

**YOUTUBE CHANNEL ‘MELI JO’ : CREATING AND MANAGING A CULTURAL TIGHT-KNIT
DIGITAL COMMUNITY BASED ON AUTHENTICITY, EDUCATION,
AND THE EXPLORATION OF ART AND CULTURE**

by

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SUMMARY

THE MELI JO YOUTUBE CHANNEL project will serve the purpose of presenting how online communities can theoretically be created via connections in the Latinx, American and Filipino communities. There is a plan to create a two video segment mini-series, *Have You Heard the Word* and *Make it Make Sense*, surrounding popular cultural events, experiences and themes, including mental health, pop culture and art, while also exploring the abilities needed to properly manage said channel. The primary language that will be utilized will be English, as well as expressions in Spanish and closed captioning, as a means to provide a better experience for viewers. The future workplan of this project will consist of goals towards developing a micro-level online social dynamics, with its main aim at being an entertainment entity and space for dialogue on said topics, towards audiences ages 18-35. The YouTube channel will be amateur in its content, meaning the user will create user generated content (UGC), rather than professionally generated content (PGC). There will also be a plausible set of Filipino audiences, due to the YouTube channel already existing and having uploaded content years before, as well as having a set of several hundred of subscribers, most of which are Filipino. This audience may or may not continue to stay tuned to the *Meli Jo* YouTube Channel once it launches. This project will include a plan towards launching the YouTube channel, the research behind managing a YouTube channel, the financial planning foregoing of a channel, and research found based on other YouTube channels demographics, data and content experiences.

KEYWORDS: YouTube community, user generated content (UGC), social dynamics, demographics, digital platform

RESUMEN

EL PROYECTO DEL CANAL DE YOUTUBE DE *MELI JO* servirá para presentar cómo pueden crearse teóricamente comunidades en línea a través de conexiones en las comunidades latina, estadounidense y filipina. Está previsto crear una miniserie de dos segmentos de vídeo, *Have You Heard the Word* y *Make it Make Sense*, en torno a acontecimientos, experiencias y temas culturales populares, como la salud mental, la cultura pop y el arte, al tiempo que se exploran las habilidades necesarias para gestionar adecuadamente dicho canal. El idioma principal que se utilizará será el inglés, así como expresiones en español y subtítulos, como medio para proporcionar una mejor experiencia a los espectadores. El plan de trabajo futuro de este proyecto consistirá en objetivos hacia el desarrollo de una dinámica social en línea a micro-nivel, con su principal objetivo de ser una entidad de entretenimiento y espacio para el diálogo sobre dichos temas, hacia audiencias de 18-35 años. El canal de YouTube será amateur en su contenido, lo que significa que el usuario creará contenido generado por el usuario (UGC), en lugar de contenido generado profesionalmente (PGC). También habrá un grupo plausible de público filipino, debido a que el canal de YouTube ya existe y ha subido contenidos años antes, además de contar con varios cientos de suscriptores, la mayoría de ellos filipinos. Este público puede o no seguir sintonizando el canal de YouTube de *Meli Jo* una vez que se lance. Este proyecto incluirá un plan para la lanzamiento del canal de YouTube, la investigación sobre la gestión de un canal de YouTube, la planificación financiera previa a la creación de un canal y la investigación basada en datos demográficos, datos y experiencias de contenido de otros canales de YouTube.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Comunidad de YouTube, contenidos generados por los usuarios (CGU), dinámica social, demografía, plataforma digital

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my beloved community of cultural managers and administrative friends in Puerto Rico, who have been not only my companions throughout this entire process of study and work but have given me inspiration and light in moments I needed moral, spiritual, emotional, and financial support the most. Thank you for being such a beautiful community in which I feel loved and seen.

I also humbly dedicate my work to my late grandmother, María Mercedes Rivera Alonso, who took up space and time on this earth for a short time, but who's love and essence continues on forever in the hearts and minds of those who truly loved and knew her.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The *Meli Jo* YouTube channel is a project dedicated to embodying the development and requisites a content creator on YouTube would need in order to manage a feasible online community. The project establishes the practical parameters with which it can be steered on the YouTube website itself, as well as the off-site work that includes the type of content planned, video editing, the financial planning and revenue of the channel, and the equipment used. The demographics of the aimed audience, being Latinx, American, and Filipino, will also be incorporated in the project's investigation and experimentation. The two mini-series on the channel that will be produced, *Have You Heard the Word* and *Make it Make Sense*, will be posted at an alternating bi-monthly basis.

In an effort to better understand the processes of a flourishing YouTube channel, it is also important to cover the basic of what YouTube is and how it can be connected to cultural community management. YouTube is a video-sharing platform in where there is opportunity to earn revenue from videos posted by users and provides a platform for diverse creators and content (YouTube “Statistics” 2021). On the *Culture & Trends* information page of YouTube, they describe the site to be a place of “digital video revolutionized media by letting anyone create and facilitating a two-way relationship between creators and viewers (through comments)” (YouTube 2023). YouTube claims to be a place of community, stating that “everyday tasks allow connections — between creators and viewers, but also between creators. In other words, doing things alone *together* can be the basis of a community” (YouTube 2023). YouTube is an international platform that “enables creators and users from all over the globe to develop, share, and view content” (YouTube “Statistics” 2021).

To further this project's development, the investigation will include information on the trends and development of successful content creators Mina Le (<https://www.youtube.com/@gremlita>), whose videos are primarily on fashion, films, and media culture, as well as other YouTube content creators such as Danny Gonzalez (<https://www.youtube.com/@Danny-Gonzalez>) and Chad Chad (<https://www.youtube.com/@thechadx2>), whose content is primarily reactions and commentary content on media culture, pop culture, and films. These YouTube channels will be analyzed in order to exhibit the strategies used in their content to create community, their performance and presentation styles, and their audience reactions that are based off the interaction in the comments.

As a for-profit entity there are several ways for YouTube users to earn income, which will be explored as part of the project. If the channel becomes successful, there are possibilities of earning money directly from YouTube such as “from ads on long-form videos, ads between short-form videos and from YouTube Premium subscribers watching your content” (YouTube 2023).

The main research question for this thesis project is: What does it take to create an impactful YouTube channel surrounding topics that are based on cultural exploration and awareness, as well as a means to create and manage a dynamic community online?

OBJECTIVES

1. Deep dive into successful YouTube content creators' channels and their means of maintaining their community via comments and other forms of dialogue (i.e. other social media platforms).
2. Develop an online social platform on YouTube and create content that is both educational and entertaining from a multidisciplinary and cultural perspective.

3. Educate on how YouTube works as a whole as well as for individual users and content creators.
4. Contribute to the development of online communities as well as the management it takes to carry it out.
5. Set up the necessary steps and equipment to carry out the YouTube channel project.

JUSTIFICATION

The *Meli Jo* YouTube channel is meant to be a cultural and educative experience on its own, with its main goal surrounding topics that may have been discussed on other channels or sources, but with a more ‘laid back’ style, since it is not professionally generated content (PGC), but rather user generated content (UGC). According to *Zippia*, a career-resources site, YouTube has over 51 million channels and 5 billion videos that are watched on YouTube everyday (Flynn). When navigating YouTube, it is evident that a majority of its users are only using YouTube for personal memory archiving purposes with little to no subscribers, which are also the audiences who tend to comment on YouTube channels that have a greater following with content that is educational, or entertainment based, and at times both. Channels can feature various themes, including science, language, music videos, podcasts, short films, and DIYs (do-it-yourself). In 2005 YouTube began as a small user generated content (UGC) based video site, and later on in 2006 it transitioned into more professionally generated content (PGC) site after YouTube was purchased by Google (Kim 55). With a thorough overview into the YouTube application and webpage, one can see that there are many channels that seek to fulfill the goal that the *Meli Jo* channel wishes to fulfill, which is connection and community.

There are many channels nowadays that do ‘reaction videos’ to different content, from anything such as social media, films, music, video games, books, and current state of affairs.

“Essentially, reaction videos are exactly what the name suggests: a video showing a person or group of people reacting to the work of another, which by nature requires the incorporation of the work being reacted to for the viewer’s reference” (Casey 602).

An example of a reaction video can be on the topic of fashion and gender, on thoughts of how clothing and style ‘has no gender’, and that in fact anyone could wear whatever clothing they desire without the need of feeling stigmatized or shamed. A prominent example that would be used is of Bad Bunny, a popular Puerto Rican rapper and singer with over 61.3 billion views on his YouTube content alone (Bad Bunny - Artist Stats and Data Analytics), when he came out on the May 2022 issue of *GQ*, where he discussed wearing dresses and skirts, that to the common population are seen as feminine. In the interview with Carina Chocano for *GQ* he stated, “What defines a man, what defines being masculine, what defines being feminine? I really can’t give clothes gender. To me, a dress is a dress. If I wear a dress, would it stop being a woman’s dress? Or vice versa? Like, no. It’s a dress, and that’s it” (Chocano and Ethridge). The *Meli Jo* YouTube channel’s *Make it Make Sense* series would go on a deep dive on researching information and ‘talking’ with the audience viewers on their thoughts on the information found through the comments. There would also be background information to fall back on in order to discuss similar past fashion icons and rebels of society, such as Prince and David Bowie, and even locally in Puerto Rico with dancer Javier Cardona, with their feminine and bazaar looks in comparison to societal norms, which caused uproar in their times from mid to late 20th century, in terms of what it meant to be a man (Rosenberg).

On the online community of Twitter and Instagram, there was quite an uproar, negative and positive, over Bad Bunny’s outfit to the *Met Gala* in 2022 (Betancourt), where there was both the appeal of excited fans just as much as there were brutal critics. A similar thing happened in the

Met Gala of 2019, when Harry Styles wore what many would deem as a ‘feminine’ blouse, dressed by *Gucci*’s Alessandro Michele, and got many reactions for his gender-bending look (Garrand). It even hit interdisciplinary fields of thought, in where actor Billy Porter believes he himself “changed the game” and that Styles “doesn't care”. Porter went on to say, “He's just doing it because it's the thing to do. This is politics for me. This is my life. I had to fight my entire life to get to the place where I could wear a dress to the Oscars. All he has to do is be white and straight” (Deng). Naturally, Porter is not the only one to experience this situation in lack of publicity towards a style or movement, which is conclusive to the fact that white men in fashion have more exposure in media (Mezerreg).

A deep dive into the development of this video example would also include a little background history, to see the development of fashion throughout time, in where Europe and other cultures have had many kings and royal men wear what would be considered feminine today, when it was simply a taste for fashion, luxury, and flair by all means, in 18th century France (Men’s Fashion in the 18th Century - Google Arts & Culture). The *Make it Make Sense* series would bring the topic and theme to light with an educational background that conducts a manner to understanding why men dress and have dressed certain ways throughout time, through different cultural lenses and perspectives.

A lot of content online, even on YouTube, will always have what they call ‘haters’ which are those that choose to, as they say online, ‘troll’ and bring in negative vitality to the space (Why Do People Troll and What Can You Do About It?), added to the phenomenon of “hate watching”, allegedly (Armstrong). The goal is that with the *Meli Jo* channel, there will be little room to harbor those type of followers and comments with the build-up of reliable sources, but also with the readiness to expect that type of behavior and be open to dialogue, with the goal of

clearing out any doubts or uncertainty on cultural subjects or articles with the use of liable sources and etymology. With YouTube's community guidelines, there are also "tools and filters that allow you to review or remove comments that you find offensive to you and your community" (YouTube 2023).

What would make this project stand out amongst other YouTube channels is that despite its purpose to be a source of entertainment and knowledge, it would also be an experiment in managing online community just as one would do in-person, but with the differences that come with online management technologies.

Online communities as we know them today really started to grow in the 1990s and early 2000s, as online forums and social networks where a group of people with a shared interest could communicate with each other. As the communities grew, people recognized the need to ensure that they were functioning, safe, and on topic – the role of community manager was born. (Speyer)

This theme is of personal interest, specifically in the interest of developing an online community and dialogue, in concordance with technology developing as well, along with the awareness of our social constructs evolutionizing culturally. As technology continues to take over the way people communicate, cultural managers could also learn to understand the trends and the ways of communication online, by learning the ways of tech and online communication in community, which in this instance would be via a YouTube channel.

An online community manager is the person or team of people responsible for owning your online community – setting the strategy, defining the online community platform, training your organization to get involved, building out the experience, and making your community a great destination where people want to engage. (Speyer)

PLANNED IMPACTS

With the management of this project, the hope is to impact the online YouTube community in a manner that is both positive and liberating, bringing a sense of vulnerableness in which the audience of the channel may feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas in the comments. The goal is for the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel to be an agency of entertainment, knowledge, and a source of perception on cultural topics and ideas that may have not previously crossed the minds of viewers, or may have with the intention of having dialogue, therefore creating a tight-knit community that is personal. Antecedent analysis shows that content creators are inclined to share opinions, daily routines or expertise in a specific subject area (Tolson). The goal is to be authentic and trustworthy so that the public that chooses to view the content feels a sense of connection, and therefore, community.

The short-term expectations for the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel are to create and prepare a set of three videos for each mini-series, launching each video in a rotational period on a bi-monthly basis to test out its potential. Marketing will be manifested through the use of other online social media entities, such as Instagram and Twitter, which are most popular among the age demographic of 18-29 years of age (The 2022 Social Media Users Demographics Guide). The *Have You Heard the Word* series will be carried out in a newscast course of action in which topics that regard the common pop-culture categories, such as film, music, television, fashion and technology, will be discussed using legitimate sources similar to the style of Mina Le's YouTube channel, in which she authenticates her work through the use of articles and books (Mina Le). With the *Make it Make Sense* series, the topics discussed will be uncanny and mystifying, specifically on clarifying strange and peculiar content in art, film, music, among other cultural topics, with the use of sources to explain the content that is being referred to and to

make it more relatable and understandable from an educative perspective. The content is meant to be entertaining, therefore elements of comedy and personalization will be implemented.

The long-term expectations for the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel are that it should be a channel that feels inviting to anyone, including the specific age demographic of 18-35, in the Filipino and Latinx communities, and open to anyone in the English-speaking community since it will be done in English. Besides the language of English being the mainstay language, Spanish will also be used, therefore the language amalgamation resulting in Spanglish as a commonplace. Spanish and Spanglish will be translated with self-made subtitles in the videos for certain words that may be new to viewers.

Another goal is to also create the option of full video subtitles for hearing impaired or hard of hearing audiences, who may be interested in the channel as well. Other long-term expectations come with the aspiration of channel growth, which could include changes in management of the channel in addition to positions that help in editing, design, subtitle additions, and planning of the mini-series. The *Meli Jo* YouTube channel is expected to adjust and modify itself according to the audience engagement provided by other YouTube users, due to that being a key factor in the essential function of the content. The *Meli Jo* channel is meant to be an online community based on integrity, with an educative perspective, and vulnerability that cultivates a safe environment to open up about emotions and mental health. Overall, in its content it is meant to be a safe space to learn, ask questions, dialogue, and be entertained. With the idea of bringing art, music, films, current events and trains of thought into conversation, the *Meli Jo* channel is meant to be a cultural experience that welcomes all who are interested in learning and sharing their thoughts on the content, building a community where culture is a lively concept to be thoroughly explored.

PREVIOUS BACKGROUND STUDIES

Successful YouTube Content Creators

The main sources for this project, with regard to other YouTube channels and their social media accounts, have been focused on the YouTube channels of Mina Le, Danny Gonzalez, and Chad Chad, who currently live out the organized idea of this project.

Mina Le's YouTube channel consists of fashion, films, and media culture along with her background knowledge in history and cultural studies, specifically in fashion (<https://www.youtube.com/@gremlita>). Some of her video content are on topics such as the history of the Coachella festival, the popularity of scammers, the Met Gala, femme fatale, teen dramas, and plastic surgery, among other popular culture topics. She starts her videos with a greeting to her followers and begins with her interest on certain pop culture subjects and how she came about them. She then goes on to question certain ideals and representations of ideas, characters, and perceptions that are manifested. She gives background of her interests and how she relates to these topics, so that her viewers can see that she is just like them, in that she is interested in said topics, and then goes into a deep dive on the subject matter with research she has done herself. She gives a 'content warning' (CW) of what the topics and content of her video are going to be about in text, and answers questions she has made on the topics.

In August of 2021, Mina Le uploaded a video called *The Problem with Teen Dramas* in where she addresses the issue of teenage characters being portrayed by adult actors (Mina Le). She uses reliable sources from articles based on facts to point out the inappropriate high school teen and teacher romance relationships, among other concerning factors, even though the actors are all adults in real life. She also addresses the reasoning of why many dramas use adult actors to portray teens, due to the labor laws of the U.S. (Mina Le). She points out the unrealistic body

standards of teen bodies in teen dramas, basically due to the characters being played by adult actors. She also takes the time to go through the psychology of some of these types of shows, such as *Gossip Girl* and *90210*, in which she uses legitimate sources to discuss the unrealistic sex life, drug use, and party life of teenagers being portrayed. In all, Mina Le's premise of this video was about adult actors and how they play teen characters, changing the perception of what content is or is not appropriate (Mina Le). She thoroughly explores her topics with sources from viable online articles and books, listing them in the video description, while also giving her opinion on said subjects, all for educative purposes (Mina Le).

This project's research also includes the YouTube content creators Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad. These YouTubers in particular mainly focus on giving reactions and commentator content about similar cultural social media subjects pertaining to their demographics, which are usually in the ages pertaining to Gen-Z and Millennials, and with a touch of comedy (Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad). Popular topics on their video content are strange children's films, TikTok videos, sexist podcasts, video games and social media forums, among other topics. Most of the topics are considered 'cringey', meant to be content that is both awkward, weird, contradictory and at times ironically funny. These specific YouTubers have such similar content that there are videos available in which they collaborate, or 'collab', with one another to create content and react together over said topics (Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad).

When looking through the comment sections of Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad videos, one can see how the subscribers interact and have dialogue, often referring to content in the video they found enjoyable and funny (Chad Chad). When reading through the comments of these YouTube videos, specifically in their collab videos, one will notice the excitement their audience expresses at seeing them uploading content together (Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad).

An example of this is in a collab video by Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad, called *Alpha Tips & Tricks* and posted on Chad Chad's channel, the two content creators discuss the toxic masculinity found on Twitter, TikTok and Instagram accounts that make strange posts about what it takes and means to be an 'alpha male' (Chad Chad). In their video, each of the creators puts a little bit of their style into the video, and since their content is similar, but unique in their own way, the collaboration goes smoothly and seems to become a favorite of the subscribers. In the comment section, the viewers thought their collab was fun. One comment with over 26,000 likes read, "Nothing is funnier than Chad Chad treating Danny as Danny does to his guests" and another read, "Y'all should collab again so I don't just keep rewatching this video" expressing a desire to see them work together again (Alpha Tips and Tricks – Chad Chad YouTube). Some of their fans did not expect to see how well they would collaborate together and expressed their delight, such as this comment with over 11,000 likes, "You two have a such a similar way of talking and formulating jokes, but I never realized how well you would work together in a collab" (Alpha Tips and Tricks – Chad Chad YouTube).

Collabs are also done as a means to promote one another's channel to gain more subscribers, which usually is a positive impact on all parties involved. After viewing some of the videos from these content creators and reading over the comments, one could see that they are truly friends with one another by seeing the interactions on their collab videos (Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad). Within their own small communities of subscribers, they are celebrated for sharing spaces together and doing content in unison, developing an even bigger community on YouTube (Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad).

Academic Predecessors

In regard to previous researchers and scholars, others that have researched and studied similar themes within the threshold of online communities, specifically on YouTube, are Kelsey Savage with her thesis of *Understanding and Engaging YouTube Communities* and Mark C. Lashley with his dissertation *Making Culture on YouTube: Case Studies of Cultural Production on the Popular Web Platform*. While Savage explored specifically “how YouTube creators are developing content that is designed to engage viewers and analyze how audiences are responding to those efforts” (Savage), Lashley did a case study on three popular YouTube content creators “and their relationship to the site as a vehicle for cultural production” (Lashley). Accompanying this field of study, this project in itself centers on developing a YouTube channel in order to generate a community, along with what it would take to manage and oversee said online community. The methodology of this investigation will also include case studies on the YouTubers mentioned above, as well as other evidence to support this project’s thesis.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL APPROACHES & LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Approaches

There are three theoretical approaches that will be reviewed in this thesis project: social media in its content intimacy and influence on community with a focus on YouTube, online cultural management, and the development and preservation of online communities. The importance of these theoretical approaches is to give a background knowledge on the purpose of this project, as well as a deeper understanding of the social media norms that adhere to the online communities that are a both cultural and community driven.

YouTube Content Intimacy and Influence on the Online Community

In today's society, social media has become a major part of everyday life. "Social media is an important part of our life because it promotes the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world" (Sawyer and Chen 152). While there are many avenues on the world wide web in which individuals can connect to and be a part of, YouTube remains the most dominant online social media platform (Suciu).

Aside from being a major platform for everyday users to watch and upload their own content, many industries have realized the major influence that YouTube has on society and has joined in for the benefits it provides in building up their own marketing and revenue. "Since being purchased by Google, YouTube has evolved from a site where amateur and ad-free videos were posted to an online destination that is now consumed by commercialized and professional videos" (Holland 53). Besides it being a means to monetize on the content uploaded by major industries, YouTube is best known for creating opportunities for the average person to build their own personal brand (Holland 53).

YouTube users can create content in which their “videos can be arranged on a scale of increasing intimacy, with [their] subjective views and opinions progressing to personal, emotional narratives” (García-Rapp 285). By creating a very personalized and intimate space on their channels, YouTubers or YouTube content creators, can initially attract more users to their communities online.

A prime example of this would be the renowned YouTuber and beauty guru Bubz, on her channel *Bubzbeauty* (<https://www.youtube.com/@bubzbeauty>). Bubz, formally known as Lindy Tsang, was and still is a major part of the start of the ‘beauty guru’ era on YouTube. While she shared her beauty tips and personal vlogs (video blogs) tailored in her style, she was always very engaging and adamant in staying genuine and true to her followers in her interactions with them.

Starting her channel in 2007, her channel later grew in popularity in 2010 and forward on, with the popularity of beauty and makeup tutorials and tips. Today, Bubz has over 300 videos and 2.78 million subscribers (Bubzbeauty). With her beauty narratives and advice, she was able to build intimacy with her viewers. “Bubz’s content ranges in intimacy, and her viewers’ responses imply reciprocal feelings of connection and engagement, in line with the intimacy of her content. In other words, intimacy develops in a bifold sense: parting from the video content and finding its counterpart in the viewers’ comments” (García-Rapp 285).

Bubz also opened her personal life up to her subscribers by talking about and sharing her personal life experiences within the community. Her closest fans could see her growth and changes throughout her life, from when she got married, had a baby, moved homes, and even her later-on divorce (Bubzbeauty). YouTube can be a very intimate place, where not only the sharing of ideas and thoughts are available, but also creating windows into people’s personal lives. Bubz has been able to handle all her online community affairs, while also shifting in her content,

which correlated with the changes in her life. She is not as active on YouTube as she was before, and no longer shares content on the beauty and trend aspects she once started with, but more so on home life vlogs, personal growth and change, and her life as a mother. Her YouTube channel, although not as active as before, still stands at almost three million subscribers (Bubzbeauty).

Not all YouTubers do a deep dive into their personal lives, yet there are those that are still able to make a community within the means of their content. With content that is entertaining, easily accessible, and allows users to interact, it is no surprise that users continue to subscribe to YouTube channels, and other social networks, that they may feel most connected with.

Social media provides a place where people across the world can stay in touch and feel closer and more connected regardless of the distance that separates them. Social media has been rapidly spreading across the globe and gaining popularity in today's society.

While providing a common way of linking people together through knowledge, behavior, and attitudes, a sense of belonging to a greater social network other than one's own local community is effectively created. The Internet exemplifies such a significant means in connecting to a diversity of people, places, ideas, and cultures. Social media has provided ways in which people can communicate and interact with others across the world, without being restricted by the limitations of time and distance. (Sawyer and Chen 15)

YouTube content creator Danny Gonzalez has kept his personal life out of the limelight, all while still creating an intimate environment with his subscribers in various ways. He chose the name *Greg* as the name of his fanbase, always referring to them as a family and as part of his channel 'army'. He chose this name for his fanbase in 2017, evident in his tweet from September 8th of that year, which still remains on his Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/dannygonzalez>). He also takes into consideration the type of content his viewers like from him the most, and

tailors his content to his viewers' advantage. Danny Gonzalez started his YouTube channel in 2014 and has become more popular in recent years. He has over 200 videos and over 6 million subscribers, making an average of \$50,000 per month (NoxInfluencer YouTube Channel Calculator). In spite of the fact that he leaves out his personal life from his work on YouTube, he has still been able to create community on his channel. "Intimacy is an important and necessary signifier in relation to both the form and content of the videos and the relation between the creators and their audience" (Raun 99). Although he has never been as personal and intimate as Bubz was in her content, he has found a way to connect that works for him and his followers. His online impact has gone beyond YouTube and delves into other social media networks like Reddit, Twitter, and Instagram (Danny Gonzalez). He has been able to create a sense of intimacy in his own way, while seemingly making boundaries for his personal life.

Cultural Management Online

In an online setting, culture not only persists, but is continuously developing its own form(s) (DiMaggio). YouTube being a culture of its own (Zanatta), seems to carry many cultures within itself. The care and details it takes in to managing a social event, an organization, or a project, are just as vital when managing an online cultural platform. According to psychologist Daniel R. Denison, "an organization with a high level of shared meaning, a common vision, a "clan-like" attitude toward members, and a high level of normative integration will perform well" (20). With YouTube being one of the most popular social media platforms, with 2.56 billion active users (Most Popular Social Media Platforms in 2022), active YouTube channels are managed by the user, and at times various users manage a channel, depending on how active it may be.

Although it seems quite easy to manage one's own personal social media networks and accounts online, it is different when it becomes a bigger community and starts to involve editing, planning, marketing and possible profiting (Zanatta 24). With a YouTuber being the face of their own brand, once their fanbase and subscribers start to rise in numbers, management becomes more complex. According to *YouTube Basics for Journalists* written by Erin Polgreen, YouTube management involves development and production of specific videos, channel and show strategy, video uploads and optimization, day-to-day channel audience engagement, partnership and collaborations management, asset and copyright management, and analytics reports (10). When YouTube channels begin to grow in subscribers and views, there are instances in that a certified YouTube channel manager can partner with another content creator to collaborate on videos and topics, in which their two or more demographic audience can be reached, therefore expand their viewer reach, expanding their online communities (Polgreen 10).

In regard to finding success on YouTube, video views and number of subscribers are peripheral goals in comparison to what is actually important to gain success and eventually make profit. "YouTube as a platform optimizes for *watch time*, or the amount of time a viewer spends watching your content. This means that YouTube itself considers your channel successful if it can hold viewers' attention. More watch time=more revenue and improved performance in YouTube's algorithm" (Polgreen 11).

In order to gain said success in the YouTube cultural environment, community management is key. According to studies done in *Youtuber and Community Management Strategies* by Tur-Viñes and González-Río, "community management implemented by a *Youtuber* is configured by two dimensions: indicators promoting and fostering participation, and the types of *Youtuber*-audience interaction" (1296-97). Accordingly, each YouTube content

creator manages their YouTube channel in their own style, with either promotion and user participation (known as dimension 1), and/or interacting directly with the audience as the YouTuber (known as dimension 2) (Tur-Viñes and González-Río 1297).

To further describe the variables of this study, dimension 1 includes community management such as the *YouTuber* encouraging their audience to interact in the channel, promotion of other *YouTubers* in the audio, and advances about future content (expectations), while in dimension 2 community management includes the use of an introducing statement, characteristic jargon, mentions to specific users, mention to the increase of subscribers, and assigning nicknames to fan followers (1297). All things considered, Polgreen says that “the best way to truly master the platform and harness its potential is to dive in” (19). Success may not be guaranteed, but the potential is there when honing ones managing skills and organization.

Creation and Preservation of Online Communities

According to Gunn Enli, a professor in the Department of Media and Communication, “Conscious and thoughtful communicative practices are necessary in the digital world because it must compensate for the void of face-to-face interaction” (2015). Cultural management in a face-to-face environment being vastly different from online interaction, the research question for this thesis project re-emerges: What does it take to create a potential impactful YouTube channel surrounding topics that are cultural-based themed, as well as a means to create community online and manage it? Just as Bubz on her YouTube channel *Bubzbeauty* was able to create a community by being authentic for her audience, essentially the formula for creating and preserving a lasting and engaged online community is by remaining authentic, or “real”, with one’s followers and by being unique and original in their content (Nazarewich 19). “Complying

with the norms within the community implies a reliable, trustworthy, and authentic image” (Nazarewich 19).

As a YouTuber, one is more likely to maintain a community by simply being oneself and creating interesting content that matters to the creator. By maintaining a transparency with their audiences, YouTubers are most likely to build-up their channel in views and subscribers, which in turn will bring in more profit and attract companies that may be interested in having their products and brand promoted (Zanatta 11). In *Bubzbeauty*’s personal case, due to starting off and leaning towards an audience with more interest in beauty tutorials and products, Garcia-Rapp believed that as long as beauty vloggers display an authentic self, they would be able to continue to self-brand and monetize their content to sustain their market position and status while avoid being labeled as “fake” or inauthentic (124).

Because the online communities, specifically on YouTube, demand more authenticity and transparency in terms of character and originality, managing an online social media platform is an immense responsibility (Vich 53). YouTube content creators have the capacity to influence their audience, hence the key term ‘influencer’ stems from this characterization (Geyser). The influence is not only in a materialistic matter, where there are ads and promotions for self-made brands and other company brands in their content, but in the role and characteristics they have as a person with a unique narrative and experience. “Although they play a part in the commodification of online culture, the cultural significance of these personalities is not restricted to the commercial aspects, but also extends to their role as ‘cultural intermediaries’ ” (Marôpo et al. 24). Although authenticity and the importance of being an agent of cultural intermediary is important, it is not an easy task. According to Marôpo and their partners on the analyzation of intimacy and trust among vloggers and followers, “sustaining a relationship of trust with the

audience while engaging with brands is also a challenge for the vloggers” (26). If authenticity is key, it is vital for the vlogger, or YouTube content creator, to make connections with brands they are genuinely into and actually enjoy.

Even for a bigger company that contracts with a YouTuber, credibility is important as well as finding a YouTube content creator that is appropriate for the promotion of their product. “The biggest achievement for a company is to find an appropriate person to establish successful collaboration” (Młodkowska 7). A beauty YouTube guru will be better off promoting a product that goes along with their content as well as their character, with something in the lines of beauty products and such, rather than a product that is made for housekeeping or computer engineering. Just as a video game YouTuber would most likely promote a product such as a VPN (virtual private network) that would help promote safe internet browsing, choosing the appropriate person for the products marketing is crucial, as well as a YouTuber choosing the right company to represent them (Zanatta 18). All things considered, a YouTuber is most likely to keep their audience and profit off their channel when finding the right company, or companies, to engage with when promoting products and ads.

Literature Review

Conducive to this project is a literature review that is meant to be a means to further sustain the background knowledge, research, and justifications of this project and its thesis.

The documentation and filming of oneself has become a phenomenon that has continued to increase over the years as technology progresses and more people have access to it. French film critic and director Alexandre Astruc, in an article he wrote in 1948, expressed that, “an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel” (18). He believed that a new age of cinema was on the rise, and he called it the age of *camera-stylo* (camera-pen) (18). He believed that cinema was going to break free from the predictable notions of how cinema worked, and he was right.

Astruc was nearly prophetic in his beliefs in how cinema would develop. “The day is not far off when everyone will possess a projector, will go to the local bookstore and hire films written on any subject, of any form, from literary criticism and novels to mathematics, history, and general science” (19). He believed that there would be different kinds of cinema just as there are different kinds of literatures and that it was not so much an art as it was “a *language* which can express any sphere of thought” (19).

Astruc was correct in his predictions and today it is evident in the several types of ‘cinema’ society has access to, via online streaming channels, television, documentaries and in social media, among others. This notion is particularly true in the world of YouTube, in which one could find literally any type of video on nearly every topic (YouTube). On YouTube exists a vast selection of choices of ‘cinema’ for all types of viewers from all around the globe.

In his book *Culture* from the 1980s, cultural theorist Raymond Williams believed there was a changed access to new media. He thought that cultural means of production was developing vastly, in variable ways.

The new technologies of cinema, sound broadcasting, sound discs and cassettes, television, video cassettes and tape recorders all embody systems of access which are direct at least in the sense that they are culturally available within normal social development, without any form of selective cultural training. (Williams 111)

On this basis, this conceptualization on means of production was accurate because over time all these systems became accessible to everyone, especially now when a majority of the world population has a cellphone at hand (Howarth).

Williams also believed that ‘tape-recording’ was essentially a more immediate form of communication, in comparison to writing or a printed report. “The tape-recording of this or that speaker is significantly different from a written or printed report of what he said”. He continued in stating that this newly developing form of immediate communicating was a “change of dimension which appears to restore *presence*” (111). The ‘presence’ he discussed could now be referring to how simply uncomplicated it was and would be to be present with someone even without them being physically there.

This theory by Williams turns out to be a validation in today’s time in view of the fact that not only is media in form of ‘tape-recording’ available at every turn, it has become a part of our day to day life in the forms of live phone calls in FaceTime or video-calls, the social media applications such as TikTok and Instagram in where there is immediate presence via the accessibility to record oneself, and even at times ‘go live’ to be quite precisely in the presence of whomever is doing the recording. All of this is available through the means of a cellphone,

tablet, computer, and any other electronic device that has a built-in camera and connection to the internet.

Writer and professor Victor Vich wrote about what it meant to be a cultural manager as “someone who knows that culture can serve both to unite a community and to divide and hierarchize it” (53). Vich continued on to say that the object of a cultural manager is to “fight for new collective imaginaries, for new cultural practices, for activating a permanent reflection on the development of community life” (53). His main objective in this matter was that it was a cultural manager’s responsibility to contribute to the people becoming better citizens. He believed that the main objective of cultural politics consisted in creating spaces for society to reflect upon itself (53), which could result in the development of better citizens.

This view pertains to my thesis in that in the creation and management of an online cultural space, there are spaces available to the public to dialogue and reflect. Whether through direct messaging (DM), a forum, or comments on a social network platform, there are spaces available to interchange and comment on views and ideas, in which can be both an opportunity for uplifting input and growth or degrading judgements that at times can be harmful (Vich 53).

In addition to this notion of creating a cultural space for reflection, hoping the result to be a positive one, Raymond Williams thought that “an effective kind of cultural reproduction” would be productive “within the very processes of knowledge” (182). In other words, Raymond believed that through an educational system that elevated “rigorous training in reliable procedures of knowledge and analysis”, there was opportunity for people to learn properly how to obtain true knowledge and learn how to analyze, while the other side of the coin was an inducing of “endlessly knowledgeable helplessness” (Williams 182).

In online community management, this concept is vital in that in order for the cultural space to be a positive, reflective and inquisitive one, the responsibility is first on the cultural manager to uphold the standards themselves initially, purposefully using reliable knowledge and unbiased analysis in the cultural spaces created, which can in turn assist the public in doing the same in return. A YouTube content creator that manages and prepares their content for the public should always uphold the responsibility of using reliable sources for their work, as well methodically examine the content information being diffused to their audience.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My methodology is based on a few research methods with the purpose of collecting information that can be used to help in the development of this thesis project. I used cross-cultural case studies that examine how YouTubers manage their communities (audience and subscribers) and maintain authenticity, while educating and/or entertaining their audience, and their forms of exploring the content they present. In addition to this method, I have also conducted a short exploratory survey on the personal interests of the average millennial and older Gen Z generation, and included is also my internship experience as a basis of brick-and-mortar community experimentation.

Cross-cultural Content Analysis

I did a cross-cultural case study analysis in order to inquire into how YouTubers Danny Gonzalez (<https://www.youtube.com/@Danny-Gonzalez>), Chad Chad (<https://www.youtube.com/@thechadx2>) and Mina Le (<https://www.youtube.com/@gremlita>), aged mid 20's to early 30's, manage and engage their audiences through publicly visible interactions, such as their comments on videos and some of their social media pages. In order to carry out this study, I took a deep dive into their YouTube channels, and some of their most popular videos. Not all three YouTube channels are used in every question of this case study. Some of the research questions I had arranged specifically for this case study were:

1. How do these YouTubers maintain their audiences engaged in their content?
2. What practices of connection do these YouTubers use in order to permeate the parts of the public that leave negative feedback, can be harmful or are not necessarily a part of their online community?

3. What is a common denominator(s) that all these YouTubers share when it comes to community development of their aimed audiences?
4. How do these online communities benefit viewers/audiences that are not necessarily in close physical contact with others?

RESULTS

Research Question 1

The first question asks how YouTube content creators keep their audiences engaged in their content. The purpose of this question is to understand the techniques used by YouTubers in order to discern engagement strategies between their viewers and their content.

Danny Gonzalez is an American YouTuber that joined YouTube in 2014 and has over 6 million subscribers and over a billion views (<https://www.youtube.com/@Danny-Gonzalez>). His channel is dedicated to finding strange and silly films, games, and pop cultural events and giving his honest reaction, while informing his audience who may not have any background knowledge on those topics. His content is meant to be entertaining and comical, and not necessarily for children because he at times says a swear word ever so often.

I chose to research on one of his most popular videos called *Unintentionally Terrifying Children's Videos*. This video was posted in 2018 and has over 15 million views, 500,000 likes, and more than 64,000 comments in the comment section (Danny Gonzalez – YouTube). The video itself is around 12-13 minutes long and he divided the video into chapters, including copyrighted content he got from some of the children's videos he is commenting on.

One of the ways he keeps his viewers engaged is by saying his thoughts about the clips he finds out loud, while genuinely expressing his confusion to some of the characters and songs encountered in the children's video. The content of the children videos seems bazaar, and in this

case, there is a refrigerator that sings, walks around, has limbs, and communicates with the family in the video. Danny also comes up with rash theories that can be a bit of ‘dark humor’ in order to explain the ridiculous content of the video in a way that is fun for the viewer. Towards the end of the video, there is a child’s song playing where the animated children and people sing “There comes the bar ice cream” repeatedly, and as the ‘bar ice cream’ part is sung, Danny starts rapping ‘bars’, which has become a modern way of “rhyming lyrical sentences in hip hop and rap songs” (Bars - What Does Bars Mean?). It was unexpected, but definitely a funny moment.

In the comment section, the viewers comment on the funny parts they found entertaining, and the viewers are free to reply to one another’s comments. One sarcastic comment in particular had over 8,000 likes and the user wrote, “Imagine breaking into a house and then the fridge comes running after you. It’s a great security measure.” When looking at the replies, there was a mixture of responses from, “you just made my day with that comment” and “that would be terrifying! LOL” (Gonzalez).

Some users even commented more recently on returning to this video since 2018 and finding it as entertaining as the first time they watched it, “This video gives me such weird nostalgia, but I’ve only been watching it about 4 years. It’s still funny and trippy as it was back then”, a comment posted a month ago (Gonzalez). A year ago, another comment posted said, “Watching Danny’s old videos have to be the funniest things ever- the part at the end where that loud ass music comes on out of nowhere always makes me burst out laughing HAHASHJDJA”, which had 9 replies and also over a thousand likes (Gonzalez).

It seems that the engagement of audiences is determined by a few factors: nostalgia, humor, the element of surprise, and accommodation of content. Danny used children sing-along videos that have elements of wistfulness with the bright colors, music, and traditional family

dynamics in the content (i.e. nuclear family). With a twist of humor added to his commentary, Danny made jokes throughout the video, commenting on the uncanny characters that were animated inanimate objects, such as the fridge and the singing ice cream. In the end, Danny pulls an element of surprise by rapping a bit that referred to the ‘bar ice cream’, which in this case was a rap about an ice cream that rapped ‘bars’ (Gonzalez).

The viewers commented on the silliness of some of the content in Danny’s video, his rhetoric, as well as expressing joy over the short rap at the end, along with commenting on the strange animation, in general. One of the reasons this video is probably one of his most popular videos is because Danny was made aware of the silly children’s content by his own followers. In the description part of the video, he wrote, “...I’m doing some reacting to the *Billion Surprise Toys* channel because a ton of people tagged me in one of their videos” (Gonzalez).

This information is helpful in confirming that in order for constant engagement to be ensured on a content creator’s channel, making content that is timeless and gets viewers to return is essential. Along with that, listening to the requests of subscribers can be vital because the content creator is creating a ‘product’ that the ‘client’ asked for, bringing in even more views.

Research Question 2

This question was on what practices of connection are used when encountering negative feedback or harmful users. This question felt important because a big fragment of having a community online is exposure to users who turn out to be the opposite of community members and can be rather harmful and distasteful.

In this case, I remember that recently around the end of 2022, a YouTuber named SNEAKO, known for his gaming and reaction videos, had commented on Chad Chad’s content about anti-aging remedies from TikTok videos, claiming that her videos looked ‘desperate’ and

complaining about every comment that she made, including then making a disturbing sexual assault remark about Chad Chad (Bhattacharya). Chad Chad is an American YouTuber known for her commentary videos and comical reactions on YouTube and TikTok videos (Youtooz). The situation between SNEAKO and Chad Chad became a bit of a dramatic, yet serious, situation due to the fact that SNEAKO's comment was very harmful and a terrible influence on viewers. A fellow YouTuber and friend of Chad Chad named Nick (www.youtube.com/nickisnotgreen), also a reaction and comical YouTuber, took it upon himself to create a video called *YouTube Should Ban SNEAKO* (nickisnotgreen) in September of 2022. In this video of three minutes and thirty seconds, Nick quickly explains the issue of having a problematic and dangerous user such as SNEAKO making inappropriate and perverted comments on a platform such as YouTube. This video has over 400,000 views and more than 16,000 comments (nickisnotgreen). The vast majority of the comments were in full support of what Nick was saying, along with support and care expressed towards Chad Chad and her dire situation.

SNEAKO soon became banned from YouTube and is still banned today from creating any other personal channels (Bhattacharya). His problematic and misogynistic comments and video had gained a lot of traction over time, and the fight to take him off this platform could not have been possible without the support and help of other YouTubers and the online community. Chad Chad would not have been able to tackle this situation alone, and luckily, she did not have to. Other YouTubers also stood up against this terrible situation (Bhattacharya) and not very long after SNEAKO had posted that commentary video on Chad Chad, he was banned.

This situation and its outcome will not always be the case when dealing with negative online users, but this research data is helpful in determining that there is a possibility of being a

part of not just any online community, but a community that watches out for one another and cares about its creators and users alike.

Research Question 3

When researching the content of the YouTube subjects, I felt it was necessary to point out what were the common factors that they all shared when developing their communities. One of those factors is making revenue on different sites besides YouTube, such as making merchandise, or informally said as ‘merch’ for viewers to buy.

While many content creators are passionate about what they do, there’s no doubt that financial rewards are a crucial ingredient too. The YouTube platform helps individuals build very successful sales, and it’s not only through the direct advertising streams on their channels. Youtubers are essentially brands, which is why merchandise sales can become an equally important part of their commercial endeavors. (Sellmerch)

Danny Gonzalez has his own merch website and sells shirts, hats, keychains, and even water bottles with his name, initials (DG) and the name of his fanbase, *Greg* (Us). In Chad Chad’s community tab on her YouTube channel, she had a temporary collectible product (Chad Chad - Community). This 4.6-inch figure of Chad Chad, that released in September of 2022, sold out quickly since at the moment she does not have a merch store (Youtooz). It was a great opportunity for her fans to collect an exclusive item that is popular among other YouTubers, and even online gamers, as well (Youtooz).

Danny Gonzalez also had a *Patreon* page. *Patreon* is a site made for creators to get support in other ways within their online community. “Your creator page on patreon.com is where you invite fans to become patrons, and post updates and content just for them” (Patreon). Mina Le, on the other hand, does not have merch, but she did once have a *Patreon* page as well.

It seems that the links provided for her and Danny Gonzalez's *Patreons* were cancelled because their pages are no longer active. A creator who has *Patreon* can receive revenue from fans that give monthly financial support, in return for bonus content or first access to new created content. Before she closed her *Patreon*, Mina Le had several options available in which her followers and fans could subscribe to, including a \$5 a month, early access to her YouTube videos and BTS (behind the scenes) content. She had posted about it on her community tab in 2021 on her YouTube channel (Mina Le). *See Appendix for visual.*

This evidence shows that a common element among YouTubers is having other forms of financial revenue in order to keep their subscribers interested and excited about their work. Unfortunately, not all forms of extra income consistently work or guarantee another form of income, but the selling of actual products seems more practical. With a little more research on *Patreon*, it seems that it is a lot of extra work. "I'd post on Twitter and Instagram with teasers, free stories, anything to attract my followers to my Patreon page. I made friends on the site, I shared their projects on my own social media, and kept up with all my subscribers' projects. It was a lot of work for little pay" (Knepper). Evidently, it's a choice of the content creator to figure out what works best for them in terms of extra revenue, a common denominator among YouTube creators.

Research Question 4

For this last question, I wanted to know how these YouTuber's online communities benefited from being a part these online communities and/or fandoms. This question would serve the purpose of identifying the qualities of the YouTube channel that make the subscribers and followers want to identify with the particular online community that they engage with.

In Mina Le's case, I believe that her strategy of making educational and relatable content keeps her followers interested and ready for her next projects. Mina Le has mentioned several times throughout her different videos that she researches for her material in the *New York Public Library*, in which she has a membership, and also has access to online libraries such as *Academia.edu*, *JSTOR* and *ProQuest*, making sure her content is backed up by reliable research (Powless).

Besides being entertained and enjoying the dialogue in the community through comments of reactional content, like Danny Gonzalez and Chad Chad, Mina Le also offers dependable content in which her followers can learn from. All of her research is sourced throughout her videos, and she even mentions the authors by name when referring to her investigations, which are usually on fashion history and trends.

I think that in an age of misinformation (Abuhmaid) having content that is not only true, but coming from a place of authenticity is refreshing. Although Mina Le's content is not a serious issue, nor saves lives, I believe that it is helpful in creating fun space for learning about these cultural topics. In this part of the case study, I can conclude that Mina Le is one of the biggest inspirations behind the content this thesis project would like to emulate. Although it would not be a strictly fashion content channel, her use of reliable research as well as her authentic way of expressing these truths, is vital to what I think would be helpful in creating a community that is exposed to new cultural knowledge.

Exploratory Survey Data

The survey research method was chosen to determine some of the interests on cultural topics, how much time is spent on watching videos online, as well as the perception of feeling online community as an individual. The survey is made up of eight questions, was done casually,

conducted in early April of 2023 on Instagram via ‘Stories’ on the application. There were, on average, 30 participants aged 18-35, all of which are currently living in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico and chose to consent to participating in the survey. The respondents range from male, female, and nonbinary in gender. These respondents are included in the aimed audience for this project and this cross-sectional study serves as a tool to help increase the chances of obtaining the desired results of the project development.

Survey Results

The first question asked whether or not the respondent preferred spending their time on the internet watching videos or looking at pictures. The goal of this question was to figure out what the preference of the respondents was when spending time online. Of the 34 that voted in this question, 88% of the respondents watch videos online, while the rest prefer pictures and still images.

Next, if in the first question the respondents replied ‘yes’, the second question asked what application or website they preferred to use when watching video content. Of the 30 votes recorded, 60% prefer Instagram reels, 27% prefer YouTube, and 13% prefer using TikTok. There was one other option labeled as ‘Other’, but no respondents chose that option. Although there were only four options available for this question, two of the respondents replied to this question slide in separate direct messages stating that one used all of these applications equally, while the other respondent spent most of their video watching on the Netflix application (i.e. other). Therefore, the results for this question would slightly shift if taking these answers into consideration.

The third question then led the respondents to choose what type of video content they preferred. Of the 29 votes, 31% enjoy watching people’s day to day life (vlogging). Another 31%

prefer watching themes on music, movies, and other personal interests, while 21% prefer educational videos, and 17% prefer pop culture and/or news. The purpose of this question was to obtain the information on the personal interests of the respondents.

In the fourth question the respondents were asked if they would be interested in watching content that had to do with cultural affairs, which includes and is not limited to: online dating, pop culture current events, fashion, history of gender norms, etc. Of the 32 that voted, 91% said yes and 9% said no.

The next question was meant to ask the average amount of time spent online watching video content and was used to determine how these individuals spend their time, particularly online. Of the 32 votes conducted for this question, 28% spend less than an hour a day watching videos, 34% spend 1 to 2 hours a day, 19% spend 3-5 hours a day, and 19% feel they may spend too much time watching videos online per day.

Question 6 was aimed at addressing the topic of online dating applications that could possibly be interesting to the respondents of the survey as video content, if made available to them. Of the 28 that voted, 64% felt it would be interesting to watch, 29% said that they would possibly be interested, and 7% would not be interested.

The following question asked if the respondents would be interested in a YouTube channel that was meant to be educational and entertainingly funny. Of the 30 votes, 90% were interested, 10% were mildly interested (only if it had to do with something that interested them in specific), and the last option 'No' was left unchosen by the respondents.

The last question conducted in the survey asked if the participants felt they belonged to any online community, be it social, religious, political, or anything in particular. Only 23 votes

were collected for this question, 57% feeling they are a part of an online community, while 43% did not feel a part of any online community.

The purpose of this survey research method is to get some perspective into the habits of video watching online on a specific demographic and their interests when watching video content. Traditional television is slowly becoming a thing of the past, and with the new applications and formats available for watching video content, especially in the hands of most individuals via their smartphones, it is important to include this information in this project's research when going forward with developing video content that will attract viewers.

Internship in Community Development & Revitalization

During my internship, which took place from July to October of 2022, I participated in working with the *MAC en el Barrio* department at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (MAC) under the supervision of professor Windy M. Cosme Rosario and her team members, Sara M. Dorna Pesquera and Donald C. Escudero Rivera. According to their Facebook page, *MAC en el Barrio* is a department dedicated to community engagement “that serves and supports 30+ communities on a sustained basis since 2014, with a program of integration and social action inside and outside the walls, using arts and culture as tools to contribute to cultural equity and social and urban transformation” (2022). In a post from June in 2022, they continue on to say what the initiative of its department entails.

Using contemporary art as the main axis, the initiative seeks to change the perception of museums as alienated spaces, turning the MAC into an active agent of social change and a resource for the preservation of collective memories, guided towards the revitalization of urban spaces and the reaffirmation of community identities. (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico – Facebook 2022)

For personal reasons, I became quite excited to be a part of this internship because of my interest in the arts and museology. Some of the highlights of this internship involved my connections to the coordinators of this department, as well as the projects that they curated and conducted. I learned so much about community and creative planning, as well as what it took to develop a project and carry it out to its end.

Part of my experience involved working with the coordinator Sara Marina, who was leading out the artistic workshop for senior citizens at Miramar Housing in San Juan, Puerto Rico. We went every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon to Miramar Housing where the super-adults, as some of us would refer to them as, enjoyed a painting and movement workshop with two artists that specialized in dance/movement and painting. This was one of my favorite experiences in the internship due to the engagement in community and development of wonderful acquaintances.

I also enjoyed in assisting an art commission project in Loíza, also directed under coordinator Sara Marina, where I had the opportunity of meeting artist La Vaughn Belle from Saint Croix and watch her project develop with my own eyes with the help of locals of Loíza. With the support and help of the leaders in the non-profit organization COPI (Corporación Piñones se Integra) and talented photographers and videographers, La Vaughn's physical art piece and video presentation titled "Becoming Wind and Current" came to life. Seeing how several artists and cultural managers came and worked together on projects was very inspiring and a major learning moment in terms of networking, connection, and community.

I believe that my integration in a brick-and-mortar community work was vital to choosing my thesis project subject. I have always had an inkling for being a part of a community and once I found that in my locality, I was curious about how I could replicate that feeling of community

online. My investigation has benefited a lot from my internship because its grounding experience has warranted more questions of what possibilities are available in community development, especially in the digital and technological world. My involvement in meetings, cultural activities, artist commissions, community engagement, and community events has expanded my worldview of what it takes to make a community a breathing and living entity. I believe that the possibilities of creating community and managing it extend into the metaverse and digital world. As our communities continue to develop in real life, I believe that the communities in the metaverse are also correlating in depth and connection for many people around the world.

BUSINESS PLAN

The carrying out of this project commences with the goal of investing at least 2-4 hours a day doing research, creating video scripts and editing plans. The goal is to have developed two video segment mini-series, *Have You Heard the Word* and *Make it Make Sense*, by the end of 2023. As of now, in the month of May 2023, the *Meli Jo* channel already exists, with 358 subscribers (Meli Jo) and a majority audience base from the Philippines, due to the video uploaded in 2013 about Filipino snacks that has made it to a little over 53,000 views. The aspiration is that the current subscribers will stay subscribed if they are interested in the new content that will be uploaded, but there may be a loss of subscribers due to the content and demographic sought for the project plan. In order to keep the current subscribers, there may be possibilities of developing content that can specifically interest the Filipino community that is subscribed, in order to keep them engaged in the channel. The location in which the project develops will be located in the home of the project developer. The channel will therefore be in English, with frequent use of Spanish words and phrases, all in order to reach the demographics of Latinxs, Filipinos and English speakers.

The project started off self-financed, meaning all the financial plans were based off the user's personal budget. Most of the material resources were already purchased and available for use, and the only other materials needed were the editing software, lighting, and cords needed to make equipment compatible with one another. Editing and researching also takes place in the home of the content creator. If the project is to succeed at a rapid rate, adjustments can be made in order to accommodate the long-term goals discussed for this project.

Time will be invested in researching topics that are popular in culture, while also sought to be interesting enough to be made into video content for the demographics aimed to reach. While also being an educative and cultural source of information, the use of a personal style of expression is expected to be used for the content of the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel. Just as the *Mina Le* YouTube channel, it will be educative, relatable and entertaining content, while like the *Danny Gonzalez* and *Chad Chad* YouTube channels, it will be comedic, edited in a unique style, and formatted in an easy-to-watch presentation, with the hope of having a productive and lively comment section built on dialogue and open discussion for all viewers.

Twitter and Instagram social media pages will be made dedicated to the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel, in order market and promote the channel. Short snippets of video will be prepared and uploaded to these social media pages in order for social media users to have an idea about the content that the YouTube channel will have. There will also be questions and short surveys on these pages on what topics the viewers would be most excited and interested in watching.

In order to carry-out this project into becoming a business that makes revenue, it all depends on the development of the YouTube channel and whether the audience aimed at becomes excited about the content planned. According to the YouTube Partner Program, in order to be able to participate in making money with the features they offer to YouTube Partners, there

are two ways to become eligible. YouTube page needs to either 1) Get 1,000 subscribers with 4,000 valid public watch hours in the last 12 months, or 2) Get 1,000 subscribers with 10 million valid public Shorts (short video) views in the last 90 days (YouTube Partner Program Overview & Eligibility). Therefore, a possible option in the meantime would be to have a *Patreon* page if support is wanted from the viewers, but even then, it is not guaranteed income. The task then is to focus on creating permissible and exciting content to keep the viewers subscribed and getting new subscribers on board. For an example of how this business would run, refer to the *Business Model Canvas* sample located in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

The justification for creating and managing the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel is essentially to educate, entertain, create, and preserve a community online based on authenticity, intimacy, and the exploration of art and culture. It is an opportunity to bring together English speakers, Filipinos and Latinx people that want to know a little more on different cultural events, fashion, films, art, and much more, all while doing so respectfully and through the mind and eyes of a YouTuber wanting to share content.

Because the aimed audience for this project extends out to not only native English speakers, it is also a rite of passage to opening a new possibility of cultural connection. The Philippines was once a colony of Spain and shares Spanish words and derivatives in their official language, Tagalog, and other dialects of the country (Erazo). There is also similarities in the Latinx and Filipino community in their foods, sports, religion, family get-togethers and even names (Erazo).

In future content, as a cultural manager, my goal would be to unite all the communities that access the *Meli Jo* YouTube channel through language and shared cultural interests.

Through the English language, used as a bridge of connection from one world to another, the different communities, including the Filipino and Latinx communities, can dialogue and connect among one another and find community in ways they may have not thought possible.

The objectives of this thesis project are all in theory, due to the fact that YouTube channel popularity and growth is never guaranteed. The aspiration is that with the precise marketing and networking, as well as precise planning and seeking the interests of viewers, the content of this YouTube channel will attract a big enough crowd that will generate a community. The advantage of creating a unique channel based on originality and authenticity, is that there are always people in the metaverse seeking connection and a commodity that will make them feel a part of something greater. The *Meli Jo* channel will seek to bring people together for dialogue and entertainment, existing as a safe place where people can be their authentic selves and possibly learn something new from the channel and one another.

Once this channel begins its debut, the goal is for it to be open to all types of people from around the world that want to explore culture and the arts with integrity, heart, and an open mind. If it becomes a greater entity, it will be exciting to see its development and discourse as it continues to address the topics that interest people the most, in an educational and fun manner. The *Meli Jo* YouTube channel is meant to be a cultural community where there can be intimate encounters between the audience and the user, while also maintaining professional and healthy boundaries. With all the bewildering things that are happening in the world of culture and the arts, it will be an adventure to deep dive into research and create content for viewers to take in and appreciate.

APPENDIX

The following glossary describes the meaning of various words, phrases, and acronyms used throughout the thesis.

GLOSSARY TERMS

bars (musical context): rhyming lyrical sentences in hip hop and rap songs.

beauty guru: beauty teacher, make-up artist, any person that can teach about beauty.

behind the scenes (BTS): being or working out of public view or in secret.

brick-and-mortar: relating to or being a traditional business/organization serving customers/working in a building as contrasted to an online business.

collab: a collaboration of sorts.

commentator content: content of creators reacting and commenting to other content, whether films, music, current events, etc.

content creator: anyone who uploads one or more videos of any subject matter to YouTube, whether they earn revenue or not as a result.

content warning (CW): a warning put out in order to warn viewers of content that they may not want to read or engage in.

cringe/cringey: in modern context among online users, meaning embarrassing or distasteful.

cultural management: the process of cultivating and scaling work culture inside an organization.

dark humor: similar to ‘black humor’, a genre of humor that is characterized by its dark or morbid content.

demographic: the statistical characteristics of human populations (such as age or income) used especially to identify markets.

direct message (DM): instant message that can be directed at any user with social media, such as Instagram or Twitter.

fanbase: a group of fans for a particular person, object, thing, or place.

fandom: refers to ‘all the fans’.

influencer: a person who exerts influence, such as a person online that has many followers and influences others into trying/learning new things or buying new products.

Instagram: a photo, and now video, sharing service application online.

Instagram Reels: short, multi-clip videos that can be posted to a person’s Instagram profile.

Instagram Stories: a feed of photos (or videos) that disappear from one’s profile after 24 hours.

Like(s): a way of showing appreciation or approval by double tapping a phot or post of an online user, such as on Instagram.

LOL: online chat acronym meaning ‘laugh out loud’.

metaverse: a place parallel to the physical world, online, where one can spend their ‘digital life’.

millennial (generation): people born between the years 1981 to 1996.

online community manager: the person or team of people responsible for owning an online community.

online platform: a digital service that uses the Internet to facilitate interactions between two or more separate but interdependent users, such as YouTube.

professionally generated content (PGC): content created professionally via collaboration between the video hosting platforms and established media professionals or media groups.

smartphone: a cell phone that includes additional software functions (such as email or an Internet browser).

social dynamics: a branch of social physics that deals with the laws, forces, and phenomena of change in society.

social media: forms of electronic and digital communication networks, such as applications online and websites made for socializing.

social network/media platform: allow users to have conversations, share information and create web content.

subscriber: an individual user of an online platform that follows and supports a creator/channel.

TikTok: a popular social media app that allows users to create, watch, and share 15-second videos shot on mobile devices or webcams.

troll (online): a user that tends to hide behind a fake picture and/or profile, in order to make unsavory comments and remarks on others content.

user: Anyone who views video content on YouTube for any purpose, at least once a month.

user generated content (UGC): content simply created by people rather than brands or big companies.

video subtitles: captions; words that are a fragment of dialogue that appear on the screen of videos, films, and clips.

vlog/vlogger: a video blog made by a person who makes videos about day-to-day things.

virtual private network (VPN): a private computer network that functions over a public network.

YouTube: a website and application where users can watch and upload videos.

Youtuber: a person who creates and uploads videos on the YouTube online video sharing service.

Sample Images

Reference to previous use of *Patreon* by Mina Le (Mina Le's previous *Patreon* page) –

<https://www.youtube.com/@gremlita/community>



Mina Le 2 years ago

Hello angels! I've Officially launched my Patreon

<https://www.patreon.com/gremlita>

Please check it out if you're interested - I have five different tiers with different rewards! Even if you can't, please appreciate the little icons of cats wearing historical clothes that I had commissioned ...




Read more



Mina Le

is creating video essays on fashion history, costume design, and culture

Select a membership level

Daytime Emmy	Golden Globe	Primetime Emmy
		
\$2 PER MONTH	\$5 PER MONTH	\$10 PER MONTH
Join	Join	Join
<p>There are no "perks" for this tier! But you <i>do</i> get my priceless love and gratitude 🧡</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👉👉👉 	<p>+ Early access - You get to view new videos 24 hours before they're published to the public.</p> <p>+ BTS (Behind the scenes) content - I post vlogs, sneak peeks, and updates on video projects throughout the month. You get a closer look at my (very strenuous) research process!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👉👉👉 	<p>+ Voting Power - I host project polls every month where you get to decide on future video topics!</p> <p>+ Exclusive Bonus Content & Recommendations - You gain access to Show more</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👉👉👉

[See all 5 levels](#) ▾

Meli Jo YouTube Channel

The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for 'Meli Jo'. The channel has 358 subscribers and 1 video. The banner image is a vibrant collage with the text 'mELi jo' in the center. Below the banner, the channel name 'Meli Jo' and handle '@melijo' are displayed. A video thumbnail is shown with the title 'Melissa in the Philippines: Filipino Snack Time!' and 53K views.

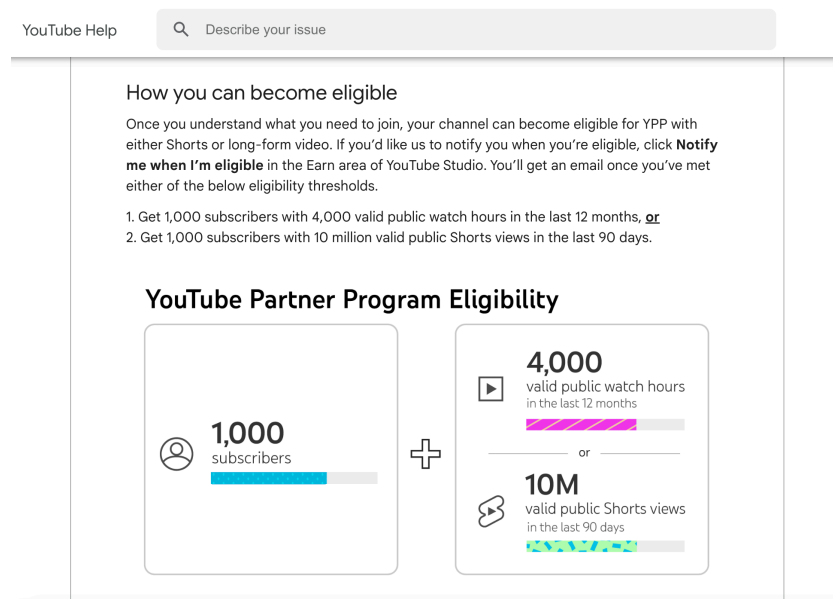
Meli Jo Twitter Social Media Account

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile page for 'meliJO' (@meLJOrivera). The profile has 19 following and 0 followers. The bio states: 'A cultural manager figuring out the world and sharing through exploration and research.' The 'Who to follow' section lists several accounts, including 'chadchad', 'nickisnotgreen', 'premium jarvis', and 'Entertainment Tonight'.

Meli Jo Instagram Account



Eligibility for joining the YouTube Partner Program (YouTube Partner Program Overview & Eligibility)



INSTAGRAM 'STORIES' EXPLORATORY SURVEY

This survey was conducted in early April of 2023 via the personal Instagram account of the student. It was said in the instructions that preceded the survey that participation was optional, with a total of up to 30 voters, on average, participating. The posting of the survey assured the privacy of the participants' identities as well. The first step in designing this survey was to bring

forth questions that would be helpful to the development of a YouTube channel, based on the participants personal interests, anonymously.

1. Do you watch a lot of video/clips online?

34 votes

- ❖ yes (30) 88%
- ❖ I'm more into photographs & pics (4) 12%

2. If you answered yes, what is your preference?

30 votes

- ❖ Instagram reels (18) 60%
- ❖ YouTube (8) 27%
- ❖ TikTok (4) 13%
- ❖ Other (0)

3. What sort of video/clips do you prefer to watch?

29 votes

- ❖ People's day to day life (9) 31%
- ❖ Having to do with music, films and other interests (9) 31%
- ❖ Educational things (6) 21%
- ❖ Pop culture and/or news (5) 17%

4. Would you be interested in watching something about cultural affairs, such as online dating, pop culture current events, fashion, history of gender norms, etc?

32 votes

- ❖ yes (29) 91%
- ❖ not really (3) 9%

5. How much time do you spend watching videos online in a day? (on average for you)

32 votes

- ❖ Less than an hour a day (9) 28%
- ❖ 1-2 hours a day (11) 34%
- ❖ 3-5 hours a day (6) 19%
- ❖ Maybe way too much (6) 19%

6. Would you watch a video about current online dating apps and how that has affected society culturally?

28 votes

- ❖ yes, sounds interesting (18) 64%
- ❖ maybe (8) 29%

❖ Not really interested (2) 7%

7. Would you be interested in watching a video(s) that I would make on YouTube that are meant to be educational and funny?

30 votes

❖ For sure! (27) 90%

❖ Maybe, if it's on something interesting (3) 10%

❖ No, sorry (0)

8. Do you feel you are part of an online community? (It could be any, from social, political, religious, something/someone you're subscribed to/follow, etc.)

25 votes

❖ Yes, I feel a part of an online community (14) 57%

❖ No, not really (11) 43%

Budget

Equipment	Budget	Item
Camera	\$0	Personal camera & phone; Canon G7 Mark iii + iPhone SE 2020
Microphone equipment	\$300	Wireless mic with cords and noise filter
Editing Software	\$300	Final Cut Pro program for Mac laptop
Lighting	\$0	Personal ring light from Amazon
Service	Budget	Item
Laptop	\$0	Personal laptop will be used; MacBook Air 2020
Design Software (marketing & website)	\$120 (one year subscription)	Canva Pro online subscription
Wifi	\$600 (\$50 x12)	Liberty/other Wi-Fi company
Rent, utilities, miscellaneous	\$180	
TOTAL:	\$1,500.00	

1. Justification of Budget:

A. Equipment Purchases – Total: \$600.00

One microphone and an editing software will be purchased. All other equipment is already purchased. The equipment will be based in the home space of the YouTube channel creator and will be used to develop and maintain online databases in addition to performing administrative work connected to the editing and design software, as well as the online channel itself.

B. Fixed Property/Service Costs –Total: \$900.00

Monthly rent and utilities cost is necessary for the site location to provide the services and activities. The cost is pro-rated at 8% for Rent and Utilities because the Department of Education Contract covers the other 50% of the cost.

- **Rent:** \$525.00 a month (pro-rated 8% of usage) Stipend \$15.00 x 12 months= \$180.00.
- **Utilities:** \$0.00 a month (included in rent)
- **Subscriptions:** Canva Pro \$10 a month x 12 months= \$120.00.
- **Internet:** WIFI (\$50 x 12 months) = \$600

C. Indirect Costs – N/A Total: \$0

D. Total: \$1,500.00

Business Model Canvas

Business Model Canvas		Designed for:	Designed by:	Date:	Version:
		Thesis Project	Melissa Rivera Sánchez	2023	1
Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Propositions	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments	
1) Google Adsense, 2) Content creators, 3) Media companies, 4) YouTube 5) Content reviewers	1) Platform management & maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube platform • server 2) Control & ensure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copyrights • Embedding of videos • User data • Community guidelines 3) Optimizing Ads and Reviewing content	1) Free video content 2) Content discovery (creating valuable and diverse content) 3) Education (cultural content, pop culture, comedy, real-life issues/concepts) 4) Communication, networking, & sharing 5) Live streaming 6) Product always available (24/7)	1) General audience relationships via social media 2) Feed, reviews, comments, and community	1) Mass market users 2) Advertisers 3) Creators	
Key Resources		Channels			
1) Platform 2) Algorithms & data 3) Patents		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original YT Webpage • YouTube application • Smart TVs • Links on Social network • Instagram and Twitter accounts integrate YT channel • Possibly Twitch (more complex site) 			
Cost Structure		Revenue Streams			
1) Platform upkeep (maintenance) 2) Development costs 3) Equipment (camera, sound, lighting, editing software, etc.) 4) Music licensing 5) Marketing (via social media) 6) Property rights 7) Cloud/server architecture 8) Taxes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future possibilities: employees (editor, assistant, etc.) 		1) Paid ads 2) Video content viewership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube premium (channel memberships) • Free + Ads 3) Live video streaming (views+ gifts)			

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