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Frau
Elisabeth Wolfram

YouTuber als Beruf - Inwieweit ist YouTube-Erfolg zufällig oder auf ein Erfolgsrezept zurückzuführen? Analyse der Erfolgsfaktoren am Beispiel eines Business- und eines persönlichen/Lifestylekanals

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Autor/in:
Frau Elisabeth Wolfram

Studiengang:
Business Management

Seminargruppe:
BM19sl1-B

Erstprüfer:
Prof. Dr. Markus Pflügl

Zweitprüfer:
BBA Laura Lander

BACHELOR THESIS

YouTuber as a profession – To what extent is YouTube success accidental or due to a recipe for success? Analysis of the success factors using the example of a business and a personal/lifestyle channel.

author:
Ms. Elisabeth Wolfram

course of studies:
Business Management

seminar group:
BM19sl1-B

first examiner:
Prof. Dr. Markus Pflügl

second examiner:
BBA Laura Lander

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Abstract

This thesis aims to research the platform YouTube and whether "being a YouTuber" qualifies as a profession or not and what leads to this. The author combines existing scientific data and information provided by YouTubers doing this as a job and uses the compilation method. The author merges that material and uses it to create a bachelor thesis that covers both the theoretical and practical approach. The aim was to find out if there is a success recipe that can be followed that leads to views and clicks which are essential for the profession as a YouTuber. To do this, the author created two channels to see how the factors mentioned in this thesis are applied and if the approach leads to success. The findings of this thesis showed, that although the profession of a YouTuber can be classified as a job, it needs to be viewed differently from commonly known and in society accepted careers. Becoming a YouTuber and making money from this business, therefore, cannot be guaranteed.

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1   Introduction

"YouTube is currently the second most visited website after Google and the market leader among video portals." (Geipel 2018, p.137). Geipel (ibid.) begins her chapter by working out the relevance and importance of YouTube and mentions that it is important to look at this topic from the scientific side and what effects this platform has on the young generation. Burgess (2011, p.1) also explains in his article that the company YouTube, founded in 2005, is the dominant platform for online videos and is of great relevance in the formation of trends and opinion formation. It also deals with the lack of scientific work on this topic (ibid.). Looking at the statements of both authors, it can be stated that even after seven years, the scientific status of YouTube is not yet fully exhausted, and there is still a need here. Furthermore, both mention the importance of this knowledge and the associated relevance for practice. The author of this thesis would like to follow suit here. With the selected topic **"YouTuber as a profession – To what extent is YouTube success accidental or due to a recipe for success? Analysis of the success factors using the example of a business and a personal/lifestyle channel"**, the author would like to investigate this.

Döring (2014, p.24) goes into the aspect of the profession as a YouTuber as follows. Anyone can publish videos on YouTube. However, for many, this is no longer a simple hobby but an effective profession. Through the YouTube partner programme videos can generate high revenues. As this network has evolved so much, the equipment, such as cameras and microphones, and the system around YouTubers, such as management and channel networks, have also been changed and improved. YouTubers have thus become stars. Due to the awareness of these so-called "influencers", many companies have also become aware of the platform and its users and cooperate with them for marketing and product placements. This media and marketing development in turn means that YouTube is becoming increasingly important, and the profession should not be neglected or trivialized.

Based on these findings it is important to understand YouTube as a platform and the mechanisms behind it.

The author of this bachelor thesis deals with the topic of marketing and the possible connection with its success on YouTube. Marketing can be seen as part of economics, as it can make a significant contribution to selling goods/services, building sales relationships and achieving the goals of both companies and customers (American Marketing Association 2017, Definitions of Marketing; Bagozzi et al. 2018, p.5). However, marketing is and remains at its core part of business administration (Disch 2020, p.55). Since YouTube – the core subject of this work – is a social media platform, that is also part of business administration and marketing, it is also located in this area (Tiberius

2011, p.90, 101; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, Users of the world, unite!). Thus, the scientific assessment of this work is business administration.

Which YouTube measures lead to a video being clicked on and viewed? "The field of microcelebrity is increasingly monetised, professionalised, and institutionalised, with the growing recognition of content creators as social media influencers." (Jorge, Marôpo and Nunes 2018, p.76). This quote describes the background of the choice of the topic well. More and more people have the desire to be/become social media influencers and thus make a living (Marschall and Redmond 2015, Structural Value). Here the author now asks herself the question whether this is a future career based on success factors and is, therefore, possible for everyone or leads to success purely by chance and thus does not represent a solid future for everyone.

As already mentioned, the profession of an influencer or YouTuber is becoming more and more popular and displaces the conventional celebrity (ibid.). Famous YouTubers are known for their authenticity and charisma and are supported by their fans as a community (Cocker and Cronin 2017, Abstract). YouTubers build a bond with the viewers and thus create the illusion of a relationship (Fägersten 2017, pp.1-10). These influencers are seen as people of everyday life and therefore represent a different role model than the conventional showman (Noury 2018, pp.1-3). As a result, it seems as if this could also be achieved by any viewer (ibid.). Against this background, however, the question arises as to whether this could also be accomplished by any user if one follows a certain scheme. Due to the growing desire for this career choice, it is important to know, if it can realistically be achieved or is only feasible for a few. If YouTube success can be facilitated or even guaranteed by certain measures, these should be known. Through these findings, conclusions can then be drawn as to whether the profession as a YouTuber can be chosen exactly as e.g., the profession as a mechanic. This raises the question, if there is a recipe for success for YouTube that can be followed.

As previously described, this bachelor thesis is important to find out whether there is a recipe for success for the profession as a YouTuber or not. Ideally, this bachelor thesis would result in precise steps that can be followed to achieve success on YouTube and ultimately also as a profession. Can the YouTube algorithm be analysed and used to one's benefit to get closer to the profession? The goal is to answer the research question: Which YouTube measures result in a video being clicked on and viewed?

The novelty value of this work is that the student creates two YouTube channels and can thus follow the process from the beginning. What is unique about this work is that two channels are created and can also be compared with each other. An advantage is that the two channels are from different industries and can once again reveal clear dif-

ferences that would otherwise not be visible. In this bachelor thesis knowledge of other works and sources can be tested and analysed for their effectiveness, since only these methods are used.

As this thesis concludes the course of studies with a bachelor's degree it needs to meet the standards of scientific work (Jele 2003, p.13). The student researched the existing literature critically, summarised it and put it in relation to another (Eco 2020, pp.8-9). To simplify what Eco (ibid.) said: The author of this thesis explored the topic YouTube and Influencer, had a look into the existing literature and collected and sorted it. In connection with that, the author also reviewed the material and connected and combined the individual literature as needed. As a result of this, the author created this thesis collecting literature relevant to the topic, combined them in this work and applied it to see, if it leads to the desired result. The student looked into already known and discussed topics and therefore, the scientific method used in this thesis is the compilation method (Jele 2007, p.3).

For the following and the already mentioned references, which do not have explicit page numbers, the hereinafter explanation applies: The sources do not offer page numbers and are therefore characterised by the title/chapter that was cited.

2 YouTube

As stated in the introduction there is not enough scientific research on YouTube and that is where this thesis and especially this chapter relate to. Arthurs, Drakopoulou and Gandini (2018, Abstract) give a brief overview of YouTube as such:

> "As famously known, YouTube was founded in February 2005 by three PayPal employees. Less than 2 years later, Goggle [sic] acquired YouTube for a fee of $1.65 billion, at a point when the major significance of a raft of new websites based on user-generated content, such as Wikipedia, Myspace and Facebook, was becoming increasingly apparent."

They go on to explain, that YouTube keeps expanding and that it is the second most viewed website in the world. This is supported by the statement from Geipel (2018, p.137) that YouTube is the second most visited website after Google and the market leader among all video portals.

2.1 What Is YouTube?

As a video portal, YouTube is a website with related server infrastructure, that provides videos of various lengths (Machill and Zenker 2007, p.9). They further explain that these kinds of video portals are different from other moving image broadcasts because they animate their users to work with them and use the platform as producers themselves. Users can upload their content and make it accessible to all internet users (ibid.).

The description above is more focused on the technical side of YouTube. Gerloff (2015, Introduction) explains what YouTube is in the context of companies and marketing and therefore business administration: Thinking about YouTube, servers or other moving image broadcasting platforms are not the first thoughts that come into someone's mind. It's the content or rather the videos that people are talking about. It's about a sneezing panda baby, someone taking a picture of themselves every day for a certain amount of time or even Gangnam-Style. These are examples of videos that have been watched a lot of times. Therefore, a lot of people know these types of videos. Videos that went viral. What a viral video is and how that happens will be explained later in this thesis in 2.5.1 „YouTube Videos go viral". Because of the high watch hours and user numbers on YouTube, it has the power to influence the viewer and can be used as a communication and marketing channel.

As described by Opresnik and Yilmaz (2016, p.35), YouTube is not only for entertainment and funny videos, but can also be a great tool for companies and self-employed people. They go on to clarify that the video platform is an opportunity for efficient and effective communication channels for international, medium-sized and small companies

as well as a self-employed person as well as bloggers and internet stars. Opresnik and Yilmaz (ibid.) also established that in 2016 YouTube had around 1 billion users and 6 billion hours worth of video material.

Machill and Zenker (2007, p.13) and Opresnik and Yilmaz (2016, p.35) reason with YouTube also being a social media platform or rather a social network, which allows the user to get in contact with other users and is also gaining more and more watch hours in comparison to traditional television. It is rumoured to be the television programme of choice for the future (ibid.; Snickars and Vonderau 2009, p.11).

2.2 YouTuber As a Profession

This chapter aims to explain what a profession is and defines what employment is. The author then goes on to establish a connection between a YouTuber and employment, if there is one and if the job as a YouTuber qualifies as a profession.

2.2.1 Classification of Employment

Employment is defined as a working relationship, which is compensated, or a person who is self-employed and is a personally independent worker, and who earns income through this process (Maier 2005, p.72; Strengmann-Kuhn 2003, Armut trotz Erwerbstätigkeit). Considering this definition of employment, YouTuber can be seen as a profession if it meets these requirements. YouTubers can be seen as "professional, independent, content creators working on social media" (Bishop 2021, p.1) that can earn money through the platform and the possible influence they gain through that. How this can be achieved will be explained in 2.5. Now that it is defined that a YouTuber can be seen as self-employed and that they can generate money through this YouTube can be seen as a profession.

2.2.2 Influencer/YouTuber

What is an influencer exactly? An Influencer is a person with a large operating range who influences other people and has an impact on them, their behaviour and their choices (Fries 2019, p.6). Because this work is focusing on YouTube, which is a social media platform, the so-called influencers in this work are going to be social media influencers that Fries (2019, pp.5-6) defines as the following: A social media influencer is a person with a presence on social media, with a big following and big influence on the ones that follow the said person, as well as a large operating range on social media. Taking this definition into consideration, a person will only qualify as an influencer if he/she has a big following. It should be noted that the terms "big" and "large" were not

specified by Fries (ibid.) and therefore cannot be clearly defined by the author of this thesis. Han (2021, pp.133-134) mentions that there is not a clear definition for a YouTuber, and he explains that it can be confusing. Khan (2017, pp.236-247) and Oh and Syn (2015, pp.2045-2060) clarify that a person can be classified as a YouTuber, if they are uploading videos to the platform as individuals without being a pre-known celebrity and/or having a big production supporting them. Despite all these factors, the job as an influencer/YouTuber is not accepted as a serious profession in society and a controversial topic (Kohout 2017, pp.66-67; Meyer 2019, 133).

2.3 Success Definition of This Thesis

If you were to type in "success definition" into Google Scholar, you get a lot of different definitions depending on the industry and topic. Because the author of this thesis focuses on a job career, she had a look into career success. This try also did not lead to the definition of success as such because employees and employers define success differently and subjectively (Pellegrin and Coates 1957, p.506). It also varies and depends on different factors such as age, gender and culture (Benson, et al. 2020, Abstract). Because of this, the definition of desired success in the context of this bachelor thesis is defined by the author.

The author considers the job as a YouTuber as successful if the channel is eligible for the YouTube Partner Programme because it grants the YouTuber income, which will be explained in more detail later in 2.4.1. So, it would be desirable to reach this milestone at the end of this thesis. Therefore, it is of interest, if the success factors will lead to the defined success or not. The goal of monetisation might not be achieved at the end of this thesis but at least a correlation between views and the success factors can be seen.

2.4 Money Earning Possibilities

As already explained, YouTube offers monetisation opportunities for creators. This is part of this chapter and will be explained in more detail.

2.4.1 YouTube Partner Programme

YouTube (2021, YouTube Partner Programme) describes its partner programme as such: "The YouTube Partner Programme (YPP) gives creators greater access to YouTube resources and features like direct access to our Creator Support team. It also enables revenue sharing from ads being served on your content." Elango (2019, p.7)

states in her work, that YouTube takes around 45% of that revenue which leaves the creator with 55% of every dollar generated through advertisers.

In the following the author wants to demonstrate how this can look as seen in the example of the YouTuber Cathrin Manning (Manning 2021, Analytic Reports).
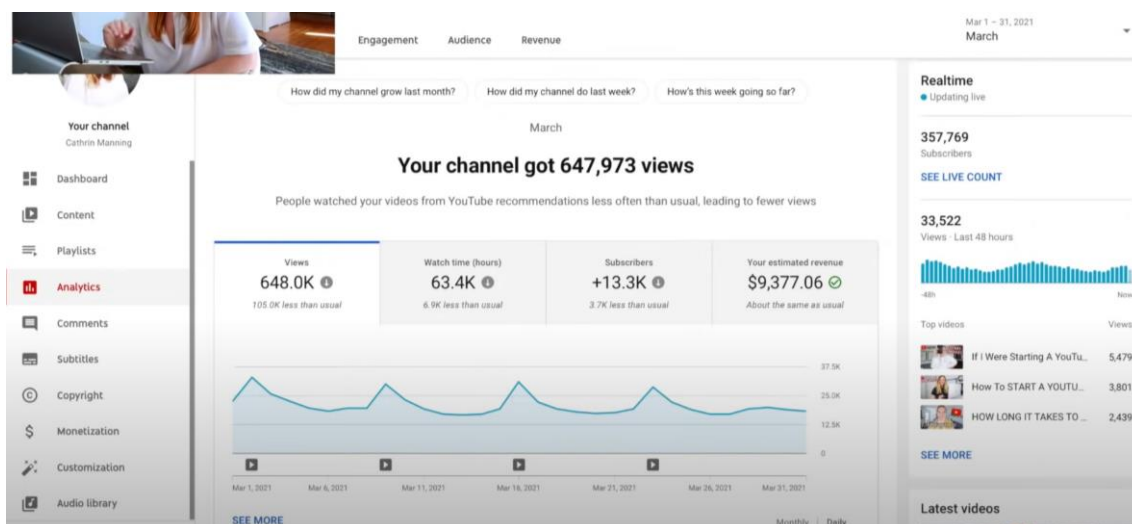

Figure 1: "Cathrin Manning YouTube Analytics"
(ibid.)

The figure shown above gives a brief overview of how YouTubers can see their estimated revenue.

2.4.2   Sponsorships

Wu (2016, p.59) describes sponsorship as: "YouTube endorsement marketing, sometimes referred to as native advertising, is a form of marketing where advertisements are seamlessly incorporated into the video content unlike traditional commercials." She goes on to categorise sponsorships into three components (ibid.):

- **Direct sponsorship** where the content creator is in a partnership with the company to create (a) specific video/s.

- **Free products** where the content creator is provided with free products that can/should be used in a video.

- **Affiliate marketing** where the content creator is granted a commission if the recommendation leads to a purchase. (This will be explained furthermore in 2.4.3)

The Economist is using a chart provided by Captiv8 to show how much money an influencer can generate (approximately) through a sponsored post on different platforms.
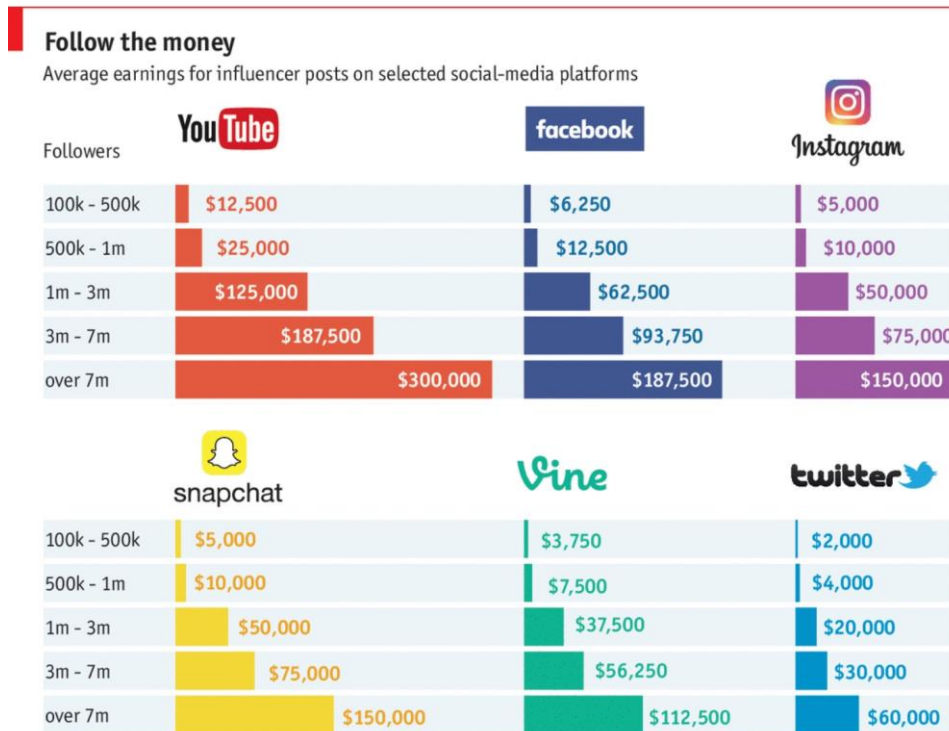
Figure 2: "Money Earnings on Social Media"
(Captiv8 n.d., Follow the money cited in The Economist 2016, Daily chart)

This income stream should not be neglected as Corrêa et al. (2020, pp.173-194) name YouTube as a relevant tool for the advertisement and promotion of a brand. They further explain that YouTubers do have an influence on the followers engagement and that a brand has to keep the followers and what emotions and interests they have in mind when choosing a YouTuber to work with.

2.4.3   Affiliate Marketing

"Affiliate programs offer affiliates referral fees in return for directing potential customers into a merchant's Web site. Affiliates are commonly paid based on the number of leads converted by the merchant into customers (pay-per-conversion) or based on the number of leads referred to the merchant (pay-per-lead)." (Libai, Biyalogorsky and Gerstner 2003, Abstract)

Jurišová (2013, p.106) explains that a seller or service provider is the agent that grants the affiliate for each visitor a financial benefit. She further explains that this action can happen through a referred purchase, registering for a subscription or just looking through the website (ibid.).
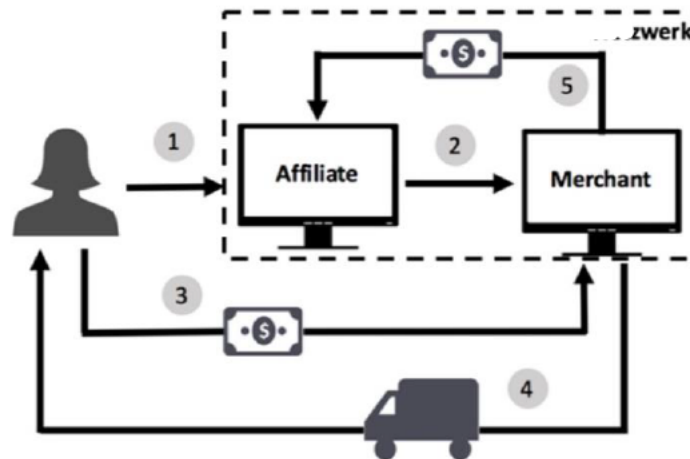
Figure 3: „Affiliate Marketing Process"
(Petersen 2016, p.331)

Petersen (2016, p.337) and Dwivedi, Rana and Alryalat (2017, Abstract) refers to affiliate marketing as performance-based marketing because it is a success-based compensation.

Affiliate marketing can be achieved through different affiliate marketing companies/networks (Mathur, Narayanan and Chetty 2018, 119:9). Amazon serves as an example of an affiliate marketing network (amazonPartnerNet 2021, Amazon Partner-Net – das Affiliate-Marketing-Programm von Amazon). A creator can sign up for the programme, refer to the products and get compensation for qualified purchases through the link (ibid.).

2.4.4 YouTuber Merchandise

The author already established that YouTubers promote products or companies on their channel in 2.4.2 where sponsorship was the topic. An example of this is the german YouTuber Pamela Reif who is a fitness influencer with international recognition and star guests such as Jason Derulo (Kock 2016, Influencer Marketing; Reif 2020, 8 MIN AB & HIIT WORKOUT with Jason Derulo / No Equipment | Pamela Reif). But YouTubers do not stop there, some of them create their own merchandise and even start a company.

According to Forbes, the highest-earning YouTuber in 2020 was the nine-year-old Ryan Kaji who is known for unboxing videos for toys (Berg and Brown 2020, The Highest-Paid YouTube Stars of 2020). Ryan now sells toys, backpacks and toothpaste among other things and has deals with Amazon, Target and Walmart which earned him around $200 million alone and has a Tv show on Nickelodeon (ibid.).

2.4.5   YouTube Premium And Membership

The YouTube Help (2021, YouTube Premium & support for creators) explains YouTube Premium and the Membership as follows: YouTube Premium allows the viewer to watch videos offline, play in the background and watch videos without ads. Through this programme, the creator also generates revenue. YouTube shares the monthly fees a premium member pays.

The membership is a bit different and is up to the creator and their community (YouTube 2021, YouTube Creator Academy). The Creator Academy (ibid.) goes on to explain that a creator can add up to 5 membership levels to their channel and the community can choose to pay and support the creator through that by purchasing a membership option that gives the viewer extra benefits. The creator receives around 70% of the revenue generated through the membership option (after local taxes and fees) (YouTube Help 2021, Become a channel member on YouTube).

Now that it has been established what the most common ways to make money as a YouTuber are, the author is going to focus on the possible success factors, what YouTubers themselves and what science has to say about them. They will be compared and will be reviewed by the author in 3.

2.5   Success Factors

In this chapter, the author researches what YouTubers themselves and scientists say about specific success factors if they align. The following chapters will be looking into detail on what the suggested success factorsS are and why they are supposed to work. The next points will only include the theory and in 3 the author will show how she applied it to the channels and if there were any other findings.

From all the thousands of people trying to be successful Youtubers, only a handful of those who try can manage to become and stay successful over time (Meyer 2019, p.135). To achieve success on the platform, there are a few tips that can be followed and will be described in the next paragraphs.

2.5.1   YouTube Features

YouTube itself gives suggestions in their creator academy (2021, Monetisation Toolkit) and Wisankosol (2021, p.78-89) has summarised them as such:
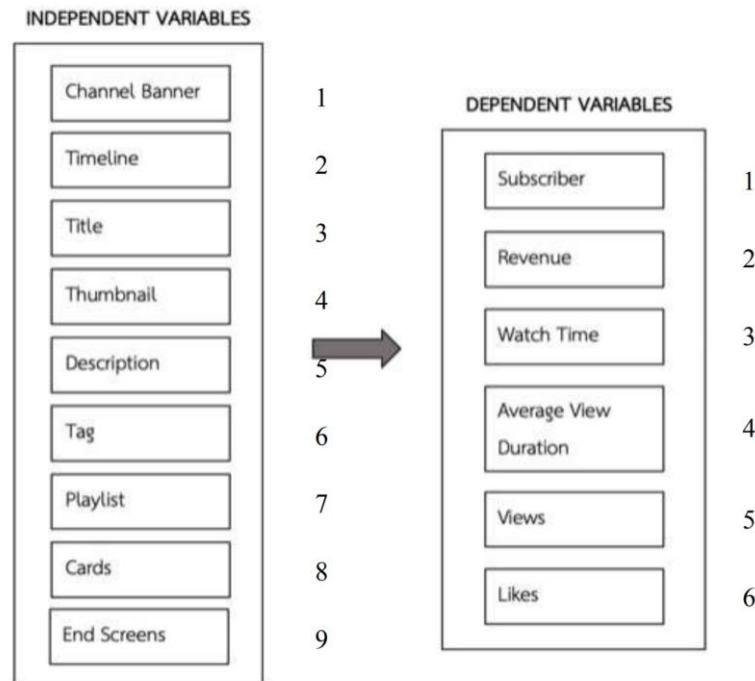
Figure 4: „Conceptual Framework"
(ibid., p.80)

Channel Banner/Branding

Schultz (2019, pp.56-64) explains how YouTubers use their banner, which will be the topic of this paragraph. The channel banner can be used as a branding technique for a YouTuber. This can be used as a promotion because it is something that the viewer is presented to right at the beginning when entering a YouTuber's channel. So, the banner is something (potential) subscribers see as one of the first elements they see when visiting a channel. Ciampa and Moore (2015, p.111) refer to the banner as the "welcome mat" on the YouTuber's channel page and so it should therefore be pleasing.

Calabrese (2017, pp.24-28), who will be summarised in this part of the thesis, explains the relevance of the YouTube banner. Because of this, the channel banner has assigned importance and should be unique and fitting with the YouTuber's content and also the theme a YouTuber wants to showcase. Calabrese (ibid.) also explains, as elements like the banner are going to be a staple for a while, it should fit with other information and visual displays such as the name and icon and should be therefore uniform and quality artwork. Because of that, the creator might need tools to generate a banner, which can be generated with tools such as Canva. And last but not least, if the banner is created, it can be changed by going over the default banner set by YouTube and a camera or pencil shows up and if that icon is clicked on the creator will be led to YouTube studio and there the new banner can be uploaded.

According to the YouTube creator academy (2021, Brand your channel), successful branding of a channel looks like this:

- It should be understandable and representative of the channel and the provided content.

- Simplicity is key – The branding should stay in your memory.

- The channel should be connected with the creator and present something that the YouTuber is proud of.

Branding provides a cohesive image/picture for the viewer and should therefore be presented throughout the brand. YouTube recommends four specific places for that (ibid.):

1. Channel icon – The channel icon is a logo and/or image that is presentable for the channel. "It appears in many places—on your channel page, when you comment, and on the bottom right of videos in most playback modes."

2. Channel art – Here YouTube refers to the banner and also recommends Canva, just like Calabrese (2017, pp.24-28), as a tool to make the banner.

3. Channel description – Here the (potential) subscribers can get an overview of what the channel is about. Since this is an important topic on its own, it will be the topic of discussion later in this thesis as a separate paragraph (**Description**).

4. Channel trailer – The channel trailer is a short video presented to the viewer on the channel page and gives the audience an overview of what the creator and the channel is going to be.

Timeline

Consistency and scheduling are two of the key factors for a successful channel (Tarnovskaya 2017, p.29). What also plays a big role in this scenario, is looking into the engagement and popularity factors that also have an impact on the scheduling because this influences what YouTube pays the creator (Hoiles, Aprem and Krishnamurthy 2017, p.1426). The engagement metrics, as well as the scheduling possibility, can be found and analysed in the YouTube studio/YouTube Analytics (YouTube Help 2021, Schedule video; YouTube Help 2021, How engagement metrics are counted).

Title

The title can be seen as an individualisation process and allows the creator to present the video and its topic to the viewer before the user even watches the video (Vitadhani, Ramli and Purnamasari 2021, p.56). With the title, a video can be described and categorised through the text that is presented in the title (Kalra, Kathuria and Kumar 2020, p.74). As already established, the title is part of textual features on YouTube (like tags, description and comments) and it still needs to be researched to determine the effectiveness of optimising it and how they interact with or rather influence each other (Geisler and Burns 2007, Abstract; Figueiredo 2009, Abstract). The title does not only provide information about the content but also can attract the audience's attention and give information about the video quality (Gabarron et al. 2013, p.6). Gabarron et al. (ibid.) also explain that this also can be misleading because a title can promise quality content without committing to it. Nevertheless, creators are still more likely to choose clickbait titles and viewers tend to click on a video if the title is emotively pleasing even though there might be a discrepancy between content and title (Moon and Lee 2020, p.9; Kim 2015, p.3). A study has shown that the title should not be overloaded with information since this leads to lesser video views and emotions, especially negative emotions can increase the video views (Tafesse 2020, Findings). Another requirement for the title is to keep it as short and simple as possible, with a maximum of 120 characters (Seehaus 2016, p.3).

The title (among other features like the thumbnail, tags and description) is a meta-level feature and they can be optimised and increase the popularity of a video (Hoiles, Aprem and Krishnamurthy 2017, p.1427). The optimisation of the title benefits the traffic because of the YouTube search (ibid.).

Thumbnail

The thumbnail is the picture that is shown on the home page and its task is to give a preview of the video and catch the user's attention (Geipel 2017, p.156). Geipel (ibid.) and Shimono, Kakui and Yamasaki (2020, Abstract) both have suggestions for what criteria the thumbnail should meet according to common standards:

- Substantially facial expressions

- Showing the core topic of the video

- Generate enough attention that a user clicks on a video

"YouTube thumbnails are noisy (tend to be visually more attractive than describing the concept in the video) and is only a single frame from the entire YouTube video" (Vara-

darajan et al. 2015, p.7). Thumbnails are, therefore "outstanding" and "loud" and YouTubers use excessive capitalisation, punctuation, highlighting specific words, exaggeration and strong emotions (Qu et al. 2018, p.3). Therefore, using a thumbnail means implementing transparent, light and attention-grabbing pictures (Holt-Day, Curren and Irlbeck 2020, p.193). There is also something called clickbait, which can be misleading and shows the user an untrue or distorted version of the video and has different levels (ibid. and Bucher 2018, p.9).

Vitadhani, Ramli and Purnamasari (2021, p.56) explain how the thumbnail can be set up and how they can be beneficial but also abused. The thumbnail can be chosen through selected video frames that YouTube suggests or custom-made. As mentioned before, its goal is to provide the viewer, also in combination with the title and description, with information about the video. That is what is beneficial about the custom-made thumbnails because the creator can tailor them to the content and also to the viewer. But this is also the downside of a self-made thumbnail. The word clickbait was used before to describe this sort of picture as misleading. It can lead to users being tricked into watching content that is not made for them, to form opinions or propaganda.

Since the thumbnail, as Koh and Cui (2021, p.2) explain, is usually the first thing a user sees, it is important for the view-through of videos. They go on to explain that the potential viewer browses through the website and they decide what videos to watch based on the information and the impression (ibid.). The author of this thesis already discussed customising the thumbnail, but to do that, the channel needs to be verified in the first place (Seehaus 2016, p.4). How this can be achieved will be explained in 3.1. Optimising this so-called first look, the thumbnail is supporting the traffic from related videos (Hoiles, Aprem and Krishnamurthy 2017, p.1427).

Description

A YouTube video can be grouped through different categories and the description is part of the text classification, just like the title (Kalra, Kathuria and Kumar 2020, p.74). As the description is the number one source for information for the extraction of keywords that are related to the user's search, the description is used to provide context to the content (Williams et al. 2014, p.4). Williams et al (ibid.) therefore recommend that the description has to be written to stand out from the rest. YouTube (YouTube Creators 2018, Do Titles and Descriptions Still Matter?) suggests using depicting language in the description and the video, so that all relevant keywords are mentioned. They go on to explain that this gives the audience, that might not know the title of the video and is just looking for a keyword, the possibility of finding to find the video easier (ibid.).

As mentioned above, the description is part of the textual features of YouTube and can be grouped through titles and tags for instance (Figueiredo 2009, Abstract). As explained in the title, and also above, this so-called metadata (e.g., titles, tags, description, …) can be a part of the decision why a user clicks on a video (Gabarron et al. 2013, p.6). Therefore, not only informational but also visual and attentional content leads to views (Gabarron et al. ibid.). When looking back to the thumbnail and the term "Clickbait", there is a fine line between gaining the audience's attention and boosting the views through this and misleading the viewer (Vitadhani, Ramli and Purnamasari 2021, p.56).

A study has shown that video descriptions can be assigned to one of three categories (Qu et al. 2018, p.3):

- Blank

- The same or similar to the title that provides informational content as an addition to the video

- Encouragement for the viewer to subscribe.

The description can not only be used as a piece of information for the video and the content itself but can also be used by YouTubers to reference links in the description box (Friese et al. 2020, p.108). Friese et al. (ibid.) explain that this can be achieved by the creator by mentioning this in the video and/or editing the video and adding information that leads to the hyperlinks. One example of this could be product promotion and/or the affiliate links mentioned in 2.4.3 (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki 2018, pp.3-4). The links used for affiliate marketing can be placed in the description box and the YouTuber can reference them and/or just have affiliate links that are always linked with general information such as camera equipment, lights, etc. Seehaus (2016, p.3) recommends putting important information at the beginning of the description since the first 95 characters are the ones permanently showing. He further explains to use incisive keywords, pack them in a reader-friendly text and make it visually appealing with paragraphs, which makes it not only more pleasing to the viewer but also for the algorithm (ibid.).

The following pictures show an example for product promotion and/or the affiliate links mentioned by Schwemmer and Ziewiecki (2018, pp.3-4). The first picture gives an example of descriptive language to inform the audience about the content and how keywords can be included. The second picture shows a more general approach for the description box, with the before mentioned affiliate links, that do not have to be directly linked to the content of the video. It should be noted that the two pictures below are

from the same video and therefore are one coherent description box that shows both examples mentioned before.

Figure 5: "Description Box - Video Related Information"
(Cathrin Manning 2021, The Legal Side Of Being An
Influencer)

Figure 6: "Description Box - Unrelated Information"
(ibid.)

Tags

"On the Internet, the term "tag" refers to keywords assigned to an article, image, or video. With the rapid development of social sharing websites […], the tags help organise, browse and search relevant items within these massive multimedia collections." (Yang and Toderici 2011, p.3217). These so-called multimedia collections get tagged by the owners and viewers and provide a collective categorisation, give it meaning and add further information (Sharma and Elidrisi 2008, p.1; Tiwari et al. 2018, p.465). Sharma and Elidrisi (2008, p.2) explain that tags are not only important for grouping content but also for finding and re-finding content and that they can be used in two different ways:

- Making the information and content available for a later time and easier to recall.

- Sharing information with other users that might not know about the content/creator.

Tags, also search terms, are words that people type into Google if they are looking for something (Krachten and Hengholt 2018, p.92). These can be found through, inter alia, Google Trends for free where current trends and tags can be researched for specific groups and areas and then applied to the channel (ibid.). As already established, tags can be also seen as keywords (Pihlaja 2014, p.2; Choudhury, Breslin and Passant 2009, p.19; Yang and Toderici 2011, p.3217).

Search terms or rather keywords cannot only be typed into Google but also YouTube and YouTubers can assign specific tags to their videos and help platform users to find them easier (Wong, Song and Mahanti 2020, p.61). Tags also can be used strategically to improve the video's search engine optimisation (SEO - which will be further explained later in this chapter) (Leer and Krogager 2021, how to approach food texts on YouTube). Tags are therefore important for the ranking of a video in the YouTube search (Kurdi, Albadi and Mishra 2021, p.169).

Since tags are chosen by the creator (Sharma and Elidrisi 2008, p.1; Toderici et al. 2010, p.3447; Kessler and Shäfer 2009, p.281), there is also potential to optimise those, for them to be most successful, and Yang and Toderici (2011, pp.3217-3218) give following examples for that:

- Too general: Tags that are not related to the content can be neglected because they do not offer a lot of information. (e.g., video, music, youtube, …)

- Too specific: These tags also do not contain any useful information because they do not offer searchable words. (e.g., the uploader's name, …)

They (ibid., p.3218) go on to explain, that a tag does not have to be viable for only one topic or certain type of content, but also for a category such as the tag "transformers" which could be part of these clusters: video games, animations, toys and movies. This also shows that different tags can be combined and have different meaning/search outcomes. Since these tags can be related, optimizing them can be beneficial to the traffic from related and promoted videos (Hoiles, Aprem and Krishnamurthy 2017, p.1427).

Playlists

The author already talked about grouping content and the automatic classification through tags, but videos can also be categorised through playlists, where video clips get grouped into coherent collections (Snelson 2010, Abstract; Balbay and Kilis 2017, p.238). Balbay and Kilis (2017, p.238) mention that a playlist can be curated through the creators/viewers and be given names chosen by the creator of the playlist. Creating a playlist successfully, therefore, means putting related videos into a distinctly marked playlist that fits with the content (Holt-Day, Curren and Irlbeck 2020, p.193). If this had to be broken down, a playlist also can be seen as a folder with videos of the same topic for the user to watch videos consecutive (Staziaki et al. 2021, 462). The authors Staziaki et al. (2021, 463) also provide information on how a playlist can be generated as a viewer and what effects the publicity has on it: When watching a video there is a button where the consumer can save the video in a playlist and save it to the YouTube account. If a playlist is public, it can also appear on Google search.

Playlists provide the viewer with some sort of system or a guide and group videos after topics (Tembrink, Szoltysek and Unger 2013, p. 53). A creator cannot just sort the videos after topics in general, but also can provide orientation on the home page of the creator through the individualisation programme from YouTube, YouTube studio (ibid., p.71). Tembrink, Szoltysek and Unger (2013, p.29) explain that a playlist can contain own productions but also foreign video content and can be created by anyone who owns a YouTube channel/Google account. Although Holt-Day, Curren and Irlbeck (2020, p.198) mention that an organised page does not affect the subscriber, it seems less clear and structured than the pages and creators who used playlists.

Cards

YouTube provides the creator with different types of cards, they can add to their videos and those are (YouTube Help 2021, Add cards to videos):

- Video cards: These cards allow the creator to link public videos that the viewer can click on.

- Playlist cards: They provide the same service as video cards, but just with playlists instead of a single video.

- Channel cards: With these cards, the creator does not link videos, but, as the name insinuates, channels.

- Link cards: These cards are special because only creators that are part of the YouTube Partner Programme ($\rightarrow$ 2.4.1) are eligible to add links (like external websites) as cards.

YouTube (ibid.) explains the cards as an enhancement to the content and to complete the experience of the viewer with additional information/related content.

End Screens

With end screens, YouTube enables the creator to include closing credits to a video and gives two options for that (Gebesmair, Bokowy and Hummel 2017, pp.30-31):

1. Self-created end screen: Here the creators can design the end screen themselves through the YouTube studio.

2. Automatically created end screen: There is also the option of an automatic generated end screen through YouTube.

For a video to have an end screen, it must have a minimum length of 25 seconds and it cannot be specifically made for children (YouTube Help 2021, Add end screens to videos). YouTube offers templates that can be optimised and individualised (ibid.).

2.5.2   YouTube Video Optimisation

This paragraph is supposed to have a look into specific optimisation tips for a successful YouTube channel.

Algorithm

"Who wants to be successful needs to produce professional videos, upload regularly and understand the target group" (Meyer 2019, p.135). Meyer (ibid.) already gives three tips in just one sentence. He goes on to mention the top genres to be located in: Gaming, Beauty, Lifestyle, Comedy, Music, Information, Knowledge and News.

It also is beneficial for the algorithm and therefore for the creator to engage with the followers and to niche down (Altendorfer 2019, p.102). The meaning behind this, as the author of this thesis is explaining in the following paragraph, is (ibid.): The algorithm can easier suggest a creator on YouTube, if it is clear what the YouTuber is doing and to whom the videos might be appealing as well. It is unreasonable for the viewer to follow an influencer, if the presented content is changing all the time and not fitting to them.

There are also some things, that might be not that obvious, Seehaus (2016, pp.3-5) describes as such in the following paragraph. Because it is not visible to the viewer, the video file name is important for the algorithm. If the file name also includes important keywords, the YouTube algorithm can pick up on it more easily. The same goes for the subtitles. This not only presents an added value for the user but also the algorithm. Since the video file name and the subtitles are part of the SEO, they are crucial to the algorithm.

Sharma et al. (2019, p.344) further explain what also plays a big role in the algorithm and why which will be described in this paragraph. They specifically name the viewer feedback, because the YouTube algorithm aims to rank videos based on their audience interaction. This system works on the foundation of an AI (artificial intelligence) programme that studies the activities and preferences of users and their feedback. The viewer feedback separates into:

- What and why users watch a video.

- What the **watch time**, the time a user spends watching a video, is. (Considering this, the watch time is independent of the video length. It does not matter if a video is long or short, the only metric mattering is how much of the video the viewer watched in percentage.)

- What the **session time**, the time spent a user spends watching videos per visit, is.

YouTube Content

If a creator wants to be successful on the platform, YouTube Videos have to give answers to questions the target audience might ask (Meyer 2019, p.136). This phenomenon can be cleared up with the example of a science channel, that answers specific questions, and with YouTube being a search engine, it delivers sustainable views (ibid.). What Meyer (2019, p.139) also points out is a mixture of information and entertainment so that the viewer receives informational content, that is entertaining as well to make even heavy topics simple.

Apart from answering questions and including what was mentioned above, videos uploaded to YouTube should be relevant for a longer period also called "Longtail" so videos get clicked even years after their upload (ibid.). It matters what the video contains, and YouTubers can follow all the rules from the YouTube-Playbook (YouTube Creator Academy), if the content is not right, no audience would click on a video (Meyer 2019, p.140).

Important to note is, that the content can only be perceived as authentic, if the creators are passionate about the topics and the online videos that they produce (Krachten and Hengholt 2018, p.3).

SEO

If YouTube videos are supposed to be successful, they need to be found (Krachten and Hengholt 2018, p.91). This is what "Search Engine Optimisation" (SEO) or rather search engine optimised video is (ibid.). This means using SEO as a YouTuber is used to optimise a video and make it searchable for the users (Cowley 2020, Abstract). Implementing this strategy indicates involving all the metadata we already talked about in 2.5.1 (Thumbnails, Title, Description, Tags, …) (Seehaus 2016, p.2). Seehaus (2016, pp.9-10) also provides an SEO-Checklist under the understanding of growth and sustaining that: "phrase a precise file name, write a pleasing video title, provide an informative description, create an individualised thumbnail, use versatile tags and automatic subtitles." Since mentioning the growth, this means growing a following and attracting traffic on YouTube through Search Engine Optimization (Rahman, Ng and Rajaratnam 2021, p.10).

Looking into the topic of visibility, Shelton (2017, The Value Of Search Results Rankings) explains that 95% of web traffic for Google is located on the first page. Taking this and the fact, that YouTube is the second most visited website after Google (Geipel 2018, p.137) the SEO also plays a big part in the platform YouTube (Bishop 2020, p.3).

Although it was established that it is an important key factor for the algorithm and overall searchability, there is still a lot of potential for further studies (Bishop 2020, p.1). Bishop (2020, p.3) and Bryant (2020, p.85) both explain that neither the SEO nor the Algorithm is easy to understand and Google and YouTube are both not revealing how the system completely works.

Connection to Other Social Media Platforms

There are several social media platforms and YouTube is just one of them, but who thinks, that one needs to be a part of all of them, is wrong and Meyer (2019, p.144.) explains it like this: Every platform has different users and therefore target groups. That

means that every creator needs to know where the target group is located and how they may react differently on the platforms. He also mentions that it should not be neglected that not every content is suited for every platform and that it is easy to be a part of all of them if working alone.

Personality/Community

Personality is a word that seems far-fetched, but it just means, that the creator needs to appeal to the viewer which does not mean that there is one personality that everyone likes or enjoys watching (Meyer 2019, p.139). It just needs to fit the target group and seem authentic (ibid.). Altendorfer (2019, pp.98-99) underpins this statement and explains that although most influencers do not have a subject-specific education just have a connection to the viewer. A sort of relationship or rather an illusion of a relationship that is presented to the viewer because they seem closer than the traditional star such as an actor (Fägersten 2017, pp.1-10).

The people watching a YouTuber and supporting the creator are called community and it is them who need to be convinced that the creator is trustworthy, and they want to be a part of that community (Meyer 2019, p.145). Easier said than done because those who do not have a big marketing budget and/or are a big brand already need to take the long road and build trust and a relationship with the viewers over time (ibid.).

In a study, viewers had to choose between teachers and their YouTube videos and rank them accordingly (Cowie and Sakui 2020, pp.71-74). The results they got from that were the following ranking criteria:

"The two most important reasons for the popular videos were that they were clear and at an appropriate speed. Other important factors were that they were not boring, straight to the point, humorous and attractive." (ibid.)

Part of the community is also, that they are not only supporting the creator as mentioned before but also by referring others to this creator. As Ashik and Ravi (2021, p.43) explain in their article, word of the mouth has a positive impact on the success of a YouTuber.

„YouTube Videos Go Viral"

Heiser (2020, p.27) describes what it means when a video goes viral accordingly: Viral videos or virals are videos that have an epidemic, uncontrollable and rapid character spreading on the internet. They benefit from mouth-to-mouth propaganda and seem more authentic through the personal note of this.

So, when a video goes viral, can be explained short and simple: A viral video gains a high number of views and is spread over various platforms, which can be converted into followers (with a conversation rate specific to different platforms) (Sbai 2021, p.102). One specific example for this is the German YouTuber Rezo and his video that criticised a German political party (DW 2019, Germany's CDU slams YouTuber Rezo over political viral video). The video went viral, and a chain reaction started (Allgaier 2020, pp.379-381). The following picture shows the difference between the video that went viral "Die Zerstörung der CDU" and his other content.

Figure 7: "Rezo's Videos Sorted by Popularity"
(YouTube 2021, Upload page)

To conclude this chapter it should be noted that since viral videos have an "uncontrollable" character, they cannot be planned, and also does not offer guaranteed long-term success (Heiser 2020, p.27).

2.6   What Do YouTubers Say About It?

In this part of the thesis, the author has chosen three YouTubers

- Cathrin Manning

- Vanessa Lau

- Film Booth

and

- vidIQ (a platform that aims to boost YouTube views as well as subscribers) (vidIQ 2022, Designed to boost your YouTube views).

The YouTubers mentioned were chosen because they do not only give specific advice on how to "YouTube" but also were the channels frequently recommended to the author of this thesis by YouTube. They include in their channel videos specifically to help others with their YouTube success and what it is that is important from their point of view and experience. This is done to see, if theory and the practical approach align and if they have different approaches and tips than science, since they have a more present and practical insight. The following paragraph will be a combination of the YouTubers mentioned above, obtaining the information from the following playlists: Manning (2021, All YouTube Tips), Lau (2021, YouTube Hacks – Check out these top videos!) and Film Booth (2021, I remake YouTube; A beginners [sic] guide to great YouTube videos; Can't improve on YouTube? Try these; 2022, Learn from the best YouTubers in the world).

The key components gathered from these videos are:

- The channel banner/branding should not only be pleasing but should show the most important information right at the beginning. So, it is supposed to be simple and short but to the point. The theme should also be seen through the content and maybe other platforms the creator is using, so the viewer can build a connection between all of them.

- The timeline is something that YouTubers mention all the time, regarding consistency and scheduling. But the opinions differ, while some say consistency is key for the algorithm, others advise putting the quality of the content over consistency. This is because some say that YouTube will not recommend a creator's videos if the uploads are not consistent. If there are regular uploads, but the people are not watching the video or not long enough because the quality of content is not good enough, YouTube

will not recommend the video either. So, the quint essence of this is to post good quality content consistently. They also mention that the scheduling depends on the type of video, how long it takes to do research, shoot and edit, and it depends on the viewers what they subjectively think is good content.

• The title, as well as the thumbnail, the description and the tags, have one thing in common: They must be searchable and include as many catching and searchable thrashes as possible and generate attention. But there is a slight differentiation between the thumbnail and the title to the rest. This is because the title and the thumbnail are supposed to be attention-grabbing but not too overcrowded or too long. The description for example can be longer and information filled as well as the tags. Though YouTubers are not so sure, if the tags are still that important, because the algorithm is changing from time to time, and different factors gain or lose importance.

• Playlists, cards and end screens were something the creators did not give a big platform to talk about. They were mainly described but not ranked as very important features that a creator cannot live without. The cards during the videos were even criticised for possibly harming a YouTuber because it can lead to a viewer stopping a video and that causes the same issue, talked about within scheduling and consistency.

• The literature and the YouTubers both mention that the algorithm is never 100% clear because YouTube/Google does not want to reveal how it works and change it up, so people cannot crack it. Some people understand it better than others, but there is no evidence proving how it works.

• As for the content, the author of this thesis already mentioned, that good quality content is important, but this is not determined by the creator, but by the audience. This also shows that good quality content does not lead to automatic success. It's the same concept with actors and/or singers, just because someone is talented, does not mean that they get to be one of the views that also make it and are successful in this field of profession. And the same applies to YouTubers.

• The topic SEO (search engine optimisation) does not only get attention in the literature but also on YouTube. They say it is very important to make a video searchable and that a lot of factors go into that. Since the author already covered this in 2.5.1, she will not go into more detail at this point, just mentioning that the YouTubers and literature align on this point.

• The connections to other social media platforms are another topic where the opinions of the YouTubers differ. Some say it is important, others mention that it can be

stressful to use all the platforms alone and that different target groups can make it un-necessary.

- An issue where science and the YouTubers align again is the personali-ty/community. Both parties determine that building a community and providing a re-quired personality for that is crucial for success.

- If a video goes viral or not, is most of the time out of the creator's hand and does not mean it always benefits the YouTuber. Just because a topic is polarising and a video generates a lot of attention, it can also be bad attention and lead to a creator's downfall.

- Finally, YouTubers also mentioned the importance of setting up the channel correctly. (→ 3.1 Setting up a YouTube Channel)

vidIQ (2022, Designed to boost your YouTube views) is described as: vidIQ is a tool that creators can use to optimise their YouTube performance with different pro-grammes. It allows the creator to track the performance not only via the YouTube stu-dio but also through vidIQ. That does not only provide information regarding that but also tips and tricks on how to achieve better results, such as suggested keywords, vid-eo topics, SEO optimisation.

Since the videos and the website are not scientifically nature, they did not get as much attention as the academic sources but should not be neglected regarding their topicality and success they can show in form of subscribers and/or flagships.

2.7   Known YouTubers

The here mentioned known YouTubers are provided by a platform called Social Blade. It is "certified by YouTube" (Social Blade 2021, All about social blade) and "compiles data from YouTube, Twitter, Twitch, Daily Motion, Mixer, and Instagram and uses the data to make statistical graphs and charts that track progress and growth" (ibid.).

The following creators are sorted by subscribers at the point of writing this thesis (4 February 2022):

- T-series is number one on this list with **206 million** subscribers (Social Blade 2021, TOP 50 SUBSCRIBED YOUTUBE CHANNELS (SORTED BY SUBSCRIBER COUNT)). T-series is an Indian music label and movie studio (YouTube Channel T-Series 2021, about; T-series 2021, about). This channel

was chosen because it is number one on the list and should therefore be mentioned because it represents the top.

- PewDiPie is number 6 and has a total of **111 million** subscribers (Social Blade 2021, TOP 50 SUBSCRIBED YOUTUBE CHANNELS (SORTED BY SUBSCRIBER COUNT)). This creator is on this list because the author of this thesis came across the name during the research and has a certain scientific importance for this topic (Fägersten 2017, Abstract; Hokka 2020, pp.142-156; Medina, Reed and Davis 2020, pp.21-33; Holland 2016, p.1).

- MrBeast, who is number 9 on the list, shows **89.6 million** subscribers (Social Blade 2021, TOP 50 SUBSCRIBED YOUTUBE CHANNELS (SORTED BY SUBSCRIBER COUNT)). He is part of this thesis because, as mentioned before, this thesis also investigates what YouTubers have to say about YouTube success and all the important steps they advise to take. Taking that into consideration, the research has shown, that MrBeast is mentioned regularly when referring to a successful YouTuber and someone who has cracked the "YouTube code". (YouTube 2021, YouTube algorithm; YouTube 2021, MrBeast YouTube success) Looking further into that even YouTube themselves have picked up on this and did a collaboration with MrBeast for their creators (YouTube Creators 2019, MrBeast – Quick Tips from YouTube HQ). That is why the author also mentions MrBeast.

These three YouTube channels, with T-series being a channel provided by a company but PewDiPie and MrBeast being individuals, just show that YouTube is not a Platform, just for companies or just for individuals, but for everyone that wants to try.

Talking about subscribers, this does not necessarily mean, that a YouTuber has a big income because one source of income for YouTubers is their views (Elango 2019, p.1; Han 2020, p.132). Just because someone has a lot of subscribers or no subscribers, does not mean they automatically get a lot or no views.

If that view is applied to the list from above, T-series is still on number 1, PewDiPie has moved to 24th place and MrBeast has not even been mentioned anymore (Social Balde 2021, TOP 50 MOST VIEWED YOUTUBE CHANNELS (SORTED BY VIDEO VIEWS)). This just shows how different subscribers and views can be.

3   Self-experimentation

The author of this thesis created two individual YouTube channels to compare the researched success factors and their effectiveness. She set up two channels to investigate if there is any difference between a business channel and a personal channel, or if YouTube makes no differentiation between those two.

The author was implementing the mentioned strategies from above and had a look into the different categories and measurements and how they each influenced the channels and their success.

3.1   Setting Up a YouTube Channel

To deduct a conclusion or rather get to a result, two channels were created. One for the company (The Unseen), and one for the student (Biz with Liz T.). As stated in Reuben (2008, p.10), where Google was consulted before creating a channel, and based on information provided by YouTubers mentioned in 2.6, it is important, to set up the channel correctly before starting the uploads. YouTube channels present a key component of the success of YouTube (Hall 2016, pp.4-5). To create a channel, YouTube has given the following guide (YouTube 2021, YouTube Help):

- Go to YouTube and click sign in.

- Create an account (personal or brand account)

- If you already have a Google account, you can just sign in with that and create an account based on that.

- After these steps have been taken, a channel can be created.

    o   Clicking on the profile picture will lead to the question whether a channel should be created.

    o   If the name and photo are aligning with your google account confirm the creation of the channel.

    o   This also applies to brand channels.

After creating the account and channel, the channel can be individualised and content can be uploaded. But before that, the channel should be optimised, and information

added. The following information is based on the setting up process that the author of this thesis went through while setting up the channels.

For this, the YouTube studio should be opened. This operation can be started by clicking on the profile picture and opening the YouTube studio. There is a bar on the left with features like analytics, monetisation and customisation. To individualise the channel, the option customisation needs to be chosen. There the creator can add a personal touch through the layout, branding and basic information.

Layout: A channel trailer, featured video and featured sections

Branding: A profile picture, the banner image and a watermark where people can just click on it and subscribe immediately.

Basic info: Channel name and description, languages links that will be shown on the banner, contact info for the subscribers and also the channel URL.

When all of this is set up, there is also a feature called "settings" where the creator can adjust general features for the channel. It is divided into:

General: Here the creator can choose a currency for your channel.

Channel: This feature allows you in "Basic info" to set a country of residence and keywords, that fit your channel and the content. In "Advanced settings" your channel can be adjusted if the content is meant to be specifically for children or if you want to review this for every video uploaded. It also lets the creator connect their Google Ads account if available and customise additional information about the channel. Feature eligibility and verifying your account allow you to "upload videos longer than 15 minutes, Add custom thumbnails, Live stream and Appeal Content ID claims" (YouTube Help 2021, Verify your YouTube account) and also gives more security.

Upload defaults: Under upload defaults, the creator can choose different settings and take precautions for videos, that should always be the same for every video.

Permissions: This field allows inviting people to the channel and giving them different roles and rights.

Community: Here is where the creator can block and accept specific comments, words, sentences and users.

Agreements: Last but not least, under "agreements", YouTube provides all the agreements a creator has to know about.

After having done all this the YouTube channel is ready and the viewer can know more about you when they watch a video.

3.2   YouTube Channels

This chapter focuses on the two channels that were created for this thesis to try the recipe for success provided by scientific literature, YouTube and YouTubers themselves and also why a YouTube channel could be beneficial.

3.2.1   How Can a YouTube Channel Be Beneficial?

Lopezosa et al. (2021, p.40) show in their article that, since YouTube is the second most used search engine after Google, it can offer an increase of the visibility in the web and reach a broader audience, when used strategically, because YouTube is not just a platform, where people can upload their videos.

Examining this shows the potential behind a platform like YouTube. Ha (2018, p.1) explains, with YouTube being the largest video-sharing platform, it also provides a wide range of videos and content that can be posted on the website and provides an audience. But YouTube is not limited to uploading videos. It also allows the users to interact with the creator and the other way around through comments, (dis-)likes, tags, and the description box and this also applies to personal as well as corporate/company channels (Pihlaja 2014, p.2).

3.2.2   Why You Should Start a Channel

There is 500 hours worth of video material uploaded to the platform every minute and YouTube itself mentions, that this is a lot and would not be manageable without a ranking system (YouTube 2021, YouTube Search). There are more than one billion users and a monthly watch rate of about six billion hours worth of video material. (Tembrink, Szoltysek and Unger 2013, p.11). As explained in the beginning, not all YouTubers that start a channel are going to be successful (Noury 2018, pp.1-3).

This leaves the question of whether YouTube leaves room for new creators or if the platform is already saturated.

Zulkifli et al. (2021, pp.2-8) and Beißwenger (2019, p.5) point out why starting a YouTube channel still is a great option and should be contemplated as this will be the basis for this paragraph. The pandemic was a perfect example of the potential for the online world. Since some small companies had to switch to online shopping and adver-

tising completely, they also branched into segments like social media (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, …). It also showed that the platforms like YouTube still offered value although the high use already. This also shows that the platform is not saturated yet. Because not only the creators grow, but the whole platform with its users as well.

Therefore, YouTube should also be seen as an extension if not solely business career because it can not only lead to an additional audience and new customers, in the case of a company channel, but also to an additional income stream. (ibid.; Lopezosa et al. 2021, p.40). Besides added revenue, YouTube can also be a cost-efficient advertising tool, because there are no costs connected to uploading a video, and the platform offers viral effects that can benefit a creator as well (Hilker 2010, p.33). Those viral effects are explained in 2.5.1 (viral videos) and through the fact that YouTube and the views are not scalable (Schmidt 2018, p.37). Simplified, a video can generate only five views, but also five million (ibid.).

3.2.3   Business Channel - The Unseen

The following information about The Unseen is provided by the company's website (The Unseen 2021, About Us) and internal information provided to the author of this thesis.

The Unseen is a company, that was founded in the United Arab Emirates to provide its market with unique, guilt-free (purchasing goods/services with the aim of being sustainable and therefore buying products without guilt) products that also have a story to tell. The sold interior design pieces offer value to those interested in ethically sourced products that are still unique, timeless and meet quality requirements.

Founder Laura Lander, who is also the second examiner of the thesis, fulfilled a long-time dream of her with starting this company mid-pandemic in early 2021. The goal is to not only convince the customer of the products but also make an impact for sustainability as their motto "Buy good, feel good!" suggests.

Laura is not only the visionary and creative mind but also responsible for providing the right brands and products. It was always a concern of hers to make a difference in the world and make it a better place. With fashion being her background and her enthusiasm for interior design, Laura combines her expertise in these sectors with the sustainability component.

With distancing themselves from mass production being their **vision**, The Unseen offer products that are not only long-lasting but also make a difference for the people and

the planet. The brands should meet at least one goal from the company while providing "unique high-quality items for a fair price".

The **mission** is to tell the story of "the unseen" and give those artisans and brands a platform and raise awareness. Every presented brand also has its background and story. Taking this into consideration, The Unseen want to connect brands, that meet their values, with customers interested in making purchases with keeping sustainability a part of it.

Since the values were mentioned a few times now, they were also important for the YouTube channel The Unseen and played a big role while planning and making the concept for the channel. The following graph shows you the values of The Unseen.

Recycled Materials

The use of recycled materials minimizes the overall waste, reducing materials ending up in landfill sites. This supports the circular economy system, where possible.

Natural Materials

Products crafted from natural materials are derived from plants or animals, sourced in a sustainable manner to preserve the world's delicate ecosystems and biodiversity

Carbon Reduction

The production process uses creative solutions and the latest technologies, with a conscious effort to reduce the Brand's carbon footprint.

Locally Sourced

We believe that products and artisans should utilize local and sustainable, where possible, materials to stimulate local economies.

Preserve Traditional Craftsmanship

Traditional craftsmanship for handmade products are passed down through generations, to preserve the production process and centuries old traditions and cultures.

Empowering Local Communities

We believe in products which support local communities and provide a fair wage to improve their livelihood.

Safe Working Environment

The brands we work with ensure a safe working environment for their artisans, free of gender- and race-based discrimination and harassment.

Gender Advocacy

A lot of the companies we work with are female-owned.

Figure 8: "Values – The Unseen"
(The Unseen 2021, About Us)

As the company is still a small Start-up, they were interested in increasing their social media presence and branching into YouTube since they mainly focused on Instagram up until this point. They also wanted to utilise YouTube as a new marketing tool, if possible. That is where the author of this thesis comes in. She was responsible for the ide-

as, the filming, editing, uploading schedule and providing a link between Instagram and YouTube. How this exactly worked and how the factors were applied will be the point of discussion in 3.3.1.

3.2.4 Personal/Lifestyle Channel – Biz with Liz T.

This channel was created as a differentiation to the business channel, to see, if there might be a difference between those two channel variations. Biz with Liz T., the channels name, was also created by the author of this thesis, Elisabeth Wolfram, to talk about personal content and serve the lifestyle niche. The channel aims to show what it is like being a young and sick woman trying to become a part of the business world while overcoming difficulties and obstacles. Another key component of the channel is bringing awareness to chronic illness in general but focusing on the ones the author experiences herself. The main sicknesses the author is talking about are:

Endometriosis: "Endometriosis is a condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb starts to grow in other places, such as the ovaries and fallopian tubes" (NHS UK 2019, Endometriosis). NHS even listed it as one of the 20 most painful conditions (15th) (Ballinger 2021, NHS names the 20 most excruciatingly painful conditions you can suffer from). Among other things, endometriosis is best known for causing "dysmenorrhea (painful menstrual periods), menorrhagia (heavy menstrual bleeding), dyspareunia (pain during intercourse), chronic pelvic pain, and reduced fertility" (Dinsdale, Nepomnaschy and Crespi 2021, p.176). Although endometriosis meets the hallmarks of cancer, it is not fatal (Chui, Wang and Shih 2017, p.78264). The only definite possibility to get diagnosed is through laparoscopy (Johns Hopkins Medicine 2021, Endometriosis).

Multiple Sclerosis: "Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a condition that can affect the brain and spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, arm or leg movement, sensation or balance" (NHS UK 2018, Multiple Sclerosis). MS "causes unpredictable symptoms such as numbness, tingling, mood changes, memory problems, pain, fatigue, blindness and/or paralysis. Everyone's experience with MS is different and these losses may be temporary or long lasting" (NationalMsSociety 2021, What is MS?).

Chronic Headaches (Cluster headaches and new daily persistent headache): Cluster headaches occur in attacks but also can be chronic, with attacks still happening and making the pain worse, and they are considered one of the most debilitating pains humans encounter (Burish et al. 2020, p.118; Wei and Goadsby 2021, p.913). "Cluster headaches are excruciating attacks of pain in one side of the head, often felt around the eye" (NHS UK 2020, Cluster headaches). "New daily persistent headache (NDPH) presents with a sudden onset headache which continues without remission within 24 h.

[…] it is one of the most treatment refractory primary headache disorders and can be highly disabling to the individuals" (Yamani and Olesen 2019, p.1).

So, the student created videos about the sicknesses and the story of herself to bring awareness and also to educate people on these topics for further understanding. The author of this thesis took issues that were relevant to her and her illnesses and built the video ideas around that. An example of that is the video about her surgery which not only showed the process of it but also the struggles of being a sick student.

3.2.5   Difference Self-employment And Employee

Boeri et al. (2020, p.171) are the base for the explanation of self-employment and employee in this bachelor thesis. To describe this topic the author only talks about workers, that can choose voluntarily to be self-employed or not, in which scenario they decide to be an employee. There also needs to be distinguished between self-employed and solo self-employed, where the self-employed person does not have employers beneath it, with the first option increasing. The biggest difference between an employee and self-employed is, that they do not have the same social insurance and job protection that is granted to employees.

As already discussed in 2.2 YouTube can be a job and provide different employment variations, as perfectly seen through the author's experience. As the author of this thesis could experience both during this process through the private channel, as a self-employed and for the company channel as an employee and the author describes the experience and the main differences like this:

- **Social Support/Security Net**: As mentioned in 3.2.4 the author of this thesis created a private channel to talk about her health issues and what it is like trying to be a part of the business world. Because there was a medical procedure during the writing phase of this thesis, the writer needed to take some sick leave. As an employee of the company, the author had the chance to take a step back and take the time needed. If compared to solo self-employment, in this case, the author needed to create before-hand to have content during the sick leave, because there is no such thing as sick leave in self-employment, as already described in the explanation mentioned above. It should be noted that the author tried to create content for the sick leave before but could not provide it for the entirety of the sick leave, which was not a problem for the company, because of the social support through employment. But if the channels would already generate money, the creator would not make any money, of not provided content, because there is no social support for that.

- **"Freedom"**: The second biggest difference from the experience was that the private channel could be created completely free and as the author intended to. This also applied to switching up plans and making changes as liked. This does not apply to the business channel. Although the author had the opportunity to create a content plan and work around that, it always needs to be discussed with the company and reviewed to make sure it is suitable for the company and not only the creator. The author was lucky enough to have creative freedom, but this does not apply to every employee. This experience can be drawn from prior jobs and internships completed by the author.

- **Working Hours**: And last but not least, as a self-employed person there are no set working hours. Nobody says when and at what time they have to work, but there is also no limitation or holidays that are financed through the social grid mentioned before. So as a self-employed, the person can choose when to work, but they also do not have assigned free time, as an employee has. This does not automatically mean, that they have more free time, but as a self-employed person there is no paid overtime and/or leave.

With this explanation, the author aims to show how different a profession and the job as a YouTuber can be and what difficulties it might bring along with it. This not only should provide information about this but also clarify possible differences between a personal and a company channel. How it played out at the end will be the point of discussion of the next chapter and the conclusion.

3.3 Analysis of the Success Factors

The question is now if the described and applied success factors truly helped. To generate numbers for this thesis, the author uploaded one video per week on each channel (The Unseen – the company channel and Biz with Liz T. – the lifestyle channel). The Unseen would be a combination of the introduction to their brands and sustainability tips that can be included in daily life. The content for Biz with Liz T. looked different because the concept behind this channel was to present a real person and personal information instead of representing a company. How both concepts were applied can be seen in the following chapter (3.3.1).

Although in theory, the author mentioned more factors, this section will only include the measurable ones, since the others cannot be proven or disproved on a scientific basis. The provided information and numbers in this chapter are from YouTube Help and YouTube Analytics.

3.3.1   How the Factors Were Applied

The first feature mentioned was the **channel banner**. This feature is shown on the home page of a YouTube channel and "welcoming" the viewer on the channel (Schultz 2019, pp.56-64; Ciampa and Moore 2015, p.111). Since there are no KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) there is no way to prove the effectiveness through this bachelor thesis. Because of that it also will not be represented in this chapter any further.

Part of the banner was also the **branding** (2.5.1) which consists of: Channel icon, channel art, channel description and channel trailer that also do not provide any information regarding their efficiency and cannot be included in this chapter.

As a next point, the **timeline** and its importance were demonstrated (Tarnovskaya 2017, p.29). It should be noted that the timeline does not only consist of an ordinary upload schedule but of a consistent schedule and the engagement from the viewer over time which can be measured (YouTube Help 2021, Schedule video; YouTube Help 2021, How engagement metrics are counted). Scheduling also enables the creator to prepare and upload videos and publish them later automatically and the effectiveness can be shown through the following metrics (ibid.):

- Views

- Likes & dislikes

- Subscriptions

Those metrics can be seen in YouTube Analytics. The exact numbers for this will be discussed in 3.3.2.

Through the opportunity to schedule videos, the creator also has the possibility of not only planning ahead but also some kind of freedom. In the case of this thesis, the author already knew that a medical procedure had to be done, and so she could plan the content at the beginning, write scripts, film and edit videos and upload them before the surgery, so there would not be such a long time without any uploads if the student did not have this opportunity through YouTube. Scheduling the content was achieved through a content calendar (which was advised by the YouTubers mentioned as named in 2.6), created by the author through the service Airtable. The company offers a platform for everyone to individualise and optimise the workflow (Airtable 2021, Product). A content calendar provides information about the content, and it should be shared with team members (Eden 2016, p.6). In the case of the student, it was the company/the second examiner so she could approve of the plan.

As already mentioned, when talking about scheduling, audience engagement is not only important but can be measured as well (YouTube Help 2021, Schedule video; YouTube Help 2021, How engagement metrics are counted). Topics that are part of this engagement metrics are (YouTube Help 2022, Understanding audience engagement): playlists, cards, end screens and the video content. Since the topics were described in more detail in 2.5.1 (YouTube features), they will not be explained here anymore. Finding the information for these matters can be achieved through the engagement menu button in YouTube analytics, which shows (ibid.):

- the **top** videos, playlists, cards, end screens (+ end screen element types and the end screen element click rate, which shows how often users clicked on an end screen element)

- and the video content (audience retention, which shows what parts of the video grasped the user's attention and likes vs dislikes) (ibid.).

Because the KPIs for these metrics are extensive, they will be discussed further in 3.3.2 and how they played out for the channels.

SEO is also a factor that is measurable through the KPI YouTube Search (YouTube Help, YouTube Analytics basics) including the **title, description,** and **tags** (Seehaus 2016, p.2)**.** With the title also being part of the welcoming procedure when seeing a video, just like the banner (Schultz 2019, pp.56-64; Ciampa and Moore 2015, p.111). Since the title is part of SEO and a tool to make a video searchable, it can be one of the reasons people find a video on YouTube and give it more reach, therefore (Krachten and Hengholt 2018, p.91; Cowley 2020, Abstract; Seehaus 2016, p.2). As already mentioned, the success of this can be examined through the KPI YouTube Search (YouTube Help 2021, YouTube Analytics basics). Part of this process was also the use of hashtags, as recommended by YouTube in the next part (YouTube Help 2021, Use hashtags for video search). Hashtags can be added to the title and/or description by adding "#". Applying this, it can link the video to a results page that also features other videos with the same hashtag. This not only allows the creator to be found but also the viewer to find related content through searching for a hashtag, clicking on it or finding one through the explore tab (YouTube Help 2021, Find videos using hashtags).

The following information regarding the KPI YouTube Search is provided through YouTube studio, to which only the creator and invited people, with a permit from the original creator, have access to.

The YouTube Search can be seen through the YouTube studio of the individual YouTubers Analytical page. To see how pronounced YouTube Search is, the infor-

mation tab "Reach" must be chosen, and there the creator can see "Traffic source types". This is where the YouTuber can see how much of the traffic on the YouTube Channel/Videos are from YouTube search. Clicking "SEE MORE" provides the creator with search terms that led viewers to the channel and the created content. The owner of the channel can also choose to see the analytics for the entire channel or selected videos and see a comparison between the videos. The search terms, therefore, help the YouTuber see what terms led people to the channel and can incorporate that into their video title, descriptions and/or tags.

Another topic, that should not be neglected when talking about SEO is the audience report which also can be retrieved from the analytics (YouTube Help 2021, Get to know your audience). How this works, is through other videos the audience watched because this can not only give you information about the viewers' preferences, but also influence you and give ideas for topics, titles, thumbnails, and even the possibility of finding collaboration partners (ibid.).

Since the **algorithm** is a tool for YouTube to figure out what the content is about, it can start suggesting it to the right audience (Altendorfer 2019, p.102). Because it also depends on SEO features the algorithm can also be measured through the already mentioned KPIs discussed in the paragraphs above as well as the tab suggested videos, because that is how many times YouTube suggested the video to other viewers (YouTube Help 2022, Understand your video reach). As already mentioned, the algorithm is not a clear system where YouTube and Google provide a lot of information and therefore cannot be solely linked to KPIs like some other metrics (Seehaus 2016, pp.3-5; Sharma et al. 2019, p.344; Bishop 2020, p.1,3; Bryant 2020, p.85).

Another factor, that can be measured, is the **thumbnail**, the picture that is shown before the viewer can click on the video on YouTube and watch it (Hou and Zhang 2008, p.999). YouTube Help explains how the effectiveness of a thumbnail can be measured in the following paragraph (YouTube Help 2021, Check your impressions and click-through rate):

How effective a thumbnail is, can be identified through the "impressions click-through rate". This shows you how often the thumbnail led to viewers watching a video. If the click-through rate is higher, more people accessed the video after seeing a thumbnail than with a lower impressions click-through rate.

For the company channel, the creator, the author of this thesis, chose to stick with a thumbnail design from the beginning to see, if this uniformity had any effect.
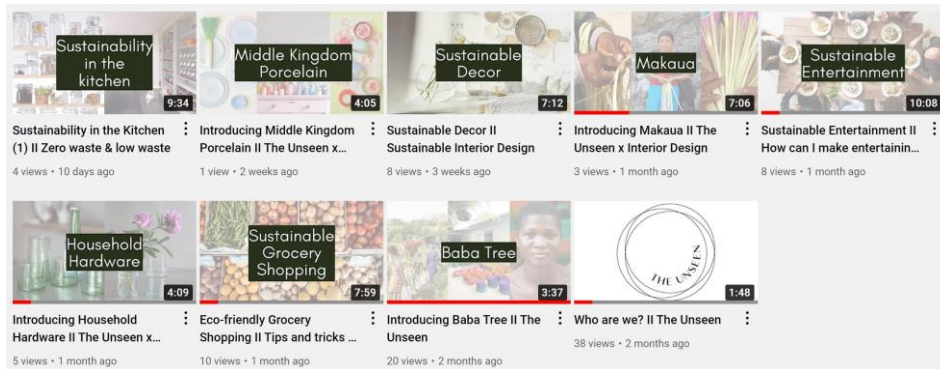
Figure 9: "Thumbnail Design – The Unseen"
(The Unseen 2021, Upload page)

To not only be able to see how the impressions click-through rate was, the author of this thesis, also changed the thumbnail design for the lifestyle channel in the middle of the test phase, to see, if optimising or rather changing them would do anything for the numbers. This experiment looked like that:
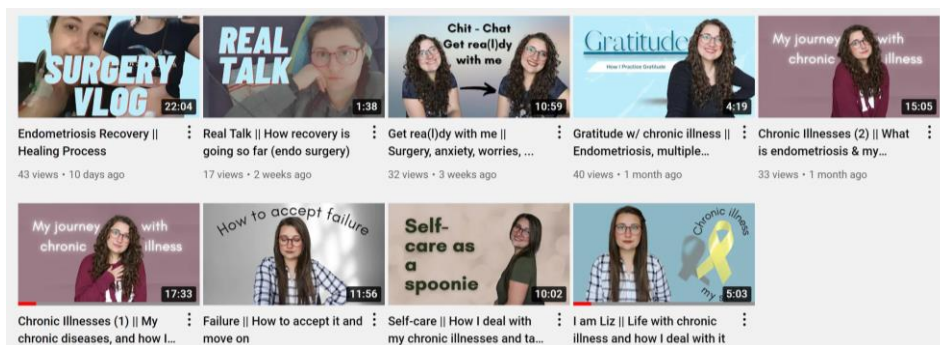

Figure 10: "Thumbnail Design before – Biz with Liz T."
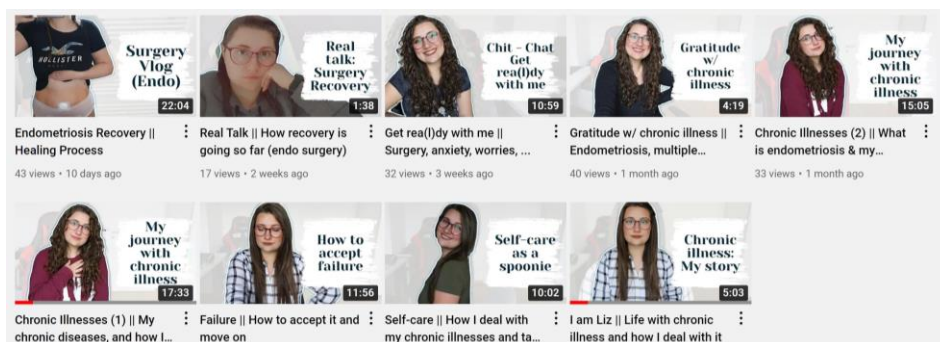(Biz with Liz T. 2021, Upload page)

Figure 11: "Thumbnail Design after – Biz with Liz T."
(ibid.)

How and if this endeavour was successful, will be explained in 3.3.1 (YouTube Analytics), where the author examines the in this chapter used applications of the theory. This also applies to other areas of this chapter because this chapter should just show how the author used the researched information. The next chapter is solely dedicated to showing how and if the use was effective or not and what other results could be drawn

from the implementation. This not only applies to the thumbnail but all the applications already mentioned and followed in this chapter.

There is also the **connection to other social media platforms** and Meyer (2019, p.144.) explains that YouTube is not the only social media platform, and they can be used simultaneously but do not have to. He goes on to clarify, that it even does not make sense if the target group is not present on the platform (ibid.). As an example, a study has shown, that millennial men are more likely to adhere to Facebook ads, and millennial women and non-millennial genders are more present on Instagram (Belanche, Cenjor and Pérez-Rueda 2019, p.69). This was also something YouTubers advised in their "YouTube Tips" videos.

For the company channel, there already was an existing Instagram account that could be utilised, and the YouTube channel was an addition. As for the personal channel of the author of this thesis, the Instagram account was created in addition to the YouTube channel after the channel was running for some time. The first Instagram post from the company The Unseen was posted on 14th May 2021 and the first video on the YouTube channel was published on 15th October 2021(The Unseen 2022, Upload page; The Unseen 2022, Instagram account). The order for the personal channel was different. The first video also went live on 15th October 2021, but the first Instagram post was posted on 27th October 2021 (Biz with Liz T. 2022, Upload page; Biz with Liz T. 2022, Instagram account). This is something that can be checked through the KPI "Traffic source: External" that can be accessed through YouTube studio.

As for the **personality/community**, Meyer (2019, p.139, 145) and Altendorfer (2019, pp.98-99) define this term and if summarised it can be said that this is not measurable through KPI's because if somebody is appealing to the community is subjectively and not defined through numbers presented to the creator. They (ibid.) also mention that building a community/relationship can take time and not be built overnight. Part of the community is also a referral from other creators and that is also the only component measurable for this topic, which will be discussed in the following chapter.
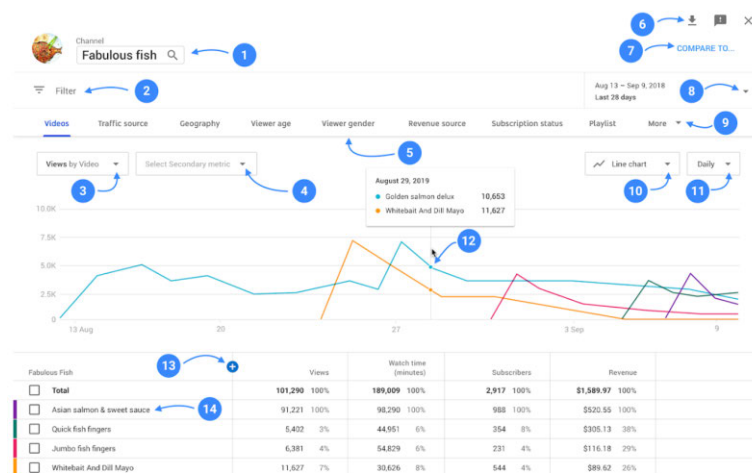
And finally, **videos go viral**, and what that means was already explained in more detail before, but in short form, when a video goes viral, it generates more traction than all the other videos and reaches a broader audience in a short amount of time (Heiser 2020, p.27).

The following information regarding the measurability of this phenomenon is provided by the YouTube studio that can only be entered by having access to the channel information that is disclosed to the public and only available to the authorised channel owners. If a video went viral cannot be proven specifically through KPIs provided by

YouTube like e.g., the click-through rate we saw with the thumbnail, but still through the information that is available in the YouTube studio because of features like comparison and also the ranking system of YouTube. With the comparison feature, two videos can be juxtaposed and seen therefore put against each other. This shows if a video was more successful than another video and can give answers on why it did better or not. With the ranking feature, YouTube shows the creator, if the video did just as well as other videos, worse or better, and how big the difference is for that. What this can look like, will be shown in the following chapter, which showcases the different KPIs and graphs.

3.3.2   YouTube Analytics

The metrics and KPIs provided by the YouTube studio are not available to the public and can only be accessed through the company and the author for this thesis, that is why some of the information in this chapter will not offer sources and be marked. YouTube studio also provides a more detailed analytical perspective through the expanded analytics report as described through the following graph and explanation given from YouTube Help (YouTube Help 2021, Learn how to use expanded analytic reports):

Figure 12: "Use the Expanded Report"

(ibid.)

As used and mentioned before, Google provides YouTube Help, which has a support-ing role for the use of YouTube. This applies to creators and non-creators. Since this thesis is presented by a creator, the author of this thesis concentrated on the "Help Centre" articles that were specifically created to support those. As this chapter is focus-ing on YouTube Analytics, the author used the following papers for research and sup-port in analysing the analytics provided by the platform (YouTube studio). These will also give guidance for the reader because the analytics shown in this chapter can only be accessed by the creator and approved/invited users by the creator.

Articles from the help centre:

- Metrics to know (YouTube Help 2022, Check your impressions and click-through rate)
- YouTube Analytics basics (YouTube Help 2022, YouTube Analytics basics)
- Audience (YouTube Help 2022, Understand audience engagement; YouTube Help 2022, Get to know your audience)

Because the mentioned articles were of such importance for this thesis, they will be used to explain the findings of this thesis furthermore.

Views, likes & dislikes, subscriptions, and scheduling – As previously mentioned in the prior chapter, views, likes & dislikes and subscriptions can be measured through the same called KPIs.
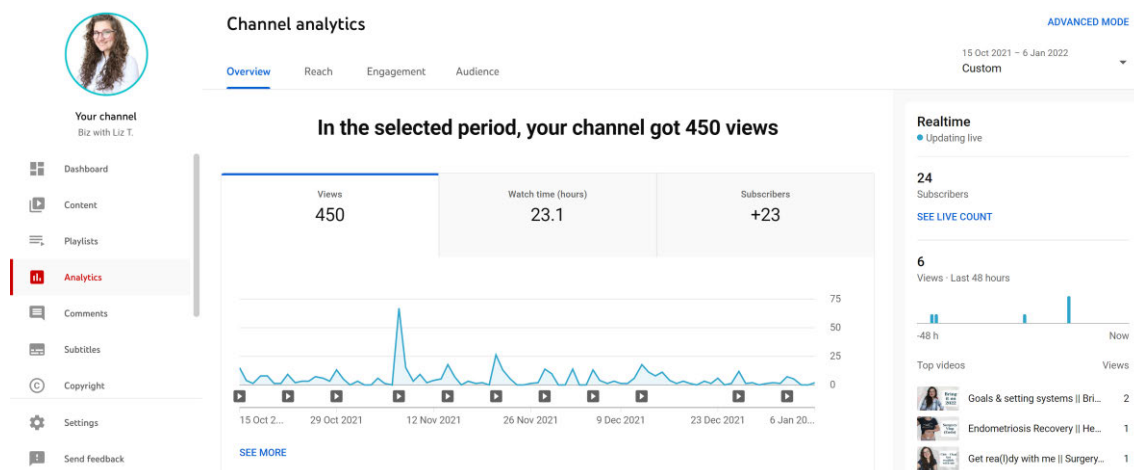

Figure 13: "Channel Analytics – Biz with Liz T."
(YouTube studio - Biz with Liz T. 2022, channel analyt-
ics)

This graph shows the channel analytics page, how it looks and what features it allows the creator to access and use. The following graph shows the advanced mode, the metrics views, likes & dislikes and subscriptions for views on the individual videos. This aims to display the different viewing options for the analytics. YouTube studio also

gives the option, as shown in the picture above and below, to set different periods and just access the analytics from that period. A diagram can be chosen differently from the creator and show the chosen metrics as one.
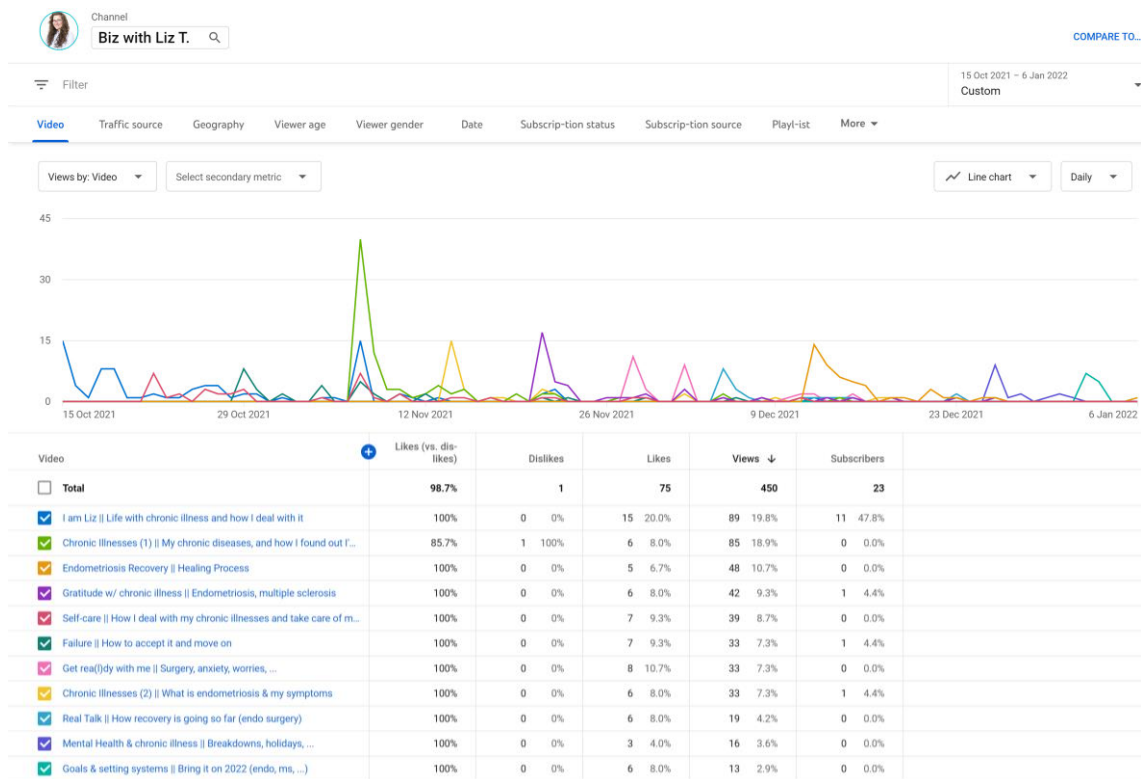

Figure 14: "Individual Views for Each Video – Biz with Liz T."
(YouTube studio - Biz with Liz T. 2022, advanced mode)

If there is not another graph showing the results mentioned in this chapter going on, it is because they are retrieved from the advanced mode shown in the graphs above and below. As seen in the advanced mode, through the blue plus additional information/features can be added, which will be the base for future information retrieval.

Figure 15: "Analytical Options"
(YouTube studio - Biz with Liz T. 2022, advanced
mode)

"Note: A filter name can be crossed out if it's not compatible with the current view or if your video does not have enough traffic." (YouTube Help 2021, Learn how to use expanded analytic reports)

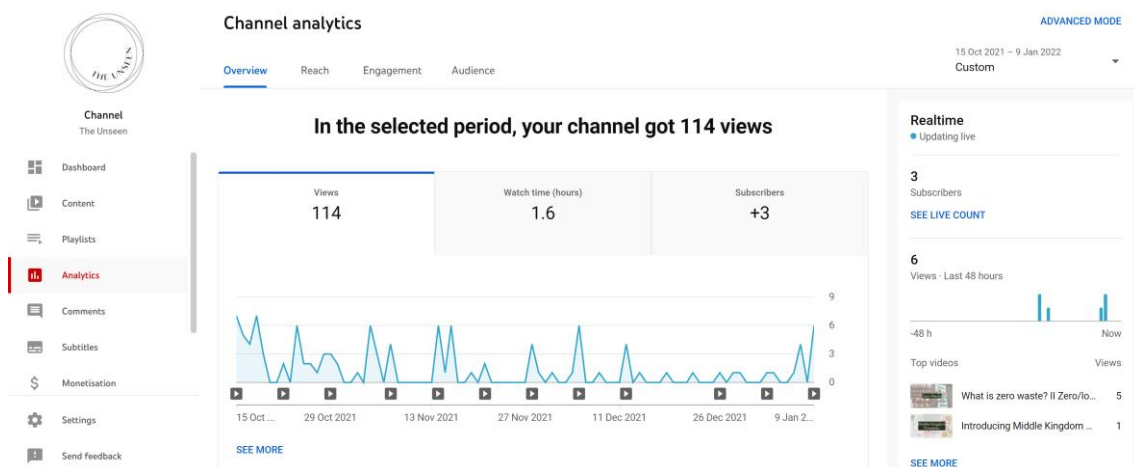The description mentioned before also applies to the channel for The Unseen.

Figure 16: "Channel Analytics – The Unseen"
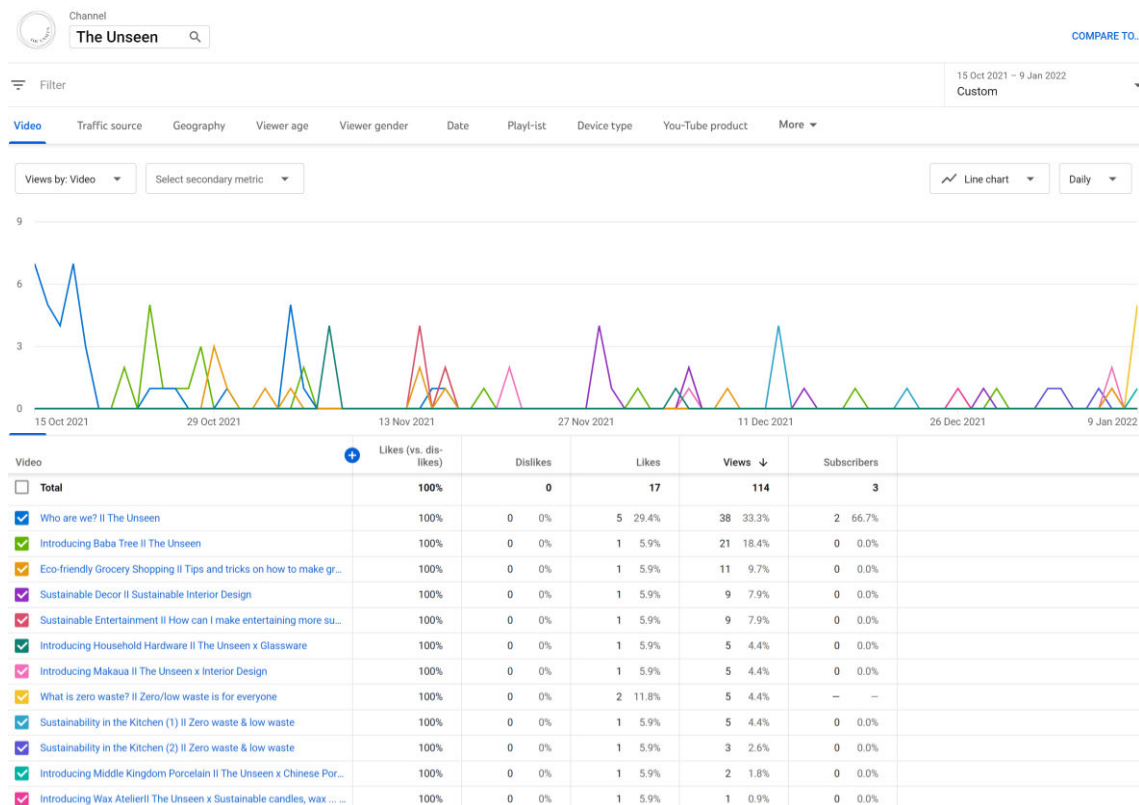(YouTube studio – The Unseen 2022, channel analytics)

Figure 17: "Individual Views for Each Video- The Un-
seen"
(YouTube studio – The Unseen 2022, advanced
mode)

Scheduling and **consistency**, as already mentioned, are important success factors (Tarnovskaya 2017, p.29). Supporting this, the author of this thesis could see this play a factor in the success because YouTube stopped suggesting the videos after the student missed one upload because of medical reasons. So, this interrupted the uploading schedule and YouTube did not recommend the videos as much as they did before the break. For Biz with Liz T. YouTube every video until the break was recommended by YouTube at one point at least once. This leaves the author of this thesis with the result, that YouTube stopped recommending the creators videos when the uploading schedule was interrupted. For The Unseen, there is not enough data to support this result. Since this is not empirical work, the author can only say, as YouTube stopped recommending the creators videos after one missed upload, this supports the statement that scheduling and consistency are important success factors.

Part of the scheduling is also the audience engagement which can be measured through: playlists, cards, end screens, top videos, audience retention and likes and dislikes.

As for **playlists, cards** and **end screens** it can be said, that there is not enough or no data for both channels to give information about these (Biz with Liz T. 2022, YouTube

studio; The Unseen 2022, YouTube studio). The audience retention can be seen for each video and can be compared to other videos and when viewers left the video (ibid.).
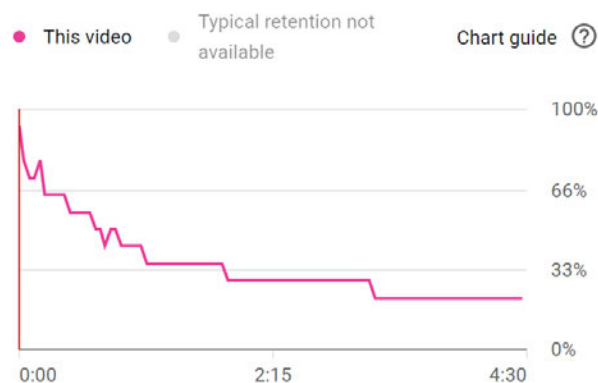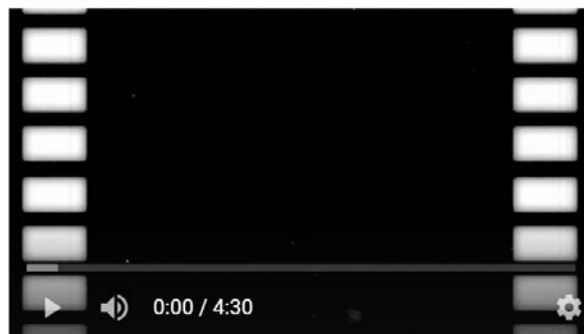
Figure 18: "Audience Retention Example – Biz with Liz T."

(YouTube studio - Biz with Liz T. 2022, Video Analytics)

The author also mentioned the section **"top videos"** (Biz with Liz T. 2022, YouTube studio). This is where YouTube shows the top videos in the last 48 hours or a set period. So, this metric shows what videos your audience watched and what topics were interesting to them. This is changing throughout time and does not provide a concrete graph.

Likes & dislikes were already mentioned in this chapter and will not be more elaborated at this point.

The author of this thesis already mentioned, **SEO** is an important part of YouTube success and recognition (2017, The Value Of Search Results Rankings; Geipel 2018,

p.137; Bishop 2020, p.3). As for the YouTube channels it can be said, that 19.3% (100 out of 518 views) of the traffic on Biz with Liz T. (personal/Lifestyle channel) were generated from YouTube search, which also gives the option of the most searched terms and the views gained from that. The top three search words were: multiple sclerosis, endometriosis surgery and chronic illness. As for the business channel, The Unseen, 21.7% (31 out of 143 views) views resulted from YouTube search with zero waste, grocery shopping and low waste being the three most searched terms for this channel. This does not only provide information about the searchability of a channel, but also what terms the viewers are looking for and leads them to clicking on a video. The analytics also show that YouTube search gained in proportion to the total traffic because in the last 28 days it was 34.1% of the total traffic for both channels and the graph provided by the advanced mode also shows growth over time. This also gives information about the title, description and tags, because those are the terms users are looking for on the internet and is leading towards the creators, hence they should be included in these parts as well.

If **hashtags** are a big part of the success, cannot be defined by the author of this thesis, because both channels generated 1 view each from the usage of hashtags, which is not a lot in comparison to other traffic sources. But because there is not enough data to prove or debunk the use of hashtags, the creator cannot give more information about this.

The **audience report** provides the creator with information regarding the audience and their behaviour. It can show when the viewers are active on the platform, other channels, and videos the audience watched, where they are from, if they used subtitles, if they are subscribed and the age and gender. Because the channels did not gain enough traffic/views, YouTube could not provide data that resulted in support for future projects/videos.

If the **algorithm** did work for the creator can be checked through already above mentioned KPIs and suggested videos (Seehaus 2016, pp.3-5; Sharma et al. 2019, p.344; Bishop 2020, p.1,3; Bryant 2020, p.85). It should be noted that the algorithm is not an obvious system with clear information (ibid.). That is why the algorithm cannot be measured and assessed probably without further research (ibid.).

As stated, the **thumbnail** can be analysed through the impression click-through rate. If a click-through rate is good or not, is individual for each creator, but for a channel itself, it is always good to improve the click-through rate. For both channels, it can be seen, that it went down over time. The thumbnails on The Unseen did not change, but for Biz with Liz T. they did. Both showed a decreasing click-through rate. It is also not possible for the author of this thesis to say, if the click-through rate went down, because the

thumbnails did not cause a response within the audience. After all, although the thumbnails for Biz with Liz T. changed, they remained the same for The Unseen. There is also the option for a "good" lower click-through rate as explained in the picture below.
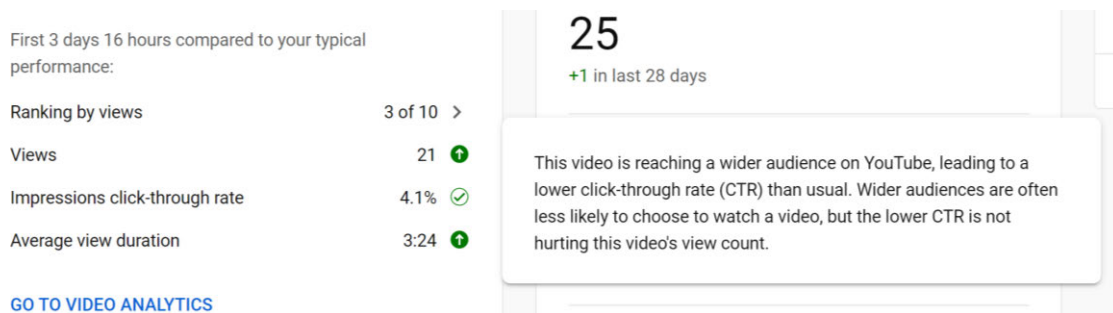

First 3 days 16 hours compared to your typical performance:

Ranking by views — 3 of 10 >
Views — 21 ⬆
Impressions click-through rate — 4.1% ✓
Average view duration — 3:24 ⬆

GO TO VIDEO ANALYTICS

25
+1 in last 28 days

This video is reaching a wider audience on YouTube, leading to a lower click-through rate (CTR) than usual. Wider audiences are often less likely to choose to watch a video, but the lower CTR is not hurting this video's view count.

Figure 19: "Lower Click-through Rate – Biz with Liz T."
(Biz with Liz T. 2022, YouTube studio)

The image shows that a lower click-through rate than usual can be just as good as a higher rate. This is because the video is presented to more viewers, and more people than usual click on the new video, but in perspective to the numbers, it is a lower percentage. That means, that a video can generate more views at a lower rate because the video is reaching a broader audience. It can be explained with the following example:

On the one hand, a video is displayed to 50 people and 25 watch it, which leaves the creator with a click-through rate of 50%. On the other hand, if the video is shown to 200 people and 50 of those watch it, the click-through rate is 25%. With this example, it can be seen that, although the click-through rate is lower, the videos get more views, and the lower rate does not hurt the creator or one's success on YouTube.

For the channels (Biz with Liz T. and The Unseen) mentioned in this thesis, the following conclusion can be drawn: The findings indicate, it is possible, that the click-through rate decreased, without pushing down the number of views. It can be explained by the fact, that the video was shown to more people, and percentage-wise fewer people clicked on it, but in an overall perspective, it did not have a negative influence on the channels.

The question of a **viral video** can be answered with the noting that at the moment of writing this thesis, no video has gone viral, neither a video from the personal or the company channel.

4 Conclusion

Going through this experience, the author of this thesis can examine that, if trying to keep all the tips in mind and build a profession out of this, it is a full-time job. Additionally, if the creator is not presented by a company, the flagship for the firm or an employee to the company, the profession is executed as a self-employed profession and offers, therefore, the benefits of self-employment but also the disadvantages of it.

In comparison to the private/lifestyle channel "Biz with Liz T.", the company channel "The Unseen" had fewer views and therefore did not provide as much information to conclude this channel. The author of this thesis can only assume that this might be because of the searchability of a channel. This is based on the broader search spectrum and terms for the lifestyle channel instead of the company channel because the brand videos required specific search terms, which was not necessary for the personal channel (Biz with Liz T. 2022, YouTube studio; The Unseen 2022, YouTube studio).

To conclude this, in the timeframe of this thesis, the success defined at the beginning of this work was not achieved. Because this is not empirical work, the student cannot determine, if a longer period would have passed, the goal could have been achieved. It should be noted that since both channels are far from achieving this milestone, after four months, the author of this thesis concludes, that the profession as a YouTuber is not a job that can be studied and then executed like an accountant or a mechanic, which are professions that can be studied/learned and then practised and they also have set tasks in society (Fatt 1995, p.997; Medina and Jeges 2019, p.10).

It was also mentioned that personality is a part of being a YouTuber and that they can be seen as celebrities (Meyer 2019, p.139; Altendorfer 2019, pp.98-99; Fägersten 2017, pp.1-10). Talking about this, not everyone who tries or aspires to be a celebrity, also becomes one and this applies to YouTubers as well (ibid.). Summarising this, although the profession as a YouTuber is possible, it cannot be achieved like a traditional profession described in the paragraph above. Additionally, just like with every profession, people need to have certain skills for jobs, and not everyone has what it takes to start a profession with this level of uncertainty and risk (Holyoke, Brown and LaPira 2015, pp.7-8; Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden 2018, pp.38-41).

In this context not reaching the defined success of this thesis is also an effective result in showing that a profession as an influencer should be seen differently to learnable jobs that can be put into practice. It can rather be compared to an actor and/or singer, where the percentage of people doing the profession and being successful is marginal.

As a result of writing this thesis and doing research on the topic, the author of this work can conclude the following:

As described in the chapter before, YouTube is not an exact science, because factors, that cannot be measured and therefore also could not be included in this thesis, influence the outcome of a YouTuber or rather the success of a creator. Just because somebody is gifted, this person does not necessarily mean to be a YouTube star and successful on the platform. Talent does not equal success in this field of profession and factors like likeability, greed and prejudice cannot be influenced by the creator.

Conclusively the author wants to revisit the research question "Which YouTube measures result in a video being clicked on and viewed". This thesis aimed to give an answer to this question and the author has to say, that there is not a clear answer to this. There are a range of tips that were mentioned in this work and the writer of this thesis also wants to state that there are numerous tips and tricks on the internet and in scientifically sources on how to succeed on YouTube and what leads to a video being clicked on and viewed. Although there are tips available to the public, YouTube is changing as a platform (the platform as a whole, algorithm, …) and suggestions provided by science may be obsolete by the time the scientific papers are published. This also answers the research question mentioned before: Certain measures lead to clicks and views, but as YouTube is changing the success factors are also changing as well as the answer to this question. To answer the title's question "To what extent is YouTube success accidental or due to a recipe for success?" the author wants to state, that following the in this thesis listed success factors can lead to success, but they don't have to and therefore, success also can be accidental.

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Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und nur unter Verwendung der angegebenen Literatur und Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus Quellen entnommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Diese Arbeit wurde in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch keiner anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

München, 04. Februar 2022   Elisabeth Wolfram