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The Rise of the YouTube Celebrity: The Migration of Young Audiences from TV to Independent Content Creators

Zrod YouTube celebrity: přesun mladých diváků od televize k nezávislým tvůrcům obsahu

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Poděkování:

Rád bych poděkoval Mgr. Michaele Slussareff, Ph.D. za vedení práce a její trpělivé konzultování, dále Ing. Janu Zikánovi a Mgr. Josefu Šlerkovi za významnou pomoc se sběrem dat a Mgr. Jakubu Fialovi za cenné technické rady. Můj dík patří i přátelům a známým, kteří pro potřeby mého výzkumu neváhali zapůjčit své Facebookové profily.

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a výhradně s použitím citovaných pramenů, literatury a dalších odborných zdrojů.

V Praze, dne 28. července 2016

……………………………..

Jakub Sedláček

Abstract:

This thesis aims to uncover the reasons behind the sudden rise of the YouTube celebrity and to test (by means of an experimental study of teenager interests) media claims that YouTubers have become more popular among teenagers than any traditional type of celebrity. The thesis integrates YouTubers into celebrity studies by first outlining the origins of celebrity and its general role in society and then drawing parallels between traditional types of celebrity and YouTubers via describing the characteristics they embody and the specific roles they perform. As a result, YouTubers are found to be a technologically determined next step in the evolution of the TV personality, whose celebrity is mainly structured around the concepts of familiarity and intimacy. What follows is a discussion of participatory culture, monetization and doing YouTube as a job, with emphasis on the effects these developments had on the rise of the YouTube celebrity and online content & culture in general. The thesis is concluded by an experimental study conducted using quantitative research methods on a sample of over 5,000 Czech teenagers by analyzing their Facebook page-likes. The results suggest that YouTubers really are more important to teenagers than traditional celebrities.

Keywords:

Celebrity, YouTube, YouTuber, YouTubers, vlog, Let's Play, para-social interaction, micro-celebrity, hidden advertising, product placement, narrowcasting, television, Patreon, monetization

Abstrakt

Cílem této práce je poodhalit příčiny náhlého vzestupu tzv. YouTube celebrity a experimentálně ověřit, zda se tvrzení médií že YouTubeři u teenagerů nahradili tradiční celebrity zakládají na pravdě. Práce integruje YouTubery do oboru tzv. celebrity studies – nejprve rozebírá původ celebrity a její roli ve společnosti a následně nachází spojitosti mezi celebritami tradičních médií a YouTubery na základě společných vlastností, které je definují a funkcí, které plní. Výsledkem je označení YouTubera za technologicky podmíněný další stupeň vývoje televizní celebrity, neboť oba typy stojí na společných základech divákova důvěrného vztahu s nimi. Práce se dále zabývá tématy participativní kultury, monetizace nebo proměny YouTuberství v práci na plný úvazek a hodnotí vliv takového vývoje na kulturu online videa, video obsah samotný a samozřejmě na vzestup YouTube celebrity. Poslední část práce tvoří experimentální výzkum, který pomocí kvantitativních výzkumných metod na vzorku více než 5000 českých teenagerů zkoumá Facebookové stránky označené jako „to se mi líbí“ a ukazuje, že YouTubeři jsou pro teenagery skutečně důležitější než tradiční celebrity.

Klíčová slova:

Celebrita, YouTube, YouTuber, YouTubeři, televize, narrowcasting, vlog, Let's Play, parasociální interakce, mikrocelebrita, skrytá reklama, product placement, Patreon, monetizace

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Introduction

Over the past few years, a new type of celebrity rose to unexpected levels of fame. The YouTuber, someone who regularly records and uploads videos to the video-sharing service YouTube, started reaching millions of viewers all around the world. While names like PewDiePie, Jenna Marbles or KSI may not mean much to people over 30, to many of today's teenagers they are the most important celebrities[1].

This thesis aims to uncover the reasons behind their sudden rise to fame, what makes that rise possible, and whether young audiences really migrate to the independent content creators of YouTube as much as they seem to. The thesis is divided into three main chapters:

The first chapter attempts to integrate YouTubers into the field of study known as Celebrity Studies. It begins by outlining the origins of celebrity and its general role in society (Boorstin, Rojek, Horton and Wohl, Mathiesen). It then moves to discussing the individual types of celebrity (Marshall, Turner) with emphasis on possible direct predecessors of the YouTube celebrity. After exploring the modern concepts of DIY- and micro-celebrity (Marwick, Shirky, Burgess & Green), the YouTube celebrity is described in terms of the characteristics it embodies and the roles it performs, which determine where it will fit into the existing systems of celebrity and why it seems to be replacing its predecessors.

The second chapter briefly goes through the technological (and related social) changes that led to the advent of participatory culture and user generated content (UGC) and made services like YouTube possible. It then explores the most typical content created by YouTubers and what makes it successful. What follows is a discussion of the "professionalization" of YouTube - the different ways and pitfalls of turning UGC into a job, concluded by an excursion into the law and guidelines of online advertising - something that many stars of YouTube and their corporate partners often seem to ignore.

The third chapter is an experimental study of teenager interests aimed at testing the ubiquitous claims that YouTubers have become more popular among teenagers than any traditional type of celebrity. The study is conducted using quantitative research methods on a sample of 5,161 Czech teenagers aged 13-17[2] by analyzing their Facebook page-likes.

[1] https://variety.com/2015/digital/news/youtubers-teen-survey-ksi-pewdiepie-1201544882/
[2] and a sample of 130 teenagers aged 12-15 for the pilot study

1. Celebrity

1.1. What Is Celebrity?

In his 1962 classic - and what Joshua Gamson calls the foundational text of celebrity studies (Gamson, 2011, p. 1062) - *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America,* Daniel Boorstin (1992) defines a celebrity as *"a person who is known for his well-knownness."* Modern celebrities are said to be *"fabricated on purpose to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness,"* and are in the author's eyes *"nothing greater than a more-publicized version of us"*[3] (Boorstin, 1992).

Rojek (2001), in a significantly less condescending manner, considers celebrity to be the "*attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere*," and finally Graeme Turner in *Understanding Celebrity* (2004), apart from indicating the scholarly definitions of celebrity[4] writes that public figures become celebrities as soon as *"media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role (such as their specific achievement in politics or sport) to investigating the details of their private lives"* (2004, p. 8), and adds that *"longstanding celebrities can outlive the memory of their original claims to fame as being famous becomes a career in itself"* (2004, p. 8).

For the purpose of dealing with what could be dubbed *new media celebrity*, it seems reasonable to introduce a customized, inclusive definition of celebrity (in the sense of *"the way that people are represented and talked about"*[4]), a more neutral one than Boorstin's, yet more specific than Rojek's and based on Turner's definition. One which will be used throughout this text unless specifically referring to a different definition:

- **a celebrity** is *someone* whose personal life generates public interest, as opposed to people only being interested in his/her work[5]
- **celebrity** is the *state* of generating public interest in one's personal life as opposed to only generating interest in one's work

[3] "*In imitating him, in trying to dress like him, talk like him, look like him, think like him, we are simply imitating ourselves"* (Boorstin, 1992).

[4] Turner's scholarly definitions of celebrity (as summed up in Marwick & others, 2011, p. 140): *"(1)Celebrity as a way that people are represented and talked about; (2) a process by which a person is turned into a commodity; and (3) an aspect of culture which is constantly being reinscribed and reformulated."*

[5] If the interest in someone's personal life far exceeds the interest in his work (as suggested by both Turner and Boorstin), they will be referred to as a *tabloid celebrity.*

1.2. From Heroes to Celebrities

Daniel Boorstin (1992) argues that even though fame was never exactly the same thing as greatness, in the past, great men and famous men were nearly exactly the same group. To become widely known, man had to be something of a hero - admired for his courage, nobility, or exploits. Fame could not be made overnight. Each generation believed, that great men existed mostly before its time and that greatness was on the decline: *"Men of the last century were more heroic than those of today; men of antiquity were still more heroic; and those of pre-history became demigods. The hero was always somehow ranked among the ancients."* Boorstin puts this image of a hero in contrast with the modern celebrity, who *"is always a contemporary. No one is more forgotten than the last generation's celebrity"* (Boorstin, 1992).

Significant people throughout history often used what might be considered early mass media (literature, monuments, portraiture etc.), to *"strategically solidify their elevated social status*." Marwick (2015, p. 334) quotes Braudy's (1986, p. 4) example of Alexander the Great, who *"cultivated an image of himself as a god and heir to an immortal throne, and hired historians, bards, and poets to spread this myth throughout his empire,"* and calls Lord Byron the first *print star* (created by the burgeoning print industry of the early nineteenth century), whose *"romantic exploits, passionate poetry, and handsome face were widely disseminated, creating a 'brand' consumed by an international female audience"* (2015, p. 334).

However, it were the new media of the early 20th century which, by letting information spread almost instantly, allowed for the first time ever for an overnight creation of fame. The rise of the modern celebrity is most commonly associated with the first two decades of the American motion picture industry (Turner, 2004, p. 11), where independent producers sought new strategies to market their products. At that time, publicizing of the face (as opposed to ideas) in the form of photography in the print media and close-up shots in film lent new importance to the representation of the individual.

De Cordova (1990) describes a form of proto-celebrity from this era of early motion pictures – *"the picture personality, [which] existed as an effect of the representation of [...] character across a number of films. It functioned primarily to ascribe a unity to the actor's various appearances in films"* (DeCordova, 1990, p. 86 as cited in; Turner, 2004, p. 12). The true identity of an actor was eventually disarticulated from the aggregated personalities they portrayed on screen and *the star* was born.

The star's existence outside their work became the primary focus of discourse, uniting their definition with that of Turner's celebrity. At that point, *stars* had an interest in promoting themselves (as opposed to only promoting the latest production), because *“they could now construct a relationship with their audience that was independent of the vehicles in which they appeared”* (Turner, 2004, p. 13).

Boorstin (1992) provides an interesting argument for why the modern celebrity was born - he explains that *“belief in the power of the common people to govern themselves, which has brought with it a passion for human equality, has carried a distrust, or at least a suspicion of individual heroic greatness. A democratic people are understandably wary of finding too much virtue in their leaders, or of attributing too much of their success to their leaders*.”

According to Boorstin, even the most admired American national heroes are no longer seen as possessing divine attributes (as was common in the past), but rather as embodying popular virtues, and, in addition, that *“the Frontier itself became the hero instead of the men. ‘Isms,’ ‘forces,’ and ‘classes’ have spelled the death of the hero in our historical literature,”* meaning that due to the “*influence of Karl Marx, the rise of economic determinism, a growing knowledge of economic and social history, and an increased emphasis on social forces,”* heroes of the past are now seen as mere representatives of bigger causes. Celebrities then seem to fill this need for great individuals. As the author, who considers celebrities the human equivalent of pseudo-events[6], continues: *“We have willingly been misled into believing that fame—well-knownness—is still a hallmark of greatness. We can fabricate fame, we can at will [...] make a man or woman well known; but we cannot make him great”* (Boorstin, 1992).

Chris Rojek (2001) provides a similar argument for the emergence of celebrity in the modern western culture in writing that *“the increasing importance of the public face in everyday life is a consequence of the rise of public society, a society that cultivates personal style as the antidote to formal democratic equality”* (2001, p. 9). Joshua Gamson (2011) speaks of hostility *“toward anything resembling aristocracy”* in the American culture, and Gabler (2001a) explains that what turns a famous person into a celebrity, based on empirical evidence, is narrative: *“We are interested in their stories: In Matthew Perry’s drug addiction, in Tom Cruise’s and Nicole Kidman’s divorce, in the serial romances of Russell Crowe”* (2001b, p. 4).

[6] According to Boorstin, there is a significant difference between man-made and God-made events: a pseudo-event is not spontaneous, but planned primarily for the purpose of being reported. Its occurrence is arranged for the convenience of media; its success is measured by how widely it is reported. The question, “Is it real?” is less important than, “Is it newsworthy? Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy: saying that the hotel is a distinguished institution, actually makes it one (Boorstin, 1962).

Gamson (2011) then identifies two major *“acceptable narratives”* about the relation between contemporary celebrity status and merit[7]:

- Meritocracy - people become famous because of achievement, merit, talent, or special internal qualities – *“They are successful because they are extraordinary. They are to be revered or vicariously consumed.”*
- Product - people become famous because they have been artificially produced for mass consumption by a team of investors, publicists, magazine publishers etc. - they are ordinary people, just like us, only luckier, prettier, and better marketed. *“They are to be disdained or consumed as objects of identification”* (2011, p. 1063).

1.3. Celebrity’s Role in Society

The previous chapter described how celebrities filled the need for great individuals as heroes gradually disappeared from popular culture, driven away by the modern western democracy. Chris Rojek (2001, p. 13) attributes the emergence of celebrity as a public preoccupation to a total of three general reasons, which also partly correspond to the roles (Turner, 2014) celebrity plays in modern society:

- **the democratization of society** - celebrity assumes the role of defining the individual
- **the decline in organized religion** – celebrity assumes the role of integrating the individual
- **the commodification of everyday life –** *“Capitalism estranges us so thoroughly from one another [and ourselves] that we project our fantasies of belonging and fulfilment onto celebrities, i.e. idealized forms of the self that is routinely degraded in commodity culture”* (2001, p. 35).

[7] Rojek (2001) similarly describes two types of celebrity: *achieved* and *attributed.*

1.3.1. Definition of the Individual

Identity formation and standard forms of social interaction in the contemporary culture *"are patterned and inflected by the styles, embodied attitudes and conversational flow developed through celebrity culture. Celebrities simultaneously embody social types and provide role models"* (Rojek, 2001, p. 16).

"*Stars,"* as Richard Dyer (2004) explains, "*represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking […], ways that have been socially, culturally [and] historically constructed. [They are] embodiments of the social categories in which people are placed and through which they have to make sense of their lives"* (2004).

We are embedded in a "*presentational culture"* (Marshall, 2010, p. 38), where the production and presentation of the *public self* (see 1.6.2.1) has become the focus of intense engagement, and celebrity plays the role of a model in our cultural identity (Turner, 2014). Hermes and Kooijman (2015) add that celebrities "*help determine 'normality' and the boundaries of acceptable behavior and self-presentation"* (2015, p. 495).

1.3.2. Integrating Function

Turner (2004) explains that aspects of organized religion *"have been taken over by the forms of commodification developed in celebrity culture"* (2004, p. 25), and as organized religion declined in the west, Rojek (2001) continues, *"celebrity culture has emerged as one of the replacement strategies that promote new orders of meaning and solidarity. […] Post-God celebrity is now one of the mainstays of organising recognition and belonging in a secular society"* (2001, pp. 58, 99). According to Neil Gabler (2000), like religion in the past, *"entertainment has become [...] the single most important source of values in late-twentieth-century America"* (2000, Chapter 4).

Rojek (2001) provides multiple examples of social functions that religion used to perform and celebrity worship took over, such as: "*collective effervescence"* (popular excitement, frenzy, ecstasy); the cult of the immortal celebrity providing analogues to the Christian pilgrimage in the form of e.g. visits to Graceland, Elvis Presley's Tennessee home, or celebrity graves serving as tourist attractions all around the world (just as cathedrals housing the graves of saints), etc. *"As the belief in God waned,"* Rojek concludes, *"celebrities became immortal"* (2001, p. 14).

As a part of the *"definition of the individual"* and *"integration"* social functions, Turner (2004) identifies another important function, tightly integrated with the remaining two – celebrity as a source of gossip - an activity described by the author as an *"important social process through which relationships, identity, and social and cultural norms are debated, evaluated, modified and shared"* (2004, p. 24).

1.3.3. Para-social Interaction

Rojek (2001) identifies a multitude of sub-reasons for the emergence of celebrity, and puts it in an intimate connection with the rise of a money economy and what he calls the *"world of the stranger, wherein the individual is uprooted from family and community and relocated in the anonymous city, in which social relations are often glancing, episodic and unstable."* Fans, he concludes, seek out celebrities to *"anchor or support personal life [and] find comfort, glamour or excitement in attaching themselves to [them]"* (2001, p. 74). In a civilization where a significant proportion of people *"confess to sub-clinical feelings of isolation and loneliness,"* celebrities offer powerful affirmations of belonging, recognition and meaning (Rojek, 2001, p. 52).

This brings us to the term *para-social interaction*, which as Rojek explains it, is used to refer to *"relations of intimacy constructed through the mass-media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings."* He calls it a *"form of second-order intimacy, since it derives from representations of the person rather than actual physical contact"* (Rojek, 2001, p. 52).

The original meaning of the term, as first introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), is rooted in the immediate, seemingly conversational situation - a *"simulacrum of conversational give and take"* between viewers and television performers - an illusionary experience of interaction through the television screen, despite the actual non-reciprocity (1956, pp. 215–217).[8]

Para-social interaction and relationship have long been viewed as a substitute for real interactions and relationships. Horton and Wohl (1956) call it a *"reasonable or natural [form of] compensatory attachments by the socially isolated, the socially inept, the aged and invalid, the timid and rejected,"* that can only be regarded as pathological when it becomes *"a substitute for autonomous social participation, when it proceeds in absolute defiance of objective reality"* (1956, p. 223)

[8] While Rojek's dystopia of the anonymous city, isolation and loneliness is something that resounds in 1.3.4, Horton and Wohl's text will be discussed in more detail in connection with YouTubers in chapter 1.6.1.

Recently, several authors suggested revaluing fan–celebrity interactions (Turner, 2014, p. 103), and moving from a position where *"such practices are assumed to constitute a problem or a psychological lack, to an argument that they are part of normative media culture"* (Hills, 2015, p. 25). They argue that modern social media challenge the notion of para-sociality between the famous person and the fan by allowing direct (or at least seemingly direct) contact: *"The study of celebrity culture has primarily focused on fans as separate from celebrities, but the ability of famous people to read and reply to fans has given rise to new sets of practices and interactions"* (Marwick & others, 2011, p. 156).

The research conducted by Click et al. (2013) among social media fans of Lady Gaga discovered that *"social media both enable and amplify [fans'] deep identification with Lady Gaga. The reciprocity they feel from Gaga challenges previous knowledge about fan-celebrity relationships by raising questions about the characteristics of and distinctions between 'imaginary' and 'real' relationships"* (2013, p. 377). Hills (2015) argues that social media do not simply *"deepen the interactivity possible in the fan–celebrity relationship"* (Click et al., 2013, p. 377), *"but also make increasingly visible the way in which para-social interactions are* <u>multisocial</u>*. Far from being dyadic and aimed only at eliciting reciprocity from a favored celebrity, para-social relationships are multiply performed and displayed within the communities of digital fandom"* (2015, p. 472).

We could sum up the argument by saying that social media create what Boyd (2008) describes as *"context collapse"*, in which audiences co-exist in a single social context with the performers, and clear-cut barriers between the two dissolve. A good example of this development is Twitter, where celebrity practitioners use @replies, to connect with others: *"Fans @reply to famous people not only in the hope of receiving a reply, but to display a relationship, whether positive or negative."* (Marwick & others, 2011, p. 145). However, developments which bring celebrities closer to their audiences (and offer hints of real relationships – although, as discussed in 1.4.1, still very much limited by scale) don't mean that celebrities cease to provide affirmations of belonging, recognition and meaning. The social function of para-social relationships remains equally important (and possibly even more – see 1.6.1) in the era of social media.

1.3.4. Panopticon, Synopticon

One of the central themes of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) is that *"the pomp of sovereignty, the necessarily spectacular manifestations of power"* have, in the modern society, gradually yielded to *"the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism in which the vigilance of the intersecting gazes was soon to render useless both the eagle and the sun"* (as cited in Mathiesen, 1997, p. 218). We have moved, he argues, from a situation where many saw the few, to the situation where the few see the many (panopticon). What in the past was accomplished by the means of external control – *"spectacular manifestations of power"* - today is accomplished by internal control – *"surveillance"*. Surveillance produces the self control which disciplines people to fit into the modern industrial society, often without them being fully aware of it.

What Foucault seemingly ignored, as Mathiesen (1997) points out, was that at the same time as the rise of surveillance, *"we have seen the development of a unique and enormously extensive system enabling the many to see and contemplate the few"* (what he calls *synopticon*) - the modern mass media. And arguably, it is the mass media that *"discipline our consciousness and encourage the industrialization of the mind making us fit into modernity"* (1997, p. 230). In agreement with what was described in the previous subchapters, Lachenicht (1997) writes that *"[in] westernised, urban, and industrialised societies [that clearly seem] associated with a greater sense of autonomous individual identity, [...] internalisation leading towards self-control becomes a vital aspect of the process of social control"* (Lachenicht & Lindegger, 1997), and *"it is by satisfying the need for escape [from the concrete misery of the world], that people are made to [...] accept and fit into the requirements of society. In this sense, the Church and television are real functional alternatives"* (Mathiesen, 1997, p. 230). In other words: mass media and by extension also their faces and voices – the celebrities – teach us to fit into the modern society.

1.4. Microcelebrity

The popular meaning of microcelebrity (or micro-celebrity), as defined in the Collins dictionary: *"a celebrity whose fame is relatively narrow in scope and likely to be transient"* ("Microcelebrity", n.d.) implies mainly a difference of scale, not quality. In the world of narrowcasting[9] it is certainly valid to call the average YouTuber a micro-celebrity in this sense (just as it is valid to call that the actors of independent movies and niche musicians), but modifying the celebrity of those YouTubers who replace mainstream media stars in traditional popularity charts[10,11] with the prefix "micro" is hardly justified. Another popular meaning of the term is to be found on the Urban Dictionary website and defines micro-celebrity as someone *"who gains a cult or mainstream following due to viral internet distribution"* (Urban Dictionary, n.d.). Fittingly, however, this definition is from 2006 and as such (and in the context of YouTube) best describes the form of internet proto-celebrity that is likened to *picture personalities* of the early cinema in this text (see chapter 1.6.3), rather than to its current state.

There is, however, one meaning of micro-celebrity extremely relevant to the world of new media celebrity: Alice Marwick (2010) describes it as *"a way of thinking about the self as a commodity that draws from advertising, reality television, and the cultural logic of celebrity"* (2010, p. 232). This is what Rojek, without using the term itself, describes when saying that *"the scheduling of emotions, presentation of self in interpersonal relations and techniques of public impression management, which employ media celebrities to humanize and dramatize them, permeate ordinary social relationships"* (2001, p. 10).

In this case, micro-celebrity becomes a term describing the practice of creating and controlling one's personal brand through social media, or as Marwick (2015) puts it: *"a new definition of celebrity as a set of practices and self-presentation techniques that spread across social networks [...] Celebrity becomes something a person does, rather than something a person is, and exists as a continuum rather than a binary quality. "Celebrity" in the social media age is a range of techniques and strategies that can be performed by anyone with a mobile device, tablet, or laptop"* (Marwick, 2015, p. 334). *"Self-branding"* (Marshall, 2016) might be another useful term to describe the practice itself, if we, unlike Marwick, wanted to make a distinction between the practice and the state (e.g. saying that "self-branding results in a culture of micro-celebrity").

[9] The "niche" or even "one-to-one" counterpart of broadcasting - see chapter 2.1.
[10] https://variety.com/2014/digital/news/survey-youtube-stars-more-popular-than-mainstream-celebs-among-u-s-teens-1201275245/
[11] https://variety.com/2015/digital/news/YouTubers-teen-survey-ksi-pewdiepie-1201544882/

Marwick's definition of micro-celebrity resounds in Pamela Haag's article about millennials: *“They are Corporations of One, [...] asked to function in what amounts to a celebrity economy, [...] all they have to rely on is their own ‘brand’ and name. Their celebrity-hood is micro, because it doesn’t transpire on the big screen [...] it’s an inner experience of self rather than an objective state of being famous.”* Their supposed selfishness, she continues, *“has an economic underpinning, and its own cultural logic. It isn’t a failing of character, but a reflection of bigger changes in economy and society. They weren’t raised to be backstage roadies or team members, but rock stars”* (Haag, 2015). To millennials, the presentation of self on social networks feels like an ongoing public relations campaign.

On the same note, the *Acumen Report: Constant Content* explains, that young people don't automatically share every piece of content they enjoy anymore, because they carefully craft their online personas: *“Teens cultivate an image for their peers; 18-24 year olds ensure there are no red flags for potential employers and colleges. Some develop social media devoted to topics of personal interest and assiduously maintain the theme to increase their followings”* (Defy Media, 2015a).

In her book *Camgirls*, Theresa Senft (2008) works with a definition of micro-celebrity that is somewhere between those previously described: she suggests that *“micro-celebrity is best understood as a new style of online performance”* and justifies the use of the term (instead of regular “celebrity”) by saying that *“in terms of both raw audience numbers and economic gain, web stars pale in comparison to even D-List performers in the film, television and music industries”* (2008, p. 25), which brings us back to the problem of scale - while this was true in 1996 (when JenniCam[12], the original cam girl, started), and still to a significant extent in 2008 (when Senft’s book was published), it is very different in 2016 (although economic gain in the world of online celebrity still isn’t a simple issue, see chapter 2.4.3).

[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jennifer_Ringley

1.4.1. From Micro- to Celebrity

As they enter the realms of social media, communication practices of many traditional celebrities naturally start to resemble those of new media celebrities. At the same time, new media celebrities who grow their subscriber bases beyond a certain level necessarily start to abandon some of those practices, simply because it isn't possible to, for example, manually respond to questions of 40 million subscribers, or to have a candid conversation with the thousands of people who come to see them at an event. It is a simple matter of scale, or as Clay Shirky (2008) puts it: *“Egalitarianism is possible only in small social systems. Once a medium gets past a certain size, fame is a forced move. The famous are different from you and me, because they cannot return or even acknowledge the attention they get, and technology cannot change that”* (2008, pp. 93–94).

Clay Shirky (2008) elaborates on the argument by saying that someone blogging for a handful of friends can read their comments and respond to all of them, because *“the scale is small enough to allow for a real conversation.”* Someone writing for thousands or millions of people *“has to start choosing who to respond to and who to ignore, and over time, ignore becomes the default choice. The mere technological possibility of reply isn't enough to overcome the human limits on attention. This is what ‘interactivity’ looks like at this scale - no interaction at all with almost all of the audience”* (2008, pp. 92–95). Based on this argument, we could suggest that one of the signs that a person's micro-celebrity is turning into a "full-sized" celebrity is that it becomes impossible for her to have a real conversation with her followers.

Whether YouTubers will generally be able to cross over the “threshold of stardom” without alienating their fans remains to be seen. As David Bloom points out: *It’s a bit like the indie rock band that finally signs to a major label. Fans who thought they ‘discovered’ and ‘owned’ the band start screaming ‘sell-out’* (Bloom, 2014). Many new media celebrities will eventually end up hiring teams of people to help them manage their fame, although some might fight this need for as long as possible, like PewDiePie, who at 30 million subscribers still had *“no manager, no assistant or friend to help out with work-related contacts”* (Lindholm, 2014) and was very particular about doing everything himself:

“My fans don’t really care about professional high-end production videos [...]. The fact that people know that it’s just me making the videos – with no crew – has proved to be a winning concept. The thing that has made YouTube so successful is that you can relate to the people you’re watching to a much higher degree than to the people you see on TV. And that’s why I keep doing it all myself, though it would save me a lot of work if I didn’t” (PewDiePie, as cited in Lindholm, 2014).

1.4.2. DIY Celebrity

Another term used in literature to describe various new media celebrities is "DIY celebrity" (Burgess & Green, 2009), which implies a non-mainstream-media origin of the celebrity: such as a YouTuber who built her fan base without the help of traditional media channels. This, once again, is a rather fragile definition, because there are numerous YouTubers with, for example, a major reality TV past (Jirka Král[13], Hoggy[14]). Considering the growth of MCNs' (multi-channel networks) support of their top talent and some channels starting to resemble traditional production houses[15,16], the contrast between DIY and mainstream may become weaker. "DIY celebrity" is a potentially useful way of hinting at the celebrity's origin, but due to many imaginable borderline scenarios, it might be more useful to call them more generically *online* or *new media celebrities*.

The term "micro-celebrity" will not be used in this text to describe YouTubers in general, because it implies a difference of scale and as such doesn't hold up for those who gained a big enough number of subscribers (and even outrank traditional celebrities in popularity). There is also no tangible qualitative difference between the celebrity of new and traditional media stars, because its effect on people (both fans and celebrities) is very similar. "Micro-celebrity" remains a useful name for the practice (and way of thinking) otherwise known as "self-branding", so ubiquitous on public profiles on Instagram, Facebook and other social networks and for the fact that, as R. U. Sirius predicted in 1997, *"everybody [is] famous to 15 people"* (as cited in: Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 111).

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[13] https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ji%C5%99%C3%AD_Kr%C3%A1l_%28YouTuber%29
[14] https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petr_Lexa
[15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rooster_Teeth
[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smosh

1.5. TV Celebrity

Specific sectors of the culture industry produce specific celebrity. David Marshall in the book *Celebrity and Power* (1997) analyzes those of the film, TV and music industries and explains that film celebrity is made for *admiring identification* and is seen as superior to the celebrities of other technologically mediated performance arts[17]: *"the admiring form of identification entails a distance from the audience. This aesthetic and 'larger-than-life distance'"* (epitomized in the "big screen" of cinema making the actor literally larger than life) *"is intended primarily to maintain the film industry as the center of cultural capital"* (1997, p. 189).

The TV Celebrity works to break down this distance and embodies the characteristics of familiarity, intimacy and mass acceptability: *"one of the attributes of the television personality is the ability to appear to eliminate the distance between their performance and themselves"* (Turner, 2004, p. 15).

A good place to start exploring this difference is the late-night TV talk show, which brings the movie star into a format that acknowledges the audience (as opposed to the star's native narrative-centered discourse) and deals heavily with *"the ordinary, the everyday, the familial"* and thus serves to establish *"a more personal and familial public personality"* for the star (otherwise built on distance from the audience). This means that the host's job could be seen as building the star's "familial" image with the audience (which is what TV does best), while his own celebrity is, in turn, built on proximity to these stars. The host, who's celebrity is specifically created by the institution of television, is usually a recognized comic and uses humor to transgress the public discourse into the personal. *"The hosts provide the consistent frame for television, a frame that builds audience familiarity"* (Marshall, 1997, pp. 125–126).

The "calming" effect of familiarity, Marshall suggests, has an important use in the role of the news anchor, who is *"inserted into the construction of [...] significant moments"* and provides a frame for the experience and becomes associated with it. His presence provides security: *"when the rest of the universe is in flux, the anchor remains in control as a monitor of any threat to the audience"* (1997, p. 124).

[17] For entertainers, the progression typically went from live comedy performance, to television, to the ultimate form of film (Marshall, 1997). *"Traditionally, the entertainment industry has been sharply divided according to status – Hollywood movies and movie stars are considered 'finer' than the TV-networks and TV-actors, who in turn are naturally 'finer' than the gaming world and the online world. According to this old-school scale, YouTubers should place at the very bottom"* (Lindholm, 2014).

Familiarity is also the foundation of another important TV format - the soap opera. In soap operas, *"the audience is invited into the bedrooms of the characters, into the details of their relationships through private conversations, and into dream sequences that identify characters' desires and aspirations. The invitation of the soap opera to the audience is to comprehend fully the motivations of each character"* (1997, p. 128). Because of the audience's familiarity with and emotional investment in the character, *"soap opera stars experience relatively little interest in their lives as real people"* (1997, p. 129) and continue to be identified primarily as their characters whether in magazines or on the street, with very limited chances of branching into other forms of celebrity.

John Ellis in *Visible Fictions* (1992) argues that *"cinema still remains the central place for the production of stars because it offers single self-contained films rather than series re-production of the same basic performance. Broadcast TV's patterns of repetition militate against the creation of stars from its performers because they generally become associated with one particular performance and one particular basic problematic. They also appear too intimate and domestic, lacking the dimensions of distance and difference that cinematic performance will tend to give them"* (1992, p. 243).

To sum up, while a film star's celebrity is built on "admiration through distance", the aesthetic of "larger than life" and individualism, the television personality constructs their celebrity mainly through familiarity and intimacy. The third type of celebrity Marshall (1997) studies - the music star - is described as *"being modalized around concepts of authenticity"*[18] (1997, p. 150).

[18] discussed further in 1.6.2.

1.5.1. Reality TV Celebrity

Reality TV is *"currently the most firmly established industrial pattern for the production of disposable celebrities."* Its stars shoot up to maximum visibility overnight and disappear into obscurity in a matter of weeks. *"Reality TV formats [...] are designed to produce a reliable supply of interchangeable celebrities [...] to deliver to the television audience"* (Turner, 2014, p. 40). The Shows *"profess to democratize celebrity by demystifying access to it or debunking its aura through the normalization of surveillance techniques to get at the private, intimate, and authentic moments of individuals on display. [They] tap into the fetishism of celebrity by suspending the traditional gate-keeping mechanisms of Hollywood's hierarchical structure"* (Collins, 2008, p. 100).

"Network and cable television, in particular, has demonstrated its ability to produce celebrity from nothing – without any need to establish the individual's ability, skill, or extraordinariness as the precondition for public attention. The phenomenon of Big Brother made that clear" (Turner, 2004, p. 9). Audience reception studies have shown that *"a large part of the pleasure for audiences is to look for the 'authentic' moments within the tension between the constructed and the real as ordinary people cross over to celebrity"* (Collins, 2008, p. 104). According to Collins, the celebrities of reality TV serve to *"reaffirm the star system [by] reminding audiences of what they are not"*[19] (2008, p. 104).

1.5.2. Celetoid

Chris Rojek (2001) initially proposed the term "celetoid" to refer to short-lived celebrities (lottery winners, whistle-blowers, mistresses of public figures etc.), who *"receive their moment of fame and then disappear from public consciousness quite rapidly."* They are *"the accessories of cultures organized around mass communications and staged authenticity"* (2001, p. 20), but the widespread popularity of reality TV formats *"produced the conditions in which some ordinary people attain more durable types of fame,"* which prompted Rojek (2012) to split the term into two subcategories:

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[19] *"On the rare occasions when reality celebrities win parts on fictional genres, [they serve to] signify the immediacy of the episode in relation to the reality celebrity's success and the recentness of the episode, which soon appears dated during repeats, rather than the 'potentially infinitely repeatable aura of stardom' garnered from 'real' celebrities"* (2008, p. 104).

"A short-life celetoid is the familiar one- or three-minute wonder. It is a person with no perceptible talents or disciplined accomplishments, who has celebrity for short, concentrated periods of time and then ceases to be famous. A long-life celetoid is also devoid of perceptible talents and disciplined accomplishments. Despite this, they achieve durable or semi-durable fame"[20] (2012, p. 165).

Ultimately, the only difference between Rojek's view of a regular celebrity and a *long-life celetoid* seems to be the lack of any specific talent of the latter. This brings us back to Gamson's (2011) *"acceptable narratives about the relation between contemporary celebrity status and merit"* (see 1.2), where in the case of the "product" narrative, celebrities are *"to be disdained or consumed as objects of identification,"* or (as would seem fitting in this case) laughed at. The general question is, whether it is still useful to expect celebrity to be built on the notion of traditional (and exceptional) talent and to invent new names for those types of celebrity that are not.[21] As Gamson aptly sums it up: *"To do its work, the celebrity industry certainly doesn't need its celebrities to be extraordinary. What the celebrity industry does require of its humans is that they live, whether glamorously or not, for the camera"* (2011, p. 1063).

Whether we decide to look down on reality TV or not, it did something very important apart from saving producers money for acting talent – it sharply increased the participation of ordinary people in broadcast media. In 2003, Frances Bonner wrote that British television featured close to 250,000 ordinary people each year with over 20,000 having a speaking role. *"This is not just a matter of the desperation of 'filler' programmes; approximately one third of the top-rating UK programmes are ordinary ones"* (2003, p. 62). *"Those who participate do not necessarily want to be singers, or actors, or dancers - they just want to be on television"* (Turner, 2014, p. 58).

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[20] To illustrate this category, Rojek (2012) uses the example of Jade Goody (a Big Brother contestant) who was *"Britain's greatest reality TV star: Her stupidity was legendary. She was reported to believe that a ferret was a bird, Pistachio painted the Mona Lisa, Rio de Janeiro is a person and Saddam Hussein was a boxer. She was not adept at singing, dancing, acting or comedy. Yet she dominated British reality TV news and was a major figure in popular culture for seven years [...] until her untimely death"* (2012, p. 165).

[21] The term "celetoid" is useful in representing short-lived celebrities, so "long-life short-lived celebrities" don't make sense, unless we narrow the term down to only denote the lack of traditional talent. That would probably mean calling most YouTubers *long-life celetoids,* unless we were also to redefine traditional notions of talent to include living for the camera and creating the impression of intimacy and familiarity. Rojek (2001) himself suggests a difference between what he calls *achieved celebrity* (derived from the perceived accomplishments of the individual in open competition) and *attributed celebrity* (resulting from the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries), which is a dichotomy similar to Gamson's dichotomy of meritocracy / product. YouTubers (in the present sense of the word; cf. 1.6.3 and 2.4.2) are not celetoids, although the term may very well fit the faces of online viral videos and memes.

1.6. YouTube Celebrity

Even though YouTubers haven't yet become full celebrities in the tabloid sense of the word, and Boorstin's and Rojek's[22] accounts of celebrities being fabricated (and their presence stage-managed by intermediaries) don't hold true for them either, there is an interesting parallel with the world of tabloid magazines to be found here: What tabloids do (or at least claim to do), is uncover the closely guarded private lives of celebrities.[23] However, since most YouTube stars are vloggers, uncovering their private lives is, in fact, their original claim to fame.

Even YouTubers who don't share details of their lives in YouTube videos (those who vlog about different topics, only make Let's Play, prank, or comedy videos etc.) usually do so on other social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Ask.fm, because to their fans, they definitely are celebrities (in the sense of *generating public interest in one's personal life as opposed to only generating interest in one's work,* see 1.1), and those fans are interested in learning as much about them as possible. The one important difference being that they don't need tabloid newspapers and magazines and TV talk shows to do that - they can consume this type of content directly at the source and (in the case of smaller celebrities) even enjoy a two-way communication with their favorites. In a sense, YouTubers are bypassing the systems traditionally responsible for making and sustaining celebrity much more than reality TV stars are. Finally, one part of Daniel Boorstin's (1992) definition of celebrity holds true for YouTubers better than for any traditional celebrity, and in a way, it is what their celebrity is built on: *"They are nothing more than a more-publicized version of us."*

Following Marshall's (1997) taxonomy of celebrity (see chapter 1.5), this chapter proposes that YouTubers are similar to TV stars in that they embody the characteristics of familiarity and intimacy, but unlike TV stars, they don't need to be acceptable on a mass scale in order to be successful (cf. 2.4.1), because YouTube allows for success with niche audiences (although making a living this way can still be a challenge – see 2.4.3). They also embody a lot (and often more) of the authenticity (see 1.6.2) previously claimed by musicians. [24]

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[22] "No celebrity now acquires public recognition without the assistance of cultural intermediaries who operate to stage-manage celebrity presence in the eyes of the public" (2001, p. 10).

[23] Because *"what stars are to traditional movies, celebrities are to what I call the "life movie" — a movie written in the medium of life"* (Gabler, 2001a, p. 5).

[24] According to Marshall (1997).

YouTubers can be seen as a technologically determined next step in the evolution of the TV personality, which (in a rather revolutionary manner) is taking place in the world of user-generated content. The foundations of their celebrity, however, are in many ways identical to those of the TV personality as described in 1956 by Horton and Wohl (discussed further in 1.6.1).

In the *Acumen Report: Constant Content,* people aged 13-24 described YouTubers as*: "just like me, understands me, someone I trust, has the best advice, doesn't try to be perfect, genuine, someone I feel close to, and likes the same things I do"* (Defy Media, 2015a). These descriptions hint at four general attributes that can be used to describe YouTubers:

- **familiarity (intimacy)**: someone I feel close to, someone I trust
- **authenticity**: doesn't try to be perfect, genuine
- **relatability**: just like me, understands me, likes the same things I do
- **information value**: has the best advice

The first two – familiarity (intimacy) and authenticity - correspond directly to Marshall's categories and will be covered in 1.6.1 and 1.6.2 respectively. *Relatability* and *information value* deserve some clarification: Consider Hank Green's VidCon 2014 opening keynote answers to the questions *"Why does what gets made get made?"* and *"Why does what gets watched get watched?"* (VidCon, 2015):

1. underserved markets serve themselves
2. things that weren't allowed start existing
3. simple monetization
4. easy to make
5. focus on cultural tension

(1) Green mentions a surprising lack of teenager-oriented content made for traditional media, and explains that as a result, *"teenagers make content for teenagers"* on YouTube. This – by definition – makes the content more relatable to teenagers:

> *"We're all teenagers, we can all relate to what we have to say. When it's just TV, we're watching made-up lives, but when we're watching YouTubers, we're more like: that's us, that's what we have to say"* (Defy Media, 2015b).

> *"You know what they've been through. You can be like: I dealt with that a couple years ago too, I'm not alone"* (Defy Media, 2015d).

(2) Content that is not considered appropriate for teenagers in traditional media is less under scrutiny and control on YouTube, and videos that would normally not be approved by network executives at all - such as many prank videos - can reach their audience.

(3) AdSense enables easy monetization (discussed further in 2.4), and not only allows for content to pay its way, but the algorithms also co-determine its form (see 2.4.3).

(4) The barriers to entry are low, and everyone is free to try. In fact, according to Defy Media (2015e), 55% of 14-17 year olds agree that they could be a YouTube star, and as a result, many will try. This undoubtedly contributes to YouTubers' *"girl(guy)-next-door status"* (Dredge, 2016) and makes them seem less unapproachable than traditional celebrities.

(5) *"Things that we're ashamed of, but still worship."* Green gives the example of beauty: *"The overt cultural message is 'don't worry about how pretty you are', but the covert cultural message is: […] be beautiful, be appealing, be a Barbie doll,"* and videogames: *"Parents are telling their kids to go outside, but culture is telling them to stay inside and shoot things"* (VidCon, 2015).

Relatability stems, for the most part, from items (1), (4) and (5): Teenagers best relate to content made for teenagers by teenagers, and the viewers' first-hand knowledge of the platform's affordances allows them to feel like they are on equal ground with their celebrities[25] and to see them as peers.

Information value[26] is best described in items (1), (2) and (5): YouTubers can (and do) cover topics relevant to the target group (and generally not covered on traditional TV extensively), and because of the viewers' strong relationship with YouTubers, their advice carries more weight than sources from traditional media.

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[25] Cf. Habermas' *public sphere* which *"stood or fell with the principle of universal access"* (1991, p. 85).

[26] Reducing the whole of YouTube to teenager content is, of course, a gross oversimplification. What is described here applies to any content (and group of people) underrepresented in traditional mass media - see for example YouTube's thriving science & education community: https://www.youtube.com/channels/science_education.

1.6.1. Familiarity

Considering that the auras of *distance* and *familiarity* are [at least according to Marshall (1997), Ellis (1992) and others], somewhat mutually exclusive, film stars should be in no immediate danger of being replaced by YouTubers (although drops in popularity charts are to be expected[27]). For TV celebrities, however, it could be a very real prognosis.

While it is not yet possible for most traditional TV formats to successfully convert to YouTube (or similar services) with the present levels of online video budgets (see 2.4.3), the qualities of *familiarity* and *intimacy* may actually transfer over the new medium better.

In 1956, Horton and Wohl described a new type of performer whose existence was a function of the new medium, who was rarely prominent in spheres beyond it, and who claimed and achieved intimacy with crowds of strangers who willingly received it and shared in it: *"His devotees 'live with him' and share the small episodes of his public life - and to some extent even of his private life away from the show. [The] accumulation of shared past experiences gives additional meaning to the present performance. This bond is symbolized by allusions that lack meaning for the casual observer and appear occult to the outsider"* (1956, p. 216). Compare this description to some of the comments made by YouTuber fans:

> *"YouTubers are my extended circle of friends"* (Defy Media, 2015d).
>
> *"Even though they know nothing about you, you feel like they're family, because they're people you can be instantly comfortable with"* (VanAlkemade, 2015).
>
> *"I definitely feel a connection to YouTubers. I don't feel like I'm a fan with a celebrity, I feel like I'm in a relationship with them."* (Defy Media, 2015d).
>
> *"Even though we haven't actually met [PewDiePie] and he hasn't met us, it still feels like there is a personal connection present. It just can't be duplicated"* (Incognito, 2014).
>
> *"I love [PewDiePie] because every time I watch one of his videos I feel like he's talking to me and only me, even though he has millions of subscribers!"* (MariePatrick. 2014).

[27] https://variety.com/2014/digital/news/survey-youtube-stars-more-popular-than-mainstream-celebs-among-u-s-teens-1201275245/

> *"I like that I'm always in the loop. If they do something, I know about it. I can see their daily life and be a part of it, kind of"* (Defy Media, 2015d).

Horton and Wohl's 1956 paper coined the term *para-social interaction,* and wasn't about YouTube but television[28]: *"One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media [...] is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer. [...] The most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the circle of one's peers."* Yet, we see that the text describes the same relationship that fans report to have with their favorite YouTubers in 2014 and 2015. Horton and Wohl's description is based on a comparison with older media, and so is the notion of the YouTube celebrity - having gotten used to the affordances of modern interactive media and participatory culture, teenagers consider television, the pinnacle of face-to-face, performer-viewer relationship in 1956, to be part of the old and impersonal:

> *"TV is boredom, YouTube is enjoyment. You go there and you get to see these people interact with their fans and you make yourself feel better"* (Defy Media, 2015b).

William Cooper in the Sony Media commissioned report *Why We Watch Television* (2015) writes that even though *"it's become fashionable to assume that we're now in a post-television era, [...] we should be wary of premature proclamations of the death of television."* His observation is that *"the vast majority of our viewing is still of programming delivered over traditional channels,"* which is a conclusion that seems to vary wildly between researchers, age groups and countries, but most interesting are his actual reasons for why we watch TV:

"Traditional television fulfils our basic need for company, social connection and participation in a shared experience. It talks to us, tells us stories, and gives us something to talk about" (Cooper, 2015).

Until advertising budgets undergo a radical shift from TV to online video[29], there will be little online competition to TV's more expensive programming, and, of course, single independent content creators will never be able to compete with TV's budgets and narrative content. However, if Cooper's definition of what he calls the *meaning of television* is accurate, it becomes clear why so many teenagers leave TV for YouTube - because not only do YouTubers perform all these functions adequately, they might, for the most part thanks to the affordances of the new medium, already be better at most of them.

[28] and radio, to a lesser extent

[29] http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/digital-news-revenue-fact-sheet/

1.6.2. Authenticity

Lonelygirl15[30] first appeared on YouTube on June 16, 2006 as a 16-year-old girl *"with an innocent sense of humor, overbearingly religious parents, and a withdrawn best friend"* (Levy, 2008, p. 85). Investigations into whether she was genuine began as soon as viewers started questioning the progressively more complicated storyline of her vlogs, and the series was finally exposed by the Los Angeles Times reporter Richard Rushfield (2006) as produced and scripted. The vlogger's exposure as a fake generated turbulent reaction from fans and ruined the show's reputation with many YouTubers. The show, however, apart from being the first viral series to integrate product placement (Levy, 2008, p. 85), did help the career of its main star, Jessica Rose, who moved on to star in a number of TV series[31]. *"LonelyGirl15 violated the ideology of authenticity associated with DIY culture, while at the same time being wholly consistent with the way YouTube actually works"* (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 29), and so in a culture that values YouTubers for their authenticity, Lonelygirl15 is to this day remembered as an important, yet controversial figure of early YouTube.[32]

Tolson (2010) argues that any judgements of authenticity will always be relative, and that *"the authenticity of vlogging is located in its excessive direct address, in its transparent amateurishness and in the sheer volume and immediacy of 'conversational' responses, by comparison with and relative to the constraints of traditional broadcasting"* (2010, p. 286).

Christian Meinberger, head of content programming and production for a multi-channel network supports this argument in describing the production of *The Mansion*[33], a hybrid of YouTube programming and a traditional reality show: *"We have learned that you have to be authentic. You have to step down from quality expectations"* (as cited in: Bloom, 2014), and David Bloom summarizes: *"Don't get too fancy with the show's look."*

Tolson's (2010) definition, however, stumbles upon an interesting paradox, one which was already mentioned briefly in the discussion of micro-celebrity: as YouTubers grow in popularity, almost all of what Tolson describes is inevitably diminished or even lost.

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[30] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-goXKtd6cPo
[31] http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2180154/
[32] https://youtu.be/qhjLjaCt1DM
[33] https://youtu.be/jqoUWRVbUnA

Amateurishness is replaced by various levels of professionalism as YouTubers buy better equipment and cultivate their public personas; direct access becomes impractical when the subscriber base grows beyond a certain point, and although the conversational responses in the form of comments are still present, they get more and more cluttered and less personal as the subscriber club becomes more inclusive than exclusive. [34] Yet PewDiePie is somehow still considered authentic (see 1.6.2.1).

Tolson's qualifying condition of *"relativity to traditional broadcasting"* is something to keep in mind here, but the discourse of authenticity (in respect to YouTube stars) doesn't seem to dwell as much on externalities, as it is a function of the YouTuber's personality. Or rather the act of staying true to that personality through changes of format, technology and skill. On a similar note (as mentioned in chapter 1.5), Marshall (1997) appropriates the aura of authenticity primarily to music performers: He explains that their authenticity is determined by how they express the emotionality of the music and their own emotions, feelings and personality and how faithful they are to the intentions of the musical score (1997, p. 150).

Moulard, et al. (2015) support a view of authenticity similar to the one just proposed (and similar to Marshall's but notably different to Tolson's): they define a celebrity's authenticity as *"the perception that a celebrity behaves according to his or her true self"* (2015, p. 173). They continue by clarifying that self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests intrinsically motivated behavior (associated with internal dispositions) is (by definition) authentic, while behavior that is externally motivated is inauthentic. However, the true self is a private entity unobservable to others, so it is impossible to know whether someone else is being authentic or not. We can only speak of the perception of a celebrity's authenticity.[35]

[34] PewDiePie talks about closing the comment sections of his videos: https://youtu.be/4_hHKlEZ9Go?t=2m37s

[35] In order to be perceived as authentic, a celebrity's behavior must be: a) unique to the person rather than common across many people (**rarity** and its subdimensions of talent, discretion and originality), and b) similar across situations and different stimuli/entities (**stability** and its subdimensions of consistency, candidness and morality)

Although their research doesn't specifically take online celebrities into account (and their subjects are 23+ years old), their data does show that while *stability* is the most important component of authenticity for older people (49+), for people under 40 *rarity* is the key (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015).

1.6.2.1. ***Are YouTubers Acting?***

The celebrity status always implies a certain amount of split between the *private self* (*"I"*, the "real" self) and the *public self* (*"me"*, the self as seen by others). While this conflict has arguably been an everyday part of the western society at least since ancient times, for modern celebrities it can get especially disturbing and even lead to identity problems (see Rojek, 2001, p. 11). The split is equally relevant for the modern micro-celebrity (see 1.4): *"As with a bona fide celebrity, the micro-celebrity in social media is comfortable with a gap between the "real self," such as it persists, and its promotion, curation, and presentation to friends, fans, and followers"* (Haag, 2015).

YouTubers (especially vloggers) tend to be perceived as authentic and representing themselves[36], so to their fans, the split between their public and private selves might be harder to grasp. Most YouTubers undeniably do represent a much more authentic version of themselves than film stars, who (by definition) can portray totally unrelated characters - or as a teenager in an *Acumen Report* video explained: are *"a body with a script"* (Defy Media, 2015).

In the context of celebrity presentation on social media, Marshall (2010) suggests a name for this *self* located at the split between the *private* and the *public*. He calls it the *public private self*: *"it is a recognition of the new notion of a public that implies some sort of further exposure of the individual's life. For some celebrities the self-negotiation of the public private self wrests control of the economy of their public persona in a way that resembles the 1950s breakdown of the film studio system, and the emergence of the star at the centre of film culture"* (2010, pp. 44–45).

Since the celebrity of YouTubers is native to the realm of social media, we could say that Marshall's *public private self* or *"the private self for public presentation"* (2010, p. 44) is the self they represent by default.

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[36]https://broarmy.net/index.php/Thread/32437-What-does-pewdiepie-have-that-other-youtubers-dont-have/?postID=228188#post228188

In an attempt to escape the "prison-house of character" and to be able to branch into other forms of celebrity, Petr Lexa[37] explains in a video[38] that the online persona of Hoggy is just a made-up character, albeit built heavily on an exaggerated version of his own personality. He asks his fans to see him as an actor portraying a role, which is in sharp contrast to the way vloggers are (and usually want to be) viewed. His *Draw My Life* video[39] mentions previous acting and reality TV experience, which might explain the different perception of being a YouTuber. On the other hand, in the *Draw My Life* video itself, he does refer to himself as "Hoggy" while sharing his real-life history in intimate detail, suggesting that "Hoggy" being only a role, not a nickname (Ševčíková, 2016) is more of a recent wish or decision made for his music and acting careers than how he established himself on the channel initially.[40]

A comparison of the apparent character presented in the first few videos of a YouTuber with the character presented in the same YouTuber's latest videos usually (if enough time has passed between the two) tells a clear story of what could be described as public persona cultivation. It is not simply a matter of learning to speak better and acquiring better tools and video-making techniques. If we compare the first video available on Hoggy's channel[41] (a video from May 21, 2013) to one of his latest[42] (a video from February 27, 2016), the difference in speaking style, tempo, pitch, energy and perceived extraversion is apparent in the first few seconds. The first video is very likely much closer to his real, everyday self than the cultivated public image of the last video.

Where some YouTubers get better at what could be considered acting skills, others, such as the biggest YouTuber of today PewDiePie, seem to stay true to their real selves to a greater extent. We could argue that he owes a big part of his success to this aura of authenticity and genuineness. As one of his fans put it:

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[37] A Czech YouTube comedian / vlogger / Let's Player known as Hoggy (630k subscribers, 148 mil. total YT views, 245k FB fans, 257k Instagram followers); singer of the band "Slza" (182k subscribers, 23 million YT views, 181k Facebook fans, 102k Instagram followers as of April 14, 2016)

[38] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tflz2EcuBpk

[39] https://youtu.be/xAd9MYWr_lY?t=1m31s

[40] A static title at the end of the video supports this notion by explaining that although he can't tell the audience more at this point, this situation has something to do with music. Later that year, Petr introduced his fans to his new band, suggesting that he (or someone else involved in his future music career) was afraid of his being "typecast" and only seen as Hoggy, hampering his options of branching into other, more serious, forms of celebrity. This is similar to what Marshall describes for soap opera stars and calls a *prison-house of narrative*.

[41] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rK9_JVTTAsY

[42] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiayFF12TVI

"He doesn't seem 'fake' in any way. I've watched other youtubers that also upload gaming videos and they always try to put on a certain persona or just try to act like what they think everyone else will like. And Pewds is just himself" (Kiwi, 2014).

If we compare his first ever vlog[43] (May 4, 2011) to one of his latest[44] (March 4, 2016) we notice an undeniable difference in confidence, speaking and language skills and production value, but he still seems like the same person. Admittedly, both these videos are an honest conversation with the audience, which is a YouTube format that generally asks for employing more of *the private self*, but not many well-known YouTubers use it as convincingly as PewDiePie, which might very well be his main secret to success.

Chapter 1.4.1 mentioned that as traditional celebrities enter social media, their practices adapt to it, and Marshall (2010) pointed out that it can lead them to reveal more of the *private self*. Celebrity researcher Jeetendr Sehdev warns that there is still a fundamental difference between how YouTubers and traditional media stars approach social media and that success in the social media economy comes down to authenticity:

"The mainstream celebrity is using social media as just another platform to project the same images, ideas and positioning, whereas the YouTube stars and digital influencers are using social media as an inherent part of their DNA. If the fundamental flaw from the get-go is the positioning of that celebrity and whether that celebrity's positioning is actually credible or authentic, it doesn't matter on how many different platforms you express that positioning; it is not going to make much of a difference" (Peterson, 2015).

Genuineness, as Langer (1981) points out, also brings with it an interesting downside: Since film stars portray other people (who sometimes retain some aspect of the actor's public identity and sometimes don't), and TV personalities portray (more or less) themselves, TV personalities are more vulnerable to going "out of fashion", because they cannot obtain new "meanings" as easily as film stars (Langer, 1981). If the public persona of a vlogger who has built her popularity on being herself goes "out of fashion", she cannot easily invent a new one and start being a new authentic "self".

[43] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zYI8FjSF_k
[44] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGjJ8lAS2VM

The British YouTuber DanIVlog answers the question *Are YouTubers Acting?* in a video of the same name: *"On YouTube you're essentially playing yourself and you just emphasize your character a little bit more. Because, let's face it, it would be boring if we were our general all-day selves in front of the camera. In videos, we are boosting ourselves - we are more happy, more colourful and bright [...], but that's not acting"* (DanIVlog, 2014).

Similarly, in a video called *How YouTubers Act Off Camera*, ConnorFranta explains: *"You guys only see a portion of my life [...] On camera and off camera I'm a pretty different person. Not completely different, don't get me wrong, I'm not acting here [...] but I've slowly realized that in real life I am not the same person I am in these videos"* (ConnorFranta, 2014).

Both videos attempt to explain that there is a difference between a YouTuber's on and off camera personality (*private* vs. *public self*), but at the same time stress the difference between such emphasizing of character *(public private self)* and acting. Even in television, as Tolson (2010) points out, the dominant ideology insists that *"performers who are not overtly acting are being themselves"* (2010, p. 277), and this expectation is much stronger for YouTubers - Jeetendr Sehdev's research shows that teens see them as 90% more genuine than mainstream celebrities (Peterson, 2015).

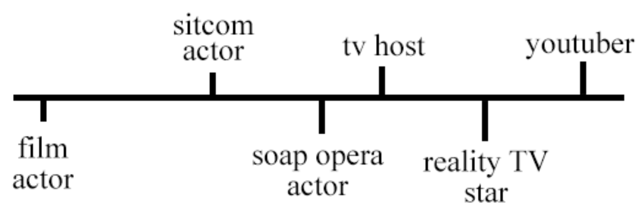

Figure 1 – an imaginary "authenticity scale" which goes from film actors (who by definition portray other people) to YouTubers (who tend to portray a version of themselves).

1.6.3. Picture Personality

De Cordova (1990) describes a shift that took place in the history of film around 1914 and took us from the era of *picture personality* (where that personality was a construct tightly integrated with the person's screen performances) to the era of the star, where the actor's existence outside her work became the primary focus of discourse (Turner, 2004, p. 13).

A similar shift took place in the history of online video, and although pinpointing the precise moment would require further analysis, the opening of the YouTube Partner Program (see chapter 2.4.2) was undeniably a contributing factor. While in the early days of YouTube "becoming famous" typically meant shooting a single, viral, quite often anonymous video, in 2016 it means becoming a YouTuber. That is: establishing a following of subscribers and releasing content regularly.

Alexander Walker (1970) in *Stardom: The Hollywood Phenomenon* (as cited in Marshall, 1997) explains that film audiences first began identifying screen personalities by nicknames that tried to capture the face, body type, or hairstyle of the performer ("the fat guy", "the girl with the curls" etc.). This, too, was similar in the early days of the modern internet video, where short clips of various performers "went viral" and made them famous without the public knowing their names (or, in fact, needing to). These performers became known by the nicknames attributed to them based on the single video (such as "The Star Wars Kid"[45], "The Tron Guy"[46], "The Afro Ninja"[47], "Numa Numa"[48] etc.)[49], bearing striking resemblance to Walker's *personalities* and De Cordova's *picture personalities*[50] of the early cinema.

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[45] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPPj6viIBmU
[46] https://youtu.be/3609OtM138c
[47] https://youtu.be/BEtIoGQxqQs
[48] https://youtu.be/OE8WzYNRPNU
[49] http://southpark.cc.com/clips/165195/meet-the-internet-stars
[50] To clarify, De Cordova's *picture personality* from the early Hollywood is, of course, about more than simple nicknames - promotional discourse of the time *"attempted to construct a close correlation between the performance on screen and the discursive construction of a private self"* (Turner, 2004, p. 15).

2. YouTube

2.1. From Broadcast to Narrowcast

Daniel Boorstin (1992) describes a shift from folk, which expressed itself by ways of the spoken word, song, dance etc., to mass, which *"is the ear and not the voice - the mass is what others aim to reach—by print, photograph, image, and sound. While the folk created heroes, the mass can only look and listen for them. It is waiting to be shown and to be told"* (1992) - a shift from production to consumption.

While every unit (community, household) in such a mass society has access to a limited number of media (and essentially all of them are broadcast media), in the network society, *"broadcast mass media reaching everyone are accompanied by, and partly replaced by, narrowcast interactive media reaching selected audiences"* (Dijk, 2006, p. 34). The change from broadcasting to narrow-casting can be described as a transition from the *"mass marketing of homogeneous audiences [...] to the customization of media content and the personalization of users or consumers to be reached"* (2006, p. 208). This process has several stages, and *"after the era of segmentation that has created a multitude of channels and media products for special target groups, we now enter a time of attempts at a one-to-one approach in personalized media forms and content"* (2006, p. 208).

From a viewer's perspective, YouTube is the perfect example of a highly-evolved narrowcast interactive medium[51]: everyone is free to watch whatever they want whenever they want it, build their own playlists and subscribe to their favorite shows: *"In classic television, viewers are presented with pre-produced, pre-edited, programmes designed for particular time-slots; in post-television users construct their own viewing experiences, from user-generated videos which [often] have no prior institutional imprint"* (Tolson, 2010, p. 285). At the level of the creator, however, the difference between narrowcasting and broadcasting is not binary, but rather a continuous, inevitable progress towards the latter as their audience gets bigger (see 1.4.1) and less niche / homogenous.

[51] Initially, "narrowcast" used to refer to local cable television channels and other forms of niche mass media. US cable TV also has what could be considered the *"YouTube of the 70s and 80s and a little bit of the 90s"* (Blue Number Media, 2014) – public-access television – non-commercial cable channels (required by law, see http://www.museum.tv/eotv/midwestvideo.htm) where programming is made by the public, which is given free (or low-cost) access to the necessary equipment, facilities and training.

"Compared to the 'mass society' with its one-way media and centralized institutions, the media and organizations of the network society tend to be more interactive and decentralized" (2006, p. 39). *"The rise of local, corporate and personal radio, television and web sites [is] turning the traditional centralized [...] distribution of mass communications upside down"* (Dijk, 2006, p. 53). However, what already happened in the world of traditional media, that is: taking over of the emergent small broadcasters by large media companies (2006, p. 84), is happening in the internet economy as well. The developmental process of the internet resembles that of other media, where the basic conditions *"are being set from above rather than from below, from the level of the capital rather than [...] participants"* (Mathiesen, 1997, p. 225).

YouTube itself was bought by the internet giant Google in November 2006, and at this point it would be very hard (if not impossible) for a new service to compete with its infrastructure. Facebook's video might be able to, once it introduces a reliable way of monetizing video (see 2.4.2), but that is an option only because Facebook itself is the world's biggest social network. Alternative services tend to concentrate on niche audiences and create small, much more exclusive communities, such as Vimeo which is predominantly a community for independent filmmakers.

Almost 20 years ago in 1997, Mathiesen wrote that *"the idealistic initial period of the truly interactive internet with flat point-to-point structure is coming to an end, and the internet is [...] developing into what may be called an interactive one-way medium"* (in the sense that you may choose what you see, but not send information for others to see) (1997, p. 225). Although this claim obviously doesn't hold true for YouTube in its entirety, we could argue that the biggest difference between the predictions of many 1990s' authors and today's reality of social networks (and the internet in general) is that under all the empowerment of the individual user, they are still monopolistic platforms under corporate control, far from the idealistic decentralized network systems (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 111). With one notable difference from mass media – they don't have to create content anymore, only enable others to create it for them.

Nick Couldry (2003) explains that *"a totally decentred pattern of media production and distribution"* is impossible in large and complex societies, because *"individual agents would always work to make selections and to make its complexity manageable and liveable,"* and as a result, effective centers would emerge. He writes that we should work towards *a "world of many relative centres,"* in which a wide range of people can participate, and which hold *"no entrenched monopoly that would prevent further 'centres' forming."* He also concludes that all basic economic principles work against the possibility of such a non-hierarchical space (2003, p. 138).

It seems reasonable to ask whether YouTube, which came to life two years after Couldry's book, is that space or not. We would, of course, need to overlook the corporate status of the platform itself and only consider its internal economy of users and content. Seen from this perspective, YouTube started almost *"totally decentered,"* and in 2016 almost certainly meets the requirements for a *"world of many relative centres,"* where everyone can participate and nothing is preventing new centers from forming. There is a hierarchy present, but it doesn't monopolize broadcasting rights:

Big channels are today's obvious centers, especially those that function as production houses[52,53] and have teams of people working on separate projects and side-channels. The next step in YouTube's hierarchy are multi-channel networks (see 2.4.2.1) which often join thousands of channels, offer assistance in exchange for ad revenue percentage, and even buy popular channels[54] - and in turn get bought by big media corporations themselves[55,56].

George Strompolos, the CEO of Fullscreen[57], proposes that *"the worlds of online video (and new media) are eventually going to bridge into what we all think of as traditional media"* (Andy, 2014). This suggests a very imaginable future scenario – a single audiovisual medium uniting high-budget narrative content and user generated video; in a sense still dominated by corporations and media powerhouses with their high-budget content, yet accessible to everyone to "broadcast themselves,"[58] and allowing users to construct their own viewing experiences from both ends of the spectrum. [59]

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[52] http://www.smosh.com/
[53] http://roosterteeth.com/
[54] http://theslanted.com/2014/11/17496/rooster-teeth-sold-fullscreen/
[55] https://variety.com/2014/digital/news/att-chernin-group-take-control-of-youtubes-fullscreen-network-1201310694/
[56] https://variety.com/2014/biz/news/disney-buys-maker-studios-in-deal-worth-at-least-500-million-1201145068/

[57] One of the top multi-channel networks, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fullscreen_%28company%29

[58]"Broadcast Yourself" was the slogan of YouTube until 2012.

[59] This, of course, is not a novel idea. Consider for example Director of New Media & Technology at BBC Ashley Higfield's speech from 2003: *"Future TV may be unrecognisable from today, defined not just by linear TV channels, packaged and scheduled by television executives, but [...] thousands of streams of content [...] These streams will mix together broadcasters' content and programmes, and our viewers' contributions. At the simplest level, audiences will want to organise and reorder content the way they want it. They'll add comments to our programmes, vote on them and generally mess about with them. But at another level, audiences will want to create these streams of video themselves from scratch, with or without our help"* (Highfield, 2003; also cited in Burgess & Green, 2009).

2.2. Technology and Participatory Culture

Technological affordances such as the wide availability of broadband internet connection, cheap digital cameras and affordable computers capable of editing video were, without a doubt, what made the modern era of online video broad- and narrow-casting possible. "*Ordinary citizens [now get] to wield media technologies – technologies that were once the privilege of capital-intensive industries – to express themselves and distribute those creations as they seem fit"* (van Dijck, 2009, p. 43).

The pre-YouTube history of online video is surprisingly short[60], not least because 56k dial-up connection speeds and high hosting / bandwidth costs made sharing large files impractical: *"According to Jenni Ringley, the JenniCam (which [...] displayed only still, silent images with a slow refresh rate) racked up bills in excess of US $15,000 per month"* (Senft, 2008, p. 20), and so hosting viral videos without a good monetization scheme before the time of free services like YouTube amounted to potential financial trouble.[61] Vlogging pioneers used to avoid this limitation by using highly compressed video distributed over peer-to-peer networks (usually BitTorrent), and sharing its location in a blogpost (Parker & Pfeiffer, 2005, p. 6).

Van Dijck (2009) points out, that even though cheap and easy-to-use digital technologies certainly stimulated audiovisual production, the most important driver of *participatory culture*[62] in the world of online video were UGC[63] sites, that allowed for do-it-yourself distribution: *"Television audiences were never solely defined in terms of passive spectatorship, [...] recipients of cultural content [...] have always engaged in activities (such as bands playing cover versions of songs or fan clubs) stimulating the recreation of content."*

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[60] And mostly limited to gif animations that fit in the attachment of an email, flash cartoons, "camgirls" and pornography (see Senft, 2008), or videos of what were to become the first proto-celebrities of online video (see 1.6.3).

[61] This could be one of the reasons why YouTube's creators were unable to find an online video of Janet Jackson's 2004 wardrobe malfunction, an incident conventionally quoted as the inspiration for turning their video-dating *Tune In Hook Up* website into YouTube (Hopkins, 2006).

[62] *"A culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another"* (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009, p. 3).

[63] "User-Generated Content" (also UCC – "User-Created Content", defined as: *"content made publicly available over the Internet which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and which is created outside of professional routines and practices"* (OECD, 2007).

Unlike TV viewers of the mass media era, however, users in the digital era have access to networked media which enable them to *"talk back in the same multi-modal language that frames cultural products formerly made exclusively in studios"* (2009, pp. 43–44). *"Audiences, empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture"* (Jenkins, 2006, p. 24).

However, not all participation equals active contribution. Van Dijck emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between its different levels: *"Participation is [...] a relative term when over 80 percent of all users are [...] passive recipients of content."* (2009, p. 44). For instance, the simple act of watching a YouTube video already entails participation (in the sense of influencing the platform's future content), because ranking and ad-serving algorithms take into account views, watch time and viewers' interaction with the video (and because creators will, understandably, tend to create videos that proved successful with their – or others'- viewers[64]). We could argue that this is not fundamentally different from how consumers traditionally *"exerted power over cultural content via their power as consumers"* (2009, p. 47) by simply buying or not buying products, but on the platforms of Web 2.0[65], this relationship is much more direct and immediate.

[64] In addition to taking many different forms, user participation on a YouTuber's video can also take place on different platforms: apart from YouTube, a typical Czech youtuber communicates with fans on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Ask.fm and often on Twitter.

[65] A popular term used to represent the modern form of the web built (among other things) on platforms, participatory culture and redefining the producer-consumer relationship. See http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html for the original definition.

2.3. Content

The YouTube of 2016 serves as a worldwide[66], fast and free video-hosting service allowing anyone to upload an unlimited number of high resolution videos, where each one is limited only to the length of 11 hours and the upload size of 128 GB[67]. Anyone with a smartphone can start recording and editing their videos with a number of free apps, or even directly in the YouTube Video Editor[68]. As a result, people have been using YouTube to upload any imaginable content from family videos shared privately with friends, to music videos and feature films. But since the popularity of a YouTube channel is traditionally measured in subscribers[69], it is mostly channels with original UGC and regular upload schedules, that rank the highest. Hank Green (2015) lists three *"massive"* genres YouTube has helped create: Let's Plays, vlogs and style tutorials, and adds that a fourth genre – sketch comedy – successfully converted to YouTube from TV. Accordingly, out of the top 116 most subscribed YouTube channels in the Czech Republic[70], 62% contained vlogs (15% specifically style tutorials), 42% contained Let's Plays, and 17% contained sketch comedy. It is important to note here, that since there are no hardcoded categories posing as limits to content creation, channels can (and generally do) contain videos of multiple types (even though they may specialize in one or two). Also, since YouTube is just a platform, the genre possibilities are limitless, and these specific four are only mentioned here because of their strong representation in the 116 most subscribed videos.

2.3.1. Vlog

According to Maximiliane Frobenius (2014), vlogs are *"a genre of computer-mediated communication (CMC) [that] feature a single speaker talking into a camera, employing multimodal elements that are regularly part of spoken interaction, such as gaze shifts, shifts in posture, shifts in facial expression, shifts in voice quality and pitch and also pointing. [...] An asynchronous, mediated monologue tailored to a non-present audience"* (2014, p. 59).

[66] With the exception of countries blocking YouTube for political or religious reasons, for an up-to-date list see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_of_YouTube

[67] Provided the user verifies her account using a one-time sms / voice call verification. By default, new accounts can upload videos that are limited to 15 minutes. See https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/71673.

[68] https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/183851?hl=en

[69] Users who choose to be notified when a channel releases a new video.

[70] Top 116 channels based in Czech Republic, with the most subscribers (75,000+) as of March 1, 2016, based on free statistics available from http://vidstatsx.com/youtube-top-100-most-subscribed-czech-republic-cz-channels, http://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/youtube/channels/czech-republic/, http://www.youtuberi.tv/top-youtuberi/ and custom search.

While otherwise useful, the definition has several points that need to be addressed: It seems to only consider videos with one participant in front of the camera to be vlogs, which is by no means a necessary requirement of the genre. There are many videos that feature more than one participant and still constitute a vlog. The important aspect is the participants' interaction with the camera, which makes the viewer feel like being a part of whatever is going on on the other side. So while usually technically a *monologue*[71], it is precisely the *multimodal elements* described (and the participant's addressing of the viewer), that turn it into an illusion of a face to face spoken interaction, and the additional interaction methods allowed for by the UGC platforms often turn it into an actual dialogue.

A vlogger is the prototypical YouTube celebrity, so the categories of *familiarity, authenticity, relatability* and *information value,* described at length in chapter 1.6, apply to her more than they apply to anyone else. Burgess & Green (2009) say that *"the vlog reminds us of the residual character of interpersonal face-to-face communication and provides an important point of difference between online video and television […] it is a form whose persistent direct address to the viewer inherently invites feedback"* (2009, p. 54).

Tolson (2010) illustrates this direct access on a video by the beauty vlogger Lauren Luke: *"Luke speaks directly to her viewers as a plural 'you'; there are deictic references to time ('today', 'now') and space ('here', 'this'); the monologue starts with a greeting; and Luke makes use of response demands which require viewer participation ('see that'). […] The effect is to construct co-presence and invite interaction even though of course, none of this is live"* (2010, p. 280).

The beginnings of vlogging (which at that point meant supplementing blog entries with small video files) are believed to have taken place in the year 2000 (Kaminsky, 2010, p. 37), but a commonly quoted milestone marking the history of modern vlogging is "the show with zefrank" (2006 - 2007), which *established some of the formal characteristics of the genre as it has been taken up in YouTube, particularly in terms of rapid editing and snappy performance to camera* (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 53).

Already in 2009, Burgess & Green found their research sample of YouTube videos dominated by vlogs: *"making up nearly 40 percent of the videos coded at Most Discussed and just over a quarter of the videos coded at Most Responded"* (2009, p. 53), and called it an emblematic form of YouTube participation (although not necessarily new or unique to the platform).

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[71] Although, as explained, it quite often is an actual dialogue between two or more participants in front of the camera.

*2.3.1.1. **Style Tutorials***

Style tutorials (also called beauty vlogs) are a specific sub-category of vlogs. Their authors (usually female) specialize in makeup tutorials, hairstyle tutorials, "hauls", cosmetic product reviews, "outfit of the day" videos, etc. Most of their channels, however, also feature other content typical for vloggers.

2.3.2. Let's Play

While video game strategy-guides have been around at least since the 1980s[72], and there were TV shows that regularly featured people playing and commenting on video games well before the era of modern online video[73], the form of a Let's Play (although at the time consisting of screen shots and textual commentary[74]) was arguably born around 2004, the term itself coined in 2005, and the first video Let's Plays appeared in 2007 (Klepek, 2015). The format (which typically features gameplay footage, audio commentary and often a small overlay window showing the player's face on camera) only needed a few years to become a worldwide sensation with more and more people every day opting to rather watch their favorite YouTuber play, than to play a game themselves.

To describe his relationship with the viewer, the most famous YouTube gamer PewDiePie says: *"We're gaming 'together' and many people see me as a friend they can chill with for 15 minutes a day. The loneliness in front of the computer screens brings us together. [...] I just want to invite them to come over to my place [...] It's like we're hanging out. It's as if you're sitting with a friend on the couch, you're playing games together"* (Lindholm, 2014).

Judging by the comments of his viewers, the feeling is mutual:

> *"When he plays those video games idk I just felt like he was playing beside me and not just playing by himself like even though he's not here, [...] somehow I felt he's here" (Darksnowy, 2014).*

The gaming group *Smosh Games* paint a similar picture: *"We're not just random hosts, we're actually friends who hang out and play video games, and that's what translates in our videos. We look like real people, and that's what people want to watch on YouTube. They feel like they*

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[72] https://youtu.be/saT2Ds98JQI
[73] Such as the Czech video game review magazine GamePage, which aired from 1998 and featured a celebrity guest playing a video game and commenting on it: https://youtu.be/0xfSLKJVKwk?t=7m34s
[74] http://effinslowbeef.com/MG2/mgi001.html

are a part of the group, which they are" (VanAlkemade, 2015). This goes to show that *familiarity* (1.6.1), or the viewer's relationship with the performer, is a key aspect of the format.

During the last couple of years, Let's Play developed into many forms ranging from what could be described as "Let's Play Comedy" – a short, fast paced montage of best moments / commentary from a play session of any given game, to complete, serious playthroughs several hours in length. Individual Let's Players are known for their specific styles and quite possibly the only thing that is common to all the main modern forms of the genre is some form of commentary.

2.4. Monetization

2.4.1. Traditional Models

While a film star's value could (at least in part) be determined by the box office results, this changed with broadcasting, where no direct payments were made by the audience, and anyone with a receiver could potentially tune in. When sales of receivers could no longer support the costs of programming, *"broadcasting became modalized around the selling [...] of audiences' time to advertisers"* (Marshall, 1997, p. 120).

The task of constructing audiences and packaging them for advertisers became the essential work of the TV industry. This, of course, determined the type of celebrity preferred by the medium. In other words, *"the sponsored nature of American television tends to construct celebrities who are inoffensive to the way in which television is involved in the perpetuation of consumer capitalism."* Where *"the film celebrity maintains an aura of distinction, the television celebrity's aura [...] is continually broken by the myriad messages and products that surround any television text"* (Marshall, 1997, p. 121).

In the beginnings of broadcast, radio and TV shows and personalities were closely connected to their sponsors. Shows bore the names of sponsors and products (i.e. the Colgate Comedy Hour[75]) and/or included product endorsement or the product being directly integrated into the show's content. This practice was later drastically reduced *"as networks attempted to gain control of programming and the construction of audiences"* (Marshall, 1997, p. 120).

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[75] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVrkI3Jh87Y

"American media function on the triangular basis of producers, consumers and advertisers. [They] have always been driven largely by market forces – forces that control production and distribution of audiovisual content through reaching audiences and profitable markets" (van Dijck, 2009, p. 46). This is equally true on YouTube: There is no magic "internet money"[76] used to pay content creators based on their popularity - apart from asking viewers to pay directly, there is only the act of building and selling audiences to advertisers.

2.4.2. History of Advertising on YouTube

YouTube first started selling advertising space in march 2006 (Yang, 2008, p. 212) and formed its first partnership with a major content provider, NBC, in June. Non-corporate YouTubers were first allowed to turn their video-hobbies into an ad-supported business in 2007, when the company opened its partner program to a selected group of its top users. A post on the official YouTube blog from May 3, 2007 details how and why the site's most popular content creators (hand-picked by YouTube, at that point) got promoted to partner status:

"Because they have built and sustained large, persistent audiences through the creation of engaging videos, their content has become attractive for advertisers, which has helped them earn the opportunity to participate on YouTube as a partner. Participating user-partners will be treated as other content partners" (who ranged from video game companies to universities to production houses) *"and will have the ability to control the monetization of the videos they create. Once they've selected a video to be monetized, we'll place advertising adjacent to their content so participating user-partners can reap the rewards from their work"* (Google, 2007a)

In a blogpost from December 10, 2007 YouTube announced expanding the YouTube Partner Program, meaning that from that point on anyone living in the United States or Canada could apply. However, the program was still aimed only at the most dedicated community members: *"In evaluating applications, we will focus on the users who have built a significant audience on YouTube (as measured by video views, subscribers, etc.) and who consistently comply with the YouTube Terms of Use"* (Google, 2007b).

This marks a key turning point in the history of YouTube (and online video), because from this point on, creating an audience also had the prospect of getting paid with real money, not just the uncertain worth of internet celebrity[77].

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[76] http://southpark.cc.com/clips/165197/10-million-theoretical-dollars
[77] http://southpark.cc.com/clips/165199/the-promise-of-future-revenue

While other major social networks don’t pay their content creators[78] (Twitter) or even make them pay for showing their content to their own followers (Facebook[79]), YouTube’s ad revenue sharing allowed many to build a business via earning money through the platform itself and helped establish the present-day meaning of the term YouTuber (cf. 1.6.3).

The partner program started rolling out internationally in January 2008 when it opened in the United Kingdom (Google, 2008a) and reached the Czech Republic in 2010 (Google, 2010). On April 12, 2012 YouTube removed the program's requirements of video views and subscribers and as of April 2016, the YouTube Partner Program is available in more than 60 countries worldwide and *“uploaders in these countries can become YouTube partners by enabling their YouTube accounts, and successfully monetizing at least one of their videos”* (Google, 2012).

*2.4.2.1. **Multi-channel Networks***

Multi-Channel Networks (sometimes referred to as MCNs or simply “networks”) such as Fullscreen, Vevo or Maker Studios[80] emerged as *“entities that affiliate with multiple YouTube channels, often to offer content creators assistance in areas including product, programming, funding, cross-promotion, partner management, digital rights management, monetization/sales, and/or audience development*” (“Multi-channel network…”, n.d.). They stand between the creator and YouTube and: offer protection from copyright infringement and content ID flags[81], while at the same time allowing its members to enforce claims on the videos of others; allow the creator to monetize cover songs / videos[82]; provide customer support; may offer access to production and editing facilities[83]; may facilitate brand deals or partner collaborations. They turn a profit by taking a percentage (typically 5-40% depending on the network, channel performance and contract [Sugi, 2014]) of the ad revenue YouTube gives its creators, which may or may not lead to a lower total revenue for the creator, as the network is usually able to sell ads at a higher rate (Vidthoughts, 2013).

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[78] *“The world-wide web [...] was envisioned as a new frontier space where grassroots initiatives, communal spirit and ‘free’ amateur culture had a chance to blossom. Labour critics and neo-Marxist scholars noticed early on how the glamorization of the digital domain was a convenient pretense for the mobilization of immaterial labour”* (van Dijck, 2009, p. 50).

[79] In 2016, Facebook appears to be testing its own system of revenue sharing for video content creators (Spangler, 2015).

[80] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_multi-channel_networks for a list of notable MCNs.

[81] https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/6013276

[82] Depending on the respective MCN’s legal arrangements with rights holders, see http://newmediarockstars.com/2013/02/universal-music-publishing-group-announces-partnership-with-fullscreen-and-maker-studios/

[83] http://newmediarockstars.com/2013/04/big-frame-moves-into-larger-headquarters-with-dedicated-production-and-sound-studios/

2.4.3. YouTube as a Job

In the early days of YouTube, if there was financial motivation behind a YouTuber's activities, it usually took the form of what Kuehn and Corrigan. (2013) call *"hope labor - a motivation for voluntary online social production, defined as un- or under-compensated work carried out in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow"*[84] (2013, p. 9). The opening of YouTube partnerships to the public (see 2.4.2) changed this notion, because from that point on, advertisement money was also available to relatively small creators. In the eyes of the press, YouTube gradually turned into a place where 21-year-olds become millionaires through gaming and vlogging (Robinson, 2015) and where *"If you haven't started your own [...] channel yet, now's the time"* (Henderson, 2015).

In an article called *The $1,000 CPM*, Hank Green, a well-known successful YouTuber[85], explains that even though considering the average YouTube ad rate of $2 per thousand views ($2 CPM) he would have made around $2 million in ad revenue over the previous 8 years, he actually spent over $4 million creating the videos. He mentions three YouTube-specific genres that are cheap enough to produce to "make it work" financially: vlogs, video game Let's Plays and style tutorials. More complicated content, he says, is usually too expensive to make to turn a profit: *"Narrative content has existed mostly as aspirational, money-losing, pre-pilot pilots for TV shows. Even content that TV people consider dirt cheap (like game shows, talk shows, and reality shows) is hard to produce with online video budgets"* (Green, 2015). Consider, for example, the band OK GO, known for their intricately staged music videos, whose manager was quoted saying that: *"YouTube revenue is so small based on how many streams we've done that I would say that it's not a business model, it's like finding change on the street"* (O'Neill, 2012). According to Green, possibly the only genre that successfully converted from TV to YouTube (and in this particular case Vine[86]) is sketch comedy, *"which has always had more to do with the skills of its creators than its budgets"* (Green, 2015).

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[84] *"Many amateurs take pride in developing their skills and dream of turning their hobby into a profession. Tinkering with media technologies has been the department of hobbyists since the time of radio hams, and digital labour has acquired the image of being creative play. [...] Labour volunteered to UGC sites is thus not conceived of as work, but as fun or play"* (van Dijck, 2009, p. 51).

[85] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hank_Green

[86] https://vine.co/

While PewDiePie's 2015 earnings of $12 million continue to grab the headlines[87,88], *"being a part of YouTube's 'middle class' often means grappling daily with the cognitive dissonance of a full comments section and an empty wallet"* (Dunn, 2015). As YouTuber Gaby Dunn points out, *"the disconnect between internet fame and financial security is hard to comprehend for both creators and fans - many famous social media stars are too visible to have 'real' jobs, but too broke not to."* Consider the story of beauty vlogger Rachel Whitehurst (160 thousand subscribers) who *"was forced to quit her job at Starbucks because fans memorized her schedule"* (Dunn, 2015).

The channel Dunn co-runs, has 637 thousand subscribers, yet despite this apparent success, she reports they're *"just barely scraping by. Our channel exists in that YouTube no-man's-land: Brands think we're too small to sponsor, but fans think we're too big for donations."*

Green suggests that the content surviving on YouTube is a direct result of the low ad revenue putting a dramatic emphasis on quantity and getting the most views (or rather watch time[89]), which results in gaming channels releasing even multiple videos per day to stay profitable (Green, 2015).

At this point, major ways of making money on YouTube include:

- **Ad revenue:** The standard way of monetizing videos and the primary source of income for most YouTubers - displaying of advertisements (display ads; overlay ads; skippable video ads; non-skippable video ads and long, non-skippable video ads; sponsored cards[90]) served by YouTube (via the AdSense auction, or on a reservation basis via DoubleClick and other YouTube-sold sources [Google, n.d.-b]). For regular YouTube partnerships the ad revenue split is 55% for the creator, 45% for YouTube (Perez, 2015). If the creator is part of an MCN (see 2.4.2.1), the 55% revenue is further split with the network. AdSense pays out a minimum amount of $100.

[87] https://variety.com/2015/digital/news/pewdiepie-youtube-top-earner-12-million-1201619802/
[88] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/pewdiepie-youtube-top-earner_us_5620f87ae4b069b4e1fbad83

[89] *"Watch Time is an important metric to promote videos on YouTube. The algorithm for suggesting videos includes prioritizing videos that lead to a longer overall viewing session over those that receive more clicks"* (Google, n.d.-f).

[90] For an overview, see: https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2467968?hl=en

- **Donations:** In selected countries (Czech Republic not being one of them), YouTube offers a "tip jar" called Fan Funding[91], which (once activated) allows users to send one-time donations (with a 5% commission + transaction fees [Google, n.d.-c]) to their favorite creators. The most popular internationally available service for recurring (per month or per video) donations is Patreon[92] (5% commission + transaction fees [Patreon, n.d.]), where several YouTube channels have been earning up to $30,000 per month.[93]
- **Brand deals**: sponsoring, product placement, endorsement and other forms of advertisement that constitute a part of the video itself (discussed at length in chapter 2.4.4)
- **Referral /affiliate programs**: typically in the form of tracked (affiliate) links in the description of a video that lead to the sales-page of services or products mentioned in the video.

What Green's article suggests is that smaller creators might consider the move from trying to make a living on advertisement money towards what he calls a "just ask" model of being supported by their loyal viewers through small, recurring donations (e.g. on Patreon), because *"it encourages a different kind of content. Instead of challenging creators to figure out how to get the highest view counts, creators have to puzzle out how to make the most valuable content"* (Green, 2015). He gives the example of Lindsey Doe, a clinical sexologist whose weekly "Sexplanations" videos reach 20,000 to 50,000 people and she makes $5,000 per month through donations on Patreon.[94]

While "YouTube money" isn't necessarily "easy money" for everybody, it is certainly possible to make a living as a YouTuber. The platform has also moved past the stage where YouTube fame only counted as fame after it was picked up by traditional mass media, and the site's function was only to pave the way to recognized celebrity status (cf. van Dijck, 2009, p. 53). YouTube of 2016 is a place where celebrity can begin and grow, but also a place where it can successfully exist in its fully grown-up form and be recognized by the outside world without the help of traditional media.[95]

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[91] https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/6050322?hl=en&ref_topic=6050317
[92] https://www.patreon.com/
[93] https://graphtreon.com/

[94] Given the average $2 CPM on YouTube, she would have to reach at least 2.5 million views per month to earn this amount of money with ads, and she probably would have to reach even more, because her content tends to be flagged as "non-brand safe", which means a limited selection of ads that can be shown along with her videos.

[95] We can sometimes see attempts of new media celebrities to transition into mainstream media. In part because the traditionally perceived hierarchy of celebrity still puts TV above new media (see 1.5), and also because

2.4.3.1. ***Authenticity and Paid Promotions***

"One of the biggest concerns that the audience has, is authenticity - is the person that I'm talking to authentic, or are they being paid?" (VanAlkemade, 2015).

According to a research by Defy Media, young people tend to view ads as something that gets in the way of fulfilling their needs (Defy Media, 2016), and 52% install ad blockers to prevent such interruptions (Defy Media, 2016b). It is precisely because young people say that "online" offers a better chance of avoiding or ignoring advertising, that the authors of the *Acumen Report: Constant Content* suggest using *"native solutions that marry content with advertising."* (Defy Media, 2015a). However, while YouTube's AdSense ads might be seen as a necessary evil (Defy Media, 2016), they are clearly identifiable as ads and are generally seen as something more or less out of the YouTuber's control: teenagers *"have a strong affinity for digital celebrities, [they are] more receptive when they understand how ads help [YouTubers] create the videos [they] crave"* (Defy Media, 2016b). Some turn their ad blocker off for their favorite YouTubers and *"they are much more amenable to formats that don't interfere with their need fulfillment."* The audience's response to obvious hidden advertising (see 2.4.4), one of the more popular ways of *"marrying content with advertising",* on the other hand, is often unforgiving. As Matt Edwards puts it: *"The risks for corporations working with [YouTubers] come down to a trade off; allow them to be themselves and risk upsetting your audience, or align them with your brand and risk them losing theirs"* (Edwards, 2016).

It is not just hidden advertising that poses a threat to a YouTuber's reputation among her viewership. Online culture, Gaby Dunn (2015) explains, *"has often placed emphasis on both social justice and purity."* While many musicians, movie actors or company CEOs are allowed to show their wealth and often revered for it, when a celebrity's appeal (and business model) is built on "*hey, I'm just like you"*, sponsor mentions and endorsements can break the illusion, in part because they highlight the fact that the YouTuber is using his audience to make money.

This brings us back to the difference between what Marshall describes as auras of *distance* and *familiarity* and that, as described in chapter 1.6, YouTubers are seen more as friends than rock stars and that the familial relationship with them is built in part on a belief in their honesty and authenticity, in a sense the very opposites of advertising.

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broadcasters started to notice the power of YouTubers' audiences and want to harness it. Jeteendr Sehdev warns that this is a very tricky transition and has to be done very carefully: *"If that level of authenticity, if the original content and ideas that are coming from the digital influencer can be translated into mainstream media in the purest form, that is going to work. However, if it is going to be an attempt for a digital star to somehow become a traditional mainstream celebrity, that's going to fall flat on its face. [...] They can certainly transition, but it's got to be with the right vehicle. They've got to maintain the reason why their audiences are engaged with them from the get-go"* (Peterson, 2015).

Pokorná (2013) found that viewers' trust in a beauty vlogger's review was weakened and they questioned its objectivity when they learned that the item reviewed was provided by a commercial subject, but also that this trust was dependent on the long term viewer-vlogger relationship and the vlogger's history of reviewing honesty. The vloggers interviewed by the author made a sharp distinction between promotion based on "giving air time" (the reviewer is compensated for making a review but not specifically for making a positive one) and advertising (pushing the product regardless of personal opinion of it) (2013, pp. 87–90).

Fryčová (2016) concludes that the bigger the share of paid promotions in a vlogger's production, the lower her credibility and general popularity. Viewers usually tolerate sponsoring and paid promotions, but these activities mustn't outbalance the original intent and philosophy of beauty vlogging. Too much commercialization may easily cause the vlogger to stop being viewed as a friend and advisor, and instead become an ad (2016, pp. 52–55).

A good summary of the matter comes from the UK based Advertising Standards Authority: "*Ultimately, it pays to be honest. Vloggers build their fan base on the originality and authenticity of the material they produce. It's potentially damaging to their reputation to be found to have hidden the fact that the content they're producing is paid for and controlled by an advertiser"* (ASA, 2014).

2.4.4. Hidden Advertising

In June 2014, a group of UK vloggers were paid to do a series of videos called the "Oreo Lick Race". After a complaint was raised with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and investigated, it turned out, that the videos were insufficiently labeled as advertisement. The ASA concluded that the disclosure statements did not fully establish the commercial intent of the videos and because no disclosures were made before consumer engagement with the material, the ads could not be considered obviously identifiable as marketing communications (Sweney, 2014).

In the article *Making ads clear: The challenge for advertisers and vloggers* the ASA subsequently explained that: "*It's important that we understand when we're being marketed to so that we can make informed decisions about what we're being told. [...] if it's appearing in a format that we'd normally expect to be non-promotional, we should be told up front about whether it's an ad so that we can decide whether we want to continue viewing"* (ASA, 2014).

The Committee of Advertising Practice (part of the ASA, henceforth referred to as CAP) states in a 2014 article called *Video blogs: Advertisement features* that:

- Vlog ads must be obviously identifiable: *"marketers need to ensure the presentation of their ad makes it clear that it is an ad."*
- Labelling must be timely: *"Viewers need to know they are selecting an ad to view before they watch it. This means making a distinction between ads and editorial based content so viewers can make an informed choice. Finding out something is an ad after having selected it, at the end of a video or half way through is not sufficient."*
- Labelling must be clear: *"the phrase "Thanks to Oreo for making this video possible" might indicate to some viewers that Oreo had been involved in the process; however, they did not clearly indicate that there was a commercial relationship between the advertiser and the vloggers"* (CAP, 2014).

Several potential scenarios are then covered in the 2015 article *Video blogs: Scenarios*[96]*:*

- **Online marketing by a brand**: videos starring YouTubers, but shared via the brand's channels – obvious advertisement, no extra labels necessary
- **"Advertorial" vlogs**: a video in the vlogger's usual style, shared via his usual channels, but the content is controlled by a brand and the blogger is paid for it (not necessarily with money). [Such a video] *"needs to be labelled upfront so that viewers are aware and understand that it is an advertorial before engaging."*
- **Commercial breaks within vlogs**: it is unnecessary to label the whole vlog as an advert, if the ad itself only takes a small part of it. It does, however, need to be clear, when the advertisement starts: *"This could potentially be done in a variety of ways, for example: onscreen text stating "ad", "ad feature", holding up a sign, incorporating the brand's logo, or by the vlogger simply explaining that they've been paid to talk about the product."* Videos on the Film Riot channel are a decent example of this technique[97].
- **Product placement**: *"A product might be used as a 'prop' along with messages that have been controlled by the advertiser within a vlog that is largely editorial."* The vlogger might create a Let's Play video and be paid to feature a specific laptop brand

[96] An extract of these guidelines is also available as an animated YouTube video called *Vloggers, bloggers and brands: a short guide to the ad rules:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Lyvxjt2Hfw
[97] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJDbwgDm8_8 (note the "commercial break" at 3:42)

and say prearranged things about it. Similarly to the previous case, the vlogger must explain that they've been paid to do so.

- **Vlogger's video about their own product**: *"This is still a marketing communication so the vlogger will need to ensure that their viewers are aware of this before selecting it."* Titles such as *"I'm excited about my promotional/book/album tour"* or *"new product news"* should be sufficient.
- **Editorial video referring to vlogger's products**: *"I'm currently using the new headphones I've just released; you can purchase them through the link below."* No need for labeling.
- **Sponsorship**: *"A brand sponsors a vlogger to create a video but has no control over the content."* No extra labeling necessary.
- **Free items**: If there are no conditions attached (the blogger is not bound to review the product - he may or may not), no labeling is necessary. If reviewing the product is the sole condition (not, for example, positivity of the review itself), the incentive should be revealed to the audience (CAP, 2015).

The CAP goes as far as to discourage the use of several popular "diplomatic" disclosure phrases such as *"sponsored*, *supported by*, *funded by*, or *thanks to X for making this possible"*, because they do not imply the brand's direct control over the content. Instead, it recommends using labels such as *"advertisement feature*, *ad*, *ad feature*, or *advertorial."* Similarly, the institution notes that it is not enough to put the disclosure into the video's description, as that section is not immediately visible on all viewing devices: *"[...] including an appropriate label early in the title of the vlog or using an appropriate label in the thumbnail are likely to be ways of ensuring that viewers know that the vlog is an advertorial before engaging with it"* (CAP, 2015).

As a response, Fleur de Force, a well-known British YouTuber, told BBC Newsbeat that: *"If you're producing a 30 second piece of sponsored content within a 10 or 15-minute video, it's not necessarily the focus of the content [...]. It does need to be clear but we need to work out a better way than putting it in the title"* (Newsbeat, 2014).

PewDiePie's latest "advert videos" are a good example of a realistic, real-world application of the principles. The video *MAKE LOVE TO A FLY!? (Swap The Fly)*[98] begins with PewDiePie saying: *"So you clicked on a fly lovemaking video? Good choice. You're also in luck, because*

[98] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGGURBJrJz0

this video was sponsored by Full Sail. Full Sail University has a programme about making video games just like this one, so if you're interested in game development, check out the link in the description. Now let's get into the fly business". The description begins with an obvious disclosure: *"Paid Promotion for Full Sail University"* (PewDiePie, 2016).

The video *Disney Princess - Jillian's Surprise Big Dream*[99] from the EvanTubeHD channel is another good example of clearly identifiable advertising content:

- It begins with the main protagonist saying: *"Hey guys, we received free products and paid support from Hasbro and Jakks to make this really cool video. Dolls, playsets, and dress up sold separately, thanks for checking it out!"*
- There's clearly visible text at the top of the video for the first 25 seconds (10% of the video) saying: *"Free products and paid support provided by Hasbro and Jakks."*
- The description of the video begins with: *"Free Disney Princess products and paid support provided by Hasbro and Jakks Pacific. Check out the Disney Princess toys in this video and more at Target. Dolls, playsets, and dress up sold separately"* (EvanTubeHD, 2016).

Neither of these videos disclose their advertising orientation in the title or thumbnail, however, they do disclose it in the video before beginning with the actual content. This is what the US based Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recommends in their comprehensive F.A.Q. called *The FTC's Endorsement Guides: What People Are Asking* (2015). They write that: *"the disclosure has the most chance of being effective if it is made clearly and prominently in the video itself."*

The FTC doesn't require disclosing that product placement was paid-for by the advertiser, unless the host endorses the product (and product placement becomes endorsement): *"even if she is just playing the game and saying something like "wow, this is awesome" – it's more than a product placement. If the payment for the endorsement isn't expected by the audience and it would affect the weight the audience gives the endorsement, it should be disclosed."*

FTC's guidelines go into even more detail than those of the CAP and go on to cover specific scenarios such as posting on social networks: *"If you write about how much you like something you bought on your own and you're not being rewarded, you don't have to worry. However, if you're doing it as part of a sponsored campaign or you're being compensated – for example, getting a discount on a future purchase or being entered into a sweepstakes for a significant prize – then a disclosure is appropriate"* (FTC, 2015).

[99] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtW9i5T9QMM

2.4.4.1. ***YouTube Ad Policies***

YouTube defines product placements as *"pieces of content that are created [specifically] for a third party and/or where that third party's brand, message, or product is integrated directly into the content,"* and endorsements as "*pieces of content created for an advertiser or marketer that contain a message that consumers are likely to believe reflects the opinions, beliefs, or experiences of the content creator or endorser"* (Google, n.d.-d).

They require creators to notify them about the use of paid product placement or endorsement (by checking the appropriate box in the video's Advanced Settings tab during upload). This is meant to prevent conflicts with certain types of advertising served through YouTube monetization: *"if you upload a video with brand mentions and product placements for Car Company A, then it would present a conflict to sell ad space around that video to Car Company B"* (Google, n.d.-d).

In one of last year's updates, YouTube Ad Policies were further clarified to prohibit the use of overlay sponsor logos (except within the first 5 and the last 30 seconds for the purpose of disclosing a commercial relationship) and any other baked-in ads similar in format to those served by YouTube: *"YouTube creators can not include promotions, sponsorships or other advertisements for third party sponsors or advertisers in their videos where YouTube offers a comparable ad format, including but not limited to video ads (pre, mid and post rolls), image overlays and video bumpers*" (Google, n.d.-e).

2.4.4.2. ***Czech Legislation***

A similarly comprehensive F.A.Q. based on Czech law is yet to be created. The Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV) offers some basic explanations about product placement and, among other things, defines what could be considered inappropriate emphasizing of a product:

- unsubstantiated mentioning of a product beyond the show's narrative context in order to bring attention to the product and awaken the viewer's interest in it
- highlighting and praising the qualities of the product
- unnatural amount of appearance of a single product
- providing the seller's (or service provider's) contact details
- emphasizing the product by visual means (detailed shots of the product without apparent dramaturgical and directional justification)[100] (RRTV, n.d.)

Until 2015, hidden advertising used to be explicitly prohibited in §2 of Act No. 40/1995 Coll., on Regulation of Advertising: *"Such an advertisement for the purposes of this Act means something that is difficult to distinguish as an advertisement, namely because it has not been identified as such."*[101, 102] This was removed in part because of duplicity with §5a of the Consumer Protection Act (No. 634/1992 Coll.) which prohibits the so called deceptive omission (an unfair business practice) defined as not stating the business objective of a practice that could lead the consumer to make a purchase decision they wouldn't have otherwise made[103].

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[100] Jako nepatřičné zdůrazňování produktu může být mimo jiné vyhodnoceno: a) neopodstatněné zmiňování produktu nad rámec dějového kontextu s cílem na produkt upozornit a vzbudit divákův zájem o produkt b) vyzdvihování a vychvalování kvalit produktu c) nepřirozená kumulace výskytu jediného produktu d) uvedení kontaktu (adresy, www stránek, telefonního kontaktu) na prodejce produktu či poskytovatele služby e) zdůrazňování produktu obrazovými prostředky (detaily produktu bez zjevného dramaturgicko-režijního opodstatnění)

[101] http://www.tobaccocontrollaws.org/files/live/Czech%20Republic/Czech%20Republic%20-%20Law%20No.%2040-1995%20on%20Ads%20.pdf

[102] Takovou reklamou se pro účely tohoto zákona rozumí reklama, u níž je obtížné rozlišit, že se jedná o reklamu, zejména proto, že není jako reklama označena

[103] Za klamavé opomenutí se také považuje, pokud prodávající [...] neuvede obchodní záměr obchodní praktiky, není-li patrný ze souvislosti, a pokud to [...] vede nebo může vést spotřebitele k rozhodnutí ohledně koupě, které by jinak neučinil.

§8 of the On-Demand Audiovisual Media Services Act (No. 132/2010 Coll.) prohibits hidden (surreptitious) audiovisual commercial communications defined in §2 as *"the oral or visual presentation of goods, services, the name, trademark or activity of a producer of goods or provider of services, included by the on-demand audiovisual media service provider in a programme, if such a presentation intentionally follows an advertising objective and if it may mislead the public as to the nature of the presentation; such a presentation is considered as intentional when it is provided in return for payment or similar consideration."*[104,105] Even though this particular act only serves to regulate on-demand audiovisual media services based in the Czech Republic, its general rhetoric signals a particular way of looking at hidden advertising.

The applicable EU directive ES/2005/29 (concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market) and the related unfair practices Black List[106] speak of: *"Advertorials: "Mixed messages" - Using editorial content in the media to promote a product where a trader has paid for the promotion without making that clear in the content or by images or sounds clearly identifiable by the consumer (advertorial)." This is without prejudice to Council Directive 89/552/EEC."* The Black List continues with an example of hidden advertising: "*an article in a travel magazine on trekking in Norway includes descriptions on how excellent a certain brand of camping gear is for this kind of trip, for which the producer of the camping gear has contributed financially to the article, if the readers are not informed of this"* (European Commission, 2006).

The legal foundations of proper advertising seem to be similar in the US, UK, EU and the Czech Republic. Due to the steep rise in local YouTuber advertising deals in the past year, it seems necessary to create an easily accessible best practices / guidelines / F.A.Q. legal document on how to properly handle it (similar to the ones published by the FTC and the CAP), because right now the vast majority of Czech YouTuber advertising does not adhere to any rules that are not explicitly enforced by YouTube itself (see 2.4.4.1), and a significant proportion of it most likely breaks the law, possibly without the YouTubers realizing it and the marketers having to worry about it because of a lack of clear regulation.

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[104] http://www.mkcr.cz/assets/media-a-audiovize/132_2010-EN.doc

[105] Skrytým audiovizuálním obchodním sdělením slovní nebo obrazová prezentace zboží, služeb, jména nebo názvu, ochranné známky nebo činnosti výrobce zboží nebo poskytovatele služeb v pořadech, jestliže poskytovatel audiovizuální mediální služby na vyžádání záměrně uvede takovou prezentaci s reklamním cílem a mohl by tak uvést veřejnost v omyl o povaze této prezentace; prezentace se považuje za záměrnou zejména tehdy, je-li prováděna za úplatu nebo obdobnou protihodnotu.

[106] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/consumer-marketing/unfair-trade/unfair-practices/is-it-fair/pdf/ucp_en.pdf

3. Analysis of Facebook users' page-likes

3.1. Introduction

This research attempts, using quantitative research methods and data collected in the Czech Republic, to test researcher and media claims that YouTubers have become more popular among teenagers than any traditional type of celebrity[107,108,109,110]. The central hypothesis is that **teenagers are more interested** (see 3.1.1) **in YouTubers than in traditional celebrities**. Facebook page like data from profiles of teenagers (130 individuals aged 12-15 collected by the means of quota sampling for the pilot study and 5,161 aged 13-17 by snowball technique for the final research) will be used to compare traditional celebrities (musicians, actors, athletes, etc.) to the content creators of YouTube.

The research will use frequency analysis to create a chart mapping the popularity of individual Facebook pages among the sampled teenagers (top list). Celebrity pages in this top list will be identified and coded with the appropriate tags in order to determine the celebrity structure of the individual levels of the top list (e.g. top 25; top 100; top 1,000[111]).

The main hypothesis has the following operational definition: More teenagers like[112] the most popular YouTubers than they like the most popular traditional celebrities (the aggregate of YouTuber pages in the top 25 will have more total likes among the sample than the aggregate of traditional celebrity pages in the same range).

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[107] https://variety.com/2014/digital/news/survey-youtube-stars-more-popular-than-mainstream-celebs-among-u-s-teens-1201275245/

[108] https://variety.com/2015/digital/news/YouTubers-teen-survey-ksi-pewdiepie-1201544882/

[109] http://www.defymedia.com/acumen/acumen-report-constant-content/

[110] http://www.techinsider.io/why-teens-like-youtube-stars-2015-11

[111] The "slices" were made at these more or less fixed positions to maintain a certain level of consistency between the pilot and the much larger final research. Calculating these positions from immediate data would, using most methods, result in wildly different slices for the pilot and final researches (e.g. using the measure of popularity in the sample and defining the middle slice as "top 10% popularity" would result in it being top 328 in the pilot and top 188 in the final research, and while the larger slice, say, "top 5%" would correspond directly to the top 992 of the pilot, the final research would put it at top 661). The slices used correspond to top 27%, top 17% and top 5% popularity in the pilot and top 20%, top 13.08% and top 3.62% popularity in the final research.

[112] For the purpose of this research, the verb "like" represents the act of becoming what used to be called a "fan" of a Facebook page, resulting in the user "following" the page (receiving updates) and having that page shown in the user's list of likes on their profile.

3.1.1. Motivation for Liking Facebook Pages

The research of Elaine Wallace (2014) suggests a Facebook fan typology based on empirical analysis of users' personal and social characteristics and brand relationships. The author ends up dividing her subjects (438 undergraduate students aged 18-24) into four clusters:

- **Fan-atics** (23% of Wallace's sample; *"Highly engaged – on Facebook and offline"*)
- **Utilitarians** (20%; like brands to get incentives)
- **Self-expressives** (38%; like brands to make an impression on others)
- **Authentics** (19%; genuinely like the brand and are unconcerned with image)

The results (see Figure 2) suggest "genuine interest"[113] to be a more significant motivation for liking a Facebook page than "image creation"[114] or "incentives"[115] regardless of the cluster. Even if the "utilitarian" cluster were to be discounted for having the lowest "genuine interest" in the page's updates (and by far the lowest "brand love"), that would still mean around 80% users are genuinely interested in the brands they like on Facebook. We could further argue that "brand love" is a fairly irrelevant metric for an online celebrity, because as long as the user "likes" the celebrity's Facebook page, they consume at least part of the celebrity's "product" regardless of their attitude towards said celebrity (unlike many regular brands, where the disconnect between liking a Facebook page and buying a product can be significant[116]).

	Fan-atics	**Utilitarians**	**Self-expressives**	**Authentics**
Reason: **Genuine Interest**	Highest (4.15)	Lowest (3.32)	Medium (3.58)	High (3.75)
Reason: **Image Creation**	Highest (3.72)	Lowest (2.63)	High (3.13)	Low (2.78)
Reason: **Incentive**	Medium (2.18)	Medium (2.15)	Medium (2.20)	Low (1.86)
Brand Love	*Highest (4.54)*	*Lowest (2.72)*	*Medium (3.37)*	*High (3.96)*

Figure 2 – Facebook fan clusters; 5-point scale (Wallace et al., 2014).

These results allow us to assume that even though there are bound to be differences between Czech teenagers and Irish undergraduates (such as a theoretically higher probability of peer pressure among teenagers), their primary motivation for liking Facebook pages of celebrities should be genuine interest in their content as well.

[113] *"I really want to know more about this brand; Having updates from this brand on my news feed keeps me up to date; The news feeds from the brand I "Like" are useful to me in the short term." (Wallace, Buil, de Chernatony, & Hogan, 2014)*

[114] *"My friends like the brand; "Like"ing this brand shows off my taste to other people; Having updates from this brand on my news feed makes my Facebook page look good."*

[115] *"I received a discount for clicking "Like"; My friend asked me to "Like" the brand; I entered a competition by clicking "Like"; There was a campaign to reach a target number of "Likes"*

[116] As suggested by Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Sharp, 2012 and Wallace, Buil, de Chernatony, & Hogan, 2014

3.1.2. General Limitations

The research is limited to teenagers with Facebook accounts. Some researchers suggest, that young people are switching from traditional use of social networks to only using messaging apps and that *"their photos, updates, likes and dislikes are increasingly shared only in closed gardens like group chat and Snapchat"* (Duncan, 2016), while others show that usage of Facebook among teenagers is still significant[117].

Facebook likes are an inherently limited source of information. All they say is that a relationship between the user and the page exists, nothing about its quality. The method chosen for data collection & processing assigns the same value to a page the user liked years ago, unfollowed and then never visited again, as it assigns to pages she interacts with on a daily basis (although the practice of unfollowing a page while still "liking" it isn't necessarily widespread).

It could be argued that judging the relative importance of traditional celebrities in a medium native to online celebrities puts them at an immediate disadvantage. While it might be true that not all traditional celebrities maintain a strong online presence, social networks may very well be the only place where traditional celebrities, new media celebrities and regular people coexist in the same space and communicate using the same set of tools. The only "fair" alternative imaginable is asking people directly (e.g. using a questionnaire), which brings with it its own set of limitations and would be incapable of providing a complex picture comparable to, for example, the top 1000 in this research.

[117] http://www.defymedia.com/acumen/acumen-report-constant-content/

3.2. Pilot Research

3.2.1. Methodology

*3.2.1.1. **Data Collection***

The pilot research employs a nonprobability variation of stratified sampling (quota sampling), with the addition of several probability steps (as explained further). To identify potential sources of test subjects, a list[118] of the 14 regions of Czech Republic was used in conjunction with an online catalogue of schools[119]. Randomly picked elementary schools from the list were then searched for using Facebook search. Provided a school had an active Facebook page, that page was searched for the first student fitting the specified target age group (12-15). For a profile to become part of the research, the particular elementary school had to be listed under its "Work and Education" category, its page likes and friend list had to be publicly visible, and the person had to look to be 12-15 years old from her photos. The first such person found was used either directly as a test subject, or indirectly as a source of other test subjects.

Once the profile was selected for the sample (after establishing that it fits the target group), the URIs of all the pages listed under facebook.com/[USERNAME]/likes were manually collected and stored in a spreadsheet for future analysis.

3.2.1.1.1. Age Considerations

There is, unfortunately, no easy way of getting a user's real age from her public Facebook profile, unless she manually sets this information to be publicly visible, and methods of guessing age from photos are naturally prone to error. A profile was removed from consideration for the pilot if a significant proportion of people in its friend list listed a high school under “Work and Education” and/or seemed to be of high school age (suggesting that the user is actually older and hasn't updated her info).

The goal was to obtain a sample that was as evenly spread across the proposed age group as possible (as opposed to all participants being 14-15, in which case the aforementioned method of verifying a user’s age proved to be effective). It was thus inevitable that some users 10-11 years old end up on the list, as there is no definite way of reliably distinguishing a Facebook profile of an 11-year-old from a profile of a 12-year-old. The vast majority of the pilot sample, however, belongs to the 12-15 age group – even though the total range is more likely to be 10-16.

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[118] https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kraje_v_%C4%8Cesku#P.C5.99ehled_kraj.C5.AF
[119] http://www.atlasskolstvi.cz/zakladni-skoly

3.2.1.1.2. Geographic and Gender Distribution

In order for the pilot sample to be as geographically representative of the Czech Republic as possible, it was necessary for it to be proportional to the distribution of the target group across the country. The necessary data[120] were downloaded from the Czech Statistical Office. As seen in Figure 3, the Central Bohemia region (Středočeský kraj) had approximately four times as many children aged 12-15 as the Karlovy Vary region (Karlovarský kraj), and as such required four times the sample size. The initially planned sample size of 100 was adjusted to 130 to better fit the distribution criteria.

Region	Children (12-15)	Proposed sample size	Sample locations
Středočeský	47,134	**17**	Kolín, Rakovník, Mladá Boleslav, Benešov, Čáslav, Vlašim, Kutná hora
Moravskoslezský	43,710	**15**	Opava, Frýdek Místek, Šenov, Nový Jičín, Karviná, Ostrava,
Jihomoravský	39,181	**14**	Břeclav, Hodonín, Brno, Veselí nad Moravou, Znojmo
Hlavní město Praha	34,630	**12**	Praha
Ústecký	31,021	**11**	Jiříkov, Litoměřice, Louny, Ústí nad Labem
Jihočeský	22,983	**8**	Strakonice, České Budějovice, Prachatice
Olomoucký	22,391	**8**	Přerov, Olomouc, Prostějov
Zlínský	20,934	**7**	Zlín, Kroměříž, Napajedla
Plzeňský	19,742	**7**	Domažlice, Klatovy, Tachov
Královéhradecký	19,727	**7**	Trutnov, Hradec králové, Náchod
Pardubický	18,854	**7**	Svitavy, Pardubice, Chrudim,
Kraj Vysočina	18,551	**7**	Havlíčkův brod, Veselice, Třebíč
Liberecký	16,250	**6**	Liberec, Česká lípa, Nový bor
Karlovarský	10,810	**4**	Karlovy vary, Sokolov, Cheb
TOTALS	**365,918**	**130**	

Figure 3 - geographic distribution of the pilot sample

Data from the Czech Statistical Office also indicated that there were approximately 6% more boys (188,268) than girls (177,650) aged 12-15 in the Czech Republic. The sample was further manipulated to reflect this fact and eventually contained 67 boys and 63 girls.

[120] https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20555901/1300641501.pdf

Figure 4 - Each point on the map represents 2-3 people in the sample (except for Prague, where it represents 12).

3.2.1.1.3. Pilot Limitations

It is possible that there is a difference between page liking behaviors of teenagers with publicly visible Facebook likes and those with stricter levels of privacy settings, making this pilot research only valid for the first group. The final research doesn't suffer from this limitation, as it is not limited to publicly visible likes.

All pilot subjects attended an elementary school. The eight-year and six-year gymnázium[121] was excluded because it would have been nearly impossible to accurately distinguish 14 and 15-year-olds from older teenagers based solely on their Facebook profiles in that type of school. In the Czech Republic, students usually finish the 9th class of a traditional elementary school when they are 14-16 years old, which constituted a useful upper age limit for the pilot sample selection. The selection of schools was, for practical reasons, limited to schools with an active Facebook page.

[121] *"a type of school with strong emphasis on academic learning, and providing advanced secondary education in some parts of Europe and the CIS, comparable to British grammar schools, sixth form colleges and U.S. preparatory high schools"* ("Gymnasium (school)," n.d).

3.2.1.2. ***Initial Analysis and Coding***

From the 130 Facebook profiles selected for data collection, a total of 65,923 likes were collected, which corresponded to 38,134 unique Facebook pages. Each like was in the form of a unique Facebook page URI to prevent any conflicts. This dataset was then sorted by means of word frequency analysis to reveal a list of pages most liked by the target group.

	Name	Likes	Popularity
1	youbo.cz	88	68%
2	PemiKstranka	86	66%
3	gogomantvfanpage	67	52%
4	primacool	66	51%
5	tvocko	65	50%
6	TwixxTv	60	46%
7	TeriBlitzen	56	43%
8	hoggycz	54	42%
9	MenTsChannel	53	41%
10	TheSimpsons	49	38%

Figure 5 – the results of data collection sorted by means of word frequency analysis (top 10 pages)

Let it be noted here that the analysis was only partial, because in order to extract any valuable information from the data, each URI (page) first needed to be manually coded with tags (e.g. ACTOR, CZ), which meant not only opening it, but quite often also doing additional Google and Wikipedia searches. It simply wasn't feasible to manually go through 38,134 unique pages. For those practical reasons and with the help of frequency analysis (see Figure 6), Facebook pages that appeared less than 7 times in the pilot dataset (pages with less than 5% popularity) were excluded from the manual tagging process, whereas the top 992 pages (pages with 7+ occurrences in the pilot dataset) were coded completely to allow for a broader view of the target group's tastes.

Likes	*Frequency*
1	27,732
2	5,688
3	1,972
4	933
5	507
6	308
7	193
8	168
9	96
10	83

Figure 6 – frequency of pages with a particular number of likes in the pilot dataset (bottom 10)

A semi-automatic process was attempted in the efforts to achieve complete data coding. However, after gathering basic information (name, category and description) for most of the 38 134 unique pages using the Facebook API, it became clear that this information wouldn't be enough to automatically identify YouTubers and traditional celebrities in the dataset. The pages were spread across 1,239 unique Facebook categories out of which 674 only had one total like and 334 had two.

With the manual and automatic coding results combined, the manually tagged YouTuber pages mostly fell into the Facebook categories of Entertainer (60), Public Figure (33), Community (17) and Comedian (9). The initial hope was that it would be possible to filter out categories that didn't prove to host any YouTuber pages in the manually tagged data, and be left with a greatly reduced list to tag. This idea was abandoned once it became clear that the "Community" Facebook category contained 11,819 pages. It might have been possible to make predictions as to the total number of YouTuber pages in the pilot dataset, but due to the ever-changing category structure on the various levels of the top list (see Figure 12) these predictions were not deemed safe or useful to make.

The final result of the coding phase of the pilot research were three levels of coded data:

- 992 pages coded completely and manually
- further 815 pages coded partially (if their subject fell into one of the "celebrity" categories)
- 37,437 pages coded with Facebook category tags

3.2.1.2.1. Tag Based on Name or Content?

Facebook page likes may be used as a method of self-presentation (e.g. showing one's music taste) to friends and visitors. Liking a page such as "NEMÁME RÁDI JUSTINA BIEBERA"[122] (We don't like Justin Bieber) could be an expression of opinion rather than of one's interest in the actual content of the page. Because of this, pages such as this one were coded with the respective celebrity's tags (whereas, for example, the content of the aforementioned page was much closer to "Fun, Pictures, Videos, Articles"). A page whose name suggests dedication to a celebrity was tagged as a celebrity. No distinction was drawn between positive and negative attitudes, and "hate" pages were counted towards the celebrity category's total just the same as "love" pages.

[122] https://www.facebook.com/JustinDislike

3.2.1.2.2. Category Considerations

Since this was outside the scope of this study, the coding methods didn't differentiate between books, movies (often based on books) and their characters. Harry Potter the book, Harry Potter the movie and Harry Potter the character were all tagged as “Movie”. It could be argued that movie characters have a strong connection to the actors they are portrayed by, and people may sometimes like a character's Facebook page although what they really mean to express is their fondness of the actor. But due to the fact that this works the other way around, too (they might like the page of an actor just because they like the movie character), actors and their characters were counted separately for the purpose of this study.

This decision becomes slightly problematic once we realize that the opposite is being done for YouTubers, who sometimes like to stress the difference between them as human beings and their characters[123]. In this research, self invented personas that represent a more extreme version of the individual's personality (or part thereof) will not be considered as separate. This would be especially relevant for the celebrity-centered interpretation, as the page-centered interpretation deals with individual pages anyway, and the research doesn't have categories for different kinds of YouTube programming (the "YouTube" category of this research includes both YouTuber, the actor and YouTuber, the character). It is of course quite possible that as YouTube programming and audiences mature, this distinction will prove useful to make.

The final list contains 12 categories, some of them broad, because their content was not of particular importance to the study and would take additional time to sort further. As explained previously, each category’s description can be imagined as prefixed with “official pages of, and pages dedicated to”:

- **Actors, Public Figures** (TV and film actors, politicians, Albert Einstein)
- **Athletes, Models** (Hockey & football players, professional athletes, bodybuilders)
- **Brands, Retail** (brands from food to clothing to online services, sports teams & leagues, magazines, e-shops, e-shops disguised as “just for fun” pages)
- **Fun, Pictures, Videos, Articles** (any pages that serve large amounts of unoriginal content, memes, news, confessions; often pages that attract likes by their relatable

[123] In this video, Petr Lexa tries to explain to his fans that Hoggy is only a character he invented and not in fact his nickname: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tflz2EcuBpk

names such as “ღ I'm sorry, I love you ღ” or “† Kluk co brečí kvůli holce neni srab ale frajer †”[124])

- **Games, Apps** (video games & software in general, several web services)
- **Movies & Characters**
- **Musicians** (musicians, record labels, songs, music videos)
- **TV & Radio Stations**
- **TV Shows & Characters**
- **Vine, Facebook, Instagram** (new media celebrities other than YouTubers)
- **YouTuber Musicians** (covered in 3.2.1.2.3)
- **YouTubers**

3.2.1.2.3. Between YouTubers and Traditional Celebrities

The band Slza[125], number 11 on the list of pilot subjects’ most liked pages, has a YouTuber front man – Petr Lexa, better known as Hoggy[126] (number 8 in the pilot top list). It is very likely that most of Slza’s fans had been recruited directly from Hoggy’s fan base, because the band came into existence when he was already very popular, and that it would thus be unfair to classify Slza’s fan base as that of a traditional celebrity. The ensuing analysis revealed that while a total of 48 people in the pilot liked the band, only 10 of them liked Slza and not Hoggy (and 49 liked Hoggy and not Slza), granting further credibility to the hypothesis and providing a good enough reason not to put the band against YouTubers in this research. This inspired the “YouTuber Musicians” category which, in the end, only contained four entries. The name might be slightly misleading - it is meant to stand for musicians whose popularity stems in a big part from YouTuber-like activities, not musicians who use YouTube to publish music and music videos.

The blurring and possibly disappearance of the initially fine line between YouTubers and traditional celebrities might make replicating this research much more complicated or even impossible in a few years’ time. As YouTubers start getting their own TV and radio shows[127,128], publish books[129], and star in movies[130], it might seem logical to study on which platform a certain public figure got started, rather than where she is most active now.

[124] Roughly translatable as *“The boy who cries over a girl is cool, not a pussy.”*
[125] https://youtu.be/gNpJu_yzZmU
[126] https://www.youtube.com/HoggyCZ
[127] http://hrajemesalim.cz/
[128] http://ocko.tv/porady/dotykac-e1518710.html
[129] http://www.munimedia.cz/prispevek/a-cup-of-style-prvni-ceske-YouTuberky-ktere-vydaly-knihu-9658/
[130] http://YouTuberreview.com/2015/09/24/7-YouTubers-crossed-big-screen/

On the other hand, YouTube has also become one of the first-stop self presentation tools for musicians and filmmakers, which probably doesn't mean Justin Bieber can be called a YouTuber.

In the context of Czech musician celebrities, however, Johny Machette[131] was put into this mixed "YouTuber Musicians" category, because even though he rose to fame with music videos, his activity for the last year was that of a typical YouTuber, not to mention his close relationship with other famous YouTubers. Raego[132], another disputable case, was eventually classified as a traditional celebrity (he is primarily a musician / radio host), because his vlogging attempts don't generate nearly enough attention to outshine his traditional media career (for the purpose of this research, music videos are considered a traditional medium even if published exclusively through YouTube).

3.2.1.2.4. YouTube, or New Media Celebrities?

This study attempts to juxtapose YouTubers alone to traditional media celebrities, to show how much of an influence this single group of entertainers has. A more correct overall comparison would of course be: traditional media celebrities vs. new media celebrities. Bloggers, prominent Twitter users or Facebook and Vine entertainers are undeniably a strong cultural force as well, but judging from data and personal experience with the matter, none of them come close to the local popularity and influence of YouTubers.

The goal of this research was to study identifiable people (fit to be viewed as celebrities) who create original content. Anonymous curators (and teams thereof) who repost the work of others were outside the area of interest. There have, however, been borderline cases that deserve mentioning even though YouTube is not their primary (or none at all) channel and so they cannot be considered YouTubers. PemiK[133], number 2 on the list of pilot subjects' most liked pages, poses as an identifiable celebrity (giving interviews and sometimes posting photos of himself), but the vast majority of his content is unoriginal and not related to him in any way. Ondra Vlček[134], posts original pictures of himself with very simple but relatable quotes and would fit the broader "new media celebrity" category just as Mr. Kev[135], who makes comic strips out of her photos and shares them on Facebook.

[131] https://www.youtube.com/PetrSimon
[132] https://www.youtube.com/RaegoTV
[133] https://www.facebook.com/PemiKstranka
[134] https://www.facebook.com/ondra.vlcek2
[135] https://www.facebook.com/mrkevicka

Historically, Facebook has been more suited towards communication by the means of text and images, and even though its native video capabilities have grown dramatically over the years (not least because of attempts to compete with YouTube directly[136]), the dataset contained very few “Facebook entertainer” personalities who used exclusively Facebook to upload their original video content. Some, however, did occasionally use it alongside YouTube, or even enjoy a bigger following on Facebook than on YouTube, such as ČauTadyPavel[137] who posts short videos of himself (lately known by the generic trademark of “vines”).

3.2.1.2.5. Language Considerations

While it makes sense to label most pages in the “Fun, Pictures, Videos, Articles” category based on the language of their content, this doesn't hold true for most other categories. In order to be able to compare Czech celebrities to foreign ones, pages dedicated to them had to be labeled with a language tag appropriate to the celebrity. The aforementioned “NEMÁME RÁDI JUSTINA BIEBERA” page was therefore tagged as “EN”, even though its content was “CZ”. However, this proved to be problematic for brands, movies, TV shows etc. Too much room for interpretation was causing unreliable coding criteria: Does it make sense to label the official local representation of a multinational as having the language of its mother corporation, even though their activities are autonomous and might even entail offering different products? If not, what about community pages dedicated to those brands - which version of the brand are they dedicated to? Eventually the decision was made to only language-tag celebrities, because they were the primary aim of this research and their language affiliation didn’t offer that much room for interpretation. Language tags for other pages (even if present in the coding spreadsheet) were not used to draw conclusions.

[136] https://recode.net/2015/10/13/facebook-is-building-its-own-youtube-inside-facebook/
[137] https://www.facebook.com/Cautadypavel

3.2.1.2.6. Page-centered vs. Celebrity-centered Approach to Data

In the page-centered approach, each page is worked with as a separate entity. That means no attempts at combining data for different pages about the same celebrity. If, for instance, we were to list the TOP 10 most liked YouTuber pages of the pilot dataset (Figure 5), "Hoggy" would be there with the 54 likes on his official page, not with the total number of likes on all of the community pages dedicated to him. This is, for practical reasons, the approach of choice for this study.

The celebrity-centered approach, on the other hand, would theoretically attempt to combine data for any pages dedicated to the entity in question (e.g. a specific YouTuber). Certain Facebook users tend to create additional pages dedicated to celebrities, whether out of admiration, spite, or simply for monetization purposes. In some cases, the test subjects liked these community pages dedicated to a YouTuber, but didn't actually like (and possibly know) the YouTuber's official page. Many (especially younger) users may be satisfied with liking any page dedicated to the desired celebrity or phenomenon.

This second approach could, for example, be used to determine how many people in the dataset actually liked the top YouTubers on the list. It would require a list of as many variants of said YouTuber's name present in the dataset as possible, and then to test each test subject's likes for their presence. With this technique, it is possible to determine that, for instance, a total of 87 pilot subjects (or 67%) liked "Hoggy" related pages, whereas only 54 subjects (42%) liked his official page. The approach, however, is very time consuming and would require additional automation if it were to be applied on a large scale. It also isn't without limits in the way of accuracy, due to the relatively large total number of pages in the dataset and too many possible unconventional variations of page names (i.e. if the name contains a variation of the YouTuber's name unknown to the tester, or refers to an event or a video, it is impossible for a non-insider to detect, since it will escape the search criteria).

3.2.2. Results

The chart in Figure 7 represents the structure of top 992 most liked pages of the pilot dataset. Each number stands for the fraction of total likes the particular group of pages makes up (e.g. pages in the "Brands, Retail" category had a total of 2,027 likes, which represents 15.9% of the 12,780 total likes for the top 992 pages). The biggest category in this particular slice of data is the broad "Fun, Pictures, Videos, Articles" category with 28.7% likes. We can see that YouTubers account for 10.4% of total page likes and quite noticeably lose to the aggregate group of traditional celebrities, which represents 20.2% of the total (musicians 12.3%; Actors 4.2%; Athletes 3.7%).

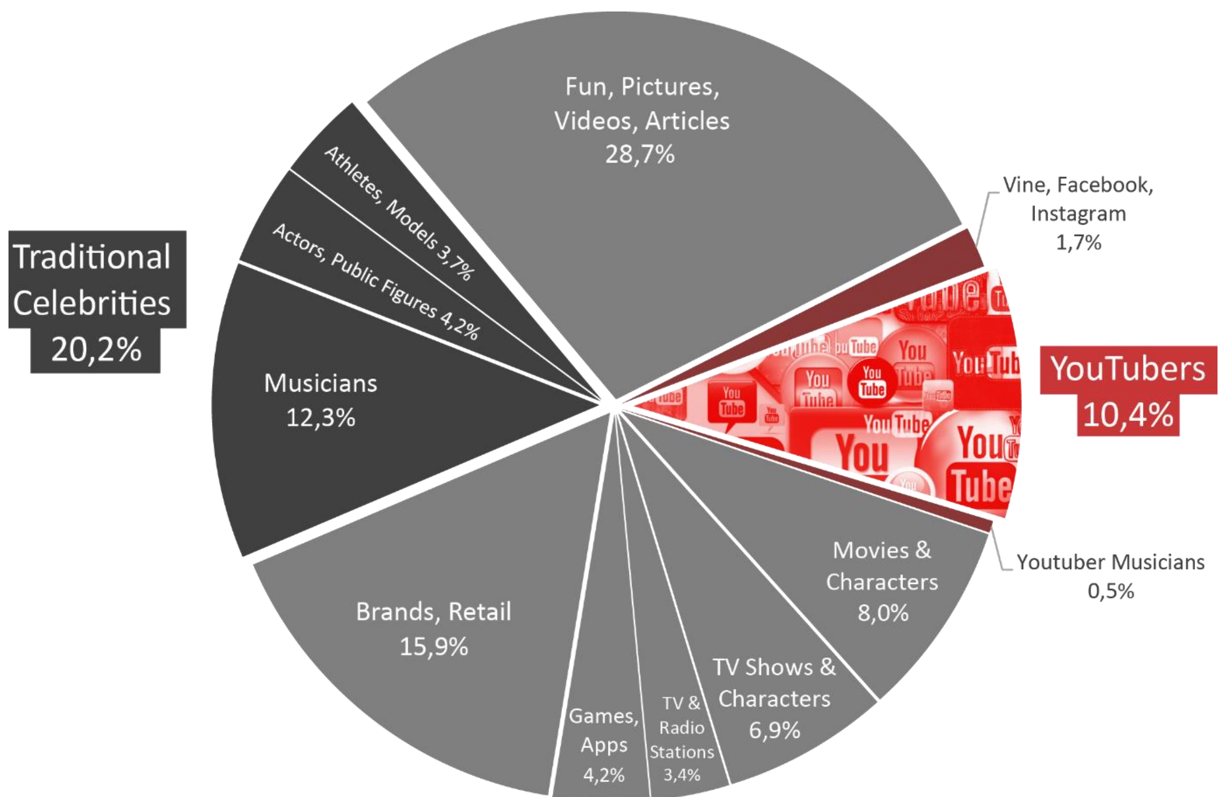

Figure 7 – structure of the top 992 pages based on total number of likes in each category

This, however, starts to change in Figure 8, which depicts a narrower slice - the top 94 pages. We see that YouTubers almost tie with traditional celebrities (18.9% vs. 19.1%) and assigning the "YouTuber Musicians" category to one of the groups would shift the balance.[138]

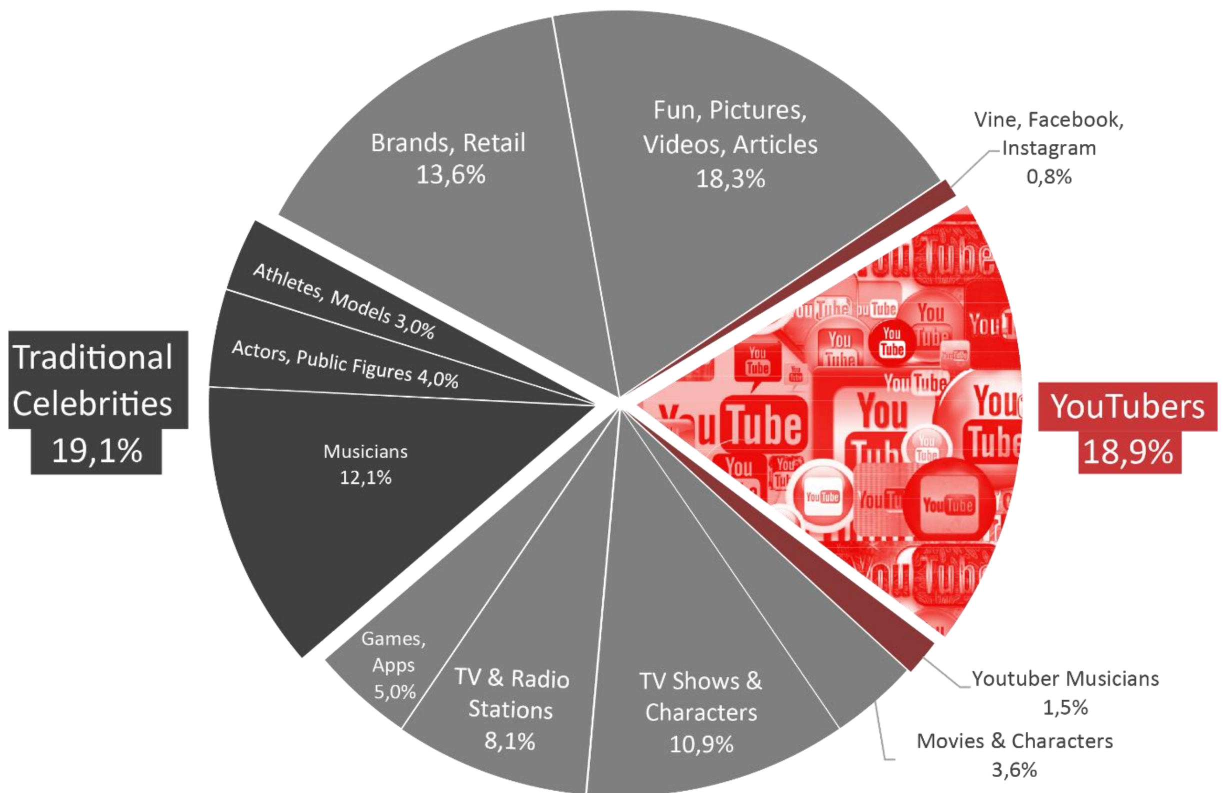

Figure 8 - structure of the top 94 pages based on the total number of likes in each category

The trend of YouTubers gaining a bigger share culminates in Figure 9, or top 26 pages. Here, YouTubers account for 29.6% likes (381 out of 1,288) and become the single strongest and most numerously represented category (7 out of 26 pages, see Figure 10). Traditional celebrities only represent 15.8% likes in this top slice. Once again, may the reader decide whether "YouTuber Musicians" should be considered musicians or YouTubers, but either outcome of this decision will be of little effect here.

[138] Nevertheless, if we were to use this data to draw conclusions for the whole target group and not just this 130-person pilot dataset, the calculated confidence interval would put this particular indicator at around 12.26 – 25.74%, so a 0.2% difference can clearly be considered a tie.

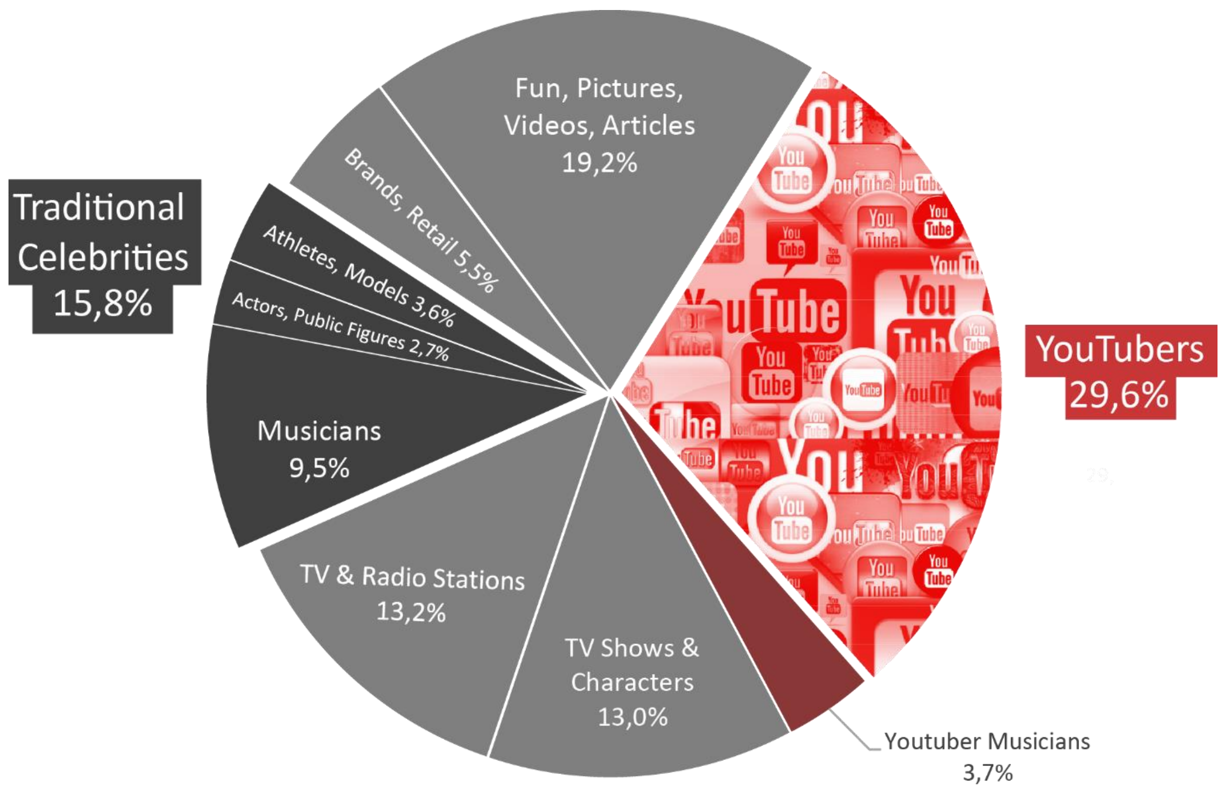

Figure 9 - structure of the top 26 pages based on the total number of likes in each category

rank	name	likes
1	YOU.BO	88
2	PemiK	86
3	Gogomantv	67
4	Prima COOL	66
5	ÓČKO	65
6	Twixx TV	60
7	Teri Blitzen	56
8	Hoggy	54
9	MenT	53
10	The Simpsons	49
11	Slza	48
12	Ben Cristovao	47
13	Jirka Král	46

rank	name	likes
14	Jaromír Jágr	46
15	FattyPillow	45
16	Partička	42
17	RE-PLAY	40
18	EVROPA 2	39
19	Majk Spirit	39
20	Ektor	37
21	Puberťáci	37
22	Trololol.cz	36
23	SuperStar	36
24	Wayfarer	36
25	Vin Diesel	35
26	BIG SHOCK	35

Figure 10 – top 26 pages in the pilot dataset, YouTubers highlighted

The numbers shown suggest that YouTubers are the one thing Czech teenagers most agree upon. Although traditional celebrities are still more numerous (and liked) overall, the top of the list is dominated by YouTubers. This could be a simple matter of variety: Even though they grow in numbers by the hour, there are still comparatively few well-established YouTubers to choose from compared to, for example, musicians. So although teenagers still like a lot of musicians, they don't all like the same ones. Most of them, however, have no other option than to like the same top YouTubers.

Language barrier is undeniably one of the contributing factors: one can understand music without having to understand its lyrics and most movies and popular TV shows are subject to dubbing, and thus accessible to those who are not comfortable with foreign languages. This is different for YouTubers. YouTube shows don't usually get subtitled and since most of them are conversational, understanding the language is essential. The only foreign YouTuber in the pilot top 94 list is the English speaking Swede "PewDiePie" (with 29 total likes), much of whose charm is probably non-verbal and who (apart from being world's most popular YouTuber with 40 million subscribers) entertains his audience by playing simple video games and commenting on the progress (and thus doesn't require a high level of proficiency in English from his viewers).

The trends outlined in Figure 7 to Figure 9 are further explored in Figure 11 which supplements the three initial slices of the top list (top 26, top 94 and top 992) with 14 more. It highlights how YouTubers, who dominate the top spots on the list, slowly get overtaken by traditional celebrities around the top 100 mark and their share continues to fall from the initial 29.6% to the final 10.4% at the top-992 position.

Figure 12 offers a broader look at the situation partially represented in Figure 11 and shows trend curves for all the main categories. Note, for example, the growing share of "Fun, Pictures, Videos, Articles" pages, which, based on a quick look at the data, dominate the rest of the list and account for a significant part of the 27,000+ pages with just one like.

The curve of "TV & Radio Stations" in Figure 12 (dark violet) bears striking similarity to that of YouTubers, lending further credibility to the hypothesis about why the share of YouTubers falls so rapidly as the range of the "top slice" grows: There are only handful of local TV / radio stations, so even though they are very popular, their share will inevitably drop as we go down the top list.

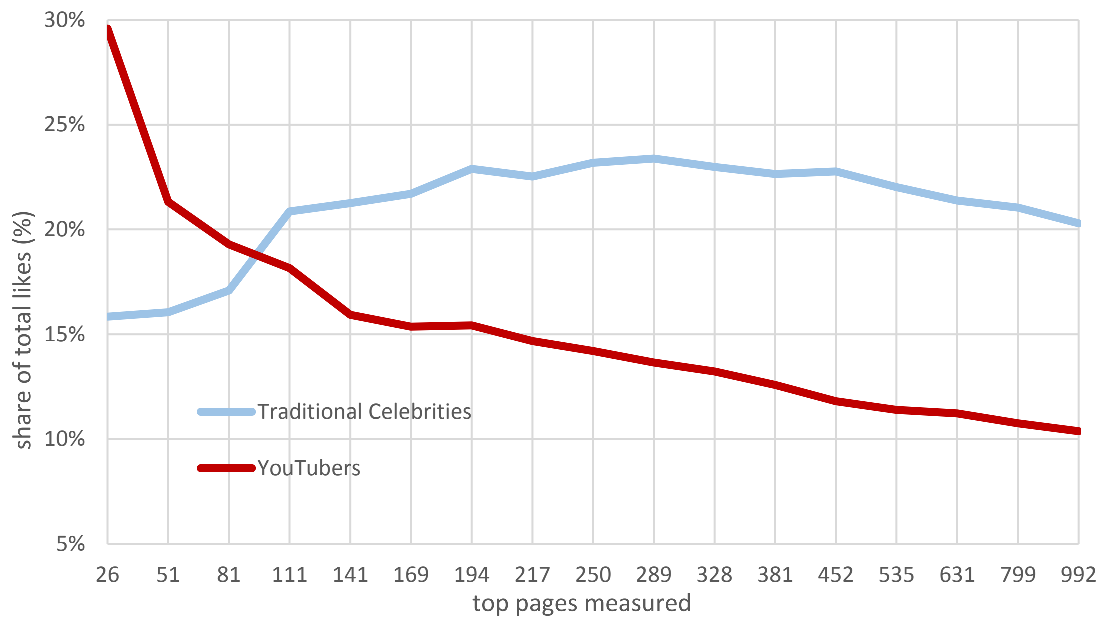

Figure 11 - YouTubers vs. traditional celebrities: share of total likes in various slices of the top list[139]

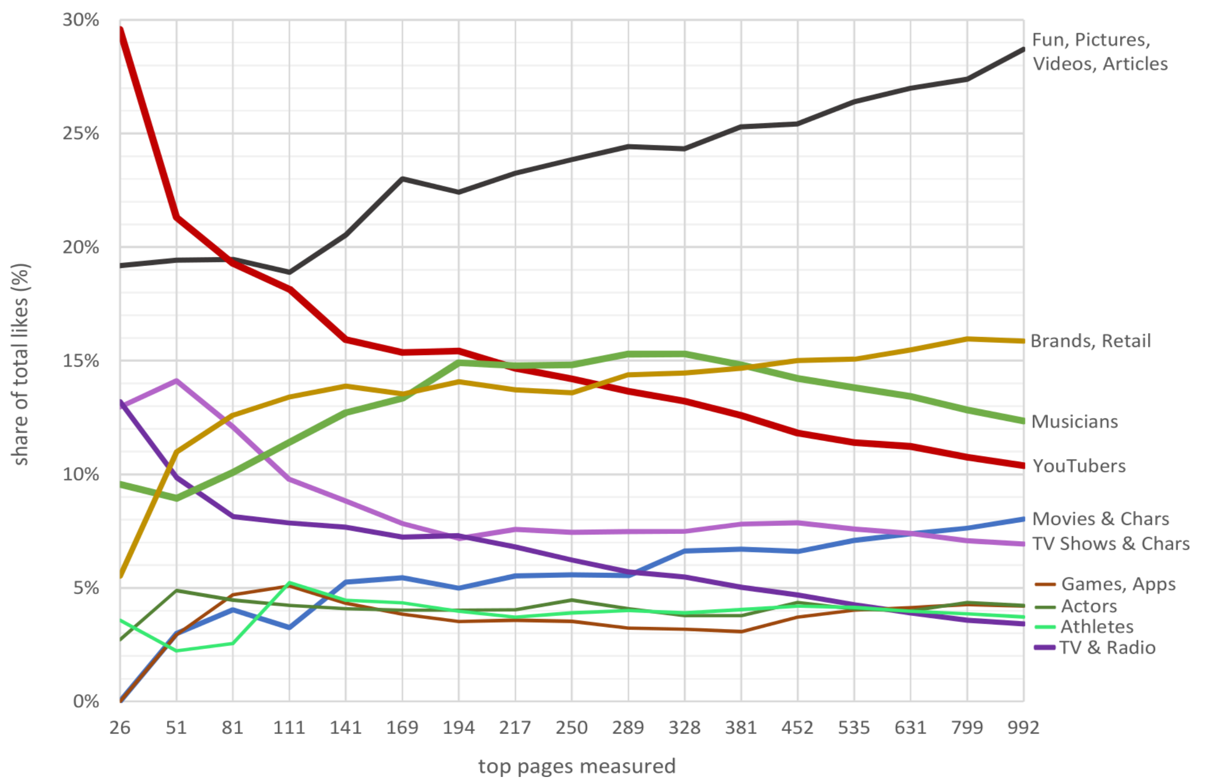

Figure 12 - Individual categories' share of total likes in various slices of the pilot top list

[139] There were only 29 unique values in the "likes" column of the pilot top list and the more down the list, the more pages shared the same number of likes (up to 27,732 pages which only had one like, see Figure 5). Therefore, it wasn't possible to make "slices" of data in traditional places such as top 25, top 100 etc. 26 was the closest potential slice to 25; 96 to 100; 992 to 1,000 etc. Slices in Figure 11 are made as close to increments of 25 as possible.

3.2.2.1. ***Language***

In Figure 13, 100% represents the total number of likes of all celebrities (traditional + YouTubers) in the top 992-page slice of the pilot dataset. Although YouTubers lose to traditional celebrities overall[140], it becomes clear that most traditional celebrities liked by the target group are international and almost all YouTubers Czech or Slovak. This brings the overall celebrity category's language composition to a near balance: 50.6% local celebrities, 49.4% international celebrities.

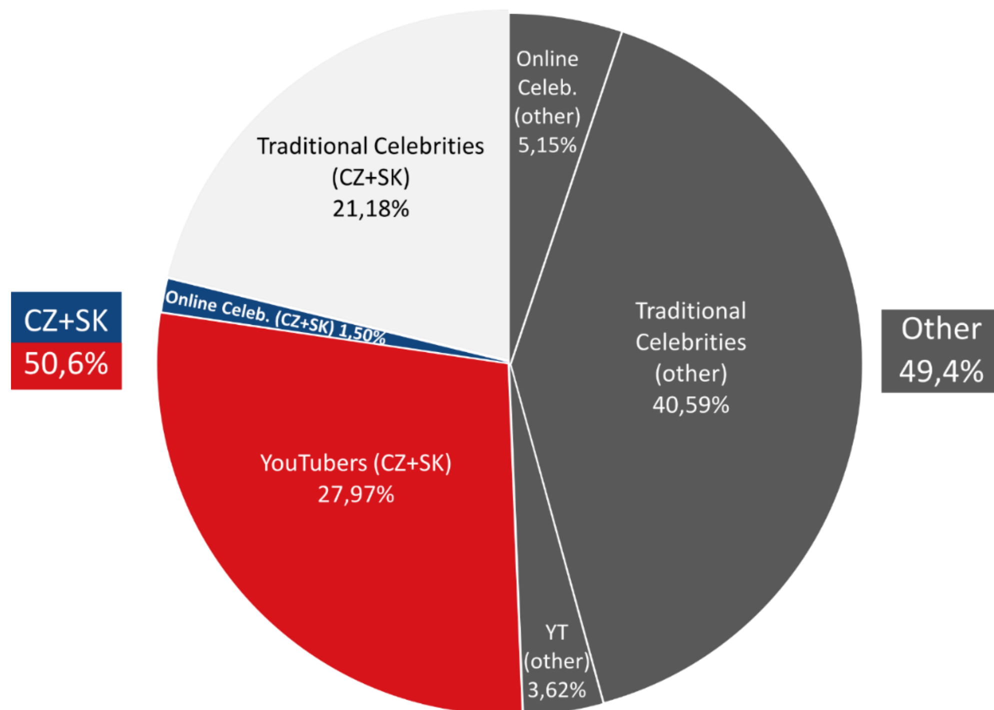

Figure 13 - Language composition of top 992 pages (% of total celebrity likes); The "Online Celebrities" category contains both the "Vine, Facebook, Instagram" and the controversial "YouTuber Musicians" categories.

[140] Due to the virtual impossibility of manually tagging 375,910 unique Facebook pages (38,134 in the pilot study), "overall" stands for the biggest "top slice" made for the particular metric – in this case the 992 pages most liked by the pilot study sample.

3.2.2.2. *Affinity*

			popularity in	
		affinity	sample	general
1	VADAK	**14.9**	17.7%	1.2%
2	Fakju pane učiteli	**14.8**	18.5%	1.3%
3	Snapchat	**14.7**	20.8%	1.4%
4	Twixx TV	**14.3**	46.2%	3.2%
5	Expl0ited	**13.8**	20.0%	1.5%
6	Denis Kubík	**13.7**	17.7%	1.3%
7	Simon Desue	**13.5**	16.9%	1.2%
8	Madbros	**13.3**	20.0%	1.5%
9	MattyBRaps	**12.7**	16.9%	1.3%
10	PedrosGame	**12.6**	20.0%	1.6%
11	KDO MÁ RÁD SIMPSO...	**12.2**	16.9%	1.4%
12	Puberťáci	**12.0**	28.5%	2.4%
13	Kiloo Games	**11.7**	18.5%	1.6%
14	Vanny	**11.7**	18.5%	1.6%
15	Ondra Vlček	**11.4**	19.2%	1.7%
16	Gejmr	**10.7**	23.8%	2.2%
17	BIG SHOCK	**10.7**	26.9%	2.5%
18	Baví nás to	**10.6**	15.4%	1.5%
19	Slza	**10.5**	36.9%	3.5%
20	Pavel "Herdyn" Mikeš	**10.3**	16.9%	1.6%
21	Ati	**10.2**	15.4%	1.5%
22	MenT	**10.1**	40.8%	4.0%
23	PewDiePie	**10.1**	22.3%	2.2%
24	Teri Blitzen	**10.0**	43.1%	4.3%
25	Gogomantv	**10.0**	51.5%	5.2%

Figure 14 – Top 25 pages ranked by affinity (pages with 20+ likes [15% popularity] were ranked). YouTubers highlighted.

The affinity score[141] tells us how likely the target group is to like a given page compared to every Czech user of Facebook. It is effective in illustrating how the target group differs from the general population. For example: In the pilot top list, "Jaromír Jágr" and "Jirka Král" ranked the same with a 35% popularity (46 likes), but Jirka Král's lower popularity among the general Facebook population (4.21% compared to Jágr's 13.83%[142]) makes him much more specific to the target group, and gives him the affinity score of 8.4 (Jágr 2.6). This means that the pilot sample is 8.4 times more likely than the general population to like Jirka Král.

[141] See https://tmblr.co/ZVx8GuyVggc7 and https://www.facebook.com/ads/audience-insights/interests for more.

[142] The "general popularity" metric is based on the number of local Facebook page fans retrieved from the Facebook API and on 4,2 million active Facebook users in the Czech Republic (ČTK, 2014). The accuracy of the 4,2 million may be questionable, but it has no effect on the ranking of pages resulting from this particular calculation. It does determine the actual affinity value (which, as a result, is only a very rough approximation), but due to the total number of users being used as a constant for all of the pages, the ranking will always be the same, no matter the number.

In Figure 14, the top 140 pages[143] of the top list (20+ likes, 15%+ popularity) were ranked by affinity. 14 of the top 25 positions were taken by YouTubers, making them the group of celebrities by far the most specific to the pilot sample. Additionally, two more names on the list fit the "YouTuber Musician" category - Slza (a band with a YouTuber singer) and MattyBRaps (a teenage music star / YouTube vlogger).

3.2.2.3. ***Gender Differences***

In the data collected for the pilot, girls were the more active "likers" with 60% total likes and a median like number of 336 (compared to 284 for boys). The average like number for a girl was in fact 632 (SD=686), compared to 390 for boys (SD=374); p=0.015 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI. This significant difference was mostly caused by a group of 15 girls (23%) who had over 1,000 page likes (whereas only 5 boys – or 7% - did).

	TOTAL	Boys	Girls
n	130	67	63
likes	65,961	26,118	39,843
likes (%)		40%	60%
likes average	507	390	632
likes median	313	284	336
standard deviation	559	374	686
variance	312481	140029	470966

Figure 15 – basic gender statistics of the pilot sample;
p=0.015 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

In the "Top 1,807" slice of the pilot dataset, YouTubers were significantly[144] more popular among boys (60% of total YouTuber likes). 30% boys liked 20 or more pages dedicated to YouTubers (compared to just 11% girls) and 94% liked at least one (girls - 89%).

[143] Data for the affinity metric was collected about 5 weeks after the pilot data collection, and several profiles, most notably number 1 in the original top list – "YOU.BO" – were already gone from Facebook. Furthermore, due to Facebook API limitations it wasn't possible to obtain reliable numbers of local fans of all ages for the following international pages: *Facebook for Every Phone, Mr. Bean, Neymar Jr, Leo Messi, Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez, FC Barcelona, Taylor Swift, Pitbull, Cristiano Ronaldo, The Karate Kid, Bruno Mars*.

[144] Boys: M=390, SD=374; Girls: M=632, SD=686; p=0.015 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

	TOTAL	Boys	Girls
YT likes	1,589	956	633
YT likes (%)		60%	40%
YT likes average	12	14	10
YT likes median	10	11	9
standard deviation	10.6	12.1	8.2
variance	112	147	66
at least 1 YT like	92%	94%	89%
at least 10 YT likes	52%	55%	48%
at least 20 YT likes	21%	30%	11%

Figure 16 – gender differences in the pilot dataset; YouTuber likes in top 1,807 pages; p=0.021 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

	TOTAL	Boys	Girls
CL likes	3,021	1,437	1,584
CL likes (%)		48%	52%
CL likes average	23	21	25
CL likes median	16	13	17
standard deviation	22	21.5	22.4
variance	484	463	503
at least 1 CL like	97%	97%	97%
at least 10 CL likes	67%	60%	75%
at least 20 CL likes	42%	36%	49%

Figure 17 - gender differences in the pilot dataset; traditional celebrity likes in top 1,807 pages; p=0.34 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

Of the girls studied, 49% liked 20 or more pages dedicated to traditional celebrities (boys – 36%) and 97% of both genders liked at least one. However, the significant difference between average and median traditional celebrity likes (girls avg. 25 and med. 17; boys avg. 21 and med. 13) suggests that the distribution was much less even than it was for YouTubers and that a relatively small group of active "likers" was responsible for a significant proportion of the 3,021 traditional celebrity likes. The difference in average celebrity likes between genders was not statistically significant (p=0.34).

3.2.2.4. ***Discussion***

The pilot data suggests that YouTubers are very popular among Czech teenagers aged 12-15. Facebook pages of (or dedicated to) YouTubers dominate the top 26 most liked pages calculated from the sample, which means that the main hypothesis can be accepted. YouTubers then tie with traditional celebrities in the wider top 94 slice. Up to that point, they even surpass the aggregate of pages dedicated to all traditional celebrities (musicians, athletes, actors etc.). In the larger scope of 992 pages most liked by the pilot test subjects, traditional celebrities still outnumber YouTubers about 2.3: 1 (191: 82), and almost 2:1 in total number of likes (2,593: 1,326). This might in part be due to the fact that mainstream popularity of YouTubers is a very recent phenomenon, whereas celebrities of traditional media have been around for a long time. As a result, there are only a handful of well-established YouTubers, and pages dedicated to them occupy the top. YouTubers also seem to be very specific to this demographic: teenagers are 10-15 times[145] more likely than the general population to like the Facebook pages of top YouTubers.

When international celebrities are excluded and only those who speak Czech or Slovak taken into account, YouTubers take victory even in the top 992-page range, namely 70: 67 in the number of pages and 1.3:1 (1,174: 889) in the total number of likes. Czech teenagers favor Czech (and Slovak) YouTubers, possibly because of the language barrier, which prevents them from fully understanding foreign ones. Likely due to the ubiquitous abundance of globalized pop-culture, teenagers like a bigger number of foreign traditional celebrities than of local ones.

In the widest (top 1,807-page) range of the top list, boys liked more YouTubers than girls did (60% vs. 40% of total YouTuber likes), and 30% boys (vs. 11% girls) liked 20 or more YouTubers. Both genders, however, usually liked at least one YouTuber (94% boys, 89% girls).

The method of data collection employed in the pilot proved to be too time consuming to be applicable on a larger scale and was replaced by using the Facebook Graph Search in the final research (see 3.3.2). Similarly, while celebrity-centered approach to data was attempted during the coding phase of the pilot (see 3.2.1.2.6), it was deemed unusable without further automation and ignored in the final research. Coding with Facebook category tags (see 3.2.1.2) was also abandoned during the pilot study due to unreliability. Results of the pilot study inspired three additional hypotheses to be tested in the final research: that teenagers like Czech and Slovak speaking YouTubers more than they like international ones overall; that teenagers like international traditional celebrities more than local traditional celebrities overall, and that (mainly due to the popularity of Let's Play videos) YouTubers have more likes from boys than they have from girls overall.

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[145] Based on the pilot dataset and the number of 4.2 million Facebook users.

3.3. Final Research

3.3.1. Introduction

Inspired by the pilot study results, this final research tests three additional hypotheses (B, C, D), while the central hypothesis (A) remains unchanged:

Hypothesis A: More teenagers like the most popular YouTubers than they like the most popular traditional celebrities (the aggregate of YouTuber pages in the top 25 will have more total likes among the sample than the aggregate of traditional celebrity pages in the same range).

Hypothesis B: Teenagers like Czech and Slovak speaking YouTubers more than they like international ones overall (the aggregate of local YouTuber pages in the top 1,000 will have more total likes among the sample than the aggregate of international YouTuber pages in the same range).

Hypothesis C: Teenagers like international traditional celebrities (musicians, actors) more than local traditional celebrities overall (the aggregate of international traditional celebrity pages in the top 1,000 will have more total likes among the sample than the aggregate of local traditional celebrity pages in the same range).

Hypothesis D: Due to the popularity of Let's Play videos, YouTubers as a general category have more likes from teenage boys than they have from teenage girls overall.

3.3.2. Methodology

The final research employs the same methodology in terms of data processing, coding and analysis as the pilot (see 3.2.1.2). However, a new, simpler method of data collection was devised to allow for a much larger potential sample size. Instead of searching for and evaluating each individual profile by hand, the new method uses Facebook Graph Search to search for teenage residents of the Czech Republic. Since Facebook doesn't allow individuals under 13 years of age to have a profile, the target group had to be changed to the more standard range of 13-17 years.

The most serious limitation of this new data collection method proved to be Facebook privacy settings. As mentioned in 3.2.1.1.1, most standard Facebook privacy settings only make a user's age visible to their friends (or friends of friends). This meant that searching from any one "collector" profile returned at most a couple hundred individuals (depending on the profile's number of friends), all of them either friends or friends of friends of that "collector" profile. As a result, many different "collector" profiles had to be used to reach the final sample of 5,161 individuals (1.14% of the whole 13-17 target group[146]). Using this method, it was impossible to control geographic distribution of the sample in any way other than trying to obtain as diverse a set of collector profiles as possible, wherefore it is likely (due to the researcher's location), that the sample is slightly biased towards the Prague and Central Bohemia regions. Genderwise, the final sample is composed of 2,588 males and 2,573 females.

Profiles with 0-5 page likes were not included in the dataset, because they represented possible data collection errors, users with high levels of privacy settings, and / or users who didn't use the Facebook "like" tool enough for it to serve as a reliable indicator of their interests (monitoring which was the primary purpose of this study). As a result, general "like statistics" (such as in 3.3.3.3) may be distorted and only serve to describe the cleaned-up sample.

The output of the collection phase of the final research were 2,037,010 total likes of 375,910 unique pages.

[146] Based on data available from https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20555901/1300641501.pdf

3.3.3. Results

The chart in Figure 18 represents the structure of top 1,002 most liked pages of the final dataset[147]. Similarly to the pilot results, each number stands for the fraction of total likes the particular group of pages makes up (pages in the "YouTubers" category had a total of 34,087 likes, which represents 9.0% of the 379,048 total likes for the top 1,002 pages). YouTubers clearly lose to the aggregate of traditional celebrities (2.6:1) and even to musicians alone (1.5:1). In this wide view, they are the fourth biggest category of pages overall and the second biggest celebrity category – notably surpassing actors 1.7:1. The overall composition is very similar to the same slice of the smaller pilot dataset (Figure 7).

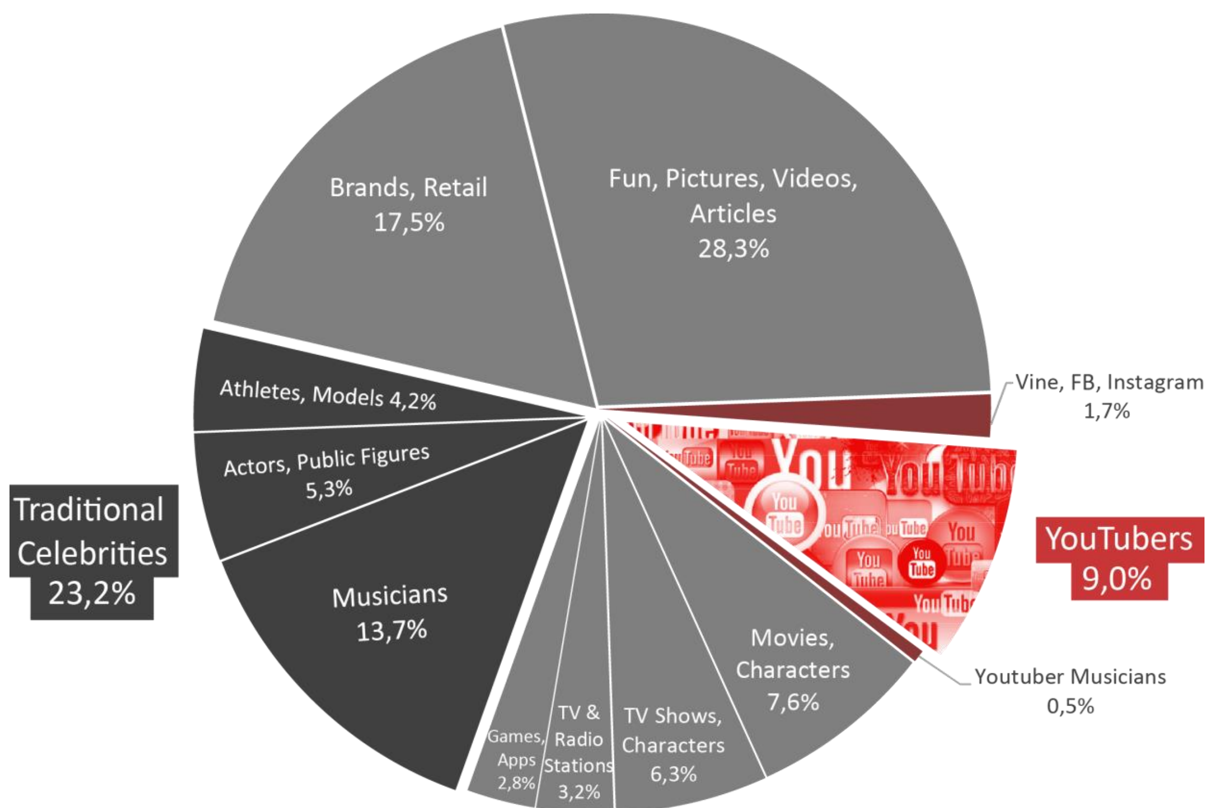

Figure 18 - structure of the top 1,002 pages based on total number of likes in each category

[147] The closest possible slices to top 25/100/1000 in the final dataset were top 25, top 100 and top 1,002

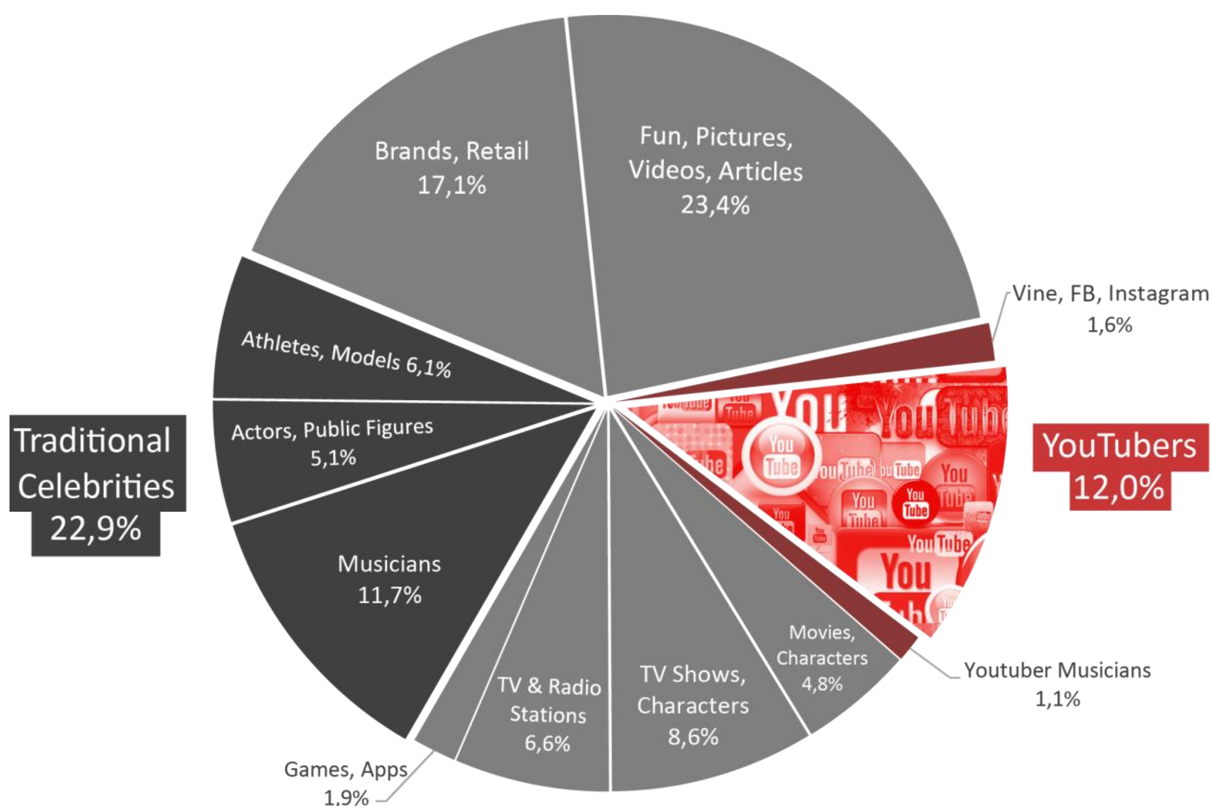

Figure 19 - structure of the top 100 pages based on total number of likes in each category

In the top 100 slice (Figure 19), YouTubers just become the strongest single celebrity category (overcoming musicians by 0.3%), but still lose to the aggregate of traditional celebrities (1.9:1).

Figure 20 represents the top 25 slice of the list and demonstrates the same dominance of YouTubers at the top spots as the corresponding Figure 9 in the pilot research. They beat traditional celebrities 2:1 and almost become the strongest overall category (losing by 0.1% to the wide category of "Fun, Pictures, Videos, Articles"). Notably, the final top 25 (Figure 21) contains the same 7 YouTubers as the pilot top 26 (Figure 10).

The trend outlined in Figure 18 to Figure 20 is further explored in Figure 22, which shows YouTubers (who dominate the top spots on the list) to be overtaken by traditional celebrities at around the top 60 mark.

Figure 23 shows trend curves for all the main categories. Note that (just like in the pilot) the curve of "TV & Radio Stations" bears striking resemblance to that of YouTubers – as with YouTubers, there are only a handful of local TV / radio stations, so even though they are very popular, their share will inevitably drop as we go down the top list.

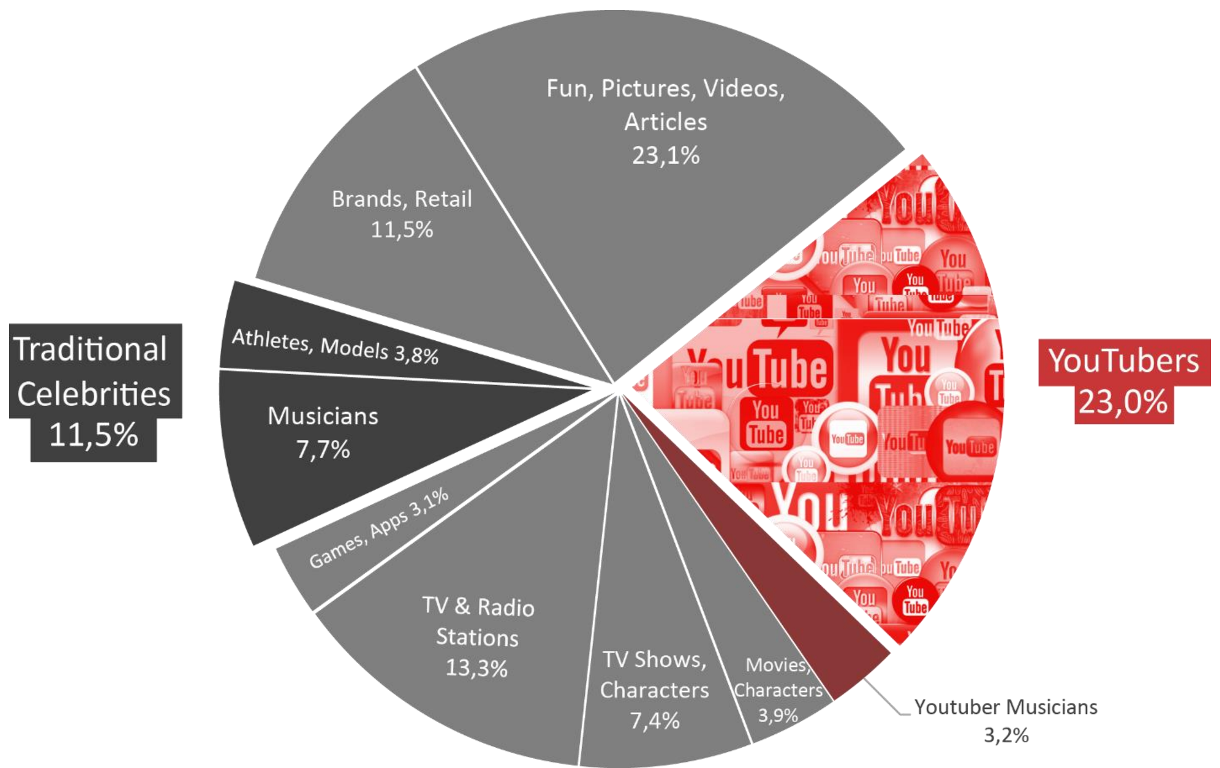

Figure 20 - structure of the top 25 pages based on total number of likes in each category

rank	name	likes
1	PemiK	2675
2	Prima COOL	1685
3	Trololol.cz	1633
4	ÓČKO	1625
5	Teri Blitzen	1584
6	Gogomantv	1496
7	The Simpsons	1487
8	Ben Cristovao	1455
9	Bubbleology ČR	1387
10	Wayfarer	1343
11	Hoggy	1319
12	Harry Potter	1310
13	Jaromír Jágr	1283

rank	name	likes
14	VÍTE, ŽE?	1271
15	Twixx TV	1266
16	EVROPA 2	1226
17	Přiznání kluků	1196
18	Coca-Cola	1180
19	Majk Spirit	1168
20	MenT	1104
21	Přiznání zmrdů	1090
22	Slza	1074
23	FattyPillow	1052
24	RE-PLAY	1046
25	Jirka Král	1009

Figure 21 - top 25 pages in the final dataset, YouTubers highlighted

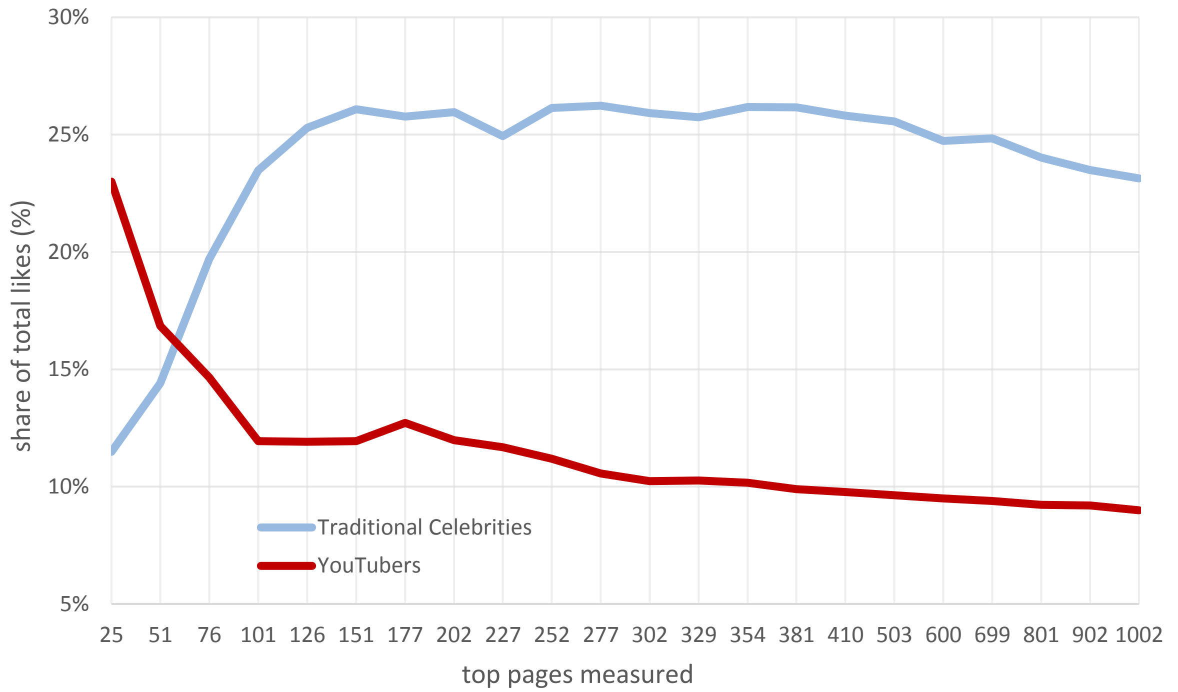

Figure 22 - YouTubers vs. traditional celebrities: share of total likes in various slices of the top list; each slice up to the top 400 mark is incremented by as close to 25 pages as possible (and by as close to 100 pages as possible from the top 400 mark)

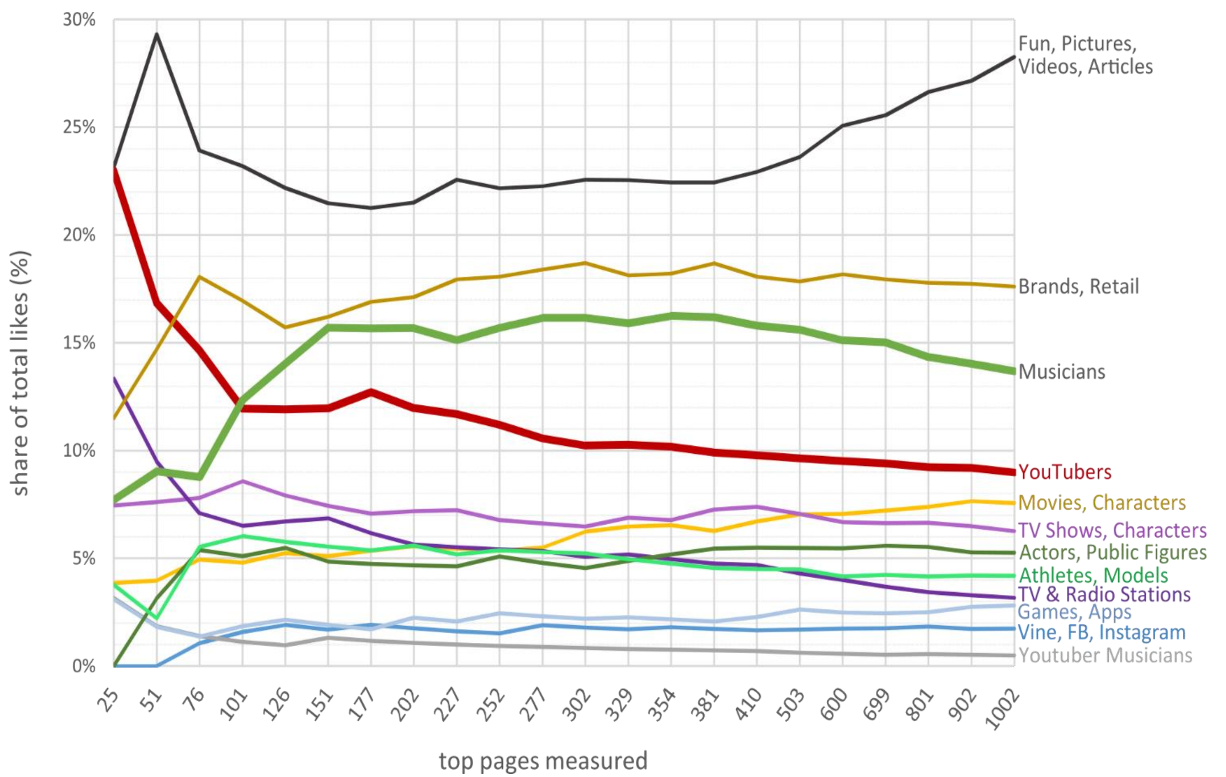

Figure 23 – individual categories' share of total likes in various slices of the top list

Figure 24 – top 20 most popular celebrities in the final dataset; top list positions 1-59; inspired by https://variety.com/2015/digital/news/YouTubers-teen-survey-ksi-pewdiepie-1201544882/

3.3.3.1. ***Language***

The top 1,002 slice of the list (Figure 25) shows Czech teenagers to prefer international traditional celebrities over Czech & Slovak traditional celebrities (2:1), and while traditional celebrities win 2.6:1 against YouTubers overall, local traditional celebrities win against local YouTubers only by a 0.4% difference. In other words: 67% of all traditional celebrity likes in the top 1,002 belong to international celebrities and 83% of YouTuber likes belong to local YouTubers.

Even though international celebrities amass more likes overall, individual local celebrities rank higher in the top list. The top 100 already saw a balance shift to 43.7% international and 56.3% local celebrity likes, while the top 25 contains no international celebrities at all, leaving 100% likes to local ones.

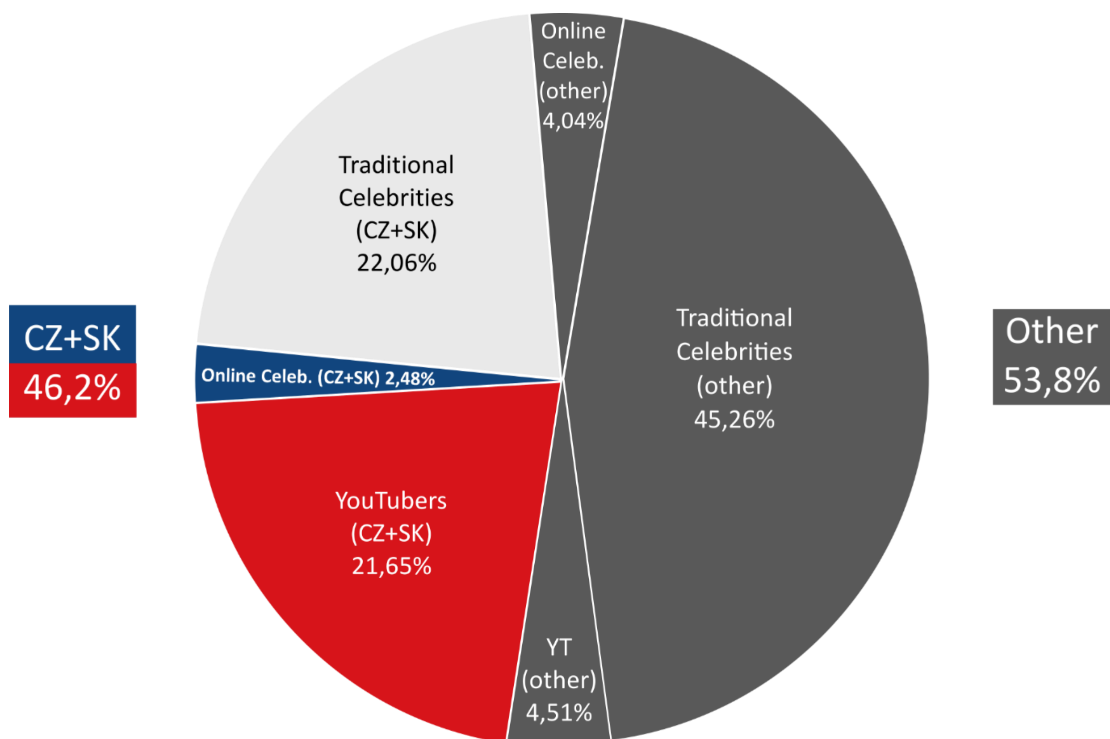

Figure 25 - Language composition of top 1,002 pages (% of total celebrity likes); The "Online Celebrities" category contains both the "Vine, Facebook, Instagram" and the controversial "YouTuber Musicians" categories.

3.3.3.2. ***Affinity***

			popularity in	
		affinity	sample	general
1	Snapchat	**11.6**	16.0%	1.4%
2	Simon Desue	**9.5**	11.6%	1.2%
3	PemiK - funny videos	**9.0**	10.3%	1.1%
4	Bubbleology ČR	**8.9**	26.9%	3.0%
5	Honzovy-longboardy.cz	**8.9**	10.5%	1.2%
6	Utubering	**8.8**	11.7%	1.3%
7	Taháky	**8.8**	10.6%	1.2%
8	Kristina Pimenova	**8.7**	11.0%	1.3%
9	Vlada Videos	**8.7**	17.6%	2.0%
10	Fakta o hovně	**8.7**	10.5%	1.2%
11	Fakju pane učiteli	**8.6**	10.4%	1.2%
12	Jmenuju Se Martin	**8.3**	12.0%	1.4%
13	Expl0ited	**8.1**	12.0%	1.5%
14	Logan Paul	**8.1**	15.9%	2.0%
15	Denis Kubík	**8.1**	11.0%	1.4%
16	VADAK	**8.1**	10.9%	1.3%
17	Snickers CZ & SK	**7.9**	10.2%	1.3%
18	BoardStar.cz	**7.8**	14.1%	1.8%
19	Jamie's World	**7.7**	15.0%	1.9%
20	Footshop	**7.7**	11.0%	1.4%
21	Madbros	**7.7**	12.0%	1.6%
22	Twixx TV	**7.6**	24.5%	3.2%
23	Nefakty CZ&SK	**7.5**	12.0%	1.6%
24	Přiznání holek - original	**7.3**	13.3%	1.8%
25	Přiznání kluků	**7.3**	23.2%	3.2%

Figure 26 - Top 25 pages with the largest affinity (only pages with 10%+ popularity ranked). YouTubers highlighted.

The affinity score (see 3.2.2.2 for explanation) highlights pages that are specific to the sample (compared to the general Facebook population of the Czech Republic), pages that the target group likes, but the general population doesn’t.

The affinity top 25 (Figure 26) contains 9 YouTubers, a YouTuber festival (Utubering), and several brands that regularly use Czech YouTubers for advertising purposes (Bubbleology[148],

[148] https://youtu.be/4AA4HvrieIE

Boardstar[149], Footshop[150]). The only non-YouTuber celebrities that made the list[151] were Logan Paul, who records sketch videos for a different online platform – Vine.co, and the Russian child model Kristina Pimenova.

The affinity metric by definition favors pages liked by no one else but the sample, and as such is mainly useful for comparing liking specifics between different groups. Note, for example, that the German YouTuber Simon Desue, who ranked 14th between YouTubers based on likes alone (position 130 in the top list), is YouTuber number 1 based on affinity because of his low popularity with the general Facebook population of the Czech Republic. This doesn't make him the most important YouTuber for Czech teenagers aged 13-17, it means that general Facebook population of the Czech Republic is much less interested in him than the sample is. The only regular top 25 YouTube channel (see Figure 21) to also appear in the affinity top 25 is Twixx TV, suggesting that a relatively bigger part of their fans belongs to the studied target group.

3.3.3.3. ***Gender Differences***

Basic gender statistics of the final sample (Figure 27) show girls to be more active likers with both more total likes and higher average like amounts (M=465, SD=694) than boys (M=325, SD=445); p=0.0000000000000000097 (two-sample unequal variance t-test, 95% CI).

	TOTAL	Boys	Girls
n	5161	2588	2573
likes	2,037,010	841,050	1,195,960
likes (%)		41%	59%
likes average	395	325	465
likes median	206	190	229
standard deviation	587	445	694
variance	344569	197667	481551

Figure 27 - basic gender statistics of the cleaned-up final sample (after removing profiles with 0-5 likes); p=0.0000000000000000097 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

[149] https://youtu.be/l1uhxPk7UqI?t=3m39s
[150] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vU5S75lrcxs
[151] It should be mentioned, however, that due to Facebook API limitations it wasn't possible to obtain reliable numbers of local fans of all ages for the following pages from the studied range: *Facebook for Every Phone, Mr. Bean, Selena Gomez, Cristiano Ronaldo, FC Barcelona, Leo Messi, Pitbull, Neymar Jr., Tasty, Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Shakira, 9GAG, 成龍 Jackie Chan, Bruno Mars, One Direction, Wiz Khalifa, BubbleMania, Ariana Grande, David Beckham, Rihanna*.

Contrary to the pilot results, girls liked more YouTubers (M=6.5, SD=7.7) than boys did (M=6.1, SD=7.4). The overall difference was subtle, but statistically significant (p=0.042; two-sample unequal variance t-test; 95% CI). Girls were also significantly more active celebrity likers (Figure 29).

	TOTAL	**Boys**	**Girls**
YT likes	32406	15700	16706
YT likes (%)		48%	52%
YT likes average	6	6,1	6,5
YT likes median	4	3	4
standard deviation	7.5	7.4	7.7
variance	56	54	59

at least 1 YT like	80%	79%	81%
at least 10 YT likes	23%	22%	24%
at least 20 YT likes	7%	6%	7%

Figure 28 - gender differences in the final dataset; YouTuber likes in top 1,002 pages; p=0.042 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

	TOTAL	**Boys**	**Girls**
CL likes	87764	39977	47787
CL likes (%)		46%	54%
CL likes average	17	15	19
CL likes median	11	9	12
standard deviation	19.5	18	21
variance	380	334	423

at least 1 CL like	89%	87%	92%
at least 10 CL likes	53%	49%	56%
at least 20 CL likes	31%	28%	34%

Figure 29 - gender differences in the final dataset; traditional celebrity likes in top 1,002 pages; p=0.0000000083 (two-sample unequal variance t-test); 95% CI

3.3.3.4. ***Discussion***

In general, the final 5,161-person dataset yielded results similar to the pilot. YouTubers were less dominant overall (and lost 1: 2.6 to traditional celebrities in the top 1000 slice, as opposed to 1: 2 in the pilot), but still represented the strongest celebrity category at the very top of the list. The main **Hypothesis A**: "More teenagers like the most popular YouTubers than they like the most popular traditional celebrities" can be accepted - the aggregate of YouTuber pages in the top 25 had a bigger share of total likes for that range (23%) than the aggregate of traditional celebrity pages in the same range (11.5%). The trend curves (cf. Figure 11 and Figure 22) were also similar, although traditional celebrities took over sooner in the larger dataset - at around the top 60 position (as opposed to top 100 in the pilot).

Mainstream popularity of YouTubers is a very recent phenomenon, whereas celebrities of traditional media have been around for a long time. As a result, there are only a handful of well-established YouTubers (although already so wildly popular that they occupy the top), while traditional celebrities are still much stronger in number overall (top 1000). Future research could monitor potential changes in this balance in the coming years.

The aggregate of local YouTuber pages in the top 1,000 had a bigger share of total celebrity likes for that range (21.65%) than the aggregate of international YouTuber pages (4.51%), proving that teenagers like Czech and Slovak speaking YouTubers more than they like international ones overall – **Hypothesis B** can be accepted. The reverse was the case for traditional celebrities - the aggregate of international traditional celebrity pages in the top 1,000 had a bigger share of total celebrity likes among the sample (45.26%) than the aggregate of local traditional celebrity pages (22.06%), revealing that teenagers like international traditional celebrities (musicians, actors) more than local traditional celebrities overall – **Hypothesis C** can be accepted.

Based on this research, YouTubers are very close to becoming more important local celebrities than all traditional celebrities combined overall (top 1000). It is possible that teenagers favor local YouTubers simply because the language barrier prevents them from fully understanding foreign ones. While music can still be enjoyed without understanding lyrics and most movies and popular TV shows are subject to dubbing, YouTube shows are mostly conversational and often don't even get subtitles. Likely due to the ubiquitous abundance of globalized pop-culture, teenagers like a bigger number of foreign traditional celebrities than of local ones.

Girls were more active likers overall, and in contrast to the pilot dataset, they liked slightly more YouTubers than boys did, even though several of the top YouTubers mainly record Let's Plays, and so, theoretically, should be more liked by boys – **Hypothesis D** can be rejected.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to find out where and why YouTubers fit into celebrity studies, what were the reasons behind their sudden rise to fame, what made that rise possible in the first place, and whether young audiences really migrate to the independent content creators of YouTube as much as they seem to.

The conclusion was that YouTubers are a technologically determined next step in the evolution of the TV personality, which (in a rather revolutionary manner) is taking place in the world of user-generated content. The foundations of their celebrity are in many ways identical to those of the TV personality, who works to break down any distance from the audience and traditionally embodies the characteristics of familiarity, intimacy and mass acceptability[152]. YouTubers build their celebrity on familiarity, authenticity (being themselves), relatability (being like their audience) and information value (providing relatively niche audiences with content they wouldn't find in traditional media). These qualities transfer over the new medium of user created online video better than they ever could over traditional mass media.

The evolutionary step was technologically determined, meaning that without the advances in internet connectivity, computational power and digital audio & video technology, there would be no free online video services. There was, however, one important aspect that made YouTube specific among other social networks – its Partner Program. By sharing ad revenue with video creators, YouTube allowed the successful ones to turn being a YouTuber into a good paying job and go "full-time". In 2016, children dream of becoming YouTubers as their future jobs, and instead of pretending to be baseball players or cowboys, they run pretend vlog channels[153].

The research in chapter 3 analyzed the Facebook page-likes of 5,161 Czech teenagers aged 13-17 and discovered that young audiences indeed do migrate to the independent content creators of YouTube as much as they seem to. This doesn't necessarily mean that teenagers don't watch TV[154]. It does mean, however, that TV personalities and actors (as well as any other traditional celebrities) are outranked by YouTubers, who dominate the top of the list of pages most liked by the target group.

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[152] They are also notably different from those of the film star, who builds on that distance from the audience and on admiring identification.

[153] http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-youtube-kids-20160627-snap-story.html

[154] The Czech TV station "Prima COOL" was, in fact, the second most liked page in the sample, the music TV channel "ÓČKO" was number 5 and "The Simpsons" ranked 8th overall.

Czech teenagers continue to listen to the music of global superstars and watch Hollywood movies with their superstar actors[155]. As a result, when we look at the "overall" view of top 1,000 pages in the sample, traditional celebrities are still greater in number, because comparatively few popular Czech and Slovak YouTubers exist. While international music can be enjoyed without understanding its lyrics, and most movies and popular TV shows are subject to dubbing, YouTube shows often don't even get subtitles and are thus hidden behind a language barrier from many young viewers. When only local celebrities[156] are considered, the aggregate of musicians, actors and public figures is already very close to being overtaken by YouTubers even in this large scope.

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[155] whose fame is built on admiring identification and larger-than-life distance (Marshall, 1997)

[156] Czech and Slovak speaking

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