Declaration on plagiarism and fraud

The undersigned

[first name, surname and student number],

Beatriz Pinho, s4790626

Bachelor's student at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts,

declares that the assessed thesis is entirely original and was written exclusively by himself/herself. The undersigned indicated explicitly and in detail where all the information and ideas derived from other sources can be found. The research data presented in this thesis was collected by the undersigned himself/herself using the methods described in this thesis.

Place and date:

Nijmegen, 15-01-2017

Signature:

Beatriz Costa Pinho

Radboud University
Faculty of Arts

Youtube's Authenticity
When Amateur Musicians Become Mainstream Celebrities

Author: Beatriz Costa Pinho
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anneke Smelik

March 2017

Abstract

One of the biggest success stories of the web 2.0 is the launch of the platform Youtube, a video uploading website where most the content is uploaded by its users, where content creators found new means to promote their content. Many of the content uploaders are amateur musicians, sometimes searching for a break in the music industry. Given the size of the platform and the fact that it offers such a vast panoply of content, musicians trying to get noticed by major music labels started practising "self-branding" techniques. They promote themselves as if they were a brand (Chen, 2013), to stand out from the mass of content available on Youtube. Alice Marwick *et al.* defines the status that the successful Youtubers obtain as a micro-celebrity status, a shift from the traditional celebrity that is associated with mass media and broadcast media to a more interactive, authentic, type of celebrity (2015).

The central question that will be researched in this thesis is Can the authenticity attributed to a musician on Youtube be maintained after being signed to a major label? The questionswhat practices do these performers show in their videos that made them be perceived as authentic at first? Which elements of the uploaded videos enforce the idea of authenticity in their performance? As well as if this notion of authenticity can be lost by the adoption of traditional celebrity practices instead of micro-celebrity practices? Will also be discussed and analysed through semiotic, visual and musical analysis of two case studies. The first case studied to be analysed will be of the popular culture music celebrity, Justin Bieber, who was 'discovered' through videos of him performing, uploaded onto Youtube. The second one of Troye Sivan, an up and coming musician that found a large following through his Youtube uploads that eventually led him to be signed by EMI Music.

Considering that authenticity is subjective and attributed by the audience and not the content creator, it was concluded that maintaining the value of authenticity after gaining the mainstream media's attention will only be possible if the micro-celebrity practices that brought the musician from amateurism to celebrity status are continued to be practiced.

Keywords: micro-celebrity, authenticity, self-branding, Youtube, amateur music, celebrity studies, cultural studies

Table of contents

I - Introduction

As someone who has been connected with music throughout her life, either through finishing a bachelor's degree in Musicology or by working in the music industry, its connections to other areas such as technology or business is something that has always interested me. When faced with the task of writing a bachelor's thesis as soon as I arrived at Radboud University, turning to my comfort zone was the instinctive thing to do. But shifting from Musicology to Culture Studies with the intent of later dwelling into the Creative Industries, gave me an opportunity to incorporate elements into my theme and research that otherwise I would have never dwelled into.

With the launch of the Web 2.0, and websites such as Youtube were made public, amateur content creators found new tools to make their work public. This was the case for amateur musicians looking for a break in the music industry, and Youtube became a free tool for them to display their talent to a broad audience. Unlike other social media platforms, Youtube has managed to keep its popularity growing since its launch in 2005, having billions of videos uploaded onto its website every day[1]. This has garnered it a global audience and turned the platform into one of the biggest video databases on the web 2.0 (van Dijck, 2013).

For musicians trying to get noticed, standing out amongst the enormous mass of content available on the platform might seem a daunting task. What most resort to is to employing "self-branding" techniques(Chen, 2013), in an attempt to become what Alice Marwick defines as micro-celebrities (2015). Micro-celebrity is usually defined as a more interactive, "authentic" type of celebrity, showing a shift from the traditional mainstream celebrity associated with mainstream media. These micro-celebrities adopt "practices drawn from celebrity culture (…) to boast their online attention and popularity" (Marwick, 2015).

Some content creators, amateur musicians who upload content related to their aspirations of becoming professional singers, showing off their musical skills, gain attention from record companies, fulfilling their goals and landing record deals, due to their popularity on the platform.

In order to garner attention, the content creators that choose to adopt "self-branding" practices commonly promote an image of genuineness, an image of authenticity. As Gilmore and Pine argue, this is what viewers/consumers are looking after. They crave what is "Original. Genuine. Sincere. Authentic." (2007:1). These characteristics take form in varied practices of the content creators, the way they address their audience, if they choose to do so, the technical quality of the videos, where the videos are recorded, all influence the acceptance from the audience. The content creators that fulfil the expectations of their audience and become popular, can be described as micro-celebrities, mimicking practices of traditional mainstream celebrities, but with a more direct contact with their viewers. Because of the apparent closeness between the content creator and the audience, these micro-celebrities are "deemed more authentic, due to the impression that they are not portraying a persona, but their 'true self'" (Marwick, 2015).

Once micro-celebrity amateur musicians get the desired attention from record companies and sign recording contracts, some characteristics of their uploaded content might suffer changes, due to their introduction into

---

[1] in https://fortunelords.com/Youtube-statistics/

the music industry, promotion in other media and mediation by a management team. This brings me to the main research question of this bachelor's thesis: Can the authenticity attributed to an amateur musician on Youtube be maintained after being signed to a major record company?

I will also be analysing the practices these performers show in their videos that meet the general characteristics of an authentic micro-celebrity, the elements, technical and non technical that reinforce the idea of authenticity in their performances, as well as if the value of authenticity can be lost by the adoption of traditional mainstream celebrity practices, instead of micro-celebrity practices.

Social media are a relatively new phenomenon. Therefore the majority of research made in this area is fairly recent. Most studies are not older than fifteen years old. Research in the areas of Celebrity Studies, Popular Music Studies, more specifically regarding the Music industry, and Social Media Studies were consulted. Although there has been a considerable amount of studies made in these areas individually, especially in the first two, there have not been many instances where these three areas of research have been combined.

To analyse how some musicians find notoriety and what practices they maintain before and after being signed by a major music label I propose two case studies. The first one, of a now global music celebrity, Justin Bieber, who first got noticed through videos of him performing, uploaded onto Youtube. And the second one of Troye Sivan, an up and coming musician that found a large following through his Youtube uploads that eventually led him to be signed by EMI Music.

Both musicians started their careers by uploading videos of them performing onto Youtube and ultimately gained enough notoriety to gather the attention of a record company that eventually signed them. Both these musicians are pop music singers, a genre that is not considered authentic due to its lack of organic genesis and "authenticating space, or a place that credentials the authenticity of a performer" (Wald, 2002). But, given the fact that both of them started their careers, even though amateur at first, through Youtube, a platform that Burgess and Green report as authentic due to its "DIY culture" (2009 cited Tolson 2010, p.279) they still can be perceived as more authentic than musicians that never had been attributed the micro-celebrity status.

A visual analysis and a music analysis, when applicable, will be conducted, in search for elements that reinforce the value of authenticity in the content uploaded by these two content creators. Both content creators' channels will be analysed chronologically in order to determine if significant changes happened to the content uploaded after the musician signed a recording contract.

In the following chapters I will be addressing the concept of micro-celebrity as well as the concept of authenticity, relating both to the Youtube platform, concept and content, as well as presenting the two case studies mentioned previously.

II- On Micro-Celebrity and Authenticity on Youtube

II.I - Micro-Celebrity

When one thinks about social media, names such as Twitter, Instagram or Youtube may come to mind but, Zoella, NigaHiga or PewDiePie might sound completely unfamiliar. These are some of the most subscribed Youtube content creators, generating several hundred thousand to millions of views per video and millions of subscribers. Although their content is so widely consumed, they still have not been recognised by mainstream media as celebrities, instead being named Internet celebrities(Hall, 2015)

The concept of celebrity, someone famous for their personal life as well as their work, rose mainly during the twentieth century with the advent of mass media (Marwick, 2015). Before the mass consumption of radio and cinema, and the creation of gossip magazines, the concept of fame and of celebrity already existed but were not as consumed (Marwick, 2015). With the technological evolution that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century and the creation of television and later the massification of computers and the Internet, the attention that was given to athletes, musicians, television presenters, actors, etc. increased (Turner, 2012). The shock factor of the realisation that the character one saw in a movie or television program was not an accurate portrait of the personality of the actor, generated a lot of curiosity as to what the "real personality" of an actor was (Turner, 2012). That is one of the reasons as to why celebrity gossip became such a profitable market for magazines and later, television programmes.

Due to this growing interest in celebrities and the chance for movie studios, and management agencies to profit from it, for example, actors, actresses and other public figures started to create their own public personas to appeal to the public. As P. David Marshall argues: "Performance is a critical component in any public figure's identity" (2010: 39), even outside the film set an actor would have to perform in order for their public image to meet the expectations of the audience. What is interesting to note is that the public is aware of this performance, but still participates and discusses celebrity culture, therefore "maintaining the industry" (Marshall, 2010: 36).

In the later half of the twentieth century, as computers became personal and accessible by the mainstream public, the evolution of the Internet to the Web 2.0 produced changes to the concept of celebrity and celebrity practices. Celebrities were no longer just associated with mass and broadcast media but "reflected a more diverse media landscape" (Marwick, 2015).

New tools to promote and create celebrities became available, and the public started having the ability to turn themselves into a "brand" and work as their own marketer. Social media can be accountable as the main propellants for this emergence of "self-brands". As a shift of attention from broadcast to these participatory media occurred (Marwick, 2015), celebrities started to take advantage of the proximity to their following that these platforms suggest, enforcing an illusion of unmediated relationship with their audience (Marwick, 2015).

As social media platforms became more complex, they started offering more and more tools for the common man to self-promote, gather attention and form an audience, therefore become what several authors

designate as micro-celebrity (Marshall, 2010, Turner, 2012, Marwick, 2015). Micro-celebrity, to the majority of authors, are practices that a non-famous person adopts, mimicking celebrities and the way they interact with their audience. The pursuit of fame, usually associated with a search for economic stability motivated Internet users from different fields such as music and acting to take matters into their own hands, therefore escaping the traditional mass media gatekeepers and publish and promote their content to an online audience exclusively (Turner, 2012).

Micro-celebrity practices were enabled by social media, presenting the right tools for its users to generate personal content and publish it publicly, as well as to market it. Marwick would describe these practices as "Self-presentation [techniques] in which people view themselves as a public persona to be consumed by others, use strategic intimacy to appeal to followers, and regard their audience as fans."(2015). Acting as a micro-celebrity can be understood as a mindset in which the content creator makes himself/herself go through a celebrification process, where an individual is transformed into a celebrity (Driessens in Marwick, 2015 [2013]), without necessarily gaining the projection and mass media attention that a "traditional" celebrity would. A content creator that acts as a micro-celebrity carefully manages and selects the discourse used to gather attention and attract a bigger audience. He/she will address their audience, as big as it may be, in an informal way but will see them as fans and never as their offline friends and family (Marwick, 2015). The fact that the discourse used is friendly and appears not mediated grants this content creators as 'authentic'.

Considering how accessible social media is, and the amount of tools provided, most of which free, a considerable number of amateur musicians started using social platforms to promote their material. Different platforms will offer different tools: Youtube provides a platform for full-length videos, mainly used to showcase a musicians ability as well as their creations. Soundcloud provides a space for musicians to showcase their music, substituting the need to reach out for radio stations. Instagram, Twitter and Facebook offer a more "immediate" interaction with their audience and are perceived as platforms that allow more personal contact. Therefore the musician can practice micro-celebrity techniques to promote their work and gather a bigger audience. Very often these content uploaders will connect the platforms they operate from one to another, this way creating a complete image, with both their professional and personal personas. Not only will the audience have access to their creations, but they will also have the possibility to engage with the content shared on a more personal level. As these content creators are, most of the times, not associated with record labels or management agencies, therefore lacking mediation by a third party, they are granted as 'authentic'. They are recognised as portraying their "true selves" online, instead of a calculated persona like a traditional celebrity would. (Gilmore and Pine, 2007).

II.II - Authenticity on Youtube

When compared to traditional mainstream broadcast media, Youtube is generally considered as a more 'authentic' medium. There are several reasons as to why it happens, according to Marwick, one of them is the fact that "the corporate and institutional middle-men, which constrain [the creators'] individualism and self-expression" are cut out (2010:18). The mediation that the audience is aware exists in traditional broadcast media is not apparent on Youtube, therefore it is interpreted that the content the audience consumes is not biased. The content creators' videos are interpreted as if they are a mirror of their personality, creativity and portray the creators' "true self" (Marwick, 2010:18). Ever since the launch of the platform, amateurism and "DIY culture" are big parts of Youtube's branding. Even after being purchased by Google, these two major aspects of the content uploaded and overall character of the platform were kept and reinforced by it's slogan "Broadcast Yourself" (Hall, 2015:133).

When comparing amateur and professional content creators, the first are deemed more 'authentic' than the latter, their technical skill level is not expected to be refined, and they are expected to work with less technically advanced equipment, therefore delivering content with less technical quality (Paasonen, 2005:93, Hall, 2015:151). This lack of professionalization and noticeable amateurism creates a more intimate contact between audience and creator, according to Susanna Paasonen (2005:93, cited Hall, 2015:131). Another aspect that conveys authenticity to Youtube's audience is the type of discourse used by its content creators. To reinforce the proximity that can be created through Youtube, content creators address their audiences in what Tolson describes as an "excessive direct address" (2010:286). This type of address, in the form of an informal, conversational discourse conveys a sense of spontaneity, unscripted discourse similar to a natural conversation (Tolson, 2010, Montgomery, 2001), which leads the audience to perceive the speaker as authentic. As Goffman would discuss, the content creators type of informal discourse will lead the audience to interpret him or her as if executing the function of the "*animator*, that is, the sounding box from which utterance comes" the "*author*, the agent who puts together, composes or scripts the lines that are uttered" and the "*principal*, the party to whose position, stand, and believe the words attest" (1981, cited Montgomery, 2001:399) all together. When one converses, he or she performs all these tasks but, when it comes to broadcast media, the audience is aware that the speaker is uttering a discourse most likely scripted by a person other than the speaker, conveying the position of a third party. He or she only performs the task of being the "*animator*". Youtube's authenticity relies on the fact that the three functions mentioned above are executed by the same person.(Tolson, 2010)

On the previous section, the concept of micro-celebrity was discussed, and it was mentioned that micro-celebrities are often regarded as more 'authentic' than traditional mainstream celebrities due to their content being un-mediated by a third, external party. (Marwick, 2015). The authenticity attributed to these micro-celebrities, helps them garner a bigger audience and consequently gain more popularity amongst all the content creators on the platform. The proximity that they convey through their discourse contrasts with the separation that traditional mainstream celebrities create between them and their audience. The public is aware that the image portrayed by the mainstream celebrity is mediated by their management, therefore they

are not showing their "true-self"(Hall, 2015). When discussing micro-celebrities and how they express their "individual voices", as Tolson would describe it (2010:285), Kimberly Ann Hall reinforces the idea that sheer amateurism plays a big part in how audiences regard micro-celebrities:

"the significance of amateurism in social media content, [works] to reduce the separation between the producer and the viewer by presenting the self as documented rather than stylised, and thus more authentic"(2015:132)

Throughout this section, forms to convey authenticity were explicated but, one question remains: is it possible to agree on a definition of what exactly authenticity is?

The subject of authenticity has been discussed throughout the most varied areas of academia, but researchers have not agreed on one universally definition of this concept. Authenticity is associated with other values and notions such as "genuineness, truth, reality or transparency"(Thompson, 2006, Arnould and Prince, 2000, Peterson, 1997, cited Rafagni and Courvoisuer, 2014, Marwick, 2010). Strand would refer to it as being "whatever is *not false* or not *an imitation*"(2014:60).

To establish authenticity, an object, performance, creation, etc., is going to have to be put in position to the value of inauthenticity, meaning if something is authentic, it is " 'real, actual, genuine' (as opposed to 'imaginary, pretended') and 'really proceeding from its reputed source or author; of undisputed origin, genuine' (as opposed to 'counterfeit, forged, apocryphal')"(Montgomery, 2001).

In conformity to the authors consulted and cited, I can assume that authenticity is subjective. The attribution of the value of authenticity relies on the consumer, and not on the creator. Therefore, it is subject to each individuals own perception, believes and values (Rafagni and Courvoisier, 2014). Peterson defined authenticity as "a claim that is maid by or for someone, thing to performance and either accepted or rejected by relevant others"(2015:1086).

III - Methodology

There have been several approached made to the study of Youtube. As this platform's content is composed mostly of visual elements, such as video thumbnails, relying only on text written about the platform would be a faulty approach to the research question of this bachelor's thesis. The goal here was to look into the material uploaded by the two content creators onto their personal channels, therefore, the method that I found to be the most suitable to develop the thesis was to conduct a visual and musical analysis of the videos uploaded. As both accounts together compile 283 different videos, making a thorough analysis to each one of these videos would result in a chapter too extensive and too descriptive. So, I chose to make a general description of each channel highlighting four videos uploaded by the two content creators. Both these content creators have been uploading videos onto this platform since 2007 and both have signed recording contracts with major record companies during their time on Youtube. Their career trajectory, the recognition that they obtained and their long careers on Youtube were the major factors that had me choosing Justin Bieber and Troye Sivan as my case studies. To make the analysis of the content more structured, I chose to divide the content of both channels into categories. The criteria for this division were patterns in the content uploaded and important marks in the musical career of the singers.

When analysing Justin Bieber content, I divided the 132 videos in three categories: before signing a recording contract, after signing a recording contract and early professional career, and mainstream recognition and worldwide fame. In the first category I included the videos uploaded before the singer signed a recording contract, the second category included the videos uploaded from the moment he signed the contract to the release of "Baby", Justin Bieber's most successful single and the one that catapulted him to mainstream, worldwide fame. The third category will compile all the videos uploaded from the release of "Baby" until February 2017. For Troye Sivan's case study, the content was also divided in three categories: before starting to use micro-celebrity techniques to promote his content, from the moment he started to use micro-celebrity techniques to when it was revealed he had signed a recording contract, after revealing he had signed a recording deal. This categorization of the content of both channels is chronological, starting from the oldest videos to the most recent, as is the observation of how the transition from amateur to professional singer affected the content uploaded, and how consequently its authenticity value was intended.

During the visual analysis of the content of Bieber's and Sivan's channels, I used Kimberly Ann Hall and Alice Warwick's approach on what it meant for a video to be authentic, for example what cues to look for. Both authors agree that signs of amateurism in videos are signs of authenticity (Marwick, 2010, 2015). The technical quality of the videos, image quality, picture grain; how it was recorded, by using hand held camera or a steady mount; if there was any type of editing in the video or not, was taken into account. According to these authors, a more 'authentic' video generally has poorer quality, no editing, or very simple editing, and it is either self recorded or recorded using unsophisticated methods, reflecting the amateurism of the content creator and the resulting content. If the content creator addresses his audience or not was also taken into account. As addressing the audience is one of the characteristics of a micro-celebrity, a more 'authentic' form

of celebrity(Marwick, 2015), the type of discourse could not be left out of the analysis. Micro-celebrities tend to address their audience in an informal, conversational way, contrasting with the type of address used in traditional broadcast media(Tolson, 2010), creating a more approachable persona and captivating their audience.

As for the music analysis, what was taken into account was the type of repertoire chosen, if the singer played their own instruments, used a backing track or sang a cappella. In the same fashion of the technical image quality, the sound's technical quality will be taken into account, as it also reflects the amateurism of the recording.

For the purpose of this bachelor's thesis, I will consider authentic the video and audio content that reflects clear amateurism, is not mediated by a party other than the content creator himself, reflecting his creativity, ability and own opinion.

IV. Case Study Analysis

When discussing a success story of a Youtube uploader breaking into mainstream media, more particularly regarding the music industry, most authors will mention Justin Bieber. Bieber was one of the first celebrities that rose to global fame after being 'discovered' through his Youtube uploads. This was one of the main reasons as to why I chose him as one of the case studies to feature in this thesis. It is very difficult to deny Bieber's status a globally known popular culture celebrity.

Justin Bieber's mother started uploading videos of him singing two years after Youtube was launched, when the platform was not as developed as it is today and mostly featured amateur videos (van Dijck, 2013). One year after his first upload, he was 'discovered' by a manager called Scooter Braun and later signed a record deal with Island Def Jam records. The time it took for Bieber to sign his record deal with a major record label after uploading his first video is important to mention as a term of comparison for the same to happen to the musician of the second case study I will be presenting.

Similarly to Justin Bieber, young Troye Sivan also started to upload videos of his singing performances onto Youtube in 2007. Contrary to Bieber, Sivan built a fan-base as a micro-celebrity before being signed to a major label. Only seven years after his first upload did Troye Sivan get a record deal with EMI Music, a subject he kept as a secret from his audience for one year. Both musicians have transitioned from amateur Youtube uploaders to a career as professional musicians, but given the differences on when it happened to both, the authenticity value associated with each uploader is different.

IV.I - Justin Bieber

Justin Bieber, in his first videos, is portrayed as a young boy who sings well and can play a variety of musical instruments. The camera work in these videos is very shaky, the quality of sound and image is quite poor, common of mobile phone cameras or handheld camcorders. Bieber mostly sings cover songs of popular pop and r&b artists. His voice is high-pitched, characteristic of his young age and although melodious, it is easily identified that he has no formal vocal training.

As an example of the videos uploaded during Bieber's early days on Youtube, before signing a recording deal, I chose to analyse in detail a video with the title "With You - Chris Brown Cover - Justin singing".

The video begins with Justing sitting on a sofa in a room. On the background there is a Bart Simpson poster on the wall, at his left there is a small table with a lamp, a picture frame and an alarm clock on top of it. The presence of the alarm clock suggests that it is a bedside table. The song starts at the same time as the video, as it approaches the chorus, Justin stands up. After standing up, the framing of the video changes slightly as he moves away from the sofa. This change in the framing reveals hockey player stickers on the wall as well as a Tupac poster. Given the thematic of these decorative elements and the presence of the bedside table in the room, I can assume that the video was recorded in Bieber's bedroom.

The video quality is poor, it is not available to be watched in high definition, and the camerawork is shaky which suggests it was recorded using a mobile phone or handheld camcorder. Regarding the sound aspects of this recording, the sound was most likely recorded using the camera's inbuilt microphone, given the low quality and occasional distortion. The song that is being covered, a popular song at the time of the recording of this particular video, is called *With You* by R&B singer Chris Brown. The lyrics are directed at an undefined 'girl', complimenting her greatly and reflecting the singers romantic interests. The theme present in this song is similar to Bieber's future releases, where he generally addresses a member of the opposite gender, revealing his romantic interest. During his performance, Bieber is accompanied by a pre-recorded instrumental backing track; it cannot be seen where the backing track is being played from.

There is no editing to this video as it starts at the same time as the performance and ends also at the same time as the performance.

Bieber's video uploads reflect his career timeline from an unknown amateur singer to a worldwide known celebrity. Around the same time as when he was contacted by his now manager and signed a recording contract, the content of his videos changed. No longer were the uploads just about Bieber's singing abilities, but they became more varied in theme and content, featuring him meeting mainstream celebrities such as Justin Timberlake and P. Diddy, the process of recording his debut album and touring the world. It is section of content that Bieber starts addressing his audience.

In the video "Justin Bieber Fans", Justin is seen in the back seat of a van, as described by him, self recording a video message to his fans. The video quality again is poor, not available in high deifinition, and the image is shaky. Similarly to the video previously described, the sound quality is low, in some instances distorted, due to this aspect I can assume that it was also recorded using the camera's inbuilt microphone. Due to these characteristics, the video was most likely recorded using a mobile phone with an inbuilt camera. There is some very simple editing to this video, at the beginning, a black screen with "Thank you for the support!" written in white letters fills the screen, then cuts to the footage of Bieber addressing his audience. Background music was added, the song "One Time" can be heard playing. During the delivery of his message, Bieber does not use the pronouns 'me' or 'I', although at the beginning of the video he introduces himself by saying "What's up guys, this is Justin Bieber", he deliver his message referring to 'we': "We're just sitting in the back of a van. We've been driving around a lot; different cities, doing different promo stuff." The audience never sees who is with Justin, composing the group whom he refers to as 'we', given the fact that he stated that the group was "doing different promo stuff", it can be assumed that 'we' is referring to Bieber's managing team. There is a promotional facet to this video, given the background music being of Bieber's single promoted at the time of the recording of the video but, the way he addresses the audience intends to bring the gap between singer and fan.

Another video I chose to highlight has the title "BABY…get the studio version featuring LUDACRIS on ITUNES NOW". Here Bieber is seen sat on a sofa, next to a man holding a guitar. the image is framed in a way that the location is not given away, there are no elements that pin point where the recording takes place. Again, the video quality is low and the image is shaky. The editing of the video is again simple, white text

over a black background introduces the video reading "Justin Bieber presents an acoustic preview of "BABY"", and the cover of the album being promoted at the time, as well as its release date, are shown on the screen after Bieber's performance. Similarly to his first videos uploaded, the singer does not address his audience, and puts the focus of the video on the performance.

After the release of "Baby", Justin Bieber became worldwide famous. The official music video for the song has over one and a half billion views on Youtube (as of 10th March 2017), reflecting the popularity obtained. The video content of his Youtube account reflects this newfound popularity status, most of the videos are of promotional content; DVD launch trailers, music video behind-the-scenes, television performances and interviews, as well as television commercials. Out of the videos that compose this section, being them the majority of the content uploaded onto the channel, only in two instances does Bieber uploads a video directly addressing his audience, and only in two other instances does he perform his music.

On the 18th January 2013, a video with the title "TAKE YOU - Acoustic - 6 Years of Kidrauhl" was uploaded. By the decorative elements present in the room where the video is being recorded, it can be assumed that he is in a living room but, given the fact that at the date of the uploadd of the video, Bieber's "Believe Tour" was taking place, it was most likely recorded at a backstage green room of a concert venue. Similarly to the previously mentioned video, where Justin sang his single "Baby", he also sitting in a sofa, in the company of a man holding a guitar, later accompanying Justin's singing.

This time the video is available in high definition, but just as in the previous videos, the sound was most likely recorded using the camera's inbuilt microphone, resulting in the capture of background noise and sound distortion. The framing of the image is fixed throughout the video, but not completely straight and slightly shaky, which suggests it was recorded with the aid of a tripod, by someone holding the camera the entire time.

At the beginning of the video, Bieber addresses his audience, mentioning the fact that his first video was uploaded onto Youtube six years prior, and that the intent of the present video was to celebrate that mark in the form of a performance. Bieber then tells that the song he is about to perform is one of his favourite songs that are part of an album that is being released shortly after the date of the upload of the present video. There is no editing to this video, it is recorded in one take, starting with Bieber delivering his message, performing and ends just as the performance ends.

Justin Bieber's video uploads on his first Youtube channel reflect his career path through the content and thematic of the videos'. There is a noticeable change in the type of content uploaded when the contract with Island Def Jam Records was signed. At first only performance videos were uploaded and when joining a major record label and gaining a management team, Bieber's content started to have a more obvious promotional intent, in the end dominating the type of content uploaded onto the channel.

IV.II - Troye Sivan

Troye Sivan started his career as a Youtube content creator around the same time as Justin Bieber did, in 2007, and both singers videos' were of similar content. Sivan, contrary to Bieber, did not sign a recording contract as early in his amateur career. Only six years after his first upload did the transition from amateur to professional musician occurred, giving him time to build a following and establishing himself as a micro-celebrity first.

Sivan's first uploaded videos reflect the amateurism of his content, the image quality is not sharp, and the audio is of poor quality. As an example of this I will be analysing the video "Troye Sivan - Crazy Love cover (Michael Buble) FULL VERSION NOW ON ITUNES!". In this video, Troye is seen sitting on a room that resembles a living room, as in the background a sofa, a television and paintings hung on the wall can be seen. Troye appears on the foreground, occupying the centre of the frame. According to the video description, it was recorded using a webcam. The quality of the image is poor, blurry and the video is not available in high definition, the quality of the sound is better than expected, given the technical characteristics of the image. During the video it can be seen that Sivan is holding a microphone, therefore, the sound is being recorded by using external equipment, reducing the amount of background noise captured and distortion. Troye sings a song original by the Pop singer Michael Bublé and is accompanied by an instrumental pre-recorded backing track. There is no editing to this video, it starts as the performance begins and ends as the performance comes to an end, here Sivan does not address the audience.

Until 2012, Troye's content focused more on him showcasing his singing abilities, the great majority of the videos were of him performing cover songs originally from popular Pop music singers. On the 26th August of that year, a video with the title "Introductions." was uploaded onto the Youtube channel. Here Sivan introduces himself to his audience, giving information about his birthplace, career achievements, likes and dislikes and family. Here he publicises his other social media accounts and encourages the audience to "follow" his profiles. Unlike the video previously analysed, this one was not recorded in one take, the image is of better quality, being it available in high definition. It is well lit and colour correction was made to the footage as dark blue-grey tones are enhanced and the overall colour palette of the footage is cool toned. Sivan is wearing a beanie and t-shirt that match his eye colour as well as the background.

Throughout the delivery of the message, some cuts are made to the footage, most likely to hide any hesitation that might have occurred in his speech during recording. As he is listing topics such as his birthplace, his participation in the movie "Wolverine: Origins", the video cuts to illustrative video footage of the topic. After describing his familly, the last topic of his speech, accompanied by footage of his family members, as well as again encouraging his audience to "follow" his Twitter account, the video cuts to small clips of what can be interpreted as footage recorded during the preparation for the speech. The background, lighting and clothing are the same as the previous footage but, Troye is seen looking downwards, repositioning himself in the frame, right, left and then in the centre, similar to what was seen during his speech. The video ends with Sivan asking his audience "Tell me a little about yourself", coming closer to the camera and extending his

arm, possibly to press the recording button off, stoping the camera from recording more footage. The image then cuts to a black screen with the message "Subscribe" written in white letters at the centre of the screen. At the beginning of the video there is no background music, only ambient sounds, but as Troye starts speaking an instrumental backing track starts playing. When the image cuts to him repositioning himself in front of the camera, a different backing track starts playing, the same happens when the ending screen is shown.

From this video, Sivan's engagement with his audience began. As well as uploading cover songs like he did at the first section of content in his channel, the content is made more diverse, with videos ranging from discussions about popular culture, to opinion videos on varied subjects, to video collaborations with other popular Youtube content creators.

In 2014, Troye announces in a video the release of his first EP, after signing with a record company. The video is recorded in a bedroom, most likely Sivan's own bedroom as it is the recording set for most of his content, the lighting is also similar to his previously uploaded content. Troye is positioned at the centre of the frame, in the background a bed frame and bedside table can be seen.

After revealing that a year before Sivan had signed a recording contract with EMI Australia, the video cuts to footage of him signing the contract, then cutting again to three clips of self recorded footage. In the first clip, Troye explains that he is writing songs at the Capitol Records building in Los Angeles, showing a door with a tag on it that reads "In session: Troye Sivan", then expressing his enthusiasm towards the experience. The video then cuts to the second clip, showing Sivan, sat against a wall, explaining that he is in Sidney and wrote a very good song that day. The video cuts again to the third clip where he is seen walking down a road, telling the audience he is in London. The image quality of the three clips is of low quality and shaky, suggesting it was recording using a smartphone's inbuilt camera. With this footage Sivan gives his audience some insight to the recording process highlight moments that happened a year prior and were kept a secret.

The video the cuts back to the initial set, with Sivan announcing excitedly the release of his first EP titled *TRXYE*. Another cut occurs, to a light blue screen, with background music starting to play. The words "My Happy Little Pill" can be heard, giving away the tittle of the first single. An animation is then shown on the screen composing the words "TRXYE" in the centre of the frame, the animation is substituted by another animation revealing the release date, which is then substituted by a final animation that composes the artwork of the EP cover. After a few seconds, the image fades to black and the video ends. During the appearance of the animation, the background music continues, revealing the chorus to the single announced.

After the announcement of the EP release, the content of the Youtube channel was maintained as previously, videos containing popular culture discussions, question and answers, and collaborations. As of the launch of Troye's first LP, more promotional videos were uploaded to the channel, such as single teasers, album teasers, as well as videos announcing official releases. Contrary to what was observed in Justin Bieber's Youtube channel, there are no television performances or interviews uploaded. The content of Sivan's channel is maintained somewhat homogenous.

I would like to highlight as a fourth video, the latest uploaded video to Troye's channel titled "Lil Suburbia Tour Vlog". The footage was recorded in the style of vlogs, or video blogs, a content popular on Youtube, where the subject of the video records him or herself holding the camera at arms length, in a documenting style. These videos are supposed to portray the recorder's experience during, for example, a trip, daily activities, etc.

In a hand held, shaky style, as seen before on the three clips shown on the EP announcement video mentioned before, Sivan takes his audience behind-the-scenes of two of his concerts. He shows the tour's poster, the catering table and what different types of food are displayed, describes his tour wardrobe as well as showing the stage set up and venue. Troye addresses his audience using a very informal type of discourse that includes slang words and expressions.

The video is edited using simple cuts from clip to clip. There is no background music accompanying the footage, only ambient sounds. The sound of this video was most likely recorded using the camera's inbuilt microphone as its quality is low.

Troye Sivan is an example of a Youtube amateur musician that built a following on Youtube before transiting into becoming a professional musician and promoting in mainstream media. Even though this transition occurred, the content of his channel suffered very few alterations.

V - Conclusion

Both Justin Bieber and Troye Sivan started uploading videos onto Youtube in 2007, with very similar content and quality. In Justin's case, the fact that he signed a record contract shortly after his first upload, did not have him interested in building an online following as much as Troye. His following was mostly built through his promotion on mainstream media. This aspect is noticeable in the content uploaded onto his channel, as the perspective of a great deal of the videos is of someone recording Justin Bieber and not Bieber recording the videos himself.

Troye Sivan deliberately built an online audience by engaging with his audience on a regular basis. His approach is more organic as there is no apparent mediation of his content from external parties. As referred before, micro-celebrities build audiences using techniques that mimic mainstream celebrity behaviour, without the audience being aware of the mediation that occurs. This mediation is done by the micro-celebrity him or herself (Marwick, 2010:19).

Regarding the research question of this bachelor's thesis "Can the authenticity attributed to a musician on Youtube be maintained after being signed to a major label?" and taking into account that for the purpose of this bachelor's thesis, it was considered authentic the video and audio content that reflected clear amateurism, was not mediated by a party other than the content creator himself, reflecting his creativity, ability and own opinion, I can conclude that authenticity can be maintained for as long as the content creator that has created an apparently non-mediated, micro-celebrity persona maintains his or her practices after being signed and recognised by mainstream media (Marwick, 2010).

When analysing Justin Bieber's Youtube channel, the amount of promotional content and lack of self produced content, after signing a recording contract, erases the amateur value of his videos. As mentioned before, sheer amateurism is one of the factors that is important when attributing the value of authenticity to Youtube content (Hall, 2015: 131). Also, the date of upload of most of the video content where he addresses his audience coincided with release dates of albums, singles, and other content. This promotional technique mimics micro-celebrity practices in order to break the mainstream celebrity-fan distance, therefore making the celebrity seem more 'authentic' (Senft, 2008, cited Marwick, 2015).

Troye Sivan's content is maintained throughout his career on Youtube, his discourse is very informal and contrasts with the type of discourse used by broadcast media(Montgomery, 2001), his videos reflect amateurism even after him transiting into a professional career. Therefore, once the audience attributed him the value of 'authentic', this value will not change.

Research in the area of Celebrity Studies and Social Media Studies is something still in its developing stages, Graeme Turner would argue that the study of celebrity is something that could be taken more seriously (2010). Although it might seem trivial, it is something very present in today's popular culture. What concerned me most while researching for this thesis was how little studies on the perception of authenticity

by the social media audience have been made. Here, I have to agree with Michal Strand on how there is a general absence of comparative studies of the meanings of authenticity in popular culture (2013: 61). Some concepts such as the concept of authenticity has long been discussed in many other areas, but when turned to popular culture I concluded that some authors generalise and classify most subjects of study as inauthentic. Especially when dealing with mainstream popular culture matters such as celebrities or social media. Social media is, as the name states, a 'social' phenomenon therefore, what is encompasses, what it means, and how it affects people in general has a lot of potential to be studied. Not having one author's work as the centre of the research and writing processes was a challenging task.

References

Albrecht, Michael Mario. "Acting Naturally Unnaturally: The Performative Nature of Authenticity in Contemporary Popular Music" in *Text and Performance Quarterly*, Vol. 28, Nº4, 379-395. 2008

Bieber, Justin, 2008. "With You - Chris Brown Cover - Justin singing"

2009. "Justin Bieber Fans"

2010."BABY...get the studio version featuring LUDACRIS on ITUNES NOW"

2013. "TAKE YOU - Acoustic - 6 Years of Kidrauhl"

Chen, Chih-Ping. "Exploring Personal Branding on Youtube" in *Journal of Internet Commerce*, Vol. 12, Nº4, 332-347, 2013.

Click, Melissa A. , Lee, Hyunji & Holladay, Holly Willson. "Making Monsters: Lady Gaga, Fan Identification, and Social Media" in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 36, Nº3, 360-379, 2013.

Coombs, Danielle Sarver, Collister, Simon(ed.). *Debates for the Digital Age: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of our Online World: The Good*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2015.

Dijck, José van. "Youtube beyond technology and cultural form" in *After the Break: Television Theory Today*. Valck, Marijke de, Teurlings, Jan (ed.). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013.

Duplantier, Aaron. *Authenticity and How We Fake It: Belief and Subjectivity in Reality Tv, Facebook and Youtube*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company

Gilmore, James H., Pine II, B. Joseph. *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2007.

Hall, Kimberly Ann. "The authenticity of social-media performance: lonelygirl15 and the amateur brand of Young-Girlhood" in *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, Vol. 25, Nº2, 128-142. 2015.

Marshall, P. David. "The Promotion and presentation of the self: celebrity as marker of presentational media" in *Celebrity Studies*, Vol. 1, Nº1, 35-38. 2010.

Marwick, Alice E. "You May Know Me from Youtube: (Micro-)Celebrity in Social Media" in *A Companion to Celebrity*. Marshall, P. D. and Redmond, S.(eds.). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

Marwick, A. *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Self-Branding in Web 2.0*. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University. 2010

Montgomery, Martin "Defining Authentil Talk" in *Discourse Studies*, Vol. 3, Nº 4, 397-405, 2001.

Peterson, Richard A. "In Search of Authenticity" in *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 42, Nº5, 1083-1098, 2015.

Railton, Diane, Watson, Paul. *Music Video and The Politics of Representation*. Sexton, Jamie (ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

Sivan, Troye, 2010. "Troye Sivan - Crazy Love Cover (Michael Buble) FULL VERSION NOW ON iTUNES!"

2012. "Introductions."

2014. "I Have Something To Tell You…"

2016. "Lil Suburbia Tour Vlog"

Senft, T. M. "Microcelebrity and the Branded Self" in *A Companion to New Media Dynamics.* Hartley, , J. Burgess, J. and Bruns, A. (eds.). Oxford,: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013

Strand, Michael. "Authenticity as a form of worth" in *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol. 18, Nº1, 60-77. 2014.

Tolson, Andrew. "A new authenticity? Communicative practices on Youtube" in *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol.7, Nº4, 277-289, 2010.

Tschmuck, Peter. *Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry.* Springer, 2006

Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity,*. London: Sage Publications, 2012

Turner, Graeme. "Approaching celebrity studies" in *Celebrity Studies,* Vol. 1, Nº1, 11-20. 2010.