MAKING MUNDANE MAGICAL
- ANALYZING VLOGGER-AUDIENCE INTERACTION IN YOUTUBE
Abstract

In the past decades a lot of research has been dedicated to widening the understanding of different media audiences, as well as to determining the motivations behind both, creation of user-generated content (UGC) as well as audience behavior.

This thesis seeks to broaden this knowledge by studying vloggers and their interaction with their audiences. Instead of asking the audience members: In what ways are the vloggers an influence on you, this thesis asks: “Can the audience be a source of inspiration and influence for vloggers? The thesis aims also at recognizing typicality’s in vloggers audio-visual content as well as strategical approaches for audience engagement. Approach in order to find answers to the set questions is critical yet humanistic.

Empirical research is divided in two parts, of which the first is done by qualitative content analysis and the second part by semi-structured interviews. The aim of this multimethod approach is to get a broad yet deep view on this commercial, and contemporary storytelling form.

Appadurai’s five scape- theory is used as the theoretical framework, and the research findings as well as conclusions are also viewed through other suitable studies from the media and communications field.

Keywords: Vlogging Culture, Vloggers, Youtube, Audience studies, Imagined audiences, Microcontent, Digital Storytelling, Critical Assessment, 5-scape theory, Arjun Appadurai
Imagination is more important than knowledge.

For knowledge is limited to all we know and understand,

while imagination embraces the

entire world.

- Albert Einstein

This thesis is dedicated to my immediate family, especially to Doctor P.J. Mathecken.
Making mundane magical

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1 Introduction

We are all affected by the cultures that we are surrounded by. We are shaped by many micro cultures, such as family culture; both the one that we are born to, and the one we might have later in life. Then there are voluntary cultures, in other words cultures we choose ourselves, related to for example, hobbies and work. Besides that, our behavior and values are influenced by different macro cultures, such as our nationality, city or rural culture and our socio-economical background. All these together are building blocks for our social identity.

When analyzing electric media’s role in the “nomadic, workless world”, McLuhan used an analogy of it being the extension of our nervous system, which is characterized by inclusive awareness which “by-passes space and time, and creates problems of human involvement and organization, for which there is no precedent” (2013; 1963, p. 137). Whether electric media has become an extension of our bodily existence is in the eyes of the beholder, but as different social medias are used as a communication tool actively already by three billion people around the world and currently half of world’s population having access to the internet (wikipedia.com, picture 1), understanding communication that happens in social media platforms is increasingly important.

![Internet penetration world-wide in 2016](Ogden J. 2019, Wikipedia.org)
As a lot of academic research has been dedicated to media audiences, as well as understanding the possible differences between professional-generated content (PGC) and user-generated content (UGC), this thesis wants to know whether this knowledge is used in practice. This thesis concentrates on studying one of the voluntary cultures; *YouTube Vloggers*, and more precisely vlogger-audience interaction. It has two empirical research parts, which aims to give complementary information regarding the chosen research question. It also tries to see how this communication is reciprocated and what challenges does the online environment create for such interaction. The importance of studying such a niche, yet well-known phenomenon lies in the current shift that can be recognized in cultural industries, as they are merging more with the aims of economic growth (Thorsby, 2008, p. 147).

Thesis research part one aims at recognizing typicalities in audiovisual communications that are used in vloggers content in a North European and North American context. The reason for analyzing microcontent is because vlogging is a contemporary storytelling method, in which ‘the story’ is not necessarily told only by the vloggers words, but also by various other small elements, that are quick flashes between the main content, but need to be understood in order to ‘read’ vloggers videos. The second research part, which is done in an Estonian-Finnish context asks: Can audience be a source of information for vloggers, and what possible hindrances is related to vlogger-audience interaction?

This thesis has a vernacular cultural approach, as the focus is on studying a phenomenon and a group that operates and connects in the realms of a specific digital environment; YouTube. (Kozinets, 2015). This thesis uses Appadurai’s (1996;1990) 5 scape theory as theoretical framework. The following parts of the introduction aim to clarify different aspects to YouTube, after which this thesis concentrates on the actual dilemma.

1.1 Basics

“Broadcast yourself” *(YouTube slogan)*

YouTube is an American company founded in two thousand and five. It is owned by Google, and following Google is the world’s second largest search engine and biggest video streaming website. YouTube’s popularity has made it a lucrative as well as competed commercial space and this platform’s success is based on “convenience and easy accessibility” (Kim, 2012, p. 57&58).
YouTubes key service is to perform as a platform that can educate and entertain by a vast amount of video content, as well as to serve as a marketplace for various industries, such as the whole-sale foods, electronics, and travelling. Its key customers are both companies that market their products in advertisements, and private people that produce and publish their own videos.

Some numbers to describe its vastness are that it is currently used in at least fifty-six countries, and in 2018 it had 1.58 billion registered users (statista.com). Every minute three hundred minutes of HD-video was uploaded to the site (businessofapps.com) and over five billion videos were watched during a day (merchdope.com). The company is currently lead by technology executive Susan Wojcicki and has 5000 employees (wikipedia.com).

Companies that provide a similar service to YouTube are for example Chinese Youku and Baomihua, and American companies Hulu, Vimeo and Twitch. The latest focuses more on live streaming and it is a subsidiary to Amazon. The only European equivalent is Dailymotion, a French-based company operating in eighteen languages. (marketing91.com)

Even if being competitors, none of the earlier mentioned companies cannot currently compare with YouTube’s estimated yearly revenue it being nine billion USD, in comparison to Youku nine thousand eighty hundred million USD, Baomihua nineteen million USD, Hulu 1.8 billion USD, Vimeo fifty million UDS, Twitch thirty million UDS and Dailymotion 27.2 million USD (owler.com). Facebook owned Instagram also offers an opportunity for video-sharing, and its estimated yearly revenue is three billion USD (owler.com).

1.2 Revenue Models

YouTube’s revenue model seems easy on the surface but has its complications. Initially it requires a person or a company to make an account, accept YouTube terms of service (TOS), turn on monetization, accept YouTube’s advertising guidelines, as well as to agree for YouTube’s ad revenue share with Google. It also requires connecting to AdSense account to receive credit for each video’s monthly income. Google keeps 45% of the advertising revenue as while content creators, no matter if the other party is a private person or a company or organization, gets 55%. After a certain amount of earnings, depending on
the country that the account is registered to, content creator must pay income tax. (investopedia.com)

YouTube uses CPM (cost per mille/ clicks per thousand views a video), and in a study analyzing over two hundred and twenty-four million ad impressions and nearly 565,000 clicks found the average CPM in 2018 to be 9.81 USD (adstage.io). Other estimates points to number closer to 7.60 USD (influencermarketinghub.com). So in simplified math, using the latter mentioned CPM, if a company or a YouTuber posts two videos a week throughout the year and has an average of 200,000 views per all per video, the average gross income for a year would be approximately 158,000 USD, from which the company of vlogger would get fifty-five percent, equaling to approximately 71,000 USD. As a general example the music video titled Gangnam style, which created also a world-wide dance-trend had earned 7.8 million USD in revenue till the end of 2013, via AdSense. (quora.com)

Some of the YouTubers become entrepreneurial vloggers (Burgess and Green, 2009 ref. in Mironova, 2015 p.15), which mean that besides making earnings from YouTube, following the number of clicks per video, they can earn from appearances and brand deals as well. These deals usually combine promoting products or services in their videos, as well as trying to get people to follow the affiliate links below their video. These deals can be anything stating from some hundreds of dollars up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per single marketing campaign.

1.3 Vlogging As A Cultural Form

Vlogging as an expessional form is estimated to be approximately as old as Youtube, and one specific group of content creators in the YouTube universe are vloggers (more commonly referred to as YouTubers\(^1\)); private people that create and publish video blogs. The videos that they create are called video logs or vlogs and these vlogs fall under many different categories such as style and beauty, gaming or entertainment.

The interest of the subscribers or followers is built around the persona or personas of the

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1) All YouTubers are not vloggers, as whereas vloggers in this context are youtubers. This thesis uses both terms interchangeably.
vlogger that run the vlog, their specific characteristics as well as the different video content that vary in style anywhere from humorous and light-minded, to theatrical, confessional and dramatic. There are also vloggers that incorporate or who’s main aim is to promote certain political views or ways of living, such as eco-consciousness, or who aim at normalizing stigma around a variety of topics. Others base their content around their profession or family life. In addition to showing moments of their everyday lives, many vloggers partake in ‘challenges’ in which there is a lot of cultural\textsuperscript{2} and global convergence\textsuperscript{3} or what Appadurai call the typicalities in mediascape (Jenkins, 2010; Appadurai 1996).

Inspiration is also drawn from reality TV shows as well as Talk Show content. One typicality special to vlogger content is the widespread videos concentrated on conspiracy and mystery stories.

Some challenges are inspired by other vloggers core content and some of the videos are vloggers own productions. Typical challenges are also “reacting videos” where vloggers analyze, grade or react to products, such a new food products or make-up lines, or even to vloggers own old videos. “To try out new unfamiliar things”, such as Tinder or eating only food that is brown in color for a day, is also one form of the circulatory themes that many vloggers use as topics in their videos. Two of the more known global audiovisual images circulating in the vlogging mediascape are MukBang\textsuperscript{4} ASMR\textsuperscript{5}.

In media publications YouTubers are often seen predominantly as influencers for especially youngsters and children, even if many studies have varied the largest YouTube content viewer group to be people between ages 25-34 (ten Have, 2017; thebusinessofapps.com). Vloggers videos on the other hand are many times seen from a very critical stance or as short-lived entertainment, but as McLuhan (2013) predicted, information-gathering regarding societal processes have become a part of the ‘new’ in culture, and YouTube videos are a part of this process.

\textsuperscript{2} Cultural convergence refers to a “shift in the logic in which cultural operate” (Jenkins, 2016)

\textsuperscript{3} Global convergence refers to media being a teaching tool that deepens and gives the possibility to understand “parallel cultures” across the globe (Jenkins, 2016)

\textsuperscript{4} A vlogging style that originated in South-Korea, in which the host eats large amount of foods at one go, while casually chatting with the audience.

\textsuperscript{5} A method that uses whispering or other differentiating sensory appealing voices as a story-telling method. Both methods are supposed to work as stress relievers (psychologytoday.com) in today’s high-pace world.
YouTubers videos also end up building a huge audiovisual library that showcase different lifestyles and personal interest from around the globe, which might, besides “pressing the spirits of the most routine-ridden minds”, also challenge the future anthropologist (McLuhan, 2013).

Only a few vloggers end up becoming celebrities nationally and fewer globally even if that is usually the aim in the beginning. Some vloggers become micro-celebrities and influencers in a smaller scale, publishing content regularly to tens or hundreds of thousands of subscribers. YouTube publicity can also be described as cumulative as well as variable, as the level of visibility of the content producer and their content often, but not always, accord (Ridell, 2012, p.26-27). This means that usually the more known the vlogger, the higher the mean of views in videos.

But there are also videos that ‘go viral’ and may end up circulating locally or around the world because of a timely topic, very active audience base that volunteer and use their time and effort to ‘push the video forward’.

1.4 Vlogger-Audience Interaction

The most typical compositional setting for a vlogging video is when a vlogger sits in front of a camera, usually alone, and uses “multimodal elements such as shifts in gaze, posture, facial expressions as well as voice” to communicate to the audience (Frobenius, 2014; Frenchaud 2017, p 59). Participatory communication as well as interactivity is usually enhanced by asking questions to followers, but because of the reality or limitations of the platform, “conversation is delayed”, as the audience’s reactions and a further discussion can only be done via leaving short comments in the commentary section, or by sending private-messages. (Frobenius, 2014, p.59) Another study found camera angle and its position towards the vloggers face to be another effective role positions practice, because fifty nine percent of the video content was filmed so that the camera angle was straight towards the YouTuber, 17,9% so that it was in motion, 2,9% looking up to the YouTuber and 1,9 % looking down (Fernchaud et al 2017), which are ways to either show dominance or submission and means of practicing role-position towards the audience.
When thinking of audience, it should be remembered that some members do not show in any statistics and are thus unmeasurable. This is either because they are not logged in or browse privately. And those that do show, both to vloggers themselves and in research, vary in their participation level. Some leave comments and likes or dislikes actively, while others are silent watchers. In some previous studies from online, text-based communities, active participants have been referred as “posters” and silent ones, slightly less flattering, as “lurkers” (O’Donnell et al. 2008). Some of the lurkers can also belong to the so-called ‘nightmare audiences’ (Murumaa-Mengel, 2017). What this means is that viewers usually categorize their audiences into imaginary segments, that have fluid borders and the nightmare audiences are the ones that vloggers – based on their personal references and history – would not want to be present (Appadurai, 1990; Murumaa-Mengel 2017).

It is easy to assume an audience network looks something close to figure one, even if it is more typically closer to figure two. In figure one all eyes are towards the mediator in the center, in this case the vlogger, who serves as a focal point to the audience. Figure number two shows that within the audience there are groups that have multiple activity centers, which can be described as uncontrollable, and usually the precise size proportions between different groups are unknown. (Kozinets, 2017).

Regardless of one’s position or activity level, all earlier mentioned belong to the audience. Jenkins et al. (2013) writes that the spreadability of content is usually connected to the more engaged audience segments, as well as to the content creators’ level of knowledge regarding the technical and strategical skills. The skills are required to motivate the audience for it to start voluntarily starting to circulate information within a social media or even to other
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social medias. These elements together with role positioning done from vlogger towards the audience, are important factors when building a follower base. (Jenkins, 2013; Frobenius, 2014)

Vlogger and the audience together form an online community that in communications literature has been given many names, and these names reflect the progression of this cultural phenomena. Names that have been given used to describe these communities are for example “virtual village”, “electronic neighborhood” or “networked individualism” (Appadurai 1996, p 197; Bourdaa and Hong-Mercier, 2012; Kozinets 2015 p. 64). Networked individuals can be described as individuals that construct their own “complex identities” and move easily between different roles and social setting. (Kozinets, 2015, p. 64) Some of the audience members become fans of the vlogger, which means that one part of the virtual village is occupied by a *fan community*. This community usually shares the same object of passion, way of communicating, similar media practices as well as the willingness to be belong.

Bearing in mind the ways vloggers send messages, and the different ways audiences can receive and respond to them, it can be noticed, that in both ends there is room for *imagination*. When watching a vlogger online, the viewer usually constructs a world beyond what it seen on the frame in front of him/her, as where vloggers whilst filming the content, must imagine some audience that they are talking to. (this chapter has been moved here)

Muruumaa-Mengel (2016, p 16) writes that “the notion of imagined audience as a term for mental conceptualizations of the people we are in communication with, has been in use already for a century, but it has more importance than ever in the online settings” and goes on to explain that the imagined community we believe to be the audience online, often differs from what it actually is. All the earlier mentioned factors are important to know and think about when reading this thesis, as context collapse, which means that after an audience or any quantity of people or things reaches a certain point, it is impossible to understand it in other sense than as a mass, not mass with individuals. (Muruumaa-Mengel, 2017)

Vloggers can also be described as vlogging cultures own “memory-men” (Lundqvist, 1999, p.167). *Memory-men* is an ethnological term used in correlation to historic cultures that were purely verbal, in other words verbal ethnic cultures. The memory-men had an important role as they were the ones that kept the culture together by constantly reminding
other individuals within the culture of their shared “memory-base” (Lönnqvist et al. 1999) by repeating and mystifying stories.
2 Research Focus and Literature Review

This thesis studies how vloggers and their audiences interact with each other using a vernacular cultural approach (Kozinets, 2017). This study is organized in two parts:

- **Thesis Research Part One** is an exploratory research and it aims to identify audio-visual typicalities within vlogger video content, with a specific emphasis on American/Finnish vloggers. The reason for having both American, as well as Finnish vloggers in the study is to see whether Appadurai’s scape theory is applicable when comparing two different types of cultures.

- **Thesis Research Part Two** of the study is done in a Finnish-Estonian context, and it aims to expand the understanding on vlogger-audience interaction by getting more knowledge regarding vloggers own motivations for content creation by trying to find answers to three main questions;

  1. Whether or not audiences and followers can be a source of inspiration to vloggers
  2. Whether vloggers know their own audiences
  3. Whether this knowledge intertwines with the motivation that precedes the creational process

2.1 Theoretical Framework of The Thesis

This thesis uses Appadurai’s (1990, p. 33) 5-scape theory as theoretical framework. It was chosen because it has a unique way of seeing imagination as a part of the way person reconstructs and builds different cultural worlds that he/she is a part of, and how these colliding worlds further re-construct global imagined landscapes.

The main reason why I see this theory being relevant and suited for research that is linked to media and communication is because it provides a lot of options and points of views, from which to reflect the research questions. When analyzing a topic that has the following elements: audio-visual storytelling, technological platform, possible state-related imagery, international flow of money, human behavior, and multileveled audience participation, a theory that is flexible is needed. One can for example ask: “What scapes mostly effect vlogging and their audiences, and in what way?” At the core of this theory is also a contemplation on how global imagination might cause deterrorization, which refers to a loosening connection between groups, people and locations, especially when reflecting
Making mundane magical culture in a historical spectrum. This contemplation in a useful element when analyzing vlogging culture from a societal point of view.

Following chart aims to clarify the five scapes with practical examples. In this thesis three scapes; mediascapes, ethnoscape and technoscape, are given more emphasis comparing to ideoscapes and financescapes (Table 1).

*Table 1: 5 dimensions of fluid cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 34-36)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ideoscapes</strong></th>
<th>= usually directly political state (=nation) related flows of images, that can be a part of forming mediascapes. Circulation of ideoscapes is usually lead by nation government.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnoscape</strong></td>
<td>= constant movement or flow of different groups that constitute to a world, that is ever shifting and moving. These groups are formed by, for example, immigrants, exiles and tourists, and they are either forced to move, or do it voluntarily. Concrete example: 50 years ago, it was not possible to people from different socio-economical classes to travel the way it is today, and because there was less transcontinental (over continents) collaboration, movement of, for example, war exiles did not connect the whole world, as it does today. These movements result in a mixture of cultures and political believes, that further build one’s social identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mediascape</strong></td>
<td>= Distribution and flow of world imagery in various medias, where fantasy and reality blurs together. Concrete example: 50 years ago, media culture was understood mainly via (paper printed) news media, television and movies, as where now internet has enabled more freedom of choice to all consumer. Instead watching a Hollywood movie, anyone can watch a clip from Bollywood of Nollywood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technoscape</strong></td>
<td>= Global configurations of technology where both mechanics and information flow transnationally (over state boarders). Concrete example: 50 years ago, the amount of technological apparatuses was limited, and they were not available for all economic classes, as where now availability has broadened, as well as the scale of price points in merchandise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financescapes</strong></td>
<td>= The international flow of money. Concrete example: 50 years ago, capital was recycled and stored mainly within the state borders as where now the global economy has made the flow of money imaginary, as it is ever so hard to trace its origins, whereabouts or place of storage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To open up Appadurai’s (1990) own thought on how imagination has possibly changed current cultural expression, here are a few examples.

1) **Imagination has broken out of the special expressive space of art, that was previously occupied by a more pre-selected group of people (such as artist or celebrities), and myth and ritual have become a part of the work, logic and practices of the ordinary people** (1990, p. 5)

2) Opposing Frankfurt schools idea in which it was believed that commoditization would have a negative impact on people’s ability to self-express, it is believed that the **consumption of (global) mass media, as well as traditional national media, can provoke a variety of reactions, and agency, that can actualize in the form of, for example, irony and resistance.** This further on helps building the collective imagination that is seen more as a promotional tool for action, than only as a way of refuge. (1990, p. 7-8)

3) **Mass-media enables more possibilities to build different communities around people, but these communities can be described as less professionalized and connected to the collectively shared criteria of relevance and taste**, and they often “operate beyond the boundaries of a nation”. (1990, p. 8)

Appadurai’s theory has many applications but I will now explain how I personally understand it. The core idea is that everything is affected by five main scapes, which all have to do with increased movement of people, Materia and imagination. When we analyze any phenomena, in this case a cultural phenomenon called vlogging, we have to take into consideration the possible effects of not the obvious – in this case the images, the audio, the person who is talking and the business model of the platform provider - but also the non-obvious, such as possible governmental propaganda in the form of global images, the effects and ambitions of global finance world, and the powerplay between all these elements. His theory emphasizes imagination, which is also a representation or a building block within the human mind. As an example, we can “imagine” that when we walk on a crowded street, the streets are full of - not only people - put people carrying with them invisible world, like comic books ‘talk bubbles’, and these worlds further build ‘the global cultural landscapes’, that are partly imagined.

Because the mentioned emphasis on imagination, Appadurai’s theory has been criticized for being ‘too positive’ or even aligning with positivism, but as Sassatelli (2013) mentions, the
difference between both; being aspiring and positive thinking, as well as positive thinking and optimism, should be understood and recognized. Imagination, when thought of more precisely, does not withhold any kind of connotation, negative or positive. The reason behind this typical misconception most probably stems from the word imagination being so often combined with the more positive aspects of creative processes and arts, even if the act of imagination can lead to a myriad of outcomes, or no outcomes at all.

2.2 Literary Review of Previous Research

Social media platforms, including YouTube, as well as YouTubers, have been studied in different academic fields with discourses varying from socio-cultural to socio-economical and technical. Lot of attention, both media as well as academic, have been given to YouTube’s commercial side, even if only 3% of its content is supported by advertising, and the size of profitable video sites are even less (Kim, 2012, p.57).

The following researches are taken from few different research fields to give a broad view on the topic, most theories listed under communications and media research. Many recent studies regarding social media participation concentrate on motivations behind user-generated content (UGC) while less seem to concentrate on the connections that vloggers build to each other, in other words, horizontal connections. One of the studies in the latter category, building on previous research done about consumption based communities, used community of practice (CoP), which refers to a shared learning process of people with the same interest, as a tool to analyze beauty bloggers and YouTubers motivations, and found that mutual engagement, shared repertoires and joint enterprise were the main integrational forces connecting these specific UGC creator groups. (Gannon and Prothero, 2018, p.592 and p. 603) Handayanis and Alaikas (2017) research linked high self-efficacy, which means a person’s belief in his/her own capacities to motivate first one’s self and afterwards others, to content creators, as where altruism tendency was in connection to identity-based attachment amongst the audiences.

A study on novel social networking applications (SNS) Naver Band ant Path, using social identity theory as a theoretical framework, found that closed and private SNS’s - which are believed to have been initially formed because of the growing need for privacy, resulting from overwhelming and excessive content amount in the public SNS - had higher cognitive and emotional trust-levels towards both to market-generated content (MGC) as well as UGC.
information comparing to the open and public ones, such as YouTube. (Choi and Lee, 2016, p.550&557) To study closed and private SNS’s is important as it can be assumed that people with different kind of motivations are more inclined to choose either and open and public media, as where people that have for example security threads or are personality-wise shy or modest, might be more inclined to choosing a closed SNS.

Another important element to Youtube is its visual expression, which many researches have also paid attention to, even if in a lesser extend when comparing to the amount of studies that have been mainly interested in audience motivations. One way of summarizing the typicalities in what Appadurai calls the mediascapes is that they are: “image-centered, narrative-based strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them are serious of elements, out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others, living in other places” (Appadurai, 1990, p.35).

Crowston and Fagnot’s (2017) study related to UGC projects, concentrating on contributors of Wikipedia, proposed an alternative three-level scale to be used in order to broader the understanding of motivation behind participating to UGC. Instead of seeing motives in a simplified manner as a static and individualistic action they found that initial contributions were in connection to curiosity, sustained contributions by intrinsic interest and meta-contributions by social motives (Crowston and Fagnot, 2017, p.98). In spite of the different research focuses and research subjects, all previously mentioned researches point to the direction that content creators build bonds of similar positioning in the platform, meaning that they share the same location in YouTube hierarchy, or as Bourdieu (2010;1984, p. 483) puts it: “a groups presence or absence in the official classification depends on its capacity to get itself recognized, to get itself noted and admitted, and so to win a place in the social order.”

Social media audiences are also initially motivated by curiosity, which has the possibility to realize as social involvement. Social involvement on its part has been found to be motivated mostly by the need to be entertained, and least by the opportunity to participate in discussion (Hadirakis and Hanson, 2009). Besides this there’s an inclination that the trust-levels towards information that media users see in open SNS’s begin to drop when the number of users exceed a certain limit (Choi and Lee, 2016). Para-socialism’s role, which means formation of a friend-like bond towards a mass-media celebrity, in audience practices have also caught some researchers attention.
In a study utilizing MANOVA, multivariate analysis of variance, studied the most subscribed channel category in YouTube, and found that para-socialism can be formed via both negative and positive self-disclosure in relation to YouTubers (Burgess and Greens 2009; Frenchaud et al. 2017). This means that even if some form this bond because they truly like the person that they are following, others form it because of dislike. Because YouTube provides a possibility to interaction different from TV-audience, which was the original study subject in the 1950’s, the exact nature of para-socialism, especially in different age groups, should be further studied, as para-socialism can be more easily found within the young than adults.

Vlogging also entails a component of storytelling, and the line of research concentrating on this part of the audio-visual communication is called either *Computer mediated storytelling* or *Web 2.0 storytelling*, and it is a newer stream within communications and technology research. It aims at understanding the storytelling typicalities and strategies that happen in online environment. The distinction between storytelling around the campfire, and Web 2.0 within a *social software* platform storytelling is that where in the past a story used to have a clear beginning, middle and end, and was told to a quiet audience, in Web 2.0 stories can be multidirectional, open-ended and even exploitary (Alexander and Levine, 2018).

*Imagined audiences* have been researched slightly over two decades, and one of the most referenced study in this area is by Litt and Hargittai (2016). They wanted to know what social media users, in this case in Facebook and Twitter users are thinking when they construct and share their posts. They found that approximately 70% are thinking of more concrete audiences, such as work colleagues or “people with collies”, and approximately 7% think of imagined audiences, such as a celebrity that is not in their contact list or a family member that had passed away. The aim of their study was to shed light on how imagined audiences and more concrete one’s fluctuated in people’s minds when they post about life events or a chosen strip of news, even if the audience base is the same. (Litt and Hargittai, 2016, p.1&9) *Imagined audiences* have also been researched in relation to political communication. Soffer (2013, p. 88) for example studied Israeli army radio’s way of imagining audiences, and found that imagined audience is tied to the goals of the media organization, the culture that it operates in, and that it can perform as a tool for survival in the ever changing broadcasting sphere.
Some researchers are hesitant whether imagined audience as a research focus is justifiable or can build invisible and visible bonds between people or communities. Aslama and Pantti (2006) write in their study about reality TV as an illustrator for contemporary confessional culture that “it has been claimed that mediated conversation dealing with the basic experiences of everyday life constructs imagined communities” (Aslama and Pantti, p. 172). Even if studying communications and audiences, many similarities to vlogging culture can be found, as they conclude their study by stating that “preoccupation with someone else’s private life has formed a new popular culture representation, that is characterized by therapeutic disclosure as a mean for authenticity, and emotional determinism” which is similar to Appadurai’s description of it being a type of global therapy form, that has a tendency to strengthen the mutual effort of sameness (Aslama and Pantti, 2006, p.181; Appadurai 1990, p. 43).

Methodologically, not size-wise, this thesis’s research part 1 comes closest to a study done by Molyneaux et al. (2014), where they analyzed over 1000 vlogs and found, for example, that community building is done also by social hypertext, in this case a network of connected videos, and that women vloggers are more prone to communicate with their followers. Regarding imagined audiences, they found that only 9% of vloggers stated that they were producing their vlog for a certain, imagined audience. Thesis research part two on the other hand is like many quantitative researches done within communications in recent years about vlogging as a community practice (Westerberg 2017; Gannon and Prothero, 2018; Ma 2017).

As a good summarization of the nature of vlogging communities serves the following quote from Appadurai: ”While the social morphology of electronic neighborhoods is hard to classify and their longevity difficult to predict, they are communities of some sort, trading information and building links that affect many areas of life, from philanthropy to marriage (Appadurai, 1996, p.197).
3 Empirical Research

3.1 Methodology and Approach

This thesis uses a mixed methods approach to study the chosen research area as it provides complementary elements and various angles to the problem, which helps to build a broader picture about the phenomena at hand. It also proved difficult to get an efficient number of interviews in the set timeframe, as had happened in previous researches (Westenberg, 2017), which is why the emphasis shifted from only qualitative research to mixed methods.

**Research part one** uses quantitative content analysis as a tool to recognize different audio-visual and microcontent typicalities and tries to see whether by comparing Swedish and American vloggers content. Content analysis’s positive side is that it provides a safe and rather trustworthy setting for analyzing communicative messages but with this method the scope, amount of data that will be collected as well as methodological approach must be carefully decided before starting empirical execution. (Allen, 2017) **Research part two** is qualitative and uses semi-structural interviews in an Estonian-Finnish context. Semi-structural interviews provide a possibility to move from open, more general questions, towards more specific theoretical questions during the interview. What supported the use of this method was that it gives great insight to a possibly complex research phenomena for critical assessment and possible follow-up questions on the spot. (Galletta and Cross, 2013)

Both methods have positive as well as negative sides. In qualitative studies there’s a risk of decontextualization, which means taking a comment away from the original social context, which is why during and after the interviews, it is recommendable to keep an open mind. Besides that, the researcher must avoid falling into the trap holes of Freudian overvaluation and remember to see things from a neutral, or at least neutral as possible, point of view. A common mistake in social media research could be for example to see technicality as something overtly progressional, and this type of presumabilities can harm the research process at large. (Carpentier et al., 2012, p.3&6) Even if Kozinets netnographical ideas are used in this thesis, it should be noted that this research does not agree with the chapter which states that combination of qualitative and quantitative research in ‘nonsensical’ (Kozinets, 2013). Looking at both sides of the equation - the numbers and the people – can
only bring more information of the research area, not simply complications. The aim is also to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in a well-planned and balanced way as numbers and meaning can be seen as counterbalancing acts in research (Hirsjärvi et al. 2000).

3.2 Research Design and Timeline

3.2.1 Thesis Research Part One

The data in part one was collected and analyzed during a duration of eight weeks. Two comparative groups were chosen from both Finland and the United States of America, 20 from USA and six from Finland, totaling in 26 videos. The reason for the mismatch in data sample size is to do with complication regarding finding videos that would suit the research agenda, as some of the videos were too long or had to be ruled out of ethical issues. One group in each country was from the most subscribed category and the comparing group’s subscriber amount was approximately 10% of the other group. Preparation for the variables that were measured was done by going through vloggers videos from few different countries and trying to find typicalities that occurred to the human eye. The word variable is used here instead of attribute, as this study proves the mentioned, saturated variables to be most possibly found in a replicatory study, only to be present “in degree” (Anderson and Ross, 1994, p. 39). See example of appendix number two in the last page of this thesis.

The reason for measuring these variables was because in the first stage of the thesis, where material was collected and the methodology was being finalized, it could be noted that one way to attract audience was in many cases the tempo of the videos. There were vloggers that seemed to attract audiences with a more slow-tempo and by creating a subtle and relaxing atmosphere. But majority of the vloggers videos, especially the ones that were in the high subscriber category were very quick in tempo, and this was usually done either by editing a normal speech into several fragments, and by adding additional ‘hypertext’ elements in between. Quick tempo and rapidly changing elements are typically found in children’s movies and tv-series, as children are drawn to colors, quick-paced storytelling as well as ‘action’.

All together more than thirty-five variables were registered and counted were, for example, the number of obvious editorial cuts, the number of comments directed toward the audience,
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the number of affiliate links below the video, whether a product or brand is clearly marketed, and the amount of complementary story-telling methods, such as the use of; emoticons, pictures, texts on top of video (hypertext), music clips or another video material. See Appendix number two.

3.2.2 Thesis Research Part Two

Email requests for volunteering to interviews were send to Finnish and Estonian vloggers. Vloggers that were approached were found via YouTube internet word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) and by using different websites that list vloggers in different countries (for example vlogit.fi and using keywords such as ‘Estonian vlogger’ in socialblade.com). Vloggers contact information was gathered from YouTube or from vloggers Instagram. Underaged vloggers, vloggers with strongly political content, vloggers who had not published anything in the previous months, or who had disabled comments-section were left out of the contacting list.

The questionnaire that was used in the interview was done in a thematized semi-structural manner, and the interview consisted of twenty interview questions. The themes in the questionnaire were motivations for content creation (MFCC), vloggers knowledge regarding their own audience (KOOA), audiences in terms of being a source of inspiration (ASOI) and using data analytics as a tool to know about audiences (DATFA) (figure 5). The reason for asking about motivations for doing the vlog was to get a better understanding of vloggers own preferences, as well as to see whether relationship with the audience would naturally come up in these parts of the conversation.
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Figure 3: Design of Thesis Research Part 2.

After having sent thirty-six emails and six messages via other medias, only four interviews came to be, three from Finland and one from Estonia. Medium duration of the four interviews was fifty minutes, and they were done with or without video via different video-call services. Reason for this was that some interviewees did not have Skype, which was the suggested call platform. Following table shows the basic information regarding the interviewees. Their mean age was twenty-seven and a half years, and their subscriber amount at the time of the interview varied between twenty-five thousand and one hundred and eighty thousand followers. (table 2)

Afterwards interviews were transcribed, and the ones done in Finnish translated to English. After that saturation and compatibility regarding some previous researches were searched in the above-mentioned areas. After that saturated content was viewed through Appadurai’s theory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee number</th>
<th>Nationality and gender</th>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Number of social medias</th>
<th>Active Years in Youtube</th>
<th>Income level (partly/full)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vlogger 1</td>
<td>Finnish, Couple</td>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlogger 2</td>
<td>Estonian, Female</td>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.3 Ethics

Regarding thesis research part one all the analyzed content is available to anyone to see, but even with quantitative content analysis ethics must be considered, and the ‘do no harm’ mentality must be kept in mind as to how the data is presented. Therefore, in appendix number two no names or recognizable figures are shown, other than the subscriber amount of the vlogger. Regarding part two all interviewees were promised anonymity, which is why consideration and detail was put to clear out all recognizable data from the material that is presented under results, as well to the way interviewee profile information is revealed. All interviewees were also asked whether they had some questions regarding the interview at the end of the call, to ensure that everyone could express how they felt about the conversation that had taken place.

As a ground rule the following idea by Kozinets (2017, p.23) is good to keep in mind. It states that “individuals with all their different characteristics and dimensions should be put before communities”, both in the ontological and moral sense. This applied to this research so that even if the main aim is to understand typicalities within a group of performers, the researcher should remember to first think of the individual rather than a collective and avoid making untrue generalizations - as every individual is different. Besides being respectful and ethical to the interviewees, or people whose content, in this case videos, are being used in any data collection, it is also important to remember the researcher’s own ethical rights regarding doing a research (Piper and Simons, 2004).
4 Results

4.1 Thesis Research Part One

This research part concentrates on finding typicalities in vloggers audiovisual expression and communication, and the findings are listed into three categories; commercial collaborations, audiovisual expression and audience engagement strategies. The reason for studying these elements within the vlogger’s media texts was partly because knowledge and previous did not seem to be centered around, especially audience engagement strategies, which is an important element in vlogging culture. Audiovisual expression on the other hand in the key element of YouTube and vlogging content, which is why it needs to be understood.

The results of this part indicate that besides excelling in video communications, vloggers need a high level of knowledge in different audience engagement strategies as well as a lot of commercial partners, in order to appeal to different audiences, and to make it to the top category of listed vloggers. It also indicates that vloggers use a multitude of hypertext and other communication methods typical to the internet, to gain popularity (Figure 3). The presented results are valid but not easily generalized, as the quantity of data was small.

![Diagram showing variables affecting vlogger popularity](image)

*Figure 4: Variables that effect vlogger popularity.*
Research part two served as pilot study to research part one, as the interviews gave a lot of useful information about what variables might be worth of studying and counting for, in order to find typicalities in vloggers strategical approaches to gain more audience commitment.

4.1.1 Amount of Commercial Collaborations

After analyzing the numeral data from research part two, it became clear that few variables were critical in proving some of the assumptions to be correct. The effect of the remaining variables was not seen in the data. In the two comparative groups there was a clear distinction between the ‘professionals’ and ‘beginners’ with respect to the amount of affiliate links. In the first group the number of videos that were promoting a company, service or vloggers own clothing or other product line was 100%, and in the comparative group it was 60%. In the ‘professional’ group the mean number of affiliate links was 9.8 links per video, as where in the comparative group it was 4.9 links per video. In other words, there was an increase of over 50%, between the high and the low subscriber vloggers.

It should be noted that all of the affiliate links were not clearly commercial, but none the less this finding would indicate that as one reaches the high subscriber group, it means that all content becomes commercial, as where, when a vlogger is producing content only part of the time, commercialization is only beginning to emerge. There also seems to be a difference in what is being promoted in the videos as the ‘amateur group’ was more concentrated on promoting their own YouTube channel or small merchandise such as t-shirts, and the ‘professionals’ were marketing - in majority of cases - their own product lines.

4.1.2 Audiovisual Expression

One variable in relation to vloggers media texts, that was found to be high in both comparative groups, was the number of editorial cuts per video, but there was not a vast difference between the comparative groups. This could mean that a certain video making style is recommended or even enforced already from the beginning, or that fast-paced videos occur, for example, more often in certain genre’s, such as gaming videos or in ‘slap
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*stick* styled videos. The amount of hypertext in both groups was also found to be too much alike to make any further conclusions from it. It could still be noted, that in certain type of video content, the amount of hypertext was much higher, than in others.

The most used alternative storytelling method was music, as it was used in eighty percent of the videos in the ‘professional group’ and in seventy percent in the ‘amateur’ group. After that came emoticons, which were used in eighty percent in the ‘professional group’ and in sixty percent of the ‘amateur group’. After that came effects, such as ‘quick close-ups to the vlogger’, or ‘trembling camera’, and these effects were used in eighty percent of the professional group and sixty percent in amateur vloggers. Less used were video clips from official sites.

4.2 Thesis Research Part Two

4.2.1 Motivations for Content Creation (MFCC)

Questions regarding the motivations for doing videos for YouTube were asked from many different angles, also in relation to both the past and possible future content creation. It became clear, that relationship with audience was an important motivation for vlogging, but not the creational process. Most interviewees mentioned publishing polls to boost audience participation, but content creation was primarily based on vloggers own interests. All interviewees (100%) also had a clear view on what kind of videos they wanted to make and believed this realness and effort to convey to the audience. Vloggers are listed here with the letter V (=vlogger) and a number.

V1: “We make videos related to topics that are relevant to us, so we do not start (the making process of) the videos by thinking of the audience fist, so to speak. We mainly do videos so that we ourselves are our biggest fans…”

V2: “First I have to be my biggest fan, only then I can create content that is very interesting to my followers.”

V3: “I believe that if I am totally myself and authentic, then it’s easier for like-minded people to come and resonate with me, with who I am and what I am about, and this way, I think, it will be much easier for the followers to get something out of my content... “
Vloggers felt that they were mostly in charge of the content that they published, and even if they acknowledged the importance of the audience that can be also in this case seen as customer-base, vloggers seemed to think that control of both the motivations that, as well as the production, were in their own control.

V4: “Well, (I get ideas) sometimes straight from people from other countries who do similar thing... or then I just 'steal the idea’, but in that case, I always mention that the idea has come from someone else. I give credit to the person that it belongs to, but otherwise I do not very easily get dragged into making something that is a ‘trend challenge’.”

V3: “If I would make for example only 'challenge videos', it would most probably result in much bigger viewing numbers to my channel every month, but that cannot be the only motive, in my opinion.”

Appadurai’s second notion of imagination, where rebelliousness and resistance are elevated, can be found in the following example, as a vlogger mentions mystery storytelling as a bonding factor between her and the audience.

V2: “…for example storytelling about mysteries that are very appealing to myself and my audiences...”

On the other hand, in today’s worlds, rituals can be something quite much different than what they used to be in the past. The way vloggers, sometimes meticulously, plan their future content, can be described as their vlogging ritual.

All interviewees (100%) mentioned the time and effort they put in their videos and were motivated by the learning curve that happens as one gets more experiences in vlogging. Three interviewees also mentioned a passion towards audio-visual expression. Here are a few examples of related examples.

V4: “I really like to do what I’m doing now, style-wise, so it started to evolve to that direction. At that stage when I myself started to feel a bit bored about it (the content), it also meant that also had the courage to start to move towards new kind of content... there’s this kind of learning curve and the persona evolves, and then you can just be more relaxed.”
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*V1: “We have gotten a lot of commentary that our videos are well made and well
edited and that’s why it’s fun to watch them, so it’s always like a guaranteed
entertainment.”*

1.1.1 Vloggers Knowledge of Their Own Audiences (KOOA)

The degree of knowledge regarding vloggers own audience varied but it seemed like
everyone had a clear picture of what most of their audience is formed of.

*V3: “…I would think that the most common follower or viewer is a young woman, or
most of my followers are young females and within the age range of 20-30, young women
with or without children…”*

*V1: “Currently our follower base is divided so that 80% is women and 20% are men,
and the age group is so that 80% of our followers are between the age 18-44. “*

*V2: “YouTube statistics show that my main audience is between the ages 18-24…but I
also see that very big amount of my followers is young.”*

Two of the interviewees mentioned their own target audience, which was in both cases very
broad, and is thus difficult to categorize as a “target audience”.

*V4: “I think that it’s content for the whole family, so that young can watch it, but just
as well adults are watching.”*

*V1: “We make videos for adults, that is our main target audience, but we make
content so that the whole family can watch it, so the content is also suitable for kids.”*

Audience segmentation was presented clearly, and few of the vloggers seemed to have a
picture that another social media was more trustworthy in comparison to YouTube, as to how
many of the audience member were seen as having used their true identity when registering.
The reason for this belief was not presented and can be seen as an interesting finding because
in reality, one cannot be any more certain of a person’s identity in another media, as in any it
is possible to create a fake account.

*V2: “That’s also why I have different social media channels, because there (in the
other media) are different audiences.”*
V4: “...and there (in the other media) people have much lower threshold to send me messages and it happens in real time.”

There were many examples where audience that is totally imagined came through, but the examples from different were quite far apart aka. no vloggers had similar imagined audience, as it is always based on one’s social identity and history. Here are few examples:

V4: “...I realized that my pet does not like these (videos) any more...”

V2: “I know that there (in the audience) is for example my grandma and that teacher...”

Only one of the interviewees mentioned gender division in their target audience, which serves as an interesting quote on what men and women prefer to be entertained with in YouTube.

V1: “Men like to watch renovating videos more than women. Then the videos that tell more about relationship, weddings and love stories, then these are the ones that attract women followers - men are not interested in these.”

4.2.2 Data Analytics as a Tool for Audience Engagement (DATFA)

This research part is a combination of both empirical parts, as it had the most over-lapping result finding, that could be more be presented under the same topic.

This research parts aim was to see whether professional vloggers tend to address the audience more than vloggers in the comparative amateur group, but the number of direct messages to the audience was too alike to make definite claims. The number of direct messages to the audience was expected to be higher amongst the professionals, but it seemed to rather be the opposite. Comments that were directed to the audience were found in 50% of the professionals and 80% of the amateur’s video content.

The expressions that were used to engage audiences varied from ‘I love you’, ‘Pray for me’, ‘I did this for you guys’ to ‘Hit the subscribe button’ and ‘Thank you for watching’.

The number of times audience was being addressed was more similar amongst the ‘professionals’ than amongst the ‘amateurs’, where the variance was thrice as much. This is an interesting finding, as it was expected to be the opposite. This finding would indicate that popular vloggers managed their behavior and content so, that they have typicalities in the
amount and the way they address their core audience, that in – yet again – partly imagined. It can be also stated that the variance between comparative groups regarding the ways, audience was verbally or with microcontent addressed, was surprisingly high.

More data would have been needed to make any further conclusion on the variety of ways vloggers address and ‘take on board’ different spectators, but it could be noted that amongst the professionals the level of strategy was seemingly high. To compare reciprocation of feelings by comparing the amount of comments and the amount that vlogger had commented or liked the comments, would have needed more time to be analyzed.

What comes to the last question in the interviews, regarding how much value the vloggers based on the information that they seemed to seek from Google Analytics on almost a daily basis varied quite substantially. Some had low trust-level towards the analytics as well to whether people are very honest about their identity, when they register.

V2: “It’s quite difficult to bring (this kind of information) out. The only thing that I go back and see (concerning the data) is the amount of views that I have, but statistics I find to be really boring...”

V4: “Well if there’s something that I have learned is that you cannot trust the analytics, that’s totally dependent on who has registered (to YouTube), and how honest they are.”

4.2.3 Audiences as a Source of Inspiration (ASOI)

Communication, interaction and audience being a source of inspiration seemed to be a multifaceted issue. There were both positive and negative aspects to it. As all interviewees had a large following in both countries’ context, most of them had encountered various types of behavior online. The vloggers that seemed to have the biggest underaged following had also encountered most troublesome behavior. In the following there are examples to both - how it can serve as a tool of empowerment as well as a source of inspiration – starting from the more challenging side of having a lot of subscribers and fans.

V2: “…for example twelve year old’s are so persistent that they have send easily hundreds of messages during few months...it gets really crazy sometimes, and then I have had to politely tell them that “it’s really nice on you to contact me but please don’t write to me so often”
V4: “When I did certain videos which were very popular at least like amongst people who were five years old... but then I thought, five year old’s should not be in YouTube and I don’t want to be a part of a process where this is okay.”

One finding that came through very strongly was the amount of hate speech that all (100%) of the interviewed vloggers had had to deal with in a weekly, and in some cases even daily bases. Here are few examples on hate speech in the internet sphere:

V3:” ...the point of the message was that I should kill myself, but it was only my second message like this in my career, so I don’t get much messages like this. But I believe that many of the more well-known vloggers get much more messages like this.

V4:” ...in the beginning it was quite a lot of people that would attack me, and be really rude ... it’s like that for many newcomers... but today or during this year, it’s mostly positive feedback”

V2: “I haven’t received negative feedback but sometimes I receive very harsh comments under the YouTube videos, just really really impolite and very very rude. They use a lot of curse words and it has nothing to do with the video content, they just wanted to curse somewhere...”

Context collapse came also through in the answers, as all (100%) of the vloggers had faced difficulties to either put together a clear picture of “who the audience is” and in some cases vloggers mentioned that they tried to actively not think about the large following, as it might have caused them to stress about the expectations, even if when asked whether vlogging practice had caused any of them stress, most (75%) denied feeling this emotion. Here are few examples:

V4: “...and it’s at those moments you realize they are people, not numbers, people...”

V2: “... sometimes the massive amount, or excessive amount of attention... like when I go to the grocery store, I get kids running to me, kids wanting to take pictures and sometimes it might get very overwhelming...”

V3: “I have a channel that is watched by many children and it’s actually children that come up to me... which can be a bit confusing at times...”
The importance of community came through in the answers when asked, whether vloggers would continue posting videos if less or no followers were watching, or no one would comment anything under the video’s commentary section:

V2: “This could be quite lonely if people would not comment. It would be very lonely, and it would feel purposeless.”

V4: “...or then you would see that people are watching your video, but they would not comment, then you think, humph, well then that (thought) makes me feel lonely.”

An appreciation towards the vlogger community came through, but as the activity of vlogging is a time-consuming solitary action, that gives one the opportunity to express one’s self and reciprocate feelings, these elements are appreciated higher than building connections to other vloggers. Audience was seen mostly as something empowering, a community that vloggers share their mundane and celebration with. High self-efficacy (Handayani and Alaika, 2017) came through in the following comment from V2 as the comments makes believe that audience automatically like every video that is posted. Having an audience was one of the most positive things in vlogging.

V1: “There are some (that have been subscribers from the beginning) and when they comment that they have followed us from the first videos, it’s quite incredible, because you know that in the beginning we could not put the same amount of effort to YouTube. So, it is really cool to hear that someone has been there for so long.”

V2: “The main inspiration comes from the positive feedback. Whenever I post a video I think that maybe I should not post, that maybe it’s pointless and no one likes it, but the second after I post it I get like tons of positive feedback and followers are just so grateful, they watch and like every video that I post...”

Interaction with the audience was an important aspect in vlogging that had an energizing effect on the vloggers as it seemed to boost their confidence during times when boosting was needed:

V2: “…it is a big part of this, that there is interaction and I can go through things with my followers and talk to them and hear what they are saying and feeling.”
V4: “... for me it has been the whole point (interaction with the audience) from the beginning, so if I would not anymore read the comments or would stop responding to people’s messages, I would not see any point in this.”

V3: “Definitely the best thing is when you get feedback that I have given value to someone else. Or raised their moods. I have for example done a video about *hidden content* and have gotten a lot of messages regarding *hidden content*. People (who are having or have had this issue) have explained that (because of my videos) they have started to see some light at the end of the tunnel...that has made me feel very good and important, so that would most definitely be the biggest motivation to why I am doing this.”

To gain positivity by reciprocating feelings was also mentioned in variety of ways. Here is one example:

V1: “...we get quite a lot of these ‘feel good’ comments, and it makes us feel great too. Also, we get tons of tips on how to solve a problem, answers to questions that we have been asking, about problems that need solving. These types of comments are examples of nice ways to interact with the audience.”

The typicalities in web-based digital storytelling, in which stories that are told have open ends and are shared with a participatory audience, all vloggers wanted to pursue a higher level of knowledge in their vlogging career, as well as keep telling stories to known and unknown audiences:

V1: ”We like to watch our old videos afterwards, and reminisce on those moments, and that life, that we lived at that time. There are small moments that you had already forgotten. All these things that you have experienced and seen and lived, and sometimes it feels like: “Have we really been there?”. It really creates such a good feeling. Something like looking at an old photo album from years back...”
4.3 Concluding Compilation and Summarization of Research

Vloggers themselves choose to attract audiences, not only with the obvious, looks, manner of talking and stylists of the video content, but also with the pace and tempo of the videos, with carefully chosen microcontent - that is used between the editorial cuts, as well creating alliances with other, similar minded vloggers, who end up boosting each other’s audiences. YouTube as a service promotes a certain kind of way to edit videos and thus style-wise vloggers content ends up being similar around the globe. Vloggers can be described as individuals that enjoy ‘challenging themselves’, love exploring the world, and enjoy being a leader to an audience.

All Appadurai’s five scapes could be found in vlogging even if sometimes in minute details. Mediascapes could be seen for example in the way challenges spread around the globe via numerous networks, the movement of Etnoscape via the way many vloggers are minority reporters, and finacescapes in the way video art and commerce is unified in YouTube. Ideoscapes as well as technoscapes were harder to trace. To use Appadurai’s three notions in the research, besides only using the five scapes, is something original.

Imagination can be seen as an important element in today’s social media world, as the current technology is built so that it enforces us to see everything through an apparatus that serves as a mirror (Matei, 2001), through which we have to first reflect our own most inner
thought regarding a topic, and only after this contemplation, we are able to fully to enjoy the content that we had just seen or experienced.

Vilhunen’s (2018, Figure 6) research on knitting blog communities found two behavioristic groups within bloggers, which had different motivations for doing their blog. Even if one cannot directly compare vloggers and bloggers, some similarities from interviewee answers could be traced to match Vilhunen’s (2018) ideas. Besides earlier mentioned reciprocation of feelings; gaining knowledge, doing together, getting ideas and help - and creating a memory book - or in this case video library, that can be a way for one’s legacy building, were all mentioned in the interviews as reasons behind continuing ones vlogging habits.

With a larger data sample, one possible outcome from this thesis empirical research could be to align with Vilhunen’s conclusions, as it did seem that vloggers could be categorized with two main motivations for vlogging, of which this other was connected to “doing things” (such as sharing shared interests and ideas) as where others seemed to be more motivated with “teaching” the audience aka. the group that Vilhunen refers to as people, who are in search of reciprocation of feelings.

To summarize these finding in reflection to research part two’s questions, it can be stated that:
1. Audience can be a source of inspiration to the vloggers but because of online bullying that majority of vloggers seem to face, vloggers must practice precaution as well as set a healthy distance between themselves and their audiences.

2. Vloggers know the basics of their audience-base, but they do not seem to openly admit or acknowledge the fact, that most of their audience is imagined.

3. Vloggers motivations for creating videos is based on their own agendas, and passion towards practicing leadership and creating audiovisual content. Audience is not a motivator or inspiration for content creation, at least to a large extent.

4.4 Limitations

This study has a few limitations, mostly to do with size of data in both thesis empirical research parts. Especially in research part one, the data size limits from making very verifiable conclusions. Having access to an analytical program such as SPSS would have helped to get more accurate numerical results, as well as would have allowed for much bigger data to be analyzed in the first place. The conclusions can pe as a form an ‘idea bank’ for possible future research and hopefully it can give examples on what typicalities could be further researched.

Thesis Research part was a type of pilot study and the first-time researcher practiced the basics of MANOVA with random selection, with the aim of ending up with findings that could be easily replicable. The problem with the random selection was that as there is so much WOM marketing as well as paid AdSense campaigning, it was noted that there is not an actual possibility to get the samples to be random, and thus it cannot be stated that the results are easily applicable. In Thesis Research Part two nationalities are presented, but the data size limits from making further correlations regarding cultural differences in the two different vlogging networks. The promised anonymity brought some limitations as quite a lot of material had to be left out because of this. On the other hand, it might have been that even less interviews had materialized, had anonymity not been promised.

In future research, that has a focus on vloggers microcontent (Thesis Research Part One), different styles such as entertainment, gamers videos as well as beauty videos should be separated in their own comparative groups, and only after that analyzed. More time would have also been needed to analyze the verbal communication in vloggers content, which
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would have broadened the way meanings are formed in this social setting (Lehtonen, 1996, p.31).

All in all, this thesis is something that broadens the view of vlogging as a cultural practice and phenomenon, especially when combined with other complimentary research done in the field.
5 Concluding Discussion

5.1 Possible Future Research

As the thesis research indicated, vloggers choose the content that they share with their audiences carefully, but as going through vlogger videos, one can see that there are vloggers who reveal very detailed descriptions of family matters or even legal battles with seemingly limited self-censorship, and this is worrisome. When a person explains in a specified manner about a challenging time in one’s life and starts the next video by saying “Hello everyone. Today’s video is presented to you by...”, and begins to market a product, it raises questions about the moral grounds of YouTube. This area could be one possible research area, to try to see whether the ‘authenticity’ poses risks to vloggers or viewers. As currently YouTube allows thirteen-year-old to have a channel with parents’ permission, underaged vloggers could be one idea for future study, as it seems that many researches take into consideration underaged audiences, but not so much the young influencers.

Appadurai’s (1990, p. 8) circulation of global imagery in the mediascape that vloggers are a part of building, could be seen in the in numerous examples presented under results, but as the examples were quite far apart, no generalization per se could be stated. Reason for finding idioscopic movement harder to proof via both interviews and data can be connected to Barthes’s belief that myth’s most profound meaning is to make history seem like it has a ‘natural tendency’ even if actually mystifying things serves a purpose of hiding the previous generation’s products, that are after all the creation of the ‘ruling class’ (Barthes ref. in Fiske, 1982, p. 117)

Appadurai writes that the way we view anthropology, or the idea of ‘cultural’, could be changed so that things that hold cultural value, are only the ones that are a “part of igniting a movement or mobilization” (1996 p.13). When thinking of the multiple ways movement and mobilization takes place in vlogging, Appadurai’s theory can be seen applicable for these findings. Movement can in this place be encouraging people to certain type of activity, to activate followers to be more engaging in multiple medias. (this chapter moved here from results with small changes in text). This would also go together with Appadurai’s third notion of imagination, as it seems that vloggers and their audiences share the collectively criteria for taste (1990, p. 8).
The grand Vlogosphere is also a presentation of all the political expression and realms, of which some are magical, some are socialist, and some yet to be figured out (Appadurai, p.52-53). In this way, the ‘authenticity factor’ or ‘realness’ that is sometimes questioned, seems to be a natural part of expression in vlogs, but like Appadurai puts it, the core problem might be that even if vloggers think they are ‘actors’, they might be ‘actants’ (Appadurai, 1990; Lewis & Westlund, 2014), and this contradiction could be one idea for a future research also.

Library and science professor Tufekci (2017) stated her concerns about YouTube algorithm’s possible machine learning bias in an opinion letter titled “YouTube, the great radicalizer” that is more radical than neutral in nature. She writes “There is no reason to let a company make so much money while potentially helping to radicalize billions of people, reaping the financial benefits while asking society to bear so many of the costs.” And continues “Human beings have many natural tendencies that need to be vigilantly monitored in the context of modern life. For example, our craving for fat and sugar, which served us well when food was scarce, can lead us astray in an environment in which fat and sugar are all too plentiful and heavily marketed to us. So too our natural curiosity about the unknown can lead us astray on a website that leads us too much in the direction of lies, hoaxes and misinformation” (Tufekci, 2017). Even if it is hard to say for certain, there might be a tendency in the algorithms to multiply the so called ‘attention or shock factor’ of the previous video, which is why YouTube company politics would need further research.

One other risk that everyone being brave enough to take on an online career, can be seen in Appadurai’s conclusions on the negative side of myth and social practice uniting, especially when it happens in an electric environment. He writes: “As fantasy in its various forms has become a social practice, it also means that people living under the most challenging of circumstances are now open to the “play of imagination” (1996, p.54). Another possible threat that can be seen in YouTube comes from researchers Perez-Latre et al. (2017), who have expressed worries over whether YouTube and other social media networks have been built to enforce audience and market segmentation into different ‘niche forms’. This leads to the question: “Is this information being used solely for marketing purposes?” As different big technological companies have admitted to working with different government officials, a more open policy as to how data exactly is stored and used might be useful, which could also be an idea for a critical assessment for another master thesis.
5.2 Afterthoughts

YouTube as a company has claimed to have tightened up their policies regarding what kind of content is allowed in the site, yet there is a plentiful of video publishers that constantly try to - either knowingly or unknowingly - push these boundaries. Amongst some vloggers it’s a form of creating entertainment value to mention that YouTube has demonetized whole video’s content (because of breaking these rules). Rebelliousness is a healthy part of any artistic form or cultural expression, but breaking copyright rules and thus the law intentionally is not. On the other hand, it is also good to think whether social media is purely an expression of the human mind in its current state, and how much responsibility, both ethical and practical, can be put on the companies that provide the platform. One of YouTube’s positive sides is its socio-ethical dedication in the way it gives a voice as well as an income to the oppressed and different minorities around the globe, that might otherwise struggle to be heard and to find a way of living.

One big but complicated question in the current global economy is, how can be peacefully combine different societies demands and needs, global companies’ agendas, as well as individuals cultural thinking, or in other words cultural differences. One example of such cultural differences related to restrictions in social media platforms can be found in an video interview done by Finnish newspaper Helsinki Sanomat to Nick Clegg, head of global policy and communications in Facebook, who answered to a journalists question regarding why Facebook is not removing fake news but is very active on clearing content with any kind of nudity, to which he answers: ”We cannot be the truth police, we cannot go through your news feed every day, and say that you have just said something that is untrue, and demolish it”, to which the journalist asks “But you can be the nude police?” (hs.fi). In Finnish culture, where nudity is seen as a natural part of life - partly because the long traditions of sauna culture - as opposed to the United States of America, where approach to nudity is more manifold, cultures can collide.

One reason why data provided by YouTube is not sufficient in providing enough information to the vloggers could be linked to the ‘paradox of primordia’ or even to the ‘paradox of privacy’ (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 40-41;Perez-Latre, 2000) The prior refers to an originally good and applicable idea getting encapsulated by the complications within the providing system, or in this case platforms complementary tools, as where the latter refers
there being a possible paradox as to how well vloggers actually feel they are in control in regards to their own content. Another, more easily approachable idea to why data is not used after a certain point, can be connected to both, the amount and quality of it, as Jenkins at al. (2013) point, the data is after all machine intelligence, not social intelligence. Even if there isn’t enough data to prove this assumption correct, the mentioned low level of trust, might go together with Choi and Lee’s (2016, p. 557) finding as it might start to affect also the content creators themselves in open SNS’s, not only audiences.

When thinking of vlogging as a community practice, Bourdieu’s (2010) ideas on social order also came through. The reason for the current wave of hate speech online can be a solution from the mere fact that in online communication there is so much room for one’s imagination which can lead to false translations. Humans also have a tendency to forget the time and effort they have put to learning their mother tongue (Lehtonen, 1996) as well as any additional language, and as vloggers use a specific set of symbols on top of the verbal and visual expression, the complexities in communications in YouTube is also easy to forget, just as the earlier mentioned learning process that everyone has taken in order to learn how to properly communicate. These inclinations could also be parts of the reason for radicalization in some members of the audience, as it can be that they do not have enough media knowledge to understand the different levels of communication in the internet sphere.
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7 Appendix One: Interview Questions

7.1 Basic information/Interviewee profile
1. Age group (18-23, 23-30, 30-45, 45 or older)
2. How many years have you had a YouTube channel? (less than 1, 1-2, 3-4, 5 or more)
3. How often do you post videos to your channel? (weekly, twice a month, once a month, less than monthly)
4. How many other channels do you update regularly? (none, 1-2, 3 or more)
5. To what extend is YouTube also a source of income? (main source, partly a source, not a source of income)

7.2 Motivations for Content Creation (MFCC)
1. What initially drew you to making a YouTube channel?
2. How would you describe the content on your YouTube channel?
3. Has the content and style you make changed and evolved during the years? How?
4. Where would you say you get most of the ideas for the videos?
5. Have other vloggers also been a source of inspiration?
6. What is the best part and what is the biggest challenge in vlogging?
7. What are your plans and hopes regarding the channel for the upcoming years? (for example, to keep creating content in the same way, getting more viewers, etc.)

7.3 Vloggers Knowledge of Their Own Audiences (KOOA)
1. What kind of viewers would you think/know are is most common ones in your audience?
2. In what different ways do you try to engage new and old viewers to ‘commit to the channel’?
3. What kind of comments do you most commonly get regarding your videos?
4. Do you get to know some of the most active commenters?

7.4 Audiences as a Source of Inspiration (ASOI)
1. Have some of the followers been following your channel from the beginning?
2. Would you like to know as much as possible about your subscribers or is there a positive side of most viewers being anonymous? -> changed to -> In what ways do you feel that the audience can be a source of influence or inspiration for you?
3. Do you consider this interactivity and getting comments an important part and source of motivation for doing your channel? Why?
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4. Does a large follower base also create pressure? (to feel obligated to answer all comments etc.?)

5. Have you experienced some negative encounters with followers and/or negative commentary?

7.5 Data Analytics as a Tool for Audience Engagement (DATFA)

Do you follow the data analytics on your page and base future content regarding the amount of views? What information do you seek out most?
### Appendix Two

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<th>Affiliate link number</th>
<th>Subscriber number</th>
<th>Views number</th>
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