Building a Successful Personal Brand on YouTube

Melissa Kuitunen

| **Author(s)** |
| Melissa Kuitunen |

Degree programme
International Business

Report/thesis title	**Number of pages and appendix pages**
Building a Successful Personal Brand on YouTube	50+5

The aim of this thesis was to study personal branding and discover what it takes to build a successful personal brand in a digital environment. Based on the findings, the purpose was to develop and implement a personal brand on YouTube, followed by an assessment of its success.

The thesis is divided into four main parts. The first part is the theoretical framework of the thesis that focuses on the key elements of branding, personal branding and personal branding on YouTube. Although many branding principles apply to personal branding, there are some key differences that are taken into account, as person brands are more abstract and have rich imagery. The chosen brand building model, Keller's brand equity model, is then introduced in detail, as it is later on used for designing the brand.

The second part examines how Beverland's key characteristics of a strong brand apply to personal branding on YouTube. The data was collected from a qualitative interview with two successful YouTube creators. Based on the findings from the first and second part of the thesis, success factors are outlined.

In the third part, the personal brand 'Mel Octavia' will be planned in detail by first building the brand identity and then proceeding to design other elements of the brand accordingly. The planning of the brand is followed by an execution of each element on YouTube.

In the end, the overall successfulness of 'Mel Octavia' is measured by assessing the brand resonance and the relationship between the brand and the audience. Brand resonance is measured by conducting a qualitative survey with the brand's audience as well as a thorough analysis of YouTube analytics.

As some of the dimensions are challenging to measure with the available data, it was impossible to fully determine whether an ultimate brand resonance has been achieved. However, based on the results it can be assumed that the brand 'Mel Octavia' reached a strong relationship and identification between the brand and the audience. The audience was proven to have a bond with the brand that drives the audience to regularly connect and engage with the brand and its content. It can be stated that the desired brand resonance among the audience has been reached, and the brand can be deemed successful.

In conclusion, the thesis showed that it can be possible to build a successful personal brand that resonates with the audience by following a brand building process. Any individual wanting to establish a personal brand in a digital environment may use this framework in his or her brand-building process. As the process has only been used for the building of one brand, it should be used only as a guiding tool rather than a definitive indication of successful brand building.

Keywords
Personal Branding, Branding, Content Creator, YouTube Creators, Social Media

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1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define the topic of the thesis and to explain its background, purpose and desired outcome. The thesis objective is explained through project tasks (PT) together with an explanation of their desired outcomes. Project management methods are determined as a set of guiding principles for carrying out the project. The international aspect of the thesis is pointed out as the target audience of the project are foreign. The anticipated benefits are outlined to validate the importance of the thesis to the author and future readers who may benefit from the research. The key concepts related to branding are explained for a better understanding of the terminology of the project. In the last chapter, the potential risks and their management is described through a risk management matrix.

1.1   Background

We are living through the biggest shift in the way humans and companies interact with each other. Internet and digitalization have changed the rules of business, communication, social relations and the way everyone uses their time. Online platforms offer limitless opportunities for anyone that has access to them. However, the globalized world has created an immense competition for brands and people to stand out from the crowd.

As traditional TV is becoming extinct, YouTube and other streaming services are attracting the population. With over 1.9 billion monthly users, YouTube is now the second largest search engine in the world. Every minute, 500 hours of content is uploaded in YouTube, most of it by regular people like you and I (Petrov 2019). YouTube is accessible to 95% of the Internet population and can be navigated in 91 countries in a total of 80 different languages. (YouTube 2019.)

YouTube has become one of the most significant mediums of self-expression. YouTube is an open platform, whose values are based on four essential freedoms: "freedom of expression, freedom of information, freedom of opportunity and freedom to belong" (YouTube 2019). On YouTube, anyone can turn their passion into a hobby or even into a successful career. All it takes is some ambition, talent and a little bit of luck!

In January 2018, a YouTube channel 'Mel Octavia' was created to tap into the vast amount of opportunities that the platform has to offer. The author was driven to create the channel by three main goals; to grow a personal brand on social media with a strategic approach, to acquire a new set of skills that would be beneficial for future career and to

realize her inner passion through influencing and helping other people. In addition, there was an interest to create a passive income stream. Managing a YouTube channel is almost like working as a CEO for a small company – it consists of branding, content creation, filming, video editing, design, cross-channel marketing, analytic analysis among other responsibilities. All of the aforementioned skills were something the author wanted to pursue.

Before proceeding to create content on the channel, a strategic approach had to be planned. The author strongly believes that developing a personal brand is the foundation for starting a channel on YouTube – it is essential to have a strong brand to stand out from the social media noise. For this reason, personal branding was chosen as the focus of the study. In addition, the author has been passionate about branding and personal branding throughout her studies and her aim is to build a career within branding.

1.2 Project Objective

The project objective (PO) of the thesis is to **build a strong personal brand that will support the growth of the YouTube channel "Mel Octavia".**

The project objective is divided into 5 project tasks (PT), as follows:

PT1. Establishing a theoretical framework

PT2. Conducting a qualitative interview on successful competitors

PT3. Identifying success factors based on PT1 & PT2

PT4. Building the brand 'Mel Octavia'

PT5. Evaluating the success of the brand

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, project management methods and outcomes for each project task.

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

Project task	Theoretical framework	Project management methods	Outcomes
PT1. Establishing a theoretical framework	Branding, personal branding, personal branding on YouTube	Desktop study	Theoretical framework for the thesis
PT2. Conducting a qualitative interview on successful competitors	Branding	Qualitative interview	Practices of personal branding on YouTube

PT3. Identifying success factors based on PT1&PT2	Personal branding on YouTube, Qualitative interview	Research of success factors	Success factors of personal branding on YouTube
PT4. Building the brand 'Mel Octavia'	Branding	YouTube, Instagram	A strong personal brand on YouTube
PT5. Evaluating the success of the brand	Tasks outcomes	Interview, YouTube Analytics	Analysis of success or failure

1.3 Project Scope

In this thesis, the focus is on identifying the most important elements of personal branding to succeed on YouTube. A product, a personal brand, will be designed and implemented on YouTube to test out the personal branding framework developed according to the findings on the theory part of the thesis (see figure 1).
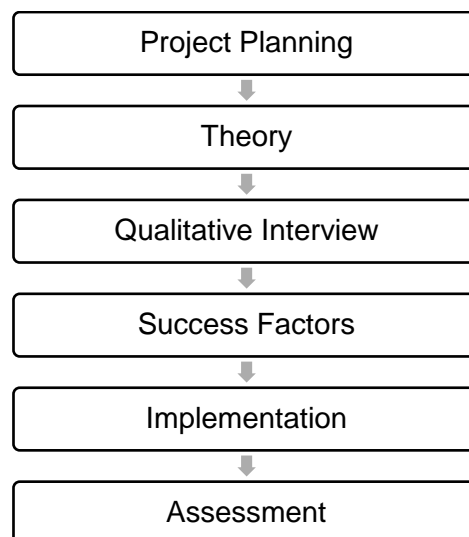
Figure 1. Project Scope

The successfulness of the implemented personal brand will be measured using different methods and techniques. The personal branding framework will then be examined to see whether the steps to create a personal brand on YouTube are applicable.

1.4 International Aspect

YouTube is a global platform connecting creators with over one billion viewers worldwide (YouTube, 2019). The target audience of the YouTube channel "Mel Octavia" is Brazilians. The channel is multilingual; it operates primarily in Portuguese but occasionally also in English and Finnish with written subtitles in Portuguese.

1.5 Anticipated Benefits

The aim is to discover the fundamental elements and success factors of building a personal brand on YouTube. Using the success factors and the chosen brand theory, a personal brand 'Mel Octavia' is built. Having a strong brand with a clear brand message is essential to attracting new viewers and turning them into returning subscribers. A strong brand is expected to support the growth of the channel by eventually helping it turning into a profitable business. The professional and career development of the author is expected to benefit from the project as the knowledge of branding is a great additional asset to her existing skillset.

The project may benefit other's also in the following situations:
a)   establishment of a personal brand on YouTube or on other social media channels.
b)   guidelines required for building a successful personal brand.

1.6 Key Concepts

A brand is "the company's promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits, services and experiences consistently to the buyers" (Kotler 2005, 250).

A personal brand is "the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions it creates in the minds of others when they hear your name" (Rampersad 2008, 34).

Brand identity is "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for an imply a promise to customers from the organization members" (Aaker 1996, 68).

Visual identity is the visual aspect of the brand that is created to associate certain feelings and experiences with the brand. Strong visual identity evokes brand awareness and recognition and makes the brand memorable and recognizable, distinguishing it from its competitors. (Wheeler, 2018, 24.)

1.7 Risk Identification and Risk Management

To begin a risk assessment, the probability of occurring risks on a project-based research must be examined. Carrying out projects can face risks due to the following factors: uniqueness, complexity, assumptions and constraints, people, stakeholders, and change – all of which are a part of a project and cannot be replaced without losing its initial value and importance. (Hillson 2009, 13–14.)

Risk Identification

The potential risks that may interfere with the project have been identified and listed bellowed in order, from the high risk to low risk matters.

1. Lack of time to carry out the project.
2. Failing to create a successful brand
3. Difficulty assessing whether the brand is successful.

Risk Management

The risks, their likelihood, consequences and ways of prevention are identified to ensure a successful project (see table 2). The likelihood is divided in three categories: high, medium and low. The consequences – the outcome of the possible risk. Prevention – actions to prevent the risks from occurring.

Table 2. Risk Management Matrix

Risk	Likelihood	Consequences	Prevention
Lack of time to carry out the project	High	Late submission of the thesis	Time management, strict time schedule with personal deadlines
Failing to create a successful brand	Medium	The failure of the project	In-depth theoretical framework of branding
Difficulty assessing whether the brand is successful	Low	Poor analysis of the result	Using analytics tools and conducting detailed interviews with the audience

As shown on the risk management matrix, the highest for failing is a lack of time to carry out the project. All the risks are possible to prevent by setting a strict schedule for completing the thesis and by conducting an in-depth research on the topic.

2 Theoretical Framework of Branding

The purpose of this chapter is to study the key theories of branding. The key concepts, theories, and models needed to build a brand will be presented. The main focus of the theory is on personal branding, but other branding theories of conventional products and services will be researched and applied to the research. The most suitable branding models for the thesis purposes will be chosen for further analysis and usage. Once the suitable branding models are selected, personal branding on YouTube will be examined.

The theory part is complemented by qualitative research conducted in the form of two interviews, which observes the practices of two YouTube creators that have strong personal brands. The data collected from the interviewees give an insight into personal branding on YouTube and demonstrates the practical methods that have been proven prosperous for creating a successful personal brand in an online environment.

Success factors of personal branding on YouTube will be assessed based on the findings on the theory part as well as the qualitative interview. Once the success factors have been identified, the brand "Mel Octavia" will be built accordingly.

2.1 Defining a Brand

We live in a branded world. "We are immersed in a branded world from the day we are born to the day we die" (Beverland 2018, 4). Almost everything that we use in our daily life is branded – in the morning we get awoken by our iPhones. We apply some of Chanel's lipstick, put on Levi's jeans, go to work with a Ferrari, and so on. Daily, we use and encounter hundreds of brands and make dozens of brand choices. At the grocery store, we find ourselves making a purchasing decision between Oatly's and Rainbow's oat drinks. Their taste is almost the same, and Rainbow's drink is half the price of Oatly's. Yet, we choose Oatly. Beverland (2018, 3) states that people use brands to project whom we want to be, how we want to be perceived and how we want to feel about ourselves.

The word "brand" comes from the proto-German *brandr*, which means to "burn your mark into or stigmatize", referring to the ancient practice of marking ownership of slaves and animals. Branding offers three main benefits; they identify the wearer, signal membership and offer protection to the product. American Marketing Association states that a brand is "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers." (Beverland 2018, 5-7.)

Seth Godin defines brand as "a set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another" (Beverland 2018, 7). If the consumer doesn't choose it, pay for it or talk about it, there is no brand value for that consumer.

In today's dense competitive landscape, branding matters more than ever before. Companies look for different ways to connect with customers to create strong relationships. The way a brand is perceived affects its successfulness, whether it's a product, service or a person (Wheeler 2018, 2). As Stengel (2011, 22) stated: "Businesses are now only as strong as their brands, and nothing else offers business leaders so much potential leverage."

Branding is the process used to build brand awareness, attract new customers and increase customer loyalty. Brand positioning should be a continuous effort to truly succeed and to become the brand of choice for people. It requires implementing an effective brand strategy that builds on a vision, aligns with the business strategy, emerges from a company's culture and has a deep understanding of the customer's needs. (Wheeler 2018, 6-7.)

According to Beverland (2018, 9-10), there are a total of seven points that characterize a strong brand:
- *Identification:* The brand should present a set of the marketplace offers that indicate authenticity and gives confidence to the users.
- *Distinction:* Distinguishing from other brands by providing unique benefits. Uniqueness is one of the key elements emphasised when measuring brand equity.
- *Differentiation:* Brand should have clear USP's (unique selling point) to differentiate from its competitors.
- *Meaning:* Strong brands have a meaning, which may include associations, cultural codes, myths or personalities.
- *Value:* Brands should provide some kind of value to the consumers. The value can be provided for instance by functional performance, identity reinforcement or emotional resonance.
- *Experienced:* As brands are built from the inside out, to truly resonate with consumers it must be something that can be experienced.
- *Authored:* It is said that it is ultimately the consumers that define the brand. As this true, it must be acknowledged that the firm is the sole author of brand meaning and holds the power of designing and shaping it accordingly through ads, campaigns, initiatives and collaborations.

2.2   Personal Branding

"Your personal brand is the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions it creates in the minds of others when they hear your name" (Rampersad 2008, 34). Everyone has a unique personal brand, whether they know it or not. Our personal brand is one of the key elements that define the world around us who we are and what we are. It is possible to create, enforce and develop your brand according to how you want it to be perceived by others. Through thoughtful creation and development of a personal brand one can take control over people's initial perception of oneself. Most of the personal branding literature point out that branding is one of the key elements to personal and professional success. (Tarnovskaya 2017, 29.)

Personal branding has traditionally been the domain of celebrities, politicians or professionals who strive to succeed in their careers. However, due to the rise of social media, personal branding has become more common among the regular people. Now anyone with internet access can brand oneself through the content he or she shares on their personal profiles. The platforms where personal branding has become especially evident are YouTube and Instagram.

Although many branding principles apply to personal branding, there are some key differences to take into account between a personal brand and a service or a product. Personal brands are more abstract and have rich imagery. It is a lot harder to control, manage and keep a personal brand consistent because it's fundamentally built by the words and actions of the person. In addition, people often have varying personas in different situations that affect the dimensions of the brand. (Keller 2013, 283.)

According to Deckers & Lacy (2012, 43), branding oneself is about "creating the right kind of emotional response you want people to have when they hear your name, see you online, or meet you in real life." The right kind consists of the things that make you, you; your personality, your voice, your habits, your interests, your values — everything that you want people to know about you. This said, everything you say, do, and show to the audience must be in line with the personal brand you've established of yourself.

2.2.1 Brand Identity

The key to successful brand building is to have a fundamental understanding of how to develop a brand identity and to know what the brand stands for, and then effectively expressing that identity. To build a personal brand, one must take a deep look on the person's identity which provides direction, meaning, and purpose for that person. In a similar way, the person's identity provides direction to the personal brand. Thus, one must define their core values, how they want to be perceived and the personal traits they want to project to the audience. (Aaker 1996, 68.)

In essence, brand identity represents the way that the brand wants to present themselves for the public, as it guides the brand image from the sender's side (see figure 2). A strong brand image is a key to success, as it helps to attract and retaining new customers. To achieve a good brand image, the brand must drive positive and recognisable brand associations in the mind of customers through consistency in the brand elements. The brand perception, or the brand image, is experienced on the receiver's side. (Kapferer, 2007, 99.)

SENDER	MESSAGES	RECEIVER
Brand Identity	Signals transmitted - Products - People - Places - Communication	Brand Image
Other sources of inspiration - Mimicry - Oppertunism - Idealism		

Competition and noise
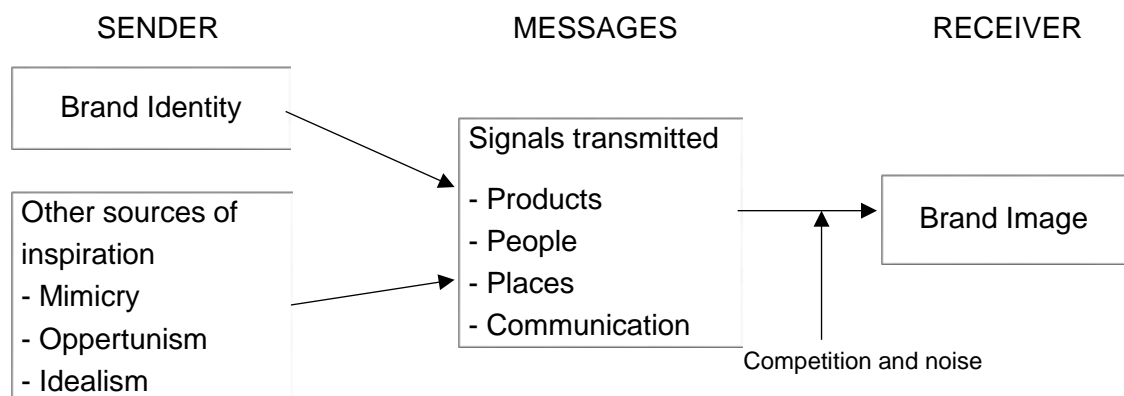
Figure 2. Identity and Image (Kapferer 2007, 98).

The core identity of the brand represents the essence of the brand. It consists of core values, vision and competences (see figure 3). The core identity is the very foundation of the brand and is built on the brand's core values, visions, competences and what the organisation behind the brand stands for. (Aaker 1996.) In the case of personal branding the organisational attribute is not taken into account.
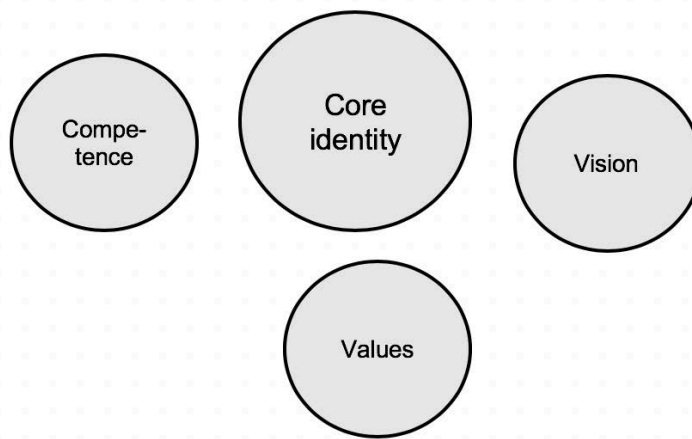
Figure 3. Core Identity (Aaker 1996).

2.3 The Brand Resonance Model

A brand resonance pyramid was developed by an American marketing professor Kevin Lane Keller. The concept of the model is simple: to build a strong brand, you must design how customers think and feel about your brand. The brand resonance pyramid presents all the necessary steps to create intense, active and loyal relationships with customers. The model focuses on identifying the effects of positioning on the consumer's brand experience as well as resonance and connectedness with the brand, with an aim to create strong brand equity. (Keller 2013, 107-108.) Keller's brand theories were originally developed for product branding but can however be applied and adapted to personal branding as well.

The brand resonance model presents the brand building process as a four-step series, each of which is dependent on the success of the previous step. The steps are as follows:
- Brand identity → Ensuring the brand's identification among consumers
- Brand meaning → Create a brand meaning in the minds of consumers
- Brand responses → Evoke wanted customer responses to the brand
- Brand relationship → Convert brand responses for brand resonance and strong customer relationship

(Keller 2013, 107-108)

The model, seen in figure 4, demonstrates the four necessary steps to build strong brand equity. These steps are formed of a total of six building blocks that must be positioned to develop a strong brand and reach the top of the pyramid. Each step of the pyramid presents a fundamental question that customers will subconsciously ask about your brand. (Keller 2013, 107-108.)
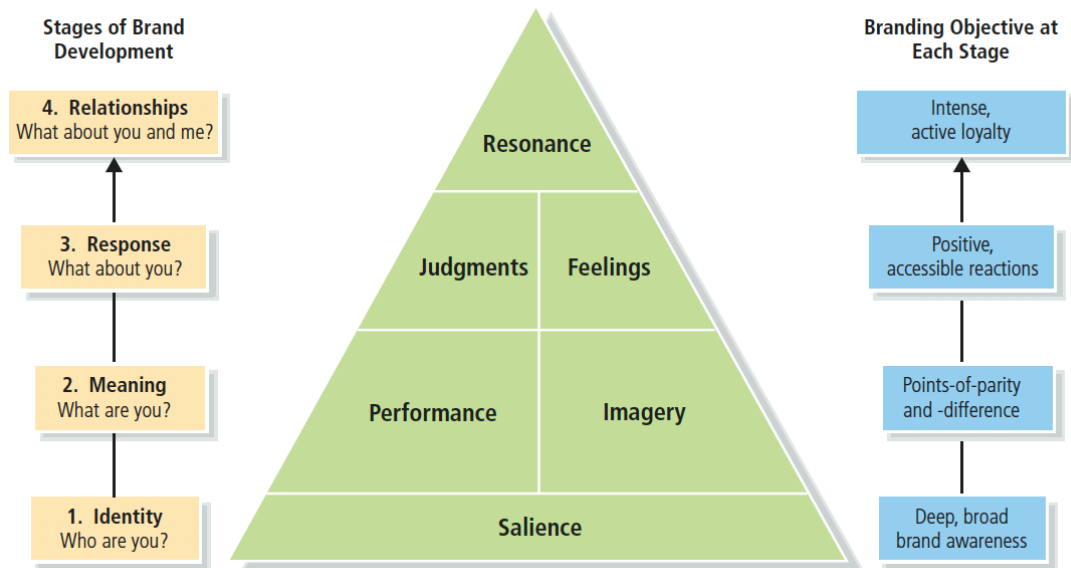
Figure 4. The Brand Resonance Pyramid (Keller 2013, 108).

Step 1: Brand Identity – Who Are You?

The first step of the brand building process focuses on the creation of brand identity and "brand salience" to build a brand that stands out and is recognized by the customers. Furthermore, this step helps to ensure that the brand perceptions are correct at the key stages of the customer process. The focus is on gaining a good understanding of the targeted customers. It's important to know they perceive your brand and what kind of decision-making process they go through to choose your product or service. It's essential to have clear unique selling points or USP's and ensure that the customers understand how your brand fulfills them. (Keller 2013, 108-111.)

Step 2: Brand Meaning – What Are You?

In this step the goal is to identify and communicate what the brand stands for, helping a brand define its meaning to the world. This is executed by creating purposeful associations in the consumer's minds through brand communication, good customer experiences and word-of-mouth among consumers. The two building blocks of this step are "performance" and "imagery". Brand performance defines how well the product meets the functional needs of customers. Good brand performance has a few key attributes such as durability, reliability, price, design, and price. Brand imagery is about the intangible aspects of the brand and focuses on responding to the needs of the customers on a social and psychological level. (Keller 2013, 111-117.)

All in all, this step is applied by creating meaningful experiences with the brand that are fundamentally created through successful product performance. To build customer loyalty, the product must not only meet the expectations but also exceed them. The goal is to make the brand relevant in consumers' lives. (Keller 2013, 116-117.)

Step 3: Brand Response – What do I Think, or Feel About You?

The customers' responses to the brand fall into two building blocks: "judgements" and "feelings". Judgements about the brand are formed based on the product's quality, credibility, consideration, and superiority. A brand can evoke certain feelings among the customers, as customers also respond to the brand depending on how it makes them feel about themselves. There are six positive brand feelings according to the model: warmth, excitement, fun, security, social approval and self-respect (Keller 2013, 117-120.)

As feelings work as a strong incentive for customers to take action, marketers work hard to evoke emotions with their brand communication. It has been proven that emotions are one of the main drivers of engagement, even negative ones if they serve a meaningful purpose. (Libert & Tynski 2013.)

Step 4: Brand Resonance – What About You and Me?

Brand resonance sits at the peak of the pyramid, as it is the ultimate loyalty relationship between a brand and a consumer. The goal of the step is to strengthen the resonance of each category. Once your customers feel a deep, psychological bond with your brand, brand resonance has been reached. The two dimensions of this step are the intensity and activity of the relationship, which are further divided into four characteristics of a resonating brand-customer relationship: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement among the consumers. (Keller 2013, 120.)

2.4   Personal Branding on YouTube

Personal branding on YouTube follows many of the same fundamental rules of branding as traditional personal or service branding. However, YouTube has many unique elements that can only be seen on the platform. The information provided by YouTube's official "YouTube Creators" has been studied to learn more specifically about branding on YouTube, as they provide their creators with resources and information to build a successful channel. Other successful social media influencers and creators such as Gary Vaynerchuk and Sean Cannell have been observed on their learnings regarding personal branding on YouTube and digital environment. In addition, two of 'Mel Octavia's direct

competitors with the same niche were interviewed to discover which branding practices they have adopted to build their successful personal brands on YouTube.

Over the past decade, YouTube has grown into one of the most popular medium of self-expression. Every minute more than 500 hours of videos are uploaded to YouTube (Petrov 2019). Remarkably, some of the biggest YouTube channels are maintained by 'ordinary' people and not corporate brands or celebrities. Creators, also known as YouTubers, have limitless opportunities to do whatever they want exactly how they want, without having any parties filtering or controlling the information between the creator and the audience.

According to YouTube Creators (2019), the most important thing is to be authentic and pursue your creative passion. One should start by asking themselves these three questions: how you would like to have an impact, what do you want to say and what knowledge can you share others.

Gary Vaynerchuk (2018) argues that to build a successful personal brand on digital environment, one should possess at least one skill that they want to convey to the audience. Unless a creator brings some true value to the audience, there is no chance of rising above the social media noise. The added value can be anything from inspiration and motivation to information or entertainment. Once the purpose is clear, a method of communication should be chosen accordingly, whether it's writing, audio or video. Then, the distribution medium must be selected for the chosen communication, be it podcasts on Spotify or videos on YouTube.

Cannell (2018) argues that one of the most important factors of success on YouTube is having clarity. Trying to please everyone will end up to reaching no one. One must have a strong brand and a clear brand message to rise above the social media noise and get noticed on YouTube. It is almost impossible to succeed if the marketing and branding of the channel is confusing to the audience.

Personal brands on YouTube often start off from zero. New creators start off with an empty canvas that they can paint the way they want, as they hold full control of designing the brand and over the things they want to communicate through the brand to the audience. Instead of building a channel, new creators should shift the focus on building a brand instead. On YouTube, channels can be customised with a set of unique characteristics to differentiate it from other creators. The brand and the key brand messages can be

communicated consistently, not only through the content, but also through the visual elements such as channel icon, channel art, channel description and channel trailer. Each of these elements should be consistent with others to form one cohesive brand so that people can quickly understand what your channel is about.

Vaynerchuk (2016) argues that one of the most important aspects of a strong brand is building a community. He emphasizes the importance of it by stating that a creator should act religiously about their audience. This is owing to the fact that on social media, the brand is never solely about the digital influencer – It's about the community that the creator builds around the brand. Many lose sight of the importance of the community, solely focusing on benefitting from them through likes, views, and money. As a digital influencer, a huge effort should be devoted to community engagement. It is extremely important to show gratitude to followers for being part of the community and encourage them to keep engaging on the channel. Moreover, by reading through all the comments and feedback, it is possible to gather insights from the audience to further develop the brand and the content. Context and understanding what is happening in the community is what drives most of the success.

Vaynerchuk (2018, 109-110) emphasises the importance of implementing a personal brand on multiple platforms and then creating content with a consistent brand message simultaneously across every channel. The platforms should be selected according to the needs of the brand, nature of the content and the targeted audience. The content must be specifically designed and adapted to suit each platform, as people use them to receive different kinds of content, even if the audience stays the same.

To conclude this chapter, a matrix of the key elements of brand building has been created (see table 2), showing the main components for a successful brand building on YouTube based on the findings.

Table 2. Key Elements of Brand Building

Key element	Reasoning
Value-creation	To become relevant in the viewer's life.
Strong brand	To attract and attain the audience.
Unique brand elements	To differentiate from competitors.
Community-building	To build a strong relationship with the audience.
Using multiple channels	To scale the brand.

3 Qualitative Interview on Personal Branding

Qualitative structured interviews were conducted with two YouTube creators to discover which branding practices have proven successful on YouTube, as interviews give in-depth information about the respondents' experiences and viewpoints on a specific matter (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2003, 24). As the respondents were located in different countries, the interviews were conducted in the form of an email interview. A great majority of the questions were formulated based on Beverland's (2018, 9-10) seven characteristics of a strong brand.

Two successful video creators and direct competitors of 'Mel Octavia' were interviewed; Jacob Chard and Lecil Alvino, both of which have managed to grow a successful personal brand around their YouTube channels, Brazilian audience as their target audience. As they are both foreigners, create content in Portuguese and focus on topics around cultural differences, they are direct competitors of the channel 'Mel Octavia'. The data collected from the interview grant insight into personal branding in YouTube and give and present the practical methods of creating a successful personal brand in an online environment.

Respondent 1: Jacob Chard
- A 21-year-old male from New Zealand
- Created video content on YouTube for the Brazilian audience since 2016
- His channel 'Jacob Chard' has 120 000 subscribers
- Publishes content irregularly

Respondent 2: Lecil Alvino
- A female from the United States living in Brazil
- Created video content on YouTube for the Brazilian audience since 2018
- Her channel 'Brazicana – A gringa Brasileira" has almost 25 000 subscribers
- Publishes content weekly

3.1.1 Designing a Qualitative Interview

A qualitative interview was designed using a standardized open-ended interview method, to ensure that the respondents could contribute as much information as they desire, allowing them to freely express their viewpoints and experiences (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, 24). The questions are written in form of "how" rather than "why" to receive stories of process instead of "accounts" of behaviour. Both of the respondents received the same set of questions in the same exact order to avoid the impact of context effects.

The interview consists of a total of 11 questions, most of which are formulated from Beverland's (2018, 9-10) characteristics of a strong brand (see table 3). The first question of the interview is a general question to gain an introduction of the respondent, as well as to "warm them up" for the questions that are theory-based and more complex. Questions 2-7 are designed based on Beverland's seven characteristics of a strong brand to discover how they are utilised in personal branding. Question 8 serves to discover the unique characteristics of Brazilians as a target audience. The last questions (9-10) aim to gather insight about branding on YouTube and function as a closure for the interview, leaving the respondents feeling empowered, appreciated and content about the interview.

Table 3. Interview

Interview question	Reasoning
1. Tell me about your YouTube channel. What is it about? What is your niche?	Introduction, to find out more about the channel and "warm-up" for the interview.
2. What are the benefits that your channel provides to your audience?	A brand should distinguish from other brands by providing unique benefits.
3. What makes your channel unique? How do you differentiate yourself from other YouTubers?	A brand should have clear USP's (unique selling point) to differentiate from its competitors.
4. What do you do to gain your viewers' trust and stay authentic?	The brand should present a set of marketplace offers that indicate authenticity and gives confidence to the users.
5. What kind of deeper meaning do you give to your audience? (associations, deeper knowledge, cultural codes, myths, personalities or anything you might think of)	Strong brands have a meaning, which may include associations, cultural codes, myths or personalities.
6. What kind of value do you create to your audience?	Brands should provide some kind of value to the consumers. The value can be provided for instance by functional performance, identity reinforcement or emotional resonance.
7. How does your audience get to experience your brand and be part of your channel/content/brand story?	As brands are built from the inside out, to truly resonate with consumers it must be something that can be experienced.
8. How do you shape your brand image through your content, initiatives and collaborations?	Brands hold the power of designing and shaping the brand image accordingly through content, initiatives and collaborations.
9. What should one take into consideration when targeting a Brazilian audience?	To gain insight about the Brazilian audience
10. What 3 things should anyone staring a YouTube channel know?	To gain valuable insight about YouTube.

11. In your opinion, what is the #1 key to success in personal branding?	To gain an understanding on personal branding and to create a closure for the interview

3.1.2 Results of the Interviews

Two respondents were interviewed to discover how the seven characteristics of a strong brand (Beverland 2018, 9-10) apply to personal branding on YouTube. As the scope is small, the interview provides insights rather than any definitive answers. Both of the respondents have built a strong personal brand and create videos in Portuguese for the Brazilian audience. The respondents' viewpoints showed a lot of commonalities, as they share the same exact niche and similar audience. The respondents also pointed out insights on Brazilian audience. To conclude, they revealed their most important practices for succeeding on YouTube.

All of the seven points that characterize a strong brand were assessed in the personal branding practices of the respondents: identification, distinction, differentiation, meaning, value, experienced and authored.

Identification

The respondents emphasised the importance of staying authentic with the audience. The viewers' trust is achieved by being yourself, staying true to the brand and by creating content that is in line with the brand. The audience can notice if the brand is not authentic. In addition, the importance of engaging with the audience was pointed out as it creates a sense of community. Both respondents interact actively with the audience across multiple channels to build a strong community around their personal brands.

Distinction

The respondents distinguish their brands from other YouTube creators by providing unique benefits to their audience that cannot be gained elsewhere. As the respondents shared the same niche, they both aimed to provide new information and perspective to Brazilians regarding other cultures. One of the respondents also helps people improve their English skills by sharing tips.

Differentiation

Both respondents had clear USP's to differentiate from their competitors; they are foreigners that create content in Portuguese for Brazilian audience. As most creators that make content in Portuguese are Brazilian, foreign creators are strongly distinguished for having

a different background, accent, viewpoints, stories and perception on things. Moreover, the respondents differentiated themselves from their direct competitors with the same niche by always striving to create new content that hasn't been seen before and by making serious effort to build community through active interaction with the audience.

Meaning

As building a deeper meaning among the audience is important to make them feel attached and passionate about the brand, the respondents' main goal was to create a sense of community in the audience. One of the creators stated that he wants the audience to feel like his viewers know him just as his family and friends know him. They also aimed to raise cultural awareness among the viewers by teaching them about other cultures.

Value

Creating value for the audience is essential to a successful channel, as it makes people connect with the brand and come back for more content. One of the respondents wanted his audience to be able to learn new things through the content he creates while feeling good, inspired and entertained. Another respondent provides value by giving language tips to her audience to improve their English skills.

Experienced

The audience must be able to experience the brand in different ways for it to truly resonate with them by making them part of the brand story and the channel. The respondents do this by immersing the viewers into their lives by sharing their stories across multiple platforms, such as Instagram. The importance of the viewers was demonstrated by expressing gratitude regularly. In addition, one of the respondents does live streaming sessions frequently to connect with her audience.

Authored

As creators hold the power of shaping their brand image through their content, initiatives, and collaborations, the respondents emphasised the importance of always staying true to the brand with everything they do. The content should always represent the brand and match the niche of the channel. As each action affect the brand image, the respondents make collaborations only with companies and other creators that align with their brands.

Targeting a Brazilian audience

According to one of the respondents, the best way to connect with the Brazilian audience is by showing the affection of their country, people and culture. He also emphasised on creating videos that are relevant to their country, as Brazilians love hearing what foreigners think about their culture. In addition, it was recommended to teach and show them things out of their knowledge, as Brazilians are naturally very curious people and love learning about new things. It was pointed out that it helps to have a fun and outgoing personality and style of communication because of Brazil's vibrant and outgoing culture.

Succeeding on YouTube

According to the respondents, one of the first things to do when starting a YouTube channel is choosing and defining the niche for the brand/channel. The niche should arise from the creator's own interests and goals. Passion for content creation is one of the most vital ingredients for success, as it takes a lot of hard work to make it on YouTube. Staying consistent with uploading new videos plays a major role in the growth of the channel. The videos should be of good quality and be edited well so that they are visually pleasing. Finally, a great effort should be put on building the community and connecting with the subscribers.

The key to success on personal branding

Both of the respondents agreed that consistency is the number one key to a successful personal brand. It was stated that a creator should have a posting schedule and post content regularly across all the platforms where he or she is present with the brand.

3.2 Key Features of Personal Branding

To conclude this chapter, a matrix of the success factors of personal branding has been created based on the findings on the theory part and the insights pulled from the interviews (see table 4). It describes the key features to personal branding as well as the reasoning behind each of these particular actions.

Table 4. Key Features of Personal Branding on YouTube

Success factor	Reasoning
Defining a niche	To have a clear focus on the channel.
Staying authentic	To appeal to the audience.
Providing unique benefits	To create value by providing benefits that cannot be achieved elsewhere.
Differentiating from competitors	To stand out from the crowd.
Creating value	To become relevant in the viewer's life.

Staying true to the brand	To stay consistent with the brand message.
Staying consistent	To establish a good reputation and maintain the audience.
Building a community	To create a sense of community provide a deeper meaning for the audience.

3.3 Success Factors of a Personal Brand on YouTube

A mind map of the success factors of personal branding on YouTube has been created based on the findings on the theory part and the interview (see figure 5). To succeed on YouTube, a personal brand must be designed by involving the success factors displayed on the mind map into the brand building process. However, the success of the brand cannot be solely based on the presented factures, but instead, they may lead to a better overall performance.
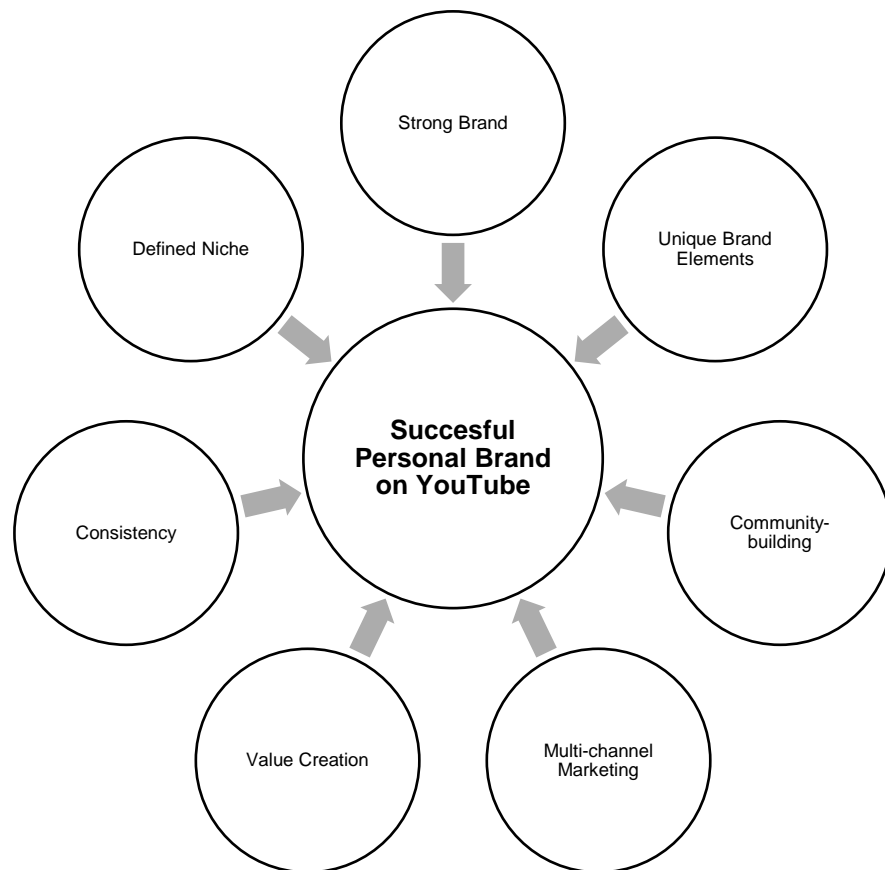

Figure 5. Mind Map

4 Building the Personal Brand 'Mel Octavia'

This chapter describes the design process of the personal brand 'Mel Octavia', which has been ongoing since the beginning of 2018. The main purpose and key messages of the brand have remained the same as in the beginning, but the brand message has become more defined over time. As Navid Moazzez (2018) stated, building a profitable personal brand doesn't happen overnight, but usually evolves naturally over time. The key is to focus on providing value and over delivering to the audience.

The brand building consists of two parts; establishing the foundation of the brand and designing the brand elements. The brand is built according to the branding theory and the identified success factors of personal building on YouTube (chapter 2.7). First, the foundation of the brand 'Mel Octavia' is built following to the four steps of Keller's (2013, 108) brand resonance pyramid by defining brand identity, target audience, story and purpose, brand response and brand resonance (see figure 6). In addition, brand positioning statement will be created. Then, the needed brand elements are planned according to the foundation of the brand. Finally, the discoverability of the brand is ensured by promoting it on other social media platforms.

Brand Building

1. Building the Brand Foundation

- Brand identity
- Target audience
- Brand story and purpose
- Brand response
- Brand resonance
- Brand positioning

2. Designing the Brand Elements

- Content
- Community-building
- Brand name
- Tagline
- Tone of voice
- Visual elements of the channel
    - o Channel icon
    - o Channel art
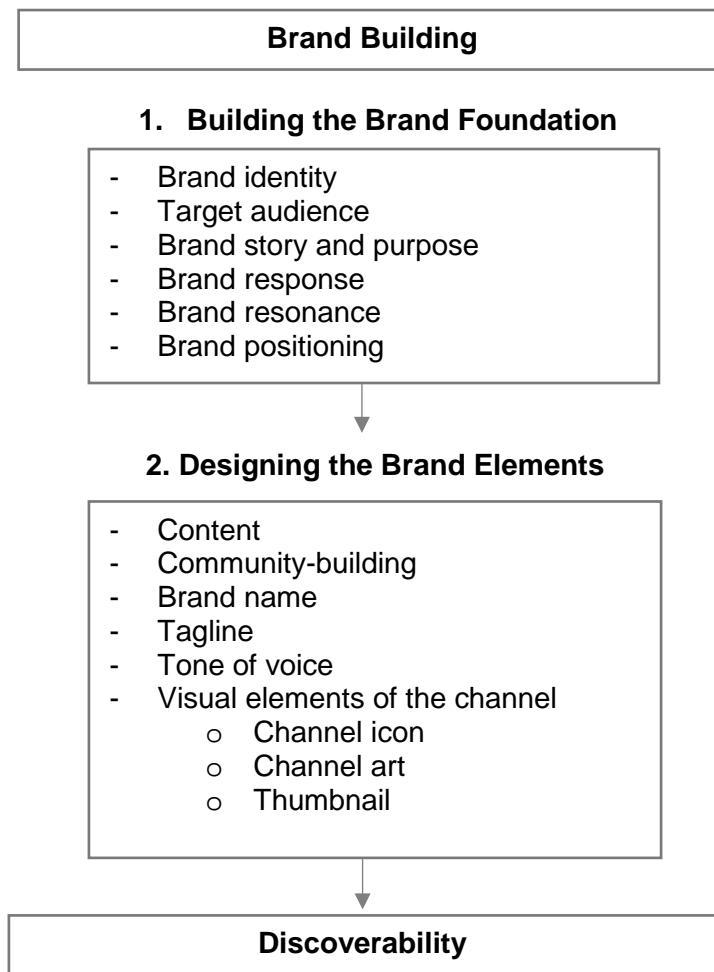   - o Thumbnail

Discoverability

Figure 6. Brand Building

4.1 Designing the Foundation of the Brand

Brand identity is the most important part of building a strong brand, as it provides purpose, direction, and meaning for the brand (Aaker 1996, 67-68). The brand is built according to the four steps of Keller's (2013, 108) brand resonance pyramid. First, the brand identity is established, and the target market is researched. On the second step, the purpose of the brand is defined. Then, the desired brand response is designed. On the final step, the brand resonance is created by strengthening the resonance of each aforementioned aspect of branding. At the end of the chapter, the brand will be positioned.

The very first step of brand development by Keller's brand resonance pyramid (2013, 108) focuses on building the brand identity by answering the fundamental question "Who are you?". The branding objective of this stage is to gain deep, broad brand awareness for the audience as well as research the target market.

To start off building the brand identity of 'Mel Octavia', some relevant facts about the person behind the brand are laid out:

- Name: Melissa
- Age: 26
- Nationality: Finnish
- Occupation: Studying and working in an advertising agency
- Characteristics: Cheerful, social, open-minded, humoristic
- Special traits: Speaks five languages, passionate about traveling and other cultures,
- Background with Brazil: Lived in Brazil 2011-2013

The subject of branding is a 26-year-old female living in Finland. She lived in Brazil in 2011-2013 and learned to speak Portuguese fluently. She's passionate about exploring different cultures and observing cultural differences. She loves to entertain, learn new things, share information and provide value to others.

The author's core values, vision, and competences are examined and defined, as they provide meaning and direction to the brand. The vision of the author's personal brand can be roughly divided into two; personal and professional. The professional vision for the channel is to demonstrate professionalism as a marketer by building a successful brand with a strategic approach. The personal vision is to break down cultural barriers and build cultural bridges.

The main competences of the author are creativity, good communicational skills, eagerness to learn new things, the ability to perform in front of the camera, as well as fluency in

many languages. For this reason, video was selected as the medium of choice. Moreover, 71% of Brazilian internet users use their time on watching video content (Ribeiro 2018).

The author's core values were defined using Jeffrey's (2019) ultimate list of core values. Her five main core values are playfulness, growth, curiosity, contribution and creativity. These are the five main values that are the very foundation of the brand 'Mel Octavia' and act as the guiding values in the author's personal and professional life. Pitkänen (2001, 92-96) suggests that although the brand image is built on brand values, they do not fully determine it. Together, the brand identity and values explain the world what the brand stands for and what it fundamentally strives for.

A personal brand should have a clear vision and a mission just as a traditional brand has. A vision statement focuses on the near future whereas a mission statement is the ultimate goal of existence. Both explain the fundamental existence of the brand and are vital in directing goals. For the brand 'Mel Octavia', a mission statement and a vision were defined to act as a guideline for everything that the brand does.

Mission statement: To educate, entertain and inspire Brazilians.
Vision: Break down cultural barriers and build cultural bridges.

4.1.1 Target Audience

In the first step of Keller's brand resonance pyramid, "salience", the target market must be researched to gain a good understanding of customers. It's important to know they perceive your brand and what kind of decision-making process they go through to choose your product or service. It's essential to have clear unique selling points or USP's and ensure that the customers understand how your brand fulfills them. (Keller 2013, 111.)

Brazilian people were chosen as the target audience of the channel 'Mel Octavia' due to the author's personal motives as well as the wide range of opportunities that Brazil has to offer as an emerging market, with a population of 209 million people (World Bank 2019).

During the recent years, Brazilians' interest towards the "outside world" has increased considerably due to globalization along with the significant improvements of the economic situation as well as the internet connections in Brazil. YouTube has grown to be the second most popular website in Brazil (Similar Web 2019). There are currently over 98 million

Brazilian users on YouTube (Ribeiro 2018). Most Brazilians have however never interacted or will never have the chance to interact with anyone outside of Brazil due to lack of opportunities or common language to communicate in.

The target audiences of the YouTube channel 'Mel Octavia' were identified based on the author's knowledge of Brazilian people as well as the characteristics of the channel and its content. The channel's target audiences are divided into three main groups; primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary target audience was Brazilian people of all genders, aged between 18-30. The majority of this target audience group studies and/or works and have a daily access to a smartphone or a laptop. They live close to urban areas as these areas tend to be more developed and have better internet connections. They are interested in cultural differences and want to learn more about other cultures, customs, and languages. They enjoy traveling or they would like to travel in the future. Their interests include European and Nordic cultures and languages, Finnish culture in particular. The audience's primary goal of watching videos on YouTube is to learn new things and widen their perspective on different subjects. The secondary target audience consists of Brazilians who watch YouTube videos mainly for entertainment purposes. They search for content that shows them something funny and out of ordinary, such as a foreigner trying to speak Portuguese. They aren't however interested in improving their cultural knowledge. The tertiary target audience consists of other Portuguese speaking people such as Portuguese as well as other foreigners who speak or are learning Portuguese language.

4.1.2 Brand Story and Purpose

The second step of Keller's brand resonance pyramid (2013, 111-117) focuses on defining the brand's purpose and communicating it accordingly to the world. This is done by creating meaningful associations of the brand through communication, good customer experiences and word-of-mouth. The eventual goal is to make the brand relevant in consumers' lives.

Wheeler (2018, 38) states that "the best brands stand for something: a big idea, a strategic position, a defined set of values, a voice that stands apart". 'Mel Octavia's brand story goes back to year 2011, as the author moved to Brazil and became passionate about the country and its' culture. The urge to create a channel for the Brazilian audience rose up from her inner ambition to build cultural awareness within individuals and to broaden their world view. As the author spent a couple of years in Brazil in 2011-2013, she familiarised herself well with Brazilian culture. It came to her attention that many Brazilians have a very low cultural awareness due to the conditions they possessed: the majority will never

get a chance to interact with a foreigner, or even if they do, they will not have a common language to communicate in.

The author strongly believes that interaction with people from different backgrounds and learning about other cultures is essential to broaden one's perspective of the world, as these interactions allow us to gain cultural knowledge and awareness that help us become more aware of our own values, beliefs, and perceptions as well as appreciate cultural diversity. Only through breaking cultural barriers are we able to love and accept those different from us. Through sharing insights on different cultures, the aim was to provide Brazilians with new perspective and understanding of other cultures. The intention was to present and cover topics that were unheard of for Brazilian, making them rethink or question their current beliefs and thinking patterns. In addition, the goal was to show Brazilians how a foreigner may perceive their country and culture, highlighting the habits and pointing out the customs that differ greatly from other cultures. People are able to relate to people from other cultures once they have the capability of seeing and understanding their own culture first (Quappe & Cantatore 1991).

4.1.3   Brand Response

The third step of Keller's brand resonance model (2013, 117-120) focuses on creating brand response among customers, which falls into two blocks, 'judgements' and 'feelings'. As brands evoke certain feelings among people, they respond to the brand depending on how it makes them feel about themselves. Brand feelings are people's emotional responses and reactions to the brand that can be positive or negative.

According to the brand resonance model (Keller, 2013, 117-120), there are six important brand-building feelings that brands try to evoke:

1. *Warmth:* The brand evokes a sense of calm and peacefulness. People feel warm-hearted or affectionate feelings about the brand.
2. *Fun:* The brand makes people feel amused, playful and cheerful.
3. *Excitement:* The brand creates a feeling of experiencing something special and exciting.
4. *Security:* The brand gives a feeling of safety and comfort.
5. *Social approval:* The brand gives the consumer the feeling of being socially favorable.
6. *Self-respect:* The brand helps people feel better about themselves by evoking their sense of pride and fulfillment.

As positive feelings and brand responses make people connect with the brand, one of the main goals of the brand 'Mel Octavia' is to evoke good emotions through content. Positive

emotions work as a strong incentive for people to take action, such as subscribe, view videos or engage on the channel. The main brand feelings that the brand 'Mel Octavia' aims to evoke among the audience are warmth, fun, excitement, and self-respect. Feelings of warmth are created by talking about Brazilians in a loving, affectionate and caring way. The audience's importance in the brand story is pointed out regularly. The author aims to make people feel amused by appearing cheerful, humorous and playful in the videos. In addition, the tone of voice used in the videos and social media posts is humorous, quirky, vibrant and enthusiastic. The brand also tries to create feelings of excitement by showing them things that they have never seen before. Finally, one of the fundamental goals is to help Brazilians feel proud about their country and nationality by pointing out positive things about their country and culture, as many struggles with a lack of pride in their home country.

4.1.4 Brand Resonance

The final step of Keller's (2013, 120-122) brand resonance model focuses on reaching the ultimate loyalty relationship between a brand and a consumer. A strong psychological bond is developed by strengthening the resonance of each category of the pyramid. Once the customers feel a deep psychological bond with the brand, brand resonance has been reached. The two dimensions of this step are intensity and activity of the relationship, which are further divided into four characteristics of a resonating brand-customer relationship: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement among the consumers. (Keller 2013, 120.)

Different methods will be used later on to assess the brand resonance of "Mel Octavia" among the audience. Behavioural loyalty is evaluated through YouTube Analytics to discover the ratio of returning subscribers on the channel. Attitudinal attachment will be evaluated through a qualitative survey to discover whether the fanbase feels emotionally attached to the brand. The audience's sense of community is examined through reviewing their involvement in the community. Active engagement is measured by observing how actively the audience is involved with the brand by observing watch time and engagements in YouTube Analytics.

4.2 Positioning the Brand

Brand positioning is the process of positioning a brand in consumers' minds. As Keller (2013, 80) states, brand positioning is the "act of designing the company's offer and image

so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's minds." To successfully position a brand, a marketer must know who the target audience is, who the main competitors are and distinguish the similarities and differences with the competitors. Identifying and studying the target market is essential due to differing brand knowledge structures, perceptions and preferences among people. Without knowledge on the target market it can be challenging to determine which brand associations are considered favourable and unique.

For the purpose of positioning the brand 'Mel Octavia', the target audience has been determined and observed, and the competitors of the channel were identified. Through this, a better understanding of the audience, as well as the competitive landscape has been achieved for strong brand positioning in the audience's minds. Maandag & Puolakka (2014, 14) present a simple formula to create a brand positioning statement: "(Your brand) is the only (your product category) that helps (your target audience) to (what your brand is used for) so that (why your target audience uses your brand)".

The brand position for 'Mel Octavia' goes as follows:
'Mel Octavia' is the only YouTube channel that helps Brazilians learn about Finnish culture in Portuguese to raise their cultural awareness.

4.3 Planning the Content

Globally the most viewed categories on YouTube are comedy, music, entertainment/pop culture and how-to videos (Petrov 2019). The content of the channel 'Mel Octavia' falls under the "entertainment" and "educational" categories, as it aims to educate people while keeping them entertained. YouTube Creators (2019) stated, the fundamental approach for creating quality content on YouTube starts by first determining what the desired impact is, what is wanted to be said and what knowledge can be shared to others.

As one of the main objectives of the channel is to raise cultural awareness, the themes of the videos revolve mainly around different cultural aspects, focusing primarily on Finnish and Brazilian cultures. The focus of the content isn't restricted solely to Finnish and Brazilian cultures, as other cultures may be introduced on the channel later on in the future. The videos present insights about Finnish culture and share experiences of a Finnish person in Brazil. Quappe & Cantatore (2007) argue that in order to promote cultural awareness, both positive and negative aspects of cultural differences should be pointed out. The desired objectives cannot therefore be reached by solely focusing on positive aspects of Brazilian and Finnish cultures. For this reason, it was decided to present subjects and

ideas that are bold, thought-provoking and even somewhat sensitive, aware of the risk of upsetting some viewers.

The ideas for the content of the channel 'Mel Octavia' often derive from the personal interests of the author, as her personal ambition works as the main driver for creating new ideas and striving for excellence with her content. However, some of the content is inspired by the community, as they are regularly requested to leave their feedback and ideas on the comment sections. In addition, observation of competitors' activities is a continuous, never-ending process that helps in keeping up-to-date with the trending themes, content planning and idea evaluation. By actively following the content the competitor's produce, it is possible to observe what kind of content works well with the target audience. In addition, some creative ideas might spark from watching other creator's content around the same themes.

A simple content guideline for 'Mel Octavia's channel was developed at the early stages of the brand to ensure that the themes of the videos are always aligned with the brand. The content of the video should always aim to meet the following requirements:

- The topics of the video should revolve around cultures and cultural elements
- The content must provide valuable insight, new information, and thought-provoking ideas.
- The content should aim to create feelings of warmth, fun, excitement, and self-respect.
- The content should create a deeper connection with the brand and the audience by presenting insights about the author behind the brand. This is the only occasion where the content doesn't require involving cultures.

Until now, the channel "Mel Octavia" contains 19 videos, all of which have been planned according to the guideline. A matrix was made to see how the videos of the channel obey the three main principles of the content guideline: involvement of cultures, connecting with the brand and teaching new information (see table 5). The titles of the videos have been translated from Portuguese.

Table 5. Video Content Matrix

Video title	About cultures	Connect with the brand	Teaches new information
10 things that shocked a foreigner in Brazil	x	x	x
10 Finnish habits that are absolutely bizarre	x		x
10 things you should know about Finland	x		x
Teaching Brazilian slang to another foreigner	x		
Brazil X Finland – Which country is better?	x		x
How I learnt 5 languages! 5 tips	x	x	x

5 expressions that surprised me in Brazil	x		x
Brazilian living in Finland	x		x
I'll be honest with you...		x	
One day with a Finnish girl	x	x	
The most beautiful Brazilian in Finland		x	
What foreigners know about Brazil?	x		x
Who is the Finnish girl? 30 facts about me		x	
Why did I move to Brazil?		x	
Brazilian trying Finnish candy	x		x
Christmas in Finland – Christmas market	x		x
I took a dip in hole in the ice!	x		x
A Finnish girl tries to speak Portuguese for the first time	x		
Why do I make videos in Portuguese?		x	

As seen above, all of the content falls into at least one of the main content principles. The content of the channel aligns successfully with the brand's main goals.

4.4 Building the Community

Building a community on YouTube allows for a deeper connection with the audience, as a strong community is one of the main elements for long-term channel growth and success. Fostering the community by regular interaction can increase the viewer's loyalty to the channel, ultimately resulting to a larger fanbase. It's important to keep in mind that building a community is an evolutionary process and takes a lot of time and work. (YouTube Creators, 2019.)

A great effort is made to build and foster the community of 'Mel Octavia'. Almost every single comment is responded either by a message or by leaving a heart on the comment. Consistent interaction with the audience shows them that they are important members of the community. In addition, the community building of the channel extends to Instagram, allowing people to become more immersed in the author's life.

Developing unique rituals for a YouTube channel can increase brand attachment, as it can create them a feeling of being an "insider". The viewers will learn to look for the repeated activities and special lingo over time (YouTube Creators 2019). The channel 'Mel Octavia' has several occurring elements. Videos usually start either by showing a short clip from the video as a teaser, showing a blooper or by going straight to the point with the usual opening. Every video starts with the same opening line "Oi gente! Tudo bem com vocês?" ("Hi people! How are you?") and ends with the same closing line "Até a próxima! Um beijo!" ("Until next time! Kisses!"). In addition, most videos contain some bloopers where the author mispronounces some Portuguese words, or everything doesn't go as planned.

YouTube Creators (2019) suggests sharing a "creation story" that tells about the creator's journey to YouTube, as it may help develop a deeper connection with the audience. A creation story of the channel was incorporated into the very first video of the channel 'Mel Octavia'. The video started by telling about the background of the author, then proceeding to reveal the motives for starting the channel, helping people feel more connected to the brand. Later on, more videos were created about the author, as an aim to create a stronger emotional bond between the brand and the audience.

It is recommended to actively involve the community by allowing them to participate building the channel and influence the content (YouTube Creators 2019). On 'Mel Octavia', the dedication to the community is shown by regularly requesting for their opinions and suggestions for the channel. The gathered feedback is used to further develop the brand and the channel. A separate video "Why do I make videos for Brazilians?" was created explaining the fundamental purpose of making videos for the Brazilian audience to demonstrate affection towards them. Furthermore, two entire videos have been dedicated to the audience without a specific theme or a script, as an aim to truly connect with them through a friend-like conversation.

4.5   Brand Elements

The purpose of brand elements is to identify and differentiate the brand from others. According to customer-based brand equity model, brand elements should be selected to build brand awareness and to convey strong, positive, and unique brand associations and feelings. (Keller 2013, 142.) The main brand elements on YouTube are the brand name, tagline, tone of voice and visual elements of the brand such as channel icon, channel art and video thumbnails.

According to Keller (2013, 142) Each brand element should be decided according to the following six general criteria:

- *Memorability:* Easily recognized and recalled.
- *Meaningfulness:* Descriptive and persuasive.
- *Likability:* Fun and interesting, rich visual and verbal imagery, aesthetically pleasing.
- *Transferability:* Within and across product categories, across geographic boundaries and culture.
- *Adaptability:* Flexible, updatable.
- *Protectability:* Legally, competitively.

4.5.1 Brand Name

Selecting a brand name is crucial as it captures the central theme and key associations of the brand. When choosing a brand name, the most important criteria is to select one that is easy to remember and in line with the brand identity. Like any brand element, a name must be chosen according to the six general criteria: memorability, meaningfulness, likeability, transferability, adaptability, and protectability. (Keller 2013, 148.)

> The right name is timeless, tireless, easy to say and remember; it stands for something and facilitates brand extensions. Its sound has rhythm. It looks great in the text of an email and in the logo. A well-chosen name is an essential brand asset, as well as a 24/7 workhorse. (Wheeler, 2018, 26.)

On YouTube, the name of a brand should be catchy and preferably communicate what the channel is about. According to Cannell (2017), there are two main ways to name your channel. In the case of a personal brand channel, personal names or modifications of them are often used. Brand names, however, are more commonly used when there is more than one creator involved. The name can also be a hybrid of these two.

The brand name 'Mel Octavia' was modified from the author's birth name 'Melissa Octavia' (first and middle name), using the six general brand naming criteria presented by Keller (2013, 148): memorability, meaningfulness, likeability, transferability, adaptability, and protectability. Firstly, the name functions well in the Brazilian market as it consists of two names that are common in Brazil. The name's simplicity, shortness and commonness make it easier for Brazilians to pronounce and remember the name. Keller (2013, 150) suggests that a brand name should be meaningful for it to enter the existing knowledge structures in the minds of consumers. Linking the brand name to names of people or objects that already exist in memory increase the memorability of the brand name. As 'Mel' signifies honey in Portuguese, Brazilians will remember the brand name with more ease. In addition, the name adds a positive connotation to the brand as it is commonly used as a nickname for people that are sweet and lovely, possibly increasing the likeability of the name. To achieve brand recognition, a name must also be different, distinctive and unusual (Keller 2013, 150). Connecting a common word and nickname 'Mel' with another popular name 'Octavia' increases uniqueness and distinguishes the name from other brand names. The brand name 'Mel Octavia' is transferable to other markets as it derives from Latin and can be pronounced and used internationally.

4.5.2 Tagline

A tagline is a short text that communicates the brand's essence, personality and positioning, differentiating it from its competitors (Wheeler 2018, 28). Just like traditional brands, many YouTubers have their own taglines that articulate their brand position. These taglines are usually placed over channel art. Brand position is brought to life in a tagline in a way that resonates more with the audience. Some taglines are so powerful that they start living their own life within the culture, such as Nike's "Just do it" or DeBeers' "A diamond is a girl's best friend".

Design expert Alina Wheeler (2018, 29) states that taglines should be:
- Short
- Differentiated from its competitors
- Unique
- Captures the brand essence and positioning
- Easy to say and remember
- No negative connotations
- Displayed in a small font
- Can be protected and trademarked
- Evokes an emotional response
- Difficult to create

The tagline of 'Mel Octavia' was developed according to Wheeler's criteria. The main tagline of the brand goes as following: "A Gringa Finlandesa que ama o Brasil!" which roughly translates to "A Finnish foreigner that loves Brazil". The tagline is short and captures the essence and positioning of the brand. It is easy to say and remember and it has no negative connotations. The tagline is present in the bio of the channel, bio of the brand's Instagram as well as in the channel art on the YouTube channel page. A modified version of the tagline is used in the beginning of each video: "Sou Mel, sou Finlandesa e eu amo o Brasil!", meaning "I'm Mel, I'm Finnish and I love Brazil".

4.5.3 Tone of Voice

A tone of voice is not about what you say, it's how you say it. Strong brands have their own unique way of communication to distinguish themselves from competitors. It is important for personal brands to design their own distinctive voice that expresses their personalities in both verbal and written form.

'Mel Octavia's tone of voice is designed accordingly to align the brand to evoke the desired brand feelings, such as warmth, excitement, and amusement. The target audience's communication style is taken into account to achieve a tone of voice that appeals to them.

Brazilians are highly expressive in the way they communicate, and they like using a lot of gestures.

The tone of voice of 'Mel Octavia' is as follows:
- Using informal communication with slang words and expressions.
- Communicating in a humorous, quirky, vibrant and enthusiastic way.
- Being expressive and using gestures.
- Aiming for clarity and understandability.
- Remaining kind even in an unpleasant situation.
- Using a specific selection of emojis.

4.6 Visual Elements of the Brand

Visual identity is the visual aspect of the brand that is created to associate certain feelings and experiences with the brand. A strong visual identity evokes brand awareness and recognition and makes the brand memorable and recognizable, distinguishing it from its competitors. (Wheeler, 2018, 24.)

A brand is communicated to the audience through visuals in just a matter of second. All visual elements of a channel should be coherent with the brand and communicate the same key message to the audience. The most important visual elements of a YouTube channel are channel icon, channel art, and video thumbnails.

4.6.1 Channel Icon

Channel icon is one of the most important visual elements on YouTube as it appears on the channel art banner and is always present next to the channel name. It displays every time the creator comments on other users' videos, getting the opportunity to drive new audience to their channel. In case of choosing a headshot for a personal channel, it is important to consider the emotion you want to convey to the public. (Cannell 2017.)

The channel icon is a headshot of the author behind the brand "Mel Octavia" (see image 1). The image was selected to evoke the main brand feelings of 'Mel Octavia'; warmth, fun, and excitement. Warm image colors together with a happy smile convey emotions of warmth, happiness, and joy.

Image 1. Channel Icon

4.6.2   Channel Art

Channel art is the picture shown on the landing page of a YouTube channel. The picture may contain a "powerful image" that illustrates the brand and content of the channel. The channel art should include a tagline as a value proposition of the channel, which is either something clever or simply a description of what the channel is about. In addition, it can include a posting schedule of the channel so that subscribers know when to expect a new video. The channel art may also include a call-to-action, such as "subscribe to the channel". (Cannell 2017.)

The channel art of "Mel Octavia" is simple and colorful, containing the name of the channel together with the tagline "A gringa Finlandesa que ama o Brasil!", to communicate the brand's essence to the audience (see image 2). The yellow background was selected to evoke the desired brand feelings, as it represents feelings of joy, warmth, positivity, and happiness. Pink shades of the image convey the emotions that are needed to achieve a strong brand community; friendship, affection, and love. The name of the channel is typed with a script font to give a carefree outlook that simultaneously expresses creativity.

Image 2. Channel Art

4.6.3 Thumbnail

Thumbnail is used as a small preview image of a video, as it gives the viewers the very first glimpse of the content. Designing an eye-catching thumbnail is important, as it serves to attract people to watch videos. (YouTube Creators, 2019.) The ideal thumbnail should look appealing, motivate people to click, display the content of the video and have a design that fits the brand.

The thumbnails on 'Mel Octavia' are designed using high-contrast colors to make the videos stand out from the competitor's videos (see image 3). All thumbnails display a picture of the author with an emotion-provoking facial expression to arouse interest and connect with the audience. The most interesting aspects of the videos are displayed on the thumbnail to maximize viewer attention. The thumbnails have a coherent design with the same font style and use of emojis to make them easily recognizable for the audience.

Image 3. Video Thumbnails

4.7 Promoting the Channel

A strong brand with a clear brand message and a distinctive design cannot succeed unless it is discoverable to the audience. There are many ways to increase the discoverability of the channel, one of the best being promoting it on multiple channels. Having an active presence across multiple platforms increases discoverability and helps to build a fanbase, as more people have the possibility of finding the content. In addition, a supporting social media account strengthens the relationship with the audience as it enables them to become more immersed into the creator's daily life. The most commonly used platforms to promote a YouTube channel are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

A brand account @mel.octavia.br was created on Instagram to promote the brand 'Mel Octavia' (see image 4). The account helps to create a deeper connection with the fanbase as it allows them to have a more intimate way of interaction. Furthermore, it provides additional value to the viewers as it provides exclusive video and photo material of the brand. Each new YouTube video is marketed and linked in the bio of the profile together with the title of the video. The interest of the audience is built by showing exclusive content of the videos that isn't displayed on YouTube, such as bloopers, teasers, and behind-the-scene videos. The account helps the audience keep up-to-date with the channel and drive them to watch new videos, as they get informed of new content through Instagram posts and stories. Much of the brand's community building occurs on Instagram, as many people rather send their comments and ideas by private messages. Furthermore, the audience gets to be more involved in the creative decision process, as they have a chance to vote for ideas and share their opinions in the polls held on Instagram stories.
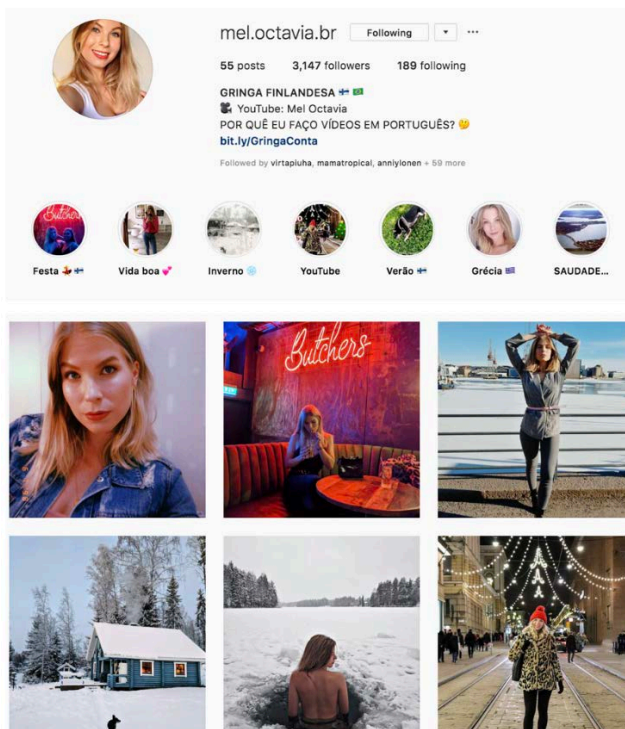

Image 4. Instagram Account @mel.octavia.br

Another method to increase discoverability on YouTube was achieved through networking and collaborating with three of the channel's direct competitors sharing a similar niche. As agreed, the channels started to promote each other on their channel pages under "featured channels". As their fanbase is similar to the audience of 'Mel Octavia', potential new viewers can discover the channel 'Mel Octavia' through their channels.

5   Reflection and Evaluation

This chapter discusses and analyses how the project goals were reached. First, the successfulness of the brand will be evaluated by assessing the brand resonance. Then, the thesis process and the author's learnings will be explained. Then, the future research possibilities on the subject will be presented.

The main goal of the project was to build a strong personal brand to be executed on a digital environment. A strong brand with a clear brand message was expected to support the growth of a YouTube channel 'Mel Octavia'.

The theoretical part of the research focused on branding, personal branding as well as personal branding specifically on YouTube. Keller's (2013) brand resonance model was selected to provide the necessary steps for brand building. In addition, a qualitative research was conducted on two direct competitors of 'Mel Octavia' who have built successful personal brands around their YouTube channels. Success factors were identified based on the findings from the literature and the interview. On the practical part, the foundation of the brand 'Mel Octavia' was built following the four steps of Keller's brand building model. Then, the brand elements were planned, designed and executed in alignment with the brand, using the previously identified success factors.

5.1   Evaluating the Success of the Brand

The successfulness of the brand is evaluated by assessing the brand resonance of 'Mel Octavia' to discover whether it has reached the ultimate relationship and identification that the audience has with the brand. Brand resonance is measured by conducting a qualitative survey with the channel's audience as well as through analysis of YouTube analytics. If the audience is proven to feel a deep, psychological bond with the brand, brand resonance has been reached, and the brand can be deemed successful. In addition, the successfulness of the brand will be examined by observing the growth of the channel 'Mel Octavia'.

5.1.1   Qualitative Interview

A qualitative interview was conducted to discover how if the brand identity of 'Mel Octavia' has been communicated successfully to the audience. Brand image is received by the audience and shows how a brand is perceived as a result of the brand's communication

(Kapferer 2008, 174). The interview was designed using a standardized open-ended inter-view method, to ensure that the respondents could freely express their viewpoints and ex-periences (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, 24).

10 members of 'Mel Octavia's community were randomly selected to be interviewed. The interviews were held on Instagram's messages. The survey consisted of three open-ended questions that aimed to discover how the audience perceived the brand image of 'Mel Octavia'. In addition, the goal was to find out why they commit to the brand and how they benefit from the content of the channel. The questions were tested out with three re-spondents before conducting the interview with the rest of the respondents. The interview questions are as follows:

- How would you describe the person 'Mel Octavia' using three words?
- Why do you watch the content of 'Mel Octavia'?
- What benefits do the videos of 'Mel Octavia' bring into your life?

Due to the small sample size, it is not possible to fully determine how the brand image is to the whole audience. However, due to the commonalities of the responses, some as-sumptions can be made based on the indications.

The first question investigated the characteristics that the audience connects with the per-sonal brand 'Mel Octavia' by asking "How would you describe the person 'Mel Octavia' us-ing three words? A great majority (8 of 10) of people perceived the personality as sympa-thetic. Other characteristics that were most commonly connected with the brand were beautiful, clever, happy and funny (see figure 7).
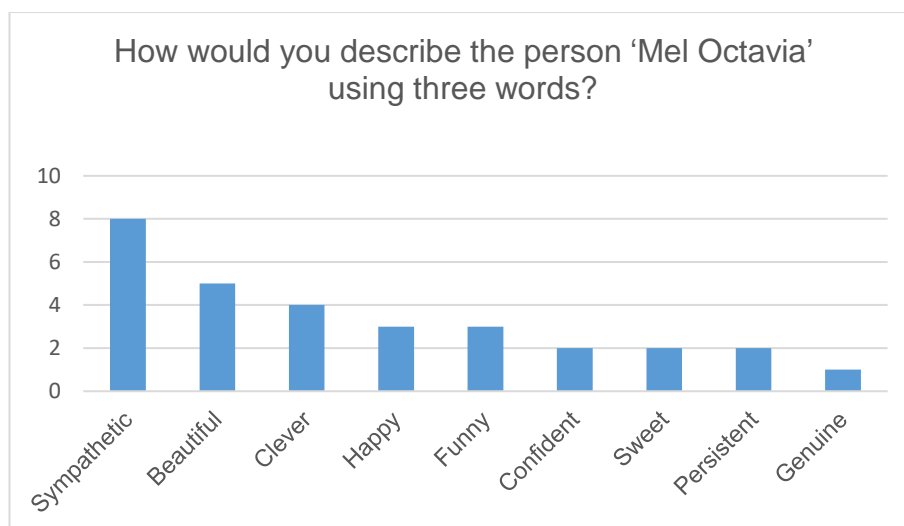

Figure 7. Interview question 1

The second question aimed to discover what drives the audience to watch 'Mel Octavia's content (see figure 8). The respondents could freely mention as many reasons as they wanted to. The three most commonly mentioned motives were to learn about Finland and other cultures, to watch 'Mel Octavia' and to gain a new perspective of Brazil.
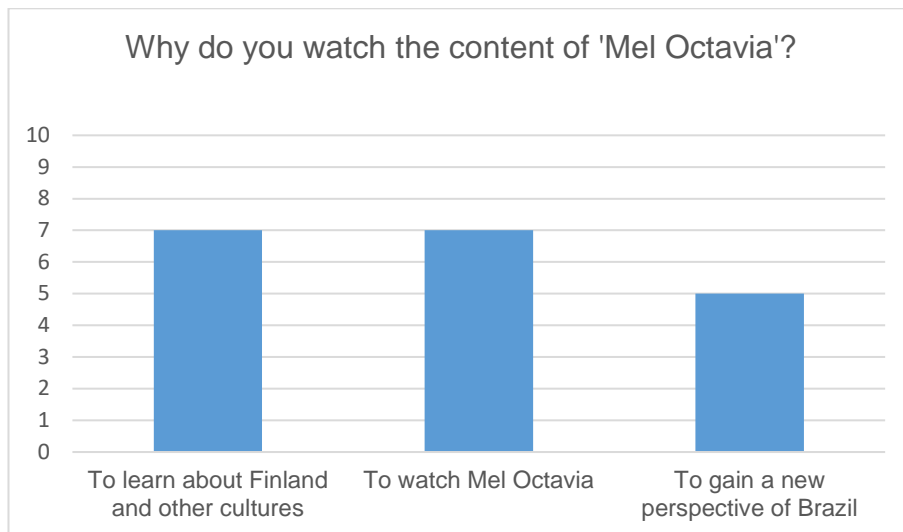

Figure 8. Interview question 2

The third and last question investigated the benefits that the content of 'Mel Octavia' brings to people's lives (see figure 9). The respondents were allowed to mention as many benefits as they wanted to. According to the responses, the main benefit that the audience gains is new knowledge on other cultures. In addition, they felt like they learn new things and feel good from watching the content.
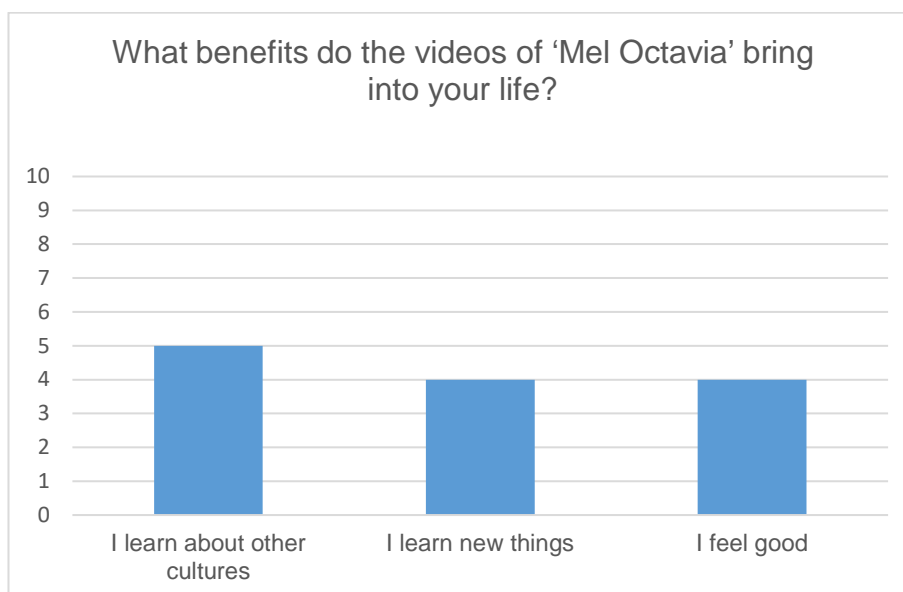

Figure 9. Interview question 3

5.1.2 Measuring Brand Resonance

In Keller's brand building model (2013, 120), brand resonance is divided into two dimensions; intensity and activity of the relationship. These dimensions can be further divided into four categories, each of which will be evaluated separately to assess the brand resonance of the brand. The dimensions are as follows:

1. Behavioural loyalty
2. Attitudinal attachment
3. Sense of community
4. Active engagement

5.1.3 Behavioural Loyalty

On YouTube, behavioural loyalty is measured by observing the count of returning subscribers on YouTube Analytics. Another way of measuring behavioural loyalty is by comparing its favourability to its competitors. However, in this case, the favourability was not possible to assess due to the lack of relevant data.

Subscribers-to-views ratio is a good indicator to measure the audience's loyalty with the channel. According to Best YouTube Views (2019), an optimal subscribers-to-views ratio is 14%. As seen on figure 10, 18.6% of all the views of the channel are from subscribers of the account, meaning that almost every fifth person that watches the content is a member of 'Mel Octavia's community. A high subscriber-to-views ratio indicates that the audience of the channel is loyal to the brand.

Subscription status		Watch time (minutes) ▲		Views ▲		⊤	Average view duration ⋮
☐ Total		1,116,063	100.0%	316,925	100.0%		3:31
☐ Not subscribed		906,676	81.2%	257,554	81.3%		3:31
☐ Subscribed		207,702	18.6%	58,888	18.6%		3:31
☐ Unknown		1,686	0.2%	483	0.2%		3:29

Figure 10. Viewer data by subscription status, last 365 days

5.1.4 Attitudinal Attachment

Attitudinal attachment will be evaluated through a qualitative survey to discover whether the fanbase feels emotionally attached to the brand. Customers with a positive attitude to the brand are likely to feel attached to it. As shown in figure 8, a majority of the respondents said that one of their main motives for watching the content of 'Mel Octavia' was the person brand itself. This indicates the attachment that the audience has with the brand. When the audience was asked to point out characteristics that they connect with the

brand, nearly all respondents (8 of 10) mentioned sympathetic (see figure 7). The brand was often connected with other positive traits such as beautiful, clever and happy, indicating their positive attitude to the brand. Furthermore, almost half of the respondents said that feeling good is the biggest benefit for following the content of the channel, meaning that the audience enjoys watching the content produced by the brand (see figure 9). It can be concluded that the fanbase has a positive attitude and emotional attachment to the brand.

5.1.5 Sense of Community

The audience's sense of community is assessed through the analytics of the channel "Mel Octavia" to discover how actively the audience takes part in the community by leaving comments in the videos. Through the interview, it came to attention that a considerable amount of the audience shares common interests and want to learn more about Finland and other cultures (see figure 8). Sharing interests with other members of the community may increase the sense of community.

The analytics of the channel's five most recent videos were assessed to see the volume in which the viewers take part in the community by leaving comments to the videos (see figure 11). As it isn't possible to assess the comments left only by subscribers of the channel, the comment count of the video will be compared to the total views of the video. To count the comment ratio, the total amount of views of the past videos is divided by the total amount of comments, achieving a ratio of 13,3%. According to Best YouTube Views (2019), the ideal comment ratio is 0.5% or more. A high comment ratio of 13,3% on the channel indicates a considerably active community involvement, which is assumed to be a result of a strong sense of community.

Date	Views	Comments
31 Jan 2019 Published	7,864	836
24 Jan 2019 Published	10,944	652
8 Jan 2019 Published	7,065	559
20 Dec 2018 Published	4,006	306
13 Dec 2018 Published	5,663	315

Figure 11. Comment Count

5.1.6   Active Engagement

Active engagement is measured by observing how actively the audience is involved with the brand. The engagement is examined through YouTube analytics, observing the average watch time and the engagement rate of the channel.

The average watch time of a subscriber on the channel 'Mel Octavia' counts up to 18.6% of the total views of the channel (see figure 11), which means that almost 1/5 of the watch time is the result of loyal community.

The fan engagement ratio of the channel shows how loyal the subscribers are to the channel. To discover the engagement rate of the subscribers, likes, comments, and shares should be examined. As YouTube Analytics doesn't show the data of comments based on the subscription status, the real engagement rate cannot be counted. To get an idea of the engagement rate, it will be calculated solely based on the number of comments and shares (see figure 9 and 11).

The engagement rate is calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total views of subscribers in the past 365 days}}{\text{Likes + dislikes + shares in the past 365 days}}$$

The engagement rate of subscribers from the past 365 days is counted as follows: 58,800/ (15,262+56+305) = 0.15627. The engagement rate of subscribers is 15,6% when the

comments are not taken into account, which means that 1 in 7 subscribers that watch the content engage actively with the brand (see figure 12).

Figure 12. Engagements of subscribers, last 365 days

5.1.7   Brand Resonance Evaluation

The successfulness of the brand 'Mel Octavia' can now be assessed by evaluating the total brand resonance by concluding the results of the analysed brand dimensions. The findings show that the behavioural loyalty among the audience was high through a high subscriber-to-views ratio. The audience's high attitudinal attachment was detected, as one of their main motives for watching the content of the channel was to connect with the brand 'Mel Octavia'. A considerably high comment ratio of the channel demonstrated active community involvement, which is assumed to be a result of a sense of community. The audience's watch time and good engagement rate indicate active engagement on the channel.

As some of the dimensions are challenging to measure with the available data, it is impossible to fully determine whether an ultimate relationship has been achieved. However, it can be assumed that the brand 'Mel Octavia' has reached a strong relationship and identification between the brand and the audience. The audience is proven to have a bond with the brand that drives them to regularly connect and engage with the brand and its content. It can be stated that the desired brand resonance among the audience has been reached, and the brand can be deemed successful.

5.1.8   Channel Growth

One of the main goals of the project was to build a strong brand to support the growth of the YouTube channel 'Mel Octavia'. A strong brand helps the channel get distinguished from its competitors and to clarify the purpose of the channel to the audience, attracting more viewers and finally turning them to subscribers. It is difficult to determine which factors played part in attaining new subscribers, but some assumptions can be made based on the data. Between January 2018 and May 2019, the channel has acquired a community of 12 000 subscribers (see figure 13). Due to the YouTube algorithm, most exposure

for the channel happens when a new video is posted, which can be seen as peaks on the growth curve. The channel has been growing steadily throughout the existence of the channel, even at the start of the channel when the amount of content was limited. Having developed a brand with a clear brand message might then have been particularly beneficial for attracting new subscribers, as the channel's purpose couldn't be communicated through already existing content.
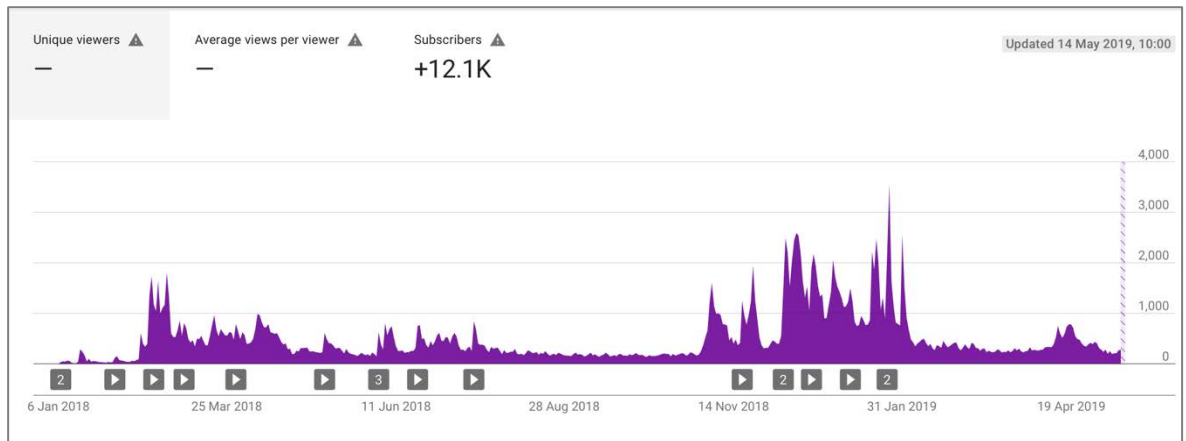

Figure 13. Subscriber Growth

5.2 Project Results

The brand 'Mel Octavia' has been built and developed for over a year now on YouTube. Until now, the channel has attracted over 12 000 subscribers, 400 000 views and 1.5 million watch minutes. The channel has been growing steadily throughout its existence. The supporting Instagram account, @mel.octavia.br, has gathered over 3100 followers. One of the main desired outcomes of the project was to create a strong brand that supports the growth of the channel 'Mel Octavia'. As there are many factors that play a role in the success of the channel, it is impossible to fully determine the impact of the branding on the channel. However, based on the success of the channel, it can be assumed that the brand supported its growth by drawing the audience's attention and differentiating it from other channels, as it communicated the key brand messages and content strategies clearly to the audience. Moreover, the brand image perceived by the audience was proven to match the designed brand identity through a qualitative interview. Based on the findings, the brand 'Mel Octavia' was deemed successful.

In conclusion, the project reached its goal and resulted to a strong brand that can be assumed to have impacted the growth of the channel 'Mel Octavia'. The personal branding framework and establishment of critical success factors made it possible to achieve a

brand that resonates with the audience. The thesis showed that it can be possible to build a successful personal brand that resonates with the audience by following a strategic brand building process. Any individual wanting to establish a personal brand in a digital environment may use this framework in their brand-building process. As the framework has only been used for the building of one brand, it should be used only as a guiding tool rather than a definitive indication of a successful brand building.

5.3 Further Research

As the thesis studied personal branding practices of only two creators, it is recommended to further research how personal brands are built on YouTube. This should be done by analysing and interviewing other successful creators with different niches and target audiences to discover which practices that have proven successful on YouTube. However, as the digital landscape is in a constant change and transition, no personal brand should solely depend on just one platform, but instead, spread their presence across multiple platforms. Thus, it is recommended to do further research on how personal brands could optimally spread their brand presence on different social media channels, such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook. As each platform has a different user base and they are used for different reasons, it would be valuable to study and identify the key differences between each and one of them to be able to communicate the brand message accordingly across all channels. As branding is a long process that requires a focused approach, it would be recommended to research the best practices for managing and improving personal brands in a digital environment. This information is a vital piece of personal branding, as nowadays any public missteps may permanently harm the brand image due to the speed, scale and volatility of the social media world.

5.4 Own Learnings

The learning process of personal branding is a highly valuable asset to the author of the thesis. It helped her build a strong personal brand and provided the necessary skills to do branding in the digital environment, as the majority of the learnings can be applied to corporate branding as well. It came to the author's attention that branding in a digital environment is extremely complex and impossible to nail on one go, as it is a never-ending process that requires a lot of trial and error. In addition, it was discovered that no matter how much work the branding and content creation process are causing, the creator should never neglect his or her audience. Instead, the audience should always be the primary priority, as they are the main source for feedback and valuable insights that helps to steer

the brand into the right direction. The acquired knowledge from the project helped the author launch her professional career, as she landed her dream job within branding in one of the most prominent ad agencies in Finland. The key lesson of the project was to continue developing the brand in interaction with the audience as they ultimately define the brand. The key lesson of this study is that branding is a never-ending process, and everything that the brand does affects how it is perceived in the minds of the audience. To truly succeed, all content, business decisions, and communication must be aligned with the brand. To ensure this, a brand must be designed with a strategic approach as it is the only way to achieve a long-term success.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. List of figures, tables and images.

Figures:

Tables

Images

Appendix 2. Interview with a YouTube creator Jacob Chard

Jacob Chard is a New Zealandic YouTuber that creates content for Brazilian audience in Portuguese. His YouTube channel "Jacob Chard" has until now attracted almost 120 000 subscribers. He was selected to be interviewed for this thesis due to his personal expertise in personal branding on YouTube.

1. Tell me about your YouTube channel. What is it about? What is your niche?
My YouTube channel was created back in 2016 to share my student exchange experience in Brazil. In the beginning I was targeting both Brazilian and international audience, as my videos were in English with translations in Portuguese. As the potential of the Brazilian came to my attention, I decided to shift my focus on Brazilian audience and create videos only in Portuguese. The themes of my videos mainly surround around Brazil, New Zealand and also perspectives on what "gringos" (foreigners) think about Brazil.

2. What are the benefits that your channel provides to your audience?
The main benefit of my channel is to provide new information to Brazilians and help them understand more about the perspective of people from outside of the country. I also want to demonstrate them what the world really has to offer and teach them be openminded.

3. What makes your channel unique? How do you differentiate yourself from other YouTubers?
Considering how big the Brazilian market is, there are not that many foreign creators making content in Portuguese. Being a foreigner that creates videos in Portuguese is already considered rather unique in Brazil. To my knowledge, I'm the only one to share perspectives of a New Zealander in their native language. I also put a lot of effort on building the community and connecting with my viewers, which is something that differentiates me from others as other creators don't seem to do it enough.

4. What do you do to gain your viewers' trust and stay authentic?
I gain my viewers' trust by being myself. The viewers can sense if you are being fake, and it's very unappealing for them. It's important to just be yourself and create original content. That's how you will get viewers to subscribe and come back to watch your videos. As I don't have a set posting schedule, I can sometimes go on for months without posting anything. However, the loyal subscribers always come back to watch my videos. As I mentioned earlier, engaging with the audience is important. You can show that their opinions matter by simply asking them a question and then interacting with them.

5. What kind of deeper meaning do you give to your audience?
I provide my audience perspective on different cultures to raise their cultural awareness so that they would be more openminded. I also try to create a sense of community among the viewers, so that they feel like being part of my intercultural gang.

6. What kind of value do you create to your audience?
I teach them new things in an entertaining way, because I want them to feel good, inspired and happy while watching my videos. I also offer to be their connection to the "outside world" so that they can finally have a foreign friend that many have wished to have. I constantly aim to have a deep connection with my audience.

7. How does your audience get to experience your brand and be part of your channel/content/brand story?

I try to immerse my viewers into my life through different channels, such as Instagram. I sometimes do giveaways too. I always credit the viewers because their support is the reason for my success. I always try to remind them of how much they have helped me through this journey.

8. How do you shape your brand image through your content, initiatives and collaborations?

It's important stay true to your brand with all the content you create. If you lose focus of your brand and start constantly making videos about the same topic or trending themes, your channel becomes the same as the other 100 channels who made a video on the same exact topic. I am not saying that one should never do videos on trending topics, but for branding purposes, it might not be smart to base your whole channel on these types of videos, as they lack focus. You just simply have to be original and make your viewers feel like they know you just as your family and friends know you. Also, I only do paid collaborations with brands that truly align with my channel.

9. What should one take into consideration when targeting a Brazilian audience?

I found that the best way is to show your affection of their country, people and culture. Creating videos that are relevant in their country, which can be anything from tasting Brazilian food, reacting to their music or discussing about their language. You need to let them know that you are really interested in their country and culture and want to learn more about it. It is also good idea to teach and show things that are not common in their country, as Brazilian people love learning about new things.

10. What 3 things should anyone staring a YouTube channel know?

1. Consistency. I cannot emphasize it enough, as it is the most important thing if you want to create a successful YouTube channel. I love to use the classic saying of "Rome wasn't built in a day".
2. Passion. This is always important, as you cannot create a channel just because you want to be famous or want to make money out of it. You need to have the passion to make videos and create content, because it is a really long journey.
3. Quality. I had issues with this one at the start of my channel as the quality of my videos was extremely bad. But as I had passion and the consistency, my channel kept growing at a slow pace. Once I bought a proper camera, the channel grew exponentially.

11. In your opinion, what is the #1 key to success in personal branding?

The number 1 key is definitely consistency. As there is no real recipe for success, you need to learn that there will be failures along the journey. However, if you say consistent with your content you will become successful with your brand.

Appendix 3. Interview with a YouTube creator Lecil Alvino

Lecil Alvino is an American YouTuber that lives in Brazil and creates content for Brazilian audience in Portuguese. Her YouTube channel "Brazicana – A gringa Brasileira" has until now attracted almost 25 000 subscribers. She was interviewed for this thesis for creating a successful personal brand on YouTube.

1. Tell me about your YouTube channel. What is it about? What is your niche?
My YouTube channel is about my experience here in Brazil. I mainly make videos about differences between Brazil and the United States. I also make videos teaching some tips for improving English skills.

2. What are the benefits that your channel provides to your audience?
The main benefit is gaining knowledge about differences between cultures. It also helps people to learn more English as I give out some English tips.

3. What makes your channel unique? How do you differentiate yourself from other YouTubers?
It's rather unique that I'm an American and I make content in Portuguese for Brazilian audience. I try to create content around new interesting topics. In addition, I reply to almost every single comment that I receive to help my audience feel more connected with me.

4. What do you do to gain your viewers' trust and stay authentic?
I always create content that is in line with my brand and look like me. I always keep the promises that I make and ensure that the posting schedule stays consistent. Also, I always try to reply to the viewers' comments.

5. What kind of deeper meaning do you give to your audience?
I try to give them a sense of being part of my YouTube community and make them feel as if I was their friend. As I talk a lot about cultural differences, I also provide them with deeper knowledge on different cultures.

6. What kind of value do you create to your audience? What are the benefits that your channel and its content bring to the viewer?
I teach English to help my audience improve their language skills so that they be more comfortable with speaking in English. I also show them an example of fun intercultural marital relationship when my husband participates in my videos.

7. How does your audience get to experience your brand and be part of your channel/content/brand story?
My audience gets to experience the brand first hand on live streaming sessions, where they are able get to know me more and ask questions about me. I also share my life on Instagram stories.

8. How do you shape your brand image through your content, initiatives and collaborations?
I always make sure that my content is in line with my brand. I wouldn't for example start making beauty related videos all of a sudden, as my channel focuses on cultures and cultural differences. I only do collaborations with people and channels that match with my brand. I also shape my brand by letting my subscribers feel comfortable to ask me questions and then responding them.

9. What should you take into consideration when targeting a Brazilian audience?

Brazilians are extremely outgoing and fun, so it's important to have a fun and outgoing personality as well and try to be as enthusiastic and energetic as you can in the videos and the way you communicate.

10. What 3 things should anyone starting a YouTube channel know?
1. Find your niche and stick to it.
2. Good editing really makes a difference to the quality of the video.
3. Focus on building the community and connect with your subscribers.

11. In your opinion, what is the #1 key to success in personal branding?
It's important to post consistently and have an online presence through all social media outlets.