing in cooperation	In this video David Archuleta. In 2022 Amy Lee and David Archuleta.
User participation & interactive relationship with fans	In this video it shows Lindsey performing to the audience but their role is to watch and not so much to participate.
Sincere and authentic connection building	There isn't that much connection building in this video. She plays her violin, and her professionalism can be seen in the video. The video also represents how well her Christmas Tour is done and it tempts a viewer to be part of her coming shows as this show is done in a very nice way.
Cover art	The cover art is a blue shaded photo where she is on stage dressed like a ballerina with three dancers around her, also dressed as ballerinas.
Editing style	The editing style and the style the video is filmed is very professional. It also makes Lindsey look very professional. The video is beautiful to watch but it is more like a traditional music video and works also to come back to the memories of the Christmas Tour.