
V-Tuber Online Communities

An exploration of the requirements needed to build an online
community centered around V-Tuber model creation

Master Thesis

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Abstract:

This master's thesis investigates the different requirements for building an online community, centered around V-Tuber model creation, using social media platforms. Throughout the research of this thesis, it was discovered that V-Tubers and their audience can be defined as a diffused audience, which can be described through the spectacle and performance paradigm. Furthermore, two social media platforms, YouTube and Discord, were analysed through the honeycomb model of social media in order to determine how well each platform facilitates the creation of an online community about V-Tuber model creation. This thesis concludes that Discord is a preferable platform for the purpose of building an online community, focused on V-Tuber model creation, and proposes a concept for how one can build this community through Discord.

The content of this report is freely available, but publication (with reference) may only be pursued due to agreement with the author.

Preface

This student project is developed by Alexander Alif Kracht and Jesper Daniel Petersen, tenth semester Interactive Digital Media students at Aalborg University, under the supervision of Thessa Jensen.

We would like to thank our supervisor for guiding our project and the many V-Tubers, V-Tuber fans, and model creators who have been so kind as to share their experiences of V-Tubing and the V-Tuber culture during our master's education. Furthermore, the contents of this report may be freely used (with reference) for academic purposes, such as teaching and further research.

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Extended Abstract

This master's thesis investigates the different requirements for building an online community, centered around V-Tuber model creation, using social media platforms. It conducts this investigation by first researching into what exactly online communities are, and determining that one should attempt to clearly communicate the community's goal, member roles, core activities, and rules, while also providing its members with a space to socialise. It then proceeds to investigate what motivates V-Tubers and model creators to join online communities, determining that an online community should motivate model creators to improve their craft, allow them to showcase their work, and offer their skills to others, in addition to also allowing V-Tubers to share their enthusiasm for the field, learn about V-Tubing culture, the model creation process, and its different approaches, while also facilitating the contact between both parties and providing them with a sense of belonging. It then investigates different ways of supporting online communities, determining that a community should enable the use of socialisation tactics, and the formation of a sense of group identity, while also allowing for good usability and sociability. Throughout the research of this thesis, it was discovered that V-Tubers and their audience can be defined as a diffused audience, which can be described through the spectacle and performance paradigm. This was followed by an investigation into social media platforms, through the scope of the honeycomb model. First the honeycomb model was explored and updated to a modern context, by reevaluating elements of the model and showcasing modern examples within the framework of the honeycomb model. Afterwards, two of the most used social media platforms by V-Tubers and model artist were chosen, those being YouTube and Discord. These were then analysed through the honeycomb model of social media in order to determine how well each platform facilitates the creation of an online community about V-Tuber model creation. The analysis determined Discord as the preferred platform for the purpose of building an online community, focused on V-Tuber model creation, and proposes a concept for how one can build this community through Discord. The concept was created by utilising a set of requirements established throughout this report and showcasing how well we fulfilled, or aimed to fulfill the different requirements established throughout the report. The thesis concludes by looking into how this concept can be further expanded by utilising other social media platforms in order to garner attention for our community.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The world of online entertainment is one ravaged by constant change, which manages to cater to both viewers' demand for new entertainment, and creators' wishes to express themselves in unique ways. And while some of the trends created by these changes reveal themselves to be mere fads, that quickly fade into irrelevancy, others are able to firmly establish themselves within the world of online entertainment and stay relevant for years upon years.

One such phenomenon is V-Tubing, the act of using a virtual avatar instead of a camera, and a character instead of your real identity, when creating online entertainment content, see figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1: The V-Tuber Juniper Actias showing off her V-Tuber model to her viewers. By using a camera in connection with special software, the model is able to mimic movements of the body, mouth, and eyes (Actias, 2022).

While years ago this phenomenon was originally pioneered by a select few people, it has since then firmly established itself as a staple of online video sharing and live-streaming, with thousands if not tens of thousands of so called Virtual YouTubers (V-Tubers) producing content today (User Local, 2023). However, the process of becoming a V-Tuber has always been riddled with different complications and thus has a higher barrier of entry compared to more traditional forms of online video content, like using a face-cam, which is primarily caused by the need for someone to create the virtual avatar used for V-Tubing (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b).

Throughout our previous research, we have discovered that both these model creators, as well as V-Tubers, face similar struggles in this regard, primarily in that new and upcoming V-Tubers have difficulties finding available model creators, which they can afford, and smaller model creators have difficulties finding V-Tubers in need of their services (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, 2022b). With these struggles being so similar to each other, we hypothesise that by facilitating the connection between V-Tubers and model creators, this issue can be solved, and thus the barrier of entry for both V-Tubers and model creators can be lowered. While this facilitation can be conducted through several different ways, we speculate that the creation of an online community focused on the creation of V-Tuber models could serve an effective way of doing so, due to the fact that V-Tubing is an almost exclusively online phenomenon, with most V-Tubers engaging in livestreaming of some kind, and the fact that model creators are primarily advertising their services on online

social media platforms and communities (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b). Since social media platforms are often used by V-Tubers, and can be used as a means of facilitating online communities, it would be very relevant to investigate how social media platforms can be used for the purpose of creating an online community focused on the creation of V-Tuber models. With all of this in mind, we pose the following Problem Formulation:

What factors motivate V-Tubers and model creators to join and connect with online communities, and how can this knowledge assist in building a successful community focused on V-Tuber model creation?

As a means of answering this problem formulation, this report will investigate what online communities are, what motivates V-Tubers and model creators to join them, how these online communities can be supported, and how social media platforms hosting online communities can be analysed. Afterwards, this report will investigate and analyse two different social media platforms in order to find out how these can support building an online community focused on V-Tuber model creation.

Chapter 2

Understanding Online Communities

This chapter intends to explore what exactly an online community is, so as to gain a better understanding of the subject area and increase the odds of creating a successful online community based around the creation of V-Tuber models. To start with, we will go over some of the key aspects of communities in general and investigate how these can be applied to online communities. Lastly, this chapter will go over some of the aspects that are unique to online communities, specifically. We will then conclude with a new understanding of online communities, and a new research question to further guide the next part of the report.

2.1 Online Communities

Online communities can both mean and be many different things, and have a lot of different perspectives, depending on the scientific background of the researcher and the paradigm they work within (Preece & Malony-krichmar, 2003). This also means that getting to a unilateral agreed definition of Online communities can be difficult, since different disciplines may weigh different element of online communities higher. That doesn't mean, however, there are not elements or characteristics within communities which are often, if not always present. In 1996, a multidiscipline group of academics met at workshop to discuss and define core characteristics of online communities (Preece & Malony-krichmar, 2003; Whittaker et al., 1997). These attributes are:

- A shared goal, interest, need, or activity, which serves as the reason for a member to be a part of the community
- Shared interactions between the members of the community, which are repeated
- A shared set of resources for the community, as well as rules on how to use said resources
- A shared sense of reciprocity between members of the community

- A shared context for the community, which can include aspects such as language, protocols, and or social conventions

As an example, a community built around the idea of watching and discussing a specific V-Tuber group, such as the community Discord server Holopro EN Fan server, a server for the corporation hololive english division (COVER Corp, 2023; GoldElysium et al., 2023; @hololive_En, 2021), would have watching and discussing said V-Tubers as it's shared goal, as this would be the main motivation that every single action of the community would most likely tie back to. The shared interactions between the members could take the form of watching and discussing the V-Tubers' streams, while the shared resources could potentially be both the time people dedicate to the community, and the money people donate to support the V-Tubers. A real world example of the latter would be the time a V-Tuber fan community came together to rent out a billboard on Time Square in New York City, to wish the V-Tuber Ninomae Ina'nis a happy birthday, see figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1: After being rented out by members of a V-Tuber fan community, this billboard in Time Square displayed fan art of the V-Tuber Ninomae Ina'nis created by members of the community for almost a full minute (EtchySketchy, 2021).

The shared sense of reciprocity among community members could come from more indirect things, such as actively part taking in the discussion over a specific V-Tuber and acknowledging the existence of the other community members, or more involved things, such as producing fan art or memes for the community. Lastly, the shared context for this example could take the form of certain expressions and terms used within the community,

such as using nicknames to refer to the fans of a specific V-Tuber, as well as a code of conduct for how to behave during the streams of the V-Tubers the community supports. A real world example of the nicknames used by V-Tubers and their fans could be how the fan base of the aquatic themed V-Tuber Gawr Gura is officially called "The Chumbuds", while those fans that support her financially are referred to as "Shrimps" (Gawr, 2020; Oniikami, 2020).

In addition to these primary attributes of communities, Whittaker et al. (1997) created a list of secondary attributes for communities. These secondary attributes are:

- Different roles and reputation
- An overall awareness of the boundaries of membership and group identity
- A set of criteria for initiation
- A shared history, as well as a long duration of the community
- Some form of rituals and events
- Voluntary membership
- A shared physical environment

If we once again apply these secondary attributes to the context of a community focused around V-Tubers, the different roles and reputation could take on the form of people becoming moderators of the community, as well as certain fans becoming really well known within their given community. A real world example of the latter would be how the artist Walfie became so well known for their small gif animations and art style, that some of the V-Tubers they drew art of had models made to resemble their art style, see figure 2.2.



Figure 2.2: Art by the fan artist Walfie (left) (@walfieeee, 2023) being adapted into the 3D avatars of Hololive's Myth V-Tuber group (right) (Watson, 2021).

An example of the boundaries and group identity provided by the group identity of the community, could be as simple as community members referring to themselves as a member of said community, like how the fans of the grim reaper themed V-Tuber Mori Calliope refer to themselves as "Dead Beats", despite the fact that the term originally carries negative connotations (Mori, 2020). It could however also be how certain members of the fan base pay a subscription fee each month in order to become a channel member of the V-Tuber they watch, which gives them both access to certain features and further indicates them being part of a specific group (YouTube, 2023). An example of this can be seen in figure 2.3.

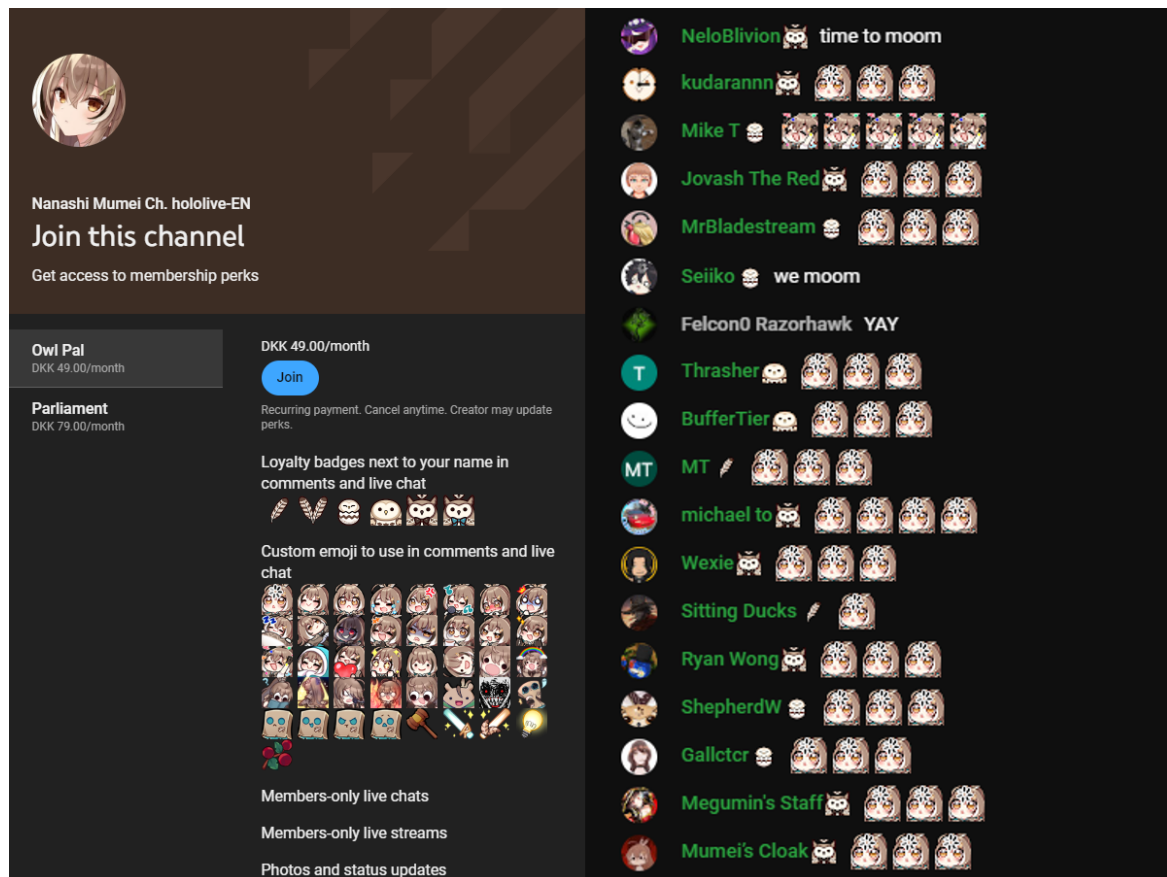


Figure 2.3: An example of the benefits provided by becoming a channel member of the V-Tuber Nanashi Mumei (left) (Nanashi, 2023b). When commenting on a livestream or video by the creator one has purchased a membership for, a badge will appear next to the commenter's name depending on the tier of their purchase (right) (Nanashi, 2023a).

On another note, paying this subscription fee could also be seen as fulfilling the initiation criteria for becoming a part of this specific community. As for the shared history of a community, an example of this could be how the fan driven Virtual YouTuber Wiki,

chronicles the entire history of a given V-Tuber, as well as any major events that occurred throughout this time frame (Virtual YouTuber Wiki, 2023). What exactly constitutes as a long duration for a community is rather difficult to say, however, as there seems to be no universal standard or average length for the duration of a community. An example of rituals and events that a given community might part take in could be a so called subathon, in which a V-Tuber or other streamer will continue to stream uninterrupted, so long as people keep donating to the stream (Robinson, 2023). Due to the nature of this event, it often becomes an occasion for the community of a given streamer to come together, in an attempt to ensure the stream goes on for as long as possible, such as when the community of the V-Tuber Ironmouse kept her subathon going for 31 days (u/we_live_ina_society, 2022). The fact that V-Tuber communities don't force people to join them also makes these communities a good example of voluntary membership, in that there are rarely if ever any forms of repercussion in place, should a community member wish to leave the community.

Lastly, while the secondary aspect of a shared physical space obviously does not apply to online communities, it could be argued that the online and virtual spaces inhabited by online communities serve as a stand in for the otherwise missing shared physical space. In that case, this could possibly apply to both direct imitations of physical space, such as virtual worlds, and more abstract spaces, such as chat rooms and web pages, although the synchronous and asynchronous nature of the respective spaces should be taken into account (Preece & Malony-krichmar, 2003).

Both the core and secondary attributes listed by Whittaker et al. (1997) also share some similarities with the key components of good sociability for online communities, suggested by Preece (2001). While these components do not try to define what makes a community, they none the less describe key components to keep in mind when investigating online communities. These key components are as follows:

- Purpose: Why are people part of the community?
- People: Who is a part of the community and which roles do they take within it?
- Policies: How are things done within the community, in terms of rituals, rules, history, etc.?

When comparing the two sets of attributes by Whittaker et al. (1997) and Preece (2001), both seem to agree on the notion that understanding the reasons for people joining a given community seem to be a crucial factor for both understanding the given community and ensuring that it thrives. Similarly, the idea of a set of practices being central to the community can also be found within both attribute sets. Where these two sets of attributes differ is in how they think about the actual members of the community in question. While Whittaker et al. (1997) focuses on the community as a collective entity, and places different roles and reputation to be a secondary attribute, Preece (2001) emphasises the importance of understanding who joins a community, and which roles they take, for enabling sociability within said community. Despite the fact that a community does not necessarily require

people to take on specific roles for it to function, the fact that the wide majority of online communities will inherently have some form of roles in place, through positions such as moderators, makes this none the less an area worth investigating.

One interesting aspect that has been observed in regards to online communities is the formation and existence of power law distributions, that is to say that there are a select few community members which experience a significantly higher level of popularity and number of relationships, compared to everyone else in the community (Johnson et al., 2014). While this phenomenon has previously been explained through Barabási and Albert (1999) model of preferential attachment, suggesting that newer members try to connect to those with more connections, Johnson et al. (2014) propose that this power law distribution isn't the result of merely a single mechanism like preferential attachment. Rather it is suggested that a mixture of mechanisms, such as preferential attachment, direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, and least effort, serve as better representations of the formation of power law distributions within online communities. This distribution is a relevant factor to keep in mind, as it could be argued that such a concentration of popularity on a few individuals is what has lead to the formation of some of the current issues faced by the V-Tuber creation community at large. Among others, these issues include that a few select model creators are getting swarmed with commissions for V-Tuber models, while smaller artists rarely get any attention at all.

2.1.1 Online Communities, Third Places, and Fourth Places

Online communities can also be further investigated through the lens of both *Third Places* and *Fourth Places* (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982; Simões Aelbrecht, 2016). Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) describe a *Third Place* as a location independent of an individual's home, the *First Place*, or workplace, the *Second Place*. As such, *Third Places* don't carry any of the preconceptions of a person's home or workplace, and thus can serve as places where people can freely socialise and interact with one another. *Fourth Places* on the other hand are described by Simões Aelbrecht (2016) as being a lot more public than *Third Places*, while also facilitating the connection between complete strangers. Simões Aelbrecht (2016) further states that "They are characterised by 'in-betweenness' in terms of spaces, activities, time and management, [...]" (Simões Aelbrecht, 2016, p. 1). While most online platforms, seem to fit this description of *Fourth Places*, due to both the interactions between strangers and most websites and forums being publicly accessible, sometimes even without creating an account, the fact that *Fourth Places* don't have a similar focus on conversation as *Third Places* indicates a closer connection to the latter, rather than the former. Additionally, despite most online communities being publicly accessible, it could be argued that the community being confined to a specific space in the form of a website, a chatroom, an application, or something similar, helps to establish a similar sense of its own semi-private space, much akin to the pubs mentioned by Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) when describing *Third Places*. It can therefore be speculated that the sense of wholeness provided by an

online community as a *Third Place* could further help to understand how said online communities can overcome the boundaries by not having a more traditional shared physical space, as suggested by Whittaker et al. (1997).

2.2 Summary on Understanding Online Communities

Based on our initial research, we can conclude that online communities, much like communities in general, are primarily formed around an overarching goal, activity or area of interest. As such, it becomes clear that we need to be able to clearly communicate what our community is about, in order to attract people relevant to it. Furthermore, these communities have some form of activities, rituals, and events through which they interact with one another while following a set of norms established by the community. The members of these communities will often times, but not always, take on some form of roles within the community, such as moderators to regulate the behavior within the community and ensure that the rules and norms of it are being upheld. Our community should in turn feature a clear set of rules, and a set of core activities, while we also need to properly motivate community members to undertake certain roles, such as moderators. While not always required, there is also a good chance that members of the community will form some form of group identity around it, which is something we should encourage through our own community. It has also been observed that communities will often experience some form of power law distribution, with certain community members having significantly higher levels of popularity than others, something we also need to be aware of and ready to potentially tackle. While traditional physical space does not seem matter much for online communities, the community does need some form of space for interaction to take place, whether that be a chat room, a virtual world, or something similar that can fulfill this role. When creating our online community we need to make sure that we fulfill this need of a space for interaction between the community members.

As such we deem based on this research that a social media platform needs to fulfill the following criteria, in order for us to use it for building our online community focused on the creation of V-Tuber models:

- It must clearly indicate what the community's overarching goal is, in accordance with section 2.1
- It must clearly show the roles of different members of the community, in accordance with section 2.1
- It must clearly communicate the community's core activities, in accordance with section 2.1
- It must clearly communicate the rules of the community, in accordance with section 2.1

- It must provide the community with a space to interact and socialise with each other, in accordance with section 2.1.1

Throughout this investigation of what an online community is, it has become increasingly apparent that the core goal of a community is one of its most important aspects, as this is the key reason why a person might join said community. To further investigate this, we ask the following question: Why do new and upcoming V-Tubers, as well as V-Tuber model creators, join online communities centered around V-Tuber model creation?

Chapter 3

Motivations For Joining Communities

This chapter will start with an investigation of data gathered by (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, 2022b), in order to uncover the motivations for New and Upcoming V-Tubers, as well as V-Tuber model creators, to join online communities. Furthermore, we will investigate how these creatives transition from audience to creator, and how they form their roles within these V-Tuber communities as their skills within their field increases. We will also briefly describe how online communities additionally can be viewed through the lens of cultural citizenship. Finally, we end this chapter by summarising a set of criteria that should be met in order to support these creatives motivation to join communities centered around avatar creation.

3.1 Understanding Motivations for Joining Communities

In order to understand why V-Tubers and model creators would join online communities focused on avatar creation, one should first gain insight into how these creatives discovered V-Tubing, why they chose to engage with the creation of virtual avatars, and what content an online community, focused on avatar creation, should support in order to meet their needs.

Kracht and Petersen (2022b) has in their report, *VTRI - An exploration of how to create value for upcoming V-Tubers, artists, and riggers* created a concept for what an online service for avatar creation could look like. To create their concept, Kracht and Petersen (2022b) interviewed three riggers, artist, and modelers, which will be referred to as model creators, and five new and upcoming V-Tubers, in order to understand the struggles that may occur during the avatar creation process. While these insights were originally meant to understand where a service for avatar creation could create value for these model creators; they may also give insights into ideas for what content an online community focused around avatar creation should support for its members. This section aims to investigate this based on the data from the interviews of Kracht and Petersen (2022b), while highlighting potential areas, which are still left uncovered by Kracht and Petersen (2022b). To support

the investigation, interview data by Kracht and Petersen (2022a) will be used to further support the findings for V-Tubers.

3.1.1 Perspectives from Interviews with New and Upcoming V-Tubers

Based on the interviews conducted by Kracht and Petersen (2022b), a set of primary factors related to the motivations of V-Tubers joining online communities focused on avatar creation can be derived.

When Kracht and Petersen (2022b) asked V-Tubers about their motivation for getting into V-Tubing, most of the interviewees were introduced to V-Tubing through the social media site YouTube. On YouTube, fans can create clips of funny or interesting moments during a V-Tuber's livestream, and then share them with fans and people online, as expressed by P8 "(...) as I was getting recommended clips from. Uh content creators from Nijisanji and .. uh. it started to pique my interest a little bit and then I started clicking on and then YouTube doing their own thing." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p. 32) One example of such a channel is Sashimi Clips (2020), which primarily focuses on clips from the company hololive's English V-Tuber division, called hololive EN (Hololive, 2023), see figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1: Thumbnail from a Sashimi Clips (2020) video (Sashimi Clips, 2023b). The thumbnail shows the V-Tubers appearing in the video, in a dramatisation of the content within the clip.

This is further supported by another investigation done by Kracht and Petersen (2022a). In this report, Kracht and Petersen (2022a) investigated the phenomenon of V-Tubing, in particular, the concept of independent V-Tubers and their practices. As part of this report, Kracht and Petersen (2022a) interviewed four independent V-Tubers to gain insights about their career as a V-Tuber. Through this investigation, Kracht and Petersen (2022a) uncovered a set of motivations which inspired independent V-Tubers to become V-Tubers. These included being inspired by watching other V-Tubers perform, and interacting with other V-Tubers through social media:

"I like met a couple of V-Tubers who used VR Chat to stream and I'm like oh is cool. So I tried it myself" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, p.1, Appendix F.4)

"it was mainly like, oh, look at this like fun thing that a lot of people are doing, like, like let's go ahead and try it out kind of thing. and just like out of luck and coincidence and like hard work it ended up being a career path." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, p. 13, Appendix F.1)

"U:::h, streaming as a V-Tuber was because I saw someone else do it and I thought it was better than not having the camera at all, uhm." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, p. 12, Appendix F.3)

While specific social media platforms are not mentioned, (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a) did specify that V-Tubers are part of *Streamer Culture*, which includes content creators on livestreaming websites such as YouTube and Twitch. Likewise, Kracht and Petersen (2022a) discovered that some Independent V-Tubers use video services, like YouTube, to upload clips and compilations of their content akin to what some fans do.

Overall, these interviews indicate that V-Tubers first engage with V-Tubing through either clips of, or watching, V-Tubers on social media websites such as YouTube and Twitch. This means that these new and upcoming V-Tubers may start out initially as audience members of other V-Tubers, before transitioning into becoming V-Tubers themselves.

Another motivation (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b) found was the motivation for New and Upcoming V-Tubers to get their model. According to Kracht and Petersen (2022b), V-Tubers are motivated by the different possibilities that having a virtual avatar and using it online can provide, such as a sense of pseudoanonymity, a virtual representation of oneself, a unique way you can express yourself, the technical possibilities with using a virtual avatar for content creation, and unique types of content you can create (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, pp. 32-34). Some of the same findings were found in relation to Independent V-Tubers (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, pp. 22-29).

Like with most people joining online communities, there is not a singular reason for new and upcoming V-Tubers to join communities centered around avatar creation. However, Kracht and Petersen (2022b) have uncovered a set of objectives, which are important for V-Tubers, during the avatar creation process. When new and upcoming V-Tubers are looking to create their their model, according to Kracht and Petersen (2022b), there are three different ways they primarily go about this (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, pp. 37-41):

- The V-Tuber choose to make the model themselves.

- The V-Tuber choose to hire model creator(s) to make or partially make the model.
- The V-Tuber buys a Premade model from a model creator.

The approach chosen seems to be indicated by the assumed risk and challenges, as well as the assumed advantages of each different approach (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, pp. 35-41).

V-Tubers who make their own model are driven by the ability to have full control over how their model will look, as well as having full rights over their intellectual property (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, pp. 37-38). According to Kracht and Petersen (2022b) they are also driven by the desire to learn a set of skills required to model creation. This does not mean that they want to master the whole process, but rather that they would like to focus on specific areas of the process.

Some V-Tubers choose to work together with model creators in order to create their virtual avatar Kracht and Petersen (2022b). This process is a multi-stage iterative process, where there is a constant back and forth design process between the V-Tuber and the model creator. The process is navigated by the concept of the V-Tuber avatar, which is often determined at the start of the process, and then iterated upon as the process continues. However, some of the challenges to this approach involve finding model creators who are experienced enough with this approach. Likewise, a model creation process can fall apart if the starting concept is not defined enough to create a model from.

Finally, one V-Tuber interviewed by Kracht and Petersen (2022b) mentioned having purchased a premade model. This V-Tuber mentioned how fairly low the price was and how that was a big reason for them to go with a premade model. However, such a model is hard to to change or readjust, meaning that if it does not fit your body type or facial features, it can be difficult to get it fixed.

The existence of these different approaches with their unique challenges and advantages, suggest that the motivation for joining a community focusing on avatar creation may be different depending on the chosen approach, and as such, an online community focusing on model creation should find a way to incentive this for these primary approaches to model creation.

Some V-Tubers may also ask their own network or connections for help with the model creation process, before looking into communities based on model creation (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, 2022b). This network may include friends and fans of the V-Tuber. For instance, one V-Tuber described how they went on to commission a fan to work on their model, since the fan had already created a fan model of their avatar before:

"And from there I searched for an artist and I had an artist that was already in my community and he was making a fan art model of my avatar. And I reached out to him and offered to pay him for completing it." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p.38)

As such, this suggests that if a V-Tuber has people within their network with the required skills for model creation, there seems to be little to no reason for them to join communities centered around model creation. However, some of the reasons a V-Tuber

might still choose to join a community could be as a way of interacting with both fans and other V-Tubers, two groups of people which might be present within these kinds of online communities. As some of the participants in the study by Kracht and Petersen (2022a) put it:

"Which for me, I try to stay active on Twitter as much as possible, when I'm not streaming so that there's some sort of interaction" (P3), "Some V-Tubers use those platforms ((Discord & Twitter)) to interact with more V-Tubers" (P1) (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, pp.27-28).

Another reason a V-Tuber might still join a community, is the potential for finding additional work, should they themselves possess skills required to create a V-Tuber model. In that case, their role would switch from being the one in need of a model, to one who can offer services to create a model for other V-Tubers. As such, these V-Tubers' motivation for joining communities may have more in common with those of model creators.

Overall, based on these interviews into V-Tubers, we conclude that V-Tubers are motivated to start V-Tubing, by watching and consuming content related to other V-Tubers as audience members. During their times watching V-Tubers, they, at some point, transition from watching and consuming other V-Tuber's performances, to wanting to perform themselves. As part of this transition into V-Tuber performers, they need to get their own virtual model, in order to perform. Here, they can go one of three ways depending on their network, skill set, and desire to participate in the creation of the virtual avatar.

Therefore, the authors of this report suggest, that during this transitional period where the person goes from merely an audience member, to desiring to perform is the ideal place for them to join a community focused on avatar creation. However, to understand how the online community should support this transition, a deeper understanding between the audience, the performer, the performance and the desire to go from merely watching to performing must be investigated further. This report will look more into this in Section 3.1.

3.1.2 Perspectives from Interviews with Model Creators

According to the interview data by Kracht and Petersen (2022b), when it comes to model creators, there seem to be different motivations, discovery and requirements during the creation process of V-Tuber model.

First, when it comes to the motivation for creating V-Tuber models, model creators are motivated by the ability to express themselves creatively, as well giving life to a concept (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, pp. 21-28). Another important element is the desire to create value for people who want to become V-Tubers, as expressed by p2: "Generally it my experience is with Commission work has been relatively positive. I-I do enjoy how like excited some of them get. Over like seeing, um, the work in progress and how happy they are when I send them the finished product. (P2)" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p. 22).

The way that model creators are introduced to the technology may be different than

how it is for new and upcoming V-Tubers. When looking at the interviews conducted by Kracht and Petersen (2022b), while one participant did mention discovering the technologies through V-Tubers, the other participants mentioned discovering the technology behind model creation through video game development.

"Uhm pretty straight forward, honestly. I learned about what V tubing was and what V tubers did, and because I had already been streaming at one point before, I thought it would be really interesting because I'm not confident in showing my face, but I do like appearing as Other characters, so to speak, and in quotations." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, Appendix O.1.2, p. 1)

"I started playing a japanese game some years back called B-Project, I also started watching the VTuber Ai-chan around the same time (she has just started the year before or like 10 months before), I felt like a fusion would be the coolest and investigating I found Brian Tsui's channel and thought it looked fun. A bit after that I paid for the whole program and started commissioning other spanish artists to make me models and not too long after that I joined the server and started taking commissions!" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, Appendix O.1.3, p. 1)

"[Translated from Danish] Because it actually starts with me working on game and game engine development, and I was working on making a lesbian fox girl mahjong visual novel-fusion game, and then I wanted to make a animation system for it. And then I looked at Live2D." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, Appendix O.1.1, p. 1)

This could indicate that model creators may not necessarily discover model creation through V-Tubers, but through projects that utilise similar technology for different purposes. This also co-insides with a model creator's desire to "express themselves creatively, either by providing motion and life to an idea or concept or by working with a particular art style or artistic expression that they enjoy." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p. 21).

Based on the interviews conducted by Kracht and Petersen (2022b), it is difficult to suggest how this transition from knowing about the technology behind V-Tubing, to them starting to utilising it to express yourself as model creators functions. Likewise, it is also difficult to define where the transition goes from doing model creation as a hobby to a variable business, leading some model creators to have a rough time defining their place within the model creation market (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, pp. 22-26).

Despite this issue, model creators are well versed in using online communities and social media to find work and collaboration partners (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b). One thing model creators might do is recommend people from their network when someone is looking for a specific task to be done. This can take the form of mentioning them by name, when someone requires a person with a specific skill set, or a rigger offering a discount when working on a model from a specific artist they know. As some of the participants in the study by Kracht and Petersen (2022b) state:

"And in one instance it was someone who on Reddit had asked for a bunch of different like things for her own stream. At which point I I advertise myself, I advertised a friend of mine who does like really nice animations." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, p. 20) Appendix

O.1.2

"My base price doesn't get any higher unless the client asks for more things than what are included but my base price does get lower if you either come recommended by one of the artists I officially work with after getting their commission or if its a very very simple model! I do it this way to encourage people to get the artists I work with and that way they get the commission easier, they don't put any discounts in for working with me so that way clients feel like they are getting a discount in both ways but the only one discounting is me" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, p.5) Appendix O.1.3

In a very similar manner, model creators may use social media to advertise themselves, and their skill set, to V-Tubers and others interested in their services. However, this approach can sometimes be riddled with difficulties. As one of the participants from the study by Kracht and Petersen (2022b) explains:

"I have advertised on social media before. But I'm I'm not entirely sure I'm the best at promoting myself which. You know, sucks, but it happens. (P2)" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p.22)

When using social media to advertise, a common approach seems to be showcasing previous works, though this can also sometimes be met with difficulties.

"it is hard to showcase my full bodies because I need the images to be big enough to be to like. Be readable and have good quality. But I I draw on very large canvases so there's only so much of a character that I can show. Before it either gets like too crowded or you just straight up can't see them." (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p.23)

Model creators also use social media platforms to learn new skills which can be used as part of their model creation workflow. In the interviews by Kracht and Petersen (2022b), two main places for getting inspiration were mentioned, YouTube and Discord:

"I found Brian Tsui's [Youtube] channel and thought it looked fun. A bit after that I paid for the whole program and started commissioning other Spanish artists to make me models and not too long after that I joined the server and started taking commissions!" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, Appendix O.1.3, p.1)

YouTube was mainly used to seek out tutorials for how to use different tools to assist in model creation such as the model creation tool Vroid or the rigging program Live2D (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b). Media sites such as Discord, Twitter and Fiver were used to further build the model creators network, hereby finding potential costumers:

"Most of my clients come through Fiverr, although when I read an interesting concept in the [Discord] server I go ahead and message the client over there first! If I see anyone looking for cheap commissions I message them through other SNS as well and other times I get referrals through Twitter!" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, Appendix O.1.3 p.8)

Some model creators also choose to work together to grant packet solutions, and advertise for each other, hereby providing new customer opportunities for everyone in the partnership:

"I have a base price which I only do discounts to! My base price doesn't get any higher unless the client asks for more things than what are included but my base price does get

lower if you either come recommended by one of the artists I officially work with after getting their commission or if its a very very simple model! I do it this way to encourage people to get the artists I work with and that way they get the commission easier, they don't put any discounts in for working with me so that way clients feel like they are getting a discount in both ways but the only one discounting is me for example if me + artist would be 200\$ they can get the whole thing for 150\$ which is the full artist price and mine with a lot of discount!" (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, Appendix O.1.3 p.5)

Overall, while there are some similarities between new and upcoming V-Tubers discovering V-Tubing and model creators, the interviews conducted by Kracht and Petersen (2022b) suggest that there are differences in the underlying motivations for working with models. Model creators are driven by the underlying technology's ability to allow them to express themselves in different ways. These model creators are fueled with a enthusiasm to learn, discover, share and create through the utilisation of virtual models. Model creators seek to collaborate with others through the creation process, be it customers or other model creators. Model creators also make use of social media for contacting other model creators to share their enthusiasm for their craft. However, some social media platforms are not as good at supporting the sharing of content as others, due to functional limitations. Model creators also seem to struggle with defining themselves within the market, often having difficulties deciding on how to place their prices compared to others. Based on the interviews by Kracht and Petersen (2022b) it can be hard to determine what the cause of this is. One indication could be due to the initial view of the model creation as a type of hobby, which later turned into something capable of generating revenue. In order to answer this fully, a deeper understanding of how model creation can go from being a hobby, which generate little to no revenue, to something which could be considered a full or part-time job is required. This will be investigated in section 3.2.

3.2 From Audience to Creator

V-Tubers are primarily entertainers, participating in online entertainment activities such as video game streaming, karaoke streams, and 'Zatsudans': a type of stream where the V-Tuber talks casually with their audience about different topics both related and unrelated to the streamer (Bredikhina, 2020; Lu et al., 2021; TaikunZ et al., 2020; u/Kargi, 2020). As mentioned in Section 3.1.1 most people who end up interacting with model creation are introduced to the phenomenon through watching V-Tubers and watching fan created content about V-Tubers, or through games utilising similar technology 3.1.2. When looking at the type of relationship there is between the streamer and the viewers of these streams, it can give associations to things such as theatre, concerts and other events where audiences are watching performers participating in a performance, a similarity that has also been noted by other V-Tuber researchers. Bredikhina (2021) has compared V-Tubing to Japanese doll theatre or 'Ningyō jōruri', and Lu et al. (2021), describes how V-Tubing is an extension of the already existing live streamer culture. This comparison between V-Tubing and doll

theatre becomes more apparent when realizing that, much like with dolls, someone needs to create the actual model used for V-Tubing, a task commonly undertaken by different model creators.

As described in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 some of these audiences end up becoming either V-Tuber performers themselves or model creators. But how and why does this happen? This section will try and give insights into this transition.

3.2.1 Defining Audience

Before describing what defines New and upcoming V-Tubers and Model creators as audiences, we must first define what an audience is. Audiences as a concept can be quite broad and hard to define. Most dictionary definitions agree that it involves a group of people engaged with an activity involving either listening, reading, or otherwise engaging with some form of media such as TV, Books, music, etc. (Britannica Dictionary, 2023; Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2023; Merriam-Webster, 2023). However, the question does arise whether it makes sense to limit the idea of audience based on the media it is associated with. After all, the idea of audiences as a role which only applies to engagement within this physical role, breaks down as soon as it is applied to rhetorical situations, such as when a newspaper writer has to 'consider the audience', which doesn't really apply to a real, physical audience (Park, 1982).

The answer is perhaps to try and remove these bindings of audiences to specific physical media. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argues that, especially in modern times, people are constantly part of an audience, in no small part thanks to the introduction of mass media, and technologies which constantly engaged us as audiences. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describes how these engagements, described as *performances*, "(...) is a kind of activity in which the person performing accentuates his or her behaviour under the scrutiny of others. That accentuation is deliberate, even if unconscious." (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 40). This in turn makes Audiences "(...) groups of people before whom a performance of one kind or another takes place." (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 40). In other words, the audience is a witness to a performance, which the audience member can observe, reflect, and critique, thereby "The performer-audience interaction occurs within, or represents, critical areas in which society is self-reflective (...)" (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 40). It is important to note that these performances are not limited to specific media, hereby allowing audience-performance interactions to, theoretical, occur anywhere (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). This is especially applicable today with technology, such as the smartphone, allowing you to instantly access media, as well as facilitate the creation of your own performances, which then can be shared instantly thanks to the internet. This is also what makes this definition of audiences relevant for this paper, as the focus is on new and upcoming V-Tubers and Model Creators, both groups which are facilitated through the internet.

When describing the audience, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describes three dif-

ferent type of audiences: The simple audience, the mass audience and the diffused audience. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) differentiate between the different audience types based on what modes of performance the performance entails. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describe six different modes:

- **Communication:** Depicts what type of communication is undergoing between the audience and the performer.
- **Local/Global:** Depicts wherever the event is located, aka. if the performance is local dependent, like a concert, or it could be depicted from anywhere, like a TV show.
- **Ceremony:** To what degree ceremonial and ritual element are part of the performance, for example going to a concert hall for a concert, or wearing formal clothes to a wedding. It is depicted on a scale going from low to high.
- **Public/Private:** Depicts if the audience is in a private setting, when interacting with the performance, or if they are in public setting, where multiple audience members can interact with the performance.
- **Distance:** The distance between the performer and the audience during the performance. This is not necessarily related to physical distance, but also social distance. For example, there are a lower social distance between a performer of a karaoke song down at the local bar, than there is from a rock-band at a concert hall.
- **Attention:** Depicts how much attention the audience should or are expected to pay to the performance.

This section will explore the different audience types, as described by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), and then compare them to the V-Tuber audience in order to better understand new and upcoming V-Tubers and model artists as audiences.

3.2.1.1 The Simple Audience

The simple audience is, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), the first audience type to exist. This makes the simple audience type the core for the other audience types such as the mass and diffused audiences. These other audience types evolved from the simple audience type, not as a replacement, but alternative viewer types to explain the changes in the media landscape.

The simple audience fits the more traditional understanding of an audience. The simple audience is an audience which is watching and being very attentive towards a particular performance. For the simple audience, the performance is all consuming, breaking them away from everyday occurrences and happenings (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). This also means that these types of performances must be able to break with everyday occurrences, meaning that they often involve a high level of ceremony. For example, if an

audience member wants to go to observe a live concert, they will have to travel to a specific place, order a ticket, as well as wear appropriate attire for the event. This also means that performances, for the simple audience, are local in nature, meaning that they are happening in the same space as the audience member is located. Due to this local nature of performances, many of these events also tend to be public, as in that the performance is viewed together with other audiences in a space open to public discourse (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

Another important element is the communication between the audience and the performer. This communication is primarily direct, meaning that there is a direct connection between the audience member and the performer during the performance (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). This doesn't mean that there is a low distance between the performer and the audience. As a matter of fact, this distance is often enhanced both physically, but also in term of societal position. In many performances such as within theatre or a concert, there is often a very visible physical border between the area the performer uses for their performances and the area from which the audience observe the performance. Likewise, the performers are the highlight of the event, with the audience members merely partaking in the viewing of the show.

Within the greater V-Tuber community, performances for the simple audience are rare due to the nature of the V-Tuber performances being mediated through the use of a virtual avatar. There have been attempts to fuse V-Tubers into localised, public performances, however. The V-Tuber company hololive has since 2016 been hosting a yearly concert, called hololive fes (COVER Corp, 2023). During the concert, V-Tubers from hololive are performing both covers and their own original songs in front of a live audience. In many ways, this seems to fit the idea of a performance in front of a simple audience; there is a performer performing in front of localised audience, the audience is cheering on the performers with things such as pen lights and banners, and there is clear marking between performer and stage, see Figure 3.2.



Figure 3.2: A picture from HoloFes featuring one of their Indonesian V-Tubers, Risu Ayunda on stage. The scene and avatar is given depth using a combination of 3D projection and screen effects. Picture taken by (Konuma, 2023).

Despite specific the fact that elements of the V-Tuber performance can be explained through the simple audience, there are many important elements of the V-Tuber performance which cannot be explained by performances for the simple audiences alone, such as livestreaming. Likewise, trying to explain things such as model creators through the simple audience doesn't make much sense either, by the very nature of them being creators while also being part of an audience. A further exploration of other audience types is therefore needed.

3.2.1.2 The Mass Audience

With the introduction of mass communication, a new era for audiences and their experiences were created (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Content which could only be enjoyed locally could now be broadcasted to the whole world, news which before could take days or weeks to reach citizens of other countries could now be delivered in the matter of hours, and copies of cultural artefacts, such as music and movies, could now be distributed to everyone with ease. With such a change to the access to media, it naturally had an effect on the relationship between the audience, the performance, and the performer.

One of the biggest effect, was the movement from the idea of performances not only being local, but global (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). You could be sitting in the United States and watch a movie from Japan, while listening to the news about what was happening East Germany through the radio. But this also had some consequences for the

form of the performance. First of all, in order to distribute and deliver the performance, the performance must be mediated through a medium such as film, TV, Radio etc. This opened up to a huge range of possibilities for enhancing, changing, and editing the performance before presenting it through a medium. This, on one hand, allows to deliver performances which weren't possible or convenient to do in a local setting, and even allows for regional relevant features to be applied to the performance, such as translating the performance into another language and then overlaying this on the original performance. Mass media essentially allowed the audience to experience the same performance in different ways. But the ability to change the original performance in so many ways, also creates a greater distance between the performer, the performance, and the audience, both in terms of physical and social distance.

As the name would suggest, mass media has the advantage of being distributed to a lot of people, meaning that almost everyone will have their own, personal access to the media. An example of this can be seen with the TV. While, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), the TV started out as being often owned by a few individuals, who then could open their doors to the neighbours and friends in order to watch TV together, as the price of TV decreased, and the access to TV's became easier, the TV turned into mass media, with most families owning their own private TV. This is an important element of mass media; while they may not be available to everyone from their early inception, they will eventually become a commodity which is made available to everyone. This has, in many ways, also turned the viewing of such performances into a private matter. Since everyone owns their own TV, everyone can choose what to watch, when to watch it, and where to watch within the confines of your own home.

Despite these aspects having been referred to in past tense, this is not to declare the era of mass media as being over. If anything, with mass media such as the phone, laptop and the desktop computer, all of which are connected through the internet, the mass audience and its interactions with mass media are still as important as ever. One could even be tempted to call the V-Tuber audience a mass audience, since the V-Tuber audience can use the connectivity of the internet to access clips and livestream archives to watch and engage with performances at will. However, there are elements of the V-Tuber audience that this audience type cannot explain. First of all, it cannot explain how audiences interact online. Audiences interact and engage with V-Tubers and V-Tubing in a manner which is far removed from how the big stars of Hollywood are treated. There is a much more commonality between V-Tuber, V-Tubing, and the audience. The audience doesn't see the performance of V-Tubing as something which is unobtainable, but almost like something everyone could do. A V-Tubers performance, while still important, is infused into the everyday life activities, something which still is spectacular and worth spectating, yet still far from the huge commitment of traditional performances. The mass audience also has another aspect which differentiates it from the V-Tuber audience, which is the desire to perform. The mass audience is, like the simple audience, comprised of spectators of the performance, who do not engage in performing themselves. In that sense, there is a

distance between the performer and their performance, and the audience, which is not the case with the V-Tuber audience. With the V-Tuber performance being part of what Kracht and Petersen (2022a) call streamer culture; the audience engages with the streamer during the performance and affects it in different ways, unlike the audiences of the simple and mass audience. In many ways, the line between the audience and the performer has been blurred which shares a lot in common with what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) refer to as the diffused audience.

3.2.1.3 The Diffused Audience

With the introduction of mass media into society, came societal and cultural changes (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). People were now constantly surrounded by different media displaying tons of different performances from all over the world. The introduction of things such as the TV, changed how people went on with their day. People started to plan around the different TV shows they wanted to see, spending free time looking around for different shows to watch, talking with friends and collages about their favorite TV shows and movies. The world was, and still is, centered around these interactions with media. In other words, our everyday life has been infused with media. The effect of this can be seen not only by the amount of media consumed, but also how people interact with each other and the media pieces they consume.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describes this through the arguments of Silverstone (1994). Silverstone (1994) argues that our sense of security in life is supported by the routines of daily life, and that things such as TV play an essential role for these routines (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Another important element according to Silverstone (1994) are the symbols of everyday life which are "the everyday sights and sounds of natural language and familiar culture; the publicity broadcast media; text on billboards, in newspapers, on television; the highly charged and intense private and public rituals in domestic or national rites of passage or international celebrations" (Silverstone, 1994, p. 19).

While things such as the TV are no longer as apparent in everyday life as back in the 1990's, the authors of this report argue that this view on media and everyday life has only become more apparent, with the introduction of the internet and the mass media which facilitate it such as the smartphone and personal computer. With the internet, people now have even greater access to different media content, including things such as social media platforms which allow people to connect with and share content with other people almost instantly. In that aspect everyday life has gone global, if not universal.

Another way through which we plan our everyday life, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), is time. Back during the time when the TV was dominant, some people would plan their everyday life around watching shows when they aired on TV. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) mentions a study by Hobson (1982) who investigated how viewers integrated the soap opera *Crossroads* into their everyday life. The participants described how watching *Crossroads* had become a habit, where they would watch the show

as part of other daily activities, such as tea time, or using it as a time band for things such as their children's bed time (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Hobson, 1982).

A similar pattern can also be observed within livestreaming culture, especially among V-Tubers from companies such as hololive. Most hololive V-Tubers upload a weekly schedule, showcasing what dates and what time they will be livestreaming, see figure 3.3 for an example.

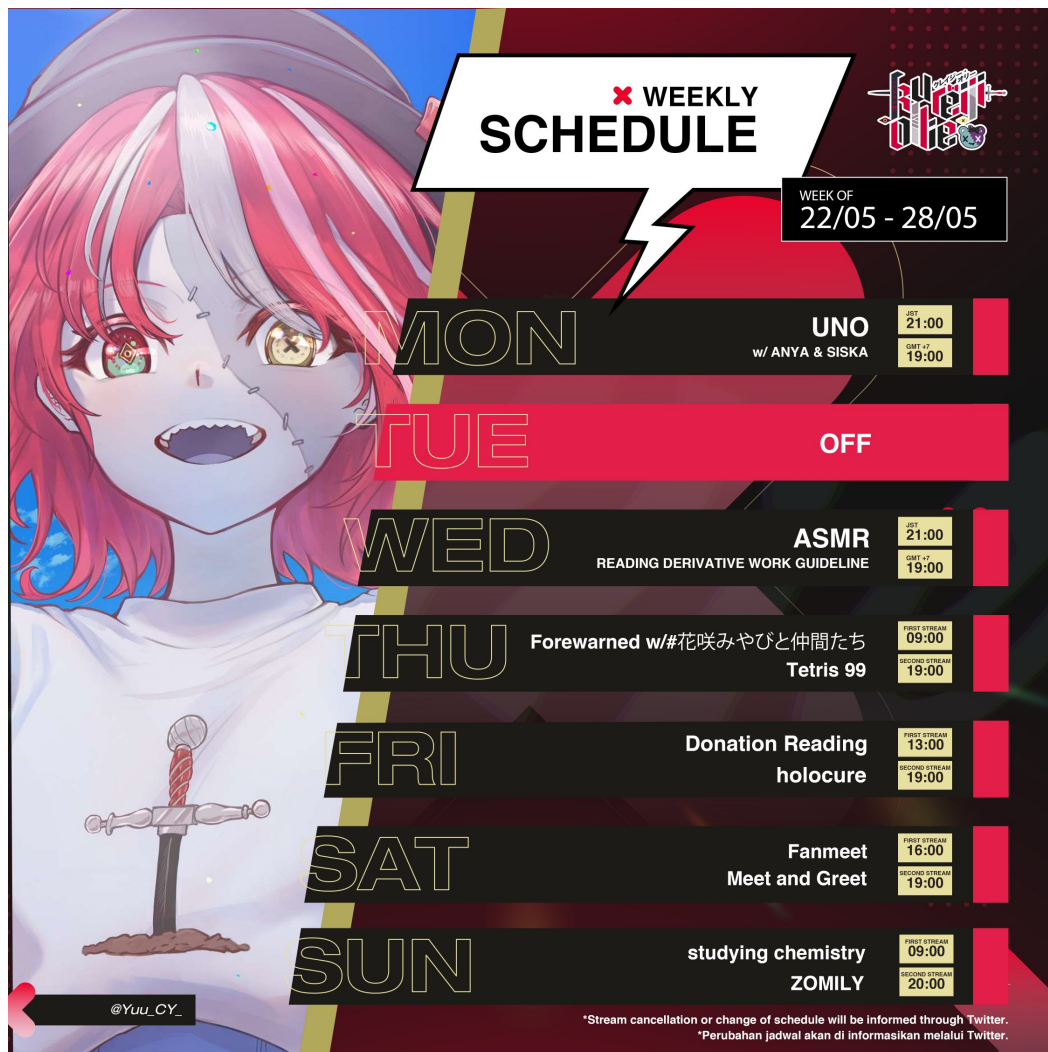


Figure 3.3: Weekly schedule from the hololive V-Tuber Kureiji Ollie (@kureijiollie, 2023). The schedule describes the event, as well as the time and date.

This allows audiences to plan their daily activities around the livestreams, which then turns into a part of everyday life. Another element of the diffused audience is what, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), Kershaw (1994) calls the performative society. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describes the performative society as where "perfor-

mance intrudes into even more mundane activities, the creation of 'everyday' shrines at accident sites, especially road accidents, for example, or the tendency to proclaim birthdays with signs on the outsides of houses"(Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, pp. 71-72). This is enhanced with media becoming part of everyday life; events which were before localised events, can go global in an instant. Again, with the introduction of the internet, and the mass media facilitating it, any small thing everyday occurrence can become a performance, and go 'viral', such as the the clip *Yosemitebear Mountain Double Rainbow 1-8-10* where Yosemitebear62 (2010) sees a double rainbow above his tent and decides to record and upload this to YouTube, see figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4: Screenshot from the video *Yosemitebear Mountain Double Rainbow 1-8-10* . In this video, the user Yosemitebear62 (2010) shares the moment where he sees two rainbows over his campsite. The video quickly spread, with the original video now having over 50 million views.

According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), one element of performative society, which does not fit with the diffused audience, is the view of the performance as a discrete event. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argues that within modern society, hereby the diffused audience, media is so ingrained into everyday life, that people are no longer aware when we are the audience or the performer. This is what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) refers to as the invisibility of performance, the idea that you may be an audience member or performer, without being aware of it. This in turn has some conse-

quences for the relationship between audience and performer. First of all, if one can be performing, or be an audience member, without being aware, then the distance between the performer and audience member must be, or perceived to be, low to non-existent since the audience is unaware of the performance and as a result also unaware of the distance between themselves and the performer. Secondly, due to the nature of modern society, some people are in the position of being both audience members and performers, while others may switch rapidly between the two states. This can contribute to difficulties for producers who desire to deliver a message to their audience, since the audience, unaware of their role as audience, may be unable to receive the message in question.

From the perspective of Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), communication between the audience and the performer is direct and unmediated, meaning that media intuitions do not affect the relation between performer and audience. Since these performances are part of everyday life and may be hidden, there is often little to no ceremonial elements for the performances of the diffused audience. This may also lead to the audience paying little to no attention to the performance, given that it is a part of the everyday life, though this can depend on the activity in question. As mentioned earlier, performances like these can neither be entirely private nor public, rather, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describes these as global in imagination, that is to say that they are bound by neither time nor space, eroding the space between them.

As has already been demonstrated through this section, a V-Tuber's activities fit very well within the diffused audience. What about the V-Tuber audience itself however? This breakdown of boundaries, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argues, also effects how we can distinguish between different performative events and media events. If people no longer can distinguish between performers, audiences, performances and media, then perhaps, as Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggest, a fusion of the different forms of media occurs within diffused audiences. This would require that a deeper understanding of what audiences are, and how studies focused on audiences should be conducted, before one can determine the nature of the V-Tuber audience and their transition into new and upcoming V-Tubers and model artists.

3.2.2 Understanding the Audience

If we wish to understand the V-Tuber audience, we must first have a way to understand how we can view the audience and their interactions with performances and performers. One way of gaining a better understanding of audiences is to understand how Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) summarises the different viewpoints throughout the research history of audiences into three paradigms; the *Behavioural* paradigm, the *Incorporation & Resistance* paradigm and the *Spectacle & Performance* paradigm see Figure 3.1.

	Behavioural	Incorporation & Resistance	Spectacle & Performance
Audience	Individuals	Socially Structured	Socially Constructed & Reconstructed (Spectacle & Narcissism)
Medium	Stimulus (messages)	Text	Mediascape(s)
Social Consequence(s)	Functions & Dysfunctions Propaganda, Influence, Use & Effects	Ideological Incorporation & Resistance	Identity Formation & Reformation in everyday life
Representative studies & approaches	Effects, Uses & Gratifications	Encoding/Decoding, Fan Studies, (Morley, 1980), (Radway, 1991)	(Silverstone, 1994), (Hermes, 1995), (Gillespie, 1995)

Table 3.1: The different paradigms suggested by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998). Each paradigm has a specific view on the audience, and understanding of the audiences interaction with media content, and the social consequences associated with that relationship. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) have also described a set of studies and approaches which align with these paradigms, as can be seen in the column Representative studies & approaches. The table is based on a table from (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 37, Figure 1.1).

This section will briefly go over each paradigm and explore it. Then, a comparison with the V-Tuber audience will be conducted, to understand how the paradigm represents the relationship between V-Tubers as performers, and new and upcoming V-Tubers and model creators as audiences.

3.2.2.1 Phases within Audience Paradigms

When looking at these paradigms, it often make sense to look at the historical context of each paradigm, and how the technology shaped the way in which researchers understood and investigated audiences.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggest 3 phases which can be used to describe this evolution: the *effects* phase, the *uses and gratification* phase, both informing the *Behavioural Paradigm*, and the *encoding/decoding* phase, informing the *Incorporation & Resistance* paradigm. By investigating these phases, we should be able to uncover what informed these specific paradigms. While Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) focuses on technologies such as the TV and radio, the presented paradigms are still applicable to internet content, which will be demonstrated as we go over each paradigm.

3.2.2.2 The Behavioural Paradigm

The effects of media on audiences have made alarm bells ring among some early audience researchers, especially the researchers who researched the effects of mass media on the masses, and how it may affect peoples' relationship to things such as sex, violence, gender and race (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Some social groups are viewed by effect researchers as being especially vulnerable to the effect of these mass medias, such as children. The effect of mass media is seen by effect researchers as especially powerful, changing the audience's attitude towards society, as well as trying to impact the audience's cognition or behaviour.

Depending on the researcher, effects of media can be seen as a drug, directly injected into the viewers subconsciousness with near instantaneous response, see Figure 3.5 for an example of effect theory being used. Of course, this assumes a lot of things, such as the media affecting the individual in isolation and that the audience member responds and acts purely based on the message of the media (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).



Figure 3.5: Recruitment poster used during World War I by the American government (Flagg, 1917). The poster depicts Uncle Sam, a fictional character representing a 'true' American patriot (The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023b), pointing directly at the audience, demanding that they should go to the nearest recruitment station and enlist. The assumption was that the effect of this poster would make men more likely to join the army (Flagg, 1917).

However, as pointed out by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), proving the direct causation between the audience and the effect can, at best, be inferred, and never directly proven given that it is impossible to completely isolate this 'effect' from other short and long-term stimuli that may affect an audience.

Despite this, the idea of the effect approach still lingers to this day. A recent example is the increase in banned and contested books from school libraries in certain American states, due to fears that the material described in these books will directly affect children's sexuality, gender identity, etc. (American Library Association, 2023; Association, 2016; First Amendment Museum, 2023; Friedman & Johnson, 2022; Haupt, 2022; Humphreys, 2022; Mcfettridge et al., 2023).

Likewise, some V-Tubers have also received scrutiny for how their model looks and the content they produce. Gawr Gura, a V-Tuber working for the company hololive, initially received criticism about her character model, as well as her character performance, which were seen by some as depicting elements from Japanese Lolicon culture (Rev says desu, 2020; Venti, 2020, 2023a, 2023b), a term used to describe imaginary, drawn or computer animated, depictions of young girls, engaged in sexual acts (Smith, 2013; Takeuchi, 2015).

Another example is the YouTuber CookieSwirlC a content creator who reviews children's toys (CookieSwirlC, 2022). CookieSwirlC chose in 2022 to transition from being a regular YouTuber with a webcam to a V-Tuber, see Figure 3.6.

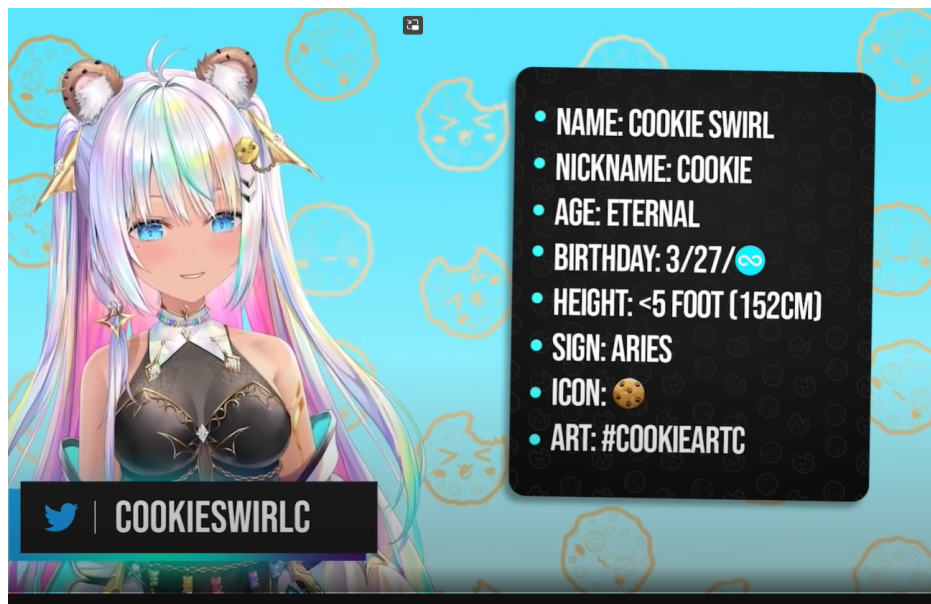


Figure 3.6: Figure depicting Cookieswirlc V-Tuber debut stream, used to showcase her model for the first time (CookieSwirlC, 2022).

Some expressed concern over her choice to use a V-Tuber model, as they saw it as a gateway for children to come into contact with more adult themed V-Tuber content, as is

depicted in the subreddit "Virtual Youtuber", which is fan subreddit focusing on V-Tubers and their content, see figure 3.7.

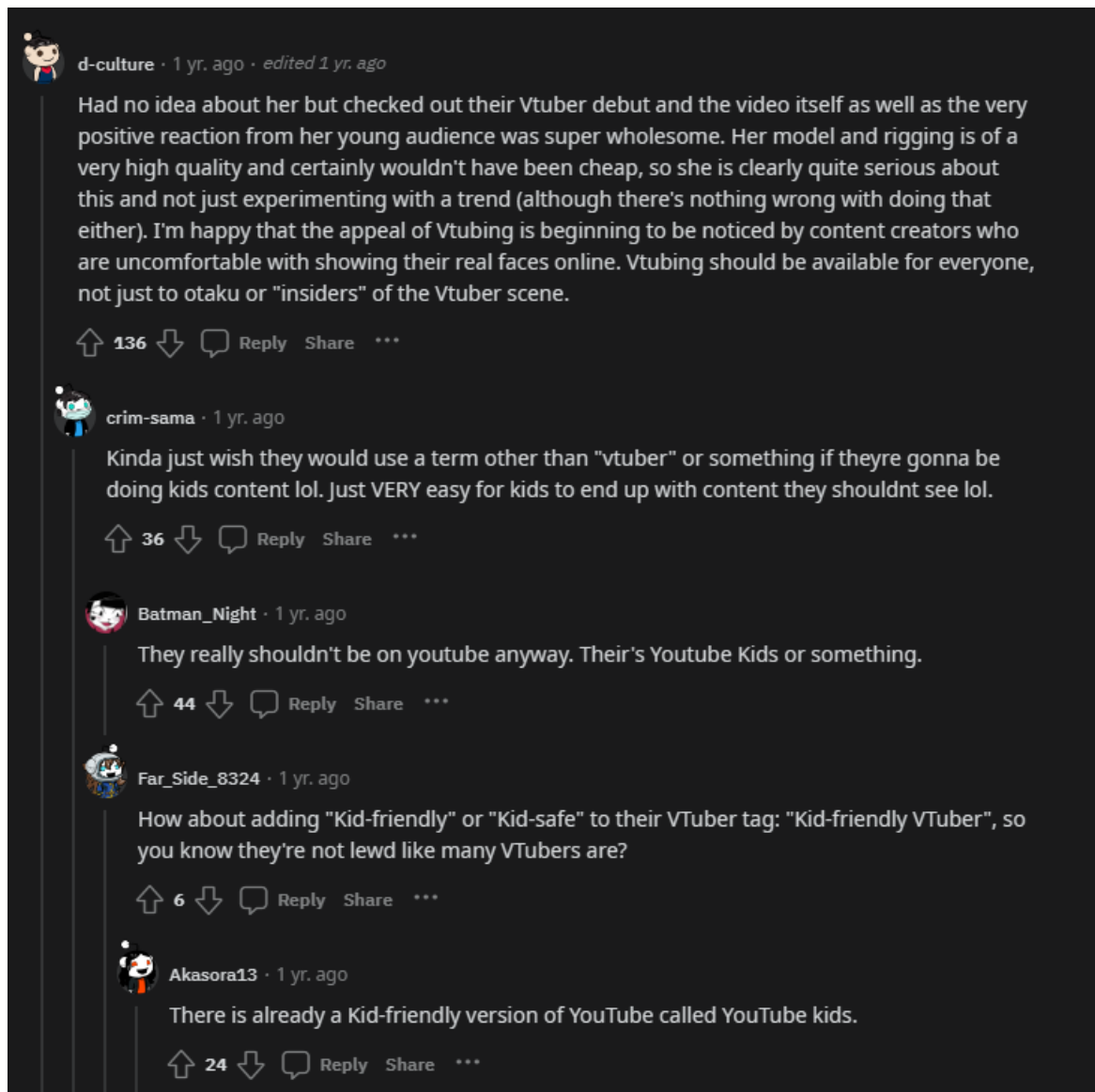


Figure 3.7: Not all within the V-Tuber community were too keen on a V-Tuber focusing on children's content. This snippet depicts a conversation between redditors of the subreddit "Virtual Youtuber", discussing whenever a V-Tuber targeted at children is a good idea (u/scwizard, 2022).

As effect research has matured over the years, the theoretical framework and methodologies have become more defined (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Instead of viewing the effect of media as a direct mind-altering effect, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), researchers such as Elliot (1974) argue that effect research should look

at how audiences are influenced by media on a micro or macro level, and how media can reinforce or challenge previously existing viewpoints of the audience. Likewise (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998) argues that it should be investigated whether these effects are cumulative or non-cumulative and whether these effects impact the audience over a shorter or longer term.

While the effects approach was the dominant approach within the behaviour paradigm during the early 1920-1930s, another approach caught on in America during the 1940s, called the uses and gratification approach (Kershaw, 1994). The approach mainly caught on in the USA as part of investigations into needs. According to (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998), Katz et al. (1974) describes how the needs of the audience generate a set of expectations for things such as media to fulfill, with the media exposure resulting in need gratification and other consequences as a result. This changes the relationship from the media using the audience member, to the audience member using the media. There are still a few similarities to the effect approach, mainly that the media still affect the audience members behaviour, and how this effect only affects the individual with no regard for context.

One example of this would be a V-Tuber focusing on the creation of V-Tuber models in the form of tutorial videos. Usually the people that watch a tutorial video will have some kind of task they need help with and will use the video as a means of learning how to solve said task. This means that, should a tutorial video of the creator not be very well made, informative, or perhaps even be misleading, the majority of people would click away from the video, as it does not help them fulfill the need that they have. For instance, a video by the V-Tuber Cutie Dragon, that focuses on the process of rigging the mouth of a V-Tuber model, received a lot of positive comments that thanked her for making the video and helping them with their need(Cutie Dragon, 2021). An example of some of the comments beneath the video can be seen in figure 3.8.

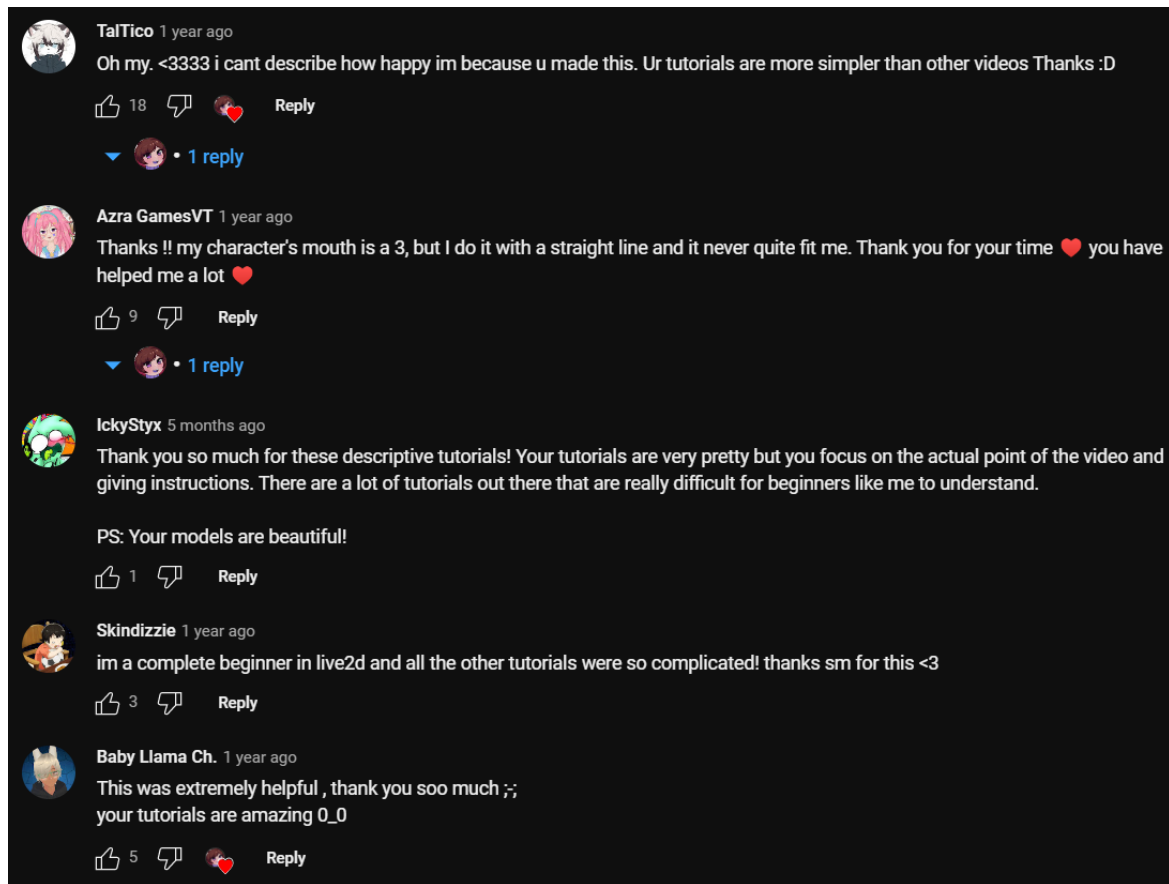


Figure 3.8: The five top comments beneath the rigging tutorial by the V-Tuber Cutie Dragon (Cutie Dragon, 2021).

The needs and gratifications approaches got fairly popular as the interest and exploration of qualitative audience rose during the 1980's and 1990's (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Despite this, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), the approach has also received quite a lot of criticism. For example, Elliot (1974) argued that many of the challenges the approach faced, some pointed out by (Katz et al., 1974) themselves, is with the emphasis on the needs and functions of gratification as concepts. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), Elliot (1974) points out that these concepts cannot be seen as mentalist representations which emphasise the state of the individual, something which hardly can be known for certain by the researcher. Perhaps more importantly, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), the approach lacks a social theory to support itself and is bound by low explanatory power, which leaves it limited in its ability to go beyond the functionalism that also bound the effective approach.

As previously stated in this section, this paradigm is very focused on the individual and their interaction with the media. But this approach fails to take into account norms, culture and rules that surround us as citizens of a society. as stated by (Hall, 1982):

"Larger historical shifts, questions of political process and formation before and beyond the ballot box, issues of social and political power, of social structure and economic relations, were simply absent, not by chance, but because they were theoretically outside the frame of reference." (Hall, 1982, p. 59).

As the quote states, the problem with the Behavioural paradigm is that it is incompatible with these ideas of society; a new paradigm was needed to address how society affects the audience.

3.2.2.3 The Incorporation & Resistance Paradigm

In an essay, released (Hall, 1982) titled "The rediscovery of 'ideology'; return of the repressed in media studies" (Hall, 1982), Hall discusses how there has been a change in audience research during the 1970s, with a renewed focus on how society and social structures affect audiences and their interactions with media. Hall had in an earlier paper released in 1980 already stated his arguments for what parameters should be used to understand the relationship between audience and the media, described by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) and Hall (1980) as the Encoding and Decoding approach. according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), Hall (1980) argues that to study media communication this must be done through the scope of a Marxist understanding of generation and distribution of power, and that messages should be understood as codes to be encoded by the dominant global ideology, and then decoded by the audience. It is important to note that this doesn't mean that the audience is a prisoner to the encoded ideology of the media, rather that the audience may freely choose through which ideological position they decode the message.

This approach is what laid the groundwork for what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describe as the Incorporation & Resistance Paradigm. In this paradigm, the main focus is whenever the audience is part of the dominant ideology encoded through the media activity, or if they are resistant to the ideology represented. The main focus for researchers of this paradigm is on understanding, gathering evidence, and then presenting the debate that exists between the audience members, and ideology presented through the medium (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

One example brought forth by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) is a study by (Morley, 1980). In the study, Morley showed two Nationwide programs which focused on, at the time, controversial political topics, and showed them to people of four different groups within four different socio-economic positions: Managers, students, apprentices, and trade unionist. Morley (1980) expected the experiment to showcase not only the difference between the socio-economic groups, but also differences within subdivision of these groups. This turned out to be true, as for example, black students tended to adopt a oppositional position to the media, where as art students took a more negotiated one. However, what was especially interesting was the different ways in which groups, with the same position may have very different 'frameworks'. For example, some black students ended up withdrawing from the study, citing it as irrelevant despite their oppositional position. On

the other hand, subgroups within trade-unions took a more actively critical approach, highlighting the issues presented in the programs from a working class perspective. This shows that even if people or groups share the same position, they can have very different approaches to approaching and interacting with media.

A more modern example of this could be the exploration of crowdfunding and its role in relation to capitalism. The book "crowdfunding the future" by Cochran (2014) investigates the relationship between crowdfunding and how it challenges the idea of capitalism, as well as the power dynamics between creators and their audience. Throughout the book, one major theme was that crowdfunding of a final movie for the TV show, *Veronica Mars*. The show had tried to get a last season for years to wrap up the story, but failed to do so due to the company behind the show not wanting to take the financial risk. The original writers of the show therefore decided to try and get one last season, which later became a movie instead, funded through the crowdfunding service Kickstarter. The message from the writers was very clear; if the crowdfunding campaign was not successful, there would be no chance of seeing the show again.

What is especially interesting about the research presented is how the relation between the audience and crowdfunding as a medium were viewed by the researchers. For some of the researchers like Bennett et al. (2014) and Gehring and Wittkower (2014), the narrative presented by the creators of the crowdfunding campaign is the dominating aspect of the debate, and whenever the crowdfunding in and of itself was a way to assert economical control over its audience by encoding the campaign with its message. Other researchers like Tussy (2014) rejects this idea, asserting that this message is only relevant, because it can be interpreted by different audience sub group members to meet their ideological standpoint, while having a solution framework that aligns with that of the participating audience members.

This discussion of who holds the dominant position, is very similar to an important element within the Incorporation & Resistance Paradigm described as the dominant position (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), research within this paradigm can be placed on a scale, depending on who the researcher sees as the dominant actor. On one end of the extreme is the text dominant position, encoded with one particular meaning which can be interpret, leaving the audience with no choice other than to accept or reject the message. On the other end of the extreme is the audience dominant position, where the text still has an encoded preferred meaning, but many different meanings can be interpreted from the text (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). From this position, the text becomes a more active topic of discussion, which can be analysed, interpreted, ignored or rejected by the audience.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) mentions one example of an audience dominant position, which can be seen in Fiske (2013) and his description of audiences. Fiske describes how the audiences of television has the freedom to chose and and assign meaning of popular culture, so long as this is still done within the societal context of the audience and the text itself. That is not to say that the text only has one meaning, but rather that it

is open and polysemic in its textuality which, together with Fiske's view on audiences as diverse, belongs to a vast range of subcultures and groups. This is not to say that the audience is free of the overall societal structures and dominant ideologies; if anything popular culture in and of itself should be seen as a reaction to what Fiske (2011) refer to as the forces of domination, and as such is still upheld to the uneven distribution of power in a society (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Fiske, 2011).

While the Incorporation and Resistance Paradigm has been developed throughout the years, it has also shown situations where the paradigm itself has been shown to be weak, resulting in what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describes as "a series of stresses and strains which threaten the coherence of the paradigm itself." (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p28). Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) highlights three main sources which challenge this paradigm; the idea of the active audience, the lack of empirical studies which support the main theory of hegemony, and the focus on the power which are held by the dominant text or audience, depending on the view of the researcher (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

The active audience is seen by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) as the rejection of the power struggle which exists between the dominant position. For the active audience, the text may have a preferred reading, but it is irrelevant due to the audience's ability to make their own meanings and does not limit what meaning the audience can apply to a text. This view is interesting as it delegates much less meaning or importance to the struggle of power, which in turn threatens the idea of the incorporation and resistance paradigm. If this struggle of power really is irrelevant, then does it even make sense to assume that there is a constant ideological struggle between text and audience?

The second issue is the hegemony of the main theory. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) the main theory revolves around the idea of an axis of power between audience and the texts. But, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), there is a significant amount of studies within this paradigm that demonstrate the fractions within the paradigm, which, if the main theory of paradigms should hold up, expects a fair amount of coherence within the dynamic of the text and the audience. For example, when watching television, the audience would not be expected to only watch one particular show or genre, but rather engage with a variety of different shows, which may cover multiple different ideological viewpoints. This has only been further exacerbated by the introduction of the internet where audiences can switch between different media with the click of a button. Audiences also have a much easier time sharing, changing, obfuscating, remixing or enhancing different readings of the text. An example of this can be seen in the video *god is dead OwO* by dakooters (2019), where dakooters is reading up a segment of the translated version of Nietzsche (1974)'s *Following and walking*, 203 but translated into *UwU language*, a practice where certain letters are replaced with o, u, and w to make the language sound more 'kawaii' (Collins English Dictionary, 2023; Dictionary.com, 2020; realhotdogmen, 2019), a term used to describe characteristics which try to emulate a certain childishness in order to express a more cute, or 'Moe' aesthetic (Kinsella, 1995). Along with

the reading of the piece is a picture of a half-cat, half-human anime character, alongside a rain effect, see Figure 3.9.



Figure 3.9: Screenshot from the video *god is dead OwO* by dakooters (2019). The picture depicts an half-human half-cat anime character with a rain effect added on top. The text is displayed on screen alongside the narration (dakooters, 2019).

With this many changes to the original text, is the preferred reading still there? Does the piece represent a different reading of the original piece? Or does this remixing create a completely new text? Regardless of the situation, all of these aspects may contribute to a fragmented experience of the original text, which can further complicate achieving the preferred reading. And with the introduction of modern media production being fractured, such as video game development, where multiple teams may work on the same product, further fracturing of the original preferred meaning may be likely to occur.

Finally is the distribution of power in relation to power dynamics. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), inside of the Incorporation and Resistance paradigm, the distribution of power is deployed in a relatively unitary way, with a constant struggle of power between those who hold the most power and those who seek to equalise the distribution. However, this brings with it some assumptions of power. Firstly, it assumes that power is something which is almost static, an individual either belongs to those who hold the power or belongs to those who desire it. However, as Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) points out, there are many different theories of power that dispute this idea of an individual or specific group holding the single and decisive power. Secondly, there is the issue of which kind of power is being highlighted in the analysis of media texts. To as-

sume that there is only one specific axis of power in play, leaves out potential context to the audiences reading of the text. On the other hand, trying to understand and analyse all the potential axes of power can make it difficult to determine what power is being resisted and what the oppositional reading is (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

These issues, while they can be explained away on a case by case basis, do call the overall paradigm into questions. If there are so many exception to this paradigm, perhaps there is another paradigm which is better at exploring the areas where the Incorporation and Resistance paradigm struggles to do so.

3.2.2.4 The Spectacle & Performance Paradigm

When Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) wrote their text about the different paradigms, alternative to the Incorporation and resistance paradigm had not yet been established, see section 3.2.2.3. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describe an, at the time, emerging paradigm where the audience is no longer just an audience, but are instead also performers in their own right, with everyday life being surrounded by performances and spectacles. This puts a person in a situation, where they are constantly part of an audience, which in turn makes being an audience member and their interactions with performances an essential part of the construction of a person (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). The Spectacle and Performance Paradigm therefore focuses on the relationship between the different audience types, the simple-, mass-, and diffused audience, and their interactions with performances see section 3.2.1. To understand this relationship, it is also important to understand the modern context between the audience and the performance within this paradigm. Since this paradigm includes the diffused audience type, see section 3.2.1.3, this paradigm must also be situated within what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) refers to as the modern society. While, as with the diffused audience, the perspective of what is modern to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) is different from our understanding in the year 2023, this report aims to demonstrate through this section why this paradigm as a whole is still relevant in our present day society.

To understand the modern society, it is relevant to understand what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) refer to as spectacle and narcissism. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) the world around us has be turned into a spectacle. People, objects and events per in the cannot simply be taken for granted, but have to be framed, looked at, gazed upon, registered and controlled (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). While there have always been elements of this in society, for example how gardens, which are used as pictures of nature and landscaping, are spectacles of human performance, there are two elements of modern society which have further contributed to spectacle within the modern society (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). First of all is the simple fact that the world itself is treated more as a spectacle. Things such as tourism are a great example of the everyday life of a country becoming a spectacle for travelers from another country visiting. In section 3.2.1.3, we have already demonstrated how modern access to media, such as smart phones, can allow for performances within everyday life, but likewise they

also allow for spectacles to occur. Returning to the example of Yosemitebear62 (2010) video of the double rainbow, Yosemitebear62 (2010) manages to capture the double rainbow and share it with the world, essentially capturing a spectacle within everyday life, and adding their own performance to the spectacular event.

Secondly is the idea of the consumer society (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Within modern society, people are looking at different commodities, objects and services, looking to own these products. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) describe this as the possessive gaze. This is also relevant within a society filled with spectacles; just as people can look at the modern commodities and desire to own them, people look at spectacles as something which can be owned. This doesn't mean that the spectacle can be owned in a physical sense, but rather that it is an internal imaginary possession of said spectacle. To understand this imaginary possession of spectacles, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), one must look into the evolution of the capitalist mode of production. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), in early stage capitalism there was a transformation of experiences from being something, aka. being a farmer, being a soldier etc. to having something, ie. having a farm, having a house etc. However, as we have reached the later stages of capitalism, this idea of having something has been replaced with the appearance, or "the transformation of the world into an array of images is intimately related to the development of the commodity form" (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 84). Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) quotes Debord (1994) discussion about the spectacle where he states: "The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image" (Debord, 1994, p. 24). Another thing which strengthen the spectacle within society is the aestheticization of objects within our everyday life. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) "The more the world becomes aestheticized, the more it becomes drenched in images, the more it becomes a cultural object, the more will it become something that invites being looked at." (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 88).

Since not only objects, but also people can be seen as a spectacle, one must assume that people have a desire to be seen as such, especially given how the diffused audience has the role of both performer and audience, see section 3.2.1.3. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggest therefore that a modern society also must be a narcissistic society. In a narcissistic society, people are not necessarily driven by actual success, but rather displaying an image of successes to others. For Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), within the diffused audience, narcissism is seen as a cultural condition within the modern society, which is expressed through a person's desire to be seen and recognised, through their performance, by an audience, fictitious or not. In this way, the audience should, ideally, work as a mirror reflecting back on the performer's own desired self-identity. This, of course, also highlights a connection between narcissism and performance (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). From the perspective of Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), narcissism is the driving motivation and the individuality of the performer. The performer must be able to express their self reflection to the audience; both through style and appearance the performer brings to the performance. In other words, this desire can turn the performance

into a spectacle. On the other end, in order to fulfill the desire to be seen by the audience, the performer must be seen as a spectacle, only then, can the performer hope to appear as a spectacle in front of their audience. In other words, the spectacle cannot exist without the narcissist's motivation to be seen, and the narcissist's desire cannot be fulfilled without the power of the spectacle.

This also means that, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), the established ways of investigating audiences from the Behaviour and Resistance & Incorporation paradigm, see Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 doesn't capture the complexity of the relationship between the everyday life performances and interactions between different audience types within modern society. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argue that, due to the complexity of everyday life, the applied methodologies should move from being ethnography adjacent or inspired methodologies, like focus groups, interviews, or self reporting studies, to proper ethnographic studies which focus on uncovering the patterns of everyday life, akin to studies by Gillespie (1995) and Hermes (1995), in order to understand the modern audiences. This does also mean that from this paradigms perspective, the audience should first be viewed through the lens of the diffused audience, see section 3.2.1.3. Once these audiences have been grounded in their everyday life interactions, it may be relevant to view the audience from the perspective of another audience type or paradigm, to reflect upon different the perspectives of the specific audience experience.

To investigate the audiences it is important to understand that the diffused audience is a part of a mediascape when interacting with performances of everyday life (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), "Mediascapes provide large and complex repertoires of images and narratives convoluted mixtures of the world of news and the world of commodities, to people throughout the world." (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 106). Mediascapes are effective at blurring the distinction between what is real and what is fictitious, feeding the imagination of people who create fantastical versions of the world. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) theorise that modern media is more effective at producing mediascapes, due to the intensity of the exposure and the mode of involvement. This can also be seen today, especially with access to media through the internet.

It is important to note these fantastical worlds are not randomly created but are constructed by the audience, by drawing out a set of these media elements which support the construction of their specific imaginary world. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) theorises that this world is socially constructed, supporting people's already existing experiences and world view. This also means that the performers hold power in the performance portrayed through the media. This is not to say that the performer holds power over the audience, but rather, that the portrayed character within the performance becomes part of this imaginary world created by the audience. These audience can come to identify with these characters, and in some cases may wish to become like the star portrayed, day-dreaming of different ways to become like the star (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). This may lead to the audience looking for ways to change their behaviour in relation to

performances. This can come to expression in various forms such as mimicking traits of the star in relation with other audience members, or claim to have a resemblance to the star in some form or another. This should not be misunderstood as a play of pretend, but as a selection of carefully chosen images by the audience, to provide material for day dreaming, and by extension, a transformation of oneself.

An important element of Mediascapes is that they consist of multiple media in connection with each other (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Therefore, it does not make sense to look at a singular media or investigate a specific type of text, as this would miss the important patterns of the everyday life, which is essential to the understanding of the diffused audience. This also means that to fully understand a particular audience experience, it requires a mapping of the mediascape within the audiences everyday life.

But what kind of mapping exactly? Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggest that one should look towards the argument of emotional mapping made by (Bagnall, 1997). Bagnall (1997) investigated in their study how audiences interacted at heritage sites and museums, where Bagnall observed three different kinds of mapping within the audience's consumption of heritage sites, as described by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998):

- Sites are mapped physically and bodily by the audience, from which other types of mappings are taking place.
- Emotional mapping, either being confirmatory or rejective. When it is confirmatory, the presented heritage site connected and engaged with the audience emotionally, giving them a feeling that what was presented could be real or possible. On the other hand some rejected the representation shown from the heritage site due to personal memories or opinions, leading to the visitors rationalising why they rejected the piece.
- There is a connection between the emotion and imagination.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) theorise that these emotions and imagination are engaged within audience activities and that this is more of a general pattern than something which only apply to audiences within heritage sites and museums.

3.2.3 From Consumer to Petty Producer

As previously mentioned we currently live in a capitalist society, where commodities are bought and sold, see section 3.2.1.3 and 3.2.2.4. The same can be said about the spectacles, especially with the desire of the modern society to own and possess spectacles. But what may not be initially clear is that the audience themselves, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), become consumers. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argues that cultural objects and events are getting commodified within modern society, with everything acquiring an assigned value. This means that audiences becomes markets to exploit, which in return, means that all markets are in and of themselves audiences.

According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) this contributes to a further diffusion of audiences, becoming a market for cultural goods, while the participants of the markets become more and more diffused into members of an audience. So, if the consumer market is diffused into the audience, it must also mean that the market itself becomes a performance. If this is the case, then it must be important to understand the relationship between the audiences themselves. The first thing to remember is, as discussed in section 3.2.1.3, that the audience required for the performance is an imagined audience, one which fits the performance. This audience should be someone who shares the same mindset, attitude and desire for specific spectacles, performances and stars. In other words, what they desire is a community (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). From the perspective of Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) on community, they lean towards the Cohen (2015) definition, where they suggest that "a reasonable interpretation of the word's use would seem to imply two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups" (Cohen, 2015, p. 12). This seems to be compatible with our findings relating to online communities, see Chapter 2. As such, the authors of this report suggest that the suggestions in relation to audiences and communities by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) should also be applicable to online communities. What is important to note about communities from this perspective of Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) is that, in the diffused audience, the community itself is imagined. That is not to say that a community is devoid of real people, but rather that a person's sense of community is based on who they deem to belong to the same community. This also transform the concept of community into a relational concept, where "(...) communities are defined in relation to one another as well as by the quality of the relationships internal to the community. Therefore, the feeling of belonging critical to the sense of community is constructed as much by *not* belonging to some imagined entity, as it is by belonging to one" (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 116). This means that belonging to a community is more a symbolic gesture than an actual physical entity, although it can have physical properties. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) contextualise this idea of the imagined community as a set of zones, facilitated by different media: the talk community, the interpretative community and the improvisational community. The most inner ring, the talk community, represents direct media output being processed together with people within the community directly, with the outer rings being a resource of imaginings, where the actual community are not relevant for the audience member.

Within these communities, exists different forms of audiences. Two which are mentioned in other research, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), are Fans and Enthusiasts. While different paradigms have different approaches to fans and enthusiasts, since this report is focusing on the V-Tuber audience, the focus of this section is going to be on the audience in relation to the diffused audience and the spectacle and Performance paradigm, see section 3.2.2.4.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) list a set of points in regards of the activities within

a fandom. First, a fandom tends to be media-focused and organised. Secondly, fans are well informed about their favourite media images, its stars, and their content. Thirdly, fans often engage in variety of communal activities, which can include things such as the sharing of fan text. This can be especially observed in today's mediascape, thanks to the internet, where it is now easier than ever for fans to gather in order to discuss and/or share fan content. One example of this the creation of the site archiveofourown.com (The Organization for Transformative Works, 2023). The purpose of this site is to share fan text, with a particular focus on relationship stories between the characters of the media pieces, see figure 3.10 for an example.

The screenshot shows the Archive of Our Own (AO3) website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Fandoms, Browse, Search, and About. A search bar is located on the right. Below the navigation bar, the page title is "1 - 20 of 258 Works in Hakos Baelz/IRyS (Hololive)". There are buttons for Works, Bookmarks, and RSS Feed. The main content area displays a list of works. The first work is "Blue Symphony" by RSCorundum, dated 27 May 2023. It is a fanfiction for the characters Hakos Baelz and IRyS from the Hololive virtual streamers. The work is marked as "No Archive Warnings Apply" and includes a list of tags such as "Ceres Fauna/Nanashi Mumei/Ouro Kronii", "Ceres Fauna/Ouro Kronii", "Ceres Fauna/Nanashi Mumei", "Nanashi Mumei/Ouro Kronii", "Hakos Baelz", "Ouro Kronii", "Watson Amelia (Hololive)", "Ceres Fauna", "Original Characters", "Nanashi Mumei", "IRyS (Hololive)", "Mori Calliope", "Takanashi Kiara", "Gawr Gura", "Ninomae Ina'nis", "Tags May Change", "Historical", "Vampires", "Hurt/Comfort", "Time Travel", "Mystery", "Romance", "Violence", "Implied Sexual Content", "Self-Acceptance", "Adventure", "Magic", "Music", "Classical Music", "Romantic Music", "World Travel". The work has 14/25 chapters, 17 comments, 41 kudos, 3 bookmarks, and 1589 hits. The second work is "Stealing your heart" by Lady_Darkness99, dated 26 May 2023. It is a fanfiction for the characters Hakos Baelz and IRyS from the Hololive virtual streamers. The work is marked as "Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings" and includes a list of tags such as "Ceres Fauna/Nanashi Mumei/Ouro Kronii", "Ceres Fauna/Nanashi Mumei", "Nanashi Mumei/Ouro Kronii", "Ceres Fauna/Ouro Kronii", "Mori Calliope/Takanashi Kiara", "Gawr Gura/Ninomae Ina'nis/Watson Amelia (Hololive)", "Hakos Baelz/IRyS (Hololive)", "Nanashi Mumei", "Ouro Kronii", "Ceres Fauna", "Mori Calliope", "Takanashi Kiara", "Hakos Baelz", "IRyS (Hololive)", "Watson Amelia (Hololive)", "Gawr Gura", "Ninomae Ina'nis", "Tsukumo Sana", "Kaela Kovaleva", "Alternate Universe - Royalty", "Fluff and Angst", "Angst with a Happy Ending", "Just three lesbians being cute", "Maybe some angst", "But Not Much", "Princess Fauna - Freeform", "Bodyguard Kronii", "Thief Mumei", "Alternate Universe - Fantasy", "Some other Holomemes mentioned", "but with some changes", "SPK au by Moch". The work has 1 chapter, 0 comments, 0 kudos, 0 bookmarks, and 0 hits. The sidebar on the right contains a "Sort and Filter" section with a "Sort by" dropdown menu set to "Date Updated". There are two sections: "Include" and "Exclude", each with a list of checkboxes for Ratings, Warnings, Categories, Fandoms, Characters, Relationships, and Additional Tags. There are also fields for "Other tags to include" and "Other tags to exclude". At the bottom of the sidebar is a "More Options" button.

Figure 3.10: This example shows a collection of fan fiction describing a fictitious relationship between the the hololive V-Tubers IRyS and Hakos Baelz.

What could be seen as a strong connection between fans and enthusiast, is the enthusiasm they share towards media. However, according to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) there are some key difference between the two groups. First, while fans' activities are focused on the media images and its stars, the activities of enthusiasts are not. Secondly, the enthusiast may not be as well informed and consume as much media content, as the fans. Of course, there are exception, such as situations where heavy consumption is directed towards the enthusiasm itself. Thirdly, the enthusiasts' activities are more organised than the fans' activity, since their goal is to produce content. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) also points out another element which often is discussed together with fandom, that being subcultures and their interactions within society. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) however, suggest to recontextualise these understandings along a continuum of fan, subculture

inhabitant, called cultist, and enthusiast, see table 3.2.

	Fans	Cultists	Enthutiasts
Object	Star/ Content	Specialised Star / Content	Activity
Media Use	Heavy	Heavy, but specialised	Specialised
Organisation	None	Loose	Tight

Table 3.2: This table showcases the recontextualised view on Fans, Cultist and enthusiasts. While Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) uses the term programme to describe content that audience become fans of. Since the dominance of TV, in the authors of this paper's opinion, has diminished in modern society we use the term 'content' instead to refer to this. Based on (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, Table 5.2, p.138).

Within this framework by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), cultist act more like what we have used to describe fans so far, as in, a set of organised individuals which are organised around a specific performance or performer. The fan will now refer to the audiences who has become particularly interested in a particular performance or performer, but are lacking the organisation in compared to cultists. Enthusiasts are audiences, where the activities are more important than the media performance or the performers themselves. Their media use is specialised, only interested in consuming media which supports the activity at hand. They can be seen as even more organised than cultist, which are required in order to produce content. Of course, there also exist an extreme at either end of the continuum. On one end is the Consumer, who has a relatively unfocused pattern of media use, and their interactions with media is relatively unsystematic. At the other end of the continuum is what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) refer to as petty producers. Petty producers are those where, what once was more about the enthusiasm for the product and the desire to produce, has now evolved into a full-time occupation. The product produced is no longer merely for the consumption of the community, but with the goal of production for the capitalist market and to be consumed by an imagined mass market. While this definition may initially make it sound like the only ones to really produce anything are fans, enthusiast and petty producers, it should be noted that, since we are talking about the audiences within a modern society, thereby a diffused society, all people should be able to produce within these communities. The descriptions by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) of these texts can be seen in table 3.3.

Consumers	Fans	Cultists	Enthutiasts	Petty Producer
Little textual production	Text production Incorporated into everyday life	Important activity, becomes central to everyday life.	Textual and Material Production within community	Textual and Material Production for the market

Table 3.3: This table summarises the different texts produced by the different fan types within the fan framework. Based on (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, Figure 5.5, p. 148).

So if the V-Tuber audience is a diffused audience within the modern society, that means that we should be able to understand new and upcoming V-Tubers and model creators in relation to this fan continuum. This can in turn shed some light onto how, theoretically, they move from being fans of V-Tubers to producers of content.

3.2.4 The V-Tuber Audience as a Diffused Audience

Throughout this chapter so far, we have analysed interviews with New and Upcoming V-Tubers and model creators, to understand what motivates them to join online communities focused on model creation, see section 3.1. One of the things that were discovered was the missing understanding of how these creatives go from watching V-Tubers to engaging with creative activities such as model creation. Based on the arguments presented in section 3.2.2 and section 3.2.1, we argue that the V-Tuber audience itself is a diffused audience, constantly switching between being audiences and performers. One particular element which showcases this is V-Tubers and livestreaming. As mentioned in section 3.1 V-Tubers are part of streamer culture and as such, participate in livestreaming. Livestreaming itself is a unique type of performance where the streamer and the audience members often both heavily contribute to the performance, by interacting with each other, as well as audience members interacting with fellow audience members through the chat. Audience members can also, for a fee, send special highlighted messages, on social media platforms such as YouTube, where the comment will be highlighted within the chat. The more money the audience member spends on this message, the longer it will appear within the chat. These messages will often get noticed by the streamer, with the streamer thanking them and reading out the message. Often the higher the value of the message, the higher are the odds of the steamer to notice and react to the message. Some of the messages can spark moments of spectacle depending on their content. As an example, the hololive streamer Hakos Baelz, had previously streamed the game Genital Jousting, which features depositions of sentient penises engaging in human daily activities. In a later stream, an audience member sent Hakos Baelz a super chat message, informing her about other V-Tubers reacting to her stream. This led to Hako Baelz reacting to the news in a reactive manner, which further engaged the audience and thus turned the occurrence from a simple

mentioning to a spectacle where the V-Tuber and audience went back and fourth adding to the spectacles (Sashimi Clips, 2023a).

Another thing which showcases the audience creating their own performances is the blue superchat toilet flush. During a V-Tuber streamer's toilet break, the V-Tuber audience might send one dollar blue superchats with no messages while the streamer is gone, until the streamer comes back. This keeps the audience entertained, while creating spectacle for both the audience and the V-Tuber to react to, once the V-Tuber comes back, see figure 3.11 for an example.



Figure 3.11: During a stream when the V-Tuber Amatsuka Uto went to the toilet, the chat started sending one dollar Superchat to start the blue flushing, emulating the flush of a toilet.

These examples showcase how the V-Tuber audience is both audience and performer at the same time, both viewing and consuming the performance, but also engaging and performing themselves. This type of behaviour is well established within the diffused audience type. But how does this relate to new and upcoming V-Tubers and model creators?

When this section initially started out, it was with the intention of understanding the transition from audience to creator. However, with the revelation that the V-Tuber audience is a diffused audience, this may be the wrong question to ask. Just because someone becomes a V-Tuber, that doesn't mean that they stop engaging with the V-Tuber audience at large. If anything, being a V-Tuber and a fan or cultist within the community may actually be an important element for their success as a V-Tuber. It is not uncommon to see V-Tubers within the chats of other V-Tubers engage with the audience and the V-Tuber themselves, or having a deep knowledge about the V-Tuber culture as a whole. And with

the idea of V-Tuber audience being a diffused audience, perhaps it is not wrong to assume that for some, being a V-Tuber is just a natural extension of their time as fan and cultists.

The same could be said for to be the case for model creators although if looking at the findings of Kracht and Petersen (2022b), see section 3.1.2 it seems that they have more in common with enthusiasts and petty producers, see section 3.2. Like enthusiasts, model creators are driven by the desire of learn the technology and create content for people which can be used. As the create some start to move towards the petty producer side of the spectrum, while never reaching a state where the main motivation is to produce exclusively to the capitalist market. This may also be why the interviewed model creators are lowering their price below market value; while they would like to earn enough to live, the desire to create and show this to the world takes precedence over the economics of the business, see section 3.1.2.

While we argue that new and upcoming V-Tubers have, in general, more in common with fans and cultist and model creators have more in common with enthusiasts and petty producers, its not to say that they cannot to say that they can have traces of both. In the interviews conducted by (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a), some of the independent V-Tubers where intrigued by the possibility of the V-Tuber technology, and how it could be utilised for new streaming possibilities. Likewise there are model creators who partake in cultist practices, such as one mentioned by a V-Tuber interviewed by Kracht and Petersen (2022b): *"And from there I searched for an artist and I had an artist that was already in my community and he was making a fan art model of my avatar. And I reached out to him and offered to pay him for completing it."* (Kracht & Petersen, 2022b, p.38).

However, while there instances of overlaps, we still believe that a V-Tuber must be grounded in the culture surrounding V-Tubers if they are to succeed. Likewise if a model creator does not have the desire to create and share with their craft, one can question if they are within model creation culture in the first place.

Overall, the authors of this paper argues that the V-Tuber audience is a diffused audience. New and upcoming V-Tuber are rooted within the fan and cultist culture of the V-Tubing community, while model creators are enthusiasts, with some engaging in more petty producer like behaviour as they grow more experienced.

3.3 Cultural Citizenship

The idea of cultural citizenship has been used in the past to both discuss and investigate the dynamics found within fan groupings of popular culture (Hermes, 2005). However, while authors like Hermes (2005) have focused on popular culture media, like movies and TV shows, it can be argued that certain aspects relating to both cultural citizenship and popular culture can also be encountered within modern online communities. For instance, due to the certain sense of anonymity that even the modern day internet still provides, as well as the accessibility of the internet, people from all over the world are able to interact with one another in relatively open online spaces. This meeting of semi-anonymity with

easily accessible places causes the traditional lines between private and public to become rather blurred, which is in line with what Hermes (2005) describes as one of the aspects of popular culture. The fact that online communities inherently provide people with a sense of belonging also ties them closer to how Hermes (2005) describes popular culture. This is especially the case for those communities that provide their members with this sense of belonging in spite of a potential barrier of entry, like a subscription fee for a specific member status, that might otherwise deter someone from participating in it. Additionally, the fact that online communities can be built around pretty much anything also provides individuals with a place to share their inner thoughts, feelings, and fantasies with other like minded individuals, as long as what they are sharing is derived from that which the community is built around. Another aspect of cultural citizenship that can be encountered within online communities is the presence of rules and norms, which both dictate and inform the behavior within the community (Hermes, 2005). These norms will of course differ from community to community, but common ones could include not discussing things unrelated to the community, or potentially sensitive topics such as politics, religion, and self harm. Further worth noting is that depending on how clear or explicit some of these norms are, they can serve as further barriers of entry for joining a community. If for instance a person were to use a certain figure of speech when joining a community, without realizing that this figure of speech is considered offensive to said community, they would most likely not be received very positively.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter we have investigated the motivations of new and upcoming V-Tubers, as well as model artists, to participate in their creative field of choice. One thing we found out through re-contextualising the data from (Kracht & Petersen, 2022a, 2022b), is that almost all started out as fans of V-Tubers in some capacity.

In this chapter we have therefore analysed the idea of the audience through the different paradigms by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998). We have argued for why we view the New and Upcoming V-Tubers, as well as model artist, as an diffused audience, which are best analysed through the lens of the Spectacle & Performance paradigm. Furthermore, we have investigated what 'role' within the bigger paradigm they may choose to take within the V-Tuber audience community. Furthermore, we have realised that through means like cultural citizenship, online communities can provide people with a sense of belonging and place to connect with other people that share their same interests, to the point where both these interests and the community can become something the individual deeply identifies with on a personal level.

With all of this in mind, we suggest that for us to consider using a social media platform to build our community focused on the creation of V-Tuber models, said platform needs to do the following:

- It must facilitate the model creators enthusiasm to learn and improve their skills as model creators, see section 3.1.2 and 3.2.4.
- It must allow model creators to showcase and receive feedback on their work 3.1.2.
- It should allow model creators to offer their skill set to other V-Tubers or model creators, both as enthusiast and payed petty producers, see section 3.1.2, section 3.2 and section 3.2.4.
- It must allow new and upcoming V-Tubers to share their enthusiasm for V-Tubing culture as fans and cultists see section 3.1.1, and section 3.2.4.
- It must showcase, inform and support new and upcoming V-Tubers about the model creation process see section 3.1.1.
- It must inform new and upcoming V-Tubers, especially those who approach from a enthusiast perspective, about the V-Tubing culture and norms see section 3.2.4.
- It must facilitate the three approaches to V-Tuber avatar creation: Making your own, working together with rigger/artists and buying a premade model see section 3.1.1.
- It must facilitate contact between other new and upcoming V-Tubers, as well as model creators depending on the chosen approach to avatar creation see section 3.1.1 and 3.2.4.
- It must provide the community members with a sense of belonging and group identity, in line with Cultural Citizenship, see section 3.3.

Understanding what motivates V-Tubers and model artists to move from audience member to creatives within their field, will aid us in understanding what our community must supply in order to incentive them to join our community. But how can we support the continues support and growth of such a community? This is something which we aim to answer in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Supporting Online Communities

This chapter will briefly go over some of the aspects that can be useful, when creating and managing online communities. It will describe different ways of affecting user activity, as well as highlight certain aspects a platform used for community building should allow for.

4.1 Attachments of Online Community Members

When it comes to the overall attachment of community members to their community, Ren, Yuqing et al. (2012) proposed that it can be possible to increase said attachment by appealing to both a user's sense of group identity and strengthening their sense of creating bonds within the community. While they did discover that group identity had a stronger effect on community attachment than interpersonal bonds in their study, they do suggest that the effectiveness of either could vary, depending on both the community these concepts are applied to and the tools for expression and communication available to said community. As such, if a community were to be hosted around a website, which is built around person to person communication, through chats and similar features, focusing on interpersonal bonds could prove to be more effective in that case. Another discovery of Ren, Yuqing et al. (2012), which is of note, is the fact that while this increased attachment to a community seemed to increase how active a user was within the community, the average retention for people joining and leaving the community seemed to remain unchanged. This somewhat lines up with the findings of Choi et al. (2010), which indicated that the use of certain socialisation tactics, like welcome messages, constructive criticism, and providing assistance, could motivate new community members to stay active within the community over longer periods of time. While both Choi et al. (2010) and Ren, Yuqing et al. (2012) each focus on only a single online community, it could be possible for the use of socialisation tactics, appealing to group identity, and forging interpersonal bonds, to increase the engagement and attachment of new community members, if each aspect is properly adapted to the community. For instance, the use of constructive criticism would be less likely to work for a community, that doesn't focus on the creation of some form of work, be it written,

artistic, or any other form of expression. Similarly, the criticism could also be received very negatively by a potential artists, if their work is criticised despite them not asking for feedback on it. This does highlight the need for great care and thought to be put into the implementation of these aspects of socialisation, group identity, and interpersonal bonds, to minimise the risk of their implementation having a negative effect on the community members.

One further thing of note, is the fact that even though some online communities are open to everyone in theory, there may still exist certain barriers of entry that aren't initially apparent. Dobusch and Dobusch (2022) note that aspects such as complex rules and norms, which can be difficult for new community members to grasp, and even smaller things, such as registering an account or having a stable internet connection, can keep individuals from joining a community. Furthermore, being part of certain demographics through age, gender, race, sexual orientation, and similar attributes can also serve as a ground for feeling less welcome in certain communities, despite the fact that a community might not explicitly exclude these individuals through rules and similar structures (Dobusch & Dobusch, 2022). These potential barriers of entry should be addressed in some form or another, in order to ensure that the community remains both open and welcoming enough to attract enough new members.

4.2 Sociability, and Usability

While investigating the usability of systems used by online communities is an important part of understanding how users interact with the system on a technical level, Preece (2001) argues that it is just as important to investigate how this usability connects to and influences the overall sociability found within the community using said system. While measuring such a vague concept as sociability is difficult, Preece (2001) suggests a few points worth investigating, in order to determine how well a community succeeds at enabling sociability. These points are as follows:

- How much do community members talk? And how much of it is on topic for the community?
- How deep do discussion threads go?
- How much do people contribute, compared to how much they take?
- How are the contributions of users rated?
- How many active users are there compared to those that just lurk?
- How much uncivil behavior exists, and how is it dealt with?
- How trustworthy is the community considered to be?

While the internet looked significantly different back then, all of these points still have relevance when applied to the more modern websites used by online communities to this very day. For instance, while discussion threads aren't as predominant in certain communities, it can be argued that the ability to reply to both posts and comments spawns threads very similar, if not identical, to the traditional threads investigated by Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997). As such, looking at thread breadth and depth as a means of investigating interactivity does still seem relevant, even for sites without a more traditional thread structure such as Reddit.com. Similarly, while measuring reciprocity might not be as simple as looking at how many questions a user asks and answers anymore, due to how the modern internet allows for increasingly abstract ways of both contributing and gaining from online communities, it is none the less still worth investigating (Preece, 2001). For instance, Passmann (2018) highlights how this reciprocity can become apparent on Twitter, through a user liking the post of someone who liked one of their own posts, and following someone in response to them following you.

On a more practical note, Preece (2001) also suggests some points for investigating the usability of the systems used by online communities, as this facet is equally important. These points are as follows:

- How long does it take until people know how to use the feature?
- How long does it take to perform an action using the feature?
- How satisfied are people with the feature?
- How well do people retain information about how to use the feature?
- How many errors do people make while using the feature?

It is worth noting that all of these points should be targeted at a given function of the system, and as such all of them must be applied to multiple features of the system in order to gain a full understanding of the system's usability.

Investigating the different systems and their respective platforms from both a usability and sociability standpoint, could be used in order to get a proper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses modern social media platforms have, in regards to forming online communities, as well as determining which of them work best for our goal of establishing a community built around the creation of V-Tuber models.

4.3 Summary on Supporting Online Communities

One thing that has become clear is that appealing to the sense of group identity of community members can become an effective tool for increasing community attachment, while increasing the bonding between the different members of the community can have a similar effect. As such, we should attempt to strengthen both of these things through our

community, while also building our online community through a platform, that allows for good usability and sociability. Furthermore, we need to ensure that the socialisation tactics we use actually make sense for the context of the community we are trying to build, while also thoroughly considering the potential wider consequences and negative side effects a given tactic could have.

Having investigated the ways in which one can support the longevity of an online community, we deem that a social media platform must fulfill the following, in order for us to consider using it for building our online V-Tuber model creation community:

- It must allow for the use of different socialisation tactics, in accordance with section 4.1
- It must enable the formation of a sense of group identity, in accordance with section 4.1
- It must have a high level of usability, in accordance with section 4.2
- It must have a high level of sociability, in accordance with section 4.2

With all of this in mind, it begs the question of which platforms we should consider for building our community based around V-Tuber model creation.

Chapter 5

Social Media

This chapter will focus on social media and which social media platform would be ideal to build an online community on. First, this chapter will set up a set of requirements for social media platforms in order to facilitate the creation and continuous growth of an Online Community. Then, we will define the framework which will be used to analyse different social media platforms. Finally, an analysis of two social media platforms frequently used by V-Tubers, YouTube and Discord, will be conducted to understand which social media site best meets the requirements and needs our online community.

5.1 Social media

The definition of social media, has changed a lot throughout the years, as the demands and needs of social media users have changed, and researchers have expanded their understanding of social media from a tool used to connect people, to a medium which affects and is affect by their users (Aichner et al., 2021). To try and understand how the scientific consensus of what social media is has changed throughout the years, Aichner et al. (2021) reviewed around 60.000 different articles, from 1994-2019, which have summarised or defined what a social media is. Aichner et al. (2021) concludes that while there is no common consensus on what social media is, these are the elements which hold true for most social media definitions:

- All social media definitions agree that the purpose of Social Media is to connect people.
- Before 2010 Social Media was commonly seen as a tool to connect people with common interest. After 2010 the common consensus was that the purpose of social media was to facilitate the creation and sharing of user-generated content.
- There exist multiple broadly accepted definitions on what social media is.

Aichner et al. (2021) do note that there are some weaknesses in their study. For one the review is lacking in the inclusion of any non-English papers in the study, leaving out the perspective of many non-European countries. Likewise, some of the differences in definitions may be up to different scientific backgrounds perspective on what social media is. Regardless, understanding that different researchers may have a different view on what social media is, can help uncover differences in results, theories and methodologies applied when analysing social media.

With no commonly agreed consensus on what social media is, we will in this section go over how we view social media from the perspective of facilitating online communities for model creators and new and upcoming V-Tubers, and which functions social media should have in order to benefit the creation of an online community.

5.1.1 Social Media from an Online Community perspective

In their study, Aichner et al. (2021) speculated that different scientific backgrounds may have different perspectives on what social media is. In this report, we have already argued that not only scientific background, but the paradigm of the scientific community may affect how a researcher views and analyses different phenomena, see Section 3.2.2. As such, it is important to note that the following requirements are from a communication and technology perspective, and viewed through a Interactive Digital Media paradigm. Furthermore these requirements will primarily focus on social media as facilitators of online communities, in particular communities focused on virtual avatar creation.

Throughout this report, we have argued that there are certain specific requirements that a online community focusing on model creation must need in order to be successful. To reiterate, we here summarise these requirements as follows:

- R1: The community must clearly indicate what its overarching goal is, in accordance with section 2.1
- R2: The community must clearly show the roles of different members, in accordance with section 2.1
- R3: The community must clearly communicate its core activities, in accordance with section 2.1
- R4: The community must clearly communicate its rules, in accordance with section 2.1
- R5: The community must provide its members with a space to interact and socialise with each other, in accordance with section 2.1.1
- R6: It must facilitate the model creators' enthusiasm to learn and improve their skills as model creators, see section 3.1.2 and 3.2.4.

- R7: It must allow model creators to showcase and receive feedback on their work 3.1.2.
- R8: It should allow model creators to offer their skill set to other V-Tubers or model creators, both as enthusiast and payed petty producers, see section 3.1.2, section 3.2 and section 3.2.4.
- R9: It must allow new and upcoming V-Tubers to share their enthusiasm for V-Tubing culture as fans and cultists see section 3.1.1, and section 3.2.4.
- R10: It must showcase and inform new and upcoming V-Tubers about the model creation process see section 3.1.1.
- R11: It must inform new and upcoming V-Tubers, especially those who approach from a enthusiast perspective, about the V-Tubing culture and norms see section 3.2.4.
- R12: It must facilitate the three approaches to V-Tuber avatar creation: Making your own, working together with a rigger/artists and buying a premade model see section 3.1.1.
- R13: It must facilitate contact between other new and upcoming V-Tubers, as well as model creators depending on the chosen approach to avatar creation see section 3.1.1 and 3.2.4.
- R14: It must provide the community members with a sense of belonging and group identity, in line with Cultural Citizenship, see section 3.3 and 4.1.
- R15: The community must allow for the use of different socialisation tactics, in accordance with section 4.1
- R16: The platform used by the community must have a high level of usability, in accordance with section 4.2
- R17: The platform used by the community must have a high level of sociability, in accordance with section 4.2

The social media platforms, which would be hosting this online community, should therefore aid the community by providing tools in order to meet these requirements.

With the requirements we set for social media platforms established, it'd be worthwhile to investigate and analyse existing social media platforms currently used by model creators in order to determine which of them best fulfill our needs for establishing a community built around the creation of V-Tuber models.

5.2 The honey comb model of Social Media

Elements of this section have been written in collaboration with ChatGPT. for more information see Appendix C.

The honeycomb model of social media framework, as proposed by Kietzmann et al. (2011), contextualizes the distinct functionalities intrinsic to social media platforms, in line with the implied needs and desires of the users. Through the lens of this model, all social medias platforms are comprised of seven blocks, each of which represents a platform's functionality, as depicted in figure 5.1.

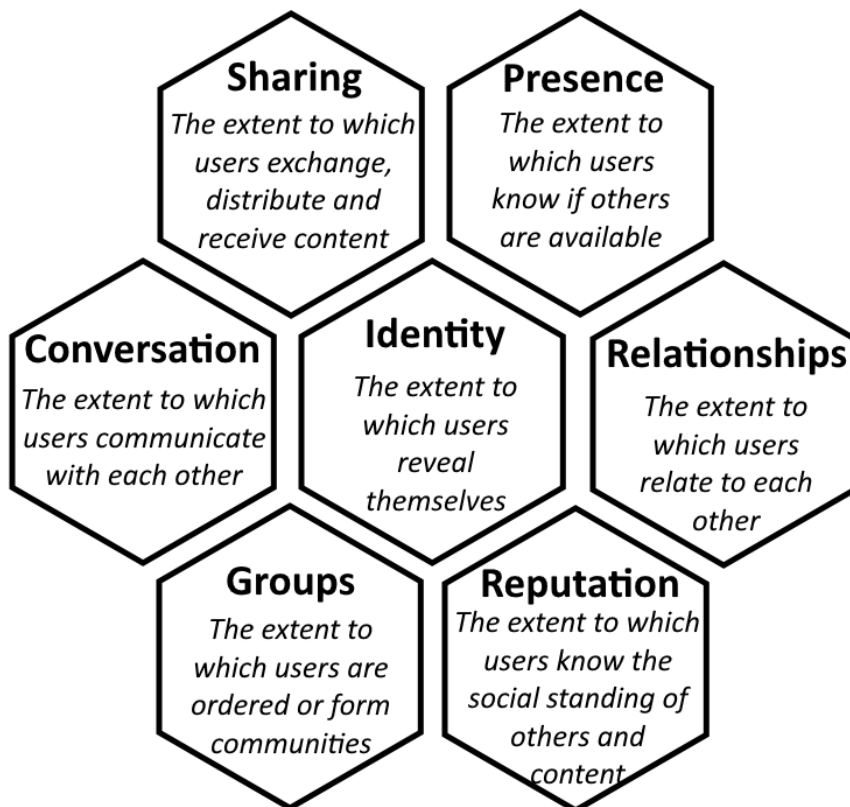


Figure 5.1: A representation of the honeycomb model showing the functionality of the social media site, in relation to the needs of the social media user. Model based on (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p 243).

Each functionality has an implicit goal of meeting the different engagement needs of their audience, see figure 5.2.

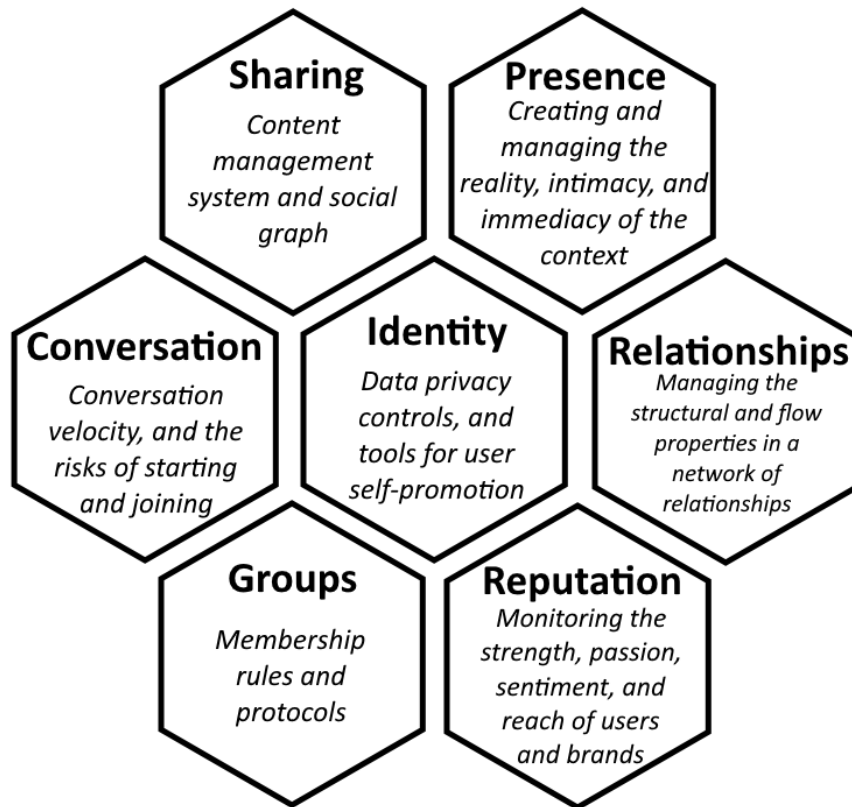


Figure 5.2: A representation of the implicit engagement goals for the users, which are fulfilled by meeting the functionality requirements. Model based on (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p 243).

Through this view, the differences in how social media facilitates communication comes down to what functionalities different social media platforms weigh higher, which in return highlights how well each website facilitates the goal of their users. While this text goal of social media is different from this paper's goal, see Section 5.1, the framework in and of itself can still aid in uncovering how and why certain groups, such as V-Tubers or model creators, utilize these social media platforms to communicate and develop their communities. This will, in turn, assist in building a set of requirements for building a community focused on model creation, by providing insight into the content's focus that can elicit the best response from potential community members.

The following sections will describe each of what Kietzmann et al. (2011) refer to as social media functionalities and the corresponding implications of each functionality. We will further expand on these functions to align with our definition of social media as well as the findings from this papers research into online communities see Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

5.2.1 Identity

Elements of this section has been written in collaboration with ChatGPT. for more information see Appendix C.

Identity is described by Kietzmann et al. (2011) as "(...) the extent to which users reveal their identities in a social media setting." (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 243) This can include personal information such as name, age and gender, or sensitive information such as political or religious beliefs, sexual orientation and other personal beliefs or preferences.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) refer to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) to explain how users share their identity over social media platforms. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), users utilise the social dimensions of social media to help construct a self-representation of themselves that is both capable of influencing others while still being consistent with their own personal identity. Depending on the social media platform, it may be better or worse at facilitating self-disclosure and self-presentation Kaplan and Haenlein (2010).

For example, some V-Tubers will have an initial debut, where they show off their model and character to their audience for the first time. During this debut, which can often include a slideshow with different bits of information on the character, the V-Tuber might show off specific information about the character, as can be seen in figure 5.3. It should be noted that in this specific case, the information will be referring to traits about the V-Tuber character, rather than the person voicing and playing the character.



Figure 5.3: A screenshot of the debut stream of the V-Tuber Gawr Gura, showing off various pieces of information about the character (Gawr, 2020).

What can happen to the person playing a V-Tuber character however, is that they might accidentally sub-consciously self-disclose information about themselves, or what Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) refers to as unconscious self-disclosure. An example of this could be the person using specific phrases, sayings, or slang, that are predominantly found within specific cultures and or geographic locations. For instance, the V-Tuber Tsukumo Sana used the Australian slang term Macca's when referring to McDonald's, which lead to her viewers deducing that she was most likely from Australia (VP Ch., 2021).

Users of social media can further identify themselves through their username (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This can be both in the form of the real name of the user or a 'handle' which can be used to either hide the person's true name or be used to express the type of content or community they are part of. These identities can enable individuals to express different aspects of themselves. For instance, the artist "Karen" embodies two primary personas on the internet, namely, Demondice Karen, her demon persona, who raps and creates art, and Mori Calliope, a V-Tuber "grim reaper" who streams games and produces music, as portrayed in figure 5.4.



Figure 5.4: The left picture depicts the profile picture of the 'Demondice Karen' persona, with the V-Tuber persona 'Mori Calliope' depicted to the right (@DEMONDICEKaren, 2023; Mori, 2023).

While the Demondice Karen persona includes more personal information such as her real-life appearance (Demondice, 2023), the V-Tuber Calliope Mori persona is more akin to a performed character, with her own lore and backstory (Mori, 2023). This is somewhat in line with how Passmann (2018) describes Twitter users and how a tweet and the person making the tweet can somewhat blend together, in that while the tweet is not the person, it is an extension of the person. As such, what affects the tweet will most likely also affect the person behind it in one way or another. It can be speculated that what happens to both

one's online persona and the things they put on the internet can have a similar effect on the person behind the persona, though the extent and form of them being affected might differ. Similarly, Passmann (2018) also describes how meeting a person, that one only knows through the internet, in real life can challenge one's perception of that person, as it will most likely differ significantly from how one imagined them to be. This discrepancy in perception has the potential of leading one to interact with the same person in very different ways, solely based on the medium through which they communicate.

Given the abundance of social media sites, some users try to establish a connection across their different social media platforms. A common approach in today's media landscape is to link to other services directly through profile descriptions or built-in social media icons. For example, the channel Sorted Foods has links on their YouTube channel page which links to their own website, as well as their Instagram, Tiktok and Twitter social media page, see figure 5.5.

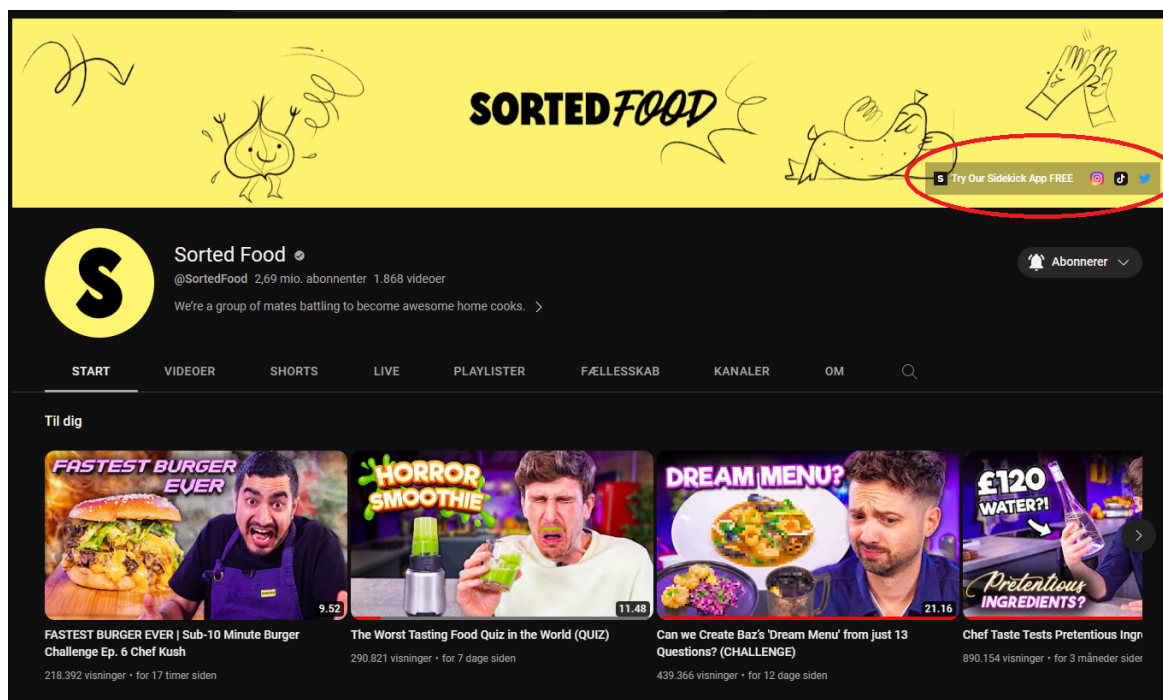


Figure 5.5: Picture of the YouTube channel Sorted Foods (Sorted Food, 2010). To the right is a ribbon, marked with a red circle, which holds the different social media icons. Clicking on these will take you to represented social media site.

This has, in large parts, replaced the social media profile cards described by Kietzmann et al. (2011). This change in behaviour could be attributed to the centralisation of the social media space, with prominent platforms such as YouTube dominating the online video platform domain.

While identity is an important part of social media, it does not mean that users may

necessarily desire to share all about themselves. In some cases users may even wish to remain completely anonymous. One example of a website that offers this the website 4Chan, where users can freely choose their own usernames when commenting. Users may also refer to each other via their comment numbers instead of user names, as shown in Figure 5.6.

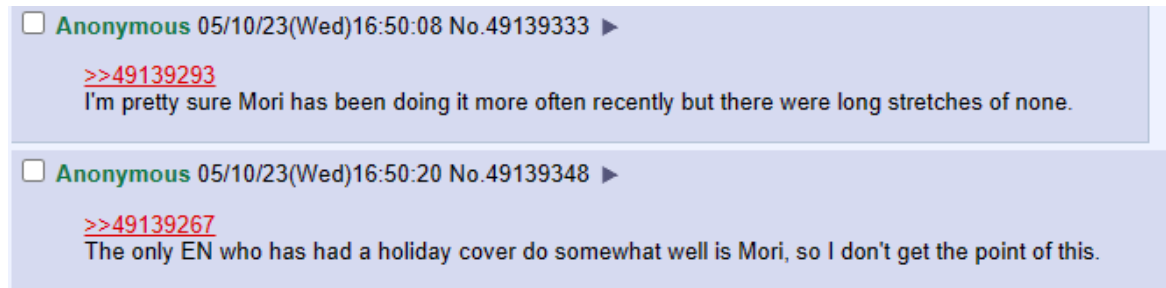


Figure 5.6: A screenshot of a comment section on 4Chan.org. A response to a comment will start out with the number of comment, which they are responding to (Anonymous, 2023). A user may click on this number in order to go to the message which is being responded to.

In recent years, there has also been a bigger focus on the right to control what data is available about oneself online, especially in the EU, with initiatives such as GDPR guidelines giving EU citizens the right to insight into what data is gathered about them, as well as the right to request personal data to be deleted from websites and social media platforms (Eur-Lex, 2022). This has forced social media sites to disclose how data about users is stored, as well as giving users more power over what personal data they share.

Overall, various social media sites offer several mandatory or optional means for expressing one's identity. At the same time, regulations from regulatory bodies, such as the EU, has granted users more insight into what identifiable data is available on various social media sites that they use, further strengthening users power to control their identity on social media sites. Such options suggest that individuals may utilize different social media platforms contingent on how they intend to present themselves, and may even create multiple handles or identities on social media websites to interact with and express themselves in different online communities.

5.2.2 Conversation

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), conversation "(...) represents the extent to which users communicate with other users in a social media setting" (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 244). Most social media sites have some way to facilitate communication between users, such as blog posts, comment sections, videos, etc. (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The reason for users' desire for communication on websites can be greatly varied and plentiful, such as keeping up with the newest tech, following trendy topics etc. Within the V-Tuber community on twitter, for example, many fans share fan created content they have created

with specific hashtags, in hope of getting the attention of the V-Tuber they are a fan of, see figure 5.7.



Figure 5.7: Fanart of the V-Tuber Ceres Fauna by the user @ToastyB (2023) being retweeted by @ceresfauna (2022). @ToastyB (2023) used a set of hashtags which are associated with Ceres Fauna, to increase the chance of it being seen. This has succeeded as @ceresfauna (2022) has chosen to retweet the tweet, indicating that it has been seen as valuable enough to highlight for the rest of their followers (Passmann, 2018).

Some V-Tubers also post content themselves to get feedback or a reaction from their community, as can be seen in figure 5.8.

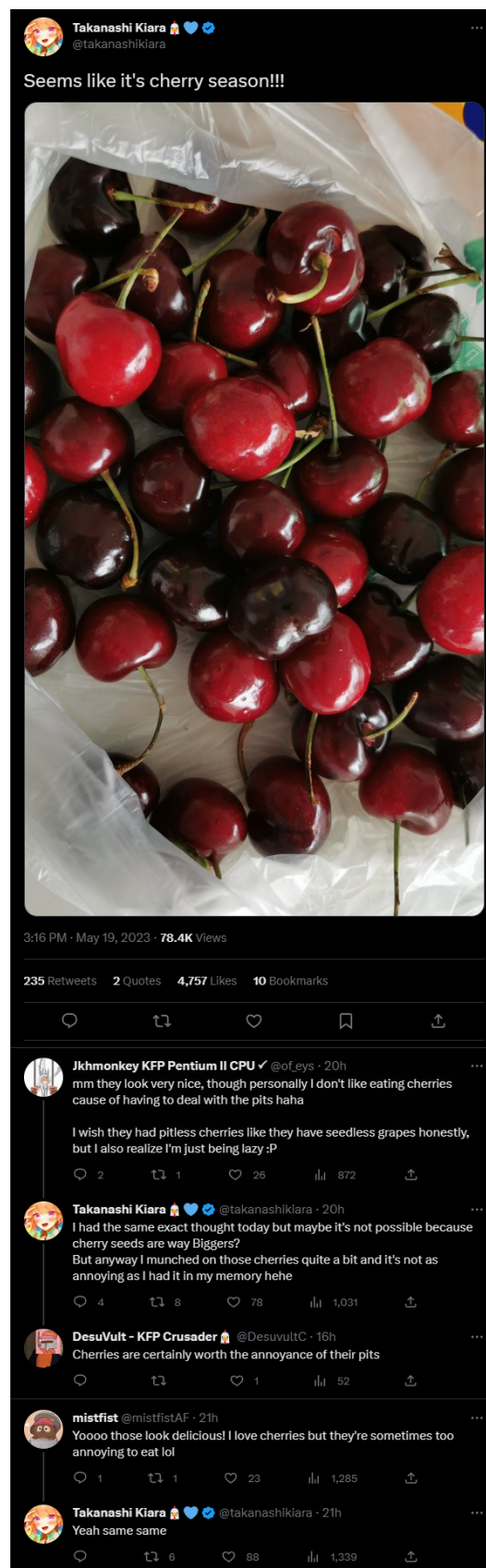


Figure 5.8: @takanashikiara (2023) sharing a post about how she recently bought cherries with the text *Seems like it's cherry season!.* This leads to a discussion within the community about the difficulties consuming cherries, which @takanashikiara (2023) engages in.

Since there are such vastly different reasons why users desire to communicate on social media, social media platforms have to accommodate different types of communication through features supporting these different types of communication. It is not, however, enough to simply meet the current need of the social media users; the user's desires for types of communication on social media are constantly changing and, as such, the features of social media platforms must accommodate these new desires.

One example of this is the evolution of the social media platform Twitter. Twitter started out in 2006 as a small messaging service, where users could, through sms, send messages to their friend as well as adding post to their blog, essentially working as a micro blog service (The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023a; Twitter, 2006). As time passed, celebrities and politicians started to get intrigued by social media. In April of 2009 Ashton Kutcher became the first person to have more than 1 million followers, and in the 2008 social media platforms, like Twitter, became an important part of Barack Obama's campaign for the US presidency (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Vanian, 2022). This raise in awareness of celebrities on the platform was not lost on the company, as Twitter started in 2010 to focus more on celebrities, big events and how companies could utilise twitter for their business (The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023a; Twitter, 2010a, 2010b), see figure 5.9.

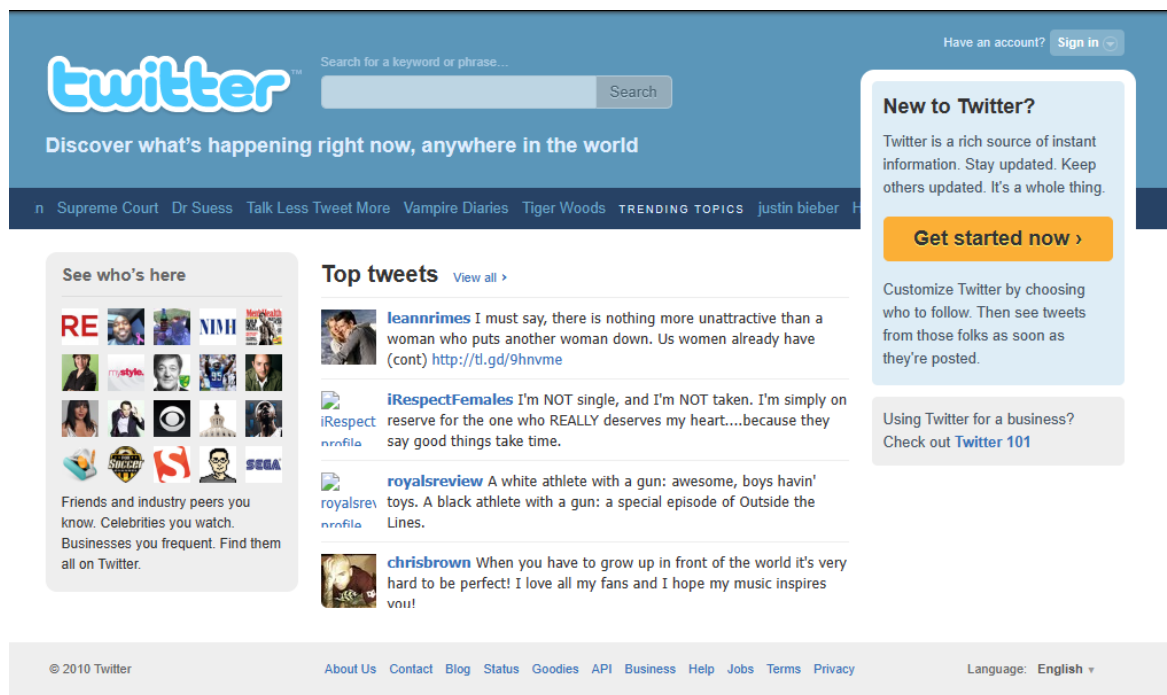


Figure 5.9: The frontpage of twitter in 2010. The focus has shifted from being a micro blogger tool, to focusing on celebrities. This can be seen in the highlights of trending topics, and the highlighted tweets from celebrities. Screenshot acquired through the waybackmachine (Internet Archive, 2023; Twitter, 2010a).

It was around this time that Twitter also became a tool for people in countries, where information is strongly controlled by governments or despots (The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023a; Vanian, 2022). An example of this could be seen during the Arab Spring, where Twitter was used as a tool to organise protest, and sharing news, although this has been contested by some researchers due to the discrepancy between rich and poor users who had access to a resource such as Twitter (Arafa & Armstrong, 2016; Bruns et al., 2013; Hermida et al., 2014; Lotan et al., 2011). This led twitter to become a forum for people to discuss and share not only ideas, but also events and news faster than traditional media would be able to confirm and validate the news (The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023a; Vanian, 2022). This could have been what made Twitter add new features such as increasing the length of a message from 140 to 280 characters, and adding spaces, a feature which allows the user to host small live voice chatrooms. This can also be seen in the change of the twitter frontage, see figure 5.10.

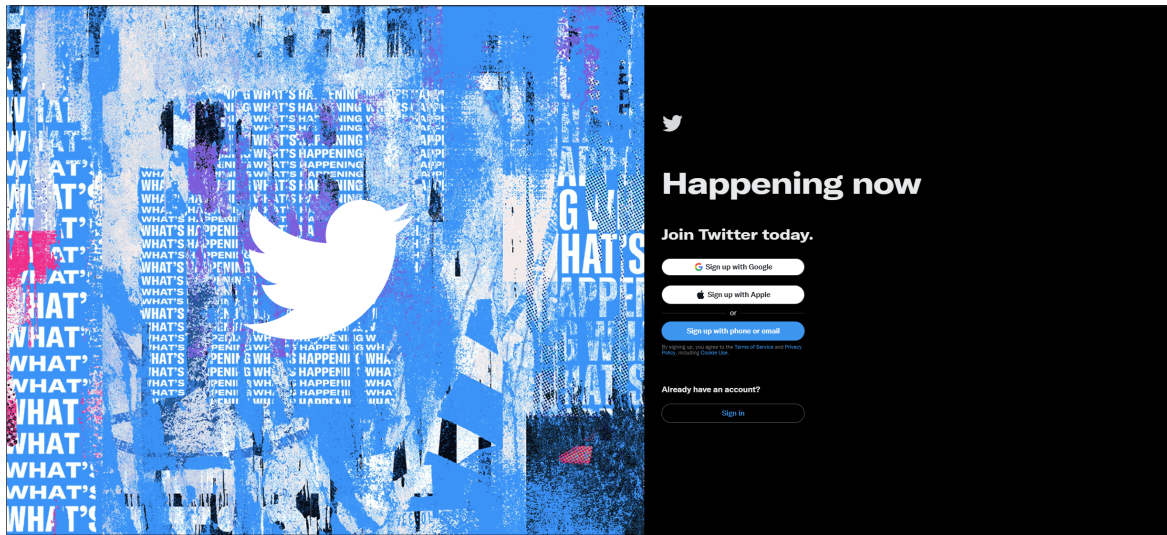


Figure 5.10: The login page used by twitter from around 2022. The twitter logo is placed on top of what can be remnant of street art. This could be to try and invoke a rebellious aesthetic, to showcase Twitter’s connection with organised protest. Screenshot aquired through the waybackmachine (Internet Archive, 2023; Twitter, 2022).

Users of a social media platform might also use multiple features of the platform to communicate at the same time, to further establish the boundaries of a conversation. For instance, Passmann (2018) describes a situation of two Twitter users, which were following each other, using both text and likes as a means of communicating within the replies of a tweet. While they were arguing in the tweet's replies, one user made sure to like one of the responses made by the other user to ensure that they, and anyone else looking onto the discussion from afar, could see that this argument was all in good fun and meant as nothing but playful banter. This does help to highlight one of the potential issues of online conversation, in that more nuanced details, like sarcasm, might not be registered

unless they are made apparent through other means, such as typing /s. Using likes in an argument, as a means of ensuring that all parties involved know that the argument shouldn't be taken seriously, thus can be seen as an example of how the users of online platforms can use certain platform features as extra means of communicating with one another.

Another aspect of communicating through features like this is the nuance that comes with them being very much tied to the context they are used in. For instance, for a like to be used to denote an argument being merely meant as a joke, the two arguing parties need to have an established relationship already, by for instance following one another, to further indicate the idea of them just being two friends messing around. Passmann (2018) further describes how likes on Twitter can be used for widely different things, be it as a means of trying to get likes yourself, as a bookmark, or simply to show that you like what someone posted. This further highlights that certain platform features have the potential of taking on widely different meanings depending on who looks at them, and as such one should carefully consider how an action on social media could potentially be interpreted by others, depending on the current context.

The nature of these features may also affect how users act, when communicating. Preece and Malony-krichmar (2003) describe to defining features of communication online, those being synchronous and asynchronous technologies. Synchronous technologies requires that all participants in the conversation are online at the same time, in order to facilitate the communication, while asynchronous do not. Many social media platforms make use of both types of communication in order to facilitate different needs within the users of the social media platforms.

Today, many social media sites try to meet the communication desires of many different user segments. This can create an element of conflict between the different user groups of the social media platform. One example of this would be the changes made to YouTube when it announced on November 10 2021 that the dislike counts of videos would no longer be publicly visible. While the platform stated this change was made in order to avoid harassment against platform creators, and there always is the risk that platform users will utilise conversation features to harass others on the platform (Baccarella et al., 2018), it has since then been pointed out that the dislike count of a video is still visible to the channel that posted it, causing people to call into question the effectiveness and intention behind the change (Koval, 2021). An example of a user sharing their grievances beneath the video announcing the change, can be seen in figure 5.11.

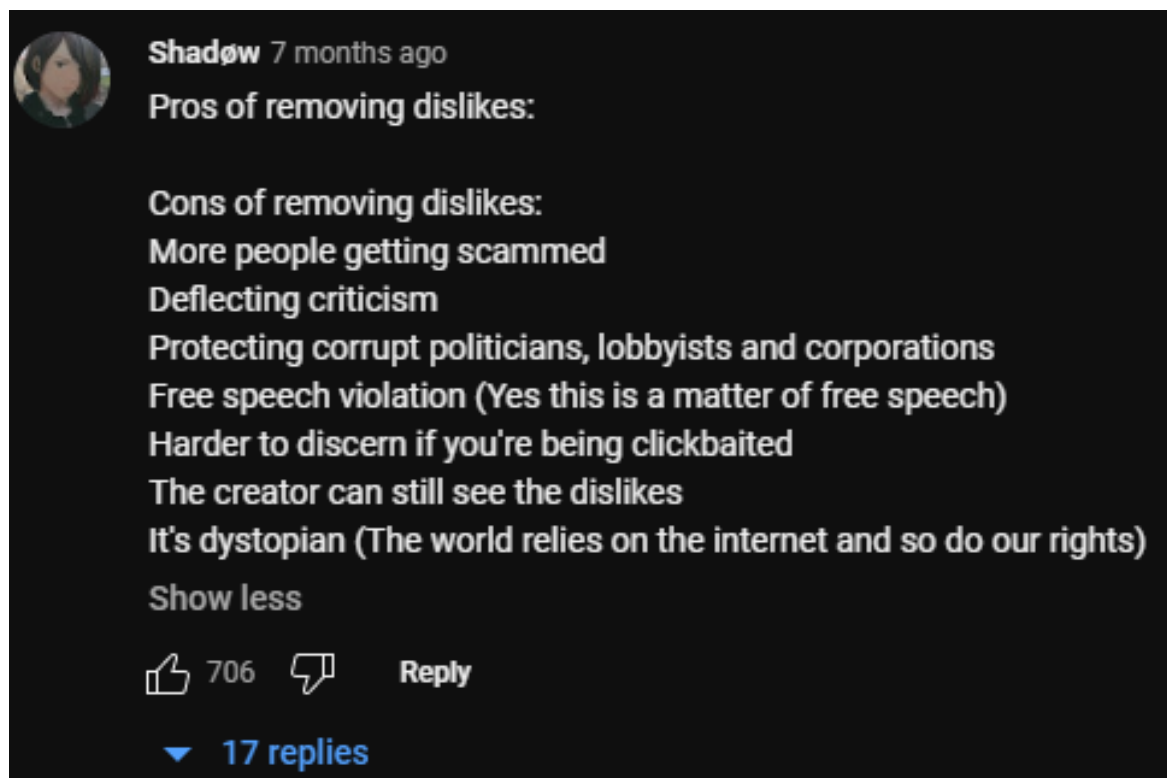


Figure 5.11: A negative comment beneath the video posted by YouTube, announcing the change to the dislikes on the platform (Koval, 2021). The number of likes and replies of the comment indicates that other users might agree with the comment.

Furthermore, many users spoke out about the benefits of publicly visible dislikes, such as figuring out whether a video is helpful or misleading. As a result of this, a portion of users have begun to use certain unofficial third party browser extensions, in order to circumvent the change done by the platform. Some of these extensions, like the Return YouTube Dislike extension, have several millions of downloads, further indicating the large number of platform user dissatisfied with the change (returnyoutubedislike.com, 2023).

The amount of conversation on social media is vast and covers many different topics. This can, according to Kietzmann et al. (2011), who base their view on research from McCARTHY et al. (2010) into industry dynamics, have an effect on how a company could make sense of the rate and direction of a conversation. This would mean that a set of tools for analysing, interpreting and understand the context of the conversation is required should a company wish to engage in conversation with it's customers on social media. At the same time, companies should be aware of the ever changing features within social media applications, as the social media platform tries to meet the demands of its users.

Overall, the features of conversation should support the conversations which are relevant for its users. Social Media platforms also need to be prepared to change their features to meet new demands from their users, which also requires companies on these platforms

to be aware of changes to how conversation is conducted on the platform.

5.2.3 Sharing

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), "*Sharing* represents the extent to which users exchange, distribute, and receive content" (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 245). On some social media platforms, the focus for communication is centered around shareable objects such as videos, texts or pictures. While these can be used for discussion, there are also situations where the sharing of the object is meant as the input to the communication.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) suggest that there is at least two implications which companies should consider when engaging with the sharing block of this model; to evaluate what these objects have in common between each other. This can also help to identify new objects which can help to connect shared interests between users of social media. This theme is in particular utilised by a lot of western V-Tubers. An example of this is the V-Tuber Melissa Belladonna who has based their V-Tuber model on a Tiefling, a playable race from the tabletop game Dungeons & Dragons (@TieflingMelissa, 2022; Wizards of the Coast, 2023). Through her model, she is able to both cater to a V-Tuber audience, who enjoy the use of a virtual avatar, and Dungeons & Dragons fans who will be able to recognise the iconic look of the Tiefling race, see figure 5.12.



Figure 5.12: In this tweet, the V-Tuber Melissa describes her finished stream, which focused on content from the tabletop game Dungeons and Dragons (@TieflingMelissa, 2023).

The other implication focuses on to what degree you can, or should, share the object. An example of this can be seen in the many changes there have been to YouTube's content policy, which often came without informing the YouTube creators about them. This has led to situations where some YouTube content creators have retroactively gotten punished for old content breaking new rules, which had been revised without their knowledge, such as what happened with the YouTuber RTGame. RTGame had two videos which broke the new revised rules on YouTube regarding swearing, which resulted in his videos to being age restricted to 18+ and also marked his videos as unsafe for advertisers. This made it so that RTGame would earn significantly less revenue per video, which as a full-time YouTuber, would significantly reduce his overall income (RTGame, 2023).

It is important to notice that what should and shouldn't be shared, as well as the consequences of doing so, aren't always as explicit as mentioned in the above example. Some groupings have different implicit rules or norms for what you should and shouldn't post. For example, in the V-Tuber community, translations about important events can meet high levels of scrutiny if they are deemed by the community as failing to present the events in, what is deemed by the community, a clear and concise way (u/Logie_19, 2021; u/Xeith_Maneheart, 2021). This has lead to some translators trying to create list of good V-Tuber translators which are approved by other translators (u/Yeflacon, 2020; vaendryl, 2022).

Overall, when sharing content it is important that the users of the site understand what can and cannot be shared. At the same time, it is up to the communities and social media sites to lay clear rules for what is and isn't acceptable to share on the sites and have features to support the creation of such rules. Social media sites should also be certain that users can share the type of content they desire for their communities.

5.2.4 Presence

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), presence refers to how well other users can see if a given user is available or not. Most online platforms built around users interacting with other users have some form of system in place for managing this availability. For instance, Discord displays the availability of its user through one of five states:

- Offline, which is displayed when the application isn't running
- Online, which is displayed by default when the application is open and no other status is selected
- Idle, which is displayed if the user has the application open, but hasn't used their computer for a few minutes
- Do Not Disturb, which has to be specifically selected and mutes incoming messages
- Invisible, which makes a user look as if they were Offline to other users

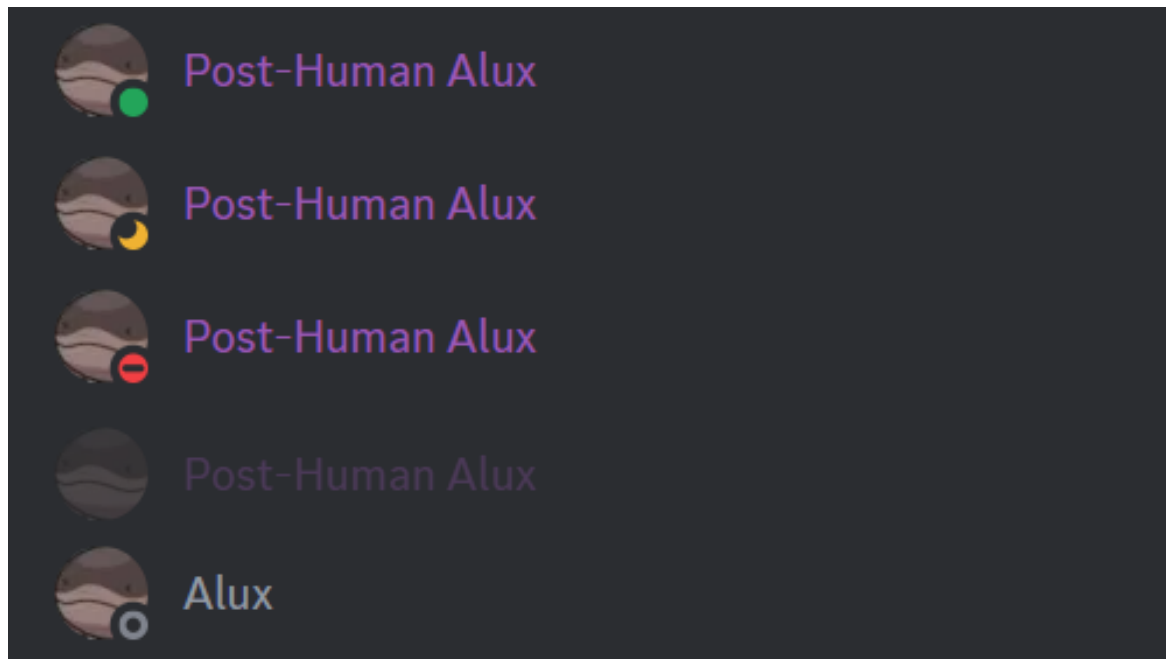


Figure 5.13: The different availability states of a Discord user. From top to bottom: Online, Idle, Do Not Disturb, and Invisible/Offline. Note that the Offline state will look slightly different, depending on whether a person looks for the user in a server (second from the bottom) or in their direct messages with the user (bottom).

What's worth noting about these displays of presence is how they can be interpreted differently across both communities and individuals. For instance, some Discord users will have the 'Do Not Disturb' state selected by default, even though they aren't currently in a situation where they don't wish to be disturbed. This is due to the do not disturb state silencing message pings from discord, making it so the user is not disturbed by the noise and notification. This potential complexity and room for interpretation of these availability signifiers should be kept in mind, both when selecting one and seeing others do so.

Another thing of note is the whole aspect of presence within the real world being displayed online. While this aspect of sharing pictures of oneself in specific locations on social media is still present on certain platforms to some extent, other platforms don't have the interface for displaying a user's real world location. Furthermore, it could be speculated that the appeal of being anonymous on the internet could discourage users from displaying their real world location. The potential risk of getting doxxed, the act of people finding out the personal information of a user and using it to harass, threaten, and cause other harm to said user, could further be a reason for online platform users to worry about their privacy and further refrain from sharing certain information, such as their location (Camebridge Dictionary, 2023; Merriam-Webster, 2023).

The main point one can take from all of this, is that while it is possible to see who might be currently available, the people who might be available yet choose not to be

seen can not really be accounted for. Furthermore, as most social media platforms can be both synchronous and asynchronous to varying degrees, there is usually little need to communicate with a user the exact moment they are available. Social media platforms should also be vary about adding functionality to these signifiers, as this may change how users utilise them.

5.2.5 Relationships

Kietzmann et al. (2011) describes the relationship aspect of social media as "the extent to which users can be related to other users" (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p.246). Kietzmann et al. (2011) describe this relation as two or more users having some sort of association with each other, such as being fans of the same thing, having the same interest or hobby, working at the same office etc. The main distinguishing factor of these relationships between users comes primarily in the form of how different social media sites and applications facilitate these relationships, and which forms they end up taking as a result. For instance, sites such as YouTube and Twitter give their users incentives to grow their follower base, which can lead to people forming more distant relationships on these sites compared to social media sites that more so facilitate a closer connection between users, such as Discord. Some viewers may also hack other elements of the website, in order to facilitate different relationships. For example, fans of V-Tubers often have a specific emoji associated with them, which other fans can use to identify each other, see Figure 5.14.



Figure 5.14: This picture depicts the Twitter profile of (@franklyperhaps, 2023), a fan of the V-Tuber Takanashi Kiara. In the users name, they have put an emoji of a chicken, indicating to other V-Tuber fans that this user is a fan of Takanashi Kiara.

It should be noted however, that the relationship dynamic of a given social media platform also has the potential to change over time, depending on the amount of people a given user interacts with. For instance, a small Twitter account might still be able to maintain a close relationship with some of their followers, whereas a large account most likely would not be able to maintain this similarly close relationship with all of their followers, due to the sheer amount of time and effort required to maintain a close relationship with that many people.

Another thing that is equally important to understand in terms of relationships on social media sites is that users have been observed to maintain different relationships towards

the accounts of other users, compared to the official accounts of brands. One example of this could be seen during the later half of the 2010s, when brand accounts on social media tried to appeal to internet culture by acting more in line with how certain online users would, through posting memes, referencing internet humor, and similar things to appear relatable, possibly resulting in users perceiving a brand as more anthropomorphic and a better relationship between an interacting user and the brand in question (Hudson et al., 2016). While some of these posts were initially received positively, eventually online users would react far more negatively towards said posts, some even creating memes specifically for the purpose of mocking the brands in question (Internet Historian, 2019). An example of such a meme can be seen in figure 5.15.



Figure 5.15: An example of a meme mocking a brand being posted beneath a brand post on Twitter (Internet Historian, 2019)

It can be speculated that the reason for this turn from positive to negative reaction could be due to online users seeing these relatable brand posts as being pandering, and merely a means for brands to exploit online culture for the sake of advertising.

What this helps to highlight is the fact that users will often see and treat company

related accounts very differently compared to individual users. As such, any company that wishes to establish themselves on social media platforms needs to be aware of this relationship between them and the other users, and act in accordance with that relationship as to not overstep any potential boundaries. Alternatively, a company could instead use the account of an established figure within the company, such as a CEO or brand representative, in order to appear less corporate and more as a regular individual, which could potentially allow for other forms of interactions between the company and other users on the platform. An example of this would be how Motoaki Tanigo, the CEO of COVER Corporation which owns one of the largest V-Tuber corporations in the world, presents himself as being both a capable CEO, while also not taking himself too seriously. This has lead to him becoming both well known and beloved within the V-Tuber community, to the point where people make funny clips and memes of him just like they do for the V-Tubers of the Corporation he runs(RudyShyTM, 2020). This endearment has gone so far as to some members of the community referring to him as being "best girl", a term usually used to describe a person's favorite character when debating online about which characters they prefer over others. This also has the additional benefit of avoiding potential infighting between the fanbases of the corporation's V-Tubers, as there is no need to argue over which of the V-Tubers is the best, if everyone jokingly agrees that it's the company's CEO. An example of some of these memes created about Motoaki Tanigo can be seen in figure 5.16.



Figure 5.16: The Cover Corporation CEO Motoaki Tanigo. On the left, an image found in an official marketing post by the company's Twitter account (@hololive_En, 2021). On the right, a meme about the CEO(u/Stetscopes, 2021).

Overall, these findings would indicate that relationships on social media can be dependent on what type of relationship the social media sites facilitates, as well as how users on the site choose to engage. Based on the history of companies on sites like Twitter, it would seem that there is a difference between what kind of relationship users wish to have with a company, as opposed to with another users. Companies should keep this in mind, and look at alternative ways of approaching customers on social media, should they wish to build a stronger bond with them.

5.2.6 Reputation

Reputation is perhaps one of the most difficult things to measure on social media, as it refers to how a given user is perceived by others (Kietzmann et al., 2011). As such, how this sense of reputation is communicated through social media can vary greatly from platform to platform. In some cases for instance, this reputation can take the form of a member of a site being assigned a specific role or title, which is being publicly displayed to signify their status on the site and as a way to vouch for their reputation. An example of this can be seen in figure 5.17.

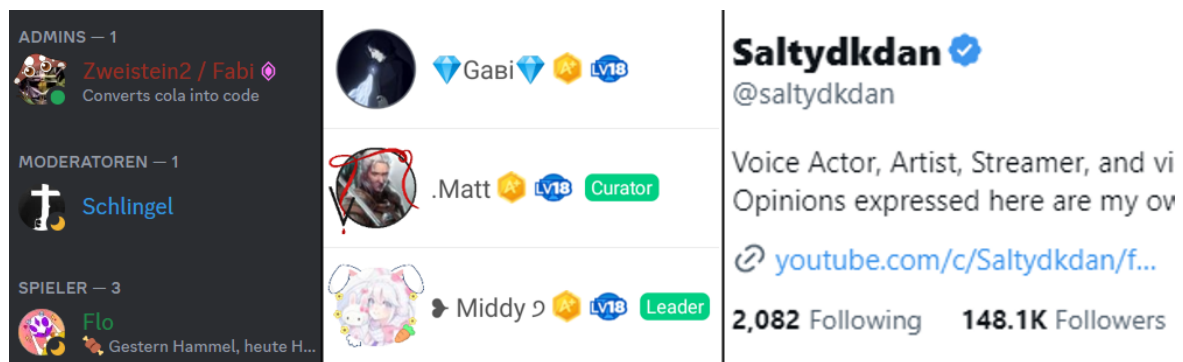


Figure 5.17: Three examples of the ways different social media platforms display roles and titles next to usernames: Discord (left), Amino (middle), and Twitter (right).

In other cases, this reputation can take the form of a numerical value within a specific metric, much in line with how Schmidt and Van Dellen (2022) describes social media being able to show a dedicated value one can use to see the current support a given message is receiving. On video sharing sites, like YouTube, this metric could take the form of the amount of subscribers a given account has, as well as the number of views and likes a video of theirs gets. On a site like Twitter, this could be the number of followers an account has, as well as the number of likes and retweets they get on a given tweet. Other platforms, such as Reddit, have a system for combining the total number of up-votes and down-votes a given user gets across all of their posts into a single number, to signify how well their contributions are received across their given communities. In a similar vein, the Amino app for online communities combines almost every single action a user can take into one collective reputation number. Here, every time a user chats with others, gets a like on one of their posts, or comments, gets a new follower, or any similar actions, these widely different things are added to the reputation stat. Unlike most other social media sites, this reputation number is further displayed in a leaderboard on the platform, alongside the 100 users with the highest reputation. An example of how these stats of reputation are displayed visually can be seen in figure 5.18.

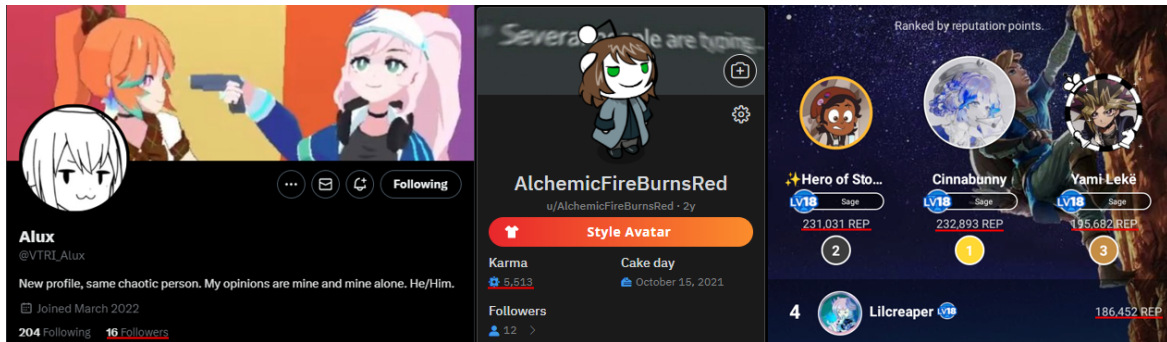


Figure 5.18: Three different forms of reputation: A Twitter profile (left), a Reddit profile (middle), and the reputation leaderboard of a 'Legend of Zelda' centered Amino (right).

As such, with means of signifying reputation being so different from platform to platform, the criteria for successfully obtaining a positive reputation can equally vary a great amount. Another thing of note is that the metric chosen for measuring this success in reputation also needs to be chosen with great care. For instance, Kietzmann et al. (2011) points out that while a large amount of Twitter followers may indicate the popularity of an account, this does not equate to every single follower reading every single post of the account in question. Furthermore, the Twitter algorithm has a tendency to show a user content based on which kinds of posts the user gives likes to, meaning that a user might not even see the posts of someone they follow if they don't like their posts (Passmann, 2018). What can become equally and perhaps more important than the number of followers an account has, is the ratio between the number of followers one has and the number of people one follows. Passmann (2018) for instance points out that getting followed by an account, which only follows a select few people, could be seen as a greater sign of respect than getting followed by an account, which follows more people than they have followers themselves. This notion of only following a few accounts is somewhat contested by Lahuerta-Otero and Cordero-Gutiérrez (2016), who highlight the importance of following other users as a means of increasing one's influence and growing one's personal network. In line with this attribution of value to a social media function, different actions can also be seen as having different values assigned to them by the people using a given platform. For instance, Passmann (2018) describes how a Retweet can be seen as more valuable than a Like, because a Retweet publicly shares the tweet in question with the entire follower base of the person Retweeting it, where as users have to actively go out of their way in order to see the tweets a user has Liked. Due to this, retweets are often times interpreted as being a direct endorsement of both the tweet in question and the person that posted said tweet. This assignment of value to certain functions is also already being taken into consideration by certain companies, by for instance using it to measure the overall amount of engagement a given post by the company gets (Azar et al., 2016).

As such, a company needs to be aware of which metrics are actually representative of gaining a proper reputation online. As this will vary greatly from platform to platform,

one needs to adapt and change these measurements of success on a case by case basis, in order to ensure they actually indicate a positive reputation. Furthermore, a company needs to be aware of the values assigned to given forms of interaction by the users of a platform, so as to not appear as being out of touch with the intrinsic social norms present on the social media platform in question. For instance, a company account should very carefully consider whether to retweet something posted by another user or not, due to how this could potentially be seen as an endorsement by the account, and as such the company as a whole.

5.2.7 Groups

The last aspect of social media encapsulated by the honeycomb model is the ability for users on a platform to form groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011). While most social media platforms lend themselves well to some form of group formation, the form which these groups can take varies greatly from site to site. For instance, both Reddit and Discord have this group formation as one of the very core aspects of their respective platforms, Discord through the creation of dedicated servers, and channels within these servers, and Reddit through it's subreddit communities, both of which are usually focused on a singular topic of interest, see figure 5.19 for an example of a reddit community.

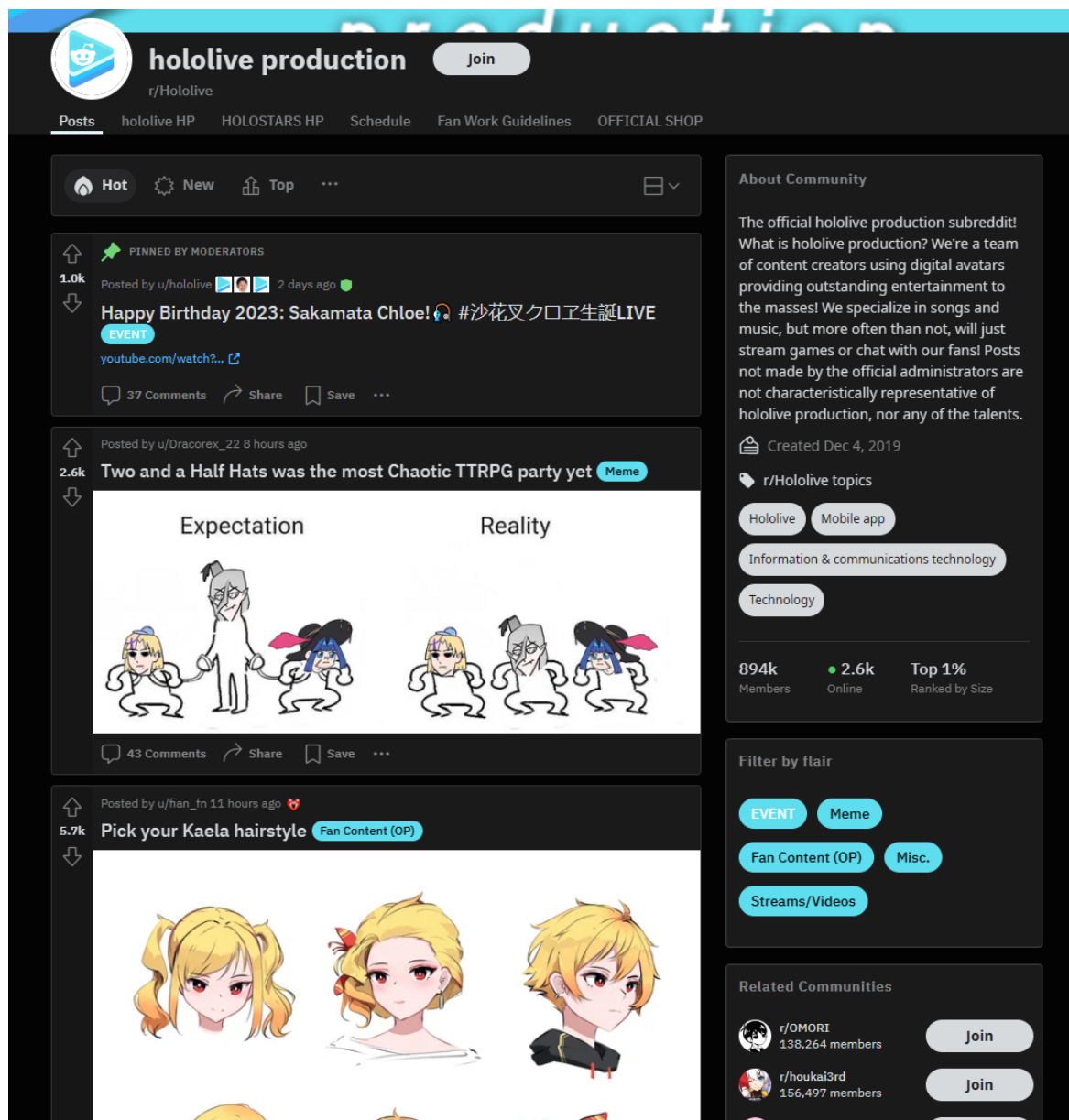


Figure 5.19: Image from the hololive subreddit (r/hololive, 2023).

Other sites have dedicated features for forming groups, such as Facebook allowing its users to create dedicated groups with their own group pages. Other sites on the other hand may not have dedicated features for the formation of groups, yet do still indirectly supply their users with the tools needed for group formation. For instance, any platform that allows users to add more than one person to a chat for direct messaging, such as Facebook's Messenger or Twitter DMs, has the potential for users to use this feature in order to form private groups amongst each other. Due to this, it can theoretically even

be possible for smaller groups to form even within already dedicated communities, like someone creating a private group DM with members from a Discord server they're a part of. While these group DMs might indicate a less formal type of group, with little to no rules, some chats might still use some of the features offered by these group DMs, such as pinning specific messages or a chat description, in order to set up a clear code of conduct and a set of rules. This helps to highlight the fact that the groups formed on social media will adapt to the features present on the given platform they are on.

In other cases, groups might form based on several accounts being similar in terms of size and area which they discuss. Passmann (2018) for instance describes how several larger German Twitter accounts began liking each others posts, following each other, and both meeting up and conversing at Twitter meetups in the real world, all while somewhat jokingly and ironically referring to themselves as part of the "Twitter Elite". The existence of a leader-board-like hall of fame on a website, which noted down the most popular German Twitter accounts, based on unknown metrics, further enforced this image of a unified group of "Elite" Twitter users. What is particularly of note here is the notion that groups in some cases might not so much be actively formed by the people in the group, and rather by people outside of the group perceiving these people as being part of a group merely for frequently interacting with one another. For instance, a user might see this hall of fame of popular Twitter users described by Passmann (2018) and assume they're all part of the same group, even though no official group might exist and not everyone on the leader board might actually engage or associate with each other. An example of this grouping of people can be seen when certain fans of a V-Tuber decide to 'ship' their favorite V-Tuber with another V-Tuber, that is to say that the fan fantasizes about both of them being in a romantic relationship despite this not being the case in reality. As an example of this, the Hololive V-Tubers IRYs and Hakos Baelz have had several pieces of shipping fanfiction written about them on the website Archive of Our Own, after jokingly acting like a married couple during a livestream, despite the fact that neither of them have officially spoken about being in a relationship with one another (Clipper make videos, 2021; of Our Own, 2023).

Another thing that is very much relevant to the formation and persistence of these groups is the presence of some form of group identity, as has been previously discussed in section 4.1. As such, appealing to both the formation of a group and group identity around a company could be beneficial for the company in question.

Overall, while most social media platforms offer some kind of support for groups, some may only offer very minor support in the form of smaller group chats, which can't support bigger community elements.

With a thorough understanding of each of these aspects of the Honeycomb model established, this report will use the model as a basis for analysing two different social media platforms, in order to determine how well they lend themselves to building a community around V-Tuber model creation.

5.3 Analysis of YouTube

YouTube.com is a platform primarily used for the online hosting of video content, allowing for users to upload both more traditional video on demand (VOD), as well as to live-stream themselves. The relevance of analysing YouTube as a social media platform primarily stems from the interview data gathered by Kracht and Petersen (2022a, 2022b), which highlighted YouTube as one of the primary places where individuals encounter V-Tubers for the first time. Furthermore, the fact that the term V-Tuber refers to a virtual YouTuber further highlights the deep rooted connections to the platform and makes it all the more worth investigating.

5.3.1 Identity

There are a few ways in which YouTube as a platform enables the identity block of the honeycomb model. As a starting point, the website requires a user to consciously share certain information regarding their identity, in order to register an account. The immediate information details that come to mind include a name for the user's YouTube channel, a profile picture, a banner image and an about section. Furthermore, YouTube allows a user to further customise the layout of uploaded content to their channel, by for instance featuring a specific video on their channel page, or highlighting specific video playlists. A channel can also further add a watermark to their videos through YouTube, as a means of further highlighting their identity within their content. If an account has been verified by YouTube, a user can also upload custom thumbnails for their videos, allowing them to further highlight and express their own identity.

While all of this information is shared publicly, it is worth noting that a user may be required to share further information with the website, in order to unlock specific features. For instance, in order to upload videos longer than 15 minutes, live stream, and add custom thumbnails to videos, a user is required to provide YouTube with a phone number, as a means of verification (YouTube Help, 2023b). Additionally, in certain countries a user may be required to share a picture of a valid ID or credit card with the platform, as a means to verify being above the age of 18 and access content on the platform that has been marked as age restricted (YouTube Help, 2023c). However, this requirement of needing to share such personal information with a company might deter certain people from making use of these features, especially when keeping the potential privacy and safety risks of using the internet (Baccarella et al., 2018).

The other way a user can share aspects of their identity through YouTube is through the actual content uploaded to the user's channel, in the form of videos, live-streams, and the channel's community window, which once unlocked allows the channel to post text, pictures, polls, and other media than just video content. Here the user can choose to actively and consciously disclose aspects about their life and identity, by for instance using a camera to show their own face in their videos, showing off their own apartment, or using their real name as opposed to an online pseudonym or username. However, as previously

highlighted in section 5.2.1, a user might also subconsciously share certain information through the content uploaded to their channel, that they perhaps didn't intend to share with the public. This subconscious sharing of information, through even minor aspects such as accents, figures of speech, personality traits, and other traits, can lead to even platform creators, that don't disclose personal information about themselves, establishing a sense of online identity. As a result of this, as well as the fact that the content uploaded to a YouTube channel is the main source of new information, it can be argued that a large part of a user's identity on YouTube is actually expressed through the content one chooses to upload. This is further supported by the fact, that the first thing one will see when clicking on a user's channel page is the videos they uploaded, whereas one has to actively navigate to the channel's about page to read about the channel, as can be seen in figure 5.20.

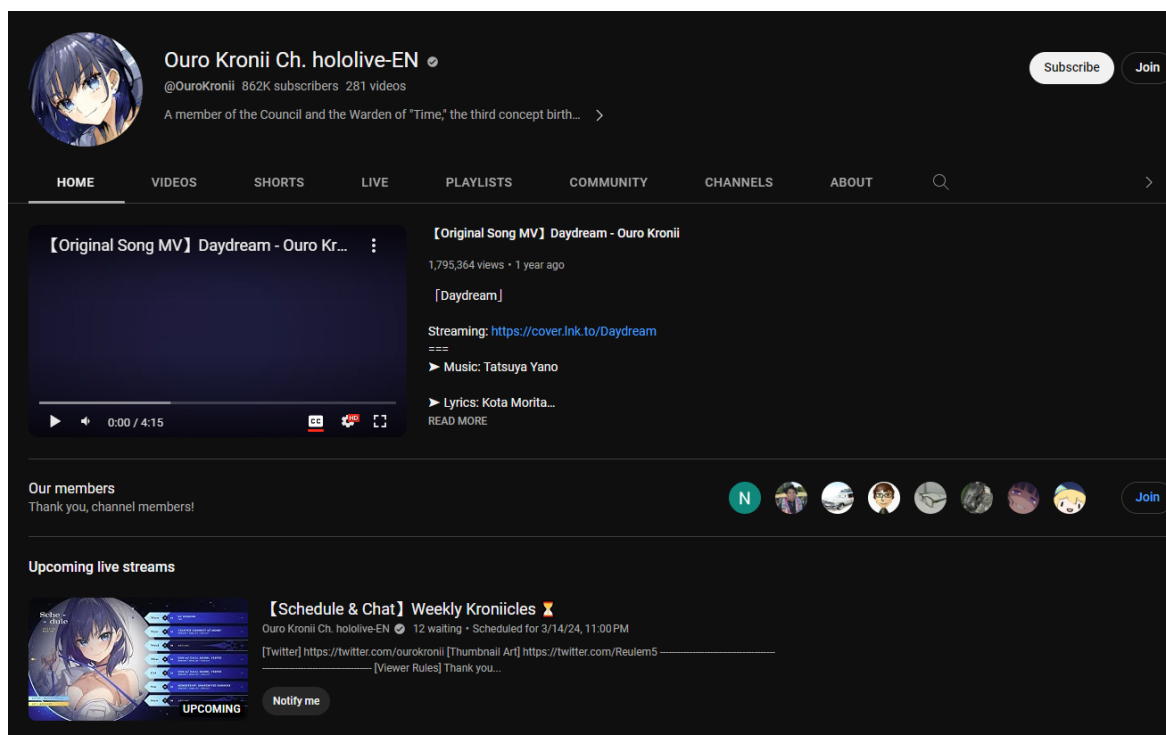


Figure 5.20: The YouTube Channel Page of the V-Tuber Ouro Kronii (Ouro, 2023a). Notice how the tab leading to the channels about page is the furthest away from the home tab, and that the home page primarily features video content and upcoming live-streams.

Furthermore, the existence of the term "YouTuber", referring to a person that regularly uploads content on YouTube, inherently applies a sense of identity to the person operating a YouTube channel, as opposed to a more traditional TV channel which hosts multiple different producers of content.

In conclusion, it seems that YouTube as a platform allows its users to determine for

themselves how much information about their real world identity they wish to publicly disclose on the website. This can primarily be seen through the existence of both channels that use the real identity of the channel creator, and channels that exclusively use a virtual identity or pseudonym, with no immediately apparent ties to their real identity, existing on the same platform. Furthermore, both of these approaches to channels and identity seem to share equal levels of success and popularity, as can be seen in figure 5.21.

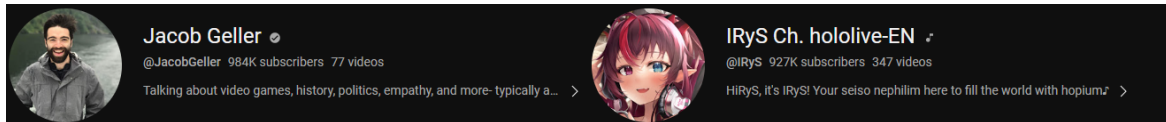


Figure 5.21: Two YouTube channels of similar size, showing different parts of their identity. On the left, the YouTuber Jacob Geller, utilizing his own name and identity for his channel (Geller, 2023). On the right, the V-Tuber IRyS, using a pseudonym (IRyS, 2023).

As such, it would seem that identity has some level of importance on YouTube, though the extent of this seems to vary greatly from user to user. Furthermore, this expression of identity seems to primarily be present for the users that actively upload content to YouTube, as the uploaded content can quickly become the main way for a user to express their identity.

5.3.2 Conversation

YouTube enables the conversation block of the honeycomb model through a few different ways, though the primary means of conversation on the platform seem to be through the comment section beneath a video. Since YouTube is primarily a video hosting site, this method of conversation has been used by the users of the website to comment on a given video and share their own thoughts about it with the video's creator. It is also possible for other users to reply to comments beneath a video, which turns them into threads of conversation, much akin to those found on other online websites and forums such as Reddit. Just like forum posts, a conversation carried through these threads will be asynchronous in nature, as opposed to having a synchronous conversation in real time. What's worth noting, is that these comments beneath the video are often times just a one way conversation, unless the creator of the video decides to reply to a comment. While the replies of a comment will be hidden by default and not show anything about the people responding to it, should the creator of a video respond to a comment beneath one of their videos, it will be highlighted and display their profile picture, as can be seen in figure 5.22.

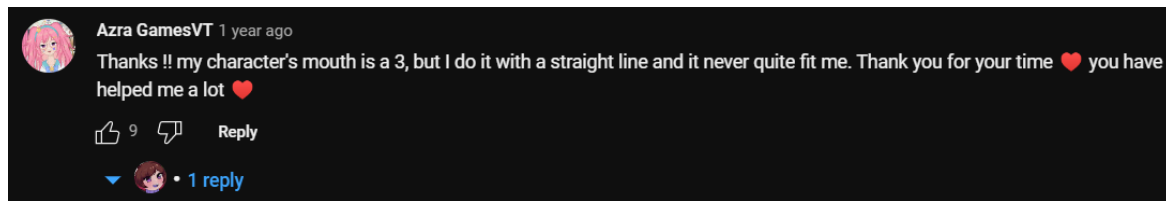


Figure 5.22: A comment beneath a video tutorial from the V-Tuber Cutie Dragon, signifying that the V-Tuber has responded to it (Cutie Dragon, 2021).

Furthermore, there are other ways a user can communicate with the creator of a comment than just replying to the comment directly. Much like videos, users can also give likes and dislikes to comments beneath a video, though the number of dislikes a given comment has will not be visible. Furthermore, the creator of a video can choose to 'Love' a comment, which gives it a little heart with the creator's profile picture next to it, as can be seen in figure 5.23.

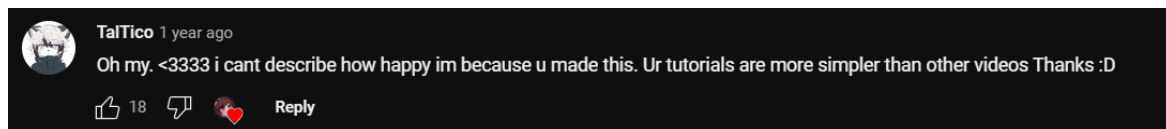


Figure 5.23: A comment beneath a video tutorial from the V-Tuber Cutie Dragon, showing that the V-Tuber 'Loved' the comment (Cutie Dragon, 2021).

All of these functions and features can also be found when commenting on a community post made by the owner of a channel. While a user of the platform can comment on a community post, as well as like, dislike, and reply to other comments in the same way they can do so with a video, community posts allow for a YouTube channel to converse with their audience in very different ways compared to the videos they upload. For instance, live streamers can use these community posts as a means to post their streaming schedule, so that their audience can find it in the same place they watch the streamer, as can be seen in figure 5.24.

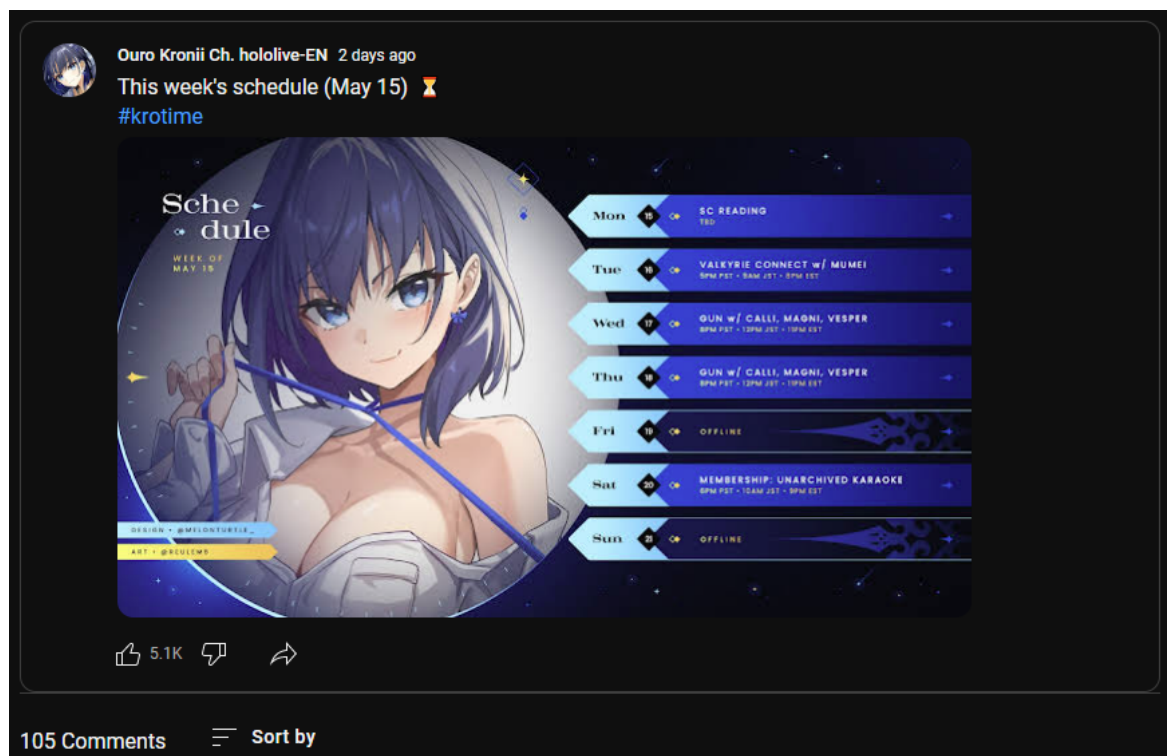


Figure 5.24: The V-Tuber Ouro Kronii sharing her stream schedule with her audience through a YouTube Community post (Ouro, 2023b).

Similar to commenting on a YouTube video however, a conversation carried out like this will be asynchronous and can become rather one sided from the perspective of a commenter, as there is a much higher chance to have other commenters reply to a comment, than the channel that uploaded what one is commenting on. One thing of note, is that YouTube actually allows a channel creator to manage the comments on their video, and gives them the option to hold potentially inappropriate comments, thus not showing said comments beneath the video. While this does partially avoid the issue of potential harassment pointed out by Baccarella et al. (2018), a channel can still choose to check through the comments withheld by YouTube's system manually, thus exposing themselves to the potentially harmful content regardless.

A different way of conversing between a YouTube channel and a viewer can occur during a livestream of the channel. Here, the channel can directly respond to comments in almost real time, and thus have a synchronous conversation with a commenter. However, the ability to carry out a synchronous conversation heavily dependent on the amount of people commenting on the livestream, as this will have an effect on how long chat messages will remain visible before getting eclipsed by other comments. One way users can increase their chances of their message being seen, is by donating a Superchat. Superchats are messages which are available at the top of the chat for a limited time, depending on

how much is donated, see figure 5.25.

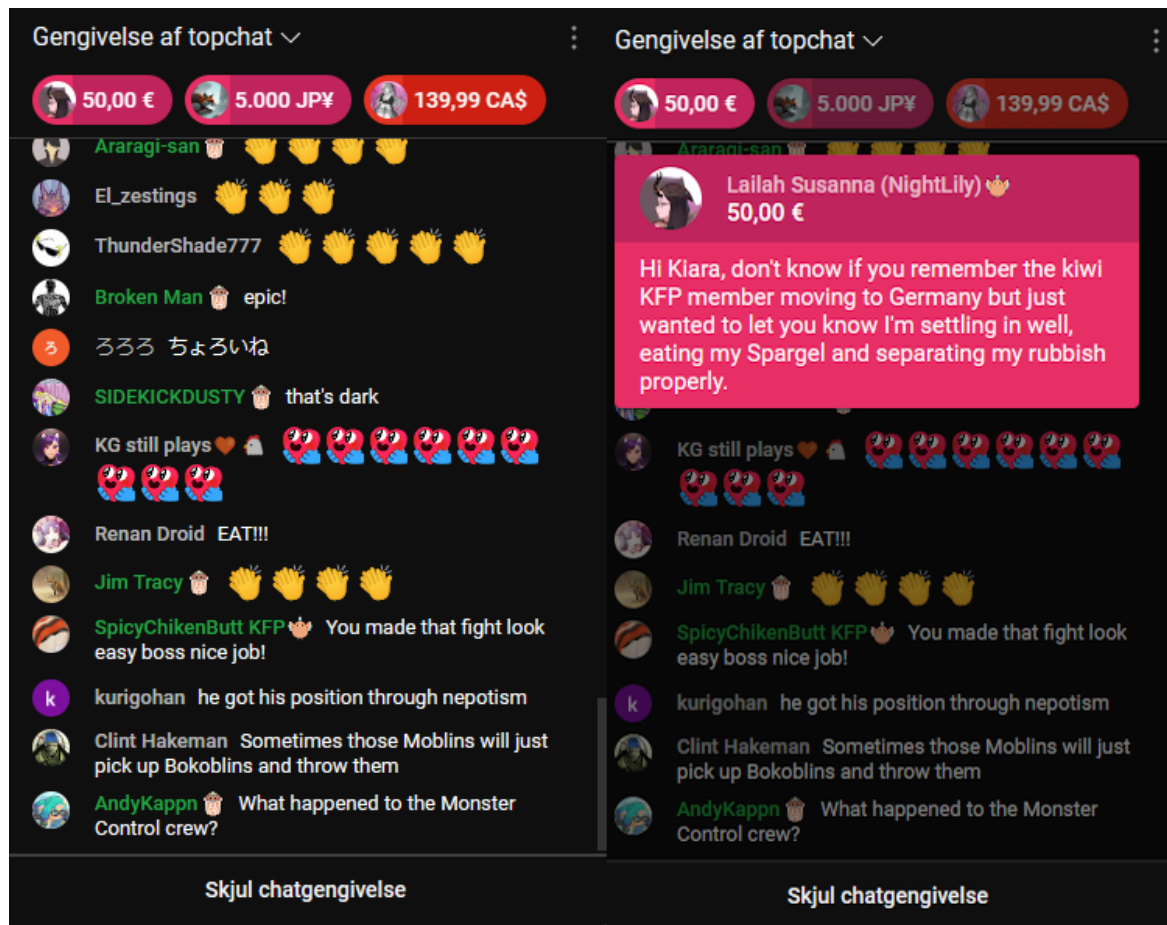


Figure 5.25: Superchats are shown on the of the comment box for a set amount of time, as seen to the left. Once the user click on the superchat, the message will be shown on top of the chatbox, with the other messages grayed out, as shown to the right. Chat is from (Takanashi, 2023)

Another way one can carry out a conversation through YouTube, is through the actual content one shares on the platform. An example of this could for instance be a video responding to certain comments beneath a previous video, like in the way of a Q&A, or a video responding to another video made by a different user. Just like leaving a comment beneath a video however, this conversation will also be asynchronous in nature, due to the amount of time it usually takes to record, edit, and upload a video to YouTube.

Lastly, the existence of likes and dislikes on YouTube allow for some form of communication as well, in a similar way to how Passmann (2018) describes communication on Twitter. However, unlike with Twitter, it is a lot more difficult on YouTube to see who exactly liked a comment by a given user, as it is not displayed. The only exception to this, is when a channel decides to 'love' a comment, which clearly and publicly displays their

affinity for the comment, while any other commenter does not get this option. Similarly, a user can not simply go to a YouTube channel to see which videos and comments that channel has liked or disliked. As a result of this, the likes of a YouTube video or comment can be seen as anonymised, making the interpretive nature of communicating through them even more difficult. It is because of this, that one of the only possible interpretations of likes on YouTube becomes that a lot of likes means a lot of people agree with a given video or comment. As such, one could argue that this communication through quantity, rather than quality, bears some resemblance to critical mass (Preece & Malony-krichmar, 2003, p. 16), in that a certain number of likes somewhat required for the like count of a comment to really mean something.

In conclusion, it has become clear that the great majority of conversation on YouTube occurs in an asynchronous matter. Furthermore, it seems that when leaving a comment on a YouTube video, one cannot expect to get any sort of reply in return, unlike with a social media platform, that has a more direct messaging system. While the option of livestreaming does somewhat rectify this issue, the fact that VOD content still has a very large presence on YouTube, and that a user's message might still fall on deaf ears in a very active live chat, unless they choose to spend money, calls into question how well livestreaming facilitates synchronous conversation on YouTube.

The fact that comments can only be left beneath existing videos or community posts also further limits the possibility of conversation, as it can be called into question how many people would be willing to upload a video to a video sharing site with the sole intention of conversing in said video's comment section.

5.3.3 Sharing

YouTube primarily enables the sharing block of the honeycomb model through the ways which users can share content on the platform. This primarily takes the form of users being able to upload different videos to the platform, as YouTube has since its inception primarily been a video hosting platform. As long as the video doesn't violate the platform's terms of service, it will be accessible through the platform by allowing others to either search for it, using YouTube's search function, or to find it by accessing the creator's channel page. Additionally, a video might appear on a user's recommended page, if YouTube's algorithm determines that the content and subject of the video matches the potential interests of that user. If a user is subscribed to a certain channel, and has selected to receive notifications, they will also get notified every time that channel uploads a video or is about to go live.

As such, video is the primary medium through which the owners of the platform's many channels share their ideas, thoughts, opinions, personal anecdotes, and any other things they wish to share with the world. How exactly these ideas can be shared is only limited by the ways one can use the medium of video in order to express oneself, and the platform's terms of service. As a result of this, people that upload to the website regularly might develop their own personal style of video making and editing, which can lead to

two different channels making vastly different videos on the same topic, a fact which can become especially apparent with more established genres of videos on the platform, such as reviews. A very clear example of this can be seen through the two YouTube channels The Completionist and Max0r both making a video review of the video game Yakuza 0, with both videos being very different from one another in terms of editing and overall tone, despite both reviewers holding the game in high regard. These changes in expression can be shared through even seemingly minor things, such as the video's thumbnail, as can be seen in figure 5.26.

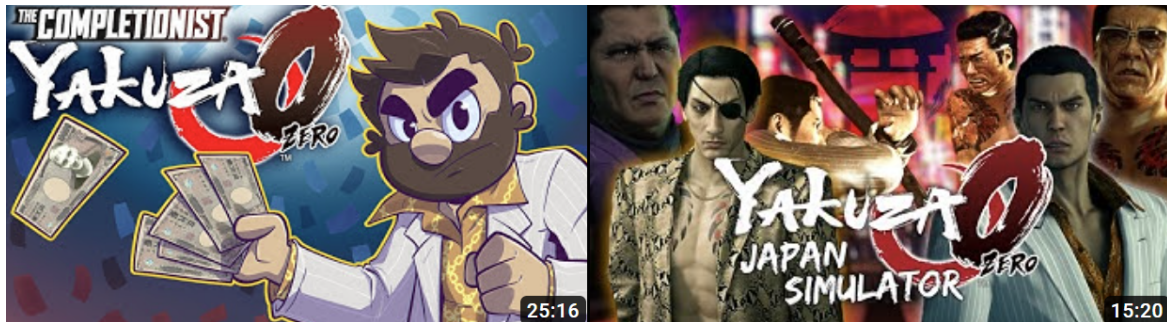


Figure 5.26: The thumbnails of two different video reviews of the game Yakuza 0. On the left, The Completionist (The Completionist, 2019), and on the right Max0r (Max0r, 2021).

This sharing of content can become an issue however, when channels decide to share content that is inappropriate or does not belong to them, both of which violate YouTube's terms of service (Baccarella et al., 2018). The main way YouTube tries to combat these issues is through numerous automated systems scanning videos for inappropriate content, as well as for intellectual property content that has been put into YouTube's Content ID system. Should a video be flagged by one of these system's a channel can still try to dispute it, should they think this was unjustified, though some platform users have also expressed several issues with the overall process of doing so (RTGame, 2023).

However, Video content is not the only content that can be shared on YouTube. As previously mentioned in the previous section 5.3.2, YouTube channels can further share content through the means of community posts, enabling them to use images, text, and other non-video related media to express themselves. What's worth noting here is that not all YouTube channels have the ability to utilise these community posts when first starting out, since it is one of the features locked behind YouTube's list of advanced features. In order to unlock YouTube's advanced features, a user needs to either have a good channel history, which can take a long time, or alternatively they can provide YouTube with a valid ID or use video verification (Sarah (TeamYouTube), 2023). While YouTube states that these restrictions are put in place to deter spammers and scammers, they also could serve as a barrier for new channels wishing to use these features, especially within a space like the V-Tuber community where anonymity is valued and a person might not feel comfortable with sharing this level of personal information with a company. Similarly, a user might be

uneasy about sharing their phone number with YouTube, in order to unlock the ability to customise thumbnails and upload videos that go over a certain length.

With all of this in mind, it does seem that YouTube as a platform allows its users to share their views, ideas, experiences, etc. through uploading different kinds of content, as long as both are in line with the website's terms of service. While the platform allows for users to upload different kinds of content in the form of different kinds of media, not all of these are equally available to all users, and in some case might result in people having to share information they are not comfortable with. Furthermore, with YouTube primarily being a platform for sharing video content, it would most likely be more beneficial for people that wish to share content that utilises this particular medium, such as riggers of V-Tuber models showing off the ways their model moves after being rigged. While it is still possible for other types of creators to adapt to this preferred medium of the platform, such as digital artists video recording their drawing process and uploading it, not every person working within V-Tuber model creation might be willing or capable of doing so.

5.3.4 Presence

When analysing YouTube through the lens of the presence block of the honeycomb model, it quickly becomes apparent that YouTube doesn't afford users the same kind of presence as other social media platforms might. As a starting point, YouTube does not show whether a given channel is online or not, with the only exception being YouTube showing that a channel is currently live-streaming, see figure 5.27.

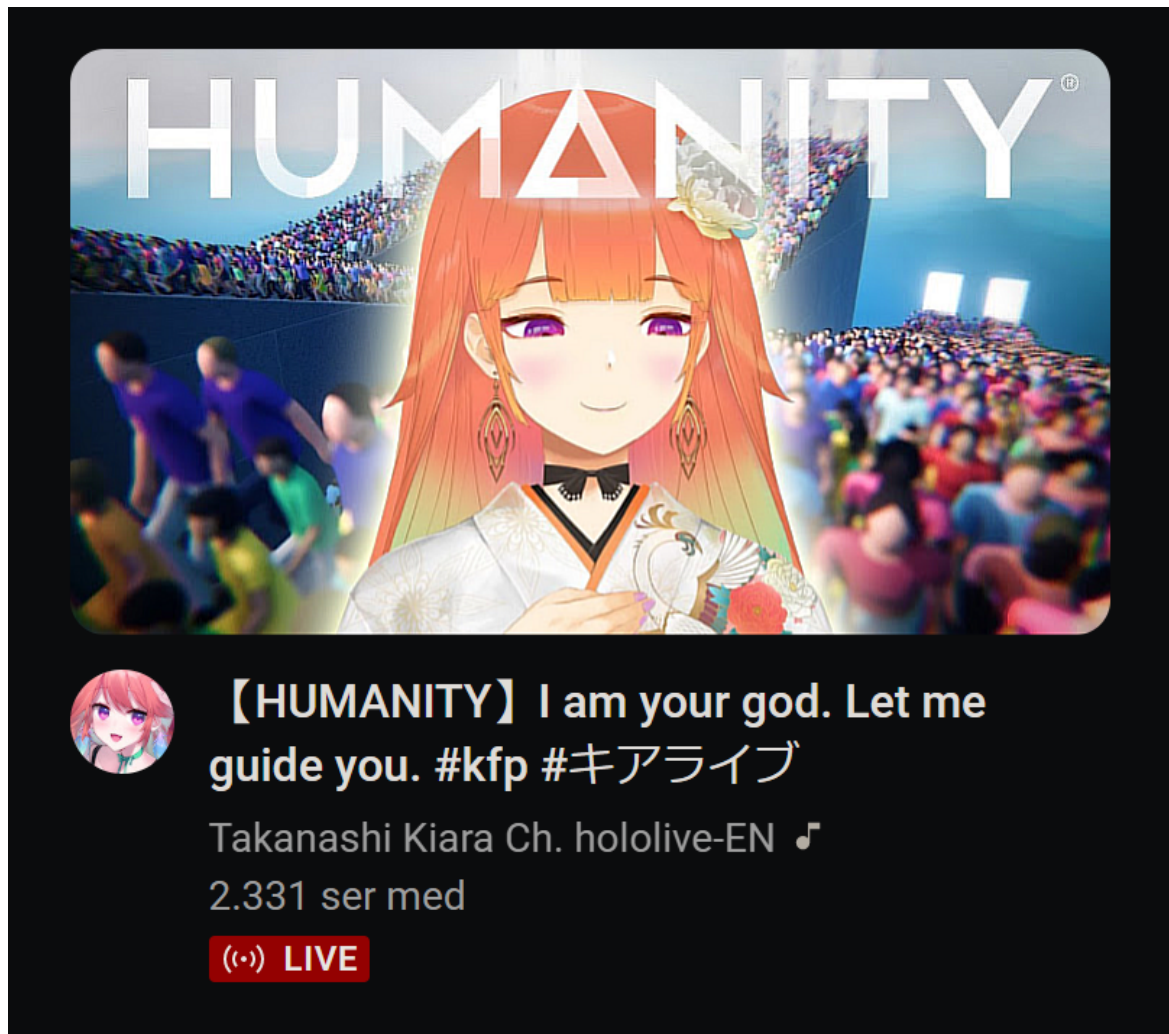


Figure 5.27: The thumbnail for a livestream hosted by the hololive V-Tuber Takanashi Kiara. A little red icon indicates that the channel in question is currently live.

As such, there is no real way of knowing when a given YouTube channel is available, outside of joining in on a livestream they are hosting. Even if a YouTuber just uploaded a video, and thus would be expected to be present on the site for at least a few minutes afterwards, the fact that YouTube allows for its user to schedule when a finished video will be uploaded means that the owner of a channel could be nowhere near a computer by the time a video is released to the public.

On the other hand, the owner of a YouTube channel can see through the analytics page of their channel at what time the people that usually watch their videos are usually online, as well as which geographic regions they are from, see figure 5.28.



Figure 5.28: The channel analytics page of a YouTube channel showing when the channel’s viewers are usually online (left) and where they are located geographically (right).

However, this availability, much like the amount of likes on a given video or comment, can not be traced back to an individual user. Therefore this data cannot be used as a means of figuring out when a given user is online or available. It is also worth noting that this data merely shows when a given user is using the website for anything, and not whether they are watching any videos of the channel in question or not. As such, while this provides some resemblance of presence, it does not reach the point of showing one user when another is available. Though, when keeping in mind that YouTube primarily facilitates asynchronous conversation, as has been discussed in section 5.3.2, it may not be strictly relevant for one user to know when another is available.

Another form of presence that exists on YouTube is not related to the channels that upload content to the site, but to the content itself. When looking at the starting page of YouTube, the site will recommend videos to a logged in account, that the websites algorithm thinks that user will enjoy. The video itself is given a lot more space, than the channel which uploaded it, as can be seen in figure 5.29.

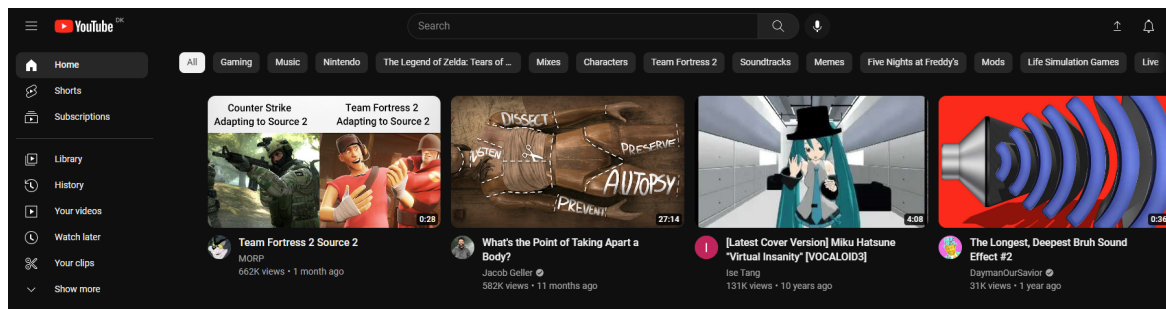


Figure 5.29: A cropped screenshots of YouTube’s front page. Here, the video’s thumbnail and title are given significantly more space, when compared to the username and profile picture of the channel that uploaded it.

Due to this, a user might decide to watch a video from a channel they are unfamiliar with, solely based on the video’s subject appealing to them. As this is one of the main

ways for a channel to gain new viewership, one could argue that the platform incentivises its creators to produce content, that can establish a presence within the recommended pages of people outside of just their normal viewership. While it can only be speculated how exactly the website's algorithm decides which videos are recommended to which people, the fact that a video's thumbnail and title take up significantly more space than the profile picture and name of their creator does afford a greater sense of presence to the actual content produced, as opposed to the people making it. Furthermore, the fact that each recommended video also shows how recently said video was uploaded further provides the content with a certain presence related to time, and possibly more relevance as a result.

All in all, it can be argued that YouTube as a platform, when viewed through the lens of the honeycomb model, provides very little to no presence to its users. Instead, a user will be more likely to get recommendations of videos that they might like, as opposed to videos uploaded by users that are currently online or available. While YouTube has a few features that enable presence, such as livestreams and tools for depicting viewership habits, these tools are all tied to the content produced for the platform, rather than the people producing said content.

5.3.5 Relationships

While Kietzmann et al. (2011) in their original text states that YouTube is an example of a platform where "relationships hardly matter" (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p.246), it is none the less worth investigating whether this notion has changed since the initial publishing of the paper. When looking at YouTube as a platform, one kind of relationship immediately becomes apparent, that being the relationship between a given channel and the subscribers of said channel. By making the conscious decision to subscribe to a channel, a user clearly communicates to a channel that they enjoy their content and wish to see more of it, especially when keeping in mind that, unlike with a private TV channel, one can watch a channel's content without being subscribed to it. As such, a relationship is established between the viewer and the channel they are subscribed to, in that the viewer shows their intention to watch and engage with more of the channel's content, as long as the channel keeps producing more content of a similar quality. Should a channel not live up to the expectations or preferences of a subscriber, the user can then always end the relationship by unsubscribing from the channel again.

This relationship can then be further deepened, if the YouTube channel utilises channel memberships, should the channel have been deemed eligible for it by YouTube (YouTube Help, 2023a). Channel memberships give viewers of a channel access to certain features, such as a special badge next to their name when commenting, and access to exclusive emotes, in exchange for a monthly subscription fee, as has previously been mentioned in section 2.1. In some cases however, channel memberships can also give a viewer access to exclusive content, such as member exclusive livestreams and the ability for a channel to set

a livestream chat to only allow channel members to comment. One could argue that this level of exclusivity indicates a stronger relationship between a channel member and the channel in question, which is somewhat further highlighted through a YouTube channel being able to display some of their channel members on the front page of their channel, as can be seen in figure 5.30.

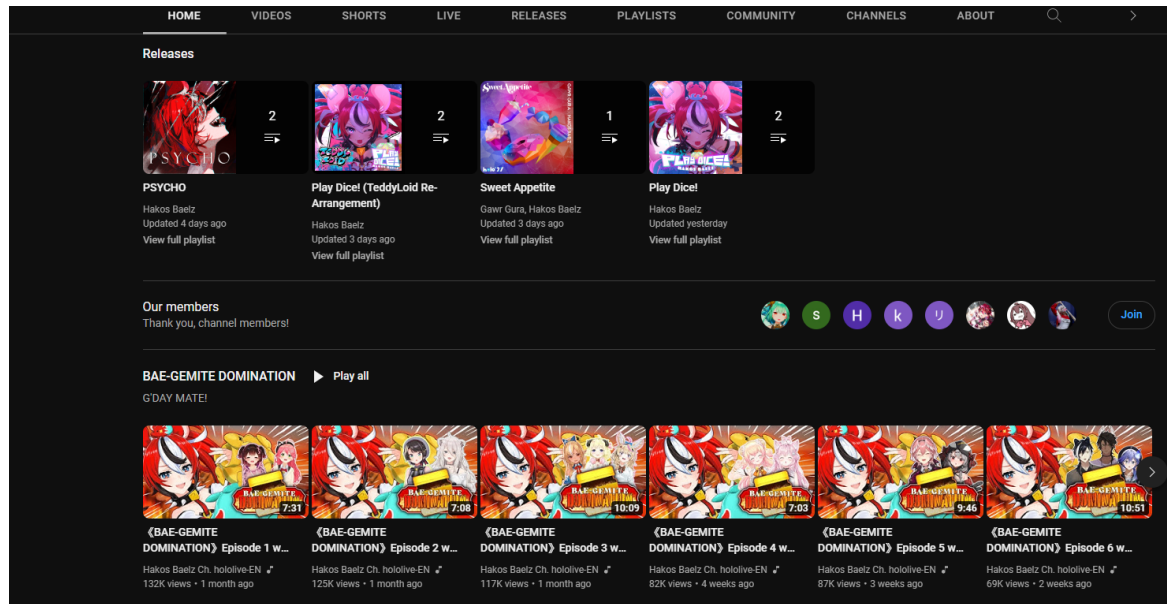


Figure 5.30: Some of the channel members of the V-Tuber Hakos Baelz being displayed on the channel's front page (Hakos, 2023).

Another way YouTube enables relationships between channels on its platform is through the channels page, where a channel can decide to feature other YouTube channels. While some channels will use this feature for highlighting any secondary channels they might have on the platform, such as for archiving livestreams or clip compilations, others use it as a means of highlighting other YouTube channels that they might frequently interact with. An example of this would be the V-Tuber Ceres Fauna, who on her channels page shows the other English speaking channels of the corporation she streams for, as can be seen in figure 5.31.

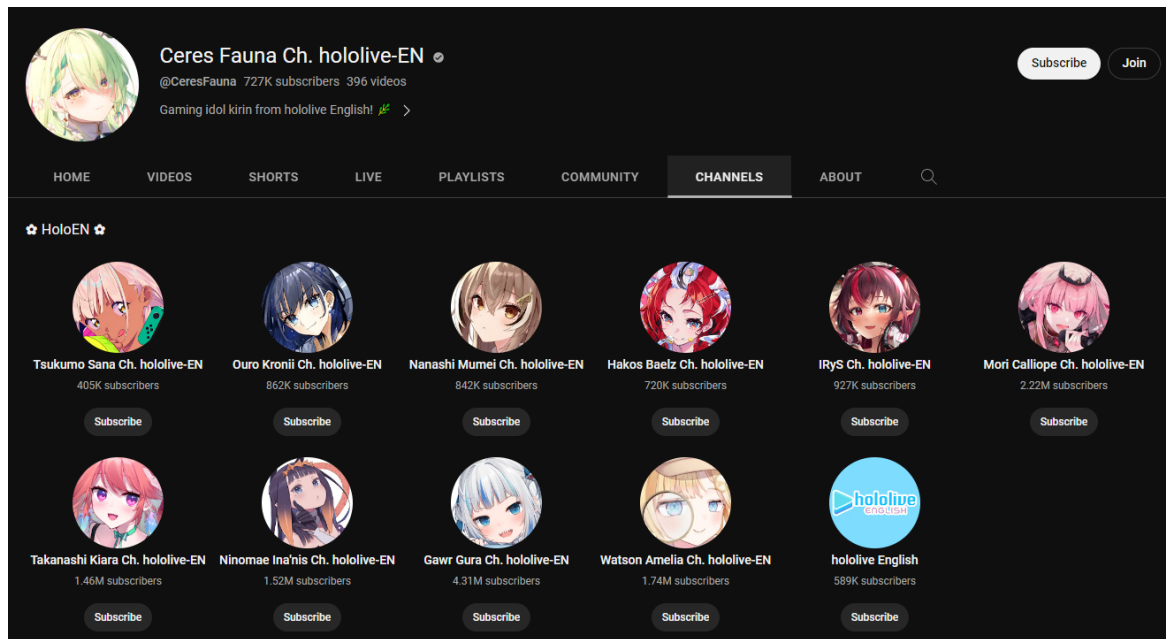


Figure 5.31: The channels page of the hololive V-Tuber Ceres Fauna, showing the other English speaking V-Tubers of the company, as well as the company’s English account (Ceres, 2023).

The main thing worth noting when it comes to all of these forms of relationships on YouTube, is the inherently non-reciprocal nature of each of them. As the relationship between a subscriber and a channel is primarily based on the content the channel produces, there is a likely chance that a channel will not subscribe back to a channel that produces content they don’t enjoy, even if that channel has subscribed to them. Similarly, a viewer who purchases a membership for a channel can not expect that channel to do the same for them. This asymmetrical nature of relationships further extends to other channels as well, as even though one channel might feature another on their channels page, there is no guarantee that the other channel will do the same.

With all of this in mind, it can be argued that the relationships that YouTube facilitates as a platform are primarily centered around the content produced on the platform, and more so take the form of a one-sided relationship as opposed to having a mutual and equal relationship with another person. This lack of reciprocity enforced by the platform does indicate that while some form of relationships exist on the platform, they seem to differ from the ones described in relation to online communities.

5.3.6 Reputation

There are a few ways through which YouTube enables the reputation block of the honeycomb model, primarily when it comes to the reputation of individual videos and the reputation of YouTube channels. For instance, as Kietzmann et al. (2011) suggests, the reputation of an individual video could depend on metrics such as the number of views

that video has. What is worth noting here however, is the fact that the number of views a video has on YouTube may serve as an indicator for how many people have seen the video in question, but not necessarily how this video has been received by the people watching it. Rather, in order to understand the reputation of a video, it would make sense to look at other features provided by YouTube, that give a better insight into the sentiment of that video's viewers, such as the number of likes and dislikes the video has. However, as YouTube removed the option for viewers to see the number of dislikes a video has, as was previously mentioned in section 5.2.2, this has been made impossible without the use of external third party tools such as Return YouTube Dislike (returnyoutubedislike.com, 2023). Without the use of these tools, one could alternatively try to compare the number of likes a video has against its view count, though how accurate the picture painted by this comparison is, is difficult to say.

Instead of focusing on quantitative data, such as the number of likes and views a video has, one could choose to look at the qualitative data presented by the comments beneath a video instead. While this could provide a user with an understanding of the reputation of the video, this does also take significantly longer when comparing it against looking at a video's like to dislike ratio. Though as the latter of these two options is no longer being afforded by the website itself, it remains one of the last somewhat reliable ways of learning of a video's reputation.

The one thing worth noting on the topic of a video's reputation, is that a channel can choose to turn off likes and dislikes, as well as comments, on a video when uploading it, thus completely obscuring any means for viewers to gain an insight into the video's reputation previously mentioned, other than the number of views on the video. While there could be many reasons for doing so, there is a very real chance that turning off comments and likes on a video could be interpreted as an act of censorship and silencing potential criticism, especially when keeping in mind that there are no real other ways of learning about a video's reputation than looking at these two metrics.

When it comes to viewing the reputation of a channel on YouTube, the main way of doing so would be looking at the channel's total number of subscribers. This is primarily based on the assumption that a channel with a lot of subscribers produces good content and thus has a good reputation when it comes to said content. One could also alternatively compare the number of subscribers a channel has to when the channel was first created, or when its first video was uploaded, to get an idea of how quickly the channel has been growing in size, once again assuming that this is caused by them producing good content.

With all of this in mind, YouTube primarily seems to enable the reputation block of the honeycomb model through the different metrics of the videos uploaded to the platform, as well as those of the channels uploading them. It should be noted however, that some of the ways to get a clear understanding of a video's reputation have been made more difficult by the platform, primarily through the disabling of all videos' public dislike count and the ability to turn off comments and likes on a video.

5.3.7 Groups

When it comes to the groups block of the honeycomb model, there aren't any direct ways through which YouTube as a platform facilitates the formation of groups. YouTube offers no tools for channels on the platform to form into smaller groups and subgroups, and thus one could argue that this part of the honeycomb model is completely unaccounted for by the platform. However, one could also argue that there is some semblance of group formation on the website, when classifying both a channel's subscribers and channel members as their own respective groups that anyone can join, by simply clicking the subscribe button or paying a monthly fee respectively. While these groups are very broad and don't allow for members to form any subgroups, it could be possible for a sense of group identity to form around them, whenever a YouTube channel decides to acknowledge and address their subscribers and channel members as a group. Furthermore, one could argue that some of the benefits provided through purchasing a YouTube channel membership further elicit the feeling of being part of an exclusive group, both through the special badge appearing next to a user's name, as previously mentioned in section 2.1, and access to content that is exclusive to channel members.

Regardless of this, YouTube does not provide users with the ability to form their own groups, independent of a specific YouTube channel. As a result of this, we suggest that the only way a group can form on YouTube is around a specific channel on the platform, significantly limiting the options for the formation of groups on the website.

5.3.8 Honeycomb Model of YouTube

With all of this in mind, we can say the following things about YouTube as a platform, when analysing its affordances through the lens of the honeycomb model:

- YouTube as a platform primarily focuses on the sharing of video content, which all of the platform's main features tie back into. Channels can also make use of community posts, to further share their ideas with the website through a medium other than video, see section 5.3.3.
- YouTube's most direct method of conversation is through the comments beneath a video, which enable asynchronous conversation threads beneath a piece of content uploaded to the website. Communication through other features, such as likes, is made difficult through their anonymised nature on the site, leading to some users uploading content as a means of conversation, and others to use livestreaming as a non-asynchronous conversation method, see section 5.3.2.
- Users can freely choose how much information about their identity they share with the site and other users on it, as using a pseudonym seems to be just as viable as using one's real identity. Users can further express their identity through the content they upload, as this will be the main way others can learn more about the user in question, see section 5.3.1.

- The type of relationship that is primarily enforced by YouTube is one of viewer and content creator, see section 5.3.5.
- YouTube doesn't show a user's presence on the platform, other than when a channel is livestreaming. YouTube more so enables the presence of individual videos, by recommending them to others, rather than recommending the channels that upload them, see section 5.3.4.
- At this point in time, YouTube has removed features that directly contribute to informing its users about the reputation of a video. YouTube also offers further means of obscuring a video's reputation, making the only means of viewing reputation a video's view count and the subscriber count of the uploading channel, both of which can be misleading, see section 5.3.6.
- YouTube does not allow its users to form groups independently, with the closest things to groups that exist on the platform being directly tied to the video content consumed on the website, see section 5.3.7.

As such, we propose that YouTube as a platform can be represented through the honeycomb model in the following way:

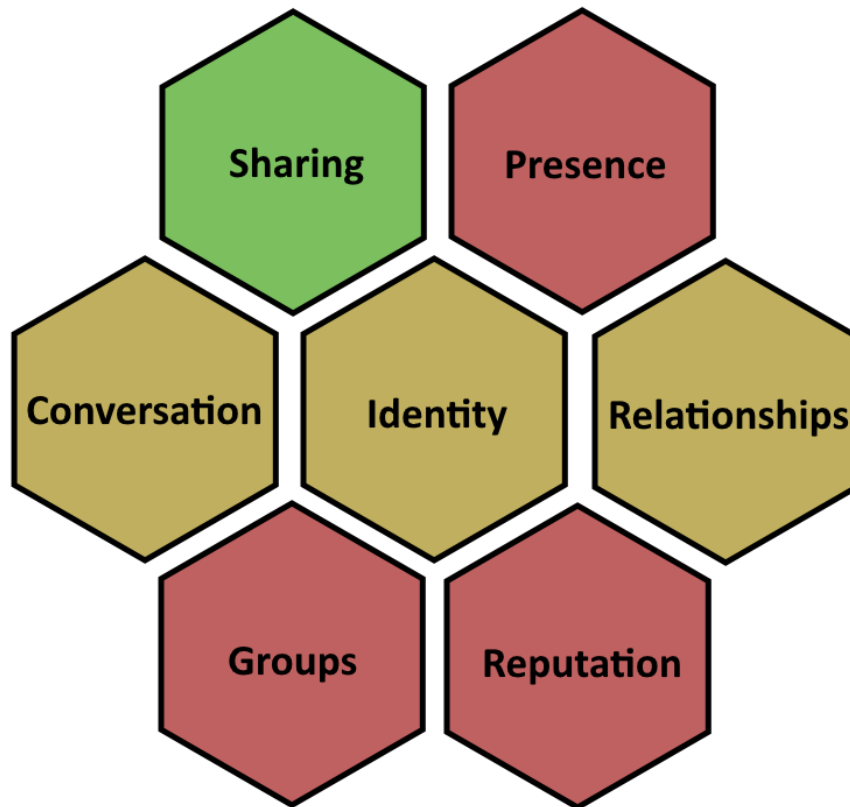


Figure 5.32: The honeycomb model proposed to describe YouTube as a platform. Green means the functionalities of the platform support the block well, yellow means they do so moderately, and red means they do so poorly.

When comparing how these platform functionalities tie into our previously set requirements, see section 5.1, we can further determine the following in regards to how well YouTube would function as a platform for building an online community, based around the creation of V-Tuber models:

YouTube as an online platform primarily emphasises and provides incentives for the production and consumption of video content, see section 5.3.6. While video content can be about a lot of different things, such as for instance model creation, there is still a major difference between a community built around the creation of V-Tuber models, and a community built around making and watching videos around the creation of V-Tuber models. As such, there may be difficulties in communicating the exact goal of the community, when using a platform as explicitly tied to a specific medium like YouTube, see section 5.3.3. This further ties into the communication of the community's core activities, as the primary activity on YouTube will inherently be to watch videos, rather than producing something yourself, which further interferes with our idea of building a community

around V-Tuber model creation. YouTube also has no features in place regarding upholding community specific rules and norms, while also having no real way of showing roles within a community, which aren't tied to the consumption of video content, like channel memberships. While one could argue that the comment section beneath a YouTube video could be used as a space for socialisation, its context and placement beneath a given video limits the kinds of interaction that can occur within said comment section, as has been discussed in section 5.3.2.

While YouTube does allow YouTubers and audiences to showcase their enthusiasm through YouTube profiles, as well as sharing them with the wider community, see section 5.3.1 and section 5.3.3, YouTube lacks tools for easily sharing and facilitating a model creation process. If you want to share your content with another creator, you will first have to make, edit and then upload a video for the other creatives to see, and even then, they will only be able to comment changes, with any contribution having to be shared through third party sites, see section 5.3.3, section 5.3.7 and section 5.3.2. Outside of livestreaming, communication with other others on YouTube is asynchronous and with no way to truly determine when someone is online, it can be difficult to collaborate, share ideas or showcase different model creation processes with other creatives see section 5.3.2, section 5.3.3, and section 5.3.4. While livestreaming allows for synchronous conversation, it does limit the audience to only participating through text, further limiting their ability to showcase their skills, see section 5.3.2. Community post can allow for a more vast amount of media to be shared, but, like with livestreaming, must be facilitated through one YouTube channel see section 5.3.2.

While YouTube could be used as a means of sharing one's own content between community members, YouTube doesn't lend itself particularly well to self promotion due to the only place on the platform users can actively use for it being the comment section of other videos, see section 5.3.2. While YouTube also can provide a sense of group identity and of belonging, akin to cultural citizenship, one could argue that most of the features providing these things being locked behind a monthly payment via channel memberships, see section 5.3.5 and section 5.3.7, increases the barrier of entry significantly, which would put a greater pressure on the community to provide what these individuals are looking for.

It is also worth pointing out that the enforcement of different socialisation tactics on YouTube might be rather difficult, due to the limited ways a channel can interact with their viewers through the website. It is also debatable how much YouTube's features and functions enable sociability, as both the depth and topic of discussions in a comment section can vary greatly from video to video, despite each comment section containing the same features, see section 5.3.2.

In conclusion, while uploading video content related to the creation of V-Tuber models to YouTube could hold potential as a supplementary way of adding to our online community, we deem based on our research, that YouTube should not be used exclusively for the purpose of building a community based on V-Tuber model creation.

5.4 Analysis of Discord

This section will analyse Discord through the use of the honeycomb model. Afterwards, this analysis will be compared with the requirements stated in section 5.1, to determine this social media platform's viability as a tool to host an online community, focusing on V-Tuber model creation.

5.4.1 Identity

On discord, the primary way users can display their identity is through their profile. The profile consist of the users display name, their current status, username, an about me section, date of creation of their discord profile, a colour banner, discord profile badges, a list of Mutual servers between the profile's user and the user viewing it, and a list of mutual Friends, see Figure 5.33.

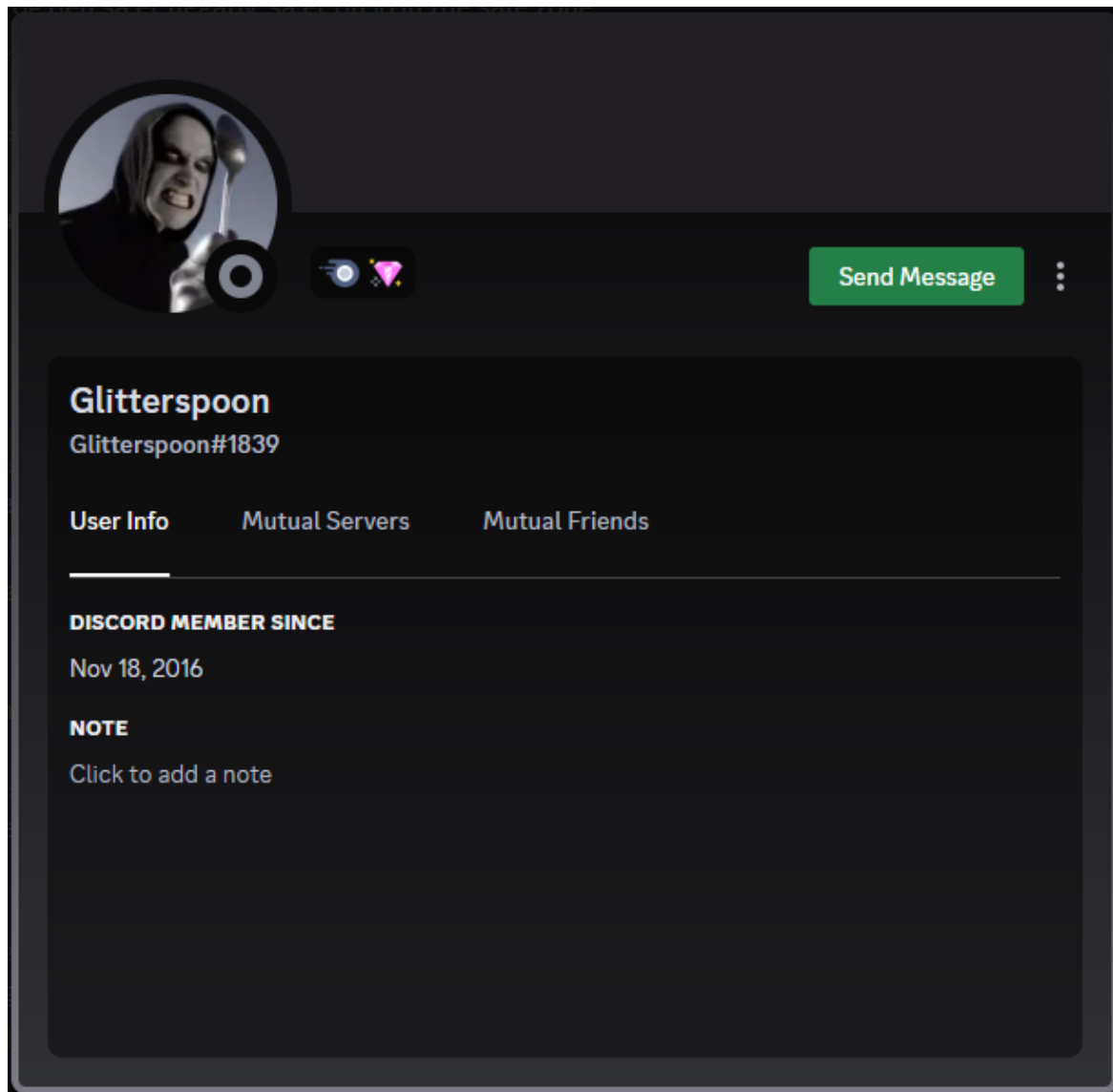


Figure 5.33: A Discord Profile showcasing the various elements which may be applied to a profile.

The display name is used across discord to identify the user of the account. If the user has Discord Nitro, they may change their display name for each individual server as well. The username is a unique identifier which can be used to distinguish the user from other users with the same display name. this username consist of the display name + a unique number between 0 and 9999. The about me section can be used to describe things unique to the user such as thoughts, interest, profession, skill-sets, fandoms the user participates in etc. The about me section is limited to 190 characters. The discord profile picture consist of an image that is used identify the user. The banner consist of a colour which can freely be chosen from a colour picker, see figure 5.33.

Discord profile badges are a set of unique badges obtainable by fulfilling certain criteria, specified by Discord (Discord, 2023b).

There are different ways to access the profile, which all slightly change the content of the profile. For example, when viewing a private chat, a version of the profile can be seen on the left of the screen, see figure 5.34.

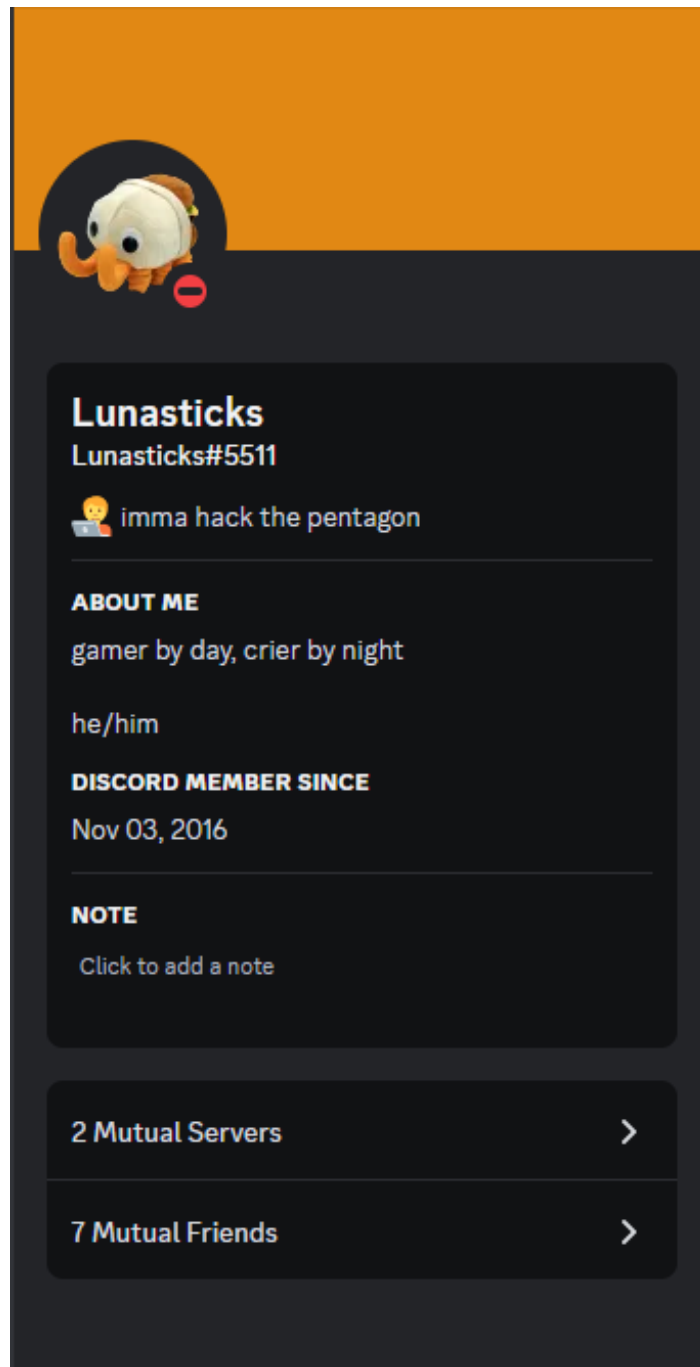


Figure 5.34: A Discord Profile seen from within the private chat. The server and friend list has been changed into a drop down menu, to better utilise the space.

When left clicking on a member of a discord community, the profile will also include the specific roles the user has within that community, see figure 5.35.

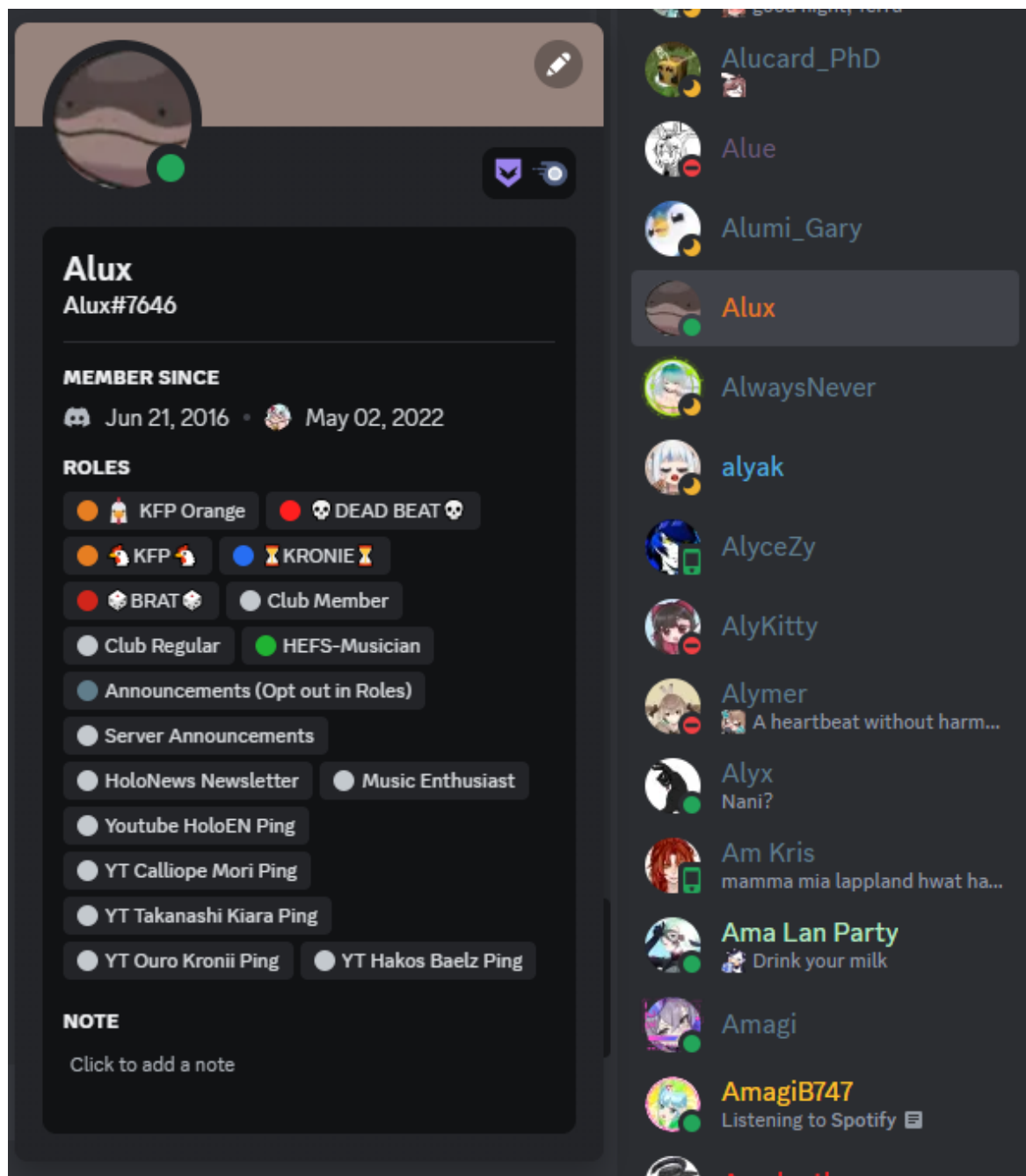


Figure 5.35: A Discord Profile seen from within a Discord community. When the profile is shown from within the community, it will also showcase the roles of the profile owner.

Users who are subscribing to Discord Nitro, a monthly subscription service which gives access to premium features, can choose to have an animated picture both as their profile background and profile picture, as well as colours around their profile card,

avatar decorations and unique profiles for each server, see Figure 5.36.

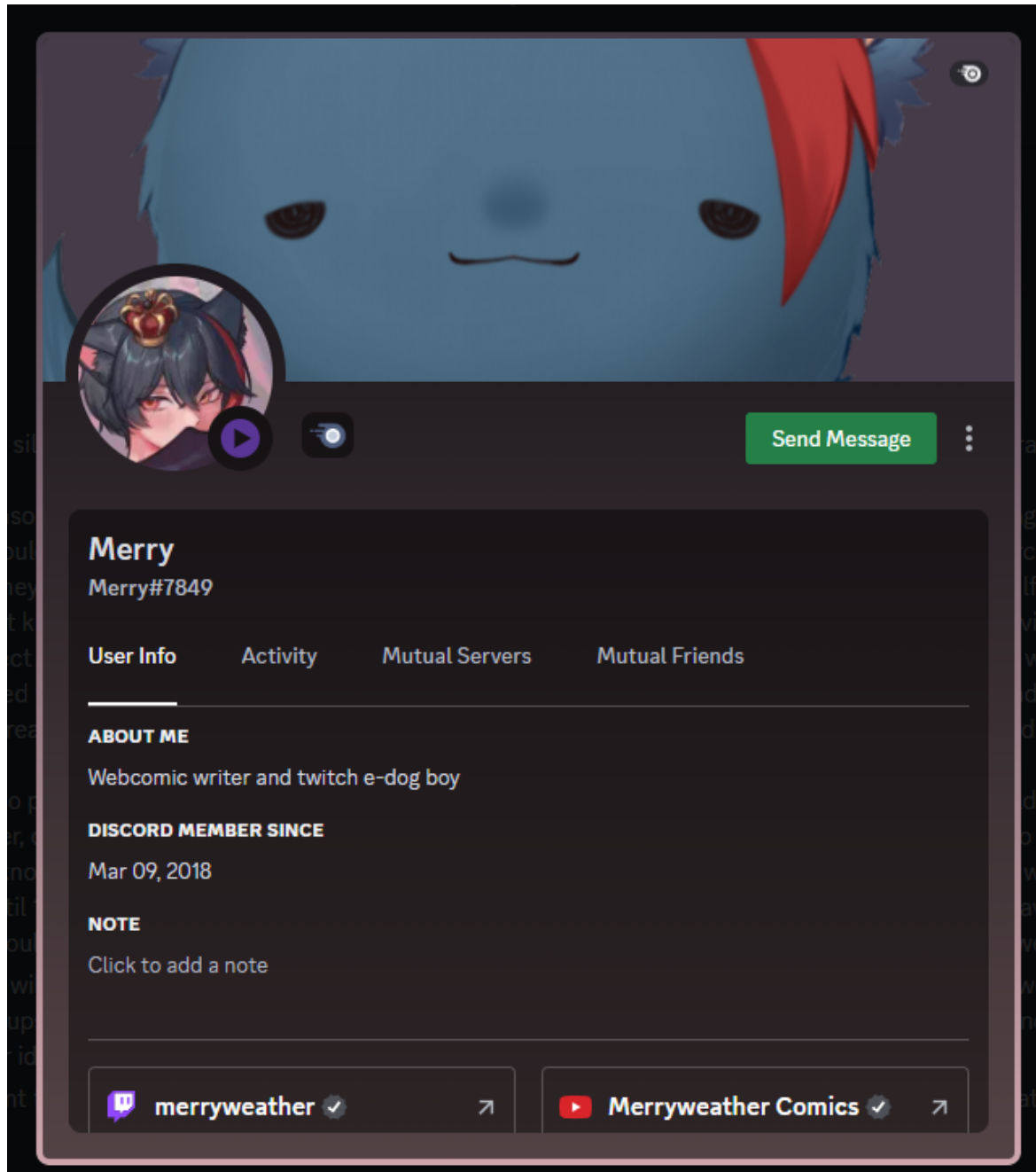


Figure 5.36: Picture showcasing Nitro features in use.

A user may also link their Discord account to other social media sites such as Twitter, to easier create a connection between the other social media platforms they are active on,

as described in Section 5.2.1, see figure 5.37.

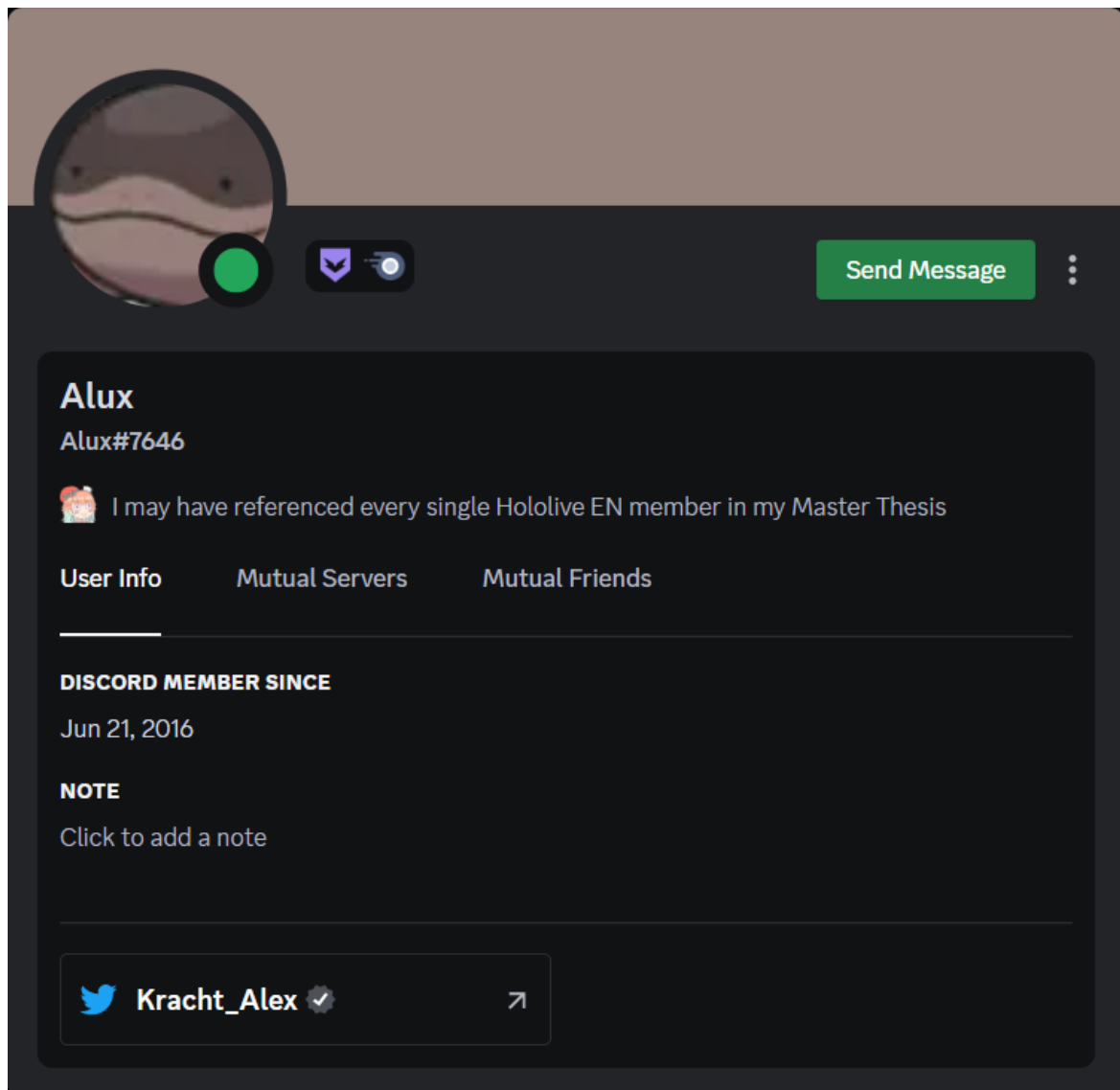


Figure 5.37: In this example, the user has chosen to link their Twitter profile to their Discord profile. This shows up with the twitter icon and a button which the user can click to go to said profile.

All of these examples represent what Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describes as conscious self-disclosure, meaning things which are disclosed by the users with the intention of being a representation of themselves. There are however also elements of unconscious self disclosure, as in elements disclosed about yourself which are not necessarily intended. For example, Discord Nitro users can post server exclusive emojis on other servers, with the added feature that, should another user click on the emoji, they will be able to see

which server the emoji originate from, see figure 5.38.

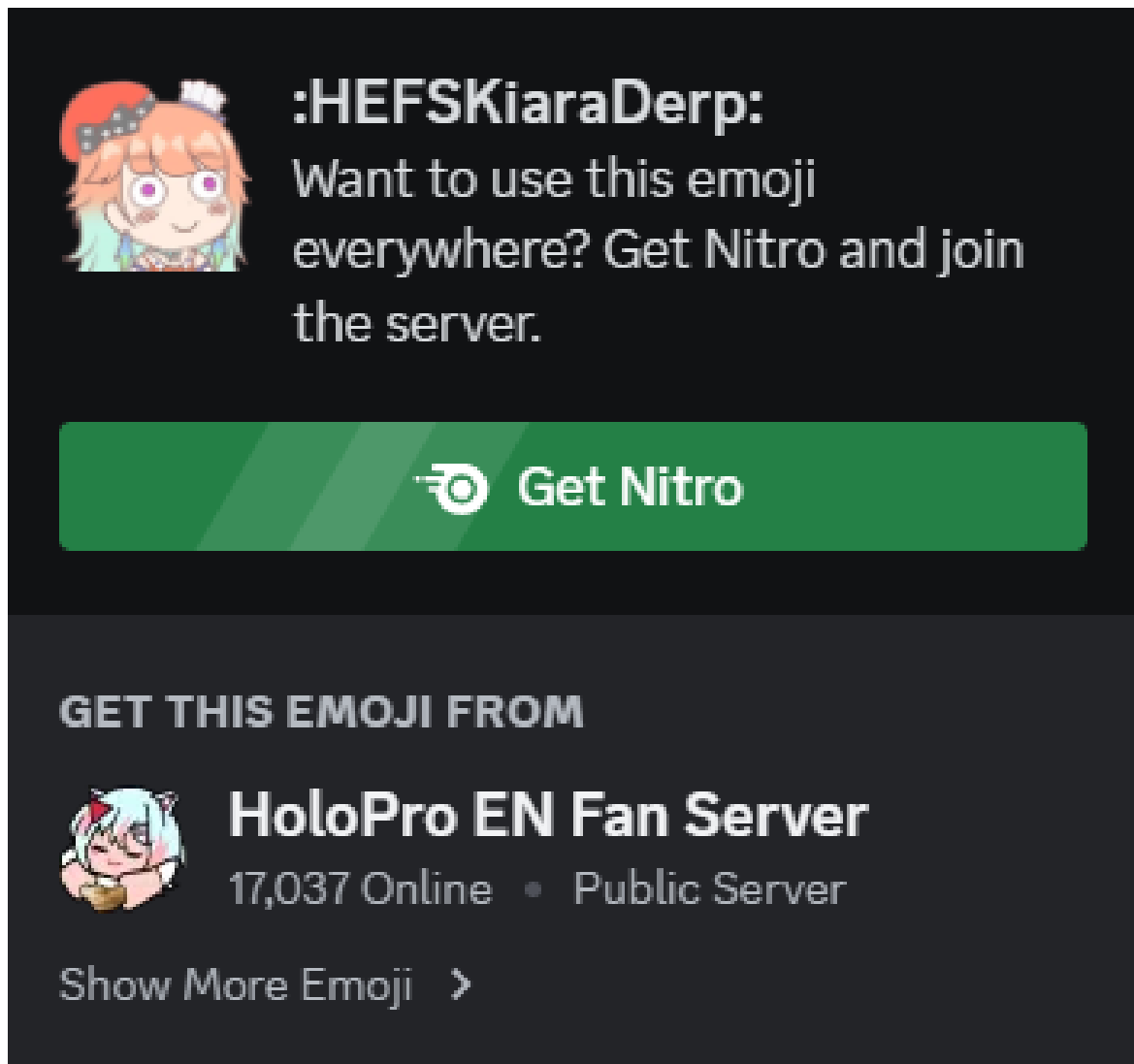


Figure 5.38: This user has chosen to post a Emoji from another server, into this server. By clicking on the emoji, you can see the name of the emoji as well as what server, the emoji originated from.

The choice of profile picture and banner can also give an indication of who the user is and what communities and content they consume. For example in figure 5.39.



Figure 5.39: Example of a users profile picture.

user has a profile picture, which references a specific moment from the YouTube show Drawfee Show, where the group is discussing and poking fun at the Pixar movie Brave, (Drawfee Show, 2023). However this reference goes deeper, as the picture is actually based on fan produced animation based on this moment from Drawfee Show's discussion, with the discussion being animated by the fan, see figure 5.40.



Figure 5.40: A screenshot from DeepBlueInk (2023) fan animation of a moment from Drawfee Show (2023) video. If the screenshot is compared to figure 5.39, it is easy to notice the inspiration.

This shows that the profile owner has a certain understanding of the fan community surrounding Drawfee Show, and the content they produce. Furthermore, by producing their own fan content, they user also show their position as a diffused audience member and fan, see section 3.2.1.3 and section 3.2.3. While this doesn't indicate the profile owner's position within the Drawfee Show's fan community, it does show that the user in some capacity associates with the fan produced content and may feel a level of membership

within that community, see section 3.3.

On Discord, users can choose to display what games or what content they are working on through the Rich Presence functionality (Discord, 2023a). When activated, discord will display when the user is using an application which is compatible with the Rich Presence feature, showcasing what they are doing, and how long they have been doing it, figure 5.41. Some application also allow other users to join you in the activity you are currently engaging in.

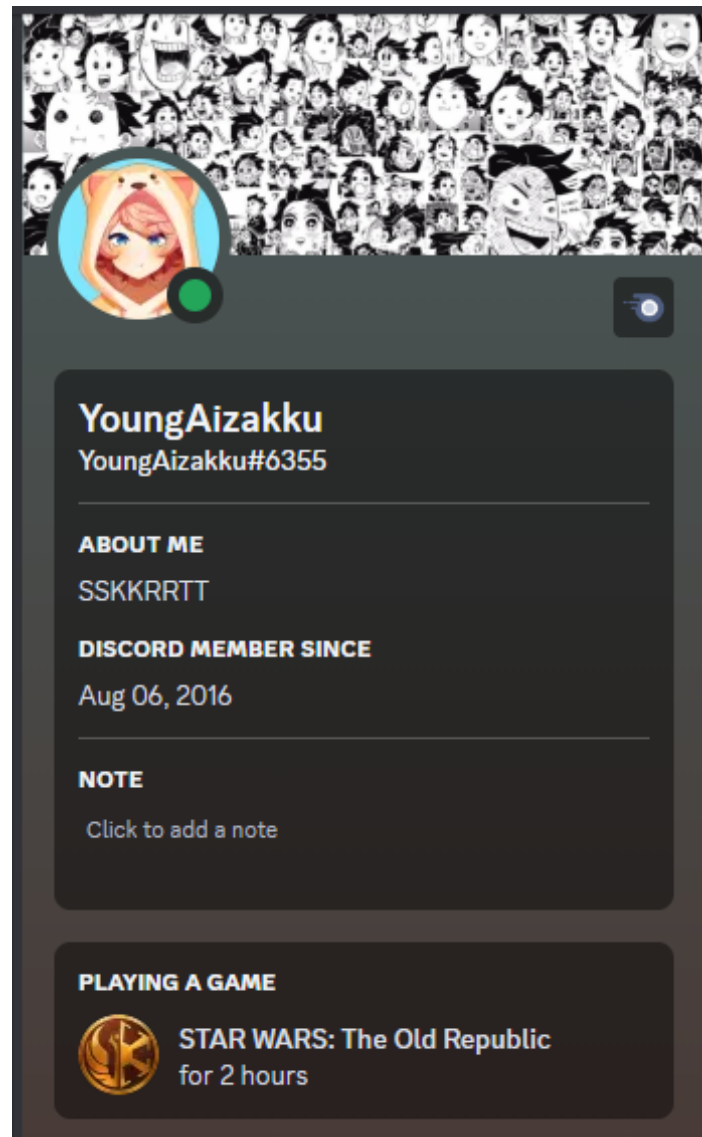


Figure 5.41: Screenshot of a user playing Star Wars: Knights of the old republic (Bioware et al., 2003), using the Rich Presence feature to show Discord users what he's currently doing.

While you can share a lot of identifiable information with other users, there is also certain information which a user only shares with the company itself. In order to create a discord profile, one must share a functional E-mail address. Users can then, optionally, choose to share their phone number or authenticate their application with the company, which is used to gain access to the users Discord profile, should it be hacked or in any other way tampered with. Should the user wish to gain access to Discord Nitro, then the user must enter a valid credit card, which is then stored by Discord for future payments of Discord Nitro. Should the user make use of the Rich Presence feature of discord, Discord will also have access currently running applications that support this feature, in order to showcase them on Discord.

With all of this in mind, it does seem that Discord provides its users with different ways of expressing their identity through the platform, through both conscious and sub-conscious self-disclosure.

5.4.2 Conversation

Discord as a platform offers two primary means of conversation, those being text chat and voice chat. Both of these methods of conversation can be used either within a server, which will have dedicated channels for it, or through Discord's direct message system, which allows one user to converse privately with one or more users. A Discord server can include several text channels for different topics, and some of these topics can be grouped together into certain categories, to make navigation of the server easier. The wide majority of activities one can conduct on a Discord server all require doing so in either a text channel or a voice channel, making communicating through these the primary way of interacting and conversing with others through Discord.

A single text message can hold up to 2000 characters in length, or up to 4000 characters if a user is subscribed to Discord's premium service nitro. Once a user has sent a message, they can afterwards choose to edit the message they sent, with a small bit of text revealing that the message was edited, see figure 5.42.

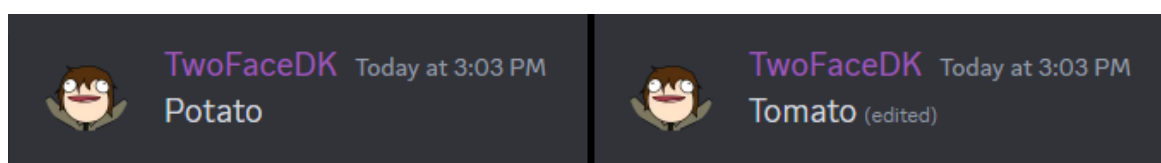


Figure 5.42: A message sent over Discord. On the left, the original message. On the right, the edited message, with Discord signifying that the message has been edited being sent.

This allows users to correct potential spelling mistakes or clear up misconceptions, while also reducing the risk of a user maliciously changing the context of a conversation, by for instance making another user appear as if they agree with an outrageous statement.

Furthermore, users have two different means of replying to a chat message. They can

either simply type in the same chat after the previous user has written their message, or they can select the message another user wrote and reply to that message specifically. Should a user choose to reply to a specific message directly, a copy of the message will be displayed above the reply, as can be seen in figure 5.43.

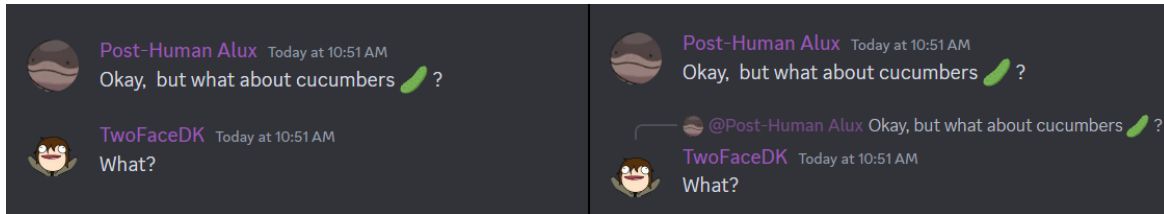


Figure 5.43: Two ways of replying to a message. On the left, a user types in the chat after a user's message. On the right, a user makes use of Discords reply feature

In case a given chat has a lot of activity in it, and a conversation might be a bit hard to follow, using a reply feature like this can be used by the people of the server to minimise the potential confusion in regards to who a certain message might be meant for. Furthermore, a user can also create a thread within a chat, to further narrow down certain points of conversation and making a potential discussion easier to follow, while also ensuring it does not clutter up the main chat of the text-channel in question.

A server owner can further set specific permissions for certain channels, in order to only allow certain people to either access or write within it. This could for instance be used in order to create a specific text channel for announcements, that every user on the server can see, but only the server owner and staff can write in. By creating different channels for different purposes, and making sure they are well organised, one can ensure that all main conversation regarding the server happens on the server itself, further helping with keeping things simple and organised.

The other main way through which users can converse over Discord is through the use of Voice-chat. In order to do so on a server, a user can enter a voice-channel and then, should another user be in the same voice channel, directly speak to them by using a microphone. When a user is in a voice chat, they can also choose to connect a webcam or other camera in order to video chat while in the channel. Alternatively, a user can also select a virtual camera instead, allowing for them to potentially use a virtual avatar instead of their real face when doing so. Lastly, if the server has it enabled, Discord also offers a soundboard for voice channels, allowing for users to play different sounds from a limited selection to other people in the call.

Discord also has a specific server type, called communities, which enables a set of features, deemed by Discord, to be especially useful for Communities. Forums is one of these features, which is a channel type where users may create posts, which can be seen as small threads, that stay within the server until closed, see figure 5.44 for an example.

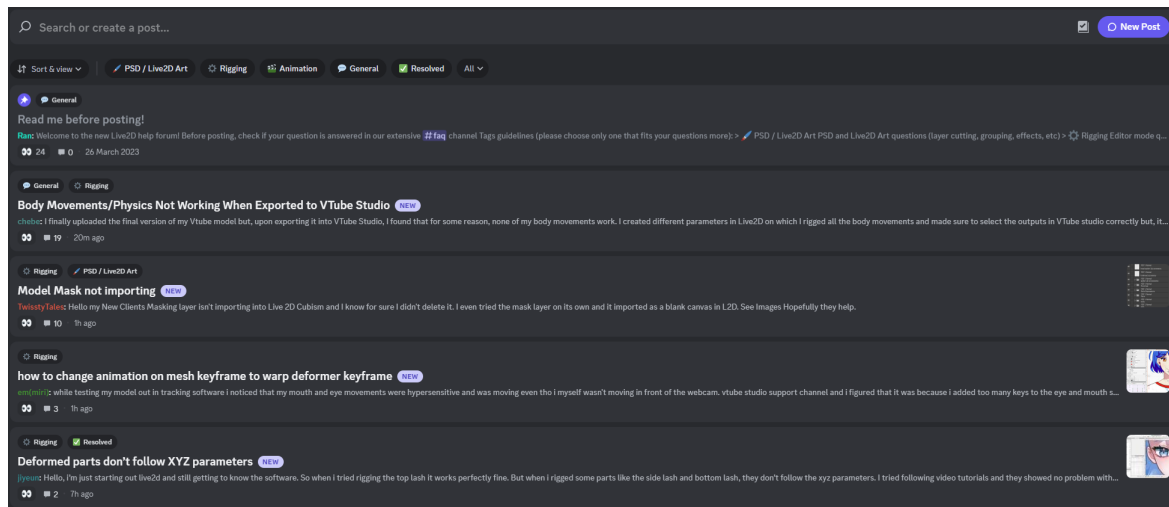


Figure 5.44: An example of a forum page from the Discord server Live2D (Live2D Inc., 2023).

Another example is the welcome screen. The welcome screen pops up, the first time someone visits a discord community, and often include things such as steps to give the user roles within the community, rules, guidelines and other elements which the server owner may want a new user to be aware of, see figure 5.45 for an example.

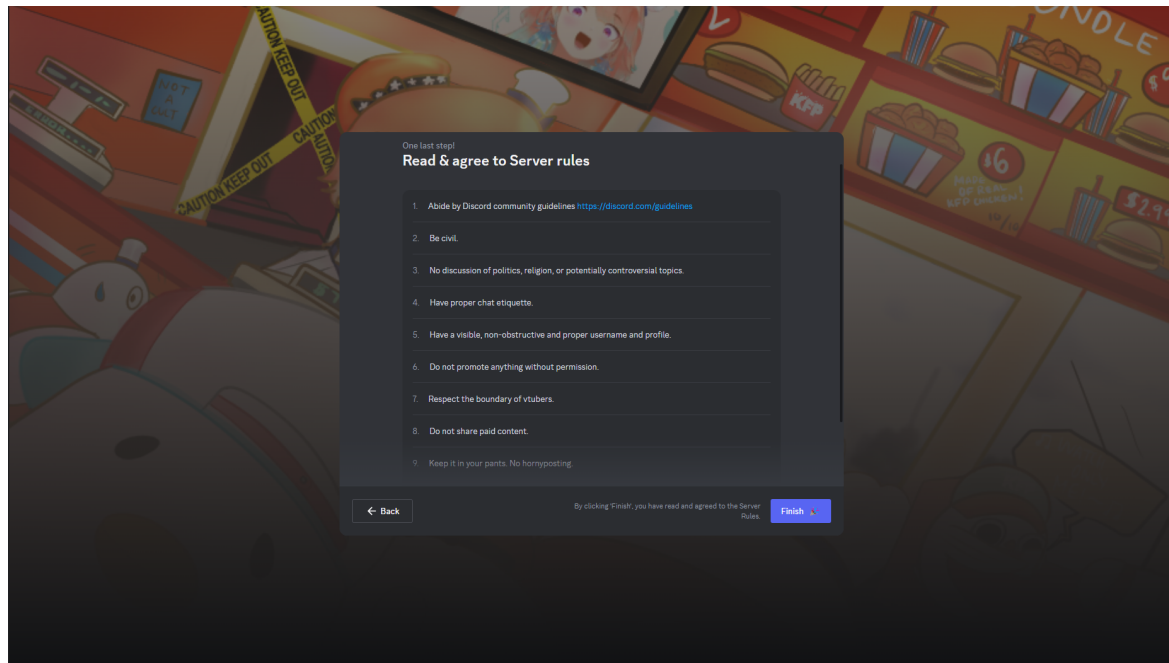


Figure 5.45: The welcome screen for the server Kiwawa Fried Phoenix. The welcome screen showcases the rules of the server (GoldElysium et al., 2023).

A third feature is the announcement channels. The only one who can post within these are roles with have gotten permission from the server owner, but, once someone post in there, the members of the the server will gain a notification. These channels can be added to other servers, which allows the user to get alerts from other servers within a server, see figure 5.46.



Figure 5.46: The announcement channel from the server Kiwawa Fried Phoenix (GoldElysium et al., 2023).

With all of this in mind, it seems that Discord as a platform primarily enables conversation through its text and voice channels, with all forms of communication, and almost all forms of interaction, on a server making use of either one of these two. Certain features are exclusive to community servers, however, there are no limits as to what can be a community server. The tools that are available to servers are often about easier communication between the owner of the server and their staff, and the users within the server.

Overall, these features provides users with different means of keeping a conversation structured and organised, such as different categories, channels, threads, and the option to reply directly to specific messages, which could allow larger groups of people to communicate without the conversation becoming too hard to follow.

5.4.3 Sharing

Discord's primary method for sharing files and other content is by sending said files through a chat message, be it in the text channel of a server or through a direct message. While this method can theoretically be used to send any kind of file, certain kinds of file formats will have different effects when sending them this way. For instance, if a user sends an image or video file, the file in question will be displayed within the chat window, as can be seen in figure 5.47.



Figure 5.47: A user sharing an image file over Discord, with the image being displayed within the chat window.

This form of display is not exclusively limited to files however, as users can also post

links to files that are hosted on other websites, such as YouTube, to have them be embedded in a similar manner. The only limitation of sharing these files over Discord is the size of the file, as Discord has a limit of 25 MB for the size of a file that can be shared over its platform. Should a user attempt to upload a file that exceeds the file limit, Discord will inform the user of this using a pop up, as can be seen in figure 5.48.

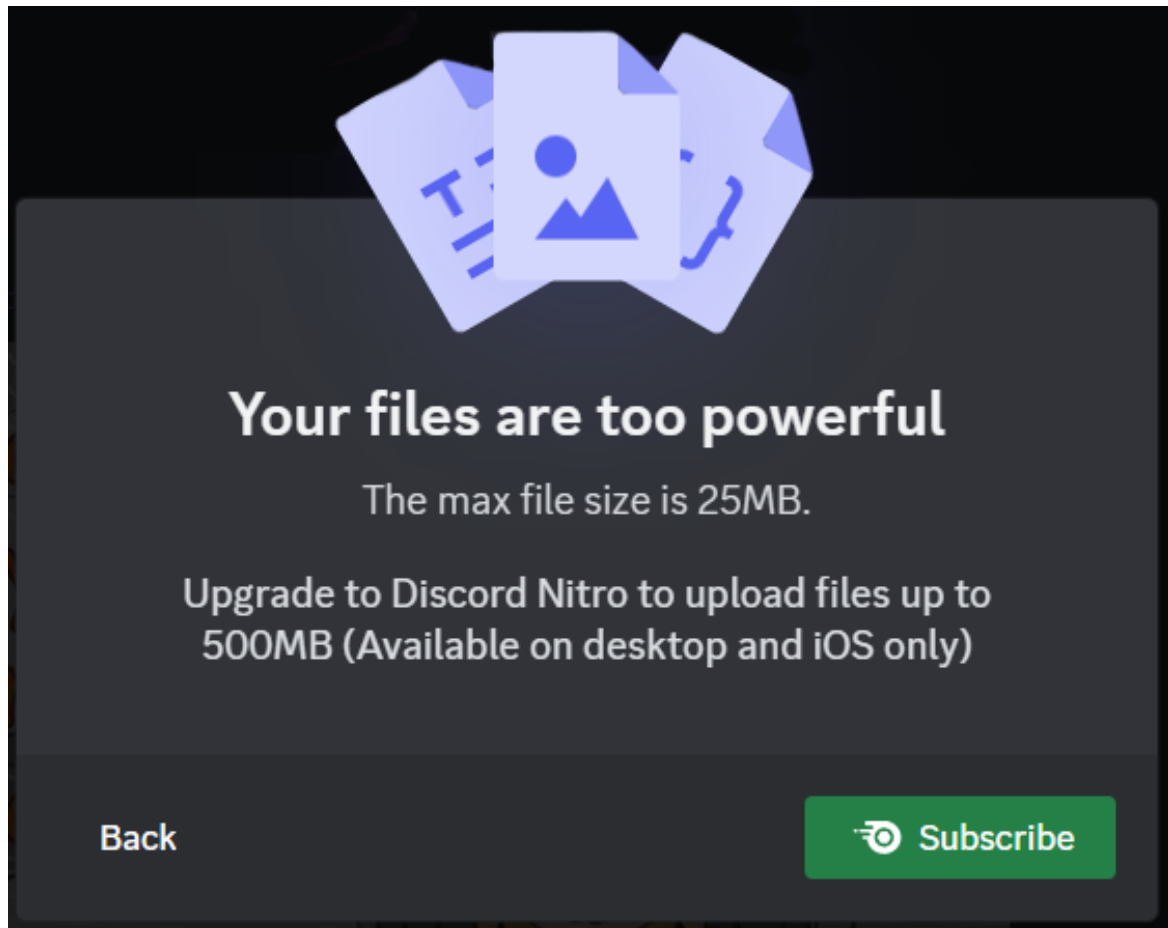


Figure 5.48: A popup window informing the user about the file size limitation.

While this would allow certain model creators, such as artists, to share progress shots and sketches fairly easily, the restrictions on file size could potentially become an issue if the given artist works with large canvases, as large images would either need to be compressed, resulting in a lack of detail, or wouldn't be able to be sent at all.

The other way through which Discord enables the sharing of files and content is through the ability of users to share their screen while in a voice chat. In doing so, a user can share anything that might be on their own computer screen with the other users inside the voice chat, whether that be a game, a video, a program, or anything else the

sharing user might decide to open up on their screen. This can essentially be used by users to livestream content, with the quality of the stream being dependent on the user's internet connection and whether they are subscribed to Discord's premium subscription service nitro, as this affects the quality at which a user can stream, see figure 5.49.

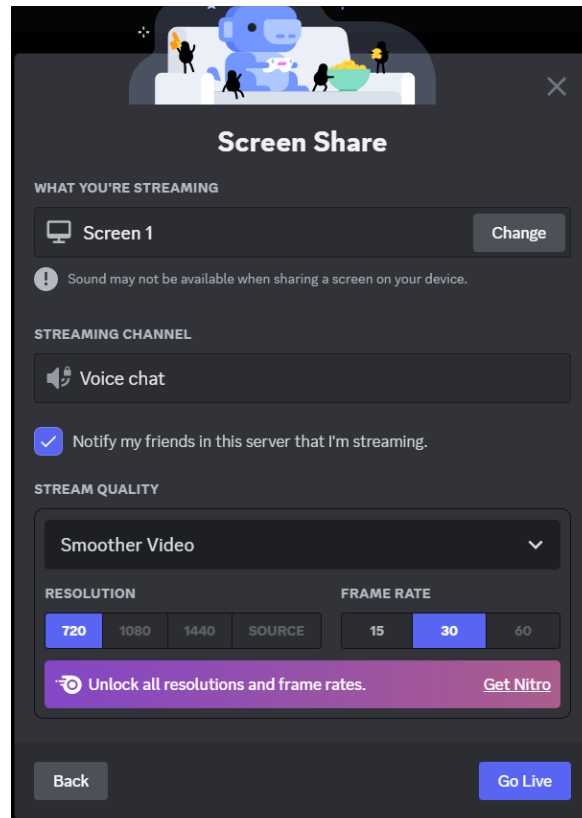


Figure 5.49: The window a user is met with, when wishing to share their screen through Discord.

This could for example be used by a model creator to show their work process and workflow to other members of a Discord server in real time, easily allowing them to converse with anyone else inside the voice chat and possibly being able to receive help from other community members, should they be stuck on a particular step or process. Somewhat in line with this idea of using Discord as a means of livestreaming content, is the fact that Discord also offers special voice channels called stage channels, where only a select few members are able to talk while other members can simply watch what is being shared. These stage channels can only be created by users that have specific server permissions, such as moderators, making them more so useful for sharing content whenever a moderator is there to facilitate this. An example of the layout of a stage channel can be seen in figure 5.50.

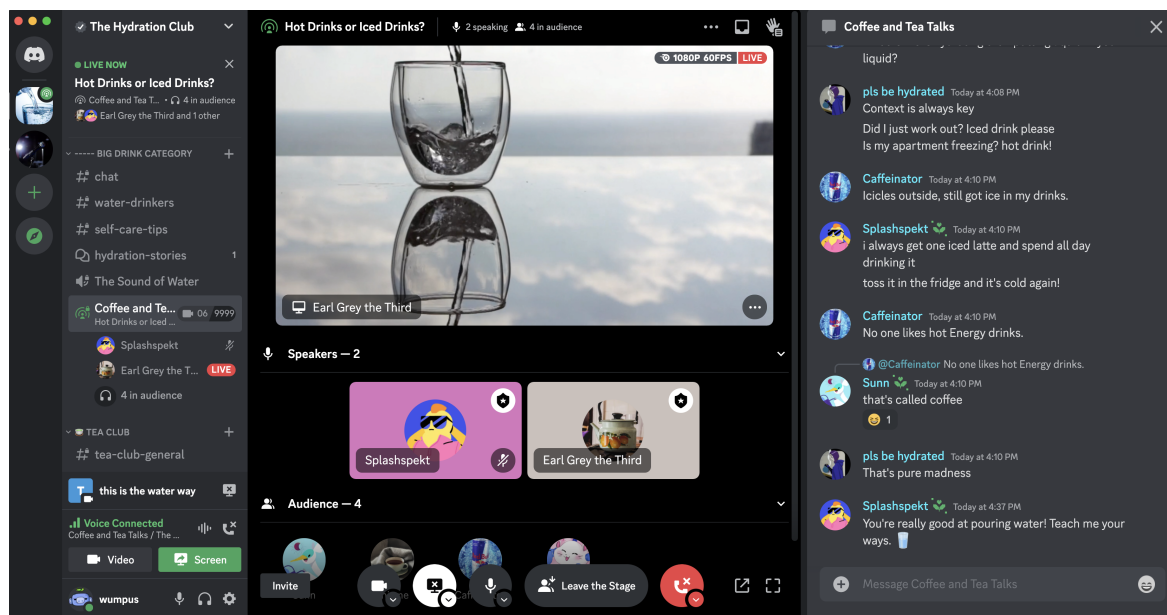


Figure 5.50: An example of what a stage channel can look like, from the official Discord FAQ on the feature (Potato, 2023).

So while Discord has limitations in place when it comes to the sharing of content, primarily due to limitations on file size, the platform does provide other features for sharing content that can be considered particularly useful to model creators.

5.4.4 Presence

There are a few different ways through which Discord enables the presence block of the honeycomb model. One of these aspects, that being the different states a Discord user can set as their current status, has already been discussed in section 5.2.4. However, another way that this can be utilized for the purpose of presence, is by people writing a custom status. This will not influence the small icon that appears next to the user's profile picture, but it can be used as a means of further expanding on one's availability. A user can also set a custom status to be cleared after a set timeframe, with the options for this being a day, four hours, one hour, 30 minutes, or set for the status to not be cleared at all. An example of how a custom status can be utilized like this can be seen in figure 5.51.

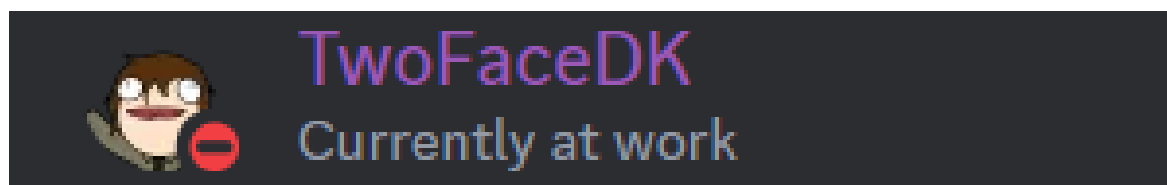


Figure 5.51: A custom status being used to signify that a user may not be available at the moment.

Another aspect of presence, which hasn't yet been discussed, is the online visibility within a Discord server. When a user is in a given server, the bar to the right side of the window will show a list over all the users that have joined the server, as well as showing which of them are currently online and which are not. If the server has specific roles for certain members, these can also further be highlighted here, in order to further divide up the current users that are currently online and a part of the server. An example of this can be seen in figure 5.52.

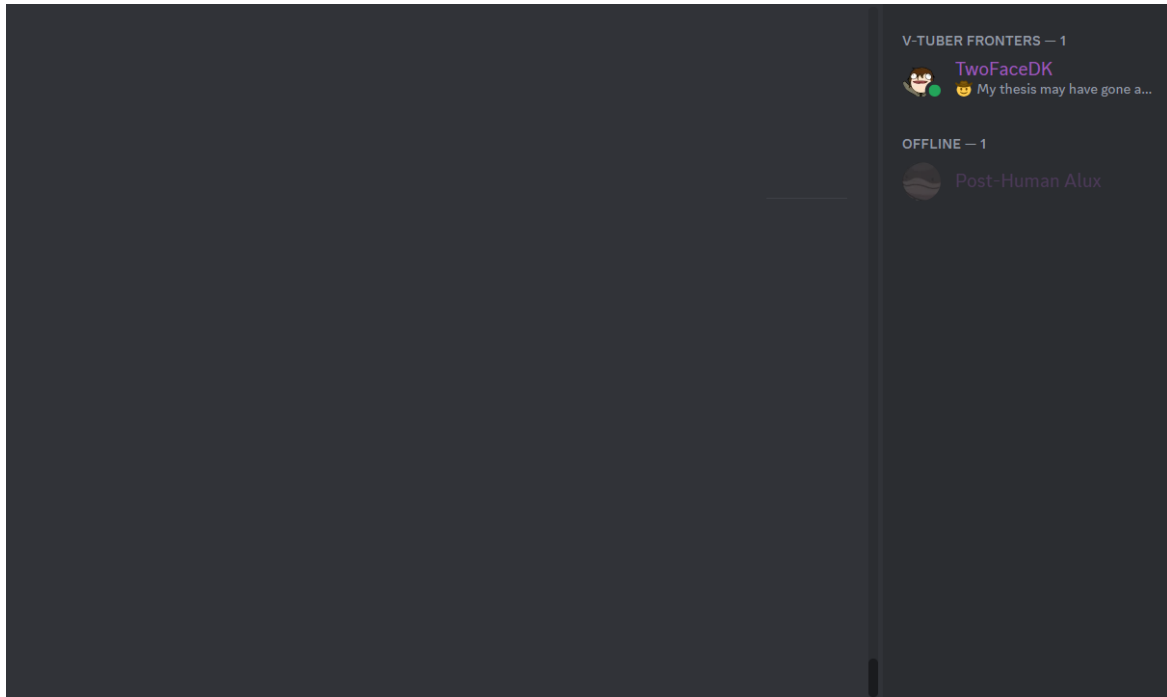


Figure 5.52: An example of a Discord server with 2 members, one of which is currently offline, and one of which is online and has the 'V-Tuber Frontiers' role.

A more direct way, through which Discord shows a user being available, and in a certain location, is through the use of voice channels. Whenever a user joins a particular voice channel on a server, their name and icon will be displayed beneath the respective voice channel, as can be seen in figure 5.53.



Figure 5.53: Two voice channels. The channel on the left is empty, while the channel on the right has a user in it.

This allows a user to quickly see if another user is in a given voice channel, thus immediately communicating to them where this user is, and that they are available, as it would be unlikely for a user to join a voice channel without the intention of speaking with others.

Discord further has the option, should a user allow it, to display what a user is currently doing, to their friends and others on a server. These activities can include things, such as displaying a user playing a particular game, or using other software that Discord can detect the use of. This allows a user to gain a certain sense of presence outside of Discord, and might signify to other users that the given user may currently either be busy with another activity, or might be available for others to join them in said activity. An example of this can be seen in figure 5.54.

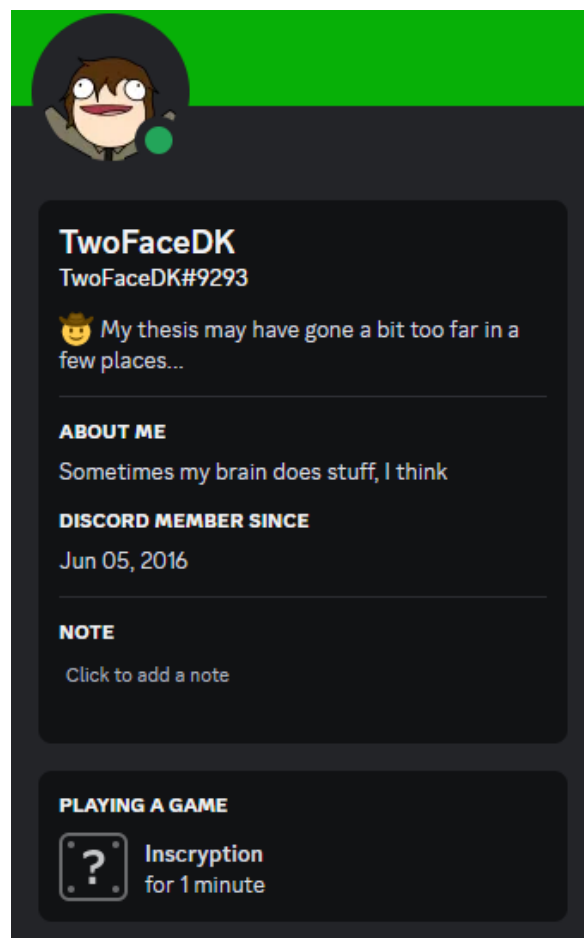


Figure 5.54: A Discord profile showing that the given user is currently playing a game.

With all of this in mind, it can be said that Discord manages to provide its users with a sense of presence, within the virtual confines of its platform. It primarily does so through

the use of features, such as availability states, custom states, highlighting when a user is in a voice channel, and showing some of the other activities a user might currently be up to outside of the platform.

5.4.5 Relationships

The relationships block of the honeycomb model is primarily enabled by Discord through the use of a friend list system. Here, a user can send a friend request to another user, and once that other user accepts the friend request they will show up in each others friend lists. This allows for these two users to send direct messages to each other, despite not being in a Discord server together, allowing for conversation to occur independently from otherwise shared groups. Despite the fact that people who are connected to each other this way may not actually be friends, the naming of the function does carry the implication of a closer connection between these two particular users, as opposed to the relationship between a user and the other users within a server.

However, one could also argue that a user will inevitably form a relationship with the other members of a server as well, especially if the server is built around a topic or community that both parties share an interest for. In these cases, the third thing that both users might have a common interest for can become the main topic of conversations between the two users, and can serve as the reason for the relationship between the two users deepening. There is also a chance that users might form stronger relationships with certain members of a server than with others, similar to what Ren, Yuqing et al. (2012) discovered in regards to interpersonal bonds within online communities. As such, if a users interacts a lot with another user on a server, their relationship might deepen to the point of conversing privately through Discord's direct messages, and possibly to the point of exchanging friend requests with one another. This process can potentially also be further helped through Discord showing a user if another user is in multiple different servers with them, potentially providing multiple different topics of conversation that both users share.

However, should one form a bad relationship through Discord, such as getting harassed or bullied by another user, a user can choose to block the harassing user. This in turn does mitigate some of the potential issues of relationships on social media that Baccarella et al. (2018) highlighted, though one should note that getting blocked could theoretically be circumvented by creating a new account, joining the same server, and then harassing the same victim again.

As such, Discord enables relationships primarily through a dedicated friend-list system, as well as by allowing for relationships to form through giving the users of a server a shared topic or interest which they can bond over. This bonding over a shared interest or topic does seem to align with how online communities have previously been described in this report, see chapter 2, indicating that Discord might serve as a good platform for online communities.

5.4.6 Reputation

There are only a handful of ways through which Discord enables the reputation block of the honeycomb model. As a starting point, as previously mentioned in section 5.2.6, the assignment of specific roles to a member can lend them a certain level of reputation and credibility. The most prominent example of this would be the use of moderator and administrator roles on Discord servers. These roles will usually come with the ability to change specific server settings, delete content, and remove people from the server, and thus the roles are ideally only given out to people that have a good reputation, not so much through specific metrics, like on other social media platforms, but through their conduct within the community. The lack of a clear metric as a way of measuring someone's reputation can make it a bit more difficult for server owners to determine who would be fit for one of these reputation roles, and thus extra care should be taken when considering people for them. Otherwise, one could run the risk of other users accusing a server owner of favoritism and corruption, should they promote a disliked or problematic user to the role of moderator or administrator.

In a similar vein to roles, special profile badges can also be used as a means of reputation. This is especially the case when it comes to special badges that cannot be obtained under normal circumstances, such as from special events or from owning a server that is officially partnered with Discord (Discord, 2023b). Being a member of the staff of Discord can also provide a user with a badge, which in addition to reputation might also lend that user a sense of authority.

Another function of Discord, that can be seen as a means of reputation, is the ability to boost a server. Boosting a server requires a user to pay money to Discord, in exchange for providing the server with additional perks such as more slots for custom emotes, better audio quality, and increasing the maximum file size limit of the server (Discord, 2023c). When a user boosts a server, they will get a special badge for their profile, and other users on the server will be notified about them having boosted the server. One could argue that this provides the boosting user with a good reputation, as they through said boost allow other server members to access features otherwise inaccessible to them, as long as enough other users also boost the same server.

So all in all, while Discord does enable some semblance of reputation through its platform, it is primarily through the use of specific roles and similar labels, as opposed to the numerical metrics found on other social media. As such, this can make it a lot more difficult for a user to determine the standing of their reputation, especially when they are not yet at a point of obtaining a special role to further highlight it.

5.4.7 Groups

One could argue Discord enables the types of groups described by Kietzmann et al. (2011) in several different ways. As a starting point, Discord gives its users the ability to create their own servers, which inherently provides them with some sort of closed group due to

people requiring an invite link to join a server on Discord. In this case, joining this given group is then as easy as joining the given server. However, each server, depending on how it is set up by the server owner and admins, can also allow for further sub-groups to form within it. As an example, a Discord server can have its different channels be grouped into certain categories, with some users exclusively utilizing the channels within a single category. This could then technically be even further divided into subgroups, if certain users prefer to exclusively interact within a single channel on a server.

However, this group formation can be made a whole lot more explicit, through the use of roles within Discord. Roles can be used as a means for server owners to assign users to groups, as well as managing them. For instance, in the settings of a server an administrator can set it so that only server members with a specific role can see and access certain categories and channels within the server, see figure 5.55.

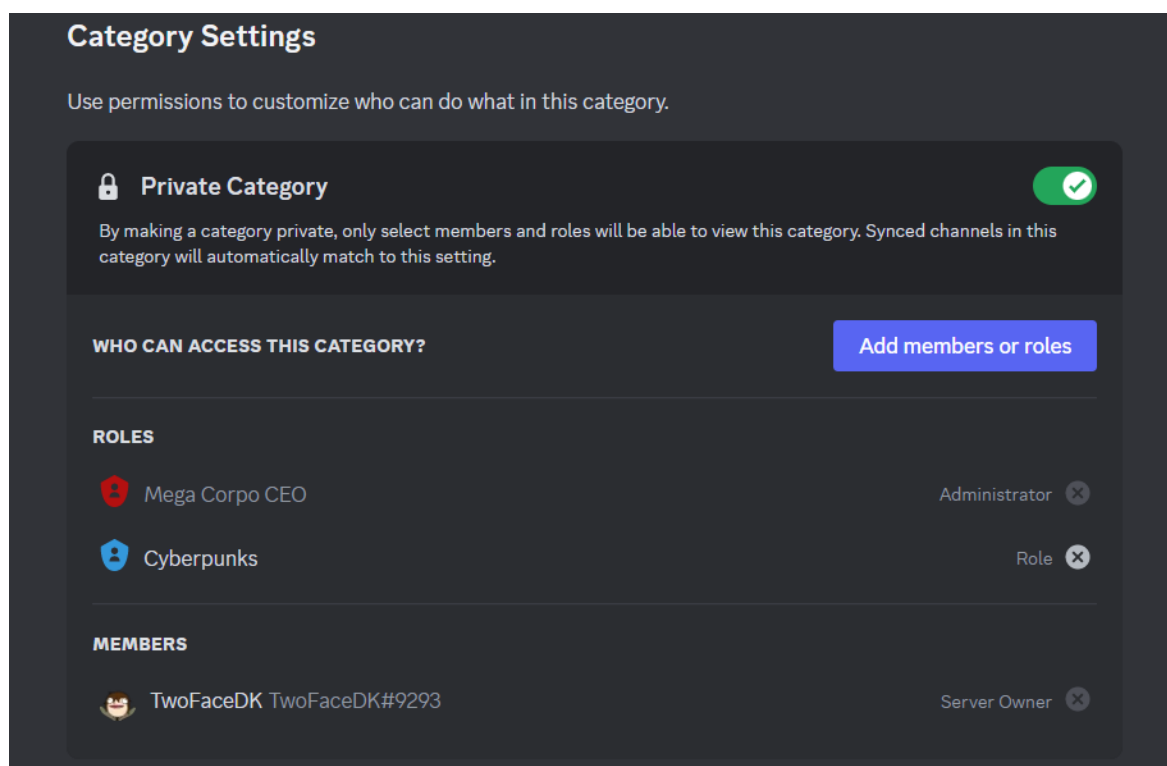


Figure 5.55: The settings of a category in Discord. In this case, two roles can access the category in question, one of which is the administrator role for the server, as well as the server owner having explicit permission to access it.

This exclusivity of having access to a particular chat or category, due to a role, might cause users to form a stronger sense of attachment to the community, akin to what Ren, Yuqing et al. (2012) describes. This separation into different groups can be further highlighted within a Discord server, by having the server's different roles be displayed along-

side the members currently online on the server. An example of this layout can be seen in figure 5.56.

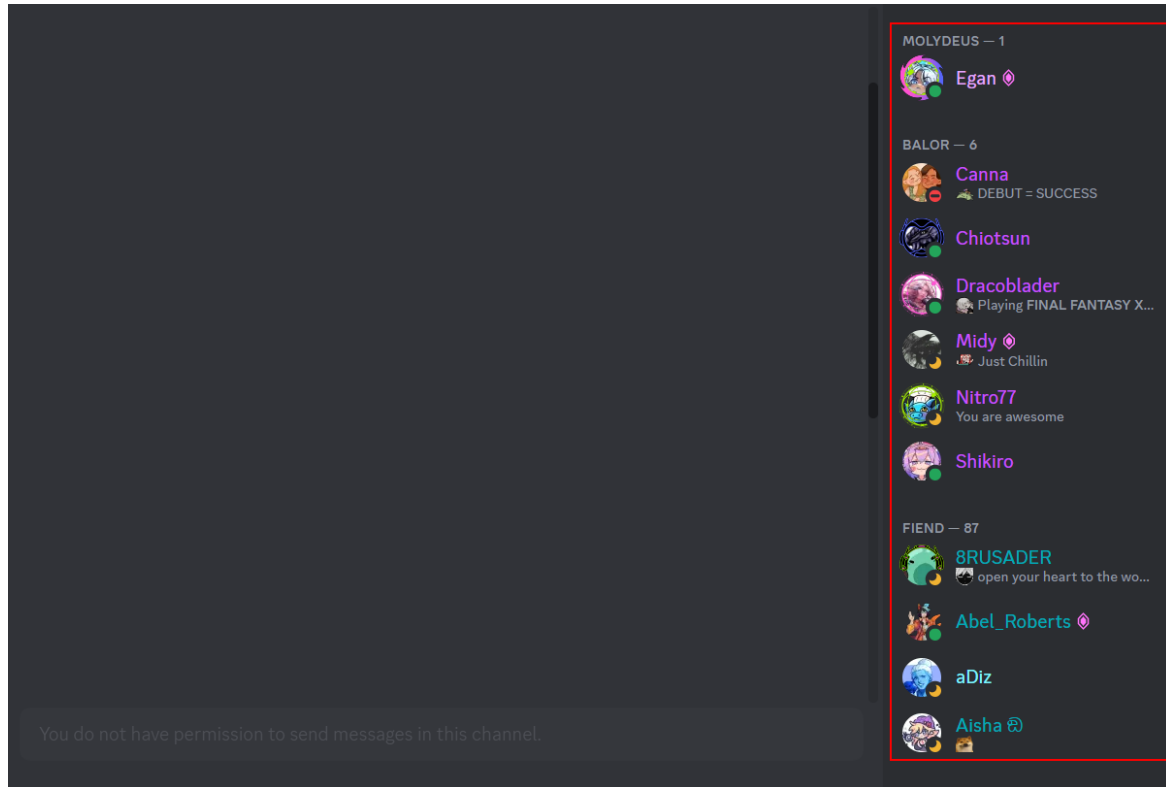


Figure 5.56: Different roles being displayed alongside the users that have said role, within the Discord server of the V-Tuber Tiffany Tiefling.

In certain ways, Discord allows for this feeling of being a part of a group throughout conversations as well. For instance, a Discord server has the option of making custom emotes that can then be used by the users of that specific server. Normally, these emotes can only be used within the confines of the server they were created for, though by subscribing to Discord's premium service Nitro, a user can use a server's custom emotes in other messages on the platform, see figure 5.57.

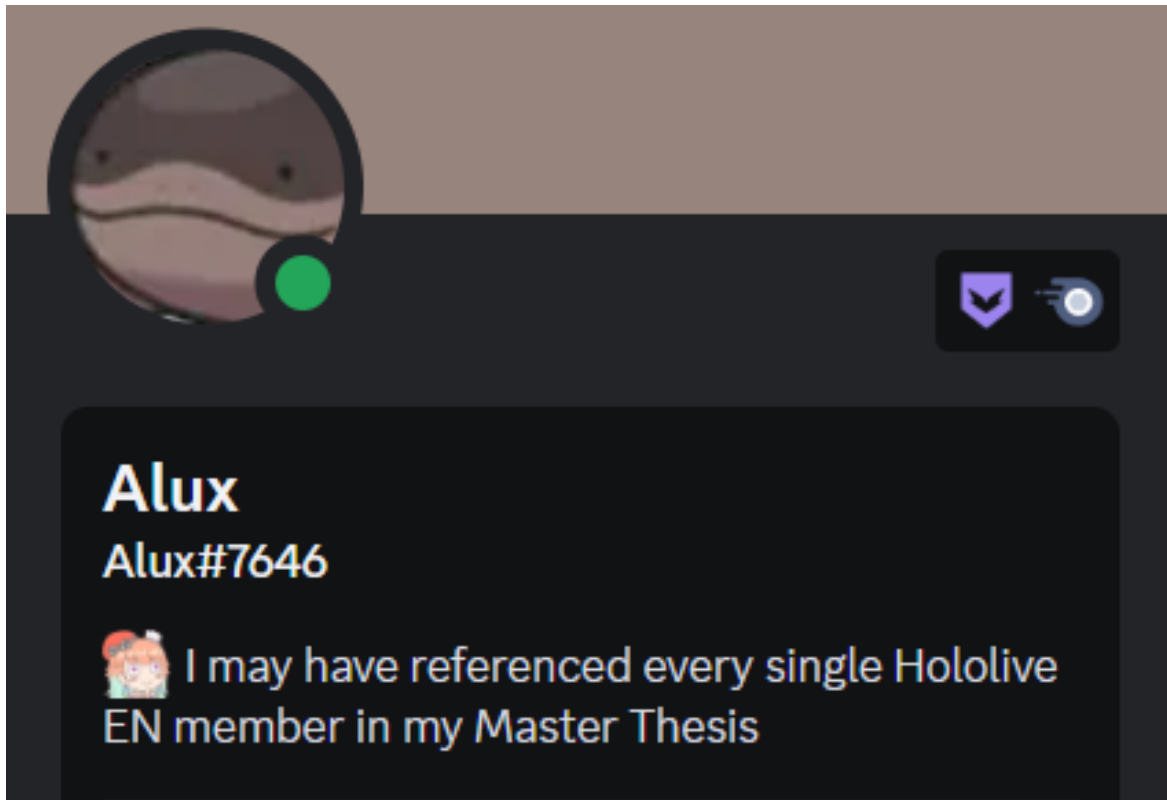


Figure 5.57: An example of a Discord user displaying a custom server emote within a status message.

Discord also provides special profile badges to certain users, if they perform certain services or do certain actions, with these badges not being server exclusive and thus being visible by anyone looking at the user's profile (Discord, 2023b). One could argue that, similar to roles, these badges can make users feel like they are part of an exclusive group, which could further strengthen their attachment to that specific community.

With this in mind, it seems that Discord in a lot of ways facilitates groups through its various features, via both special roles and the very structure of a Discord server as a whole.

5.4.8 Honeycomb Model of Discord

After having investigated the platform from the different angles posed by the honeycomb model, we can say the following things about Discord as a platform:

- As a platform, Discord primarily focuses on facilitating conversation through the use of different channels for text and voice chat. As such, the great majority of interactions that can be conducted through the platform include some form of conversation through these channels, see section 5.4.2.

- Discord offers a lot of different ways for groups and subgroups to form around different subjects, be it through the creation of a server, the use of specific roles, as well as different channels and categories. Unless a user exclusively uses Discord to communicate through direct message with people they already know, a user will always interact with some form of group on Discord, see section 5.4.7.
- Quite a few different methods for establishing presence are offered by Discord. A user can use different states in order to communicate their availability, including custom ones, and will be visible to other user when they are in a voice chat, see section 5.4.4.
- Discord does enable the formation of relationships through its platform, among others through a dedicated friend list. However, as the primary method of building relationships is through being part of a server, the forging of these relationships seems to primarily be facilitated through interacting with different groups on the platform, see section 5.4.5.
- A user can customise their identity primarily through the profile section, which will adapt to different situations within discord, depending on where they are viewing it from. Roles within the community can also reveal part of the users standing and identity within the community. Identity can also be revealed through the programs they use which feature rich presence, the emojis they use and discord groups they are a part of, see section 5.4.1.
- While Discord allows a few different ways to share content, such as through sharing a user's screen, it also limits the kinds of content that can be shared through file size limitations. While Discord offers a paid service to raise these limitations, it is debatable in which regards this actually fixes the issues posed by them, see section 5.4.3.
- Discord has no primary method of keeping track of a user's reputation. While features, such as roles, can be used for the purpose of providing some sense of reputation, the fact that these roles are confined to a singular server makes it difficult for a user's reputation to carry over from one server to another, see section 5.4.6.

With all of this in mind, we propose that Discord as a platform can be represented through the honeycomb model in the following way:

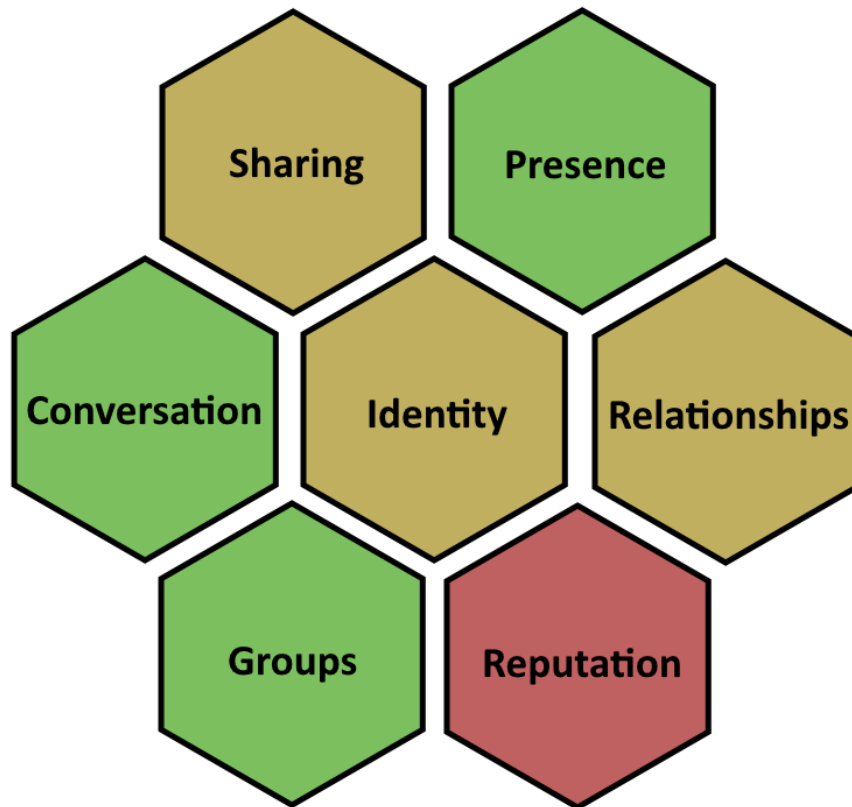


Figure 5.58: The honeycomb model proposed to describe Discord as a platform. Green means the functionalities of the platform support the block well, yellow means they do so moderately, and red means they do so poorly.

If we compare these functionalities to our previously set requirements, we can determine the following in regards to how well Discord could work for the purpose of establishing an online community built around the creation of V-Tuber models:

Discord is above all else a communication platform, offering different means of conversing with others, as has been discussed in section 5.4.2. More importantly however, the way in which this conversation is framed and facilitated, through the use of different servers and channels, does provide a potential community with a dedicated space to interact with one another. This, alongside the ability to create a dedicated server focused around a specific topic, lines up with the idea of third places rather well, by giving users a place away from the associations of their home or workplace, where they can interact, communicate, and possibly bond over a shared thing. Core activities and rules can also easily be made accessible and clear, through the use of a specific channel, and custom roles can further be utilised to clearly communicate who does what within the community.

On discord both V-Tubers and model creators have multiple ways to showcase both

their talent and their interest. With discord ability to create profiles with custom pictures, banners, descriptions colours etc., any user can showcase their creative skills, as well as showcase specific pieces of fan media and identifiers to showcase they are part of a specific culture or fandom, see section 5.4.1. Since users can change their profile on a server by server basis, if they pay for discord nitro. they can also showcase different performances, depending on the server in question.

Thanks to features, such as roles and categories, the server can be customised to showcase text, voice, and forum channels which may be most relevant to the V-Tuber or model creator in question, while also creating spaces where they can collaborate, see section 5.4.7, and 5.4.5. Features such as rich presence also allow collaborators to easily jump into other creatives current work and collaborate, should they have programs which allow this part of the feature see section 5.4.3. Collaboration could both happen within the server, by utilising things such as the channels, as well as features such as screensharing, or in smaller groups outside of a discord server thanks to discord friend function see section 5.4.3 and section 5.4.5. Announcement channels or forum posts could also be used by individuals to showcase their progress, to showcase their work and ask for feedback and help from other creatives see section 5.4.3 and section 5.4.2. Community specific servers such as the welcome screen, can also give a way to guide V-Tubers into relevant channels, to better suit their specific approach to model creation. Announcement channels can give a way for petty producers and enthusiast to announce offer their skills to the community, which is especially useful for V-Tubers who are looking for model creator with a particular skill to work on their model. Unlike YouTube, Discord allow for strong sense of presence, see section 5.13. Users on Discord can set different status to showcase their current availability on discord, as well as setting costume status messages. These can also be used by model riggers to indicate if they are currently available for projects.

Furthermore, a Discord server can have dedicated channels for people that look for feedback, or showing off their work, possibly making the use of socialisation tactics easier. The ability for users to also further split up into specific sub-groups through custom roles and channels, as well as the fact that Discord as a platform primarily facilitates interactions between different users, could further support the formation of a sense of group identity, as well as attachment to the community as a whole, see section 5.4.7.

Overall, it would seem that discord allows for the required elements for a building a community, focusing on the creation of virtual models.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter we have chosen two specific social media platforms as potential candidates for building our community, those being YouTube and Discord. Both were analysed by applying the honey comb model of social media to a more modern context, which highlighted the strength and weaknesses of both social media platforms. By having gained this understanding of how these platforms facilitate the formation of communities, we deem

that Discord as a social media platform better enables the formation of an online community, when compared to YouTube. With this in mind, we will in the following chapter use these insights to formulate a set of requirements for how one can build a community focused on the creation of V-Tuber models using Discord.

Chapter 6

Concept Online Community Focusing on model creation

In this chapter, we will present our suggestion for an online community, which focuses on model creation. For our concept, we propose the use of Discord as the primary social media platform used for the facilitation of the community. However, we will supplement elements of sharing through YouTube, since Discord allows for the embedding of YouTube video, see Section 5.4.3. In order to do so, we will examine the requirements posed at the end of section 5.1 and how each of these requirements can be fulfilled by using Discord as the primary social media platform for building an online community.

6.1 Fulfillment of Requirements

This section will describe how Discord can be used to fulfill each of the different requirements mentioned in section 5.1.

6.1.1 Fulfillment of R1:

There are a few ways through which Discord can be used to clearly communicate the overarching goal of a community. As a general starting point, when building a particular server for the purpose of creating a community, one should make sure that the first thing that a person see when interacting with the server for the first time, clearly communicate what the server is about. As the goal of our community is the creation of V-Tuber models, we decided to name the Discord server of the community "VTRI Model Creation Club", and gave it an icon we thought represented this well, as can be seen in figure 6.1

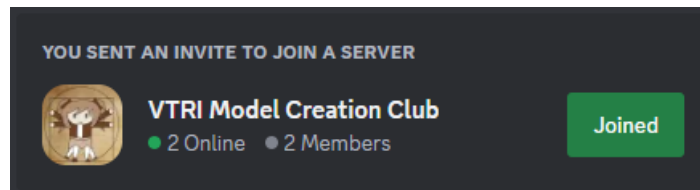


Figure 6.1: The invite link to our server, showcasing the icon and title of our server.

Furthermore, Discord allows servers to have a welcome screen and a on boarding introduction, which will appear on a user's screen the first time they join a server. This in turn could further be utilised to clearly state the goal of the community, as well as some of the other aspects of it. In the case of our community built around the creation of V-Tuber models, we decided to create a welcome screen, which can be seen in figure 6.2 and figure 6.3.

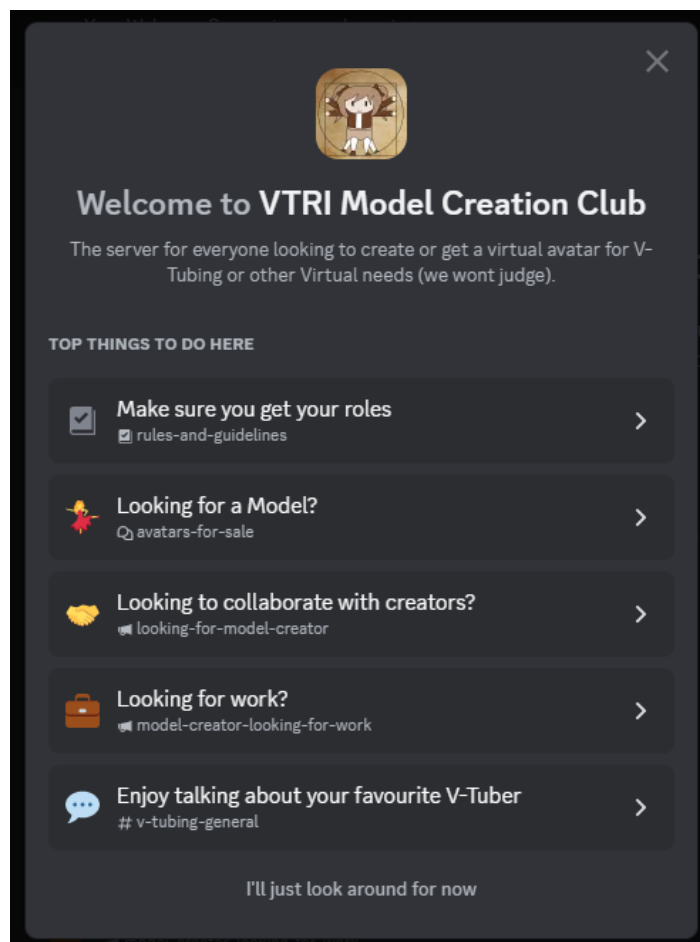


Figure 6.2: The welcome screen for our community. The screen includes a list of suggested activities for the member to engage in.

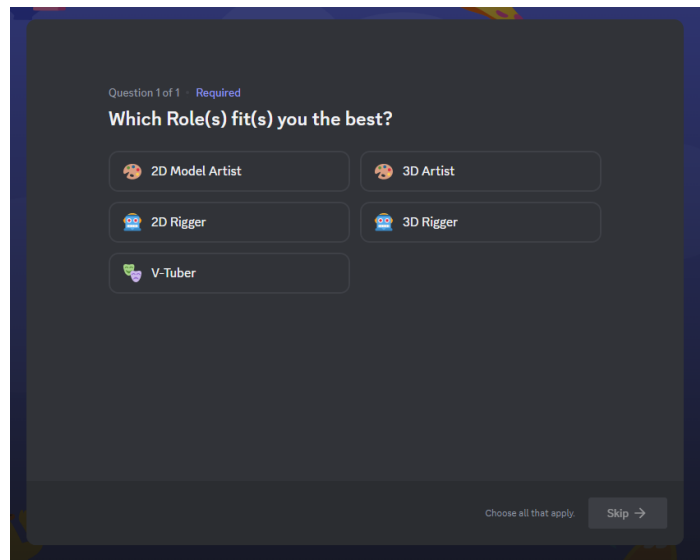


Figure 6.3: The onboard screen. The onboarding screen is used to assign roles for the users.

With these introductions to the server purpose, we believe that it will be possible for potential members to gauge if this community are build around the purpose they seek to fulfill.

6.1.2 Fulfillment of R2:

As Discord has a dedicated system for the use of roles within its servers, it would make a lot of sense to use this exact system as a means of communicating the roles of different members within the community. On one hand, this can be used as a way to directly provide users that have certain roles with the ability to moderate within the community, such as creating dedicated roles for administrators and moderators. On the other hand, this can also further be utilised as a way for other members of the community to highlight their unique talents and levels of experience within certain fields relevant to the community. For instance, in the case of a community built around the creation of V-Tubers, one could create a dedicated role for each the different actors required for the creation of a V-Tuber model, such as an "Artist" or "Rigger" role, as well as a role for those not interested in making a model but instead obtaining one, such as the "V-Tuber" role. This could even be further expanded by using this system to indicate if a certain user has a lot of experience within a particular field, such as having a "Beginner" or "Experienced" role, to signify that these community members might be able to help some of the newer artists and riggers if they find a particular aspect of the process difficult. The fact that a particular color can be assigned to each role, which changes the color of a user's name if they are assigned said role, can also further be used as a means to communicate what a given community member's skill set might be, or what they might be looking for in the community. With all

of this in mind, we propose that our Discord server focused around the creation of V-Tuber models should include the different roles, which can be seen in figure 6.4.

- VTRI Founder
- Admin
- 2D
- 3D
- Experienced
- Intermediate
- Beginner
- Rigger
- 2D
- 3D
- Experienced
- Intermediate
- Beginner
- Artist
- Model Creator
- Experienced
- Intermediate

6.1.3 Fulfillment of R3:

In order to communicate the community's core activities, we utilise some of the same features used for the fulfillment of R1, see section 6.1.1. To further communicate some of some of the everyday activities on the server, each channel is part of a category to showcase what activities are produced within these channels, see figure 6.5.

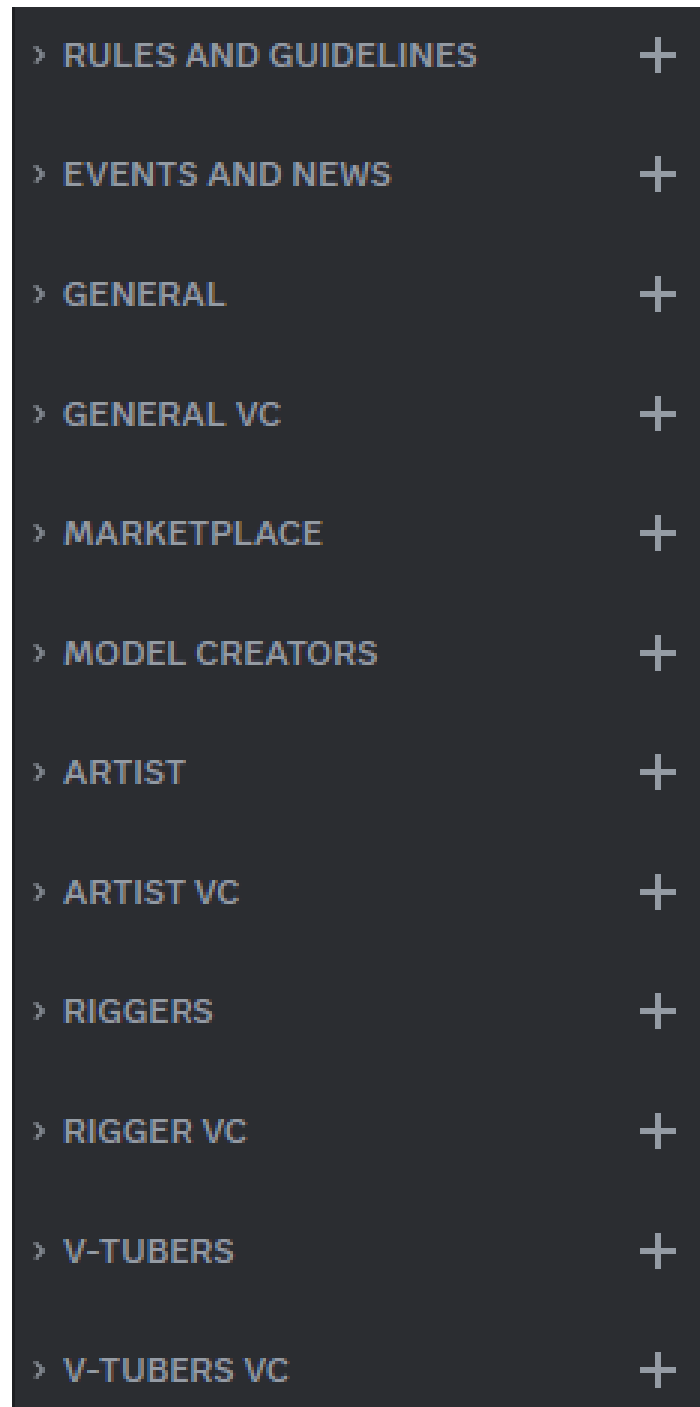


Figure 6.5: Categories available on the server. Some are hidden dependent on the role of the user.

The channels also include a few announcement channels which intend to deliver weekly news that are relevant for V-Tubers, and model creators respectively, as well as also includ-

ing news about activities relevant to the server community, see figure 6.6.

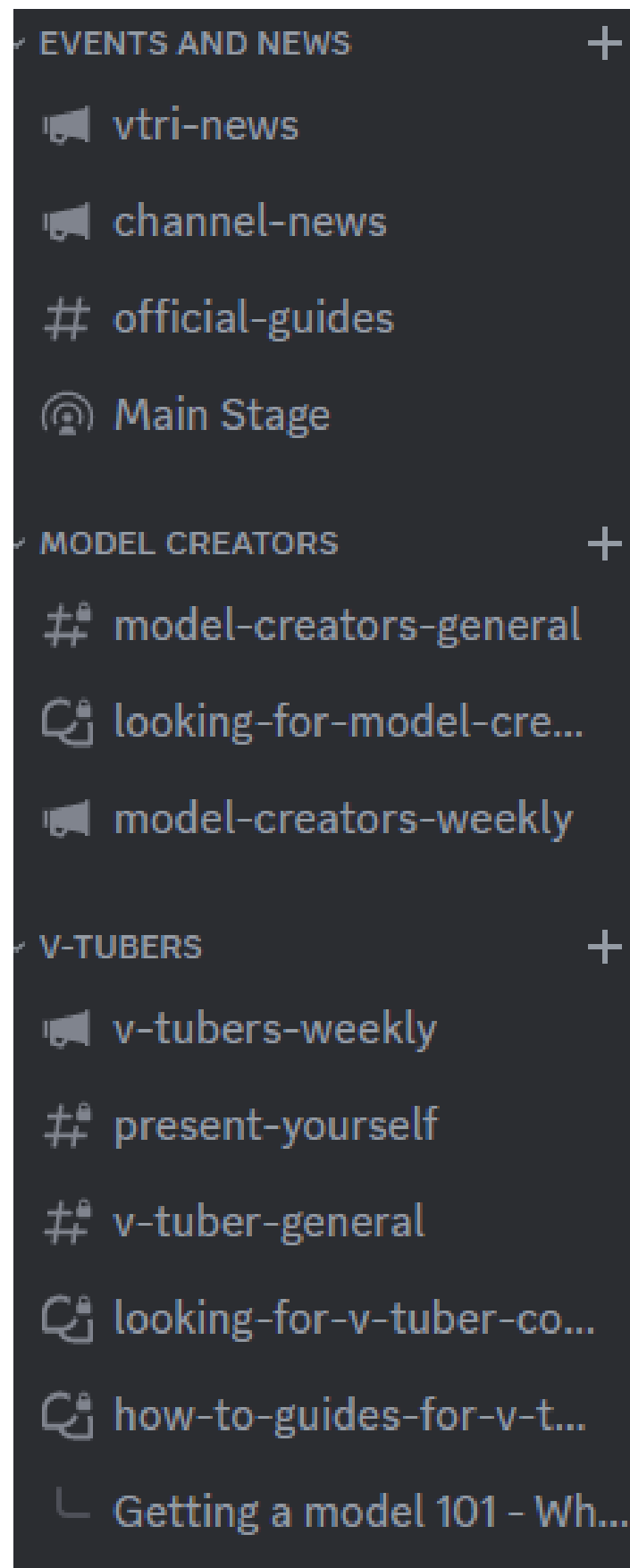


Figure 6.6: Announcement channels within the Audience, Model creator and Event and news categories are marked with a megaphone, to symbolise their use for announcements.

For instance, by setting up the server's different categories and channels in a very concise way and having a news channel relevant for specific types of users, the users could get an idea of what each channel and category are used for, and in turn what activities can be conducted within the community found on this Discord server.

6.1.4 Fulfillment of R4:

The onboarding process mentioned in section 6.1.1 can additionally also be equipped with certain steps a user has to complete before fully gaining access to the majority of the server's features. For our server, the user must first agree to the rules before they can start using the server, see figure 6.7.

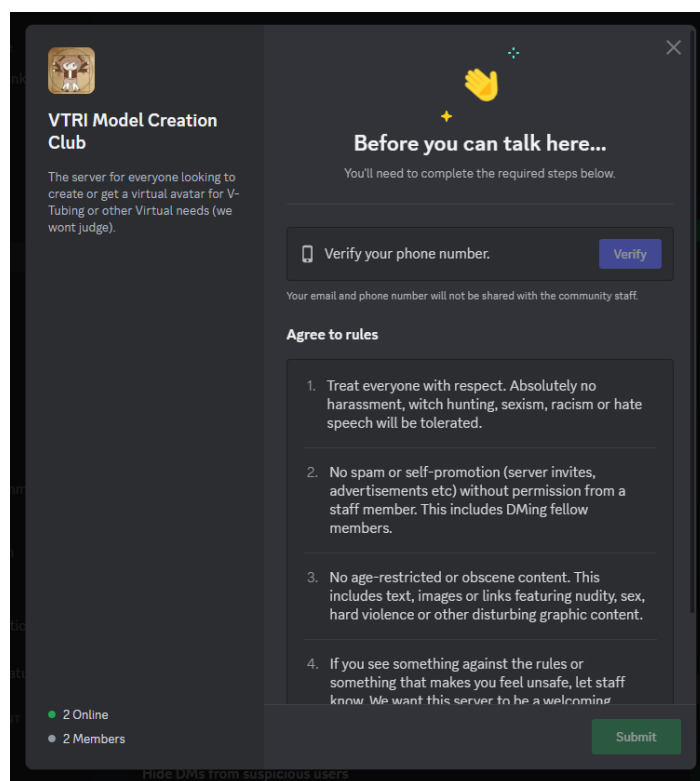


Figure 6.7: Popup that is shown, should the user not have agreed to the server rules, after filling out the onboarding step.

In addition to this, a dedicated rules channel can be created as a means of having a permanent place on the server, where a community member can look up the server's rules if they should ever be in doubt about them, see figure 6.8.

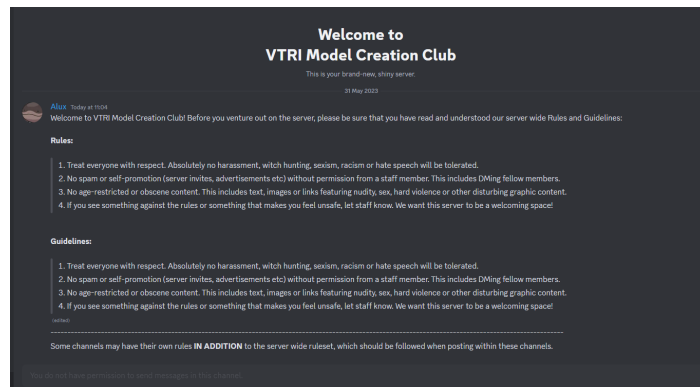


Figure 6.8: Rules channel of the server. Only the administrators and the server owner can post to the channel, but everyone can see and quote it.

It is very important when creating such a channel for rules, announcement, or similarly important things, that only certain people have the ability to post within it, in order to minimise the risk of malicious actors vandalising or deleting the rules. Of the roles mentioned in section 6.1.2, only the administrators and the VTRI Founders can post on the sever. Some channels have extra rules to support the server wide rules. These are listed in the server, as a pinned message, see figure 6.9.

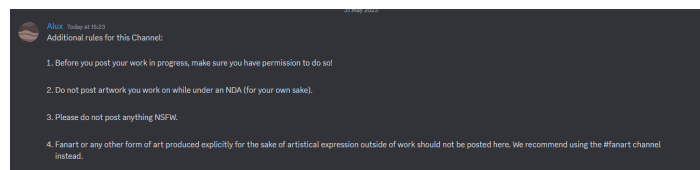


Figure 6.9: Additional rules for the Show-and-tell-artist channel.

Furthermore, the fact that one can post a link to a specific channel within a server, means that one can easily refer a particular user to the server's rules, should they have broken one either by accident or on purpose.

6.1.5 Fulfillment of R5:

One could argue that a Discord server in and of itself already provides a community with some semblance of a space to interact with one another, in that it provides a semi-private space where only those that have decided to click an invite link can communicate. However, in order to make this space even more explicit and clear we have chosen to have dedicated channels and categories for interaction and roles, which the community can use as a way to interact with each other, see figure 6.10.

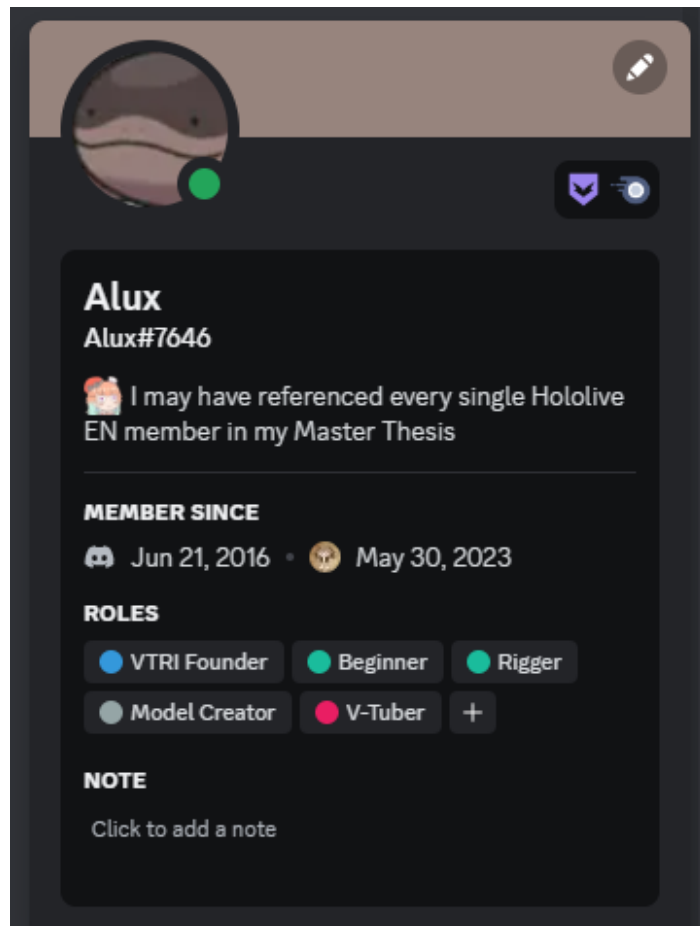


Figure 6.10: A user with both the V-Tuber and rigger role, allowing them to interact both within Rigger and V-Tuber related categories.

As an example from our community concept, we have created a create a dedicated channel for both artist and riggers, with the purpose of users showing off their current work with the intention of getting feedback on it, see figure 6.11.

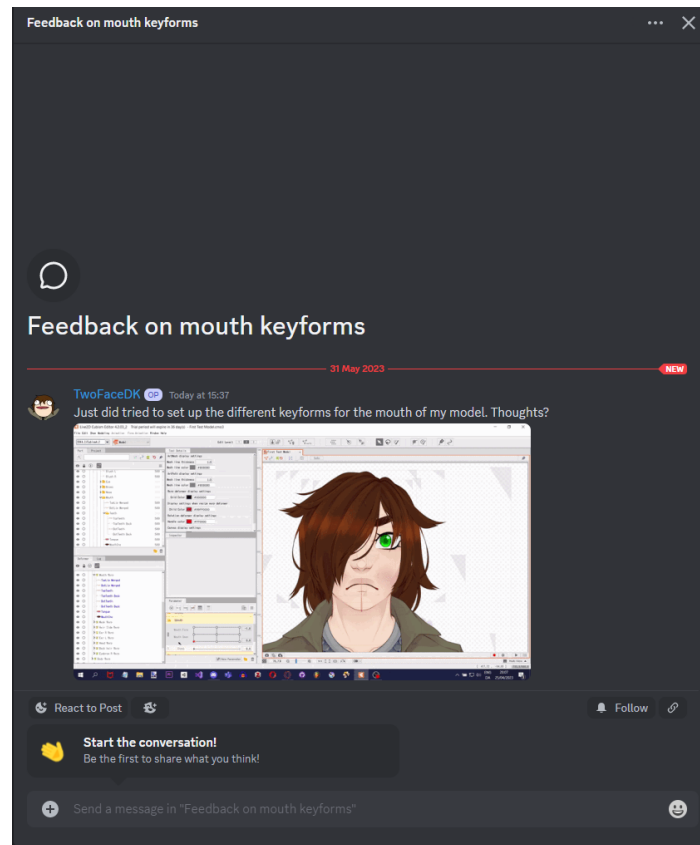


Figure 6.11: The user has made a post within the looking for feedback rigging forum. Other riggers can respond with suggestion, as well as post gif and other material such as videos.

This provide these users with a dedicated space for showcasing, interacting and receiving feedback from others within their field, both helping them grow and improve their skill. Should a user only wish to display, but not receive feedback on their work, they can choose to post it in a specific showcase channel, where users cannot post feedback on the piece, but still look at and react with emojis, see figure 6.12.

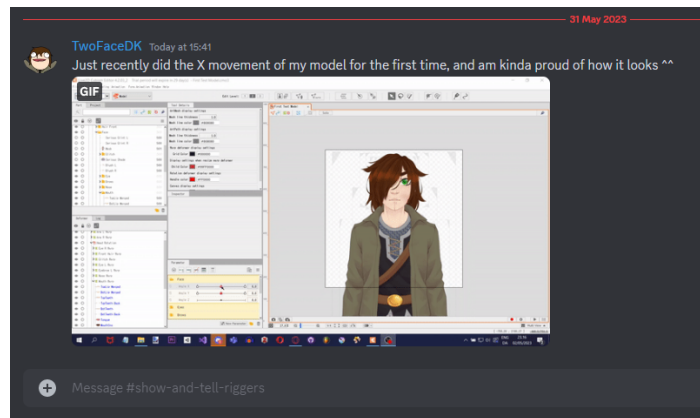


Figure 6.12: A rigger showcasing their work within the Show and tell rigger channel. While people can post emoji as a reactions, they cannot quote the post nor make post referring directly to it.

This means that should a community member not wish to engage in this particular kind of interaction, they can simply choose not to use these channels. Furthermore, both text channels and voice channels can be used for this particular purpose, as some user might prefer to talk with other users when interacting, while others may prefer to do so through text. As such it our server provide both kinds of channels, as a way to be accessible to community members that might prefer one form of communication over the other, see figure 6.10 for an example.

6.1.6 Fulfillment of R6:

There are a few ways through which a Discord server can be used to engage the enthusiasm of a model creator, as well as inspiring them to improve their craft. For one thing, the ability for model creators to use Discord as a way of showing off their work does hold the potential of model creators inspiring each other through witnessing each other's work. Furthermore, the fact that a model creator can use Discord to ask another model creator how exactly they achieved a particular effect within their work could further help them improve their craft. The use of roles, as previously mentioned in section 6.1.2, could also be used to engage model creators, by for instance motivating them to improve their craft to the point where they feel that they can change their role from Beginner to Intermediate, or even Experienced, within their given craft.

6.1.7 Fulfillment of R7:

A Discord server could make use of dedicated channels for user to both show off their work and receive feedback on it, as mentioned and demonstrated in section 6.1.5. Doing so could possibly sidestep the issue of certain users, who may have good intentions, critiquing a creator's work, when in reality said creator wasn't looking for constructive

criticism and thus perceives this interaction as negative. To further ensure that this feedback and criticism remain constructive, the servers for constructive criticism is specifically only available to others within the same field, so only those with the same skill set are able to critique the work of others. Furthermore, people can set their skill level as a role on discord, which will showcase their level within the particular skill, see figure 6.10.

6.1.8 Fulfillment of R8:

One way through which a server can facilitate the exchange between model creators and V-Tubers is by having a dedicated channel category for purposes related to collaboration, or selling and offering heir skill to other members of the community. In our community we have a category called the market place, where the different model creators can showcase their skills and offer their services for model creation, see figure 6.13.

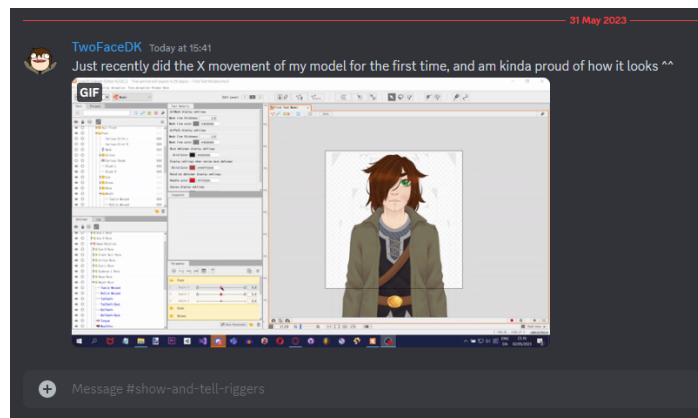


Figure 6.13: The marketplace within our server.

Inside of the model creation category, there is also an area, where creators can ask for collaboration with other model creators on different projects, see figure 6.13.

6.1.9 Fulfillment of R9:

One way through which the Discord community server created allows new and upcoming V-Tubers to share their enthusiasm for V-Tubing culture is by having a specific section of the server dedicated to this exact purpose. In the case of our server we have a space to discuss both V-Tubing, a place to share moments and a place to share fan art, see figure 6.14.

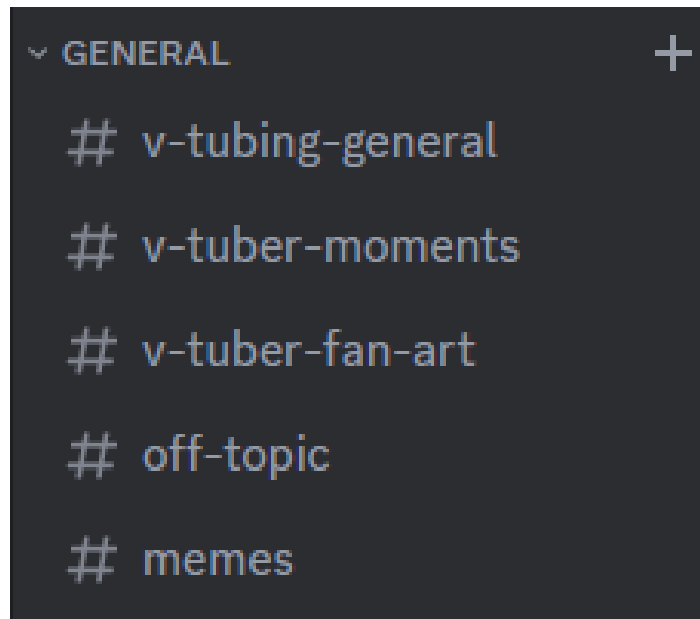


Figure 6.14: The general chat, which is available to all on the server, has channels dedicated to discussion of V-Tuber fandom and culture.

Within these sections, a new and upcoming V-Tuber can share and discuss their favorite clips from the V-Tubers they watch, while also providing them with a space to share some of their creative fan content, such as fan art.

6.1.10 Fulfillment of R10:

There are a few ways through which Discord can inform new and upcoming V-Tubers about the overall process that goes into creating a V-Tuber model. One way could be to bring together different model creators from the community and in collaboration with them create a list of frequently asked questions these model creators get. These events could then be hosted on the stage, see figure 6.15.

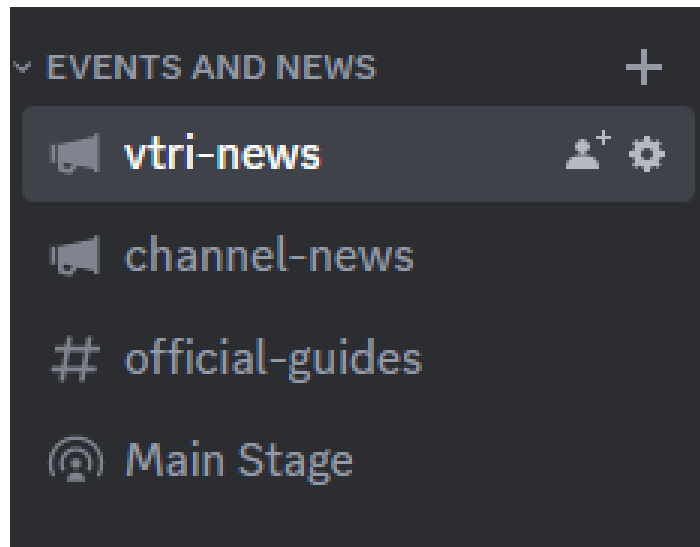


Figure 6.15: The events and news section also has a stage section, which can be used for events.

This FAQ could then be posted in the official guides channel, so that any user who's unsure of the process in the future, could check it out before approaching a model creator. Another way could be to post inside the how-to-guides for V-Tuber forum within the V-Tuber category, where experienced V-Tubers and staff, can write various guides specifically relating to V-Tubing, see figure 6.16.

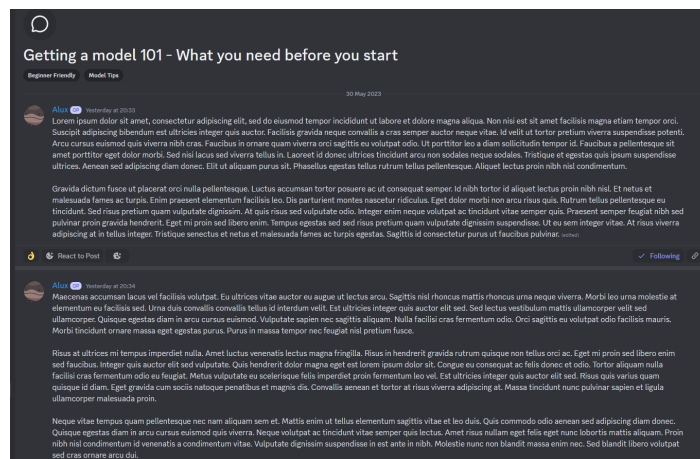


Figure 6.16: An example of a post within the How-to-guides for V-Tubers channel.

6.1.11 Fulfillment of R11:

One of the ways new and upcoming V-Tubers can learn about the culture and norms of the V-Tuber space, is through the server having a dedicated V-Tuber category, which is

accessible by members that have the V-Tuber role. While this does provide the people that have this role with a space for them to interact with others in, and thus the opportunity to learn through interacting with other members within the community, it does also include dedicated how-to-guides, as previously mentioned in section 6.1.10. The inclusion of these guides can allow a new and upcoming V-Tuber, who is unsure of the typical norms of the V-Tuber community and thus might be hesitant to engage with it, to read up on the community before engaging with it.

6.1.12 Fulfillment of R12:

The facilitation of the three different methods of obtaining a V-Tuber model, those being creating one yourself, creating one in collaboration with one or more model creators, and buying a premade model, can be facilitated in a few different ways.

First, is to take a similar approach to what has been described in section 6.1.10 and provide a detailed guide for each respective approach, which can be hosted on the stage and then turned into an official guide. Depending on the process, we could also provide users with different resources for the respective process, such as providing links to well made video tutorials for learning model creation through the how-to-guides within the rigger, artist and V-Tuber categories. One way we already facilitate this is through the marketplace, where model creators can offer their services or sell their finished Models. Should a V-Tuber wish to learn the craft themselves, they could join the creator role with the beginner role, in order to showcase they are new at craft in question, see figure 6.17.

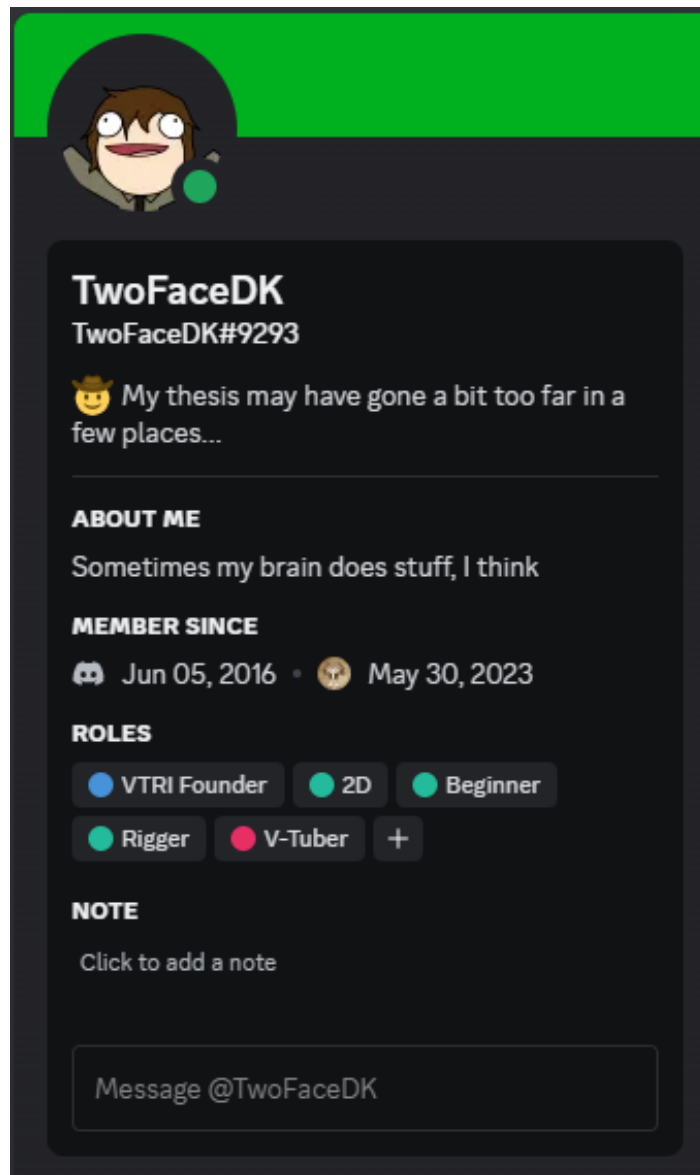


Figure 6.17: A user having marked themselves as a beginner rigger.

6.1.13 Fulfillment of R13:

In order to facilitate the contact between new and upcoming V-Tubers, we have created the V-Tuber category in order to encourage and facilitate different types of interactions between V-Tubers, see figure 6.18.

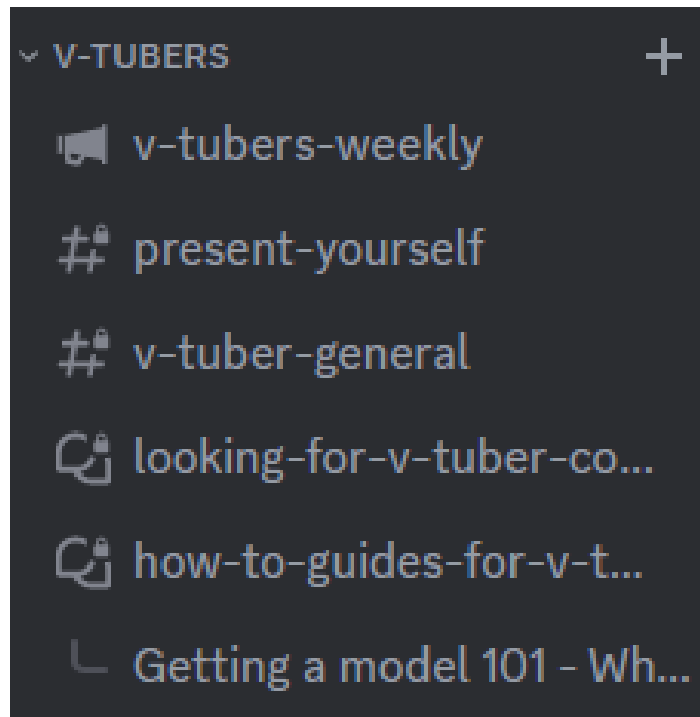


Figure 6.18: The V-Tuber category, where only those who have taken the V-Tuber role can join.

Another way we facilitate this connection is through the marketplace category, where V-Tubers and Model creators can look for someone to work for etc. Alternatively, we have a dedicated category for each of the approaches previously mentioned in section 6.1.12, with different channels for the different aspects of each respective approach.

6.1.14 Fulfillment of R14:

While it can be difficult to narrow down exactly which parts of an online community can provide a sense of belonging and group identity to an individual, we can none the less utilise some of Discord's features to increase the odds of this being the case. For one thing, the fact that our online community is focused around the particular topic of V-Tuber model creation provides a way for people to discuss a topic they might be passionate about with other like minded individuals, could be seen as one way of enabling this formation of group identity. Furthermore, the use of Discord's role system in order to assign specific roles to specific members of the community, based on their particular set of skills, or area of interest, within the field of V-Tuber model creation, could further provide these users with a sense of belonging to a particular subgroup within the community. This could have the effect that these users might interact more with other users that share same the role they have, possibly due to the ability to discuss a common thing both are passionate about, and might lead to them growing more attached to the community as a whole, via

the bonds forged through this subgroup.

6.1.15 Fulfillment of R15:

One could argue that Discord as a platform can be used as a means of facilitating different socialisation tactics rather easily. For instance, both sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.5 mention features that can be used as a way to incorporate welcome messages and feedback on a user's work respectively into a community through a Discord server. Furthermore, the use of channels to facilitate conversation within specific topics and areas, such as having a channel for conversation otherwise considered off-topic, can further be used as a way for users to communicate interests not directly related to the community. On a related note, one could also argue that new and upcoming V-Tubers being able to use the community as a way to post about what kind of model they are looking for does bear some resemblance to what Choi et al. (2010) refer to as "task request" (Choi et al., 2010, p. 111), yet another socialisation tactic. Since these are merely examples of how a Discord server can accommodate some of the socialisation tactics mentioned by Choi et al. (2010), in particular those that could be implemented into a Discord server with relative ease, it could be worth investigating whether other tactics can be introduced throughout the community's lifetime.

6.1.16 Fulfillment of R16:

While we have yet to test the usability of the Discord server we created for our community, there are a few different ways we could go about doing so. In general, while building the Discord server, it would be a good idea to keep in mind the good practices of usability suggested by Preece and Malony-krichmar (2003). For instance, information within the community should be easy to find and be accessible, which could be accommodated by having clearly labeled channels with clearly communicated information within them. Similarly, the navigation of the community should not be needlessly convoluted, which is in part accommodated by different channels being grouped into relevant categories. Furthermore, users can choose to only follow categories and channels they deem relevant, meaning that channels they don't wish to interact with will not be shown for them, which further might simplify navigation. The fact that Discord as a platform is also relatively accessible, due to having an application for both personal computers and smartphones, while also being accessible through a web browser, further plays into how usable a community built on this platform could be. In ensure that these requirements are met, it would be relevant to run a set of evaluations such as usability lab tests (Preece & Malony-krichmar, 2003; Preece et al., 2015).

6.1.17 Fulfillment of R17:

The ways through which our Discord server community would enable usability, as previously discussed in section 6.1.16, could also further be able to support a high level of sociability within the community as described by Preece and Malony-krichmar (2003). However, providing this sense of sociability can also tie into other aspects previously discussed in this chapter, such as clearly outlining what the community is about, see sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.3, and providing clear rules and guidelines for the community to follow, instead of just letting them figure things out themselves, see section 6.1.4. While all of these things can be done before the server for the community even goes live, it would be equally important to investigate the community throughout its lifetime, in order to gain an understanding of the current level of sociability within the community. For instance, it would be relevant to investigate the community's overall conversations and discussions, how many active users there are compared to those that lurk or are inactive, how behavior that goes against the server guidelines is dealt with, as well as the other aspects previously brought up in section 4.2.

6.2 Proposed Concept for Community

The link to the proposed community can be found in Appendix D.

Chapter 7

Contribution

In this chapter, we will detail the contributions this report provides within the fields of online communities, V-Tubers, and audience research.

We have reevaluated the views presented by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) when it comes to the modern, diffused audience. We have further argued that the main point presented in the book about the diffused audience and the spectacle and performance paradigm still hold up in the year 2023, especially when considering the wide adoption of the internet, and facilitating technologies like the smartphone and the computer. We have, in this report, created a mental model for understanding the V-Tuber audience as a diffused audience, who through livestreaming, create spectacles and performances together with the V-Tuber, being in large part just as important for the performance as the V-Tubers themselves.

We have also created and defined an understanding of new and upcoming V-Tubers from the lens as members of the V-Tuber audience, and as such, a diffused audience. We view these as members of the larger V-Tuber fandom and culture, who through their own contribution and participation within this community build up the desire to perform as V-Tubers. Likewise, we see model creators as primarily enthusiast within the V-Tuber community, who are driven by the desire to create, explore and create value for individuals within the community. While some creators can also be fans, or even move within the cultist spectrum, we argue that the main drive is still the before mentioned desires to create value for themselves and other within the community.

This report also utilises the honey comb model of social media in order to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of modern social media platforms, by applying it to a modern context. Furthermore, it uses the honeycomb model to investigate one of the platforms investigated by Kietzmann et al. (2011), that being YouTube, highlighting how the functionalities of the platform have shifted over the years. Furthermore, the honeycomb model has been applied to a new social media platform, that being Discord, which has previously not been investigated through this lens.

Lastly, this report propose a concept for those who desire to create an online community

for V-Tubers and model creators. Additionally, it has created a concept for how such a community could be built, look, and function, when using Discord as the primary social media platform for the community. While our focus was on the facilitation of the V-Tuber model creation process, the findings about the constructing of online communities within the V-Tuber fan culture can still be useful for those, who desire to create an online community focused around another topic. When doing so however, the requirements presented within this report should first be properly adapted to the context one wishes to build this community around, in order to ensure that it can actually provide value to the people joining said community.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this report, we presented a concept for constructing an online community for V-Tubers and model creators. Through our research we have defined the V-Tuber audience as a diffused audience, from where new and upcoming V-Tubers are grounded. Likewise, we have defined model creators as enthusiasts driven by the desire to create, explore and provide value for other members of the community. Therefore, an online community built for model creation will also be a community that supports the V-Tuber audience, which make our approach useful for the creation of other online communities within the V-Tuber culture.

Through the use of the honeycomb model of social media, we have analysed two social media platforms often used by model creators and V-Tubers: YouTube and Discord, where Discord was deemed to be a preferable social media platform for the purpose of creating an online community focused on the creation of V-Tuber models.

With the understanding of how to build a community centered around model creation, our next step will be to expand these findings into a concept for building, maintaining, and further expanding this community. In order to do this, we must gain a better understanding of how other social media platforms can be utilised to further support our community. This raises the following question for further research: *How can other social media platforms be used to support the growth of our online community?*

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Appendix A

Dispensation

Alexander Alif Kracht

From: Jette Due Nielsen
Sent: Tuesday, 28 February 2023 11.04
To: Alexander Alif Kracht; Jesper Daniel Petersen
Cc: Thessa Jensen; Pia Knudsen
Subject: Anmodning om at skrive "Kandidatspeciale" på engelsk

Kære Alexander Alif og Jesper Daniel

Studienævnet for Kommunikation og Digitale Medier har behandlet og godkendt jeres dispensationsansøgning om at skrive jeres speciale på engelsk – Interaktive Digitale Medier.

Dispensation til at skrive på engelsk indebærer samtidig, at der eksamineres på engelsk ved den mundtlige del af prøven.

Ansøger gøres opmærksom på følgende fra uddannelsens studieordning:

§13: REGLER OM SKRIFTLIGE OPGAVER, HERUNDER KANDIDATSPECIALE

I bedømmelsen af samtlige skriftlige arbejder skal der ud over det faglige indhold, uanset hvilket sprog de er udarbejdet på, også lægges vægt på den studerendes stave- og formuleringsevne. Til grund for vurderingen af den sproglige præstation lægges ortografisk og grammatisk korrekthed samt stilistisk sikkerhed. Den sproglige præstation skal altid indgå som en selvstændig dimension i den samlede vurdering. Dog kan ingen prøve samlet vurderes til bestået alene på grund af en god sproglig præstation, ligesom en prøve normalt ikke kan vurderes til ikke bestået alene på grund af en ringe sproglig præstation.

Jeres vejleder Thessa Jensen er indforstået med denne dispensation.

Nærværende dispensation skal vedlægges den skriftlige aflevering som bilag via Digital Eksamen.

WorkZone 2023-601-126168

På vegne af studienævnet

Med venlig hilsen / Kind regards,

Jette Due Nielsen
 Studiesekretær | Institut for Kommunikation og Psykologi.



UNIVERSITETET I SØNDERS

Appendix B

Approved Academic Bibliography

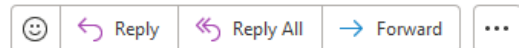
Sv: Godkendelse af akademisk litteraturliste




Thessa Jensen

To: Alexander Alif Kracht

Cc: Jesper Daniel Petersen



Wed 24/05/2023 12:20

 This message was sent with High importance.

Hej Alexander og Jesper,
nedenstående litteraturliste er hermed godkendt.

Med venlig hilsen

Thessa

Page Numbers	Source
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Appendix C

Collaboration with ChatGPT

Parts of section 5.2 and section 5.2.1 were written in collaboration with ChatGPT, a language model build created by OpenAI (OpenAI, 2022). The purpose of the collaboration was to test how great ChatGPT was at reformulating notes into academic sounding language. While some of the results inspired some of the wording within this section, the author of this paper deemed that the results weren't exactly what was desired, and the collaboration was dropped after this section. The following section includes the conversation between one of the authors and ChatGPT.

C.1 Transcription of Conversation with ChatGPT

USER:

Hi GPT, could you re-write the following section to sound more academic? It is important that the references to authors are not removed as they explain where the information originates from. Also, please don't add any new information.

START OF THE SECTION

Social media aims to allow users to share, communicate, create and modify different types of online content. The goal of a social media platform is to allow the facilitation of social media. However, how a platform chooses to accomplish this goal is very different depending on how the platform in question.

The honeycomb of social media framework, as proposed by Kietzmann et al., contextualises the different functionalities inherent in a social media platform, with the implied needs and desires of the users of said social media. The honeycomb is split into eight blocks, representing the site's functionality, see figure fig:2.1:Social_Media_Functionality. Each functionality has an implicit goal of meeting different engagement needs of their audience, see figure fig:2.2:Implicattions_Functionality.

Understanding this relationship can aid in uncovering how and why certain groups, such as V-Tubers or model creators, choose to use these social media platforms to communicate

with and build their community. This will, in turn, assist VTRI in building a community through these social media platforms, and give insight into what the focus of the content produced for said social media should be, to gain the best response from potential community members. The following subsections will describe each of what Kietzmann et al. 2011 refer to as functionality and the implication goal they seek to meet. We will further expand upon these functions to better fit the changes in the online social media space since the creation of the model back in 2011.

END OF THE SECTION

ChatGPT:

Social media serves the purpose of enabling users to exchange, communicate, generate, and alter diverse forms of online content. Despite the shared objective of facilitating social media, each platform employs a distinct approach to attain this goal. Kietzmann et al. propose the honeycomb of social media framework to contextualize the distinct functionalities intrinsic to social media platforms, in line with the implied needs and desires of the users. The honeycomb model comprises eight blocks, each of which represents a site's functionality, as depicted in figure fig:2.1:Social_Media_Functionality. Notably, each functionality aims to cater to diverse engagement requirements of the audience, as illustrated in figure fig:2.2:Implications_Functionality.

An understanding of this relationship can aid in comprehending why certain groups, such as V-Tubers or model creators, utilize these social media platforms to communicate and develop their communities. In turn, this can assist VTRI in building its community through social media platforms, and provide insight into the content's focus that can elicit the best response from potential community members. The succeeding subsections expound on each of Kietzmann et al.'s (2011) functionalities and their corresponding implication goals. We further elaborate on these functions to align with the current changes in the online social media space since the creation of the model in 2011.

USER: Could you do the same with this section?

START OF SECTION

Today, users of social media have different 'names' on social media, depending on what community they are interacting with. These different identities can also be used to express different part of yourself. For example the artist 'Karen' has two main persona's she is known as on the internet, one being Demondice Karen, her demon persona who is rapper and artist, and Calliope Mori, a V-Tuber 'grim reaper' who streams games and creates music, see figure yy. While the Demondice Karen persona includes more personal information such as her real life appearance, her V-Tuber persona is more of an acted out character.

Some websites allow the user to be completely anonymous. One example is the website 4Chan, where users can freely write their user name to be whatever they want when writ-

ing a comment. Users also refer to each other through their comment number, instead of user names, see figure bb.

Since there exist a vast amount of different social media sites today, some users try to create a connection between their different social medias. The most common way is to either link to other services directly through profile descriptions or through build-in social media icons, which has in large part replaced the secondary social media profile cards described by DandyID. This could have been due to the centralisation of the social media space, with big platforms like YouTube completely dominating online video platforms.

Overall different social media sites can include multiple required or optional ways to express your identity. This could indicate that you may use different social media depending on how you want to express yourself. You may even use multiple handles or create different identities.

END OF SECTION

CHATGPT:

Presently, social media users possess varying "names" depending on the online community with which they engage. Such distinct identities can enable individuals to express different aspects of themselves. For instance, the artist "Karen" embodies two primary personas on the internet, namely, Demondice Karen, her demon persona, who raps and creates art, and Calliope Mori, a V-Tuber "grim reaper" who streams games and produces music, as portrayed in figure yy. While the Demondice Karen persona includes more personal information such as her real-life appearance, the V-Tuber persona is more akin to an enacted character.

Certain websites offer users the option of being entirely anonymous, exemplified by 4Chan, where users can freely choose their usernames when commenting. Users may also refer to each other via their comment numbers instead of usernames, as shown in figure bb.

Given the abundance of social media sites, users may attempt to establish connections across their various social media platforms. A prevalent approach is to link to other services directly through profile descriptions or built-in social media icons, which has largely supplanted the secondary social media profile cards described by DandyID. This may be attributed to the centralization of the social media space, with prominent platforms such as YouTube dominating the online video platform domain.

Overall, various social media sites offer several mandatory or optional means for expressing one's identity. Such options suggest that individuals may utilize diverse social media platforms contingent on how they intend to present themselves, and they may even create multiple handles or identities.

C.1.1 Link to the full conversation

The full conversation is also available at the following link: <https://chat.openai.com/share/199aa42c-ee64-46cc-be61-1da7752d9afc>







Appendix D

Link to the Discord Server

The Discord server can be accessed by using the following link: <https://discord.gg/vWbDR58TFC> To access, you must have a Discord user with a verified e-mail. To gain full access, click on the EXAMINATOR during the onboarding question, see figure D.1.

Question 1 of 1 · Required

Which Role(s) fit(s) you the best?

 2D Model Artist	 3D Artist
 2D Rigger	 3D Rigger
 V-Tuber	 [EXAMINATOR] Click here.

Choose all that apply. [Skip →](#)

Figure D.1: Click on the book to gain the special exterminator role, which give access to the whole server.